

Environmental issues have an impact on our quality of life as well as all future generations. This kind of responsibility starts with each of us, and it is first and foremost a state of mind, willingness to take responsibility, followed by appropriate behavior.

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## ECO-BUILDING: WHERE IS BELARUS?

In the course of numerous research it has been revealed that modern European spends 23 hours per day in premises, whether it is a car, a house or an office which is mainly constructed from artificial materials such as plastic, PVC and synthetic resins. But only ten out of these materials are tested on toxicity and get hygienic certificates in our country. The influence of others remains unknown. So often it is not just about how to live in such a house but even how to survive in it. In some cases it can result in real disaster which happened in Ostankino when new-built houses had to be destroyed after numerous cases of birth of children with inborn deformities. So it came down to creating eco-friendly and safe for human health environment.

Eco-building has been the main trend in the world's real estate for the past decade. The interest is determined by the fact that all the most important components of people's living such as economy, ecology, climate and health are correlated in it. Among other main reasons are creating more comfortable conditions for living, cut emissions of gases, rubbish and reduction of water pollution. In addition eco-building allows to decrease capacity on regional electric networks. In Europe and the USA eco-building is the essential part of the market. Eco-elements like "green" roofs and double-skin facades are often applied to building by large corporations. For them it is the matter of prestige, care about the quality of environment in the workplace for their employees and the economy on conditioning, heating, lighting.

What is an eco-house? It is a dwelling where non-renewable sources of energy are practically not used and on the other hand there is no harm to nature and people's health. The key elements of each eco-house are:

- Thick walls made from straw and clay;

- Wind-driven generator;
- Solar batteries;
- And obligatory usage of recycled materials;

The first energy-effective house was built in Manchester in 1972 while in Belarus such a building appeared only in 1997 in Zanaroch.

Our country is practically deprived of own sources of fossil fuels so eco-building could be the most effective solution to the housing crisis. Unfortunately, there is no interest in this technology on the part of our government and that's why the main efforts of eco-building are being made by Belarusian developers in Russia.

It can't help saying about advantages and disadvantages of eco-houses. At first glance eco-building seems to be a costly affair. And you are right but only half, for eco-tech increases expenditures for the building by 5-15%. However these costs are fully paid off in nearest 8-10 years. Besides, there is no need to use heavy equipment, construction cranes when this house is being built.

One might get the impression that it can be dangerous to live in such a house because of the possibility of fire. However the houses built on "straw-bale" technology contain large amount of potassium compounds, which make them fire-resistant.

One is likely to know that mold is one of the most common annoyances damaging constructions. In eco-houses people don't encounter such a problem because of vapor barrier that protects the building from penetration of water steam.

Finally, after its "death" there will be no difficulties in recycling since all its parts are natural and they will just rot through.

Despite all the mentioned advantages there is still an ecological problem concerning the quality of conditioning: the necessity to use heaters, often non-natural, does not always ensure good quality of air.

On the whole, with the growing threat of global climate change, depletion of natural resources and the collapse of the world's ecosystem eco-houses are of

paramount importance and should be a priority over the construction of traditional structures.

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## ECOLOGY AND TRANSPORTATION

When we talk about parking the long forgotten word “deficit” comes into metropolitan residents’ mind. It is not surprising, because nowadays more than 712 thousand cars are registered in Minsk. At the same time there are only 642 official parking places, which are only able to contain about 91 thousand cars. Undisputed is the fact that parking on the sidewalk and lawns has become the norm. The reason is the law penalties as well as a very weak and outdated control system.

Transport is a key part of the economic system of the state; it determines the development of the economy and the well-being of the population. Solution of the illegal parking problem will improve the ecological conditions of life and help to increase the efficiency of the transport system.

Some solutions which can help to change this difficult situation may be suggested.

Firstly, in our country we need some amendments at the legislative level, such as *liability for illegal parking on the owner of the car*. The same measure has been already taken in legislation for speed infringement.

Secondly, we need to form a completely *new structure of parking services*. It will have the authority to impose a fine on the intruder. In some western counties such a service is known as a traffic control department or agency.

Finally, *payment for parking in the city should be introduced*. Since this system is absolutely new for our young country, we have a good opportunity to apply high technologies (GPRS, internet, mobile-phone). It also will help to avoid the corruption. Payment for parking can vary in different parts of the city. Parking is a primary source of income for cities. This is a natural result of the fact that car owners are essentially renting an enormous amount of real estate. The City of Minsk, with a