

Belarus

Geography

Location: Eastern Europe, east of Poland.

Map references: Commonwealth of Independent States - European States.

Area:

total area: 207,600 sq km.

land area: 207,600 sq km.

Land boundaries: total 3,098 km, Latvia 141 km, Lithuania 502 km, Poland 605 km, Russia 959 km, Ukraine 891 km.

Coastline: 0 km (landlocked).

Climate: cold winters, cool and moist summers; transitional between continental and maritime.

Terrain: generally flat and contains much marshland.

Natural resources: forest land, peat deposits, small quantities of oil and natural gas.

Land use:

arable land: 29%.

permanent crops: 1%.

meadows and pastures: 15%.

forest and woodland: 0%.

other: 55%.

Irrigated land: 1,490 sq km (1990).

Environment:

current issues: soil pollution from pesticide use; southern part of the country contaminated with fallout from 1986 nuclear reactor accident at Chernobyl.

Note: landlocked

People

Population: 10,437,418 (July 1995 est.)

Age structure:

0-14 years: 22% (female 1,126,062; male 1,166,439).
15-64 years: 65% (female 3,494,891; male 3,293,196).
65 years and over: 13% (female 913,508; male 443,322) (July 1995 est.)

Population growth rate: 0.3% (1995 est.)

Birth rate: 12.98 births/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Death rate: 11.23 deaths/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Net migration rate: 1.27 migrant(s)/1,000 population (1995 est.)

Infant mortality rate: 18.6 deaths/1,000 live births (1995 est.)

Life expectancy at birth:
total population: 71.03 years.
male: 66.36 years.
female: 75.93 years (1995 est.)

Total fertility rate: 1.87 children born/woman (1995 est.)

Nationality:
noun: Belarusian(s).
adjective: Belarusian.

Ethnic divisions: Byelorussian 77.9%, Russian 13.2%, Polish 4.1%, Ukrainian 2.9%, other 1.9%.

Religions: Eastern Orthodox, other.

Languages: Byelorussian, Russian, other.

Literacy: age 15 and over can read and write (1989).
total population: 97%.
male: 99%.
female: 96%.

Labor force: 4.887 million
by occupation: industry and construction 40%, agriculture and forestry 21%, other 39% (1992).

Government

Names:
conventional long form: Republic of Belarus.
conventional short form: Belarus.
local long form: Respublika Byelarus.
local short form: none.

former: Belorussian (Byelorussian) Soviet Socialist Republic.

Type: republic.

Capital: Minsk.

Administrative divisions: 6 voblastsi (singular - voblasts') and one municipality* (harady, singular - horad); Brestskaya (Brest), Homyel'skaya (Homyel'), Horad Minsk*, Hrodzyenskaya (Hrodna), Mahilyowskaya (Mahilyow), Minskaya, Vitsyebskaya (Vitsyebsk). note: the administrative centers of the voblastsi are included in parentheses.

Independence: 25 August 1991 (from Soviet Union).

National holiday: Independence Day, 27 July (1990).

Legal system: based on civil law system.

Suffrage: 18 years of age; universal.

Flag: three horizontal bands of white (top), red, and white.

Economy

Overview: Belarus ranks among the most developed of the former Soviet states, with a relatively modern - by Soviet standards - and diverse machine building sector and a robust agriculture sector. It also serves as a transport link for Russian oil exports to the Baltic states and Eastern and Western Europe. The breakup of the Soviet Union and its command economy has resulted in a sharp economic contraction as traditional trade ties have collapsed. The Belarusian government has lagged behind the governments of most other former Soviet states in economic reform, with privatization almost nonexistent. The system of state orders and distribution persists. In mid-1994, the Belarusian government embarked on an austerity program with IMF support to slash state credits and consumer subsidies in order to bring down the budget deficit and reduce inflation. However, despite its promising start, the regime's drive to reinvigorate the economy has fallen short, and the IMF has criticized its failure to implement the reforms that the Fund had negotiated.

Transportation

Railroads:

total: 5,570 km in common carrier service; does not include industrial lines

broad gauge: 5,570 km 1.520-m gauge (1990).

Highways:

total: 98,200 km.

Pipelines: crude oil 1,470 km; refined products 1,100 km; natural gas 1,980 km (1992).

Ports: Mazyr.

Airports:

total: 118.