

Minsk City Guide, Street Theatre Festival, Movaveda – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Foreigners coming to Minsk for the Ice Hockey World Championship get useful tips what to see and do in the city. Digital magazine 34mag.net has revised its Minsk guide for English-speaking tourists

Budzma launches a new cultural campaign 'Be Belarusian Women'.

Movaveda, a new language course starts soon and invites Belarusians to learn their native language.

Guides to the IHWC in Minsk. An avant-garde digital magazine 34mag.net has updated [English Minsk guide](#) for the IIHF World Championship 2014. Now the guide has more sections like transport, lodging, coffeehouses, pubs, cultural sights as well an interactive map. Some other thematic guidebooks have been released by CSOs to the IHWC – information for foreign journalists by [BAJ](#) and [Solidarity with Belarus Information Office](#), useful tips to keep safe by [Belarusian Helsinki Committee and Penal Reform Int](#), description of touristic sites by [Belarus Digest](#).

[New courses on Belarusian language launched in Minsk.](#) The courses titled as *Movaveda* start on May 22. The lessons are to be conducted weekly, on Thursdays. The courses have already attracted a wide public attention due to their bright promotional videos based on the known movies – [Sherlock and Language](#), [300 Linguists](#), and [Ivan Vasiljevich Changes his Language](#).

[The project ABC Business for Rural Youth summed up the results.](#) On 3 May Youth Business Ideas Fair was held

in Smarhon, Hrodna voblast. The Fair announced winners of the contest on promoting business and creative initiatives of rural youth. Twelve projects of pupils and students got to the final; the first place went to a project on computer literacy for older people. The contest was organized by the local NGO *Selchanka*, local charity fund *Ahinski Northern Athens* in cooperation with local authorities and business companies.

Cultural campaigns

[New project from *Budzma* for females](#). The cultural campaign *Budzma* invites Belarusian women to participate in a new project *Be Belarusian Females* that provides the thematic meetings and discussions, sharing experiences and finding new solutions. At the first stage the most active participants will attend a workshop *Women Go!* that will be held in Warsaw (Poland) in June-July 2014.

[Change the World Together! exhibition](#). *Change the World Together!* exhibition was opened on 3 May in the Centre of Modern Arts (Minsk) with the support of World without Borders Charitable NGO, the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare, etc. The exhibition presents the works of persons with mental and physical disabilities and aims to draw public attention to their problems as well as integrate them into the society on the principles of respect and understanding. The exhibition works until 30 May.

[Education programme at the Street Theatre Festival](#). On 10-11 May Minsk hosted artists from Europe to participate in [the Second Minsk Street Theatre Festival](#) and International Festival of Street Arts *Grand Teatro*. This year a partner of the forum is the International Consortium *EuroBelarus* that has prepared an extensive educational program – free lectures and discussions about the theatre, workshops on juggling, interactive theatre and performance, work on images of living sculptures, etc.

Political activity

[Govori Pravdu campaign is looking for MPs who said "Yes"](#). *Govori Pravdu* campaign made a call to every member of a Parliament to appoint a meeting about [People's referendum](#) on behalf of 50 000 citizens who signed petition supporting referendum. The campaign is going to meet each MP next few months to ask how they treat the priority issues raised by the People's referendum and put the talks into Internet. As only 43 out of 110 MPs knew when they are going to meet their voters, the activists proposed to the Parliament their assistance to create one subpage on the web with a timetable of MPs meetings.

[Statement of CSOs in connection with the deaths of people in Odessa and Eastern Ukraine](#). On 6 May the Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum issued a statement in connection with the deaths of people in Odessa and Eastern Ukraine. The statement urges the international community to take action to help resolve the situation, in particular to halt Russian aggression towards Ukraine.

Interaction between state and civil society

[Preventive detentions ahead of IHWC](#). Belarusian authorities continue practise of preventive detentions of its citizens ahead of Ice Hockey World Championship 2014. In general, the activists are being detained on similar grounds such as "disorderly conduct" and "disobedience to the law-enforcement officials". As of 9 May about 30 activists were sentenced to administrative arrests; they together will spend [432 days in jail](#).

[Andrej Hajdukou released](#). On 8 May Andrej Hajdukou was released from the Viciebsk jail at the expiration of his term. He was convicted on 1 July 2013 for "attempt to establish cooperation with the special service, security or intelligence agency of a foreign state" and sentenced to 1.5 years in

prison. Andrej Hajdukou was in [the list of political prisoners](#) of the Human Rights Centre *Viasna*.

[Minister of Culture met with the head of Tuzin.fm](#). On 7 May Minister of Culture of Belarus, Boris Svetlov met with Sergei Budkin, Head of the independent music portal Tuzin.fm. The meeting was held at the Ministry of Culture and primarily touched on a project *Re: Piesniary*, dedicated to the 45th anniversary of the famous Belarusian band. Sergei Budkin also raised the issue of the recent refusals to certificate concerts for a bunch of independent Belarusian artists.

[TBM contributed to the creation of a new envelope](#). The state-run entity Belposhta recently released a new envelope within a series *Famous people of Belarus*, dedicated to a public figure Iosif Hashkevich (diplomat, orientalist, naturalist). This was a proposal of the Belarusian Language Society NGO to create such an envelope.

[Europe Day in Belarus](#). To mark Europe Day 2014, Embassies of EU Member States in Belarus and the Delegation of the EU to Belarus present a program of events. The year 2014 marks 100 years since the start of WWI, a turning point in the history of Europe, and the 10th anniversary of the 2004 EU enlargement. Some of the events on this year's program are themed accordingly, but there's something in it for everyone – hockey fans and gourmands, researchers and cinema goers, music lovers and history buffs.

[Support Program for Belarus starts the 7th phase of the German-Belarusian partnership](#). The main objective of the Program is to assist non-state actors, together operating under the German- Belarusian partnership initiatives, in collaboration with state organisations for the sustainable development of the society at the national and regional levels. The Program calls for proposals from Belarusian registered NGOs, German non-profit organisations, state institutions and government

bodies, as well as business entities in partnership with NGOs. Applications should be submitted until 15 July 2014.

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.