

# Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership, Sweden and Finland provide grants to support environmental investments in Belarus

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The Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership (NDEP) together with the Government of Sweden, through the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (Sida) and the Government of Finland have today extended grants to five Belarusian water utilities to support investments to be carried out by the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) in Vitebsk, Baranovichi and Slonim and by the Nordic Investment Bank (NIB) in Brest and Grodno.

The grants from Sweden/Sida come to the total of EUR 13.6 million. Grodno Vodokanal has received an investment grant of EUR 3.6 million and Vitebsk EUR 2.7 million to improve their wastewater treatment facilities. Baranovichi and Slonim have benefited from a EUR 1.4 million grant each to install new biogas plants. In addition Sida has provided a grant of EUR 4.5 million for technical assistance to the three projects EBRD projects in Vitebsk, Baranovichi and Slonim, which is also supported by EUR 0.8 million grant from Finland. The technical assistance grants will finance project implementation units and corporate development plans.

At the same time, NDEP has provided EUR 6 million in grants for Vitebsk, Grodno and Brest to support the EUR 33.5 million loans from the EBRD and NIB signed in Minsk on 10 December 2012 for Vitebsk, Grodno and Brest. The total investment for the three cities comes close to EUR 65 million and will ensure that the cities will treat their wastewater treatment in full compliance with the EU and HELCOM standards. The inflow to the Baltic Sea of phosphorus, nitrogen and organic material will be substantially reduced, once the projects have been fully implemented. The grant funds will be disbursed directly to the relevant contractors who will be selected through an international tender.

Cleaner waters in the Baltic and Barents Seas are of primary concern for the NDEP donors. NDEP is a multi-donor Fund managed by the EBRD which pools funds from the European Union and 12 donor governments (Russia, France, Canada, Sweden, UK, Germany, Finland, Norway, Denmark, Netherlands, Belarus and Belgium). The Partnership was set up in 2001 and its Support Fund currently stands at over EUR 342 million. Belarus joined the NDEP in 2010 with a EUR 1 million donation and a clear commitment to improve the environment through concrete municipal investments.