

Census of Belarusian-Speakers, Pressure on Freelancers – Belarus Civil Society Digest

A new initiative of Mova Nanova – Census of Belarusian-speaking Population aims to demonstrate that Belarusian-speaking people exist in all sphere of life all over the country.

Minsk Hub has launched a campaign promoting the facilitation of Schengen visa procedures. Now every Belarusian can sign the Free to Move e-petition.

Sviatlana Alexievich, the 2015 Nobel laureate, was awarded with “The Civil Leader of the Year”.

Civil society initiatives

[Mova Nanova has launched Census of Belarusian-Speaking Population](#). The idea of the campaign initiated by free lessons in Belarusian is to show that Belarusian-speaking people exist in all spheres of life and all over Belarus. The Mova Nanova web site contains a template that allows for everyone to post a photo, name, occupation and location. Launched on 18 January the viral campaign has already collected about 1,300 posters with distribution in social networks.□

[Minsk Hub has launched a campaign promoting the facilitation of Schengen visa procedures](#). Global Shapers Minks Hub, an initiative of the World Economic Forum, has started the Free to Move campaign which promotes facilitation of Schengen visa procedures. The Free to Move e-petition calls upon the

European Parliament and EU countries' Permanent Representatives to the EU with the request to endorse the Commission's legislative proposal.

[Civil Society champions 2015 were awarded in Minsk](#). On 15 January the Assembly of NGOs arranged the 7th Civil Society Champions Award Ceremony to estimate leaders and the most significant events of the last year in the third sector. An award "The Civil Leader of the Year" was given to Sviatlana Alexievich, the 2015 Nobel laureate; the Campaign of the Year was a solidarity campaign with the cadets of the Jastrambelskaja school; the Media/Journalist of the Year nomination took a blogger Anton Matolka.□

[Talaka.by sums up its results in figures](#). A non-profit platform [Talaka.by](#) has calculated its major achievements for 2015 in numbers. Among them, 50 trained consultants in project consulting; 8,165 participants involved in the contest #RazamMinsk; 126 projects placed at Talaka.by; 15 successful crowd funding campaigns; 136,752 unique visitors of the web site; 3.6 million contacts covered by the publications about Talaka.by, etc.

[A Belarusian attends the WEF Annual Meeting 2016](#). On 20-23 January Minsk Shapers Hub founder Denis Kolga attends the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos. Minsk Hub is among 50 Hubs of the Global Shapers Community honoured to be represented at the prestigious event. At the WEF the Belarusian presents an idea to set up in Belarus a long-lasting international platform, which would deal with resolution of conflicts which affect post-Soviet countries.

Education

[Call for sections for the 6th International Congress of Belarusian Studies](#). Organising committee announces call for sections for the 6th International Congress of Belarusian

Studies that will take place on 7-9 October 2016 in Kaunas, Lithuania. Sections (panels) can be disciplinary, thematic or focus on particular narrow problems. Application deadline is 15 March.

[Eastern European School of Political Studies \(EESPS\)](#) in cooperation with the Council of Europe announces a call for fellows. Belarusian citizens under 35 years old are invited to participate. The program includes three or four educational sessions, the first of which is scheduled in Ukraine, and the last – in Strasbourg (the World Forum for Democracy). Deadline for application is 16 February.

[Good Neighbour](#). The Office for European Expertise and Communications (OEEC) launches a new service under the Leadership in Local Communities program. The new program *Good Neighbour* will offer free consultations, mentorship assistance and thematic workshops in the field of community development to Leadership course participants and any interested activists across Belarus.

Interaction between state and civil society

[Student activist got expelled from the Belarusian State University](#). Hleb Vaikul is the participant of the student march of *Love and Solidarity* that took place in Minsk, on 2 December 2015. Later he was fined Br3.24 mln (around \$170) for violating the order of holding mass events and expelled from Philology Faculty on grounds of [alleged poor progress](#). According to the student, the real reason of his being withdrawn is his public activity.

[Authorities want to deprive Ales Bialiacki of place of residence](#). Ales Bialiacki, the head of the Human Rights centre *Viasna*, has received a ruling from the department of

enforcement of judgments that a part of his flat falls under arrest. According to the writ of execution, 18/100th share of Ales Bialiacki's flat, in which he lives permanently with his family, shall be arrested as part of the property to be confiscated, within his criminal case of 2011.

[Perspektiva was refused the premises for the forum](#). The Forum of Entrepreneurs is scheduled for 25 January but all attempts to find the venue in Minsk failed. Accordingly, Perspektiva NGO that organised the [previous forums](#) has released a statement, that declares that the Forum is thwarted by authorities, but Perspektiva is to continue to operate under the legal framework. The [statement](#) has been published on Facebook page of Perspektiva Head Anatoli Shumchanka, as the Perspektiva's [website isn't available](#).

[BAJ appeals to president's administration on persecution of freelancers](#). The Belarusian Association of Journalists sent a request to the president's administration with the view to clarifying the reasons for the renewed persecution against some journalists under article 22.9 (unlawful production and distribution of mass media products). To the moment, the total number of [cases](#) is 38; the total sum of the fines in 2015 amounted to 8,000 euro.

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.