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Promoting biodiversity conservation

June 2023

Background

Conservation of biological diversity remains one of the key priorities for the country contributing to the environmental, social and economic benefits and advancing the country to the SDGs achievement. At the institutional level, the main document outlining further steps is the National Plan for Conservation and Sustainable Use of Biological Diversity. In line with further improvement of the regulatory framework, development and expansion of the network of the nature protected territories, education and awareness raising play essential role ensuring behavioral changes and proper understanding among the people. Thus, permanent contribution to the development of ecological knowledge is required starting from the youngest generations.

Objective:

To promote and support the conservation of biodiversity of Belarus and its potential for environmental education and ecotourism. The objective will be achieved through creation of an interactive guide demonstrating the richness of the unique Dnieper and Sozh Reserve, located in the Loyew district of Homel region in the south-east of the country. Furthermore, the guide will be broadly promoted though a series of the trainings and promotional events for different target groups.

Duration:

1 July 2023 – 31 March 2024

Target audience:

Pedagogues and schoolers, staff of the libraries and museums, students, civic society, and families.

Brief description of the initiative:

When there are floods, Dnieper and Sozh rivers' junction resembles a sea, which is observed for years. Young adventurers and seasoned scientists can do fieldwork on Belarusian and European animals at the Dnieper-Sozh interfluve. The rarest butterflies, insects, animals, and plants can only be found in a limited area—even by nature reserve standards, it is small. The Reserve is a crucial corridor for historical and biological migration in Europe. The Dnieper, Sozh, and Pripyat rivers' banks are the exact locations where Belarus' earliest settlers started to establish themselves. Archaeological sites and discoveries in these areas demonstrate that Loyew has been a significant trading port going back more than a century.

The initiative envisages re-working and upgrading of the educational product, the interactive instructional guide "Journey through the Belarusian Interfluve", with further training of the key stakeholders and promotion of the product. The guide itself will include:

1. 6 educational modules with the working titles "Dunes", "Abakumy", "Flood meadows", "Ferry", "Floodplain oak woodland", "Loyew town". Each module is dedicated to a specific topic featuring different aspects of the Belarusian Interfluve. The printed version of the guide will include images with QR codes for easy access to a website with further details about the respective sites.

2. Web-based information modules featuring the education guide. The materials will be posted on the website https://www.greencross.by, and easily accessible through QR codes.

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Through illustrations of numerous components and facets of life in the Belarusian interfluve, the guide reveals the diversity and intricate interconnections of various natural ecosystems, as well as human engagement with them in both the past and the present.

A number of training and promotional activities are planned for the key stakeholders to ensure practical usage of the guide at different levels.

Outputs and activities:

Output 1: Interactive educational guide promoting biodiversity conservation and ecotouristic potential of the Dnieper-Sozh interfluve is modified and prepared for publication, including an electronic version.	
Activities linked to Output 1:	
Activity 1. Preparation of the interactive educational guide "Journey through the Belarusian Interfluve" for publication	
1.1.	Editing, modification, composing of the guide sets, compiling the artistic and textual components, preparing for printing
1.2.	Monitoring over activities implementation
Activity 2. Production of the interactive educational guide "Journey through the Belarusian Interfluve"	
2.1.	Printing of the interactive educational guide "Journey through the Belarusian Interfluve"
Activity 3. Development of the web-based informational modules of the interactive educational guide "Journey through the Belarusian Interfluve"	
3.1.	Development of the web-based informational modules of the interactive educational guide "Journey through the Belarusian Interfluve
Output 2: Awareness on the educational and ecotouristic potential of the Dnieper-Sozh interfluve is spread by means of promoting the new educational material.	
Activities linked to Output 2:	
Activity 4. Promotion of the interactive educational guide "Journey through the Belarusian Interfluve"	
4.1.	Promotion of the educational guide

Language:

The printed materials will be prepared in Belarusian, as the guide was originally intended for distribution in rural schools in Belarus, where the teaching process is predominantly in Belarusian. In addition, this allows preserving the authentic flavor of the region.

Prospects:

A special interactive guide that is both a virtual and physical tour of the Belarusian Interfluve will help increase the number of schoolchildren, families, young people, and other interested stakeholders who are interested in ecology and nature. The guide provides information from a fresh, unexpected perspective, highlighting how intricately connected everything in the living world is. Users will be able to utilize the developed guide to exhibit their local biotopes and ecosystems to schoolchildren, the local community, as well as to visitors, and the general public.

Gender equality:

The activities involve consultations with the local experts and educational and cultural institutions including schools, libraries, museums, environmental centers, and other cultural and educational institutions of Belarus and equal participation of female and male staff will be endured. The consultations will be held in a participatory inclusive manner to ensure that the voices of women and men are heard.

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To promote the guide trainings and workshops will be held and all involved parties will be invited and the participation of female staff including teachers will be encouraged.

The initiative aims to expand the ability of women to use, develop and protect local natural resources and environmental goods and services by acquiring and sharing knowledge on local biodiversity and ecotourism in the Reserve at their workplace.

Partnerships and consultants:

The initiative will be implemented in partnership with the local NGO Green Cross Belarus, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection of the Republic of Belarus, and other civil society organizations. Experienced national consultants will be recruited to edit, modify and compose the guide modules; ensure the implementation of activities; create visual content; develop QR codes and webpages with additional information supporting the guide and develop and test practical methods of guide usage.

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