Combined Project Information Documents / Integrated Safeguards Datasheet (PID/ISDS)

Appraisal Stage | Date Prepared/Updated: 14-Oct-2019 | Report No: PIDISDSA26007

Public Disclosure Authorized

BASIC INFORMATION

A. Basic Project Data

Country	Project ID	Project Name	Parent Project ID (if any)
Belarus	P167992	Belarus Higher Education Modernization Project	
Region	**Estimated Appraisal Date**	**Estimated Board Date**	**Practice Area (Lead)**
EUROPE AND CENTRAL ASIA	29-Jul-2019	02-Jul-2020	Education
Financing Instrument	**Borrower(s)**	**Implementing Agency**	
Investment Project Financing	Republic of Belarus	Ministry of Education	

Proposed Development Objective(s)

The Project Development Objectives (PDO) are to improve the teaching and learning environment and the information on labor market relevance of higher education.

Components

Modernization of the teaching and learning environment
Innovations in teaching and learning
Quality assurance
Project management

PROJECT FINANCING DATA (US$, Millions)

SUMMARY

Total Project Cost	109.01
Total Financing	109.01
of which IBRD/IDA	109.01
Financing Gap	0.00

DETAILS

World Bank Group Financing

International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (IBRD)	109.01

Environmental Assessment Category

B-Partial Assessment

Decision

The review did authorize the team to appraise and negotiate

B. Introduction and Context

Country Context

1. **Over the past three decades, Belarus managed to attain high rates of economic growth accompanied by significant reductions in poverty and declining inequality.** After the dissolution of the Soviet Union, Belarus pursued a strategy of only gradually opening its economy to the private sector and limited reforms of the state-owned enterprise (SOE) sector. Growth rates in real gross domestic product (GDP) were impressive, averaging about 6.3 percent per year during 1996–2000 and about 8.3 percent per year during 2001–08 (World Bank, 2018a). The poverty headcount[1] fell from 32 percent to less than 1 percent between 2003 and 2014, the largest drop in the entire Europe and Central Asia (ECA) region during this period. A reduction in inequality, which remains at low levels compared to other countries from the region, complemented the reduction in poverty. Belarus performed well also in other dimensions of human development. In the 2016 Human Development Index (HDI), which covers life expectancy, education, and gross national income (GNI) per capita, it ranked 52nd, higher than it would have been predicted based on the country's per capita income. Certain challenges (for example, related to labor market performance) notwithstanding, disparities by gender are low in Belarus and show steady improvement (World Bank, 2018a; 2018b). In the latest Social Institutions and Gender Index of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), Belarus ranked 12th among the 160 countries covered.

2. **Nonetheless, changing conditions have slowed economic growth and put further human development in Belarus at risk.** Capital investment, foreign borrowing, the import of subsidized fuel, and the Russian Federation's economic development were key factors behind Belarus' impressive growth but ceased to have a strong positive impact in recent years. Investment decisions not geared toward competitiveness and periods where public expenditure and wages grew faster than productivity have put an additional strain on economic development. Following the 2008 financial crisis, which led to lower export demand and challenges with access to foreign financing, the Belarusian economy stagnated in 2009 (World Bank, 2018a). Despite a short rebound during 2010–11, economic growth has slowed significantly since then, averaging 3 percent during 2009–14 (World Bank, 2018b). Spurred by falling oil prices, Belarus fell into recession in 2015–16, even though a modest recovery can be observed for 2017. The economic downturn has been accompanied by stagnation in real income growth and an increase in the vulnerability of households. The poverty headcount[2] increased by 2 percentage points in 2015 and by another percentage point in 2016 (World Bank, 2018a). This development was even more pronounced in rural areas, which reversed a trend of spatial convergence in living standards witnessed during 2003–14 (World Bank, 2018b). Subjective measures of well-being were affected as well. In the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development's (EBRD) Life in

[1] Measured based on the purchasing power parity (PPP) USD 5/day threshold.
[2] Measured based on the PPP USD 10/day threshold.

Transition Survey (LiTS), the share of adults who reported that they are satisfied with life decreased from 66 percent in 2006 to 50 percent in 2010 and to 41 percent in 2016, the largest decrease among all countries from the ECA region. At least in the near future, economic growth is projected to remain at its current rate of around 2 percent, leading to the risk of Belarus entering a low growth trajectory (World Bank, 2018a).

3. **There are, however, several advantageous conditions now that can help Belarus address its development priorities.** These include, for example, growth in the IT sector, and the advantages of a geographical position between East and West. In addition, Belarus can make use of the huge development potential of its private sector and its highly educated work force. Nevertheless, continuing reforms and targeted policies are needed to foster the structural recovery of the Belarusian economy, its integration in global value chains and a shift to export-driven growth, which are required for entering a path of strong economic growth and improvements in living conditions.

4. **For Belarus to return to sustainable economic development that reduces further poverty and increases shared prosperity, a new growth model is required.** The World Bank's Systematic Country Diagnostic (SCD) identifies six priorities to pursue the twin goals of poverty reduction and shared prosperity, including unleashing private sector growth potential and maintaining Belarus' human capital edge. Important levers to achieve Belarus' development priorities are addressed by various government programs and have been taken up in the Country Partnership Framework (CPF). The CPF for the fiscal year (FY) 2018–22 period has as its main objective to foster sustainable and inclusive growth and to improve living standards (World Bank, 2018b). The CPF revolves around the main areas of: (a) creating opportunities for private sector growth and for more efficient public investment; (b) maintaining the country's human capital edge; and (c) improving the contribution of infrastructure to climate change management, economic growth, and human development. These three areas are complemented by the cross-cutting theme of promoting the use of data and access to information in public decision making to increase the transparency of information, foster the use of impact data and promote well-informed decision making by private and public sector actors based on a public-private dialogue. In this new growth model, maintaining Belarus' human capital edge is one of the main pillars to achieve a "competitive, inclusive, and dynamic Belarus" (World Bank, 2018a, p.10).

5. **Further developing human capital is crucial in Belarus as jobs are increasingly about cognitive and interpersonal tasks, while manual and routine tasks are declining.** Technological change is driving a wedge in product and labor markets by providing immense opportunities for some firms and workers while leaving others behind. The "future of work," in which technology takes over tasks once performed by humans, is already a reality in Belarus and elsewhere (Ridao-Cano and Bodewig, 2018). Technological change, offshoring and the skills upgrading of the workforce are big drivers of the changes in the task content of jobs (Acemoglu and Autor, 2011). While technological change may make certain types of jobs obsolete (Frey and Osborne, 2017), it has not necessarily led to less demand for work in aggregate (Autor, 2015; Graetz and Michaels, 2018). Jobs today are increasingly intensive in skills that complement technology (advanced cognitive and social-emotional skills). Workers well equipped with these skills (high-skill workers) are benefiting from these changes, while low-skill workers are losing the most— the employment share of (mostly high-skill) workers in non-routine cognitive jobs is increasing while the share of (mostly low-skill) workers in manual jobs is declining (Acemoglu and Restrepo, 2019).

Sectoral and Institutional Context

6. **Belarus' new growth model requires a modern tertiary education system and the Belarus Higher Education Modernization Project is a crucial step towards achieving this.** Belarus needs a tertiary education system where relevance, interconnectedness and attractiveness constitute its three main intertwined features. In the wake of the transition toward knowledge-based societies where high-skill workers benefit the most from technological change, the importance of higher education to economic and societal development has significantly increased in many countries throughout the world. Students are more and more dependent on acquiring the right sets of skills for living meaningful and productive lives, and societies and their economies can benefit greatly from highly-skilled graduates and the knowledge and technologies generated by higher education institutions (HEIs). As a result, the ability to ensure that all stakeholders are provided with offers that suit their needs in an easily accessible way has become an indispensable feature of modern tertiary education systems. In the case of students, important strategies to achieve this consist of targeted adaptations of the educational content and the forms of provision that take into account the diversifying needs and conditions under which they pursue their studies and that focus on the actual outcomes of the learning process. In the case of companies, key strategies include gearing HEIs' research and development activities more strongly toward the needs of the (regional) economy and establishing channels for an actual transfer of knowledge and technologies. Cutting across the different facets of relevance, systematic information gathering on the relation between higher education systems and their environment has evolved into an important strategic instrument supporting policy makers and institutional managers.

7. **In Belarus, important foundations for a modern, relevant tertiary education system are in place.** The system has a broad geographical coverage, with 23 of the 51 HEIs located in the main regional centers throughout Belarus. High enrolment rates have led to a large pool of students and comparatively high levels of education within the population. Building on universal school education at the pre-tertiary education level, Belarus has reached a tertiary education gross enrolment ratio of 87.0 percent in 2016, 76.3 percent for males and 98.4 percent for females.[3] The overall ratio exceeds the average for the Central and Eastern Europe region of 80.0 percent. As a result, Belarus reaches a high share of tertiary education graduates within the population, which amounted to 41 percent among the 25-34-year-olds in 2016. In this respect, Belarus reaches similar shares as Estonia (41 percent) and Latvia (42 percent) as well as the EU8 countries (40 percent). In absolute terms, however, demographic developments have led to a decrease in student numbers. Whereas 371,755 students were enrolled in Belarusian HEIs in 2014/15, this number dropped to 299,247 in 2017/18 (National Statistical Committee, 2018a). Even though a recent rebound in fertility rates will lead to a transitory interruption of this development in the medium term, the trend of demographic decline will prevail in the long run and affect the number of graduates entering the Belarusian labor market.

8. **Efforts to increase and sustain Belarus' tertiary education system relevance have induced an intensification of the external relations of HEIs and have made the interconnectedness of modern tertiary education systems one of their crucial features.** This comprises connections between HEIs and their direct environment as a first dimension. Representatives of civil society and the economy have become involved in the activities of HEIs in several ways. They support the governance of institutions (for instance, via their representation on governance boards), but have also become involved in the teaching and learning process, for example, via participating in the curriculum development process and providing internships to students. The international relations of tertiary education systems and their institutions constitute a second dimension. These have been

[3] UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) data.

fostered to promote the flow of talent and ideas and to access valuable knowledge and ideas for enhancing the quality of tertiary education, from good practices of institutional governance to innovative forms of higher education provision. Key strategies to support these connections include promoting the compatibility and transparency of higher education systems (which facilitates the mobility of students and academics) as well as developing strategic inter-institutional relations across national borders.

9. **As a precondition for relevance and interconnectedness, the attractiveness of HEIs for students, academics and companies, both domestic and foreign, has become a third key feature of tertiary education systems fit to assume a proactive role in societies of the 21st century.** With regard to students, modern facilities as well as guidance and counselling services addressing their well-being, advancement and future careers can complement relevant and accessible programs as factors contributing to a meaningful and successful higher education experience. Additional levers for increasing HEIs' attractiveness relate to foreign students, for whom programs and support services offered in different languages, the ease of having study periods abroad recognized at home, dedicated welcoming structures and an atmosphere of openness can provide important arguments for the choice of a specific study destination. With regard to academics, working conditions conducive to high-quality research and career advancement constitute the main factor behind the attractiveness of institutions. The up-to-date research and innovation infrastructures required in this respect furthermore contribute to the attractiveness of HEIs for companies.

10. **Suitable quality assurance processes framing the core activities of HEIs are an additional cornerstone of modern tertiary education systems.** In an ever faster changing world, constant efforts to ensure the relevance and quality of higher education are needed, especially with regard to its alignment with labor market needs. This requires a culture within higher education systems and their institutions that places emphasis on continuous quality enhancement. A key strategy developed to bring about this culture consists in establishing a well-aligned system of quality assurance processes on the system and institutional level and promoting that institutions take ownership, while being monitored and supported in their efforts by an independent arbitrator.

11. **All of these features lie at the heart of the pan-European Bologna Process, which, therefore, provides valuable strategies and instruments for modernizing tertiary education systems.** Initiated in 1999 as a special form of inter-governmental cooperation, the Bologna Process aims at creating a common European Higher Education Area revolving around the mobility of students and academics and the employability of graduates. Over the course of its implementation, various tools have been devised in close cooperation among representatives from the participating countries to achieve that objective. This includes: novel approaches to the design of curricula and to teaching and learning, which aim at putting learners and their needs at the center of the higher education process; a common degree structure and transparency tools, which promote the compatibility of higher education systems and, thereby, the mobility of students; various programs supporting the exchange of ideas and people; and a framework and guidelines for quality assurance on the system and the institutional level, which aim at promoting a culture of continuous quality enhancement throughout higher education systems.

12. **A major step toward modernization was made with Belarus' accession to the Bologna Process in 2015.** This step implies important developments such as the introduction of the Bachelor's–Master's system, the implementation of a student-centered approach to teaching and learning and a learning outcomes framework, and the adoption of transparency tools such as the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation

System (ECTS), the Diploma Supplement and the National Qualifications Framework (NQF) on the agendas of policy makers and HEIs. In addition, matters of student and staff mobility as well as quality assurance are receiving increased attention. At the same time, great expectations vis-à-vis the implementation of the Bologna Process requirements were created among representatives of the Belarusian higher education sector and on the side of the European higher education community.

13. **However, it cannot be taken for granted that the accession to the Bologna Process leads automatically to a successful implementation of its requirements.** On the contrary, the required transformation comprises a set of far-reaching and challenging changes, which necessitate coordinated efforts and cooperation among various actors from within and outside of the country. With regard to the Bachelor's–Master's degree structure, for instance, first legislative changes were introduced, but these mark only the beginning of the required transformation, as the mere numbers reveal: In 2017/18, around 284,300 students were enrolled at the undergraduate level, but only around 14,900 in Master's degree programs. The implementation of transparency instruments is at a similar stage. While a higher education section of the NQF was drafted, the other sections are still under development. First changes to the design of programs were made as well in the form of a greater orientation toward the outcomes of the higher education process and the required workload for students, but these have not led to a fully-fledged introduction of a learning outcomes framework and the ECTS so far.

14. **Targeted efforts are also needed to promote the relevance of higher education in Belarus, especially with a view to the needs of the labor market.** Despite the quantitative expansion of the sector, higher education still yields significant benefits for graduates, which suggests that they are in high demand. During the 2011–15 period, the average increase in wages (with basic education or lower as the reference group) amounted to 44.1 percent for tertiary education, compared to 8.3 percent for secondary general education, 21.5 percent for secondary specialized education, and 13.9 percent for education at vocational schools (Belarus PER). State and, in particular, private enterprises frequently report a lack of qualified graduates (World Bank, 2018a). In the 2013 Business Environment and Enterprise Performance Survey (BEEPS) conducted by the International Finance Corporation (IFC), for instance, more than 20 percent of employers reported skills gaps as a key constraint for their business (World Bank, 2018b). The lack of qualified candidates seems to be particularly pronounced in potential growth areas such as computer sciences, suggesting that Belarus faces the challenge well known in other countries of a lack of graduates in the fields of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This challenge is acknowledged by the Belarusian government that launched in 2017 a new project "University 3.0". The "University 3.0" model promotes a stronger relationship between the science and the economy sector, which aims at developing entrepreneurial universities, including via support for joint facilities and entrepreneurship education for students.

15. **Innovative approaches to teaching and learning and a greater flexibility of provision could remedy parts of the mismatches between higher education and the labor market but are not sufficiently developed in Belarus so far.** New forms of teaching and learning and updated educational content are key for providing students with the skills required in 21st century societies and economies. The same holds true for more flexible forms of provision, which can increase the accessibility and efficiency of higher education. Students in Belarus are to some extent able to choose forms of provision that suit their particular circumstances in the form of daytime, evening and correspondence education, complemented by distance education approaches and first steps toward the use of new technical means. However, the potential of new information and communication technologies (ICT) in the context of higher education provision remains insufficiently used –

even though a new Government concept on the development of technology-enhanced teaching and learning in the Republic of Belarus until 2025 has provided fresh impetus in this area. Potential for improvement exists also with regard to program design, especially in relation to the Bologna Process instruments directed at putting the learner at the center of the higher education process such as a learning outcomes framework.

16. **In addition, students – and the labor market – would benefit from sound information on the outcomes of different higher education programs.** Currently, there is no systematic monitoring of the career trajectories and labor market success of graduates. While some data are available for those under the job placement system, information on those who studied on a fee-paying basis is scarce. The collection of more comprehensive data would not only allow students to make informed study decisions that take into account the differences in outcomes among programs but could also inform higher education policies directed at the labor market relevance of higher education. When it comes to policy making, scope for improvement remains with regard to taking up data for steering purposes, which could be achieved in Belarus in connection with the ongoing development of an Education Management Information System (EMIS) at the pre-tertiary education level, supported by the World Bank.

17. **Belarusian HEIs furthermore need to become more attractive partners for companies with regard to research and development activities.** Sporadic exchanges of HEIs with the economy via certain institutional sub-units notwithstanding, cooperation between the two sectors does not take place on a broader scale at the moment. Even though there are efforts on the side of the Government to foster these ties via the establishment of entrepreneurial universities under the "Universities 3.0" concept, transfer channels, including adequate innovation infrastructures, and the entrepreneurial engagement of students and academics remain insufficiently developed.

18. **The increase in relevance and the successful implementation of important transformations of the sector will depend, among others, on an intensification of the outward relations of the Belarusian tertiary education system and its institutions.** At the moment, systematic exchanges between HEIs and employers are mostly restricted to interactions related to the work placement scheme. Other forms of cooperation such as the involvement of companies in institutional governance and program and curriculum design do not exist on a broader scale. However, a better interconnectedness of Belarusian higher education in this direction would be relevant for its alignment with the labour market and within the context of Belarus' ongoing transition process toward the Bologna Process degree structure including the Bachelor's and Master's degree. Room for improvement exists also with regard to international relations. Here, implementing fully the Bologna Process instruments (in particular, the NQF, the ECTS and the Diploma Supplement) would increase the compatibility and transparency required for an increase in the flow of students. This could furthermore be promoted via institutional strategies that pay greater attention to internationalization and strategic partnerships and double degree programs involving Belarusian and foreign HEIs as well as via more comprehensive government support programs and an adequate design of legislative framework conditions. Improved financial and non-financial support would be needed for increasing the mobility of academics as well. These efforts to promote internationalization would benefit from a stronger integration of Belarusian higher education into international contexts more generally, including the participation in major initiatives on the European level, closer exchanges with international experts, and the involvement in peer learning mechanisms, especially those related to the implementation of the Bologna Process requirements.

19. **An ongoing modernization process will furthermore require that Belarus invests in the functionality and**

attractiveness of its tertiary education sector. Many teaching and learning facilities are outdated, and lack of modern research infrastructure does not only hamper research and development but also negatively impacts on the quality of higher education and training. Enhancing the guidance and support structures for students and establishing welcoming structures and a supportive atmosphere for international students would greatly enhance the attractiveness of Belarus as a study destination. Physical facilities that are up-to-date and enable high-quality learning experiences would add to this. Adaptations of the physical infrastructures would also increase the attractiveness of HEIs for domestic and foreign academics and post-graduate students, in particular, an upgrading of laboratories, equipment and machinery. This would at the same time increase HEIs' attractiveness for companies, which would be particularly relevant with regard to the STEM fields, since these relate to sectors of the Belarusian economy with a high growth potential.

20. **Finally, a comprehensive quality assurance system in line with modern standards requires particular attention in Belarus.** Currently, quality assurance on the system level is implemented under the aegis of the Department of Education Quality Control of the Ministry of Education with a focus on inputs to the higher education process. On the institutional level, many HEIs have opted for ISO 9001 certification, a system that has no direct relation to the higher education sector. Thus, an overhaul is needed for Belarus to establish an adequate higher education quality assurance system. Relevant facets of such a change can be derived from the Bologna Process requirements and include the establishment of an independent quality assurance agency on the system level that complies with the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG) and is well connected within the European quality assurance community. Within institutions, quality assurance and enhancement need to be viewed more as a genuine contribution to the overall mission of HEIs, and less as a bureaucratic exercise. Key preconditions for initiating the required transition process are a suitable legal and institutional framework as well as sufficient capacities within HEIs. Once such an updated quality assurance system has been put in place, it will provide important information on the quality of provision for state actors, the private sector, current and prospective students and families alike.

C. Proposed Development Objective(s)

Development Objective(s) (From PAD)

21. The DO is to improve the teaching and learning environment and information on the labor market relevance of higher education.

Key Results

22. The Project's achievement of the PDO will be measured via the following indicators:
    - Number of higher education institutions with improved research facilities
    - Percentage of Bachelor's and Master's programs with established learning outcomes
    - A national system to regularly trace higher education graduates (Graduate Tracer Study – GTS) is established
    - The newly established Belarus quality assurance agency is a full member of the European Association for Quality Assurance in Higher Education (ENQA)[4]

[4] http://www.enqa.eu/. "As indicated in the ENQA statutes approved by the General Assembly in 2015, it is a condition of membership that all members of ENQA undergo an external review at least once every five years. Before being accepted or being

D. Project Description

Component 1: Modernization of the teaching and learning environment *(estimated cost: $97 million equivalent)*

23. The objective of this component is to enhance the environment for teaching and learning as well as that for research and innovation. Through this component, the Project will support the modernization and the increase in relevance and attractiveness of the Belarusian tertiary education system for students, academics, and companies. This comprises physical infrastructures and equipment as well as curriculum reform at the tertiary level. The quality and efficiency of tertiary education are inextricably linked to quality-enhancing inputs such as modern facilities, appropriate information technology and laboratory equipment, and qualified staff.[5] In addition to general aspects of teaching and learning environments, accessibility of tertiary education facilities to staff and students with disabilities and compliance with environmental standards need to be ensured.

24. To promote these important priorities which the World Bank concurred with (and with a view to activities to be financed under subcomponents 1.1 and 1.2), the MoE has collected related proposals, established a set of criteria and subsequently pre-selected appropriate project infrastructure and investment activities. Proposals from universities were pre-selected focusing on:

    (i) *Regional higher education institutions*, as they have an important role to play in creating and fostering a dynamic social and economic environment;

    (ii) *Higher education institutions aspiring to become entrepreneurial universities* ("Universities 3.0"). The project would support the creation of learning spaces that are conducive to bolster entrepreneurial culture (i.e. through the creation of incubators, innovation hubs, etc.); and

    (iii) *Academic and methodological associations (AMAs)* - this criterion is chosen in connection with the fact that educational and methodological associations in the field of specialized tertiary education (education areas and tertiary education majors) operate on the basis of leading HEIs in their respective fields and supervise the design of curricula for various tertiary education programs, as well as development of new programs, related to the field of specialization. This allows considering the aforementioned HEIs as research and methodology centers that define conceptual trends in the development of the tertiary education system within the relevant field of education. As part of the project, these HEIs will be the main educational institutions to provide others with access to unique academic and research equipment and provide higher-quality consolidation of professional competencies in students.

    (iv) *Improving energy efficiency* of university premises and infrastructure.

re-confirmed as a member, an applicant agency must satisfy to the Board that it meets the criteria for membership: the European Standards and Guidelines for Quality Assurance in the European Higher Education Area (ESG)."

[5] See Ahmed et al., 2018; Beichner, 2008; Brooks, 2011; Hill and Epps, 2010; Lizzio, Wilson and Simons, 2002; Mitchell, White and Pospisil, 2010; Perks, 2013; Vermeulen and Schmidt, 2008; Walker, Brooks and Baepler, 2011.

Subcomponent 1.1: Enabling high quality practical training

25. The skill development of students depends on the education content, the teaching and learning environment, and the forms of provision. Especially with regard to skills that are relevant within 21st century societies and economies, promoting the right combination of these elements has gained in importance. Against this backdrop, the objective of this subcomponent is to: (i) set up or modernize laboratory and research facilities at HEIs; (ii) outfit classrooms with modern educational equipment and (iii) set up or modernize centers for shared use of unique educational and scientific equipment. The intent of establishing such labs and centers is to continue the shift toward practice-based skills training rather than theoretical knowledge, and more efficient and shorter training, in order to make tertiary education more labor-market relevant. This subcomponent will make an important contribution to the new Bachelor's/Master's system by providing students with research experience and opportunities for practical application of learning.

26. The Bank-financed activities under this subcomponent will focus primarily on investments in modernized research infrastructure. However, these investments will be complemented by appropriate training in how to use the new equipment in the educational process, which will be provided to the teachers through the existing training system in the Republic of Belarus paid for by the Borrower's counterpart funds. The institutional responsibility for implementing these activities will rest with the RIVSh. Separate tenders will be launched for similar groups of equipment. The tenders will include the delivery, installation, and calibration of the equipment and will be separated into lots by year of delivery to coincide with the completion of the rehabilitation activities in each of the HEIs.

27. Modernization of laboratories and research facilities at HEIs will also support activities related to energy efficiency, renewable energy and low-carbon technologies e.g.: establishment of a "smart" house training and research center for energy saving and alternative energy studies, application and research; ecological security intersectoral research laboratory (the lab will be furnish with a mobile fuel consumption meter, a mobile exhaust gas meter, a mobile gas analyzer, a mobile dispersed particle content meter, environment temperature and humidity gauges); research laboratory of innovative building materials and energy efficient technologies in construction; multiple-access center for research of engines, energy machines, fuels and various energy sources; procurement of e-cars and/or hybrid cars for learning proposes, etc. An important activity under this subcomponent will be the provision of infrastructure for the establishment of a multi-disciplinary STEM research center at BSU. This center will enable practice-related graduate training in different and innovative STEM areas and explicitly respond to industry demands. The Center will include about 30 educational laboratories covering key areas of interdisciplinary studies at the interface of biology, chemistry, physics and informatics. The proposed Center will provide trainings and develop programs in areas not yet represented at Belarusian universities, namely bioengineering, nano-chemistry, synthetic and system biology, biotechnology, pharmacology, bioinformatics, biomechanics, etc. The development of these programs responds to the needs of the labor market, including in the medical and pharmaceutical area. The amount of investment for the Center is about EUR 31 million including the renovation and equipment of the building.

28. Subcomponent 1.1. will finance the creation and modernization of research laboratories at Belarusian universities through procuring goods (research equipment). Direct output of these activities will be an increased innovative capacity of universities in learning and research.

Subcomponent 1.2: Modernization of the physical environment for teaching and learning

29. This subcomponent will focus on the rehabilitation of buildings and premises of higher education institutions in order to: (i) improve the overall conditions for teaching and learning; (ii) create a barrier-free environment for learning and improving access and working and learning conditions of staff and students with disabilities by creating an inclusive learning and working environment; and (iii) improve energy efficiency of buildings and premises. To ensure that female and male students and teachers, as well as students and teachers with disability, have a voice and opportunity to influence and prioritize modernization activities and discuss their opinions, this subcomponent will include participatory planning through frequent focus group discussions.

30. An important activity under this subcomponent will be the provision of infrastructure for the establishment of a multi-disciplinary STEM research center at BSU. This center will enable practice-related graduate training in different and innovative STEM areas and explicitly respond to industry demands. The Center will include about 30 educational laboratories covering key areas of interdisciplinary studies at the interface of biology, chemistry, physics and informatics. The proposed Center will provide trainings and develop programs in areas not yet represented at Belarusian universities, namely bioengineering, nano-chemistry, synthetic and system biology, biotechnology, pharmacology, bioinformatics, biomechanics, etc. The development of these programs responds to the needs of the labor market, including in the medical and pharmaceutical area. The amount of investment for the Center is about USD 30 million including the renovation and equipment of the building.

31. Overall, component 1 will benefit students and academics as well as employers and the broader economy in several respects. Students will obtain easier and more flexible access to higher education and enjoy a learning experience that is better aligned with their needs and of higher quality. Academics, including doctoral students, will benefit from a better working environment that allows them to engage in high-quality research as it is required for career advancement and entrepreneurial activities. These effects will furthermore have a positive impact on employers and the economy, which obtain access to better-qualified graduates and research and development activities and outcomes that support their innovation activities. In addition, HEIs will be able to reduce their recurrent expenditures via the increased energy efficiency of their premises. Given the focus of the investments, it will be ensured that these benefits stretch across all regions of Belarus.

32. Subcomponent 1.2. will finance the modernization of research and learning environment and the creation of a barrier-free environment in Belarus universities through procuring civil works (infrastructure repairs and engineering works). Direct output of these activities will be an improved quality of learning and research in line with labor market development prospects.

Component 2: Innovations in teaching and learning *(estimated cost: $8.5 million equivalent)*

33. The objective of this component is to increase quality, relevance and attractiveness of tertiary education through modernized programs with a focus on learning outcomes and curriculum reforms. Relevant tertiary education requires effective teaching and learning practices in line with modern labor market demands and provision of quality data and information, for example via a graduate tracing system (GTS), mobility and transparency tools like ECTS – the European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System, etc., as well as measures to support innovative teaching and learning through digitalization. Related activities will be supported under component 2.

34. The Belarus' National Qualifications Framework which contains generic learning outcomes (in the form of knowledge, skills and competences defined per degree level) is currently in draft form. The definition of generic learning outcomes is an important step towards development of the new degrees (Bachelor's, Master's). While further work is assumed to involve sector councils for certain groups of professions, the definition of learning outcomes of the program level will be an important task requiring support under the new project. Global perspectives and competencies are planned to be incorporated into the new curriculum design as well as into internationalization activities through subcomponents 2.1. and 2.2.

35. During project preparation, the World Bank implemented a grant from the British Government[6] which focused on enabling evidence-based tertiary education policies in Belarus. Under this grant, a handbook for the establishment of learning outcomes was developed which will provide guidance for future curriculum reforms as well as a GTS proposal, supporting students' transition into the labor market and identifying potential skills mismatches. Such a system will help policy makers as well as families and students to make more informed choices. Based on the work under the grant, the MoE decided that the graduate tracking system will be piloted, evaluated and rolled out under the project. The learning outcomes handbook was disseminated to the higher education sector and will provide an important input for training under component 2.

36. Thus, component 2 sets out to support different ways of promoting and implementing innovations in the teaching and learning process and on the institutional level. It comprises the following subcomponents:

Subcomponent 2.1: Development of learning outcomes and curriculum

37. While Bachelor's and Master's programs have been formally introduced in Belarus, the new system will need to be brought to life and programs modernized through the establishment of learning outcomes (statements of what a student knows and is able to do at the end of a period of learning) and related curriculum reform. These steps are needed to align provision in Belarus with good European practice established under the Bologna Process and needs of the labor market. Taking the EFO work on learning outcomes (and the resulting handbook) as one starting point, academics will need to be trained and supported through advisory work (consultant services) under this subcomponent to ensure that the learning outcomes approach is successfully implemented throughout the higher education system and that it makes a real and permanent contribution to teaching, learning and assessment.

38. Further, universities will need to modernize their programs (and develop new programs) in accordance with the established learning outcomes which reflect the needs of the labor market. This work will be guided through the newly established GTS. The GTS will provide important information via a public website which will guide these revisions. New programs should, inter alia, contain modules on entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial training, in general, will be strengthened under this subcomponent as part of teaching and learning and through practical applications and interaction with companies (internships, involvement of practitioners in teaching, etc.). In summary, this subcomponent will support the development and introduction of the GTS, the establishment of learning outcomes at the program level and related curriculum reforms.

[6] Further referred to as EFO – Externally Funded Output.

39. Subcomponent 2.1. will finance the design and further development of higher education curricula to bring them closer to labor market needs and European Higher Education Area practices. This will be achieved through procuring consulting services, training, goods and travels. Direct outputs of these activities will be new methodologies and tools to support the update of the higher education curriculum.

Subcomponent 2.2: Internationalization of higher education

40. Internationalization is an important goal of Belarus' higher education sector. There is a strong interest in good practices in other countries and a willingness to share local experience. Internationalization does not only support the modernization of higher education institutions and the teaching and learning process, it can also be an important income source for higher education institutions. Finally, internationalization and the introduction of mobility tools (like ECTS) play an important role in the Bologna Process and thus form part of Belarus' Bologna commitments.

41. Activities under this subcomponent revolve around the strengthening of incoming and outgoing mobility of academics and students and increasing the attractiveness of Belarusian universities in an international setting. ECTS as a transparency and accumulation tool certifying successful periods of learning, will be strengthened under the subcomponent, easing recognition of study periods abroad. The Diploma Supplement will be developed and subsequently issued for all students. This will make results of learning more transparent and also support mobility. The attractiveness of Belarusian universities will be further supported by better branding and "welcome structures" for international students and academics. This work will be accompanied by training and consultant services (expert advice) as well as possible peer learning events and cooperation with experienced academics and institutions in Europe. The subcomponent will finally support mobility programs for students and academic as well as the strengthening of language learning (including English).

42. In addition to internationalization-related training activities and expert advice (consulting service), this subcomponent will support twinning projects involving Belarus and foreign universities, peer learning events and study visits to countries and institutions featuring best practice examples, as well as support pan-European activities like participation in EUROSTUDENT[7].

43. Subcomponent 2.2. will finance increase in internationalization activities, including staff and students' mobility, language training and research publishing, through procuring consulting services, training, events and travels. Direct output of these activities will be a new level of internationalization in Belarus universities that will bring them closer to the European benchmarks.

Subcomponent 2.3: Flexible delivery modes

44. Tertiary education systems across the globe see rapid technological change and content- as well as delivery-related innovations. Modern delivery modes, approaches and instruments like online technology, use of artificial intelligence, virtual and augmented reality, etc. provide important opportunities to modernize teaching and learning, reach students in remote areas and create more inclusive tertiary education systems.

[7] http://www.eurostudent.eu/

Flexible delivery modes can be attractive especially for non-traditional learners.

45. Belarus clearly understand the importance of digitalization in the education sector. A new concept of development of technology-enhanced teaching and learning' in the Republic of Belarus until 2025 has been prepared and including tertiary education. Subcomponent 2.3 sets out to support related activities and in particular the strengthening of flexible delivery modes with a view to regional and non-traditional learners on the tertiary level. This is also needed since a substantial number of Belarusian HE students are enrolled in evening-classes, some of which already incorporate aspects of blended learning, combining campus-based and online learning. In addition, several HEIs active in the field of distance learning apply ICTs in their programs to varying degrees. Finally, Belarusian HEIs are increasingly intensifying their ties with industry ('University 3.0') including the development and offering of continuous professional development (CPD) programs. The use of ICTs in such CPD offerings greatly contributes to their flexibility as requested by the working professionals served through such programs.

46. However, the tertiary education system level currently lacks a clear strategy for how proposed digitalization activities under the BHEMP will transform into above mentioned goals. For example, more consideration will need to be given to how modern technology can assist present correspondence students in Belarus to enter the digital age and become distance learners. At present, about a mere 3,000 out of more than 80,000 distance learners can be considered as 'e-learners'; others still study under the traditional 'correspondence' model, with e-mail as the main communication channel. It was thus agreed that the project will initially only finance consulting services and possibly training in support of the following activities:
    - Development of a strategy for distance learning which includes a roadmap and proposal for specific measures how this change may be affected.
    - Preparation of guidelines and provision of training for academic teachers on how to strengthen teaching and learning via digitalization and bring this up to modern standards.
    - Development of a plan for the use of digitalization in internationalization (related to Subcomponent 2.2).

47. These steps will need to be completed, assessed jointly by the MoE and the World Bank and – if it is concluded that they provide a suitable strategic basis – would enable the design and support of additional activities under this subcomponent.

48. Subcomponent 2.3. will finance the development of the strategies for flexible delivery modes and how they can enhance access, learning process and outcomes in higher education through procuring consulting services, training and potentially study tours. Direct output of these activities will be a national concept (strategy) for the introduction of digital tools in higher education teaching and learning.

49. Overall, component 2 will reinforce key effects of the activities under component 1 with regard to the modernization of the Belarusian tertiary education system and, at the same time, yield additional benefits for various stakeholders. With regard to students, the accessibility, quality and relevance of higher education will be improved, as will their possibilities for gaining valuable experiences through international mobility. Academics will also benefit in terms of enhanced possibilities for mobility, which supports them with the development of their educational and research programs and their integration into the international academic community. The greater mobility of students and academics will ultimately benefit the higher

education system as a whole and the economy via an enhanced influx of ideas and talent. In addition, an expansion of the information and data available as well as more intense exchanges with actors from abroad will enhance the decision-making and planning capacities of policy makers and HEIs' leaders. Activities under subcomponents 2.2 (internationalization) and 2.3 (flexible delivery modes) will go hand in hand with results-related curriculum reforms under 2.1 (learning outcomes and curriculum reform).

Component 3: Quality Assurance (QA) *(estimated cost: $3 million equivalent)*

50. Internal and external quality assurance are key aspects of the Bologna Process and, overall, of well-functioning tertiary education systems as they ensure and promote that the activities of individuals within HEIs are oriented toward a process of continuous quality enhancement. While external quality assurance serves accountability purposes – but also within the framework of a more formative approach supports enhancement of provision – the main responsibility for quality assurance lies with higher education institutions themselves (Berlin Communique, 2003). Thus, external QA needs to be complemented by internal QA to avoid overly bureaucratic systems, ensure ownership and effective improvement.[8] Accordingly, the aim of this component is i) to establish an independent and efficient mechanism for external quality assurance and ii) to strengthen university-internal quality assurance.

Subcomponent 3.1: External quality assurance

51. Work under this subcomponent will support the establishment of a European Standards and Guidelines on Quality Assurance (ESG-2015)-compatible National Quality Assurance Agency (BQAA). The subcomponent will include the development of a legal framework for the external quality assurance system in tertiary education in line with ESG-2015[9]. In particular, the project will support the development of the concept and bylaws for the new quality assurance agency that would spell out the responsibilities of the agency, the composition of the Board of the agency, its decision-making process, and how it will be accountable to Belarus' higher education sector and society.

52. Other activities cover the development of new guidelines for the external quality assurance process and the principles for selecting external peers and their training. In parallel, peer learning events focused on the agency staff will discuss how to develop accreditation guidelines and experts training and other requirements of setting up an agency such as: a document management system, a website, the required staff to support the future Board of the agency, and the accreditation visits, and the activities required to ensure that the agency and the universities are working together to improve quality in Belarus. The project will also fund infrastructure and equipment of the new body. This will include housing the agency (rehabilitation of a currently unused building) and developing the IT infrastructure.

53. Following up on earlier consensus-building activities and to ensure ownership of QA development, the project foresees study visits to well-established European QAAs and to associated universities. Participants in those visits will involve the agency senior staff and staff from a few universities. The project will, further, fund events to develop consensus on the best approach for external quality assurance in Belarus from an

[8] Options and modalities for the establishment of an external quality assurance agency were discussed at a QA workshop co-organized by MoE, RIVSh and the World Bank on 05 June 2018 and subsequent events.
[9] *https://enqa.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/ESG_2015.pdf*

early stage on. These events will bring together the higher education community and will provide an opportunity for participants in the international visits to disseminate their knowledge and insights.

54. Subcomponent 3.1. will finance the creation and development of a fully operational Quality Assurance Agency that will cover higher education as a specific level of the national education system through procuring consulting services, civil works, training, goods and travels. Direct outputs of these activities will be an operational national external quality assurance system.

Subcomponent 3.2: Internal quality assurance

55. Work under this subcomponent will include the development of internal quality assurance in line with the ESG-2015. It will provide support to higher education institutions for the development and adoption of the internal quality assurance systems in line with ESG-2015 e.g. through capacity building measures, peer learning and trainings. Specifically, this will include supporting the development and implementation of internal quality assurance policies in universities and related implementation questions.

56. The main beneficiaries of the activities under subcomponent 3.2 will be students, whose needs in terms of high-quality and relevant studies will receive greater attention in the design and implementation of HEIs' activities; however, related activities will benefit the entire higher education sector as well as employers and will help making Belarusian universities more performance-oriented and attractive.

57. Subcomponent 3.2. will finance developments in internal quality assurance mechanisms of Belarus universities through procuring consulting services, training, events and travels. Direct output of these activities will be updated institutional quality assurance practices in universities.

Component 4: Project Management *(estimated cost: $0.5 million equivalent)*

58. The objective of this component is to support project management, monitoring and evaluation (M&E), and technical assistance (TA) in order to ensure efficient and effective management of project implementation. To this end, the proposed project would finance consultant services to adequately staff the PIU (the project would finance, *inter alia*, the recruitment of consultants in procurement, financial management, contract management, as well as M&E), as well as training and capacitity building for PIU staff. The project would also cover expenses directly related to project implementation, financial audits, monitoring and evaluation (M&E) - including the monitoring of environmental and social aspects - and selected PIU operating expenses.

59. Component 4 will finance management and implementation of the BHEM project through procuring consulting services, training, and, possibly, goods and travels. Direct output of these activities will be a successful implementation of the BHEMP.

E. Implementation

Institutional and Implementation Arrangements

60. **Project implementation, coordination and oversight**. The project will be implemented over a five-year period. The Ministry of Education (MoE) is the Government's entity responsible for implementing project

activities with the administrative and fiduciary support of the Project Implementation Unit (PIU). As such, the MoE is ultimately accountable for meeting the project objectives, providing strategic guidance and project oversight, and ensuring compliance with World Bank procedures, as well as providing technical support to the various implementing entities within MoE, as needed.

61. Technical expertise and responsibility for the implementation of project components and subcomponents will be delegated to the relevant entities at MoE, i.e. directorates and technical departments, as well as other subordinate entities - such as the Republican Institute for Higher Education (RIVSh) - within their functional missions which include the preparation of budget action plans, terms of reference (TORs), technical reports, etc. RIVSh is a key stakeholder of the project, being a main national think tank and policy advisor to the Government of Belarus for the higher education sector. These entities are part of the Working Group[10] nominated by MoE and have been deeply involved in the project design and preparation. The MoED departments, directorates and RIVSh will work closely with the PIU who will provide guidance on fiduciary (procurement and financial management) and social and environmental aspects that fall under World Bank procedures. Given the specificity of equipment to acquire under the project (mainly scientific equipment and labs), it is envisaged, under the proposed project, to finance consultancies as needed to help MoE implementing entities develop technical specifications for the acquisition of equipment and other tenders of complex nature.

62. **Project Management Unit (PIU)**. The MoE will delegate the responsibility for managing the day-to-day project management, including overall fiduciary responsibilities (procurement and financial management) and safeguards (social and environmental) - to the existing PIU which is located at the National Institute for Education (NIE). This PIU is currently in charge of managing the World Bank (WB)-financed Basic Education Modernization Project (BEMP) and as such, has acquired experience in WB-financed projects as well as WB procedures. The PIU will also be responsible for preparing and issuing all project progress reports, Interim Financial Reports (IFRs) and annual audited financial reports. During project preparation, it was assessed that the capacity of the PIU would need to be reinforced with the recruitment of additional staff in order to manage additional workload. For this, the proposed project will finance key PIU positions in procurement, financial management, contract management, safeguards, and monitoring and evaluation, as well as capacity building and training for PIU staff, as needed.

B. Results Monitoring and Evaluation Arrangements

63. The Project Development Objective (PDO) level and Intermediate Result (IR) Indicators will be monitored using the following data collection instruments: (i) regular surveys and data collection processes; (ii) administrative data and data from the education management and information system (EMIS) once the system is operational; and (iii) monitoring reports prepared by the PIU.

64. The PIU will carry out the day-to-day coordination of monitoring and evaluation of project activities. To achieve this task, the PIU will bring together the representatives of the relevant MoE directorates and departments to monitor the project's objectives and results and will communicate with the World Bank

[10] The Working Group was composed of representatives of the following entities: Vocational Education Directorate at MoE, Development of the Material and Technical Base Department, Quality Assurance Department, Main Information and Analytical Center, and Republican Institute of Higher Education (RIVSh).

according to the frequency of reports as agreed. Entities that are subordinate to the MoE —such as RIVSh— will be responsible for the provision of timely and accurate information required for monitoring the project's objectives and results achieved under their respective component.

65. The Main Information Analytical Center at MoE (GIAC) is the main entity responsible for the collection, processing, and analysis of education data, using EMIS. Currently, the ongoing World Bank-financed BEMP project and related Additional Financing are supporting the development and operationalization of an enhanced, integrated EMIS at MoE that would include data for all levels of education (i.e. preschool, general secondary, vocational, secondary special, higher, and postgraduate), and would also be interconnected with the labor market information system. The EMIS is expected to be fully operational by June 2020.

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F. Project location and Salient physical characteristics relevant to the safeguard analysis (if known)

The MOE has collected related proposals, established a set of criteria and subsequently pre-selected appropriate project infrastructure and investment activities. Proposals from following universities were pre-selected: state universities (SU) located in the capital city Minsk (BSU, BNTU, BSEU, BSTU, BSPU, BSUIR, Belarus Medical SU, BSA of Aviation) and regional state universities (Brest STU (State Technical University), Polessky SU, Vitebsk SU, Vitebsk STU, Polotsk SU, Gomel SU, Grodno SU, Vitebsk Veterinary Medicine SA, Grodno Agrarian SUб BSU of Transport,). Majority of these higher education facilities are located in the built-up areas. These are without significant environmental features and are little likely to be impacted with proposed project activities.

G. Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialists on the Team

Arcadii Capcelea, Environmental Specialist
Aimonchok Tashieva, Social Specialist
Oksana Rakovych, Environmental Specialist

SAFEGUARD POLICIES THAT MIGHT APPLY

Safeguard Policies	Triggered?	Explanation (Optional)
Environmental Assessment OP/BP 4.01	Yes	Component 1 of the proposed project includes building and renovation activities. The planned construction and installation works will include replacement of roofs, windows, floors, internal partitions, repair of basements, laboratories, modernization of heating and sewage systems. Potential impacts are site specific, relatively minor

		and can be efficiently managed during project implementation. Therefore, the project has been categorized as B, and any high risk and/or To address identified impacts the borrower prepared an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF)which specifies procedures for environmental and social screening, management planning, and monitoring of the proposed works. Site-specific Environmental and Social Management Plans will be developed based on the hierarchy of risk mitigation and implemented under technical supervision of the project implementing entity.
Performance Standards for Private Sector Activities OP/BP 4.03	No	This Policy is not applicable to the project therefore not triggered.
Natural Habitats OP/BP 4.04	No	No natural or critical habitat is present within, close or adjacent to the higher education facilities therefore this Policy is not triggered.
Forests OP/BP 4.36	No	No forests are present in the project area as defined in the Policy therefore this Policy is not triggered.
Pest Management OP 4.09	No	The project activities do not use or promote use of pesticides as defined in the Policy therefore this Policy is not triggered.
Physical Cultural Resources OP/BP 4.11	Yes	The policy requires compliance with certain procedures regarding Physical Cultural Resources. Some of the buildings of the Belarusian State University and the Belarusian State Pedagogical University as well as one of the buildings of the Belarusian State Technological University in Sverdlov street, 7, belong to the objects of historical and cultural heritage of Belarus. In case of renovation and modernization works in buildings belonging to the cultural heritage and regarding occasional finds, the ESMF includes a description of specific procedures and main requirements for preparing a PCR Management Plan..
Indigenous Peoples OP/BP 4.10	No	No indigenous peoples in Belarus and therefore this Policy is not triggered.
Involuntary Resettlement OP/BP 4.12	No	All rehabilitation works under the project are expected to take place within the existing educational facilities and no land acquisition is expected. The screening process will ensure that buildings selected for rehabilitation do not require additional land and that the building selected do not have mixed ownership or pending claims from

		individuals. In addition, the actual situation in Belarus is supported by the well-enforced regulatory framework that prohibits squatters and vendors within territory of the school compound, thus permanent or temporary physical or economic displacement as the result of the project is not expected.
Safety of Dams OP/BP 4.37	No	The project activities do not involve any works which will have impacts on or will depend on dams as defined in the Policy. This Policy is therefore not triggered.
Projects on International Waterways OP/BP 7.50	No	The project does not include activities which impact water bodies related with international waterways as defined in the Policy. This Policy is therefore not triggered.
Projects in Disputed Areas OP/BP 7.60	No	The project is not located in Disputed Areas as defined in the Policy. The Policy is therefore not triggered.

KEY SAFEGUARD POLICY ISSUES AND THEIR MANAGEMENT

A. Summary of Key Safeguard Issues

1. Describe any safeguard issues and impacts associated with the proposed project. Identify and describe any potential large scale, significant and/or irreversible impacts:

The proposed activities proposed under Subcomponent 1.1 “Modernization of the physical environment for teaching and learning” which will support rehabilitation of buildings and premises of higher education institution and improving their energy efficiency, as well as under Subcomponent 1.2 “Enabling high quality practical training” aimed at supporting investments in modernization of laboratories and research facilities targeted at energy efficiency, renewable energy and low-carbon technologies if not properly managed, might generate a series of adverse social and environmental impacts, such as: (a) dust and noise due to rehabilitation activities; (b) dumping of construction wastes, accidental spillage of machine oil, lubricants, paints, and solvents, etc.; (c) groundwater and surface water contamination; (d) asbestos which might be a real health concern for the construction workers and general public in the vicinity of the rehabilitated premises, in particular when it is inhaled; (e) labor & safety impacts; and (f) air pollution. Additionally, while conducting rehabilitation civil works the structural integrity of buildings might be affected and this requires a careful assessment of projects design prior to approving any subproject activities and buildings retrofitting. Furthermore, in cases when rehabilitation works would be performed at facilities marked as Physical Cultural Resources by the national legislation, the project might have adverse impacts on them and, respectively, the proposed civil works at such sites requires to be done in accordance with principles of good practice in the cultural heritage field. All these environmental and social risks are typical for medium-scale construction or rehabilitation of buildings, well-known upfront, short term, site specific and can be easy mitigated by applying best construction practices and mitigation and/or avoidance measures.

Based on described potential impacts the project triggers two WB Operational policies, - OP 4.01 on Environmental Assessment as will generate a series of environmental and social impacts. As potentially the project might also finance

rehabilitation of facilities included in National and/or Regional Lists of Physical Cultural Resources, it was decided to trigger the OP 4.11 on such resources and respectively to follow all its rules and procedures while implementing such projects. The OPs on Natural Habitats and on Forestry are not triggered as the project activities are of rehabilitation nature and will be implemented within the settlement's areas

2. Describe any potential indirect and/or long term impacts due to anticipated future activities in the project area:
No indirect or long term negative environmental or social impacts are anticipated from the project implementation. In case of successful introduction of 'low carbon' measures in the facilities, as well as energy efficiency and climate change adaptation methodologies and practices into the curriculum, slight decrease in country carbon footprint may occur in medium to long term perspective.

3. Describe any project alternatives (if relevant) considered to help avoid or minimize adverse impacts.
N/A

4. Describe measures taken by the borrower to address safeguard policy issues. Provide an assessment of borrower capacity to plan and implement the measures described.
To address identified environmental and social impacts and risks the Borrower has developed an Environmental and Social Management Framework (ESMF) which contains detailed instructions on the environmental and social screening of the proposed individual investments, lists common types of risks that may be encountered while constructing or rehabilitating university premises, provides measures to mitigate expected negative environmental and social risks, details necessary stakeholder engagement activities, and defines roles and responsibilities of the implementing agencies. Templates for developing Environmental and Social Management Plans (and ESMP-Checklists) and producing environmental and social monitoring reports are attached to the ESMF. Finally, the ESMF document specifies that the civil works should be scheduled during matriculation breaks or, if impossible, adequate arrangements should be made for safeguarding students and teachers from nuisance/accidents that may occur if works are underway in parts of the buildings where classes are being held at the same time. If temporary accommodation in alternative premises is required for educational process (as well as any other activities - food services, clubs, sports activities, etc.) while a building is being rehabilitated, the MOE will be responsible for approving and overseeing implementation of such arrangements to be made by local implementers.

The ESMF implementation lies with the MoE who will delegate the day-to-day project management, including safeguards issue to the existing PIU under the National Institute for Education (NIE). This PIU is currently in charge of managing the World Bank (WB)-financed Basic Education Modernization Project (BEMP) and as such, has acquired experience in WB-financed projects as well as on WB procedures. The PIU will hire an Environmental Specialist (ES) which will be responsible for safeguards issues under both, BEMP and current projects, including the following main duties: (i) providing assistance to the project's beneficiaries to determine the exact impacts that can be generated by proposed activities supported under the project as well as prescribe the required mitigation actions to be taken; (ii) conducting screening and ensure that due environmental work (ESIAs/ESMPs) are prepared for the proposed investments; and, (iii) monitoring and reporting on a regular basis the effects on the environment that financed activities may provoke and ensure that mitigation is carried out. The Environmental Specialist will also have to selectively visit sub-projects and ensure proper supervision for all ESMPs implementation for Cat B sub-projects. Additionally, technical supervision consultants will also cary some of the supervision/monitoring responsibilities and report to the PIU Safeguards Specialist on site conditions, especially, on-site maintenance and OHS issues.The PIU will also make sure that the Safeguards Specialist monitor compliance with physical cultural heritage requirements.

5. Identify the key stakeholders and describe the mechanisms for consultation and disclosure on safeguard policies,

with an emphasis on potentially affected people.
The MOE, and agencies under it such as RIVSh as well as administrations, teachers, students and their parents of all beneficiary tertiary education institutions will be the project stakeholders. Additionally, local governments, civil society organizations and parent organizations are important stakeholders.
The ESMF developed for the project was disclosed in Russian language through the web pages of the MOE on August 26th, 2019. It was discussed with stakeholders during public hearings held on September 6th, 2019 and finalized to the satisfaction of the Bank.
Site-specific Environmental and Social Management Plans will also the disclosed in draft, discussed with local stakeholders and agreed with the Bank. Grievance Redress Mechanisms will be established with assigned focal points by MOE.

B. Disclosure Requirements

Environmental Assessment/Audit/Management Plan/Other

Date of receipt by the Bank	Date of submission for disclosure	For category A projects, date of distributing the Executive Summary of the EA to the Executive Directors
26-Aug-2019	06-Sep-2019	

"In country" Disclosure

Belarus
06-Sep-2019

Comments

C. Compliance Monitoring Indicators at the Corporate Level (to be filled in when the ISDS is finalized by the project decision meeting)

OP/BP/GP 4.01 - Environment Assessment

Does the project require a stand-alone EA (including EMP) report?
Yes
If yes, then did the Regional Environment Unit or Practice Manager (PM) review and approve the EA report?
Yes
Are the cost and the accountabilities for the EMP incorporated in the credit/loan?
Yes

OP/BP 4.11 - Physical Cultural Resources

Does the EA include adequate measures related to cultural property?
Yes
Does the credit/loan incorporate mechanisms to mitigate the potential adverse impacts on cultural property?
Yes

The World Bank Policy on Disclosure of Information

Have relevant safeguard policies documents been sent to the World Bank for disclosure?
Yes
Have relevant documents been disclosed in-country in a public place in a form and language that are understandable and accessible to project-affected groups and local NGOs?
Yes

All Safeguard Policies

Have satisfactory calendar, budget and clear institutional responsibilities been prepared for the implementation of measures related to safeguard policies?
Yes
Have costs related to safeguard policy measures been included in the project cost?
Yes
Does the Monitoring and Evaluation system of the project include the monitoring of safeguard impacts and measures related to safeguard policies?
Yes
Have satisfactory implementation arrangements been agreed with the borrower and the same been adequately reflected in the project legal documents?
Yes

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