

BŷRoom, Vendors Against Certification, Alternative Service – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Perspektyva gathered over 400 vendors for a forum to address new regulations. Apart from the vendors, the official representatives from the authorities also attended the event.

All about Belarus during the Vilnius Summit: BŷROOM expands its creative space and will bring together the most interesting civil society activities in Belarus. Minsk will host an international conference on transformation processes unfolding in countries such as Germany, Poland and Ukraine.

The Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility brought together over 70 participants. Among them were representatives of Belarusian business, non-governmental organisations and international experts on social responsibility.

Conferences, workshops

[Register for BŷROOM now](#). BŷROOM is **[a creative open space](#)**, designed to present some of the most interesting civil society activities implemented inside Belarus. BŷROOM will host photo exhibitions, presentations from different sectors, informal roundtables and a press room. It will be open to anyone interested in visiting it or using it on 28-29 November at the Novotel Hotel in Vilnius. To register for ByROOM send a request to **info.byroom@gmail.com**.

[Conference on transformation processes](#). On 22 November Minsk will host an international conference "Belarusization: Whether it is Possible to Complete the Process of Institution Building

of an Independent State?" The conference is organised by the Centre for European Transformation with the support of the Consortium "EuroBelarus" and the Heinrich Böll Foundation (Germany). The event will bring together experts on transformation processes from Germany, Poland, Ukraine, Russia and Belarus.

[Inclusion can become mainstream](#). On 11-12 November the UNDP office in Minsk hosted a workshop "An inclusive development agenda after 2015: the practical prospects for people with disabilities in Belarus" that was attended by representatives of national and international organisations, people with disabilities and foreign experts. On 14 November the Association for Life Long Education (ALLE) together with the Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities conducted a roundtable "Inclusion in non-formal education" aimed to develop practical recommendations for CSOs to adopt an inclusion principle in their educational programmes.

[How to get a foreign assistance](#). On 5 November in Homel, the Office of European Expertise and Communications (OEEC) conducted a training "How to write and implement a successful international project." The training apparently caught the attention of local governmental and non-governmental organisations – with 30 out of 60 applicants having a chance for participation.

Civil society activities

[Vendors address GOB through forum in Minsk](#): On 4 November Perspektyva held a large Forum in Minsk as a reaction to statements made by Deputy Prime Minister Piotr Prokopovich that beginning on 1 December small vendors would not be able to sell light manufacturing products without a certification of quality. More than 400 entrepreneurs attended the forum, as well as a representative of the Trade Ministry. Forum participants signed a finalised document at the forum, in which they resolved to

invite Lukashenka for an exchange of ideas at one of Belarus' many markets, and also to file a lawsuit against the proposed measures with the Eurasian Court. Vendors argue that the proposed measures would effectively put them out of their jobs.

Meetings on public participation in government programmes are held in the regions. The Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities is conducting a series of regional meetings to discuss how people with disabilities can influence the content and format of government programmes. Meetings have already taken place in Minsk, Brest, Vitebsk and Mohiliou.

Forum on rural development. On 28 November the Forum "Rural Areas – Opportunities for Business Development and Youth Creativity" is to take place in Smorgon, Hrodna oblast. The organiser is a local CSO "[Selchanka](#)" together with the Smorgon local authorities. The Forum aims to discuss the development of business and the creative potential of young people in the Smorgon region as well as the public's role in the implementation of local strategies for the sustainable development of the region. *Source: BD contact*

Corporate Social Responsibility Forum gathers 70 participants. On 15 November an annual Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility took place in Minsk. The agenda included 15 presentations made by representatives of business, non-profit organisations and international experts in the field of social responsibility. The Forum was conducted within the framework of a long-term project, implemented by the Foundation of Ideas in partnership with the Pontis Foundation (Slovakia) and supported by the European Commission.

Platform Conference: On 4 November the Belarusian National Platform of EaP Civil Society Forum held a conference in Minsk, focusing on the future of the civil society forum. Conference participants drew on conclusions from the EaP Civil Society Forum meeting in Chisinau, expressing

dissatisfaction with the dynamism of the Forum's development. Additionally, conference participants also made comments to the 2014-2016 Strategy of the EaP Civil Society Forum, noting concerns about "expertisation" of the Forum and a decreasing role of civil society on the policy-making level. Finally, the conference adopted a resolution with a message to the EU to not decrease the attention afforded to Belarus, Azerbaijan and Armenia after the Vilnius Summit.

[**SYMPA announces the fifth round.**](#) The School of Young Managers in Public Administration (SYMPA) aims to create a community of young people in Belarus that are competent in the field of public administration and carrying it out at different levels. The Organisers invite participants who are motivated Belarusians of ages 25-40 years old, with higher education, who speak English, work in the fields of public administration, as well as in business, civil and political organisations. The program consists of four full-time training sessions held in Belarus, Lithuania, Georgia and Sweden, and inter-sessional work with the fellows.

Interaction between state and civil society

[**Citizens of Mahiliou to get construction of additional parking places.**](#) To do this, the residents from one of Mahiliou streets collected 177 signatures. The residents' initiative was facilitated by activists of the local CSO "Impulse", which is addressing the issues for improving conditions surrounding backyards and public spaces.

[**Wheelchair user is suing the National Airport "Minsk".**](#) On 31 October the Minsk court held a hearing regarding a lawsuit of Eugenij Sheuko, the chairman of the Association of Wheelchair Users against the National Airport "Minsk". Sheuko states that he suffered terrible treatment when boarding a plane during his working visit to Estonia in May 2013.

[**Bill on Alternative Civil Service is ready:**](#) Minister of Labour

says the Council of Ministers is ready to submit the Bill on Alternative Civil Service to the parliament. The Alternative Civil Service campaign (AGS) [reposted this news](#) without comments. This should not come as a surprise as the bill was originally included in the legislative drafting plan for 2013. It is not clear whether the AGS can attribute this news to their success, but can surely claim their own contribution.

[Is there a role for CSOs in Belarusian healthcare?](#) Oleg Eremin, Chairman of the Belarusian Anti-Aids Network Association, suggests that civil society organizations could help ease the workload on Belarusian medical professionals by implementing preventative and other, more complex, programmes. Such programmes could include pre- and post-HIV/AIDS testing consultations, as well as the testing itself. Eremin contends that the Belarusian government could partner more with CSOs in dealing with healthcare services to vulnerable groups and announces that at the end of November two pilot HIV-prevention offices will be opened in Minsk and Gomel under a UNESCO project.

Belarus Digest prepared this overview on the basis of materials provided by Pact. This digest attempts to give a richer picture of the recent political and civil society events in Belarus. It often goes beyond the hot stories already available in English-language media.