



**Минприроды**

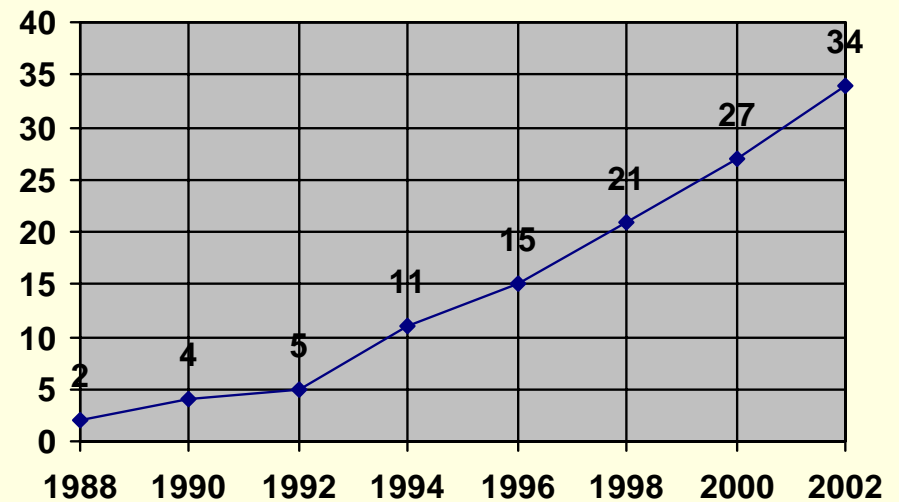
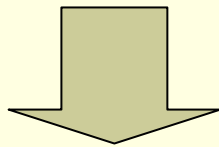
**EVALUATIONS OF SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT (SD)  
PROJECTS AND THEIR IMPACT ON ENVIRONMENTAL  
DECISION-MAKING IN BELARUS WITHIN THE PERIOD OF  
1991-2006**

Slava Filimonau,  
Belarusian Environmental Research Center  
“БелНДЦ”Экалогія”

Vienna EASY-ECO, March, 13th, 2008

# Problem definition

- High number and diversity of SD projects;
- World-wide, regional and local scale;
- Often run in cooperation with governmental institutions;
- Evaluation studies for their better understanding;



**BUT** → How do they influence environmental decision-making?  
Is the outcome of evaluations accounted for sustainable governance?

# Research purpose

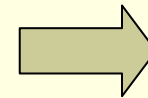
Evaluation of SD project 1

Evaluation of SD project 2

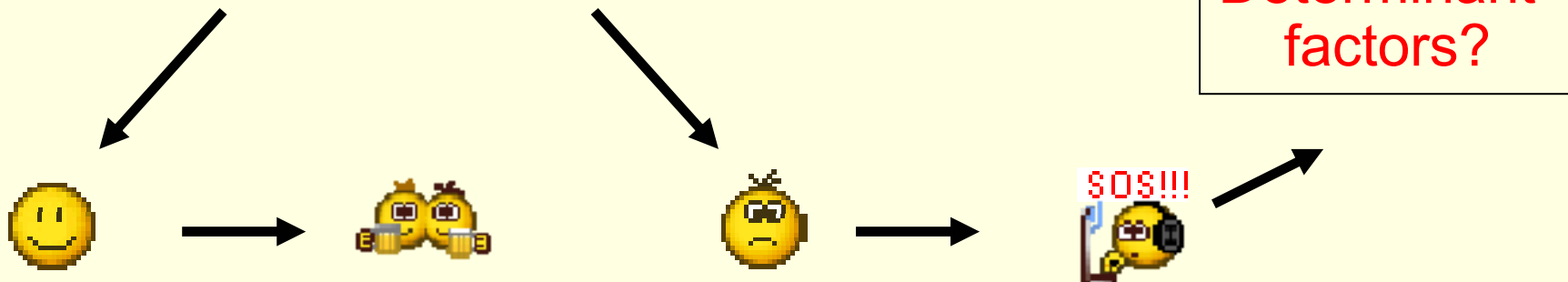
Evaluation of SD project 3

.....

- What impact did they make on environmental decision-making process?
- Was the outcome taken into consideration?



Identify, analyze and understand their outcome



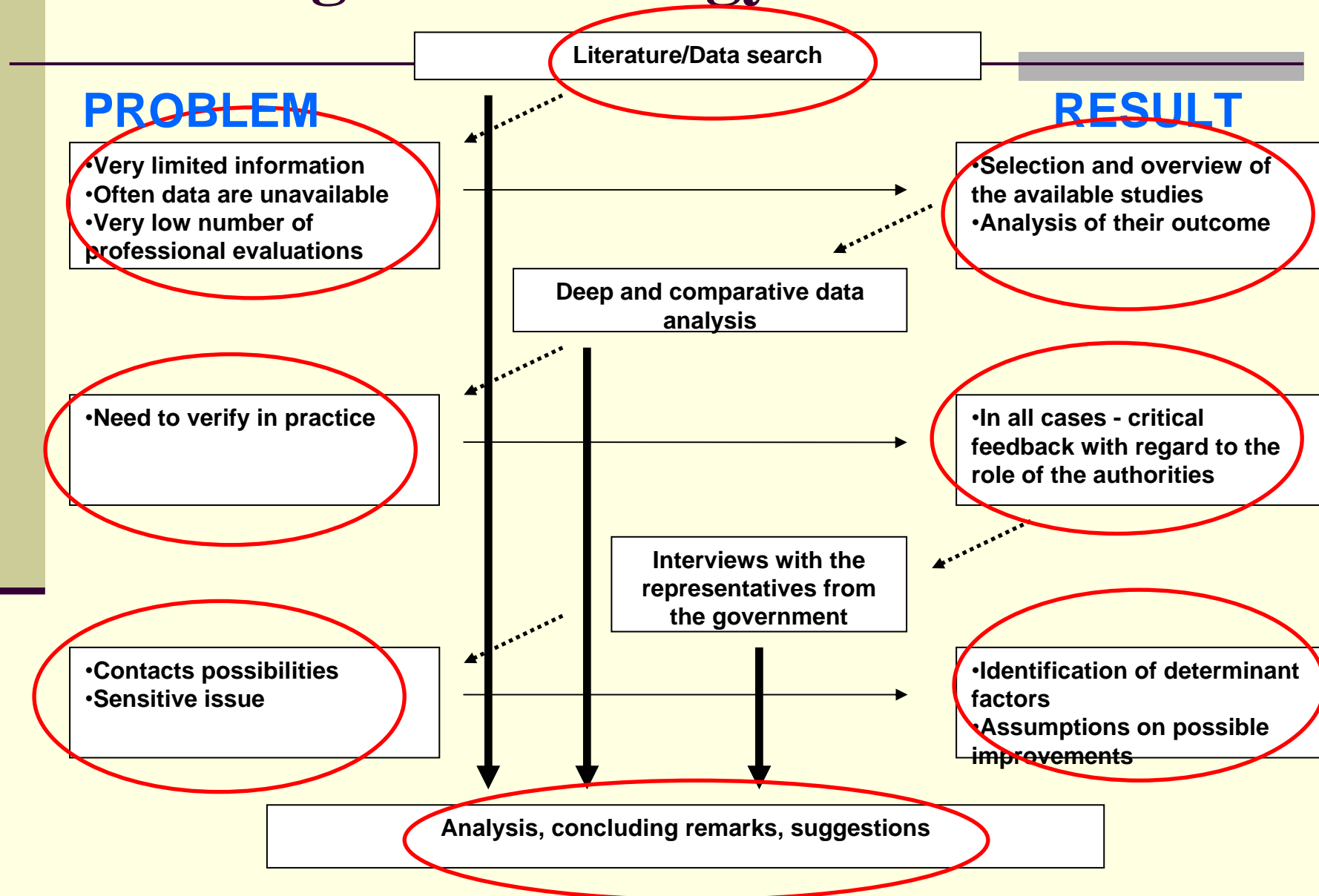
# Research objectives

---

- How the evaluation feedback on SD projects in Belarus is accounted by the policy-makers?
- What are the determinant factors for the effective utilization of the evaluation of SD projects outcome in Belarus?
- What can/should be done in order to address them?

**NB: The importance of identifying the determinant factors should be paid a special attention to. If addressed properly, it may help to save on the problems later**

# Working methodology



# Belarus



Source: Embassy of the Republic of Belarus in USA, 2005

# Belarus: relevant facts and figures

---

- 1991 - ... - Socio-economic and political reforms;

- **Major purposes:**

- 1) build civil society;
- 2) convert centrally-planned model of economy to the free-market one;
- 3) ensure sustainable development



- **Results by now:** Limited success, soviet model of governance still prevails;

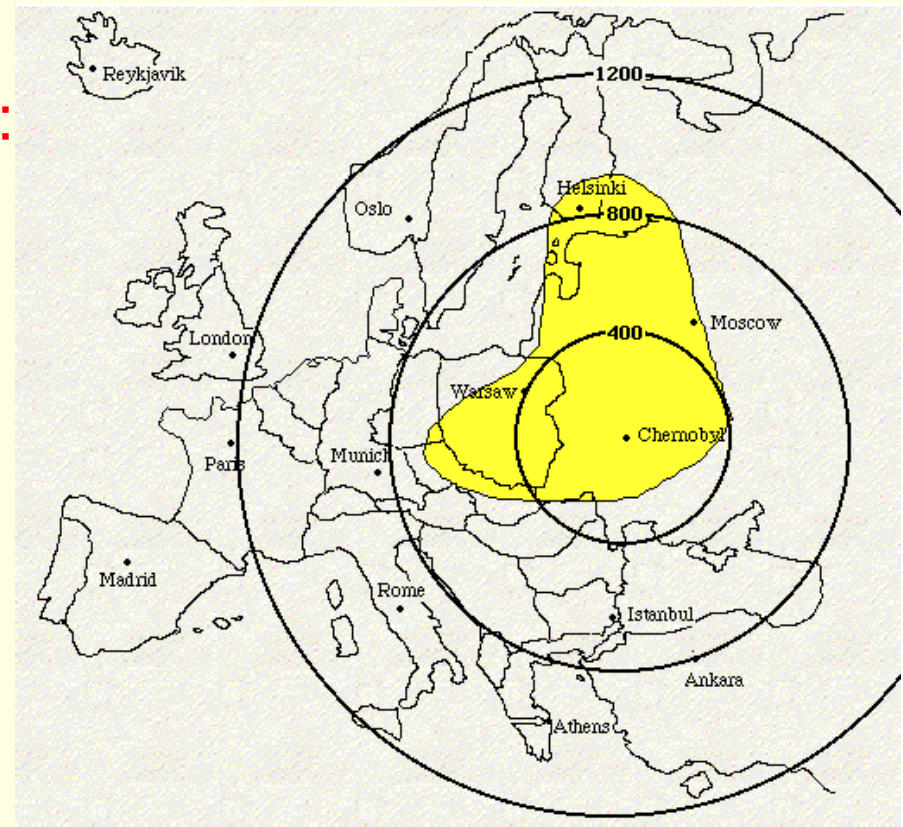
- “Socialist planning” concept is more acknowledged than “sustainable planning” (features of the latter – 1) broader participation, 2) more independence, 3) higher decentralization);

# Belarus: SD projects and evaluations 1

- Significant number of SD projects, different scales of application **BUT** → **very limited number of evaluations, difficult to access;**

- **Priority areas of SD projects:**

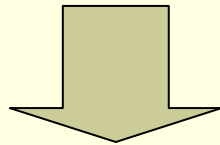
- Chernobyl
- Energy (since 2007)
- Protected areas
- Waste treatment
- Peat land protection
- Sustainable tourism



# Belarus: SD projects and evaluations 2

---

- Most of the available evaluation studies represent:
- Evaluations made by non-professionals
- Small (local scale) projects evaluations



- Change of the initial plan: now focus on
- National scale SD projects;
- Evaluations made by professionals;
- Interconnectedness; studies should be successive;
- Easy-to-access.



3 studied corresponding to these requirements have been selected

# Belarus: evaluation study 1

- National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-economic Development of Belarus up to 2005 (adopted in 1997)
- Ex-post evaluation (2002) initiated by UNDP in Belarus
- Aim: 1) identify managerial and organizational drawbacks;  
2) produce recommendations for future versions of strategy
- Major findings:
  - 1) no interdisciplinary analysis;
  - 2) section-by-section instead of cross-cutting analysis;
  - 3) focus on content, ignorance of process;
  - 4) participation of stakeholders is not considered important;
  - 5) foreign experience is not taken into account



Considered as a legal and planning basis for development of other sectoral and territorial plans and programmes!

# Belarus: evaluation study 2

- Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the National Strategy for Sustainable Socio-economic Development of Belarus up to 2020 (adopted in 2004)
- Ex-ante evaluation (2003) initiated by environmental NGO

- Major findings:

1) drawbacks are similar to those in the evaluation 1;

**IN ADDITION:**

- 2) lack of integration, insufficient combined analysis;
- 3) poor address of priority issues and identification of trade-offs;
- 4) insignificant improvements (e.g. in establishing performance indicators and developing monitoring measures);

Government was assigned the role of a key agent in formulating, implementing and controlling sustainability policies!



# Belarus: evaluation study 3



- SEA of the National Tourism Development Programme of Belarus 2006 - 2010

- Ex-ante evaluation (2005) initiated by UNDP in Belarus



- Major findings:

- 1) drawbacks are similar to those in the evaluations 1 and 2;

## PLUS

- 2) “expert-driven” process of preparing the plan;
- 3) poor integration of topic-specific sections with strategic visions;
- 4) too much centralization, ignorance of stakeholders involvement
- 5) certain improvements (e.g. in discussing and reporting strategic visions and goals);



Transparency, credibility and broad participatory approach of the programme is questioned!

# Belarus: evaluations – sum-up

---

- The outcome of evaluations is poorly utilized by policy-makers;
- Recommendations of evaluators are in many cases ignored;
- Minor improvements as a result of evaluation feedback;
- The question arises – why does it happen?



# Belarus: determinant factors 1

---

- Misinterpretation (accidental and deliberate) of the concept of sustainable development on the highest policy-making level

- Language problem



- Separation of the term “sustainable development” from “economic development” and “social development”

- SD is considered as supplementary to economic development, is not regarded as its possible limiting factor

- Unwillingness and fear to look for the trade-offs between economic development and SD;

The economic aspect of sustainability is often the only criterion which is laid into the basis of evaluations of SD projects in Belarus!

# Belarus: determinant factors 2

---

- **Misuse of the concept of SD**
- Speculations with the term to obtain political, financial support and other benefits;
- Utilization of the positive evaluation feedback with marketing purposes;
- Sustainable development is a fashion on the highest governmental levels



- **Absence of adequate knowledge and specialists in the decision-making field**
- Most policy-makers obtained education before the concept of SD arose
- Poor addressing of sustainability issues in modern educational system
- Low number of qualified specialists in evaluation and SD studies

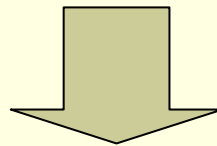
# Belarus: determinant factors 3

---

- Hard links to the old Soviet planning system of the governance



- Bureaucratization
- Complex governmental hierarchy
- Conservatism, fear of new, non-traditional methods for getting a feedback
- Fear of making decisions without getting approval from above
- Unwillingness and fear to take the lead and to come up with any initiatives and to carry responsibility for its outcome



- All this does not enable a quick transfer of knowledge from one governmental level to another

# Belarus: determinant factors 4

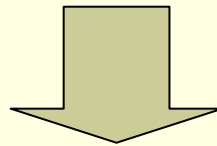
- Dominance of old Soviet approach in decision-making

- Criticism is often unacceptable



- Stakeholders involvement is not appreciated and not considered to be helpful

- Unwillingness to account for the opinions of others




All these phenomena were absent in the Soviet Union and therefore are not considered useful in modern Belarus!

- Necessity to receive approval on the highest governmental level for every minor measure or action

- Isolation of the country

# Belarus: what can/should be improved?

---

- Concept of sustainability → clear definition;
- Broader application in policy-making process; 
- Political recognition of environmental, economic and social pillars of sustainable development as equally important parts of the SD concept;
- Acknowledgement of evaluation as a useful feedback tool and its integration into the national policy-making process on all managerial levels;
- Political commitment, approval and support of the necessity for the evaluation of the SD projects on the highest governmental level, governmental support and cooperation with the evaluation experts and institutions

# Belarus: what can be improved?

---

- Development of the strategy for utilization of the evaluation studies as important support instruments for different SD projects and initiatives on various levels of policy-making;
- Development of the transparent and accountable scheme of the application of the evaluations in the governance process;
- Facilitation of the wider participatory approach for the development of the SD projects and during their evaluations;
- Building credibility and trust between the parties involved, facilitation of effective public participation in the discussions of the SD projects, their evaluations and outcome of the evaluations;



# Belarus: what can/should be improved?

---

- Better integration of the local, regional and national levels of decision-making; facilitation of the more rapid transfer of knowledge and information;
- Institutional capacity building in the field of sustainable development of evaluations of the SD projects;
- Study of the foreign experience in the field of SD projects evaluations, dissemination of the obtained information to different levels of the authorities and all interested stakeholders;



# Belarus: what can/should be improved?

---

- Governmental cooperation and experience exchange in the field of SD evaluations and their applicability in environmental policy-making with the representatives from other countries, especially from those with economies in transition;



- Education of the decision-makers in the field of sustainability in general and evaluations of SD projects in particular;

- Preparation of the specialists in the field of evaluation in general and SD projects evaluation in particular;

**Governance reform which would facilitate a faster shift from the old Soviet system of the environmental governance to the modern one with adaptation of the related knowledge and experience!**

# Conclusions I: evaluations of SD projects in Belarus

■ are not closely integrated with the process of environmental governance and utilization of the evaluation outcomes is still very limited;

■ major reasons are seen in



- 1) absence of political commitment with regard to the usefulness of evaluations;
- 2) frequent misinterpretation of the term “sustainable development”;
- 3) poor understanding of the role of evaluations in the decision-making process;
- 4) absence of comprehensive knowledge both in the area of sustainable development in general and in the field of the applicability of the evaluations of SD projects in particular

# Conclusions II: evaluations of SD projects in Belarus

---

- The following measures may be helpful:
  - 1) “sustainability planning” over “central-planning” ;
  - 2) education of decision-makers in the area of evaluation of sustainability projects;
  - 3) raise of political commitment for the need of evaluation studies;
  - 4) research of the foreign experience.

**If applied properly, these may help facilitate more effective utilization of the evaluations’ outcome within the national policy-making process and make it more knowledge-based and accountable**

**It may also contribute towards elimination of the shortcomings and enhance the success of the future SD projects run in the country**

---

# Thank you for your attention!

Slava Filimonau,  
Belarusian Environmental Research Center  
“БелНДЦ”Экалогія”  
Minsk, Belarus

[slavafil@psem.net](mailto:slavafil@psem.net)

