

Belarus: World Bank Announces New Country Assistance Strategy and Additional Support To Social Infrastructure Retrofitting

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WASHINGTON, December 4, 2007 — The World Bank's Board of Executive Directors discussed the new Country Assistance Strategy (CAS) for Belarus today for the period of 2008-2011. The new CAS supporting the country's development agenda was prepared in consultations with government of Belarus and representatives of civil society organizations, the private sector, and international organizations.

The World Bank expects to provide about US\$100 million a year in long-term loans to support the country in addressing global environment and energy challenges, enhancing the competitiveness of its economy to assure rising incomes, and protecting the welfare of the most vulnerable over the next four years.

"Perhaps more important than the financial resources that the Bank provides, is its role as a leading external source of economic and social analysis and a facilitator in discussing policy choices within the country. We look forward to continuing this very positive engagement under the Bank's new Country Assistance Strategy", said **Paul Bermingham, World Bank Country Director for Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova.**

In addition to discussing the CAS, the Board of Directors approved additional financing in amount of US\$15 million for the Social Infrastructure Retrofitting Project. The loan will be used to improve functional and health environments of social sector facilities across Belarus, with particular emphasis on improving energy efficiency.

The initial IBRD loan for US\$22.6 million for the Social Infrastructure Retrofit Project was approved in 2001. The project has already yielded positive results. About 600 schools, kindergartens, hospitals, and outpatient clinics were renovated under the loan in all country regions, resulting in a 20-25 percent reduction in energy consumption. The additional financing will be used to finance similar improvements as in the original project: window replacement; wall and roof insulation; heat substation and boiler replacement; and energy efficient lighting in about 140 schools and hospitals across Belarus.

"The Government of Belarus has identified three priority areas where World Bank financial support is needed including improvement of energy efficiency, ensuring quality of water and reliability of water supply systems, and environmental conservation and waste processing. The approved loan will contribute to the government's efforts to improve the quality and cost-effectiveness of services for Belarus' citizens," said **Paul Bermingham.** *"We are also discussing possible operations in water and energy sectors, which could be supported by the World Bank",* he added.

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For more information on the World Bank's work in Belarus, please visit: <http://go.worldbank.org/AGC8K8VPA0>