

# IMF, FDI and Security Discussed in Minsk – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Belarus hosts events focused on Belarus's place in the region, the role of FDI in modernisation of the Belarusian economy, and corporate social responsibility.

Street artists from different countries will paint Minsk walls based on urban folklore during the Urban Myths festival, which runs from June to November 2015. Read about the upcoming conferences, competitions, and exhibitions in Belarus Civil Society Digest.

## Public Discussions

[Idea online journal organises the first public event](#) to host a speaker from the International Monetary Fund in Belarus. The guest is the IMF senior representative in Central and Eastern Europe Mr. James Roaf. The expert will present his office's special report '25 Years of Transition: Post-Communist Europe and the IMF'. The meeting starts at 7 pm, on April 23, at the Minsk Imaguru Business Club.

[Conference 2014: Belarus and the Region](#) was held by Belarus Security Blog Project, on March 28. The event attracted both local experts and their counterparts from the Belarusian diaspora. The event was dedicated to the most important events in the country and in the region over the past year. According to the organisers, the conference was held on a minor note: Belarus is still interested in the world more than the world is interested in it.

[Foreign Direct Investments: Driver for Modernisation of the Belarusian Economy](#) round table is organised by the Association

of European Business in cooperation with the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS). Belarusian experts will present the recommendations that have been drafted as a part of REFORUM project for the government on how to improve the business climate in Belarus in order to attract foreign direct investment into the country. The event will take place on April 24, in Crowne Plaza Hotel.

[Discussion 'Corporate social responsibility \(CSR\) for small and medium businesses'](#) will be held on April 29, in Minsk. Experts from Ukraine and Belarus will talk about the opportunities that CSR has for business companies, including in times of economic crisis. Business professionals, entrepreneurs and representatives of private companies are invited to participate in the discussion. The event is organised by ODB (Brussels) in partnership with the Association of European Business (Minsk).

## **Campaigns**

[Leadership in Local Communities course sums up results.](#) On March 28, a graduation meeting of the Fellowship Program *Leadership in Local Communities* took place near Minsk. The event summed up the key results of the long-term education course for Belarusian community leaders, implemented by the Office for European Expertise and Communications (OEEC) in partnership with Pact. Namely, under the program the fellows managed to involve in activities about 1,000 local residents and mobilised local resources for implementing more than 20 local initiatives. The OEEC website has started to post [real cases](#) of the fellows' achievements.

[29 Belarusian CSOs sign the collective proposal for changes in the rules of foreign aid.](#) The CSOs' proposals have become a response to changes in legislation on obtaining and using foreign aid. The Center for Legal Transformation *Lawtrend* and the NGO Assembly took the initiative to develop a consolidated position on behalf of the third sector. Inter alia, CSOs offer

to introduce the notification principle to receive foreign aid.

[Results of the Week against Racism in Belarus](#). On March 14-22, Belarusian human rights defenders held a series of actions and activities within the European Week Against Racism. Young activists have prepared videos on the topic of racism featuring Belarusian intellectuals, organised a public lecture and film screening as well as posted their photos on Facebook.

[Free screenings of films about the problems of people with autism](#). Film screenings are held on April 3-8 in Minsk and supported by the U.S. Embassy in Belarus, Kufar.by company and the initiative *Good Jam for Good People*. The event aims focus public attention on the problems of social inclusion of people with autism.

#### **Exhibitions and Competitions**

[VI Belarus Press Photo competition awarded its winners](#) on April 16, at the Minsk Gallery [TUT.BY](#). Winners in 8 categories and the Grand Prix were selected from among 137 authors, who submitted for the competition more than 2,000 works – series and single photos. Belarus Press Photo is an open independent press photography contest, organised in 2009 by the Belarusian photojournalists with the support of photo portal ZNYATA.

[Winners of the annual Svetlana Naumova award](#) were identified at the ceremony conducted by the civil campaign *Govori Pravdu*, on March 27. Charity store *Kali Laska* won in the nomination The Project of the Year; Hope of the Year went to activist Oleg Korban, *Alternatyva* NGO leader; Analyst of the Year – to Yury Drakakhrust; the Journalist of the Year – to Dmitry Galko, the author of a series of reports from Donbas.□

[Urban Myths Festival](#). Street artists from different countries will paint Minsk walls based on urban folklore during the Urban Myths festival, which runs from June to November 2015. It will bring together artists from Belarus, Brazil, Spain,

Ukraine, Poland, Russia and Sweden. The project is initiated by street art community Signal. Part of the funds for the festival is planned to collect through Belarusian crowdfunding platform [Talacosht](#).

[Exhibition 'Person Holding a Flower'](#) opened in the new premises of TSEKH on April 14. The exhibition presents photos of blind Natalia Kavalevich and photographer Anastasia Hralovich and plunges into the world of a blind person. During the exhibition, until May 15, the organisers promise to conduct a few tours with a blindfold and a cane, as well as master classes for children.

#### **Other Developments**

[Lukashenka doesn't prepare a successor and advises the opposition to change ideology](#). In his interview with Bloomberg, Lukashenka said that the Belarusian opposition demonstrates that "they are not ready to take power in Belarus and keep the country." Meanwhile, two opposition political forces – [Volha Karatch](#), the Nash Dom civil campaign leader, and [Movement For Freedom](#) – made official statements that they will not take part in the presidential election in 2015. Journal *Ideaby* produces an infographics that [explains all the links within the Belarusian opposition](#) – who is friends with whom and against whom.

[Belarus takes the 78th place of 102 countries in the Open Government Index 2015](#), released by the World Justice Project (WJP). The best result Belarus has in the category "complaint mechanisms" (52nd place), the worst – "civic participation" (93rd place). The WJP Open Government Index 2015 is the first effort to measure government openness based on the general public's experiences and perceptions worldwide.

[Belarus is ranked 52th in the Passport Index](#). Based on collected data, the site enlists a Visa Free Score per passport. Points are accumulated based on each visa-free

country that holders can visit, meaning they can either visit without a visa or obtain one upon arrival. Belarusian passport holder can visit 66 countries without visa or get visa on border. [Visa Restrictions Index](#) put Belarus on the 67th place and counted that Belarusians may visit 63 countries without visas. □

*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.*