



EASTERN PARTNERSHIP  
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# ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE RESILIENCE IN THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

## State of play in 2022 and recommendations

Policy brief



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# Environmental and climate resilience in the Eastern Partnership : State of play in 2022 and recommendations

## Policy brief

### Author:

Nataliya Andrusevych, Resource and Analysis Center “Society and Environment”

The conclusions presented in the thematic brief are the sole responsibility of the "Ukrainian Prism" team and do not necessarily reflect the views of the EU and partners from the Eastern Partnership countries.

### Contributors by gathering data on their countries:

Sargis Harutyunyan (Media Diversity Institute, Armenia),  
Mariam Paposhvili (Georgian Institute for Strategic Studies),  
Natalia Stercul (Foreign Policy Association of Moldova),  
Nigar Islamli (Center for Economic and Social Development, Azerbaijan)

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Grants are available for CSOs from the Eastern Partnership and EU countries. Key areas of support are democracy and human rights, economic integration, environment and energy, contacts between people, social and labour policies.

## Introduction

The Joint Communication “Eastern Partnership Policy beyond 2020: Reinforcing Resilience – an Eastern Partnership that delivers for all”<sup>1</sup> (March 2020) identifies “environmental and climate resilience” as one of the five long-term objectives of the post-2020 EaP agenda.

The Joint Staff Working Document “Recovery, resilience and reform: post-2020 Eastern Partnership priorities”<sup>2</sup> (July 2021) provides further elaboration on the prioritization of green initiatives, emphasizing the need to mainstream environmental priorities into all sectors of the economy and public life. The principle of “Do no harm to environment and climate” should be integrated into economic growth strategies and taken into account when making investment decisions, with the overall objective of decoupling economic growth from resource use and environmental degradation, and progressing towards climate neutrality by 2050.

The Document identifies five areas of cooperation within the general environmental and climate resilience priority, namely: promoting benefits for people’s health and wellbeing; advancing circular economy, climate neutrality, and green growth; biodiversity and economy’s natural assets base; strengthening energy security and nuclear safety; accelerating the shift to sustainable and smart mobility. Besides, the identified Top Ten Targets for 2025 include investing in sustainable energy (250 000 households shall reduce energy consumption by at least 20%) and investing in environment and climate (additional 3 million people should gain access to safe water services quality monitored and improved in 300 cities).

The full-scale invasion of Ukraine by Russia and the ongoing war have significantly affected not only the region’s security but also its environment. The enormous damage caused to Ukraine’s environment, including the pollution of water, air, soil, destruction of ecosystems and biodiversity, has had a huge negative impact on ensuring the environmental resilience of the region in general. The issue of the region’s dependence on fossil fuels, particularly those imported from Russia, has become a cornerstone in ensuring energy independence and has given new impetus to decarbonization.

According to the data of the Ministry of Environmental Protection of Ukraine presented during COP27, approximately 33 million tons of CO<sub>2</sub> were released into the atmosphere as a result of Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine.<sup>3</sup>

## Methodology

This thematic brief is the second installment in a series of studies conducted by the team of the project “Civic EaP Tracker: Monitoring EaP targets, deliverables and related reforms”, dedicated to the involvement of the EU in transformations in the countries of the Eastern Partnership. The research group aims to examine various aspects of the situation in the countries and the reforms the EU actors in the target countries paid attention to, how they adapted their actions in this context to the new political, social, economic and security circumstances, as well as how consistent the countries were in implementing reforms in

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<sup>1</sup> [https://commission.europa.eu/publications/joint-communication-eastern-partnership-policy-beyond-2020-reinforcing-resilience-eastern\\_en](https://commission.europa.eu/publications/joint-communication-eastern-partnership-policy-beyond-2020-reinforcing-resilience-eastern_en)

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eastern-partnership/joint-staff-working-document-recovery-resilience-and-reform-post-2020-eastern\\_en?s=273](https://www.eeas.europa.eu/eastern-partnership/joint-staff-working-document-recovery-resilience-and-reform-post-2020-eastern_en?s=273)

<sup>3</sup> <https://ucn.org.ua/?p=8824>

response to Brussels' reactions. For this purpose, data were collected on statements by European officials, official conclusions regarding the implementation of policies by EU institutions, and changed or newly established support mechanisms (programs, projects and funds), the addressees of which were partner countries. Information was also collected on the laws and other legal acts adopted in the Eastern Partnership states and steps in their implementation related to the priorities of the "Joint Staff Working Document – Recovery, resilience and reform: post 2020 Eastern Partnership priorities". The analysis covered all the significant events of 2022 in this context.

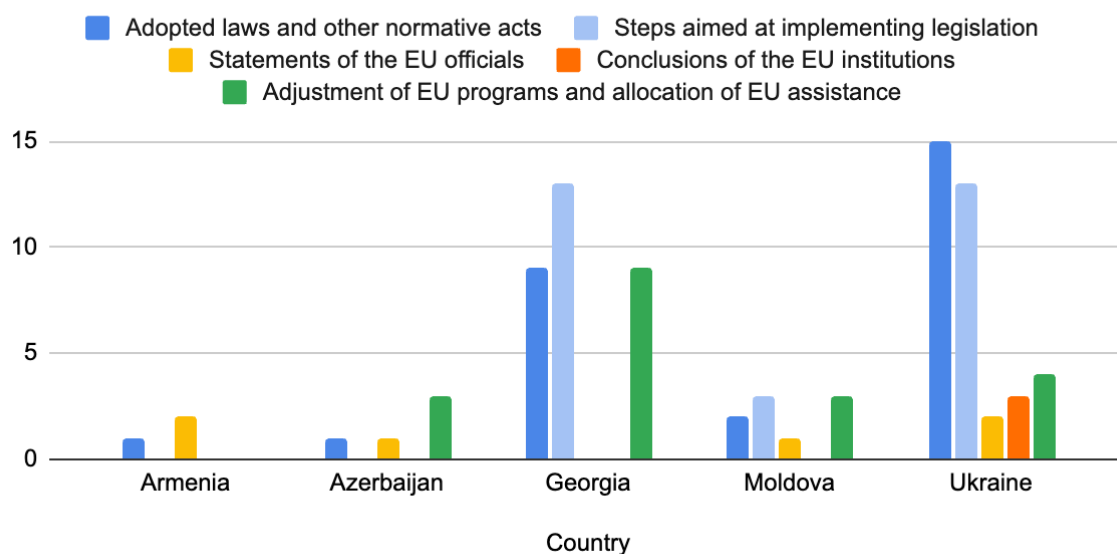
The study has a common framework for Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. Due to the de facto termination of the participation of Belarus (captured by a self-proclaimed authoritarian regime) as a state in the Eastern Partnership, the study will present a separate perspective of independent Belarusian civil society on the topic. This thematic brief is devoted to the processes in the area of priority “environmental and climate resilience”. Accordingly, all the analysed information about the actions of the EU and reforms in the partner countries was related to the issues of this chapter of the Joint Staff Working Document.

## Main trends in climate change, environmental protection, and energy fields

**The European Union has been a major partner for EaP countries in promoting discussion on climate and environmental issues. This includes providing financial support for reform implementation through various projects and providing access to EU funding instruments, as well as promoting legislative work in environment and energy sectors.**

### 1.1. Together for environmental and climate resilience. EaP Countries' Reforms and EU Actions in 2022: General Data

Data: Civic EaP Tracker project team based on the information from the European institutions' and EaP governments' websites



Joint regional projects aimed at implementing reforms in the environmental, climate change, and energy sectors have been implemented in all EaP countries. In particular, it is possible to single out such projects as EU4Environment (promoting green economy and greening national policies), EU4Climate (support in implementing Paris agreement and improving climate policies and legislation), EU4Energy (implement sustainable energy policies and foster co-operative energy sector development at the regional level), EU4Environment - Water Resources and Environmental Data (more sustainable use of water resources and improved use and availability of environmental data for decision-makers and citizens). Technical assistance projects are also currently being implemented in Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine, with the aim of approximating policies and legislation in sectors such as waste management, water resources, climate change, energy markets, energy efficiency etc.

Several financial instruments are now available for some EaP countries. For example, in 2022 Ukraine and Moldova joined the LIFE program for environment and climate, the European Commission has approved new Interreg programmes aimed at fostering cross-border and transnational cooperation, including for boosting green transition.

**In the context of energy resources, the task of reducing dependence on Russia and moving towards decarbonization in the EU has led to the formation of a new energy architecture in the region, with an increased focus on cooperation on critical raw materials.**

The increased role of energy independence from Russian fossil fuels and decarbonization of the energy sector in the EU led to the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding on a Strategic Partnership in the Field of Energy between the EU and Azerbaijan. This agreement includes a commitment to double the capacity of the Southern Gas Corridor to deliver at least 20 billion cubic metres to the EU annually by 2027, contributing to the diversification objectives in the REPowerEU Plan and helping Europe to end its dependency on Russian gas. In the long term, the memorandum focuses on energy efficiency and clean energy.

In the development of the Memorandum on strategic partnership between Ukraine and the EU in the raw materials sector, further cooperation steps were discussed and taken during the EU Raw Materials Week held in 2022.

**The European Union has given a united response to the crisis caused by the Russian aggression against Ukraine.**

Since Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine on February 24, 2022, the European Union remains in solidarity with Ukraine and provides it with all kinds of support, from political statements to practical initiatives. In the context of the environmental and climate resilience, it is necessary to highlight the response to the nuclear threat posed by the occupation of the Chernobyl and Zaporizhzhya NPPs and the need to ensure nuclear safety in the region, as well as actions to address the damage to the energy infrastructure caused by massive attacks during the fall and winter of 2022.

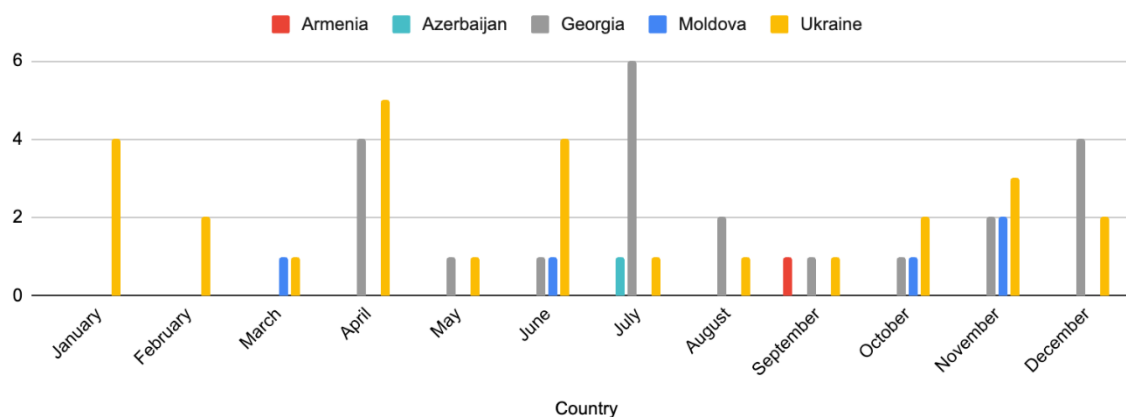
**Environmental, climate change, and energy issues were actively considered and promoted in the format of bilateral cooperation between the EaP countries and the EU. General policy reports and initiatives also included a green component and, in some cases, have been crucial for the reform of green sectors. For example, Ukraine's and Moldova's new status as EU candidate countries will give a significant impetus to the reforms in the so-called "green cluster".**

In 2022, interaction between the EU and the EaP states also took place within the framework of standard bilateral processes, namely: meetings of partnership committees, association bodies, summits, etc. Environmental and energy issues are usually on the agenda items discussed during such meetings. For instance, the EU-Armenia Partnership Committee met in April 2022, and discussed CEPA implementation in the fields of transport, energy, environment, and climate action. The EU and Armenia agreed to enhance collaboration on air safety, building on the Common Aviation Area Agreement signed in November 2021. On Energy, the EU and Armenia agreed to follow the implementation of the Armenian National Action Plan on nuclear safety, adopted as part of the EU-supported Stress test process.

**In 2022, environmental and climate resilience issues were not a high priority on the agenda of the Eastern Partnership countries. For some countries, it is due to the low level of prioritization of decarbonization issues on their national agendas, while for Ukraine and the countries of the region, it is also a matter of Russia's armed aggression.**

### 1.2. Together for environmental and climate resilience. EaP Countries' Reforms in 2022 (not including roll backs): Dynamics by Months

Data: Civic EaP Tracker project team based on the information from the European institutions' and EaP governments' websites



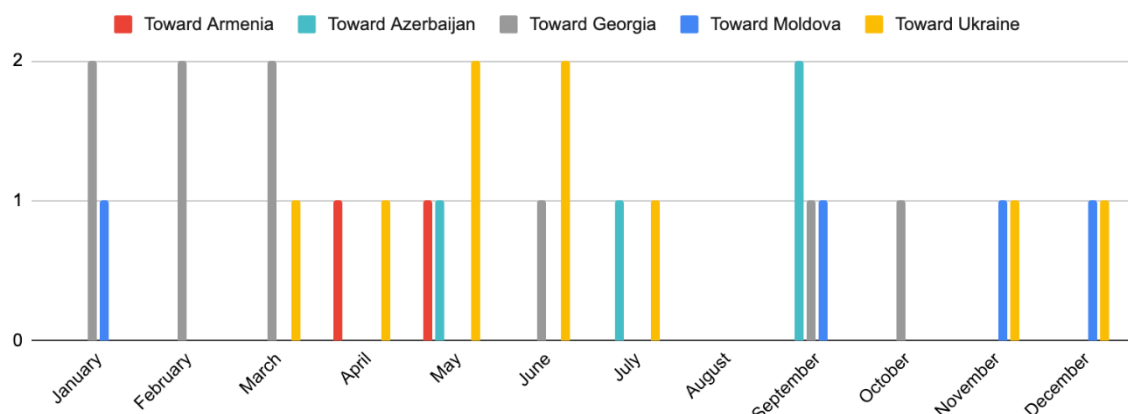
There are notable disparities among the Eastern Partnership countries regarding their level of political commitment to advancing the green transformation agenda. However, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine stand out as a distinct group, demonstrating a strong willingness to pursue green transformation. It is caused by several factors. As associated countries, Georgia, Moldova, and Ukraine have made significant legal and political commitments to implementing environmental acquis of the European Union and aligning their environmental policies with those of the EU. The Association agreements provide an extensive list of specific legal acts of the EU environmental acquis, which the associated countries must implement, ranging from horizontal environmental assessment and public participation to specific directives and regulations, such as water framework or industrial pollution control directives. Furthermore, these three associated countries are members of the Energy Community, which requires them to adhere to additional environmental commitments (such as developing the integrated national plans on energy and climate.) The remaining EaP countries are not members of the Energy Community. These examples demonstrate a significant level of political support for green transformation among the associated countries, based on robust national environmental policies and legal reforms.

Furthermore, Ukraine and Moldova obtaining candidate status, as well as the issue being on the agenda for Georgia, have provided additional momentum for these countries to accelerate their efforts towards achieving climate and environmental resilience.



### 1.3. Together for environmental and climate resilience. EU Actions Toward EaP Countries in 2022: Dynamics by Months

Data: Civic EaP Tracker project team based on the information from the European institutions' and EaP governments' websites



In 2022, the Government of Armenia took some steps towards improving health care but made less efforts towards green economy or energy security/nuclear safety. Currently, the country's green economy development strategy is being developed. The most urgent issues on the agenda include water resources, green economy, nuclear safety, and energy efficiency.

The main priority of the environmental policy of the Republic of Azerbaijan is to protect ecosystems to ensure that people live in an environmentally clean environment, to ensure sustainable development with the efficient use of natural resources, minimal harmful impact on the environment, restoration, and protection of its initial state. However, the country lacks legislative and practical measures to implement this priority.

In 2022, the Government of Georgia adopted some important changes, including reforming the legislation and activities supporting implementation process. These changes included adoption of the Law on Industrial Emissions, Law on the Creation and Management of the Multi-Purpose Territory of Samukhi (for protection of gazelle population), amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences to regulate emissions on roads and impose fines for violations. Several decisions were also made in the context of strategic planning in the environmental sphere, in particular, adoption of National Waste Strategy and Plan for 2022-2026, the Fourth National Environmental Action Programme of Georgia for 2022-2026. Some steps were also taken regarding the practical implementation of the adopted legislation and policies. From 2022 the Law on Environmental Liability is in force, additional funds were allocated for water monitoring, the National Red List was updated. There are also many draft documents and discussions on other issues that are important in the context of Georgia's legislative approximation to the EU.

In 2022, Moldova was active in aligning its legislation in the energy, climate, and environment domains to the EU acquis. Examples of progress towards integration into the EU in the field of energy, climate change and environment include the adoption of the Regulation on administration of the National Environmental Fund, launch of Roadmap on System Integration of Renewables, approval of National Development Strategy "European Moldova 2030", adoption of the Law on Atmospheric Air. The energy system of the Republic of Moldova is characterized by low levels of domestic natural resources and production and thus has a heavy reliance on energy imports.

Despite having high potential, the deployment of wind and solar energy in Moldova has been very slow. As of 2022, only 97.9 MW of renewable capacity for electricity generation was installed. The Energy Strategy of Moldova 2030 provides guidelines for national energy sector development and specific policy objectives. In the context of global efforts to transition to a green economy based on renewable energy, minding regional and national development directions and strategies, the Republic of Moldova has taken the responsibility to address climate change by reducing consumption through increasing energy efficiency and using renewable energy sources to replace traditional sources of pollutants.

Despite Russian aggression hindering Ukraine's focus on the environmental and climate direction, several important documents and decisions were adopted during 2022. The Parliament passed several laws, including the Law "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Development of Energy Storage Systems", "On Amendments to Certain Laws of Ukraine Regarding the Creation of Conditions for Implementation of Complex Thermal Modernization of Buildings", laws related to waste management, Pollutant Release and Transfer Register (PRTR), chemical safety and management of chemical products. The Water Strategy of Ukraine till 2050 and the Operational Plan for its implementation were adopted as a significant step in strategic planning for the environmental policy. The government of Ukraine also approved the Technical Regulations on Eco-design Requirements for Air Heaters, Coolers, High-Temperature Industrial Coolers, and Air Conditioners, the Concept of implementation of "smart networks" in Ukraine by 2035, the Strategy of the Integrated Automated Radiation Monitoring System for the period until 2024, the Concept of the Environmental Program for the Management of Radioactive Waste. The Ministry of Energy has approved the Technical Regulations for Energy Labelling of Energy-Consuming Products, which comply with the updated EU legislation requirements. Practical implementation steps were taken, including the approval of the procedure for functioning of the biomethane register, starting operation of the new water monitoring programs, and improving the procedure for maintaining the state water cadastre, etc.

Martial law in Ukraine has negatively impacted public participation using traditional mechanisms such as environmental impact assessment (EIA) and strategic environmental assessment (SEA). Limited access to a significant amount of environmental information, primarily geospatial and EIA, makes effective public participation and public control in this area impossible. Despite this, government bodies are making significant efforts to ensure the collection of environmental data and are gradually resuming publishing the data, through the open data portal. There are limitations and a non-systematic approach to ensuring public discussion in the preparation of draft government decisions and significant limitations in the transparency of the Verkhovna Rada's work.<sup>4</sup>

It is important to emphasize the synchronization of the electricity grids of Ukraine and Moldova with the Continental European Grid.

Regarding the implementation of reforms in countries throughout the year, there has been an upsurge in activity in Moldova, Georgia, and Ukraine since June 2022. Ukraine began 2022 with reforms in January, but we have seen a decrease in activity in February due to Russian aggression. The most productive months for Georgia were April, July, and December. Regarding Armenia and Azerbaijan, it is not possible to single out trends since very few reforms were carried out in the fields of environment, energy, and climate.

As for the statements and decisions of the EU itself, they are almost evenly distributed throughout the year, with the exception of August, when it is traditionally the holiday season in the EU.

## Conclusions and recommendations

Building environmental and climate resilience remains a challenge for all countries in the EaP region. More efforts are needed to integrate environmental and climate policies into national agendas and policy making.

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<sup>4</sup> <https://www.rac.org.ua/uploads/content/677/files/reportpublic-access-to-decision-making2023.pdf>

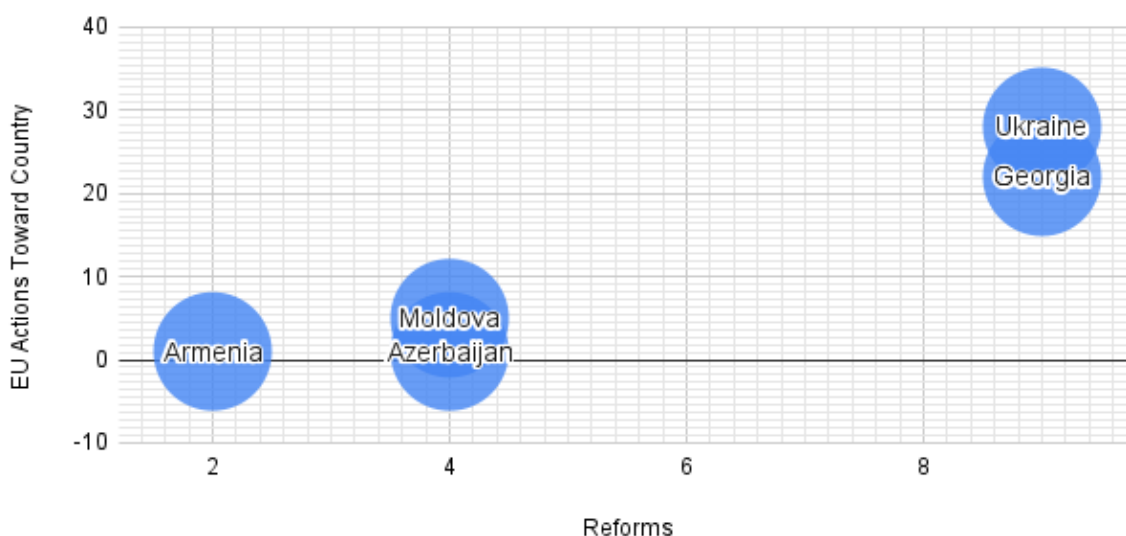


The granting of candidate status for EU membership to Ukraine and Moldova, as well as providing incentives for Georgia to accelerate its progress, has had a significant impact on strengthening efforts towards European integration in the areas of energy, environment, and climate change.

While a relationship between the decision and statements of the EU and the reform in the countries exists, it does not show an immediate effect.

#### 1.4. Together for environmental and climate resilience. EU Actions Toward EaP Countries and EaP Countries' Reforms in 2022

Data: Civic EaP Tracker project team based on the information from the European institutions' and EaP



**Considering the findings and trends of 2022, the following recommendations can be offered:**

**To further integrate the EGD issues into the EaP agenda and bilateral relations with the EaP countries.** The cross-cutting inclusion of the EGD issues on the EaP agenda will, on the one hand, help the EU to implement its global EGD dimension. On the other hand, it will enable EaP countries, especially those that do not have deep integration with the EU for a detailed overview of the reform issues to be covered by the EaP policy under the environment and climate resilience priority, as specified in the Joint Staff Working Document.

**Utilizing green agenda issues as a basis for cooperation within the EaP region.** Combined with the flagship initiatives on EGD-related topics in the regional and/or sub-regional format would help the EU reach its ambitious goal on climate neutrality.

**Open negotiations for green cluster chapters for Ukraine and Moldova as soon as possible.** Integrating the green agenda into security and trade cooperation areas for these two countries seems to be an important practical step to stimulate the green transition. This can also be scaled up to other EaP countries in the future.

**The green postwar reconstruction and recovery of Ukraine should create a new context for the EaP region's transformation.** Ukraine is likely to become a regional leader, so its recovery will certainly have a regional dimension in various fields (electricity grids, trade routes, etc.). Furthermore, the region needs to recover from Russian aggression towards climate resilient and sustainable economy.

**Build strong environmental governance as the cornerstone of the green transformation.** The principles of transparency, accountability, and public participation have come under pressure due to the consequences of Russian aggression. Although the pressure is evident in all EaP countries, it manifests in different forms in each of them. No stable green transformation process can be ensured without good environmental governance.

## Special Opinion From Belarusian Civil Society

*Dr. Maria Falaleeva, NGO EKAPRAEKT*

During the last years, Belarus did not take active part in the EaP processes, although implemented several policy initiatives aligned with the EaP priorities. The country started to adopt international practices and standards in biodiversity protection, environmental and climate policy, energy efficiency and mobility. The SDG agenda received formal support at the national level. Belarus prepared a National Plan for green economic development (2021), submitted NDC with the increased GHG emission reduction target from 28% to 35% to the 1990 level (2021), adopted the new National Program "Energy Efficiency" for 2020 -2025 (2021), suggested a revision of the National Sustainable Development Strategy up to 2035 (2020), revised the National Environmental Protection Law (2023) and implemented several other initiatives. International assistance projects and the need to comply with international commitments traditionally served as important drivers for the national environmental policy. The internal political situation, repressions of civil society and economic sanctions led to the suspension of the participation in the EaP (2021), withdrawal from the Aarhus convention (2022), suspension of key international projects such as EU4Climate, and overall reduction of international cooperation. The significant shift in the national priorities caused a rollback of the existing policies' implementation, developing new initiatives and adopting EU practices. The war in Ukraine further amplified the crisis.

Since 2020, Belarusian civil society undergoes unprecedented pressure: more than 1200 CSOs have been liquidated, including about 90 environmental CSOs. Many experts left Belarus, causing a drastic decrease in capacities inside the country. Activities within the established networks, including the Covenant of Mayors, can no longer be supported. In 2021-2022, several CSOs and experts re-established their work abroad and remained focused on Belarus and the EaP region. The Green Belarus initiative emerged in 2022 united more than 10 Belarusian CSOs and experts working on sustainability and the green economy. Moreover, the growing impacts of the EU environmental policies and EGD on the economy and trade in the region drives emerging interest in sustainability issues among Belarusian business.

The current situation significantly impeded cooperation of EU and Belarusian civil society on sustainability, climate and environmental policy. Although EU supports singular activities of the Belarusian CSO (administrative and relocation support, training and education) the systematic cooperation is currently ceased and need to be re-established to pave the way to future green transition of the country.

The following cooperation priorities will help to support the integration of Belarusian actors and expertise into the EU and EaP sustainability agenda, and to prevent loss of capacity in the country:

- Support independent expertise in the area of sustainable development and green economy provided by Belarusian CSOs and independent experts;
- Strengthen the importance of integrating sustainability and green economy agenda into all perspective political and economic strategies for Belarus, including mainstreaming green agenda into EU support programs for democratic transitions;
- Support analytical research and actions developing and discussing perspective policy documents and institutional structures, streamlining Belarusian national

policies with the EU sustainability agenda and EGD (discussion papers on the national climate policy, carbon market, renewable energy policies, sustainable mobility, education for sustainable development and others);

- Support integration of Belarusian CSOs and expertise into the regional processes, discussions, projects and networks within EaP to strengthen the European regional cohesion and shape the future of the EaP region. Include independent Belarusian experts as national representatives in the EaP cooperation projects such as EU4Climate, EU4Environment and forthcoming initiatives;
- Considering limited opportunities for practical actions in the country, to support capacity building, cooperation, education and information initiatives on sustainability for various stakeholder groups – professionals, business, public, university and youth.

# Environmental and climate resilience in the Eastern Partnership : State of play in 2022 and recommendations

## Policy brief

A think tank consortium led by **Ukrainian Prism** with the support of the **Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum** is launching a set of thematic expert debates in Brussels, devoted to five key priorities of the EaP. The project team is involved in the monitoring of the EaP policy implementation in each of the partner states. We look into the performance of each partner country along with the key priorities and invite you to the discussions about the future shape of the region and EU policy towards it.

This is the first policy brief assessing the state of play in each of the five EaP states. A special view from Belarusian civil society is included as a separate opinion on the topic. For this discussion, we invite experts from all participants of the Eastern Partnership policy and decision-makers from European institutions.



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[www.prismua.org](http://www.prismua.org)



[info@prismua.org](mailto:info@prismua.org)