

Freedom Day 2019, dance flash mob, anti-fake news campaign – Civil Society Digest

A campaign aiming to improve the situation in prisons and help former prisoners kicks off. *Nashe Mnenie* expert network finds out that the value of rights per se has grown significantly for Belarusians. TUT.BY chief editor Maryna Zolatava to stand trial in BelTA case on February 12. Mediakritika.by portal kicks off an online project about fake news.

The organizing committee applies for Freedom Day 2019. Minsk will hold a flash mob against gender-based violence. Authorities allow citizens to propose amendments to draft laws. Two Belarusian CSO activists take part in the World Economic Forum in Davos.

[Freedom Day 2019](#). On January 16, the organizing committee applied for holding a mass event to Minsk municipality. The organizers believe that up to 30,000 people may appear at the celebration of the 101st anniversary of the Belarusian People's Republic (BNR). The scenario includes marching from Kastychnitskaya street to Dynamo Stadium, a rally and concert. A fundraising campaign is [open](#).

[Authorities allow citizens to propose amendments to draft laws](#). The Council of Ministers' resolution introduces a possibility to discuss bills at the official Legal Forum. At the same time, the state limits the initiative to submit bills to the public. In general, independent experts welcome the new law – the state, though with a lot of reservations, seems ready to listen to the citizens' opinion.

[Dance flash mob against gender-based violence](#) will be held in Minsk, on Valentine's Day, February 14. The flash mob as a part of the One Billion Rising international campaign aims to

put an end to the bullying of women, and with the help of mass dances demonstrate solidarity with the victims of violence. Marching, Baby! initiative organizes the action in Minsk. The exact location is to be confirmed.

Human Rights

[Investigation of Zakharanka, Hanchar and Krasouski's cases is suspended](#). The state has stopped looking for the opponents of the authorities who went missing 19 years ago and for the people guilty of their disappearance. The relatives will appeal this decision.

[Return a Person human rights public campaign kicked off](#). The campaign aims to improve the situation in prisons and help former prisoners in their socialization. The campaign also intends to seek the possibility of visiting places of detention. The campaign was initiated by the Belarusian Documentation Center together with partner human rights organizations.



One of dance flash mobs in Minsk. Source: grodnonews.by

[Belarusian rating of human rights](#). In December 2018, *Nashe*

Mnenie (Our Opinion in English) expert network commissioned a poll on the question, which rights and freedoms seem to be the most important for Belarusians. Thus, Belarusians highly value social rights, to a lesser extent – economic, even less – political. But compared with 2013, the value of rights per se has grown significantly for Belarusians.

Media

[19 Belarusian media will be monitored](#) since February 2019. Press Club Belarus launches a large Media IQ campaign that will monitor 15 online media and four TV channels to observe journalism standards and detect signs of misinformation, propaganda, and manipulative techniques. The campaign will also organize media schools for high school pupils and promote media literacy among Belarusians.

[TUT.BY chief editor Maryna Zolatava to stand trial in BelTA case](#) on February 12. For the first time in the history of modern Belarus, the chief editor will be tried on charges of offences related to the professional activities. Zolatava remains the only accused person in the so-called [BelTA case](#), an investigation into alleged unauthorized access to paid services of the government-owned news agency.

[Special project FAKES. Everything you need to know about fake news in 2019](#). Mediakritika.by portal kicked off an online project about fake news to answers the actual questions: what fakes are and how to recognize them; what real consequences of virtual fakes are; how to deal with fakes around the world at different levels and what is the future of fake news.

Education

[Whitepaper 2018: European prospects of Belarusian higher education](#). The Public Bologna Committee released the 2nd

whitepaper on the implementation of the Bologna commitments by Belarus. The authors not only state the numerous problems of Belarusian higher education but also outline a program of action for modernization. The authors [present](#) the report at the Press Club, on February 5.

[BISS is launching its first educational project Be Critical.](#)

The project of the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) is meant to promote critical thinking in the Belarusian society, especially among youth. It is to include a range of activities like video-lectures, training, and textbooks. The introductory video lecture is [available](#) (in Belarusian).

[Mova Nanova celebrates its 5th anniversary.](#) The first classes of [Mova Nanova](#) (Language Anew in English) free courses of Belarusian language, were held in Minsk on January 13, 2014. Now the classes take place in 14 cities and attended by over 3,500 people. Organizers call to [donate](#) for courses through the crowdfunding platform Talaka.

Entrepreneurship

[Two Belarusian CSO activists take part in the World Economic Forum in Davos.](#) They are Andrey Yeliseev, *East Center* research director, and Lyudmila Batura, an employee of one of the UN regional offices. Both activists represent Minsk Global Shapers Hub, an international network of young professionals under the WEF auspices.



Mova Nanova courses. Source: nn.by

[Individual entrepreneurs seek a meeting with Lukashenka](#). They collected almost 7 thousand signatures on an appeal to the president with a request to meet. The chairperson of the *Perspektiva* CSO met with the head of the presidential administration to deliver the appeal. Entrepreneurs want to discuss urgent problems of small business with Lukashenka.

[Index of the Good for business](#). The social fund *Dobra* (the *Good* in English) will measure the social responsibility of the Belarusian business – how much a company cares about people and the environment. The index aims to motivate companies to more active communication with consumers and organizations that implement social projects.

Other

[Belarusian Foreign Minister answers to Brigitte Bardot](#). In December 2018, the famous actress and animal rights activist Brigitte Bardot [appealed](#) to Alexander Lukashenka with an open letter in which she asked to protect homeless animals of Belarus. In response, Belarus MFA Head Vladimir Makei expressed deep respect to Bardot and thanked her for the valuable advice.

[Belarus slips to 70th place in Global Corruption Index 2018.](#)

The Transparency International's [index](#) measures 180 countries on a scale of 0 to 100, where 0 is highly corrupt and 100 is very clean. Since last year Belarus has moved down from 68th position to 70th with 44 scores. The country made a serious leap at the end of 2016 – from 107th to 79th place.

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.