Stories to tell
Making an impact in Belarus and Moldova
Supporting Environmental Civil Society Organisations (SECTOR)

The SECTOR project supported environmental civil society organisations (CSOs) in Belarus and Moldova to become strong and equal partners for sustainable development.

SECTOR operated through the following interlinked components:

- Organisational development and viability
- Grants and platform building
- Capacity building and networking
- Green Steps toolkit

The framework programme “Strengthening Local Environmental Planning and Environmental Civil Society in Belarus and Moldova, 2012–2014” (STREAM) comprised two projects: SECTOR and Local Environmental Action Planning (LEAP).

Activities were carried out at local, national and regional level between 2012 and 2014, involving over 100 active CSOs and 14 municipalities.

The SECTOR programme is one of the finest programmes that we have had the opportunity to take part in. The interlinked components created a captivating learning environment... The programme also boosted our creativity and enthusiasm.
ORGANISATIONAL VIABILITY
The viability component helped CSOs to evaluate their organisational performance using a participatory approach that resulted in tailored organisational development plans.

The REC’s methodology for organisational self-assessment, the Organisational Viability Toolkit, was adapted for the specific context in Belarus and Moldova. Mentors for organisational change were trained. Grants were awarded to enable CSOs to implement priority elements of their newly drafted development plans.

GRANTS AND PLATFORM BUILDING
A total of EUR 1 million was distributed in the form of national, local and cooperative grants (57 in total) to support CSO initiatives and projects.

National grants were awarded to support public participation in decision making; awareness raising and media involvement; the promotion of clean technologies; and the provision of legal advice.

Activities were supported with local grants in the fields of education; organic agriculture; ecotourism; green consumption; river protection; and energy conservation. Grantees included environmental CSOs, trade unions, and church, women’s and youth organisations.

“As for my personal YEL! experience, I can firmly say it was a great three weeks. Much information was exchanged, and the practical activities made the whole programme a challenging experience. We had to ‘get out of our comfort zone’...”
CAPACITY BUILDING
Trainings and exchange programmes were organised to build capacities and strengthen networking:

- The three-week Young Environmental Leaders (YEL!) programme targeted CSO activists, giving them skills to become drivers of environmental change.
- A series of week-long master classes were given by local and international experts on advocacy, public participation, networking and green economy.
- A study visit was organised in Estonia.

GREEN STEPS
This multimedia toolkit aims to improve understanding among citizens of Belarus regarding sustainable lifestyles, environmental rights, and the changes that people can make in their everyday lives in order to contribute to sustainable development. The toolkit is aimed primarily at environmental activists, but will also be a valuable resource for educators, students and families.
Sustainability and Environmental Action Planning

Within the LEAP project, support was given to ten municipalities in Belarus and four in Moldova to improve local environmental planning practices. Based on a tested methodology, the REC provided trainings and study visits for beneficiaries, enabling them to work on common priorities and address environmental problems using a participatory policy development process.

Guided by local and national coordinators and the REC team, problems were assessed and priorities established. A LEAP was then developed to address the identified problems and provide a framework for potential investments. This “living” operational document contributes to better strategic environmental management, helping local communities to achieve compliance with national and EU standards. In the final stage, municipalities officially adopt the LEAP and begin to implement priority actions, with financing from the programme.

“Throughout the entire programme we got to know how it feels to communicate efficiently, have a healthy attitude towards work, receive constructive feedback, and be supported and trusted.”
The STREAM programme gave us a clear vision, a sense of belonging, knowledge, and the motivation needed to make things better. And above all, we got to know valuable people, which made us feel valuable too.