

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 answer 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.

Conflict with Russia, the first crypto exchange in the

world – digest of Belarusian analytics

Belarus finds itself in another conflict-in-progress with Russia, with a growing wave of Russian information attacks on Belarus. Belarus lifts restrictions on the number of US diplomats in Minsk, however, a breakthrough in Belarus-USA relations remains unlikely.

Belarus's economic growth will slow down in 2019/2021. Belarus has got potential for reducing the generation of waste and expanding the substitution of primary resources with secondary raw materials.

World's first crypto exchange launched in Belarus. Belarusian opened a hostel at the foot of a nuclear power plant. Belarus allows foreigners to register online. Minsk airport tops World's Most Punctual Airports. To learn more visit cryptonews.com – [Current Up to date crypto news](#).

This and more in the new digest of Belarusian analytics.

Politics

[Belarus and Russia Dispute the Fundamentals of Their Relationship](#) – Yauheni Preiherman notes that over the past several months, Belarus has found itself in yet another conflict-in-progress with Russia, with a growing wave of Russian information attacks on Belarus. The analyst believes that relations with Russia are absolutely crucial for Minsk and will remain so for a long time and under any government. But Belarus is not going to trade its sovereignty to preserve the status quo in relations.

[Belarus – US: There Will Be No Breakthrough. Blitz Comment #1](#) – Andrei Kazakevich comments on a recent report on the

lifting of restrictions on the number of US diplomats in Minsk. He believes that the full-fledged work of the embassy will expand the relations between countries but doesn't mean qualitative changes. The Blitz-Comment is a new joint analytical [project](#) of BISS and *Nashe Mnenie* expert community.

[Is Annexation of Belarus Really Imminent?](#) – Belarus is not a former Soviet republic, Edward Lucas, a reputed British writer and security policy expert, stated in an interview with Belsat TV. He reduced the likelihood of a dramatic scenario in Belarus-Russia relations and noted positive changes in the country.



Belarus's Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makei. Source: tut.by

Economics

[Business self-regulation in Belarus: the case of advertising business – from declaration to implementation.](#) Nikita Belyaev and Evgeny Mordosevich from Liberal Club research business self-regulation in Belarus on the case-study of the advertising business. To ensure the promotion of self-regulation in the Republic of Belarus as a whole, it is necessary to develop a form of incorporation for the self-regulatory organization.

[Effectuation processes, gender, innovativeness and performance of SMEs: the case of Belarus.](#) Maryia Akulava from BEROC explores the link between the applied effectuation principles, the gender of the leader and SMEs financial and innovative functioning on the Belarusian example. The findings also clearly indicate women being more prone to the hybrid decision-making strategy than men.

[World Bank: Belarus' economic growth will slow down in 2019/2021](#). According to the data in Global Economic Prospects [report](#), the annual growth rate for Belarusian economy may slow down to 2.7% in 2019 and down to 2.5% in 2020/21. The lack of structural reforms may leave to increased political uncertainty.

Human rights

[Authorities Performing Balancing Act Between Their Interests and Human Rights](#) – Valyantsin Stefanovich, HRC Viasna, notes that the number of politically motivated criminal cases went down in 2018 but this may be due to the lack of important political events. This year, 18 people became the targets of politically motivated

[UN: Prisoner executions in Belarus 'simply unacceptable'](#). The continued use of the death penalty in Belarus has been condemned by an authoritative UN rights body after three men were reportedly executed there, despite its requests for clemency. Belarus remains the last country in Europe and Central Asia that applies the death penalty.

[Sweep. Green Light for Some, Red Cards for Others](#) – Yanina Melnikava, MediaKritika, overviews the rapid change of the Belarusian information space. The journalist points to the prosecution of the leading online resources, the introduction of mandatory user authorization, the emergence of Russian actors on the market that can result in serious consequences not only for the media sector but also for national security in general.

Security

[Can Russia Devour Belarus? Really?](#) – The conflict between Minsk and Moscow about the tax manoeuvre gives rise to fears

that Russia is preparing to join Belarus. Several articles on this topic appeared in major Western media like [The Washington Post](#), [Bloomberg](#), [Independent](#). In the [TUT.BY](#) new video project *Chewed*, Artyom Shraibman convinces that it's too early for supporters of Belarus's independence to panic.

[Belarus Inside the Bear Hug. And Its Geopolitical Predicament After the Ukraine Crisis](#) – Aliaksei Kazharski, PONARS, in his policy memo notes that the 2014 crisis between Russia and Ukraine has produced new security concerns in Minsk related to a hypothetical Russian intervention and occupation of Belarus. But the crisis has also allowed Minsk to reap some short-term diplomatic benefits and improve its image in the West.

[New Union State Military Doctrine Will Not Change Status Quo in Belarusian-Russian Military Alliance](#) – Arseny Sivistky doesn't believe that a new Military Doctrine of the Union State of Russia and Belarus will include provisions for the establishment of a Russian military base on Belarusian soil. But what is almost certain is that Minsk will seek to exercise its veto power to block the adoption of any political and military decisions inconsistent with its national interests.

Other

[World's first crypto exchange launched in Belarus](#). Currency.com platform allows traders to buy shares, gold, [pink diamonds](#), foreign exchange and other traditional assets with cryptocurrencies from Belarus and other countries. The project was launched by two investment companies led by Viktor Prokopenya and Said Gutseriev.

[Belarusian opened a hostel at the foot of a nuclear power plant](#). 18 km from Astravets town. The hostel is in demand among workers who are building the first Belarusian nuclear power plant. The hostel manager is confident that the place is safe, because "the degree of protection against radiation is

very strong”.



Inside Minsk Airport. Source: airport.by

[Belarus allows foreigners to register online](#). Foreigners arriving in Belarus can register online and free starting January 2, 2019. Thus, foreign visitors to Belarus are no longer obliged to visit registration offices in person. The registration of tourists can be done through the unified portal of e-services within 5 business days after arrival.

[Minsk airport tops World's Most Punctual Airports](#), according to Punctuality League for 2019. Minsk National Airport claimed the first place in the category of the best-performing small airports (2.5-5 million seats) with 92.35% of flights arrived or departed on time. 'On-time' is defined as departures and arrivals that take place strictly less than 15 minutes after schedule.

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Belarusian independent think tanks: surviving despite the

odds

Although people rightly regard the Belarusian political regime as authoritarian, several independent think tanks function in the country. In this article, Belarus Digest identifies some of the main players, drawing on data from the [Belarus Policy](#) database and a ranking prepared by the Belarusian Research Council in 2016.

Belarusian independent think tanks mostly specialise in economics, international relations, security, public administration, or education reforms. Very few attempts have been made to measure the performance of Belarusian think tanks. According to estimates by the Belarusian Research Council in 2016, BEROC, BISS, CASE Belarus, and the Ostrogorski Centre possess the highest organisational potential and widest information outreach. Despite their ostensibly limited influence on the state apparatus, Belarusian independent think tanks generate ideas, some of which actually do influence policy-making. Click on <https://immigrationlawnv.com/es/> to access the best legal information to win your case.

The organisational potential of Belarusian think tanks

In 2016, the Belarus Research Council [ranked](#) Belarusian independent think tanks according to their organisational potential, information outreach, and research activities. In terms of organisational potential, the Belarusian Institute of Strategic Studies (BISS), CASE-Belarus, and the Belarusian Research and Outreach Centre (BEROC) occupied the top three places. The Minsk-based [BISS](#) (Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies) conducts research in four target areas: human capital, social contract, modernisation and

institutional change. Moreover, BISS works in the area of international relations, focusing its work in three directions: Belarus as a part of Eurasian integration, the Belarus-EU relationship, and Belarus's relationship with developing nations.

The research database [Belaruspolicy.com](http://belaruspolicy.com) contains [50 research papers](#) prepared by BISS experts from 2009 to 2018. The BISS experts researched issues of the social contract between the state and various groups of Belarusian society, Belarus's isolation in Europe, and improving Belarusian competitiveness on a world stage. The BISS experts paid particular attention to the Belarusian national identity and Belarusian migration. The most popular research papers included the analysis of Belarusian [views on immigration](#) by [Alexei Pikulik](#) and the analysis of [migration](#) between Belarus and the EU by [Andrei Yeliseyeu](#).

The Warsaw-based [CASE Belarus](#) (Center for Social and Economic Research Belarus) conducts broad socio-economic analysis and sectoral studies, providing data and policy recommendations. Helping Belarus to avoid the mistakes of other post-socialist countries remains the key mission of CASE Belarus.



One of the research papers prepared by CASE Belarus. Source: case-belarus.eu

[Belaruspolicy.com](http://belaruspolicy.com) contains [31 papers](#) prepared by CASE Belarus experts from 2011 to 2018. The experts research covers the structural crisis of the Belarusian economy, the performance of Belarusian industries, and the potential for the development of market institutions in Belarus. Socio-economic problems also receive significant attention, in particular, environmental problems, poverty belts, the use of labour in the prison system, and reducing the role of orphanages.

The most popular research papers included an analysis of the unrealised [potential of Belarus-EU](#) economic cooperation edited by [Dzmitry Babicki](#) and a diagnosis of [“poverty belt” in Belarus](#) by [Aliaksandr Radyna](#).

The Minsk-based [BEROC](#) (Belarusian Economic Research and Outreach Centre) features among the leading economic academic think tanks in Belarus. The Centre started its work in 2008 as a joint project of the Stockholm Institute of Transition Economics (SITE) and the Economics Education and Research Consortium (EERC).

Belaruspolicy.com contains 82 papers prepared by BEROC's experts from 2010 to 2018. The experts' research encompasses foreign investments, inflation, macroeconomic trends, tax amnesties, liquidity and monetary policy in Belarus. Moreover, BEROC paid particular attention to the dollarisation of the Belarusian economy, the Belarusian pension system, and the role of private sector in Belarus. Among the most popular of BEROC's papers – an analysis of [self-employment in Belarus](#) by [Mariya Akulova](#) and a study of [depressed regions](#) in Belarus by [Aleh Mazol](#).

Information outreach

In terms of information outreach, the Belarusian Centre for European Studies, SYMPA/BIPART, the Ostrogorski Centre, and Liberal Club hold the leading positions. The Minsk-based Belarusian Centre for European Studies promotes closer relations between Belarus and the European Union and positions itself as an expert base for the European movement in Belarus. Apart from its research activities, the Centre administers an educational platform (ECLAB) and a discussion club “European Café”.

SYMPA (The School of Young Managers in Public Administration)/[BIPART](#) (Belarusian Institute for Public

Administration Reform and Transformation) conduct educational projects in the field of public administration and conduct research activities. Over recent years, BIPART's experts have researched [public procurement](#), [e-government](#), and [public-private partnerships](#) in Belarus.



Source: Majority of papers on Belarus Policy database

The [Ostrogorski Centre](#) analyses the problems Belarus faces in its transition to a market economy and the rule of law. The Centre [experts](#) transition processes in Belarus and provide policy solutions, often based on the best practices of other countries.

In addition, the Ostrogorski Centre regularly holds [conferences](#) on Belarusian [education reforms](#) and [security issues](#). Since 2013, the Ostrogorski Centre has prepared 12 research papers on [education reforms](#), [national security](#) and [foreign policy](#). The most popular papers include [“Who rules Belarus”](#) by [Siarhei Bohdan](#) and [“Belarus-Russia Relations after the Ukraine Conflict”](#) by [Ryhor Astapenia](#) and Dzmitry Balkuniec.

The Minsk-based [Liberal Club](#) focuses on research and dissemination of liberal paradigm in the context of the Belarusian socio-political, economic and cultural realities. Belarusprofile.com contains 14 papers written by the Liberal Club's experts from 2010 to 2018. The experts have calculated an index of [economic adequacy](#) of Belarus, proposed ways to stimulate [corporate social responsibility](#), and analysed Belarus's relations [with the EU and Russia](#) in the discourse of print media.

Analytical and research activities

In terms of analytical and research activities, BEROC, NMNE, and IPM Research Centre occupied the first three places. NMNE (or the expert community “Nashe Mnenie”) has provided daily analytics of Belarusian politics, economy, governance, society, cultural and gender policies since 2003.

The Minsk-based [IPM Research Centre](#) (The Research Center of the Institute for Privatisation and Management) has monitored and forecast the economic situation in Belarus since 1999. The most popular research papers by IPM’s experts on [Belaruspolicy.com](#) included [corruption studies](#) on Belarusian SMEs, an analysis of Belarusian SMEs development, and the prospects of Belarusian [business developments](#) in 2017.

Cooperation between independent think tanks and the state?

From time to time Belarusian independent think tanks conduct joint events with representatives of the state. Originally started as a [joint initiative](#) of the Liberal Club and the Ostrogoski Centre, and now run by the Liberal Club “Minsk Dialogue” has become a platform for the exchange of ideas on issues of foreign policy. On 23-25 May, the “Minsk Dialogue” expert community arranged an international forum, “Eastern Europe: in search for security for all”, with President Alexander Lukashenka and Foreign Minister Uladzimir Makei among the speakers.

One of BEROC’s flagship events is the annual KEF conference

which attracts top economists from the Belarusian government, such as the former first deputy prime minister [Vasil Maciusheuski](#) and top advisors from the National Bank of Belarus. The Ostrogorski Forum organises events in the area of education, attracting heads of faculties of Belarusian universities and high-level officials from the Ministry of Education.

In most cases, however, independent think tanks exert only very limited influence on Belarusian state policies. Government officials generally view think tanks with suspicion as many of them have to survive on funding from the West. The restrictive legal and political framework prevents think tanks from engaging properly with Belarusian businesses, apply for meaningful state funding or conduct large-scale joint projects with the government, particularly in areas viewed as politically sensitive.

Yarik Kryvoi & Olga Hryniuk

Corruption, Cooling Relations with Russia, CSR – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

Over the last weeks analysts covered a range of issues from corporate social responsibility to human rights. Belarus and Russia now undergo the period of cooling, the economy is deteriorating and the authorities are trying to implement reforms.

Belarus scores relatively well on corruption perception compared to Russia and Ukraine but still remains a not free

country according to international experts. This and more in this Digest of Belarusian analytics.

[Five Years of Corporate Social Responsibility in Belarus](#) –

Pact analyses Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) development in Belarus over the last 5 years. Five years ago, CSR was a virtually unknown concept in Belarus. Today, civic events such as Artist and the City and Jazz or Classic Music in the City have mobilised millions, raised private funds and made Minsk's public spaces more vibrant, diverse and European. The organiser of the mentioned events is Fond of Ideas, established with the assistance of Pact via its USAID supported BRAMA program.

[Capacity of Youth Non-Governmental Organisations and Initiative Groups for Cooperation in Addressing Common Objectives](#) –

The sector of youth NGOs is not the largest by the number of organisations, but pretty large by the number of participants; young people are not deeply involved in the activity of youth organisations, according to the fresh study commissioned by the Office for European Expertise and Communication (OEEC). The research was carried out by the Centre for European Transformation (CET) and [presented](#) on 19 January in Minsk.

Politics and human rights

[Semi-annual BISS-Trends \(July-December 2015\) issue](#) – The new issue of BISS-Trends focuses on the main trends in political democratisation; economic liberalisation; good governance and rule of law; geopolitical orientation; and cultural policy. In particular, the field of politics in the second half of 2015 was marked by progress, while the economy was characterised by the deterioration of the main macroeconomic indicators, accumulation and aggravation of old challenges.

[Human Rights Situation in Belarus: January 2016](#) – Human Rights Centre *Viasna* released its monthly monitoring that indicates that in January, there were no changes that would have

demonstrated the Belarusian authorities' will to reform the country's human rights situation. The month was marked by certain negative trends in comparison with the last three months of 2015. In particular, the authorities resumed the practise of administrative harassment of freelance journalists working with foreign media.

[OSCE/ODIHR released its final report on Belarus' October 2015 presidential elections](#). The report indicates that Belarus still has a considerable way to go in meeting its OSCE commitments for democratic elections. Chairperson of the Central Election Commission Lidia [Yermoshina](#) is satisfied with OSCE report and considers it constructive. The report was discussed at the [meeting](#) on 29 January of MFA Head Vladimir Makei with delegation of the OSCE/ODIHR and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly.

[Situation in the Field of National Security and Defense \(December 2015\)](#) – Belarus Security Blog has released its monthly national security monitoring. Namely, the experts conclude that it is obvious that Belarus and Russia have the period of cooling of the so far not excellent relations due to several reasons: the regional security situation, the position of Belarus on Ukraine and the refusal of the official Minsk from the earlier informal arrangements to expand the Russian military presence in the country.

[Belarus Foreign Policy Index #29 \(November-December 2015\)](#) – BISS presents its regular issue of Belarus Foreign Policy Index, which examines Belarus's foreign policy in the five key dimensions. In relations with Russia, Belarus has managed to not only get involved in Russia's foreign policy conflicts, but also to strengthen its neutral position. Relations with the EU continued to develop within the trend of normalisation. Relations with Ukraine were overshadowed by the problems in bilateral trade, which, however, were soon resolved.

Reforms Review

[KEF Newsletter. January 2016](#) – IPM Research Centre and KEF partners have released the 2nd newsletter with an overview of developments over the past month and publications. The issue includes monitoring of economic transformation and dialogue on reforms. It also refers to a new project of the webportal TUT.BY [The Practice of Reforms](#), series of materials about the possibilities of structural reforms in Belarus.

[There is no need to change the economic policy pursued by the government, Alexander Lukashenka](#) said on 26 January in Minsk, speaking at a government meeting on the current economic developments. "I cannot agree to breaking anything, putting excessive pressure on people, which would yield no result. I am unalterably opposed to this."

[New law 'On Corruption'](#). The new law has been in development for almost two years and entered into force on 24 January 2016. The changes include withdrawal of the pension for bribe, property declaration for the children of officials, no more punishment for small things, creation of an institute of public control over corruption, etc.

[Report On the Monitoring Of Belarus Roadmap For Higher Education Reform Implementation](#) – The Ad Hoc Commission of the EaP CSF Belarusian National Platform prepared the first report on the incorporation of the EHEA principles into the Belarus higher education system for the period from June 2015 till December 2015. The report indicates that the steps taken in implementing the EHEA principles do not come together with the process of increasing the openness and transparency of the Belarus higher education system.

Belarus in International

Rankings

[Belarus takes 107th place in Corruption Perceptions Index](#)

2015. Based on expert opinion, the Corruption Perceptions Index measures the perceived levels of public sector corruption in 168 countries. In comparison with 2014, Belarus improved its ranking by 11 positions and ahead of Russia (119 place) and Ukraine (130 place).

[Freedom in the World report 2016: Belarus is ranked as “Not Free” country](#)

The worst situation is related to political rights. Published by Freedom House, the report notes that Lukashenka’s “gestures toward the West seem motivated by growing fears of Russian bellicosity and economic weakness”.

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Shadow Economy, Competitiveness, Relations with the EU and Russia – Digest Of Belarusian Analytics

The new report on human rights in Belarus – the Human Rights Centre Viasna has released its monthly monitoring.

Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) presented four scenarios of development of relations between the EU, Russia and their common neighbours. Where is the place for Belarus?

The shadow economy in Belarus – the new research by BISS studies the public perception of the shadow economy and assesses the involvement of Belarusians in it.

Public Lectures and Conferences

[Bruce Bucknell: Belarusian language may be the solution to the “Russian World” problem in Belarus](#) – The British Ambassador delivered a public speech on the national identity within the frames of the Flying University project *Urbi et Orbi*. The lecture was held on 20 November and attracted about two hundred people. The video version is [available](#)

[Four Scenarios of Development of Relations Between the EU and Russia: Where is the Place for Belarus?](#) – On 25 November in Minsk, Friedrich Ebert Foundation (FES) presented four scenarios of development of relations between the EU, Russia and their common neighbours. The scenarios are built on the metaphor of the house. The first scenario describes the situation of overlapping interests but different values and is presented in the form of a block of flats. The second one contains common interests and values and, accordingly, is presented as a common house for a large family.

[Criticising the State Isn't Enough; We should Change the Discourse of Situation Perception](#) – The real resistance is the production of one's own civilization product, not just a criticism of the authorities on the part of the regime fighters, who are frozen in time. This is one of the findings of the conference “Political techniques in modern

authoritarian regimes as a challenge to transformation” that took place on 27 November in Minsk. The organisers are the Centre for European Transformation with the support of the International Consortium EuroBelarus, and Heinrich Boell Foundation.□

[Letter From Minsk](#) – Strategic Europe continues the second phase of its Capitals Series exploring how EU foreign policy is viewed by six countries in Europe’s Eastern neighbourhood. They have asked the contributors from each capital to give a candid assessment of the EU’s policies toward their country, with a ranking on a scale from “miserable” to “excellent.” Andrei Yahorau, the director of the Centre for European Transformation, a Belarusian independent think tank, speaks on behalf of Belarus.

Research and Monitoring

[Human Rights Situation in Belarus: November 2015](#) – The Human Rights Centre *Viasna* has released its monthly monitoring on human rights situation in the country. In particular, November was marked by a continuation of the policy of ‘soft practises’ observed earlier since August. During November, there were no new politically motivated cases, while a series of street protests took place without the intervention of law enforcement and without arrests of their organisers and participants.

[The Shadow Economy in Belarus in a Regional Perspective](#) – The BISS new research studies the public perception of the shadow economy and assesses the involvement of citizens in shady activities. The representative opinion poll conducted in May-June 2015 at the same time in Belarus, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Poland, and Sweden. One of the findings shows that shadow employment in Belarus is the highest in comparison with other countries of the research, and can be estimated at 33% of GDP. The research was presented in the [Amplituda](#) TUT.by

program.

[The Global Competitiveness Index \(GCI\): Dynamics of the Belarus' Position](#)

– CASE Belarus presents the study using a unique micro-data from the 2012 poll jointly run by the Ministry of Economy of Belarus and CASE Belarus. Belarus is not on the GCI list of the World Economic Forum so far. The project determines the potential place of Belarus in the GCI Report and provides recommendations for strengthening the competitiveness of the economy of Belarus based on the breakdown of the potential score.

Reforms Review

[New licencing regulations in Belarus](#). Starting from 1 March 2016, the incense will be issued in Belarus in perpetuity. The new presidential decree also reduces a scope of paperwork and data submitted to obtain a incense.

[Minsk considering borrowing \\$3bn from IMF for ten years](#). Minsk is considering the possibility of getting a \$3 billion loan of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) with a 2.28% interest rate for ten years. Belarus president Alexander Lukashenka said, "no one, including the Russians, has given us loans under such interest rate". [Belarus is interested in the IMF loan](#), taking into account the national interests, Lukashenka stressed.

Monitoring of economic transformation. Since January 2016, IPM Research Centre in cooperation with TUT.BY and IPM Business School launches publication under the KEF new regular newsletter – "Monitoring of the Belarusian economic transformation and business confidence." The structure is based on the [road map of reforms](#) presented by the First Deputy Economy Minister of Belarus Alexander Zaborovsky at the recent KEF conference "[Economy of Belarus: At a Tipping Point](#)".
According to the KEF newsletter

[Lukashenka: It is necessary to move a little and strain.](#) On 7 December at a meeting on the budget and monetary policy for 2016, president Alexander Lukashenka warned the government of the experiments in the economy. Lukashenka is confident that the Belarusian economy is absolutely competitive in terms of price and quality.

[Belarus-EU visa facilitation agreement ready for signing.](#) This statement was made by Gunnar Wiegand, Deputy Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia of the European External Action Service (EEAS) during a press conference under the EU official visit to Minsk on 9-10 December. The official also reported that [EU set to double financial assistance to Belarus next year,](#) allocating its funds for programmes aimed at building the country's competitive capacity and creating new opportunities for economic and regional development.

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.

Russia Would Rather Cut Pensions than Subsidies to Belarus – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

Belarusian experts discussed Russian subsidies, economic reforms, which the government will have to implement and the challenges of their implementation. Other topics include human rights violations in July-September, coverage of the 2015 presidential elections in state media and the state of the

third sector in Belarus.

Foreign policy analysis covers relations with Eurasia and the European Union as well as decisions of the European Court of Justice on targeted sanctions also covered. All this and more in this issue of Digest of Belarusian Analytics.

Economy

[Andrei Molchan: Russia Would Rather Reduce Pensions to Pensioners than Subsidies to Belarus](#) – Online magazine Ideaby under the Kastryčnicki Economic Forum KEF-2015 presents a video version of a public lecture of Andrei Molchan, the head of the economic program at the Carnegie Moscow Center. [KEF-2015](#) was held on November 3-4, in Minsk and brought together more than 300 participants and about 30,000 online viewers. KEF 2015 related publications received over 2.5 million views via media.

[Six Reform Steps in Belarus Proposed by Economy Ministry](#) – The "road map" of structural reforms was presented by First Deputy Economy Minister Aliaksandr Zabarovski at Kastryčnicki Economic Forum in Minsk. The points include ensuring the macroeconomic balance; increasing efficiency in the allocation of financial resources; reducing the role of government in the economy; the increase in jobs in the private sector; the development of the labor market and strengthening social protection systems, and formation of efficient commodity markets and financial services markets.

[Macroeconomic Problems of Belarus: It will be Different This Time](#) – Economist Dmitry Kruk discusses stereotypes that have emerged in the past 7-8 years during discussing economic policy and argues that the situation has changed greatly. Now Belarus is in a unique situation when structural reforms are beneficial not only for the long term, but short-term

prospects. The material is prepared in the framework of the [KEF-2015 conference](#). See also an [infographics piece](#) for the IPM research *What Reforms Business Expects*, created by IdeaBy journal.□

[Unemployment insurance will not save](#). Alexander Chubrik, Research Centre IPM, analyzes the unemployment insurance system discussed by Belarusian authorities. Chubrik argues why this system is problematic and its introduction in Belarus is inexpedient.

Civil Society and the State

[Monitoring: The Coverage of the 2015 Presidential Election in the Belarusian Media \(Final Report\)](#) – The Belarusian Association of Journalists releases the final report on the coverage of the 2015 presidential election in the Belarusian media. One of the key findings is that contrary to the 2010 presidential campaign, this time the state-owned media gave more attention to the election related topics. However, the incumbent still enjoyed a dominant position.

[The "Third Sector" is Ready to Become a Reliable Partner for the Government in Reforms, "Just do Not Stifle](#) (video) – For 10 years the Belarusian civil society has become highly professional, its expert opinion is valued around the world, and today in the midst of crisis, the "third sector" can be partner for the state. These points are articulated by guests of a regular Amplituda TUT.by – ecologist Irina Sukhi, Chairperson of the National Platform Svetlana Koroleva, and Chairperson of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee Aleh Hulak.

[Analytical Report on Human Rights in Belarus in July-September](#) – The main purpose of the report is to reflect the situation with basic human rights in Belarus and indicate socio-political and economic factors that influence its development. The human rights situation in Belarus during July through

October 2015 was influenced directly and indirectly by the presidential election campaign. The report is the result of cooperation between Belarusian human rights organizations.

[Third Sector: Progress, Regress, or Stability?](#) – The topic of a new program *Black and White*, TV channel Belsat, is dedicated to discussion what active citizens can do in a passive society; how citizenship starts and how to develop it, etc. The guests in the studio are Max Hedin, a specialist in the promotion of the [Grazhdanstvennost.by](#) project, and Ivan Vedenin, creative director of [Talaka.by](#) platform.

Foreign Policy

[Belarus' Balancing Act. Lukashenko Looks West – And East](#) – Andrew Wilson, a Professor at University College London and the author of *Belarus: The Last European Dictatorship*, suggests an answer, what the difference between presidential elections of 2010 and 2015. In the first case thousands protested in the capital city of Minsk, and the EU and the United States imposed harsh sanctions on Belarus. This year only 100 protesters turned out for a brief demonstration. The EU promptly announced that it would suspend most sanctions for four months. So what changed? In a word: Ukraine.

[Eurasian Review №6](#) – BISS presents the sixth issue of the Eurasian Review, which analyzes the processes of Eurasian integration. Over the past few months, Eurasian integration was marked by a series of significant developments. In August, Kyrgyzstan became a full member of the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU). The main feature of the issue is the lobbying capabilities of Belarus in the EEU.□

[The Court of Justice of the EU: Chyzh Plays Hockey with Lukashenko, So What?](#) – Andrei Yeliseyeu, BISS, describes a case when the Court of Justice of the EU has made it clear to the Council of the EU' lawyers that they need to provide more

cogent arguments why sanctions must be imposed on Belarusian citizens and companies. The EU's legislative branch requires incontrovertible evidence of mutually beneficial connections between Belarusian tycoons and the country's political regime; implicit arguments are insufficient.

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Civil Society Potential, Media Barometer – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

To be successful, reforms need a strong political leader. A Belief in Wide Discussions and Consensus is a Myth – says Ivan Mikloš, a Slovak politician "father of the Slovak reforms", who will participate in the upcoming Kastryčnický Economic Forum, Minsk.

The potential for solidarity in the Belarusian society is vanishing – according to the results of the research conducted by the Centre for European Transformation and the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies.

The awareness of civil society organisations in Belarus has risen over the last years – Pact releases findings from a national survey conducted by the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies.

Belarusian Civil Society

[Polling Memo: Stable Society? CSO Awareness has Risen, Participation Remains Low](#) – For the second consecutive year, Pact releases findings from a national survey conducted by the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS). According to survey results, the number of Belarusians who are aware of CSOs has stabilised at around 50% in 2014-2015, which is almost 20% more than in 2013. At the same time, the level of Belarusians' trust in CSOs dropped from 37.7% last year to 32.2% in 2015. The level of citizen participation in public activities remain low – around 20%. Explore [the full text of the polling memo in English](#). Russian-language version [is also available](#).

[Potential of Solidarity of the Belarusian society is vanishing](#) – This is a key finding of the fresh study conducted by the Centre for European Transformation (CET) and the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS). The study is a continuation and development of the 2014 research on the [potential for solidarity among CSOs](#). Belarusian society turned out to be even more amorphous, divided and atomised than the civil society.

[Amplituda TUT.BY: Belarusian Society has Outgrown the Politicians who Represent it?](#) – The Belarusian society has outgrown the politicians, so the society and politicians are not interested to each other. In the next five years economic challenges require responses from everybody. Such opinions were articulated in a regular issue of the *Amplituda* program by Valery Kalinousky (Radio Svaboda), Elena Artemenko (BISS) and Nikita Belyaev (Liberal Club).

[Human Rights are Much Better Respected Here, in Belarus](#) – New analytical resource IMHOClub.by posts an interview with a political refugee who returned to Belarus after 15-year living in the Czech Republic. The former publisher of the Belarusian

opposition newspaper *For Will*, anarchist Yuri Puzikov tells "idleness in the EU simply killed him". As a result, he realised he wanted to be useful for his country and returned to Belarus to his girlfriend.

[BISS Political Media Barometer \(April-June 2015\): The Media, But Not Politicians Set the Tone in the Coverage of Elections](#)

– Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) presents basic findings on media representation of political forces. Namely, elections much more influence on the communication of individual politicians than political forces. Leaders among politicians become Mikalai Statkevich, Tatiana Karatkevich (first presented in the ranking) and Anatoly Lebedko.

The 2015 Presidential Elections

[Belarus 2015 elections: A cautious rapprochement with the West](#)

– Alena Kudzko, the Central European Policy Institute (CEPI), considers that the instability in Ukraine, Russia's increasing pressure to permit it to station its military airbase in Belarus, and the drastic worsening of the economic situation in the country are all factors that may motivate the Belarusian government to seek geopolitical and policy alternatives and new partners. The time is ripe for Europe to anchor a more pragmatic and realistic long-term approach to its notorious Eastern neighbour.

[Same Old, Same Old? Belarus Votes](#)

– BISS senior analyst Dzianis Melyantsou together with a visiting scholar at the Carnegie Endowment and project director at Pact Balazs Jarabik prepared an article that analyses the presidential elections in Belarus. The authors believe that Belarus's domestic situation and external environment have changed since the last elections in 2010. The 2015 electoral process, warts and all, shows how the Belarusian regime is attempting to adapt to

these changes, while trying to keep the Soviet-style state machinery going.

[Elections-2015: An illusion of unity before reforms start?](#) –

In its analysis of post-election situation, BISS warns that one should not expect the newly reelected president to implement large-scale structural reforms, contrary to what the West would like to see in Belarus. Only sporadic point transformations will be a lot likelier in the areas, which cannot do without changes, and where such modifications will have no political impact on the authorities. These conclusions are supported by Alexander Lukashenka's [recent statement](#) against radical reforms.

Upcoming Events

[Support for Reform is Important Not Only for Democracy, It is Not Accidental that Authoritarian Systems are Populist](#) –

Why developing countries are so vulnerable to a global financial crisis, why reforms need a "guillotine" and what errors are made by reformers – these issues are raised by Marek Dąbrowski, one of the speakers of the [Kastrýčnický Economic Forum](#), KEF (3-4 November, Minsk), in his interview to TUT.BY. Marek Dąbrowski, a senior fellow of the Centre for Social and Economic Research CASE, worked in the Polish reformatory government of Leszek Balcerowicz.

[To be Successful, Reforms Need a Strong Political Leader. A Belief in Wide Discussions and Consensus is a Myth](#) –

Ivan Mikloš, a Slovak politician and the former Minister of Finance of Slovakia, is known as "father of the Slovak reforms". Ivan Mikloš goes to Minsk for the first time to participate in the [Kastrýčnický Economic Forum](#), KEF, and tells in his interview for TUT.BY, what determines the success of the reforms, if there is a risk of political suicide for the main reformer and why this issue is not necessary to consult with the people.

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What Do Belarusians Think, Forum Of Entrepreneurs – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Perspektiva organises a National Forum of Entrepreneurs to enable them to share opinions how they see their future in Belarus.

Fountain on Grushevskaya street in Minsk will be restored for the money of locals. The local residents decided to take the matters into their own hands and save the fountain by raising funds for its reconstruction.

The Office for European Expertise and Communications (OEEC) invites to a new debate under the series *What do Belarusians Think*. This time participants will be discussing gender issues.

Public Debates and Conferences

[**Perspektiva organises a National Forum of Entrepreneurs**](#) on 28 September. The Forum aims to present the *Perspektiva's* policy proposals for 2015-2020 and enable entrepreneurs to share opinions how they see their future. Meanwhile, the head of a business union *Perspektiva*, that brings together individual

entrepreneurs and small businesses, [Anatoly Shumchanka declares his political ambitions](#) and does not exclude that he could run for the president or member of parliament.□

[Fifth International Congress of Belarusian Studies.](#) The Congress is to take part on 2-4 October in Kaunas, Lithuania. The preliminary [programme](#) is available. The International Congress of Belarusian Studies is an annual meeting of Belarusian and foreign scholars, experts, analysts and representatives of civil society and government institutions, which are involved in studying Belarus.

[Gender Equality: Why is it Profitable?](#) The Office for European Expertise and Communications (OEEC) invites to a new debate under the series *What do Belarusians Think*. The new meeting will be devoted to gender issues and take place on 23 September at the Minsk Gallery [TUT.BY](#). A series of live discussions *What do Belarusians Think* aim to make the expert debate public and creates a space for discussion of researches on topical issues. Discussions are organised since September 2014 by OEEC in partnership with the Belarusian Research Council, Pact and supported by USAID.

Civil Society Initiatives

[Fountain on Grushevskaya street in Minsk will be restored for the money of locals.](#) Since the 1940s, the fountain was the centre of social life of the district, however by the moment it lost its well-maintained appearance. The municipality was going to dismantle the fountain to organise the flower bed instead, but the local residents decided to save the fountain and raise funds for its reconstruction. In total, they need to raise about 170 million rubles.

[EuroBelarus.info website launches a new video project.](#) The project *Postmodern and Anthropotechnique* is an attempt to understand the anthropological dimension of era of post modernism and multiculturalism, revolutionary technological

and social change, unavailable for people to keep pace with. The first episode of the video project is a series of lectures of the Head of the International Consortium EuroBelarus, Vladimir Mackevich on political technologies of the third generation.

[Students' Leadership Academy calls for fellows](#). The Academy implemented by the Centre for Development of Students' Initiatives is designed for active students who are not indifferent to the students' problems and would like to resolve them. Fellows will be able to select one of the four areas of study: the protection of students' rights, improving the quality of education, belarusization of higher education, student media; or propose their own idea.

[Gomel Democratic Forum releases a study on media space of Gomel region](#) and a manual on planning and implementing of local media campaigns. Publications are prepared within the framework of a project aimed at promoting best media presence of local CSOs. Now [Gomel Democratic Forum](#) plans to continue to support local organisations and initiatives with media consultations.

[Third Age University in Minsk announces the third call for students](#). The project aims to educate seniors and implemented by the Belarusian Association of Social Workers. For two years, the University courses in computer literacy, foreign languages, journalism, psychology, local history were attended by over two thousand Minsk residents of 60+ years old. In September, [Grodno Golden Age University](#) enrolls students for the seventh academic year.

[Fifth Festival of creativity of people with disabilities was held in Minsk](#) on 13 September. The Festival aims to promote creativity of people with disabilities, establish a comprehensive system of social and cultural rehabilitation of the disabled and their active integration into society. Among organisers were Minsk municipality and non-governmental

organisations such as Belarusian Society of Disabled People, Belarusian Association of Assistance to Children and Young People with Disabilities, etc.

[BISS and CET present a new research on solidarity](#). On 29 September a research on the potential for solidarity in the Belarusian society is to be presented in Minsk. The study is a continuation and development of the research on the [potential for solidarity among CSOs](#), conducted by the Centre for European Transformation (CET) and the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) in 2014. The presentation will take place at 6 pm, at the Studio67 venue.

[New cultural partnership program](#). The Association of Local Democracy Agencies ALDA (France) together with the International Consortium *EuroBelarus* announces the launch of the partnership program *CHOICE – Cultural Heritage: Opportunity for Improving Civic Engagement*. The two-year project is aimed to protect the cultural heritage and strengthening the institutional capacity of cultural CSOs. Presentation of the project will be held on 22 September in the TSEKH venue.

Contests and Awards

[XII National competition of school teams about Europe](#). The contest *What I Know about Europe* is held annually since 2004, by the initiative group of Belarusian teachers and civic leaders with the support of public organisations. Competition tasks are designed for senior school pupils.

[The first summer reality-competition of urban projects #RazamMinsk awarded the winners](#). Among 11 finalists (selected out of 300 teams) the jury divided the prize fund (\$ 1,000) between two projects – *Beautification of Pond* and *Museum of Retro Computers*. Minsk residents voted for *Clean Business* project on separate waste collection. The competition, organised by Onliner.by portal, Talaka.by platform and Velcom

mobile company, has brought to Minsk a number of ideas implemented, like [installation of bikes spots](#) – facility for free repair bicycles.

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Pro-Russian Maidan, IISEPS National Poll, Media Barometer – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

Is “pro-Russian Maidan” in Belarus possible? Grigory Ioffe agrees with an assumption about such a scenario in Minsk if Lukashenka spoils his relations with Moscow or reneges on some of his promises.

BISS Political Media Barometer suggests that the United Civic Party and Belarusian Popular Front appear more frequently than other parties in Belarusian media.

Daria Chumakova, vice-executive of Centre of Ecological Solutions, explains how to create a green office and why Belarusian private businesses are interested in ecological corporate social responsibility projects.

Politics and Governance

[Elections, Identity and Economic Decline in Belarus](#) – Grigory Ioffe shares a journalist Sviatlana Kalinkina's assumption about the possibility of a “pro-Russian Maidan” in Minsk if Lukashenka spoils his relations with Moscow or reneges on some of his promises. Indeed, Belarus is integral to the Russia-controlled information space, and on Ukrainian issues there seems to be a noticeable rift between many Belarusians and their president. Apparently Kalinkina sees this rift as a resource that some Moscow-based malefactors could leverage to foment a pro-Russian rally in Minsk on election day.

[Government officials lay like a rock on the way of Belarus' development](#) – Ina Ramasheuskaya of BIPART discusses bureaucracy, its role in Belarusian society and its attitude towards and impact on possible reforms. She concludes that although many Belarusian officials understand the need for reforms in practice they constitute an obstacle to development of Belarus.

[BISS Political Media Barometer №12 \(January – March 2015\): Elections Affect the Structure of Communication, but the Amount of Is not Growing](#) – BISS presents basic findings of the BISS Political Media Barometer for January-March 2015. The research analyses quantitative and qualitative characteristics of the independent political forces' communications field. In the first quarter of 2015 a leadership position in amount of political communications belongs to the United Civic Party and Belarusian Popular Front parties and individual politicians Anatol Liabedzka and Mikola Statkevich.□

[Eurasian Review №5](#) – BISS presents the fifth issue of the Eurasian Review, which analyses the processes of Eurasian integration. Since the launch of the Eurasian Economic Union six months passed. From an economic point of view, the period was not easy: indicators of the Russian economy worsened;

economic situation in other EEU countries, linked to the Russian market of goods and services has also been considerably complicated.

[Andrei Yeliseyeu: State Can't Do Without Civil Society on the Way to the Visa-Free Regime with EU](#) – Only if the Belarusian authorities want to see such regime feasible at some point. Signing of the Agreement on simplification of visa regime with the EU and Belarus was expected at the Eastern Partnership Summit this May. In other EaP countries civil society has been seriously involved in the preparation process. Belarusian state cannot avoid it either, Andrei Yeliseyeu, BISS analyst, assumes.

Civil Society

[Civil Society: Away From Politics Towards Cooperation With the Authorities](#) – Yuri Chavusau's article in *Belarusian Yearbook 2014* describes the key trends of Belarus civil society of last year. Namely, the expert notes that the state keeps its tight legal framework for the registration and activity of non-profit organisations. In the process of adaptation to the existing conditions, an increasing number of organisations are trying to distance themselves from formal politics (elections, parties) and thus to take a stand convenient for a dialogue with the authorities.

[IISEPS National Poll. June 2015](#) – Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) released the results of a June national survey. At the presidential elections 37.4% would vote for Lukashenka, 20.6% – for the candidate of the democratic opposition, 27% – for none of them (in March the numbers were 37%, 23.2% and 21% respectively). The idea of the "Russian world" of Russian president Vladimir Putin, is [treated positively](#) by almost 39% of Belarusians, indifferently – 39.4% and negatively – 15.2%.

[Belarusian Yearbook 2014](#) – Published since 2003, Belarusian

Yearbook is a complex analysis of the situation in the most important segments of the Belarusian state and society for the year. The book is presented under the aegis of the Agency for Social and Political Expert Appraisal and the expert community of Belarus *Nashe Mnenie* ('Our opinion'). Namely, in 2014, there was an external push – the Ukrainian Maidan, followed by Russian annexation of the Crimea and the military operations in the eastern Ukraine, had a significant impact on many processes in Belarus, before flowing mostly in the inertial mode.

Economy

[Being environmentally-friendly is a must of the modern market](#)

– Daria Chumakova, vice-executive of Centre of Ecological Solutions explains according to which criteria international companies choose Belarusian partners, what is 'green washing' and how one can define advertisement technologies from real projects of social corporative responsibility. Reading expert's interview one will know how to create a green office and why Belarusian private businesses are interested in ecological corporate social responsibility projects.

[Belarusian business 2025: experts name 10 trends that will change the country](#)

– Growth of taxes is one of factors that will change Belarus greatly during next 10 years. Efficiency of state-run companies will be lowering, as well as the quantity of working class, so the Belarusian business will face the increase in taxes. The event was held under celebration of the 10th anniversary of the business portal Bel.biz.

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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 [Talakosht](#).

[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. □

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Top 10 Civic Actions in Belarus in 2014 According to Pact

With the 2015 approaching fast, international NGO Pact identified the most notable items in Belarus' civil society life in 2014. For the second straight year Pact acknowledged top 10 civic actions in Belarus.

Belarus's civil society is [growing](#) and going somewhere, only we are not sure about the direction yet.

Trend of the Year: Belarusization

Belarusian language free courses have become a new hit in 2014. [Mova Nanova](#) (*Language in a New Way*) has spread to eight Belarusian cities with about 1,000 students and got state

registration. The largest Belarus web portal TUT.by launched free Belarusian lessons.

The courses titled as [Movaveda](#) attracted a public attention due to their promotional videos based on the known movies. In September, Minsk hosted a first-ever Belarusian-language sports festival [Mova Cup](#) organized by stars of Belarusian sports.

Belarus' top leadership, including president [Alexander Lukashenka](#) and prime minister [Mikhail Myasnikovich](#) spoke Belarusian in public. In addition, "mass" enthusiasm was shown for national [embroidered shirt/vyshyvanka](#) in Belarus. Several companies offer both authentic costumes and modern fashionable clothes with elements of national ornament.

Two Vyshyvanka Days – on [October 5](#) and [December 13](#) – were held as a Festival of national culture and gathered up to 5 thousand people. This year the central October Square in Minsk is decorated with [New Year Tree in traditional style](#) with embroidery ornaments.

Event of the Year: [Kastychny Economic Forum \(KEF\)](#)

On November 5, 2014 KEF gathered about 160 Belarusian and international experts for professional dialogue on Belarus' private sector potential. The annual economic forum was [opened by the Minister of Economy](#) Mikalai Snapkou and attended by leadership of World Bank in Belarus, Moody's Investors Service, IFC Belarus Office among others. KEF is organised for the second time by the Research Center of the Institute for Privatization and Management in association with the Belarus Economic Research and Outreach Center (BEROC) and CASE Belarus.

Local Fundraising of the Year: [MaeSens project](#)

Tree time in row Pact sees the MaeSens project as the most

successful local fundraising initiative. The main reason is in its stability: launched in October 2011, a social Internet platform MaeSens.by has collected to the moment about \$320 thousand of private donations for charity. Moreover, MaeSens continues to organize a contest of grassroots ideas [Social Weekend](#). The recent Social Weekend-4 gathered more than 200 applications; nine of them received financial support from local business.

Lobbying of the Year: [Antimak campaign](#)

On January 15, 2014, president Alexander Lukashenka signed a decree 'On certain issues regarding state regulation of poppy seeds turnover'. According to [Alexander Shpakouski](#), the Aktualnaja Konseptsiya non-profit institution leader, the decree "practically liquidates conditions for organization of drug business on poppy seeds materials in Belarus". After more than three year of the Antimak public campaign, adoption of the above decree is the major indicator of its success.

Award of the Year: [Via Bona CSR Award](#)

The first ever award in the field of corporate social responsibility (CSR) in Belarus was established by Fond of Ideas. In March 2014, the best CSR projects of Belarusian business were awarded in seven categories, for example, the mobile company Velcom got the prize for the best cooperation with the local community (the project VELOCITY).

Community Initiative of the Year: [Local Hrushauka Festival](#)

In May 2014, the first ever local community Festival was organized in Hrushauka Minsk district. The event was initiated by a single activist, joined by some organized groups and gathered up to 1,000 local residents. Most notably, Hrushauka Fest was fully self-funded and inspired a number of similar initiatives in Minsk (similar Fests were planned in Uruchcha, Malinovka and Slepjanka city districts) and across the country.

Monitoring of the Year: [Barrier-free environment of IIHF World Championship](#)

Before the start of the IIHF World Championship in Minsk, the Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities held an accessibility monitoring of facilities of IIHF World Championship 2014 in Minsk. The monitoring studied about 50 different facilities including railway stations, sports complexes, hotels, shops and other places of the service sector and concluded their unsatisfactory degree of accessibility.

Survey of the Year: [BISS poll on attitude to reforms](#)

The Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) public poll under the REFORUM project reveals the general attitude of [ordinary citizens](#) as well as representatives of [civil society and political opposition](#) to reforms and identifying high-priority areas. Thus, 75.6% of Belarusians consider reforms necessary and wants reforms in health sector while representatives of civil society believe the key area of reform a political system.

Education Program of the Year: [Golden Age University in Grodno](#)

Golden Age University was voted as such at the [5th Festival of Non-Formal Festival](#) in December 2014. According to the people's voting and professional jury decision, the Grodno-based Golden Age University (GAU) was recognized the best educational event. Starting from 2010, GAU is improving the quality of life of Grodno elderly by increasing their participation in different fields of life and creating conditions for them to contribute to both civil society and local community.

AND NOW FOR SOMETHING COMPLETELY DIFFERENT:

The phrase of the year: [Что-то не так!](#) ([something's wrong](#))

The film 'Abel' financed by the Ministry of Culture includes the reconstruction of political events of the presidential elections in Belarus in 2010. While filming the Ploscha events of December 2010, the actors of mass scenes shouted slogans 'We are not satisfied' and 'Something's wrong (in Russian – «[Что-то не так!](#)»)). Actually, there were no such slogans at the true Ploscha of December 19, 2010 which [anniversary](#) is marked these days.

Mova Nanova for Kids, Age Friendly City Campaign, TechMinsk – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Now Mova Nanova invites Belarusian children for free Belarusian languages courses. Golden Age University announced an Age Friendly City campaign in Hrodna to improve the quality of life of older people.

Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) releases fresh data of a September national poll. It turns out that the Belarusians are ready for changes, but it is less associated with the opposition.

Belarus in the international focus

[EaP Media Freedom Watch: Belarus is again at the bottom.](#)

Georgia remains the leader of the Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Index for the first half of 2014. Azerbaijan and Belarus are at the end of the ranking. The EaP Media Freedom

Index is compiled quarterly and calculated by summing up the points obtained by participant countries in four sections – Politics, Practise, Broadcasting and Internet and new media.

[Program to support grassroots in Belarus](#). [Civic Belarus Czech NGO](#) invites to cooperation and offers a program of long-term support for the groups of local activists. The mission of the program is not only the financial support of grassroots; the priority is capacity development of initiatives and improving the quality of their work. Applications are accepted until 17 November 2014.

Education

[Mova Nanova launches Belarusian courses for kids](#). Free Belarusian courses *Mova Nanova for Kids* started on 5 October at the Minsk Gallery Ÿ. Children of 4-7 years old (preschool age) are invited to participation. According to the organisers, the first class has about 100 small students enrolled. It appears that one more Belarusian courses *Mova ci Kava / Language or Coffee* also start a new season as soon as on 1 October they had [a casting of comperes](#).

[TECHMINSK Fall Batch 2014](#). On 1-31 October TechMinsk, the first International Entrepreneurship School in Belarus, has started its work. TechMinsk prepares the next generation of global entrepreneurs and change makers from Eastern Europe and help them build rapid high growth companies and go global. A 5-week program is a combination of educational, mentoring and networking tools. 80% of all courses are taught in English.

Civil society activities

[Human rights activists announce week against the death penalty in Belarus](#). Various human rights activities will be held from on 5-10 October under the slogan 'The death Penalty is Murder'. The events will be attended by honorary foreign visitors, ambassadors, famous creative people, relatives of executed convicts shot and sentenced to death, advocates and

activists of the abolitionist movement in Belarus. The Human Rights Centre 'Viasna' invites everyone to join the activities of the Week.

[Age Friendly City Campaign to be developed in Hrodna](#). On 1 October on the International Day of Older Persons, at a media breakfast, Hrodna Golden Age University announced the start of developing an Age Friendly City campaign in Hrodna. The campaign's goal is to engage representatives of public, government, academic and profit organisations in the development of specific actions aimed at improving the quality of life of older people and using their potential for the benefit of society. The organisers also presented for journalists the latest results of [the Global AgeWatch Index 2014](#).

Analysis

[Voice of the People is for the People](#) – Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) releases fresh data of a September national poll. According to the survey, the Belarusians are ready for changes, but it is less associated with the opposition. Namely, 17.5% of the respondents consider themselves involved in civil activities, almost 40% participated in various charity events, and 18% signed a petition. The level of trust to the president continues to rise: 45.9% in March, 49.6% in June, and 53.5% in September.

[Presentation of a research on a potential for solidarity in Belarusian civil society](#) is to take place on 7 October in the Minsk business club IMAGURU. The research was conducted by the Centre for European Transformation (CET) and Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) and notes a decrease in the ability of citizens for joint effective political and social action, despite the growing number of petitions, public statements, and collecting signatures.

Belarus' Public Sector: Values, Expectations and Perceptions of Reforms – Belarus in Focus Information Office (aka SBI0, Solidarity with Belarus) releases its policy paper – a comprehensive overview of Belarusian public sector employees held in Minsk and regions in 2014. The differences in values, attitudes to life, risk tolerance and attitude towards labour mobility of the public sector employees revealed in the study were among its main results. These differences depend on the size of the community in which the public sector employees live, and on their age.

Interaction between state and civil society

Zmicier Vajciushkevich officially excluded from the 'black list'. The musician is preparing for his first legal solo concert after a three-year break. Minsk city executive committee issued a certificate for Zmicier Vajciushkevich's concert, which is planned on 29 October in Minsk. **Black list** appeared in 2011 and includes well-known musicians, writers, actors from Belarus, Russia, Europe and Hollywood who anyway protest against repression after the presidential elections of 2010.

Human rights defender Alena Tankachova may be stripped of her residence permit. Alena Tankachova, leader of the Minsk-based Centre for Legal Transformation, also known as *Lawtrend*, told that Belarusian authorities were seeking to annul her residence permit. Although she is a citizen of Russia, she has lived in Belarus for nearly 30 years and is not going to leave.

Supreme Court upholds registration denial to human rights NGO. The Supreme Court on 30 September upheld the legality of the position of the Ministry of Justice, which refused to register the national human rights NGO 'Movement for the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights' (Pact/Covenant).

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.

Dealing with Alcohol Abuse, Cycling in Minsk, REFORUM – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Movement *For Freedom* invites to a summer school programme entitled 'Belarusian idea and the ways of national consolidation'.

The New Eurasia Establishment held in Minsk a USAID-supported workshop *Financial Management for Non-profits* for directors, finance and program managers from civil society organisations.

A senior government official met with opposition activists to discuss problems of alcohol abuse.

Interaction between state and civil society

[First deputy prime minister meets with opposition activists campaigning against alcohol abuse](#). First Deputy Prime Minister [Uladzimir Syamashka](#) met with activists of the Belarusian Christian Democrats (BCD) campaigning against alcohol abuse. The government has demonstrated its readiness to take the public's proposals against the 'alcoholisation' of society into account, said the BCD press office.

[Belarusian Language Society asks for Belarusian language to be](#)

[used again in legal acts](#). The Belarusian Language Society (BLS) has appealed to the House of Representatives with a proposal to return the Belarusian language to national legislation. In fact, at present almost all the laws in the country are adopted only in Russian.

Events

[REFORUM project completed the preparatory phase](#). The project, implemented by the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS), over the next two years will offer 16 reform proposals, a dialogue between various stakeholders, including the opposition, authorities, experts and business. For the first six months the project has established relations with stakeholders, created a Council for the project and conducted a study to identify the attitude of Belarusians (society and civil society) to reform.

[Food for Thought – 4](#). On 8 July at the Minsk café, Fond of Ideas held its fourth business breakfast in the series *Food for Ideas*. The theme of the breakfast was the policy of forming a strategy for social marketing. For the first time together with the businessmen representatives of Belarusian NGOs working with social projects attended the breakfast. The event took place as a part of a project to raise awareness about CSR in Belarus.

[Information Day on European opportunities and gender equality](#). On 17-18 July the Office for a Democratic Belarus (Brussels) and the Office for European Expertise and Communication (Minsk) invite interested parties to information sessions in Brest and Hrodna. CSOs' activists will learn step-by-step how to prepare successful projects, get to know about available EU support mechanisms as well as learn about the incorporation of European values and cross-cutting issues (gender) into their project proposals and during the implementation of their projects. The event is being organised under the Clearing House project.

[Round table on public administration](#). The civil campaign *Tell the Truth* conducted a regular round table on the issues of the efficiency of public administration, the prospects for reforming the power vertical and the need for modernisation. According to the invited politicians and experts, the modern system of the state decision making and implementing is closed off from public control and is not in line with Constitution. [BIPART analyst Natalia Ryabova](#) noted that one of the main problems facing public administration is a low level of training and retraining.

Civil society initiatives

[Belarusian Christian Democracy party \(BCD\) initiates a Minsk Forum of NGOs and civic initiatives](#). The Forum aims to solve the local problems of the Minsk citizens; among priorities are the elaboration of alternative plans for Minsk's development; coordination of Minsk civil and social initiatives; conducting campaigns to address actual local issues; civil control over the city authorities, etc. Journalists, however, doubt in the potential success of the new initiative and have stated that this is merely a way for BCD to try to expand its electorate.

[CityDog.by launches a joint project with the Institute Strelka](#). Every week, the Minsk city online magazine CityDog.by will publish articles created by students and graduates of the Institute for Media, Architecture and Design *Strelka* (Russia). Architects, urbanists, sociologists will share knowledge how to study and improve the urban environment; the articles are designed to teach and motivate the readers of CityDog.by to improve the environment of Belarusian cities.

[I Bike Minsk](#). From 10 July to 24 August a campaign *I Bike Minsk* will be held in Minsk and include about 20 different activities – workshops, street actions, lessons on how to ride a bike, bike tours and trips. Additionally, 60 bikes will be available to rent. According to the [belngo.info](#)

Education

[New Eurasia held training on financial management](#). On 8-9 July the New Eurasia Establishment held a workshop entitled *Financial Management for Non-profits* for directors, finance and program managers from civil society organisations. The event was organised in the framework of the USAID-supported Capacity Building for Civil Society Organisations project. Participants had the unique opportunity to learn about the specifics and professional secrets of financial management in non-profits.

[School to study Belarusian identity](#). Movement *For Freedom* invites individuals to participate to a School 'Belarusian idea and the ways of national consolidation'. The School will be held from 24-29 August with the participation of well-known Belarusian experts, public figures and politicians. The School aims to consider the potential and opportunities for the consolidation of Belarusians in light of the new threats and challenges facing Belarus. Participation is open to Belarusians 18-30 years of age that are active in social and/or political sphere.

[E-Teacher Scholarship Program](#). The U.S. Embassy in Minsk announces a call for applications from teacher trainers, tertiary/secondary teachers of English, and program administrators in Belarus to participate in one of the ten English Teacher Professional Development DISTANCE LEARNING COURSES provided through the University of Oregon. The deadline for submitting applications is 15 July 2014.

International

[EU removes eight Belarusians from its blacklist](#). On 8 July the Council of the European Union lifted entry bans and asset freezes against eight citizens of Belarus and placed one Belarusian on its blacklist. A total of 225 individuals, including Aliaksandr Lukashenka, are currently subject to

travel bans and all of them, and 25 economic entities, are subject to asset freezes.

[Belarusian Delegation Visit to Brussels](#). On 8-10 July a delegation from Belarus, headed by Deputy Foreign Minister Alena Kupchyna, visited Brussels to take part in a second round of consultations with the European Union on modernisation issues. The delegation included representatives of the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Economy.

[Call for Proposals: European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights](#). The Delegation of the European Union to Belarus is seeking proposals for projects to be implemented in Belarus or projects which would directly benefit Belarusian society with financial assistance from the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights. The deadline for submission of proposals is 2 September 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.

Belarusians Want Reforms, Entrepreneurs Protest, New Education Initiatives – Belarus Civil Society Digest

New polls suggest that in the current environment Aliaksandr Lukashenka remains the most trusted politician in Belarus but Belarusians want reforms, in the first place of its political system.

The recently released political prisoner Ales Bialiatski is meeting with top European politicians.

Education initiatives and debates keep civil society activists busy in Belarus this summer. Entrepreneurs protest against new regulations adopted in accordance with new Customs Union rules.

Polls

[BISS Poll: Attitude to Reforms](#). The Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) has released the data of a public poll under the REFORUM project.

The research reveals the general attitude of [ordinary citizens](#) as well as representatives of [civil society and political opposition](#) to reforms and identifying high-priority areas. Thus, 75.6% of Belarusians consider reforms necessary and wants reforms in health sector above all. According to representatives of civil society the main area of reform should be a political system.

[Trust to Lukashenka continues to rise](#). The Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) has released the results of a national survey conducted in June 2014. According to the poll, the level of trust to the president continues to rise: in December he was trusted by 37.7% Belarusians, in March – 45.9%, and in June – 49.6%. At the same time, popularity [ratings of all potential opposition](#) presidential candidates combined do not exceed 20%.

Education

['Learning Region' Adukatar](#). Association for Life Long Education (ALLE) has released a regular issue of its thematic magazine *Adukatar*. The issue is devoted to the 'learning region' concept that is defined as any regional competitiveness in the modern world by its ability to learn.

The 'learning region' is shown to readers as a theoretical construct as well as its implementation on the European continent and in Belarus.

[Distance learning for Human Rights advocates](#). The International Human Rights House Network announces a call for applications to participate in distance learning program for lawyers and experts from Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine. 125 participants – 25 fellows from each country – will pass theoretical and practical training in applying the concept of human rights and international legal standards in the national and international legal protection. The course is certified by European Humanities University (Vilnius, Lithuania).

[Golden Age University invites to a methodological Summer School](#) on education for the elderly. The School is to be held on 6-10 August in the Grodno region; it aims to share Belarusian and foreign experience on the methodology of social enhancing of the elderly. The organisers are welcome representatives of community and government organisations that already have or plan to start educational and outreach programs for the elderly. The University works at the Third Sector Centre NGO in Grodno from 2010.

Debates and projects

[What young Belarusians want](#). On 1 July in Minsk, the Liberal Club held a roundtable discussion titled as *Youth Policy Concept in Belarus: What Young People Really Want?* At the meeting, the experts presented an updated concept of youth policy and launched a debate on how to satisfy the real needs and interests of the youth. Thus, organisers hope to contribute to the country's national security and to meet the challenge of a high level of dissatisfaction of young Belarusians and their strong desire to leave the country.

[Ales Bialiatski visits Brussels and Strasbourg](#). Ales

Bialiatski, head of the Human Rights Centre *Viasna* meets with European diplomats and journalists such as the newly elected President of the European Parliament Martin Schulz, EU Commissioner Stefan Fule, Secretary General of the Council of Europe Thorbjørn Jagland, etc. Remind that on June 21, Ales Bialiatski was released from prison under an amnesty having served almost three years for tax evasion. On 27 June in Vilnius, Ales Bialiatski gave a press conference for the Lithuanian media ([full video](#)).

[First city-game "Skhvatka" in Belarusian language would take place under the slogan "Let the Glory of Orsha be eternal!"](#).

For the first time the city-game "Skhvatka" will be held In Belarusian language. It will be devoted to 500th Anniversary of Orsha battle. The game will have a format of bicycle ride with a team contribution of 30 US dollars. One can become a part of the game joining [its website](#) or official public account at social networks.

[Festival of Belarusian Advertisement and communication Ad.nak! celebrates its fifth anniversary](#) (picture at the top).

Traditionally organised by civil cultural campaign Budzma and web-portal Marketing.by Festival is steel increasing in numbers. This year the Festival has collected more than 400 works from almost 200 participants. 6 Grand Prix (2 – last year), 17 first places (6 – last year), 33 second and 41 third places given. The fifth edition was the first one to bring collaboration with general partner on business side which was the oldest mobile operator Velcom.

Projects on social inclusion

[Accessibility Week summarizes results](#). Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities summarises the results of the Accessibility Week that held in Belarus for the second time. The Week lasted from 1 to 15 June and took place not only in Minsk, but also in other cities of Belarus: Hrodna, Kobryn, Zhytkavichy, Lida, Smarhon, Baran', Babruisk. The Week

included 14 events attended by more than 400 people.

[UNDP initiative "Inclusiveness after 2015: social collaboration of disabled in Belarus" has started](#). The program has started in May 2014 and its aim is to improve the life and deepen involvement of people with disabilities into community life.

The communicational core of the action is [an internet platform](#), where everyone willing can write down his own story or the story he witnessed. When the pull of the stories is collected it will be analysed by special program, working out a new approach to further development of disabled involvement. The approach would be used for further spreading among civil, business, governmental and international organisations.

Interaction between state and civil society

[Entrepreneurs try to defend their interest through Forum and strike](#). On 30 June in the Minsk hotel Belarus, 235 entrepreneurs from across the country gathered at their regular forum, organised by the republican public association *Perspectiva*.

Entrepreneurs urged not to sign the decree that requires that from 1 July light industry goods should be imported to Belarus only with documents on compliance with special technical regulations of the Customs Union. The next day, on 1 July entrepreneurs from different cities of Belarus [went on strike](#).

[Campaign of Belarusian language defense at Constitutional court has started](#). Friends of civil initiative "Rada of Belarusian intelligence" have signed a petition in defence of Belarusian language to Constitutional court. The example of the petition was worked out by Belarusian Helsinki Committee chairperson Harry Paganajla. One can simple [cache and sign the example](#) and read [methodical recommendations](#).

[New public hearings are announced on Kurapaty building](#)

[project](#). Minsk municipality has decided to run another round of hearings on city development project of detailed planning of territories near Kurapaty. This information is coming out of the list of head of architecture branch of municipality. During first hearings many remarks were made and were supported by expert board on situation around Kurapaty and second round has to fix misunderstanding between authorities and activists.

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Sieviaryniec and Generational Shift in Belarusian Opposition

On 14 April, the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies published [a new issue](#) of its Political Mediabarometer. Pavel Sieviaryniec, co-chairman of the Belarusian Christian Democrats, is now the new leader in terms of media presence in Belarus.

Sieviaryniec' success demonstrates emergence of a new generation of Belarusian opposition. Zmicier Dashkevich of the Young Front and Aliaksei Yanukevich of the Party of the Belarusian Popular Front also faired well in the study.

Preparations for local elections attracted little attention in

the media, while the number of references to the opposition discussing bread and butter issues decreased from 10% to 8%.

The opposition remains reactionary, not proactive, with their messages to the public. Mainly they spread information related to releasing political prisoners, celebrating the 25th anniversary of the Belarusian Popular Front or their own organisation congresses. Despite this trend, the volume of proactive communication that opposition politicians themselves have initiated has increased.

New Media Leader

BISS`s research shows that [Paviel Sieviarynec](#) has become the most prominent member of the opposition in the Belarusian media. His release and rapid ascent into the political arena has, in large part, contributed to this phenomenon.

[Uladzimir Niakliajeu](#) slipped to second in the rankings, although he remains the most popular opposition politician in Belarus. According to the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) his rating is holding steady at 7.1%. Niakliajeu, [Alexander Milinkevich](#) and their deputies will primarily decide who will challenge [Lukashenka](#) in the coming presidential elections in 2015.



During the period studied, [Anatol Liabiedzka](#) from the United Civic Party published a book. The 25th anniversary of the Belarusian Popular Front helped [Aliaksei Yanukevich](#), the party`s leader, to stick around the top of the rankings. [Zmicier Dashkevich](#), leader of the Young Front, took fourth place largely thanks to his organisation's active congress.

The number of references of females politicians declined from 16% to 9%. Maryna Adamovich, wife of [Mikalai Statkevich](#), remains popular in the media, but this is largely due to the fact that acts a conduit who transmits news about her husband

(who remains in prison). The number of references to Anastasia Dashkevich after her husband's release has declined, although she remains a prominent member of the Tell the Truth campaign.



The ratings for political organisations in the media is very similar to the ranking of individual politicians. For the first ranking, the study assessed the media presence of coalitions. According to their research, Narodny Referendum (People's Referendum) had much better results than Talaka.

This happened because of the growth of its offline activity, proactive communication and the variety of politicians that represent the coalition. The focus of each coalition differs. Narodny referendum focuses on bread and butter issues and Talaka on the demand to hold free elections.

The Opposition's Issues

Over the period of this study, researchers noticed a rapid growth in the number of Belarusian opposition references in the media – from 3,217 in July-September 2013 to 5,998 during October-December. While these references do not indicate that the opposition is gaining ground politically, it does appear to indicate that the opposition is intensifying its efforts.

However, this activity rarely deals with the lives of ordinary people. The 11% growth in the sheer number of mentions of ordinary opposition organisations members is evidence that there is an awakening occurring amongst democratic forces.

BISS analysts have defined the four catalysts of political communication during this period as: the release of Sieviaryniec, the 25th anniversary of the Belarusian Popular Front, the anniversary of the 2010 presidential elections and the events in Ukraine.

59% of the references found were from online resources, with

31% of those references having retained party information within their content. The significance of Facebook has also grown, according to the study, although the study did not cover vk.com – a Russian-language social network and perhaps the most popular social network and overall web site in Belarus.

Preparations for local elections was all but invisible in the media. Objectively, the opposition did little in the way of making this issue front page news. Public issues like prison releases, deaths or religious holidays were the most popular topics of the opposition.



The topic of repression will likely remain at the top of these rankings as long as they exist. International relations' relevance spiked upwards due to the [events in Ukraine](#). The economy has slid to eighth place, though this might be in part due to the fact that the opposition raises these issues primarily as coalitions.

Despite the stereotypes, the opposition's media presence in almost half of the cases analysed were associated with more practical work. The study's authors wrote that public events, policy implementation or meetings with foreign politicians were the opposition's principal activity.

BISS also divides up the types of references into different categories. One third of the references discovered were related to a more general pool of information, while in 31.7% of the references discovered, Belarusian politicians were mentioned as participants in an event – this is in reference primarily to [Yury Hubarevich](#) and Aliaksei Yanukievich, who visited Maidan in Kyiv.

Opposition Awakening Before the Presidential Elections?

Reports such as these would seem to suggest that the

opposition has awakened after a period of slumber. While their actions do not usually go beyond the "opposition ghetto", as people say in Belarus, the growth in the number of references and the appearance of a new popular leader in the media appear to indicate a period of intense political activity.

Seviarynec will continue to occupy to the upper end in the rankings. He will likely try to play the role of an opposition coalition builder as well as a coordinator of the process for selecting candidates for the presidential elections. Seviarynec himself cannot stand as a candidate due to his recent imprisonment and his party has no viable alternative.

His colleague from the Belarusian Christian Democrats, [Vital Rymasheuski](#), lacks credibility in the eyes of other opposition politicians which means that Seviarynec's party does not have a contender in the upcoming elections.

A growing number of young politicians are coming into their own. Unlike their older colleagues, individuals like Sieviaryniec, Dashkievich, Hubarevich, [Dzmitryjeu](#), [Lahviniec](#), Yanukevich rose to prominence 10 or even 15 years ago, after Lukashenka came to power. A generational overturn is gradually unfolding in Belarus.