



Minsk from the observation site at the National Library. City is so very green

# Eco-friendly city-gardens soon to fully blossom countrywide

‘Green housing’ concept included in national statement ‘Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus via ‘Green’ Principles’

By Artem Voronovsky

The times of defying nature by senselessly draining marshes and changing the flow of rivers are a thing of the past, with environmental friendliness now a central part of social planning. We speak not only of protecting nature from industrial pollution but the introduction of ‘green’ principles. The aim of ‘eco’ and low-hydrocarbon measures is to reduce negative impact on the environment while enhancing competitiveness by reducing dependence on hydrocarbons (and their share in the final cost of a product). In fact, the concept of a ‘green’ city has already been developed in Belarus.

Of course, we aren’t alone in focusing on protecting the environment. “There’s a trend worldwide towards building eco-cities, using ‘clean’ construction and energy efficient technologies. We are creating new urban communities oriented towards healthy living and a responsible attitude towards the environment,” notes Katarina Podvorskaya, an



Walking near blooming jonquils lifts spirits

engineer at the Belarusian Ecology Research Centre’s Department for Ecological Certification and Auditing. “The most ambitious project is

Masdar City, in the United Arab Emirates, not far from Abu Dhabi. It is to be the first city in the world with a zero level of CO emissions, using only renewable energy sources,” she notes.

Eco-city construction projects are being gradually implemented in France, the UK and China, using state investments alongside private funding. Ms. Podvorskaya stresses that Russia is slightly sceptical, since it’s often difficult to make accurate calculations in such matters. Nevertheless, the first low-rise eco-city is being created in Russian Novoe Stupino. The satellite town will combine comfortable and affordable housing, an industrial park housing eco-enterprises and social and commercial infrastructure.

Belarus is funding state programmes of small town development, with eco-villages appearing via local initiatives. The Family Estates of Belarus Information and Uniting Centre has been set up, overseeing the eco-villages of Zvon-Gora (Vitebsk Region) and Rosy (Minsk Region) alongside over a dozen others being built.

Of course, these are not ‘green’

cities in the full meaning of the word admits Ms. Podvorskaya. She explains, “Initially, Belarus will be constructing new ‘eco’ buildings and reconstructing existing buildings, reducing energy consumption while enhancing the beauty of settlements. CO emissions into the atmosphere will be reduced, as will energy consumption in the construction sphere, while providing comfortable living conditions.”

Of course, energy efficient construction in Belarus isn’t a new topic. As part of a comprehensive state programme, energy efficient houses are being designed and built, using ever more advanced technical solutions, countrywide.

Our national statement entitled ‘Sustainable Development of the Republic of Belarus via ‘Green’ Principles’ — for the international Rio+20 Summit — aims to solve energy-efficient construction tasks while planting more trees and shrubs in urban areas. Of course, Belarus can’t become a country-garden at the wave of a magic wand. We envisage the creation of a model settlement, whose experience will be drawn upon. First, we need to calculate the costs involved and the repayment time, while deciding how best to fund the project.

“Naturally, state investments would be used, with a system of state purchase. Subsidies would be given and outside funding would be sought at the initial stage,” explains Ms. Podvorskaya. “Moreover, international mechanisms of ‘green’ financing are planned for the world economic system after Rio+20.”

Undoubtedly, to attract investors, attractive terms must be created. In particular, tax and loan preferences will be required. Without doubt, the building of eco-towns is both prestigious and beneficial to citizens.



Flower clock near Town Hall is one of the sights of the capital of Belarus