

# EU Support, Modernisation and Russia's Interests – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

Belarusians have become less interested in the pro-European vector of development as the influence of Russia in the country grows. Belarusian analysts hope that Stefen Fulle's European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarus will soon become meaningful and that the EU will focus more on working with the people, and not only respond to the actions of the illegitimate Belarusian authorities.

[Support for EU in Serious Decline](#) – The Belarusian Institute of Strategic Studies (BISS) analyses the March 2012 public opinion poll data of the Independent Institute for Social, Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS). According to BISS, data from the March poll brought a dramatic end to the relative balance in the geopolitical choice of Belarusians: 47 per cent of respondents support Russia, while only 37 per cent show support to EU.

This means a 10 per cent decline in EU support since the presidential elections in December 2010 and a 23.5 per cent drop from the pro-EU peak one year ago. In domestic politics, while Lukashenka's electoral rating grew 10 points from December to 34.5 per cent, 77 per cent of the population still believes that the country's economy is stuck in crisis.

[Civil Society Perspective on the Development of the Situation in Belarus](#) – Alena Zuikova, an analyst at Centre for European Transformation, prepared a brief overview of Belarusian experts and CSOs leaders' opinions on the current situation in Belarus with some important conclusions that can be made for EU policy towards Belarus. The paper appeared following the Forum of Belarusian Non-Governmental Initiatives in Warsaw

(15-16 March 2012).

One of the report's conclusions is that in order to not to hurt the democratic community in Belarus, the EU has to be very balanced and moderate in its relations with the Belarusian authorities. But the “more for more” and “less for less” principles should remain. The application of this principle should also target civil society in Belarus as well and being oriented towards people, and not only respond to the actions of the illegitimate Belarusian authorities.

[European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarus](#) – Responding to the initiative of the European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarus, a number of Belarusian think tanks and CSOs (Andrei Yahorau, Elena Tonkacheva, Ulad Vialichka, Dina Shavtsova, Vladimir Dunaev) put forward their positions regarding the principles, the possible framework and the content of the process. They urge organising broad public consultations with civil society and the political opposition in Belarus on the mechanisms and procedures for the dialogue, the role and place of civil society, the potential tools for the dialogue's support by the EU

[European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarus: Reality or Illusion?](#) – journalist Elena Daneyka tries to define the meaning of the new EU initiative European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarus, announced by Stefan Fule. Potential participants from the Belarusian side hope that the authors of the initiative will be able to fill it with real content.

[Russia is interested in the isolation of Belarus and more repression against the opposition](#) – Liudmila Hraznova, a former member of the Belarusian parliament who is currently a human rights activist gives her vision of why over forty participants of the peaceful Chernobyl Way demonstration permitted by the authorities were detained and some were beaten. She believes that if something is difficult to explain

from the point of view of Belarusian national interests, then the most likely explanation is the effect of Russia's influence. She thinks that it is time not to be silent about the fact that Russia is interested in the isolation of Belarus from the West and in keeping the Belarusian pro-Western opposition as weak as possible.

[The Distance between Smolensk and Moscow is 300 km but a Tomahawk Flies Fast](#) – Alexander Alesin, an analyst of Belarusians and the Market, examines Russia's interests with respect to Belarus. In particular, the expert believes that the military-strategic importance of Belarus is the essence of Russian interests. The report was presented at the conference titled Rubicon-2012: Prospects for modernization and reform in Belarus (Tallinn, 30-31 March 2012).

[Between Dialogue and a Policy of Double Standards](#) – analyst Pavel Usov continues debate about the effectiveness of sanctions against the authoritarian regime and tries to answer the question of whether dialogue in relation to the authoritarian regime is more effective than sanctions, and if it could lead to real changes in the non-democratic system. The expert offers a definite answer: as long as Lukashenka is in power, any dialogue is doomed to fail.

[Dirty Games](#) – journalist Svetlana Kalinkina considers why only two activists were released, and not all of the political prisoners. She believes that the recent events are "not a political thaw, but just games in mercy and pardon, punishment and justice. These dirty games should definitely be stopped."

[Lukashenko, Bynet and Casus Xenia:](#) Former Head of National TV and Radio Company Alexander Zimovskiy reflects on the public debate which emerged following the propagandistic [‘I am from the village’ music video](#) by a 13-year old Xenia Degelko. The negative public outcry (hundreds of thousands of online comments), in Zimovskiy's opinion, has nothing to do with the singer, but with government policies and life in Belarus. He

concludes that the regime received bad news: the number of those who cannot stand the status quo and are simply waiting to show the government their frustration is much higher than the announced 26 per cent – it is a six or seven-digit number.

["Political": the Dots Above "i"](#) – the deputy head of *Viasna* Valentin Stefanovich describes a human rights perspective in the recognition or non-recognition of "political" cases. The human rights defender explains why *Viasna* does not recognise the political character of criminal cases of anarchists Alexander Kruty, Yuri Chygileichik and Alexander Molchanov.

[Belarusian Political Talk Show Settled on YouTube](#) – *Deutsche Welle* reports that Lukashenka's opponents, having no access to television, put their video blogs, in particular, political talk shows, on YouTube: for example, "European cuisine" (movement "For Freedom") and "Mad Tea Party" (Yevgeniy Lipkovich and Vladimir Matskevich).

*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.