

“I’m From a Village”, China Industrial Park, Bialyatski – Politics & Civil Society Digest

□A propaganda-style music video "I'm From a Village" by a 13-year old girl was the breaking news of the week in online media. Other notable development include public debate on the proposed China Industrial Park in Belarus and the EU's new initiative "European Dialogue on Modernization of Belarus". At the same time Belarus was denied entering the Bologna process.

Patriotic rap song "I'm From a Village" ‘blew up’ internet. Ksenia Dziahelka, a 13-year-old Belarusian schoolgirl and member of a pioneer organisation from the town of Oktyabrsky (Gomel oblast) sings, in a propaganda style, about the stability and prosperity of Belarus. [Amateur video](#) of this rap song has attracted significant attention and sharp reactions from Internet users.

The video gathered more than 450,000 views on YouTube in less than a week and generated over 3,000 comments. The views grew significantly after a [program](#) praising the girl "talent" on state TV on April 19th. To compare: Belarusian history [animation video](#) of the Budzma campaign has about 360,000 YouTube views from the end of May 2011.

Officials agree with public on China Industrial Park. On April 16, the talk show ["Open format"](#) on the state TV channel ONT was devoted to private property and discussion of building of a China-Belarusian industrial park. During the talk-show officials agreed with the arguments of the campaign "Tell the

Truth" and residents of Smolevichi area and acknowledged that the authorities should hold open public hearings, if the question is intimately related to the well-being of citizens.

Minsk city executive committee gave permission for Chernobyl Way-2012. The march will be held [on April 26](#) from the Academy of Sciences to the park Friendship of Nations. This year the organizing committee consists of BPF, the Movement "For Freedom", UCP, campaign "Tell the truth", Young Front, the party "Fair World", European Belarus, NGO Ecodom.

Byalyatski ordered to pay more. A judge of the Pershamayski District Court in Minsk has ordered imprisoned human rights defender [Ales Byalyatski](#) to pay a late charge of Br140.3 million (\$17,500) and Br7.1 million (\$890) in litigation costs.

Lukashenka postponed address to the nation. Alexander Lukashenka [postponed his annual address](#) to the National Assembly and the Belarusian people, which was originally scheduled for April 19, ordering speechwriters to rewrite parts of the text that focused on privatization and foreign policy.

Ignore-2012. Eight youth organizations launched the joint campaign "Ignore-2012" [to boycott the parliamentary elections](#). Young Front, Young Democrats, Young Hramada, European Belarus, the initiative Zmena and the Young Christian Democrats call on older politicians to join forces against Lukashenka's dictatorship like young CSOs.

Civil Society

Nobel Committee registers Ales Byalyatski's nomination for Peace Prize. The Nobel Committee has admitted the nomination of [Viasna leader Ales Byalyatski](#) for the 2012 Peace Prize. Byalyatski's nomination was submitted by a number of Polish MPs and later signed by several members of the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly.

Round table on European dialogue. On April 20, Minsk hosted a round table "[European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarus: Challenges and Prospects](#)", organized in the framework of the National Platform of EP's Civil Society Platform. The event was attended by around 30 representatives of Belarusian think tanks and CSOs. The participants discussed current challenges and prospects for the new initiative of the EU for Belarus, including the organization of the dialogue, its format and content.

Journalists tried to find common ground with the police. Belarusian independent journalists [visited three Minsk police departments](#) to meet with their heads. Journalists prepared a special appeal and [leaflets](#) reminding about journalists' rights guaranteed by the Constitution and the law on mass media.

Fundraising campaign for new children's hospice. On April 17, NGO "[Belarusian Children's Hospice](#)" organised a press conference devoted to the construction of a new building of a children's hospice in Borovlyany (Minsk region). The NGO launches new projects to raise funds for the construction, including a new website with appropriate information – about the process of collecting the money, etc. Also, the campaign "400 thousand of caring" will offer to people to purchase "bricks" and thus contribute to the construction of the building.

Foreign Policy

Makey warns EU over ambassadors' return. The ambassadors of European Union member states will be allowed to return to Belarus after the 27-nation bloc displays its readiness to lift its sanctions on the country's individuals and economic entities, Uladzimir Makey, head of the Presidential Administration, [told a group of hand-picked reporters](#) in Minsk on April 17.

Belarus to loosen EU border control. Belarus plans [to loosen control](#) over travelers and goods crossing the country's border into the European Union in response to the 27-nation bloc's sanctions. Speaking on condition of anonymity, the official from the State Border Committee warned that the Belarusian border control service would give priority to control over people and goods traveling to Belarus from the EU.

Belarus banned from Bologna process for three years. Belarus is [banned from the Bologna process](#) for at least another three years. The question of accession is completely removed from the agenda of the Summit of Ministers of Education of the European Higher Education Area, which will be held on April 26-27. Belarus will get a chance to join the Bologna process again only in 2015.

Belarus and U.S. mutually raised cost of visas. On April 13, U.S. [raised](#) the size of the consular fees for the issuance of nonimmigrant visas for Belarusian citizens. In response, the Belarusian authorities have increased the cost of visas for the U.S. citizens.

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.