

Mediabarometer: Belarusian Opposition Needs to Do its Homework

At the end of October the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) published a [new issue](#) of its Political Mediabarometer. It shows that many in the Belarus opposition seem to focus more on international activities and less on work inside the country.

The Political Mediabarometer reflects public communications of Belarusian political parties and movements and their presence in Belarusian media and covers April-June 2013. According to the BISS' findings, the public campaign Tell the Truth, United Civic Party and the Party of the Belarusian People's Front appeared the most frequently in Belarusian media.

This media presence, however, does not lead to any serious level of public support even for the biggest parties or the most well-known politicians. The Belarusian opposition needs to fight for any publicity just to be recognised by the common people. Some of the new political forces – for example, the campaign Tell the Truth – manage to do it better.

Who is the Opposition?

Many opposition activists may become upset after reading the new BISS study done by Aliaksei Pikulik and Alena Artsiomenka. The number of politicians' mentions according to the BISS – dropped from 3,900 in January-March to 3,084 in April-June. This means that as a whole, the opponents of the current government became less visible in the public sphere.

Essentially, oppositional political forces often have to focus on, in the least, publicity before looking for new supporters.

Moreover, according to Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS)□, the level of trust in oppositional parties among Belarusians in March stood at 13.1%, while the level of distrust reached 60.1%.

The media paid more attention to those politicians who demonstrated more offline activities and communicated proactively, not only reacting to what others have done or said but taking the initiative themselves.

Top-5 in Ranking of Media Presence

<i>Person</i>	<i>Affiliation</i>	<i>Place</i>
Anatol Liabedzka	United Civic Party	1
Uladzimir Niakliaeu	Tell the Truth	2
Aliaksandr Milinkevich	Movement for Freedom	3
Aliaksei Yanukevich	Party of the Belarusian People's Front – PBNF	4
Vital Rymasheuski	Christian Democracy	5

Anatol Liabedzka of the United Civic Party still leads the ranking of media presence, while the tendency towards a growing media presence for both Yanukevich and Milinkevich continues (at the end of 2012 the former was in 12th place and the latter 7th place).

In 2012, Liabedzka and a former presidential candidate Andrei Sannikau replaced each other at first place in the BISS ranking. In the first quarter of 2013, Sannikau found himself already at third place. And according to the study in April-June 2013 he fell even lower – to sixth place. In October 2012, he received political asylum in the UK, and as is often the case, physical absence rarely makes a politician more popular at home.

Top-5 Parties and Movements in Ranking of Media Presence

<i>Party or Movement</i>	<i>Place</i>
Tell the Truth	1
United Civic Party	2
Party of the Belarusian People's Front – PBNF	3
Movement for Freedom	4
Christian Democrats	5

Tell the Truth traditionally leads the ranking of political forces which more or less corresponded with the ranking of their leaders. Absolute media presence rankings for the top-5 parties and movements remain higher than those of their individual representatives and it proves that they are more than “one-man-parties”.

Party Equals Leader?

They, however, remain very much concentrated on Minsk. The proportion of regional activists, according to the BISS study, had declined. The share of provincial party leaders and members anyway never reached a tangible level. Only Tell the Truth has a tangible share of alternative representatives who articulated political messages in the period screened by the BISS. In all cases, when the media mentioned the United Civic Party, PBNF, Christian Democrats, and For the Freedom, their reporting was related only to their leader (or leaders).

Only Young Front had a considerable share of coverage linked to their regional leaders, and the Conservative-Christian Party of the Belarusian People's Front – to a regional party member.

This means that politics involved the same circle of well-known faces. Unfortunately, the old politicians of the Belarusian opposition have limited popularity among the broader public. According to the IISEPS opinion survey conducted in March, support for Niakliaeu reached 5.1% and Milinkevich and Sannikau got only 2.8% each.

Along with regional activists, the share of women also declined. In the first quarter of 2013 four women, namely Iryna Khalip, Maryna Adamovich, Natallia Radzina and Nasta Dashkevich (Palazhanka) made it into the top-12 of the ranking. But later in the year only Maryna Adamovich, the wife of the incarcerated presidential candidate Mikola Statkevich, was still at the top.

The Opposition Prefers International Activities

Politicians and political forces over this period of time actively discussed a more balanced and diverse set of issues. In particular they focused more upon issues of international relations, domestic politics and social matters. Since April 2012, when BISS started this study, Belarusian politicians rather frequently talked about economics. The share of such statements doubled: previously it never exceeded 6-7 per cent, now it reached 15 per cent of all communications. It made the discourse of the opposition more interesting to common people.

The BISS experts named the events related to the communications of Belarusian political forces from April-June, although they did not study them per se. The study suggests that the Belarusian opposition pays more attention to international activities than to domestic problems, which are more important to common people.

Domestic events included [Chernobyl Way](#), a traditional rally dedicated to the anniversary of Chernobyl catastrophe; and formation of political coalition People's Referendum (Narodny Referendum). Inside this coalition, Tell the Truth, For Freedom, the PBNF and BSDP declared that they would work together as strategic partners during the forthcoming local, presidential and parliamentary elections.

The international activities of opposition, on the other hand, were more impressive. In the second quarter of this year, its representatives participated in a conference on Belarus in

Brussels held by the European People's Party, urged the EU to ease visa regime, hold a series of meeting in Lithuanian Seimas and addressed the Lithuanian Foreign Ministry about the conditions under which the EU could normalise relations with Belarus.

Tell the Truth Grows Stronger

Yet international advocacy cannot substitute active political work inside the country. The study suggests that politicians proposed fewer new initiatives between April and June. Only Andrei Dzmitryeu (Tell the Truth) and Dzmitry Vus in this time span put forth any proposals. In general, the share of proactive communication – those when the politicians addressed publicity out of their own initiative – declined, while share of reactive communication responding to somebody else's actions or statements, grew to 85 per cent.

The structure of opposition and its activities are changing very slowly. An obvious maverick, the movement Tell the Truth demonstrate steady and vibrant activity. In less than five years it made it from zero to probably the most promising political force in an otherwise conservative Belarusian opposition. The political agenda of the movement looks rather flexible. So far, it simply takes on every local initiative it can find.

The Belarusian opposition has faced harsh suppression for years, an yet it still exists and is functioning. The new BISS study suggests that to become more visible in the domestic media and more popular among Belarusians, the opposition should spend less time doing international activities and work more inside Belarus, with its potential electorate.

Who is Happy in Belarus, State and Independent TV Compared – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

Who is happy in Belarus? BISS analyzes official government and UNICEF statistics and finds out who is happy in Belarus. Mediakritika.by monitors the media situation in Belarusian state TV media, but also Warsaw-based Belsat.

Sergey Drozdovskii, Coordinator of the Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities, explains why the Belarusian authorities hold back from signing the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. Liberal Club presents a policy brief on the results of the recent sociological surveys regarding attitudes towards the public administration.

[Numbers: Who is Happy in Belarus?](#) – Elena Artyomenko, BISS, analyzes [the report](#) on women and children, developed jointly by the Ministry of Statistics and UNICEF. In particular, data on subjective well-being and the happiness of young people allows them to derive a formula of a happy Belarusian – to be happy, you have to be a young unmarried girl from a wealthy family from Minsk with a basic education. To feel satisfied with life, you need to be born in Brest in a well off family, do not receive secondary education and have experience with being married.

[Censorship and Violation of Journalistic Standards on All Channels](#)– The project [mediakritika.by](#) released its regular monitoring of news on state-run TV channels ONT and "Belarus 1" as well as the Warsaw-based "Belsat". The monitoring data for September shows that all three channels were characterized by violations of professional standards such as a balance of

opinion, completeness of coverage, separating facts from opinions, reliability and timeliness. State TV did not mention the opposition at all and almost half of their air time was filled with positive stories about the president and government bodies.

Seviarynets on his Release, Spiritual Revolution and Isolation of Opposition from the People – The deep isolation of the opposition from the electorate cannot be compensated by a few and not too ambitious actions. The opposition will gain popularity only when its leaders show by personal example how to live without lies and live according to a moral code. These and other issues are raised in the studio TUT.BY-TV by former political prisoner, Pavel Seviarynets.

BISS Political Mediabarometer (April-June 2013) – The Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) presents the fifth edition of its quarterly report covering April-June 2013. The report summarizes the half-year and contains information about the communication of political forces and its reflection in the media. In particular, among the positive trends experts point to the increased attention on the part of the media to the political forces with a higher level of offline activity and a greater proactive communications.

What do Belarusians think about the National System of Public Administration?– Vasily Korf, Liberal Club, has prepared a policy brief on the results of the recent sociological surveys. The expert uncovered that the data of both government (Information-Analytical Centre at the Presidential Administration) and independent (Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies, IISEPS) centres indicate that not only tops officials, but also the ordinary Belarusians worry about the low efficiency of public administration in the country – "the majority of society does not feel its unity with the state, but rather opposes to it."

[**In Europe the Death Penalty was Abolished in Defiance of Public Opinion, Belarus has its Own Way**](#) (video) – In the studio of TUT.by-TV, an attitude of the Belarusians to capital punishment was discussed by Nikolai Samoseiko, MP, Grigory Vasilevich, a former attorney general, Valentin Stefanovich, a human rights activist of the campaign "Human rights defenders against the death penalty", and Oleg Gajdukevich, deputy chairperson of the Liberal Democratic Party.

[**Vytis Jurkonis: Lukashenka is a project of the Kremlin**](#) – The Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius will remind the official Minsk about obligations as the EU repeats from 19 December, 2010. The European Union has no illusions regarding Lukashenka. The current regime does not have a European perspective, as Lukashenka is a project of the Kremlin. These theses are articulated by a lecturer of the Institute of International Relations and Political Science of Vilnius University, Vytis Jurkonis during his interview about the current relationship between Belarus and Lithuania, between Minsk and the EU.

[**Andrei Yegorov: Civil Society in Belarus has a Low Temperature of Development**](#) – Despite its visible activity, Belarusian civil society is developing slowly. These are the results of a project that monitored civil society in Belarus, held by the Centre for European Transformation over the past two years. The project tracked the development of CSOs working in the field of democratic change, advocacy campaigns, protection of human rights, and an organisational development component as well. The presentation of [the recent results](#) of the monitoring was held on 8 October in Minsk.

[**Why Belarus does not Sign the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities?**](#) – The intention to join the UN Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities is discussed since 2009. But up until now, Belarus remains the only one in Europe that has not signed the document. Sergey

Drozdovskii, Coordinator of the Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities, explains that the Convention imposes a serious commitment on the country, and it is alarming for authorities, because additional legislative regulatory changes and financial investments will be necessary.

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.

Video of Belarus Research Council's Debate 'What Belarusians Think'

The Eastern Europe Studies Centre and the Belarus Research Council are organising the third live panel discussion What Do Belarusians Think: Results of Research on Social Contract.

'Social Contract' is a research focusing on relations between different social groups in Belarus and the state from the viewpoint of social and political stability. During the first such a research in 2009, analysts of the Belarus Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) have shown that social stability was based on a rational and pragmatic exchange of goods for loyalty. How the dramatic political development and economic have influenced the social contract since?

The research will be presented by **Alena Artsiomenka** from the Belarus Institute for Strategic Studies and discussed by **Aleksandr Sosnov** from the Independent Institute for Socio-

Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) and **Irina Tochitskaya** from the Institute for Privatization and Management (IPM RC). The discussion will be moderated by journalist **Maria Sadovskaya-Komlach**.

Belarus Digest organised online streaming of the discussion. Viewers are also welcome to follow the event, comment and ask questions on Twitter using the hashtag #Whatbelarusiansthink for English speakers) and #Чтодумаютбелорусы (for Russian speakers).

Why Belarusians Emigrate

On 12 July, Prime Minister [Mikhail Myasnikovich](#) proposed the introduction of a tax on non-working Belarusians.

Although official statistics show that the [unemployment rate](#) stands at 0.5 per cent, the prime minister acknowledged that 445,000 Belarusians do not work – about 9 per cent of the working-age population. The authorities avoid talking about it officially, but everyone in Belarus is aware that most of these people work abroad.

The majority of migrants from Belarus find jobs in Russia. Although most Belarusian workers perform low skilled work in Russia, the brain drain is becoming a threat to the country. People who are well-paid by Belarusian standards and have higher education and pro-European attitudes increasingly want to leave Belarus.

According to a recent study of the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS), 35.6 per cent of Belarusians think of emigrating. If all these people went away, the population of Belarus would be reduced from 9.5m to 6.1m, Belarus would

lose its youth, business and public elites.

Who Leaves Belarus?

The Belarusian authorities decided to deal with people informally employed abroad, as the state receives no taxes from them. At the same time, families of Belarusian migrant workers employed abroad enjoy some cheap social services in the Belarusian system. For example, the monthly payment for kindergarten is just \$10, and a litre of A-95 petrol is \$0.88. However, the Belarusian authorities prefer not to emphasise the fact that migrant workers sent home about \$913mln last year.

The International Organisation for Migration (IOM) announced bigger figures than the Prime Minister Myasnikovich. IOM's data shows that up to 1.2 million Belarusian citizens work abroad. Belarus keeps no official statistics or independent studies on how many Belarusians leave Belarus, where they go and whom they are working for.

However, many Belarusians privately know a few people who have gone to Russia and earn their bread through heavy physical labor. The Belarusian media often convey the deaths of Belarusian workers in Russia. In general, Belarus has the awkward prospect of becoming a "second Moldova" – a country that supplies a cheap labor force.

[The research](#) conducted by BISS shows that the typical Belarusian migrant-worker is a divorced man aged between 30 and 44. He has secondary or vocational education and lives in Minsk or in small towns in [Mahiliou](#) and [Viciebsk](#) regions.

Who Wants to Leave Belarus?

In addition to people in low-skilled jobs, young people leave Belarus en masse. According to BISS, only 13.7 per cent of young people want to stay in Belarus, either to study or to work, or for a permanent residence in another state.

The youth sees no economic prospects in today's Belarus and no chances for political change. Although going to [Russia](#) is the easiest route, the West also became a considerable destination point. If you look at the Belarusian-Polish border crossing Brest-Terespol, a significant proportion of the travellers are young people going to study in Poland. According to the Polish educational foundation Perspectives, 2,397 Belarusians are studying in Poland. It is difficult to find concrete figures on how many Belarusians were studying in Poland five or ten years ago, but the figure was definitely lower.

The study mentioned above also demonstrates another dangerous trend. People with economic education and higher education in general, as well as Internet users, have expressed a strong desire to leave Belarus. 42.2 per cent of people with higher education want to leave Belarus.

In fact, a significant number of mid-level managers want to leave Belarus. Those in the same positions in Moscow, for example, can earn much more. Although emigration for these people remains a heavy damping off, many of them wish to go through the changes to leave Belarus.

Average Wages in Moscow and Minsk (USD)			
	Engineer	Manager	Driver
Minsk	790	675	900
Moscow	1575	1425	1335

Data: yandex.ru

According to the BISS study, many businessmen also want to leave Belarus. Some of them recognise that Belarus remains a more corrupt country than even Russia. While in Russia, thanks to privatisation, corruption in business has decreased, in Belarus bureaucrats still manage large state-owned enterprises and prevent the development of Belarusian business.

Although the authorities of Belarus have carried

out [administrative reforms](#), government employees still earn little. In such circumstances, state officials find themselves emigrating or working in Belarus for Russian businesses. Last year former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Belarus Siarhei Martynau was appointed [a special representative](#) of the Russian oil company Russneft in Belarus.

Many other officials leave for Russia. For example, two former foreign ministers (Ivan Antanovich and Ural Latypov) emigrated to Russia, and two former heads of the KGB (Leanid Yerin and Siarhei Matskievich) were among many other former ministers and senior officials to leave for Moscow.

Turn Off the Lights at the Train Station

When [a financial crisis](#) exploded in Belarus back in 2011, many Belarusians joked that the last one to leave Belarus should turn off the lights at the train station.

Two years after the crisis, the flow of migration has decreased, but a lot of people still retain the mood of the émigré. According to BISS, every third person wants to emigrate. Moreover, 15 percent want to leave for permanent residence. The idea of “shoving off” remains especially popular among young people, who have no particular social contracts with the state or deep attachments in society.

Belarusian business owners are still willing to leave, but they cannot. The Belarusian market remains familiar to them, and the competition there is not so high. For them, it is easier to stay in Belarus with Lukashenka and the bureaucrats rather than move to another country and build their business from scratch.

However, Belarusian business managers, who do not own businesses, are ready to leave. For them, emigration remains a new challenge that has the potential to bring them salaries several times higher than in Belarus. The average salary in Moscow is about \$1,500, while in Minsk it remains two times

lower.

However, the Belarusian youth is growing like grass through asphalt. For example, a 22-year-old woman recently became the director [Partisan](#) football club, and another 20-year-old woman opened the third hostel in Minsk for the year. The only hope for Belarus is that not all young people leave.

The authorities should get the point that Belarus need economic reforms and to attract foreign investors. Without new innovative enterprises and new jobs, Belarusians themselves may become the main export of the country.

Political Activists in Belarus: a Portrait

Last week, the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) released a new ranking of Belarusian political activists based on media coverage in January-March 2013.

The BISS [study](#) suggests an undersupply of political initiative among Belarusian political figures. According to BISS, the quantity and quality of political communication by Belarusian opposition figures do not necessarily go together – possibly a symptom of the uneven playing field in authoritarian regimes such as Belarus.

This article uses the BISS list as a representative sample of Belarusian political opposition figures to learn about these people's paths into politics. Belarusian political activists are highly educated, are likely to be affiliated with political parties and have suffered arrests and imprisonment. Strikingly, one fifth of the political figures on the BISS

list are in exile. Even so, for many political repression has become a right of passage into political visibility.

Measuring Political Communication: Media Barometer BISS

The BISS study examined both qualitative and quantitative characteristics of media communication. The study went beyond being academic and aimed at contributing to the improvement of political communication in Belarus. The quantitative index measured the number of media references and the size of audience covered by the online and print media as well as personal communications. The qualitative index takes into account the content of media references and consists of indices of expertise, initiative, and political action.

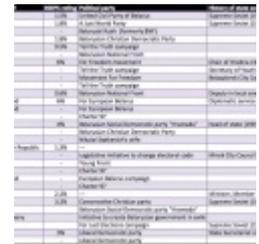
The figures on the BISS list are political actors broadly defined; many of them are civil society activists rather than politicians. According to BISS, among the top-12 political figures include distinct groups: a group with a high quantity of communication but average quality; a group with the most balanced quality communication, a group of women politicians with a high quantity of communication but “a complete absence of political initiative”.

Analtoly Liabedzka leads as far as the quantity of political communication goes, with 197 references in the media and the largest audience. Uladzimir Niakliaeu, at 244 references in the media occupies the second place, and Andrey Sannikau finds himself in the third place. Notably, these politicians feature in the media due to their political activity rather than personal life events or the bad luck of being imprisoned.

The only politicians according to BISS to have voiced new economic initiatives, Andrei Dzmitryeu and Aleksei Yanukevich, have high marks on the qualitative index but much less impressive quantitative results. Aliaksandr Milinkevich, Aliaksei Yanukevich, Andrei Dzimtyieu, and Vital Rymasheusky have the most

“balanced” communications, in terms of both quantitative and qualitative media presence.

This indicates the absence of political debate over important issues in Belarusian media. In fact, many political figures resemble citizen bloggers, expressing opinions but not engaging in constructive discussions over solutions of the day-to-day problems facing Belarusian citizens.



Some opposition politicians prefer to pose as victims and freedom fighters rather than address the mundane issues that interest the average Belarusian citizen. Of course, the dependence of Belarusian political activists on foreign donors may explain such behaviour. In the end, this limits the opposition’s appeal in Belarus.

How well do Belarusians know the figures on the BISS list? In June 2013 the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) published a [study](#), which indicated that only about a quarter of respondents came up with names of politicians who represent an alternative to the current president of Belarus.

When offered a list with names of politicians, however, the IISEPS respondents produced rankings slightly different from the ordering of the BISS study. One reason for this discrepancy could be that the BISS study took place at the time of relatively low political activity, with no elections on the horizon. A few names included in the IISEPS were missing completely from the BISS list, however.

Who Becomes a Political Activist in Belarus?

The provisional character of the BISS rankings notwithstanding, the biographies of the political actors mentioned by BISS allow learning more about the careers of people who become visible in Belarusian politics. Although each actor has his own background, the basic features that

many of them share common characteristics.

First of all, six out of thirty on the list live in exile in Western Europe or the United States. Political asylum undoubtedly limits these people's influence in Belarus, so their visibility in Belarusian media may appear surprising.

The average age of a political activist in Belarus is 50, with Stanislau Shushkevich, aged 78, being the oldest and Anastasia Palazhanka, aged 22, – the youngest representative. More than half of the people on the BISS list come from Minsk.

Only two out of thirty people on the list are independent from any political party or movement. Given the underdevelopment of the Belarusian political sphere and the wariness of political parties as such after the decades of Communist dominance, this strikes as a remarkably high number. After all, in June 2013 IISEPS study, only 15.3% of respondents said that they trusted the opposition parties. Even so, the Belarusian parties remain far from being truly programmatic, and the popularity of the people in the BISS list focuses to a large extent on personalities.

Two paths to political opposition stand out from the biographies of people in the BISS list. One was followed by the political figures well-known already in the 1990s. These people have some political experience, having served in the Supreme Soviet of Belarus, regional representative bodies, or diplomatic service. Some even initially cooperated with the Lukashenka regime. For nearly all of them, the constitutional referendum of 1996 became a turning point, marking the start of their careers in political opposition.

Another group came into politics from other paths of life, with their political experience starting in the Belarusian Popular Front, Charter97, or as citizen journalists. These people first came into the spotlight after their arrests. The very real repercussions of their political activities have

made their names familiar to the general public in Belarus as well as to the international organisations and probably strengthened their motivation to stay in politics.

These two possible paths to opposition suggest that while repression may discourage political involvement by some and increase the number of politicians in exile, in the longer run repressive measures only increase visibility of the political opposition and can possibly turn even politically neutral people into the regime opponents. Oppression in Belarus also draws the attention of foreign donors, increasing international visibility.

Who Funds the Opposition, EU Neighbourhood Barometer – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

Belarusian analysts remain sceptical about integration within the post-Soviet space. BISS invites discussion on its new social contracts research results. The Centre for European Transformation presents the results of the "EU-Neighbourhood Barometer" on the attitudes of Belarusians towards their own country and the European Union.

The Eastern European Studies Centre examines the third sector in Belarus. The World Bank approved a new programme for Belarus for the coming years. What does the Partnership Strategy mean for Belarusians?

[Lyabedzka: My Party does not Receive a Penny from the West](#) – one of the most discussed issues of the week was articulated by Anatol Lyabedzka, UCP leader, at the recent EuroNest meeting in Brussels. In particular, Lyabedzka suggested checking the assistance that democratic countries provide for civil society in Belarus.

The politician explained his sudden suggestion that there are in existence some pseudo-democratic organisations which are supported alongside together with truly independent media, human rights activists and political structures. Euroradio spoke to the politician about his statement, which risks causing a new round of arguments in the democratic community.

[EU Neighbourhood Barometer: What Belarusians think about Belarus and the EU?](#) – Alyona Zuikova, from the Centre for European Transformation, prepared a paper analysing the results of the research component of the Regional Programme for EU communication. EU Neighbourhood Barometer gives a snapshot of the whole region, making it possible to compare the Belarusians public opinion on issues related to democracy, democratisation and Europeanization, with the opinion of the residents of other EaP countries. In particular, Belarusians have expressed a moderate position on most issues, while avoiding radical ones.

[Eurasian Economic Union: A new Toy for the Three](#) – The future of the Eurasian Economic Union, which Belarus, Russia and Kazakhstan are to create by 2015, analysts say, is rather lacklustre. They believe that by 2015, all the integration documents will be signed and ratified by the three countries, but the real integration will be visible later. This was discussed in a regular issue of the Amplituda TV TUT.by program, attended by experts Alexei Pikulik, BISS Academic Director, and Yuri Shevtsov, director of the Centre for European Integration.

[BISS-Timeline #5 \(May 2013\)](#) – The Belarusian Institute for

Strategic Studies (BISS) issued its regular monthly review of the major social, economical, political and cultural events in Belarus. The May issue covers US and EU sanctions' being lifted against Belarusian companies, a meeting of the Supreme Eurasian Economic Council, the opposition's initiative to hold a 'popular referendum', some signs of liberalisation in the cultural landscape, etc.

[The Bell, No.4 \(34\)](#) – The Eastern Europe Studies Centre (EESC) presents an issue of the electronic newsletter The Bell is devoted to the analysis of the NGO sector in Belarus. In particular, Tatsiana Chulitskaya examines the current situation of the NGO sector in Belarus and stresses upon the main strengths and weaknesses of it; Yury Chavusau gives a brief review of Belarusian NGOs registered abroad and categorises them into four different types.

[Presidential Election 2015: Opposition is Still Off](#) – Belaruskaya Delovaya Gazeta noted that in 2015 the 5th presidential election will take place in Belarus, and respectively asks a number of experts whether the opponents of Lukashenka have a chance to update the Belarusian political Olympus. The experts – Andrei Egorov, Alexander Shpakovski, Valery Karablevich – were all practically on the same page and do not see strong candidates in the Belarusian opposition. "A crisis of age and cadres affects the fact that elections can go almost unopposed," stated Shpakovski.

[The European Endowment for Democracy HQ opened](#). On 27 May the headquarters of the European Endowment for Democracy (EED) were opened in Brussels. The Endowment is expected to provide assistance to civil society organisations, young pro-democracy leaders, and independent media outlets. The Endowment will be financed by the European Commission funds and EU member states. Over the first three years, the EED budget will reportedly exceed €25 million.

[The organisers of cultural events will have to get](#)

[concert licences](#). The presidential decree of 5 June provides for compulsory obtaining of a certificate for an organisation to conduct cultural and entertainment events in Belarus (concert licence) at the Department of ideological work. [Independent artists believed](#) that such a decision could be caused by the desire of the authorities to have additional control over this realm.

[World Bank approves new Partnership Strategy for Belarus](#). Accepted on 6 June, the new Country Partnership Strategy for Belarus for 2014-2017 is based on consultations at all levels of society, and with development partners. It commits to help reforms in key areas needed for the country to regain competitiveness, but also to maintain macroeconomic stability and sustainable growth.

[The State of the World's Children 2013](#). On 30 May UNICEF issued [its annual report](#) on the issues of children with disabilities. The report urges the governments of all countries to sign, ratify and implement the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities. To the moment, 128 countries, including the EU, have signed the Convention; Belarus is not in the list.

[Poland invites Belarusians to a new scholarship program](#). Polish MFA in cooperation with the Ministry of Science and Higher Education launched the Stefan Banach scholarship program designed for students studying economics, engineering, natural and agricultural sciences, or European studies and living in the EaP countries. Any Belrusian can participate at the new Program, regardless of his/her political views.

[Belarusians earned abroad nearly a billion dollars](#). In 2012, Belarusian citizens received from abroad 913.1 million dollars of personal transfers, states the Belarus National Bank. Thus, the official earnings of Belarusians abroad have increased by 15.2% in comparison with 2011.

[Belarus becomes world's top country for SPAM](#). Belarus has eclipsed the US to become the biggest single source of global spam, according to cloud-based email and web security firm AppRiver. After the spike happened on 13 April, AppRiver said it began recording an average of 12.3 million spam messages per day from Belarus – which is now climbing.

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.

European Intercultural Festival, Corpus Christi Procession in Minsk – Civil Society Digest

The European Intercultural Festival, journalism ethics programme, national symbols campaign were just some of the civil society events which took place in Belarus over the last few weeks. This year for the first time the initiative "Save Kurapaty" together with the municipal service gathered to clean together the area near the Kurapaty forest, the place of execution and burial of the victims of Stalinist repression.

[European Intercultural Festival 2013](#). On 20-26 May, the first European Intercultural Festival is taking place in Minsk, Homel and Hrodna. [The Festival agenda](#) aims to promote knowledge about the EU and the EaP countries and includes language classes, discussion clubs, a presentation of European

Volunteer Service, European Movie Night, presentation «An Illustrated History «This country called Belarus», [BISS panel on facilitation of visa regime](#), etc. The Festival is a joint project by Belarusian and international organisations, including ODB (Brussels), OEEC (Minsk), BISS (Vilnius), Youth Centre *Fialta* (Minsk), etc.

[The Corpus Christi procession](#) in Minsk on 26 May was attended by the highest number of participants – 10-12 thousand. This year procession, which attracted twice as many participants as last year, has become the most massive in the history of this march in Belarus; that may indicate the development of the Catholic faith in Minsk.

[National symbols campaign](#). On 14 May, a campaign on popularisation of Belarusian national symbols launched. The start of the campaign marks the day in 1995, when a national flag of three stripes – white-red-white – as well as a state seal (Pahonia) were changed on the current official symbols. The campaign organisers – Art Siadziba, initiative "Rock and Solidarity" and BMAgroup – started their activity with distributing the Belarusian music CDs and themed badges on the Minsk streets.

[Mediakritika is launching a new project](#). In its new video project portal [Mediakritika.by](#) will look for answers on actual media market questions – why the media cannot be divided into "we" and "they"; what quality journalism is, and who needs it; whether it is possible to keep a balance between media as a business and media as a profession. The participants of the project are Belarusian journalists, editors, bloggers, and representatives of profile CSOs.

[Kalinouski competition](#). On 22 May the organising committee to celebrate the Year of Kastus Kalinouski launched a competition on the rebellion of 1863-1864 and the personality of the national hero Kalinouski. The competition "Who knows

better Kalinouski rebellion" is held in two phases – an online quiz and a "live" final in a format of brain-ring.

[Budzma presents a new concept](#). The campaign "Budzma" presents a new concept "Culture Improves Life" which will be revealed via a series of movies in which well known, successful Belarusians characters tell the story how the culture has changed their lives and made them real trendsetters in the media and public life. The next step is to promote the real content of the notion "culture" through a large series of interviews with prominent Belarusians.

[Roundtable Ad.nak!](#) Minsk hosted a round table "How to Make Sports Clubs National Brand?" under in the 4th Festival of Belarusian-language advertising and communication AD.NAK! The discussion was attended by representatives of business and sports marketing, in particular, the director of sports marketing agency Sportteam, Head of Press Service of HC "Dynamo-Minsk", BATE marketing manager as well as Alyaksandr Kul, the initiator to name the basketball team as "Tsmoki-Minsk".

[Vouchers for CSO capacity development](#). Capacity Development Marketplace has shared information on approving and issuing vouchers which allows CSOs to get funding for a need-driven capacity development service. To the moment, the Marketplace has issued six vouchers which went to Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities, Brest and Vitebsk branches of YMCA, [St Mikalai Christian Volunteer Movement](#), regional Agency Dzedzich. All awarded CSOs should have posted a tender at the Marketplace website and collected at least three bids from providers in order a deal was declared valid.

Educational Opportunities and Trainings

[Europe Day Education Fair](#). EU Delegation to Belarus and the EU embassies invite students, teachers and researches to Europe Day Education Fair. On 21 May, a number of foreign and local

speakers will present the EU educational opportunities – TEMPUS program office in Belarus, Polish and Lithuanian universities and foundations of academic exchanges, the EU embassies, the Bureau of the German service of academic exchange (DAAD), Goethe Institute, the European Voluntary Service, etc. The event is to start at 10 am, at the Minsk IBB Centre.

[Visit on energy topic](#). The Brussels-based Office for a Democratic Office invites Belarusian experts to an educational visit on energy topic. The visit will take place in June 2013, in Brussels. The event is a part of Clearing House project and aims at deepening the contacts and the exchange of best practices between Belarusian specialists and their EU and EaP counterparts. The organiser covers all trip expenses.

[Belarusian Human Rights School](#) announces a competition for participation in the Summer School on Human Rights in 2013. Under the program, participants will learn about the history and philosophy of human rights, as well as methods and tools of their protection at the national and international levels. Young people of 18-25 years from Belarus are invited to participate. The School is to take place at the Belarusian Human Rights House in Vilnius.

[Human rights weekend](#). On 18-19 May, Gomel and Mogilev hosted educational workshop "Human Rights on fingers". Everyone is invited to participate; for those who successfully pass the seminar the organizers provide in-depth human rights education, training and participation in the activities of the human rights and youth organisations. "Human Rights on fingers" is a regular educational workshop, held with the support of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, *Studentskaya Rada*, the Human Rights Center *Viasna*, and Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend).

Interaction between State and Civil Society

[ARCHE re-registered](#). On 24 May the edition received the documents for re-registration. Valery Bulhakau will be editor in chief again. ARCHE did not publish from June 2012 due to problems with registration, now the editors plan a next issue for early summer. This year, the magazine celebrates its 15th anniversary.

[Talaka in Kurapaty](#). From 25 May to 3 June volunteers will conduct national "talaka" to clear the garbage in the area of Kurapaty□□, the place of execution and burial of the victims of stalinist repression. The works will be held in conjunction with the municipal service "Zelenstroyi", however, attempts of initiative "Save Kurapaty" to agree for assistance with the administration of the Minsk city administration have still failed.

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.

Dead Organisations in the Belarusian Third Sector – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

Over the last few weeks a number of analytical publications came out. BISS prepared two regular reports on the trends within the Belarusian society and priorities in Belarus's foreign policy. For the first time the UN issued

a report on the trends in the field of human rights in Belarus.

Mediakritika.by monitored how the state and independent media find out the sources of their news. The Liberal Club discussed the possible consequences of the new health system reform implementation.

[Belarusian Third Sector is Overloaded with Dead Organisations](#) – Uladzimir Matskevich, the leader of the National Platform of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum considers problems and threats to the civil society. He pays attention to poor legislation and poor conditions for Belarusian NGOs which waste time on formation, existence and survival: "Only those who can get away from all those formal obligations and allocate time for thinking, criticism, reflection, evaluation, and mere human discussion are capable of something. But there are very few of them in Belarus."

[Where do the news come from?](#) Mediakritika.by portal has monitored the two state-owned TV-channels in Belarus and non-governmental Belsat to find out sources of their news. Liaison offices of government bodies, public relations departments, ideology deputies – are the ones shaping the key information occasions featured by the Belarusian TV-channels on a daily basis. News occasions created by government's spokespeople are the basis of the news broadcasts aired by all three TV-channels during the monitoring week. Meanwhile, there were almost no exclusive news materials created by the channels' journalists.

[BISS-Timeline #4 \(April 2013\)](#) – Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) presents its brief monthly review of the major social, economical, political and cultural events in Belarus. According to publication, environmental issues were high on the agenda for Belarusians recently. Majority of public initiatives in April related to the Chernobyl disaster and the construction of a new power plant in Astraviec. The experts describe also the landmark foreign policy events in April, note that overstocks remain a significant problem,

predict no important innovations in the social sector in the coming months, and reveal further confrontation between official and unofficial culture.

Another publication of BISS, [Belarus' Foreign Policy Index #13 \(March-April 2013\)](#), presents the 13th issue of its regular report, which focuses on five foreign policy priorities of Belarus. In particular, the experts note that official Minsk has once again underlined its limited negotiability with Russia and the willingness to take the necessary decisions in exchange for significant economic concessions. Belarus' relations with the EU continued to develop rapidly and demonstrated an unprecedented number of diplomatic and political contacts on the high state level for the last years. Some results of the current Index were also discussed at the ["Amplituda" TUT.BY](#) program.

[What kind of Health Reform does Belarus need?](#) After a panel discussion on the possible upcoming health reform in Belarus, Liberal club has shared the key findings and experts' advice on the issue. According to surveys and experts' opinions, the key problems of medical industry are lack of effective financial models for hospitals and poor human resources management. The experts also discussed the opportunities and consequences of insurance-financed medicine.

[The European Dialogue on Modernization: the Current Status and Development Problems](#) – Centre for European Transformation prepared policy paper providing a rationale for the reorganisation of the EU initiative European Dialogue on Modernization. The author substantiates the necessity of the convention and coordination of the position of various subjects, which is to actually set the stage for modernization reforms in Belarus – so called conventional modernization is contra posed to authoritarian modernization as a possible way of reforming Belarus' economy while the current political regime is preserved.

[Review-Chronicle of Human Rights Violations in Belarus in April 2013](#) – Human Rights Centre *Viasna* presents its regular monitoring on the human rights situation in Belarus. In April, the experts notice consistently poor situation with a clear tendency to deteriorate. Namely, 11 political prisoners were still kept in jail. A dangerous trend in April was that KGB and the prosecutors' offices issued warnings to activists about the possible criminal punishment for activities on behalf of unregistered organizations.

[The Way Belarusians Understand Civil Society is Puzzling](#) – Ulad Vialichka, the chairman of the International Consortium "EuroBelarus", considers whether the notion of civil society is used correctly in Belarus and which countries' experience can be most useful for Belarusian civil society. Vialichka assumes that Belarusian society still has an underdeveloped understanding of civil society that is connected with the fact that the processes of civil society formation that were going on in the early 90s were exposed to serious attacks afterwards.

International Reports on Belarus

[First report of UN special rapporteur on Belarus](#). Miklos Haraszti, the UN Human Rights Council's special rapporteur on Belarus, published his first report on the situation in Belarus. The report to be submitted to the UN Human Rights describes the main trends in the field of human rights in Belarus in the period 5 July 2012 – 31 March 2013 and emphasises the systematic violations of human rights in Belarus.

[The UN Special Rapporteur's second thematic report](#). The UN Special Rapporteur on the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly and of association, Maina Kiai, [published his second thematic report](#) which draws particular attention to the ability of civil society to seek, protect and use financial resources from international and internal sources. The report

also provides practical guidelines to facilitate the implementation of the freedom of peaceful assembly.

[European Parliament adopted draft recommendation on EU policy towards Belarus](#). Justas Paleckis acted as the rapporteur of the document. The European Parliament addresses its recommendations to a number of the EU institutions which should “reiterate the need for the unconditional and immediate release and rehabilitation of the political and civic rights of all remaining political prisoners to be a prerequisite for a gradual lifting of EU restrictive measures and for a substantial upgrade in EU-Belarus relations”.

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Forget Lukashenka – Remember Belarus – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

Over the last two weeks, Belarusian analysts devote much attention to Belarus-EU relations. A major Amnesty International report on Belarus came out. Analysts discuss privatisation and female politicians in the country.

[Forget Lukashenka – Remember Belarus](#) – politician Andrei Dmitriev names Lukashenka a politician of the past and offers to stop using the legacy code “Lukashenka” – and start to create and use the new code: “We and Our

country". Dmitriev calls to join the discourse of the new majority – the work on the national agenda of change which provides a social agreement about the changes, where the main principle is "not Who instead, but How after."

[What is not Permitted is Prohibited: Silencing Civil Society in Belarus](#) – Amnesty International's report analyses the legislation governing freedom of peaceful assembly and association and documents violations of these rights faced by human rights defenders, trade unions, environmental campaigners and sexual minorities individuals. The report shows how the authorities in Belarus regularly deny the rights to freedom of peaceful assembly, association and expression, preventing people from speaking out in public, holding demonstrations or setting up civil organisations.

[BISS Political Media Barometer #3](#) – BISS presents its report for October – December 2012 and offers the analysis of political media following the 2012 parliamentary campaign period in Belarus. The report notes growing differences between the forces inside and outside of Belarus. The main topic of communication of those actors/forces outside of Belarus are repressions while those in Belarus focused on social sphere and internal questions of political parties. Meanwhile, media pay much more attention to stories of repression and political conflict.

[What Do Belarusians think?](#) – A video capturing the most interesting moments of the discussion *What Do Belarusians Think?* is available online. The discussion took place on April 12, in Vilnius, and focused at the newest results of national public opinion polls carried out by Belarus' leading pollsters and analysts. The event was organized by the Eastern European Studies Center (EESC, Lithuania) and the Belarus Research Council (BRC).

[PR1MUS: Yaraslaa Ramanchuk](#) (audio) – Yaraslau Ramanchuk, head

of Mises Research and Analysis Centre, sums up the development of the Belarusian economy for the first three months, analyses the two long-running privatisation deals – MTS and MAZ and argues that now the Belarusian government is carried away by the stimulation of the economy and just forgot the future.

Female Politician: Reality or

Nonsense? – Tatiana Schurko notes that in the modern world, despite the declarative statements on gender equality, women are still faced with the barriers that hinder their promotion into the political sphere. Government leaders and all active women in politics are still not so much that connected with gender stereotypes and prejudices. The expert presents the history of women's political rights, gives the actual statistics of women in governance, and describes the stereotypes that exist in Belarus in this field.

Belarus-EU Relations

The Holly War for a Water-Pump Station: Notes to the Latest

Events – Andrei Yahorau, Centre for European Transformation, appeals to the recent conflict among the political members of the opposition when Alexander Milinkevich and Andrei Sannikau expressed different points of view if the EU should have a dialogue with the official Minsk. The expert considers the conflict "the highest point of absurdity" because the opposition was left aside the dialogue between the EU and Minsk long ago. Until the political opposition is in state of disorganisation and only gives useful pieces of advice, nobody will take it seriously, Yahorau summarises.

Three Levels of Misunderstanding – Uladzimir Matskevich, the head of International Consortium *EuroBelarus*, suggests his vision of the situation why the discussion of Belarus-Europe dialogue permanently provoke sharp conflicts within Belarusian political opposition. The analyst singles out three types of incomprehension: the level of ordinary people who are not initiated into the subtlety of

international politics; the political level, when professionals don't understand the essence of dialogue; and finally, the level of intraoppositional competition and struggle when every leader tries to get in the mainstream of European politics.

[Prospects for EU Policy Towards Belarus During the Presidency of Lithuania](#) – Kinga Dudzińska and Anna Maria Dyner, the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), note an intensification of political and economic relations between Lithuania and Belarus and expect that Lithuania will use its presidency of the EU Council to resume a dialogue with the Belarusian authorities. The experts consider that this would be a great success for Lithuanian diplomacy.

[Analysis of EU Instruments for the Development of Civil Society in Belarus](#) – experts of Centre for European Transformation (CET) prepared working papers that analyze two thematic EU instruments – [European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights](#) (EIDHR) and [Non-State Actors and Local Authorities](#) (NSA-LA). The papers consider the priorities of EU instruments and draw some conclusions on their capacity in the Belarusian context. The papers are a part of the CET study aimed to analyse effectiveness of EU programs for the development of civil society and democracy in Belarus.

[Traps and Opportunities of the European Policy towards Belarus](#) – Whether there is a shift in the EU dialogue with the official Minsk? What are the reasons of this shift, what are traps and possibilities there; what is the role in the process of civil society? Radio Svaboda discusses the mentioned issues with Pavol Demes, German Marshall Fund, Kamil Klysinsky, Polish Center for Eastern Studies, and Kirill Koktysh, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations.

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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.

Do Belarusians Want to Join the EU?

On 2 March, the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies presented a report on geopolitical preferences of Belarusians. The media paid little attention to the document presented by an influential Belarusian think-tank, although the conclusions of this report could be important for Belarus.

Despite the crisis in Europe, the regime's anti-European propaganda and the EU's weak informational policy inside Belarus, the number of Belarusian euro-enthusiasts continues to grow, slowly, but still. At present moment, 17 % Belarusians consistently support the idea of European integration. Moreover, if we held a referendum on Belarus' joining the EU tomorrow, 38,2% Belarusians would have said "yes".

The new thing about the research is that the biggest group of respondents – 30,9% – does not want to see Belarus involved in any integration processes at all. 23,3 % Belarusians stand for integration with Russia. This is more than for joining the EU.

But despite state propaganda the level of pro-Russian orientation keeps going down. Primarily because the Russian integration supporters are the people who lived most of their lives in the Soviet Union, and their number in the society is gradually decreasing in a natural way. 20,0 % want integration

with both Russia and the EU and see Belarus as a sort of a bridge between the East and the West.

Europe's Casus

The European Union has an unbelievable Soft Power in Belarus, it stands steadily even under the influence of the external conditions.

On the one hand, the regime has been promoting the anti-European propaganda in the state media for many years, focusing on the crisis in the eurozone or economic problems of the "new Europe" countries. After the election-2010, Lukashenka [accused the West](#) in attempt at the state turnover in Belarus.

On the other hand, the European Union has a very weak communication strategy inside Belarus. The EU remains a key donor of Belarus. It has provided € 510 million of technical assistance during the years of independence. But according to BISS analysts only 4,6% Belarusians have any idea of the ["European dialogue for modernization of Belarus"](#). The Belarusian authorities keep silence about the European projects while Brussels put little effort into conveying this information directly to Belarusians.

Despite all this, European integration has become the most stable geopolitical choice. Moreover, there appeared a trend of growth of the pro-European moods in Belarus. The data presented by the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies in September 2003 shows that 23,4 % Belarusians are ready to vote for joining the EU in case of a referendum. This number increased by 15% in 10 years regardless of the unfavourable conditions. The trends when Belarusians should choose between joining the EU and integration with Russia look even more interesting.

	06`06	12`07	12`08	12`09	12`10	03`11	12`11	03`12	09`12	03`13
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Joining the EU	29,3	33,3	30,1	42,1	38	50,5	42	37,3	44,1	42,1
Integration with Russia	56,5	47,5	46	42,3	38,1	31,5	41,5	47	36,2	37,2

Data provided by the IISEPS

The data shows that the pro-European vector of the Belarusians' preferences increases every year with regard to the integration with Russia. There are several factors that facilitate growth of the pro-European moods in Belarus.

In Belarus, European goods, European living standards, the social model, and culture have high respect. Even Lukashenka, ordering to improve the functioning of a certain enterprise, says "make it work like in Europe".

Success of the former Soviet block members – the new EU members – also plays a significant role in the pro-European moods of Belarusians. After independence resume, Poland and Belarus started from identical positions, but Poland had become an example of the economic development. The BISS research shows that residents of the Western Belarus, the region that has intensive connections with Poland, have more pro-European moods than others.

Belarusians [often visit the European Union](#) and notice the positive sides of the European life model. The more Belarusians have an opportunity to go to the EU, the more students study in the EU, the quicker the pro-European moods will grow inside the Belarusian society.

Other Geopolitical Choices of Belarusians

Despite the stable trend of pro-EU moods in Belarus, other geopolitical options presented in the BISS studies stay on the table.

There appeared a trend that no one noticed before – pro-independence moods in the Belarusian society. 30,9%

Belarusians want neither European integration, nor integration with Russia. 20 years ago, in 1993, 55,1% Belarusians stood for the revival of the Soviet Union, so the views supporting total sovereignty surprise.

Russia is gradually losing its "Western Outpost". Only 23,3% want to unite with Russia. Given that Kremlin used to see Belarus as a natural part of its empire, today's results may seriously upset the Russian leaders.

The peculiarity of Belarus lies in the fact that 20,0% Belarusians want to be in a union with both the EU and Russia. On the one hand, it shows poor understanding of the integration processes by ordinary Belarusians. On the other hand, this confirms the Belarusian idea of a country as a bridge between the East and the West.

So Where?

The pro-European orientation of Belarusians has become a noticeable trend, but we cannot claim its stability.

The people of Belarus have few means of influence the authorities. The regime did not ask the people's opinions when it took the decision to join the Customs Union. It looks highly possible that Belarusians become just passive observers of the process of further integration with Russia. Kremlin desires to adjoin Belarus to Russia more than the European Union wants to accept it as a EU member. Moreover, Russia has much more finance and means of influence inside Belarus.

The European choice of Belarusians will always be jeopardised by the opportunistic policy of the regime and Kremlin's imperialistic approach. The only way to turn the pro-European orientation into reality is to let Belarusians vote in free and fair elections. This may take a long time but it appears Belarusians remain pro-European despite years of propaganda and authoritarian rule.

Belarus Human Development Better Than in Two EU Countries – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

March was a busy month for Belarusian analysts and international organisations studying Belarus.

The United Nations Development Programme reports on the development of countries and Belarus ranks 50th in terms of social and economic progress.

BISS challenges the belief that Belarusians are strongly for independence with fresh survey results. What are the geopolitical preferences of Belarusians? – their report gives an answer.

Viasna reviews the situation of the human rights in Belarus. The Kalinowski programme celebrates its 7th anniversary and Generation.by takes a closer look on the project and sums up some interesting facts about it.

Belarus in International Context

[Belarus in 2013 UNDP Human Development Report](#). According to this regular UN study, Belarus is ranked 50th out of 186 nations in terms of economic and social progress. It is classified as having high human development and scored higher than Russia (56th), Romania (57th), Bulgaria (58th) and Ukraine (78th). The report is based on a composite statistic of education, life expectancy and income indices to rank countries into four tiers of human development – very high,

high, medium and low.

[Belarus is not included in the top five Internet enemies.](#) On 12 March, the World Day Against Censorship in the Internet, Reporters Without Borders, an international advocate for press freedom, labelled Syria, China, Iran, Bahrain and Vietnam as "enemies of the Internet" in a new report for their alleged increased online surveillance. Belarus is not mentioned in the report.

[How much people spend on food in different countries?](#) The discovery by European food shoppers shows that spending on food as a share of total income has declined markedly, but at the expense, some say, of quality: people in poor countries are forced to devote a far higher share of income to buying food. Belarus is in the top in the list where households have to spend significant sums on food, alcohol and tobacco.

[Improving the Situation in the World. What is Important for Belarusian Women?](#) – In January, the United Nations launched a global survey "My World", where everyone can choose what she/he thinks the most important for a better world. Six priorities of Belarusian women looks like as follows: better health care, honest and effective government, protection from crime and violence, affordable and quality education, protection of forests, rivers and oceans, non-discrimination and harassment. The first four priorities coincide with the global one.

Politics and Human Rights

[Geopolitical Preferences of Belarusians: Too Pragmatic Nation?](#) – BISS presents its new research which studies the attitude of the Belarusians towards the main integration centres – Russia and the EU. The comparison of the data [obtained in 2010](#) and 2013 made it possible to explore changes in some of the crucial trends. As a result, some of the popular stereotypes about the geopolitical choice of the

Belarusians were debunked, specifically, the stereotype about the predominantly value-based choice of 'Euro-enthusiasts' and integrity of 'Russophiles,' as well as the myth about the brotherhood with Russia.

[Amplituda. Belarus Authorities Phenomenally Lucky with the People](#) – analyst Alexander Klaskousky, a guest of TUT.by program *Amplituda*, discusses the characteristics of street protests in the recent history of Belarus, slogans and speeches of the opposition, the authorities' response and relocation of protests to the Internet. The expert believes that Belarus needs street protest but both the authorities and the opposition should learn them.

[The Conservative Revolution: Breakthrough to the Past](#) – Alexander Adamyants, Centre for European Studies, continues to debate between liberals and conservatives. In his article, the author presents the dispute as a competition of ideas about the present and future of Belarus. The expert believes that the current conservative futurism is a breakthrough in the past, in a bygone era which has only of historical-philosophical sense, but nothing more.

[ABC. Political Review # 1, 2013](#) – Analytical Belarusian Centre presents its first Political Review in 2013. The paper examines proposals on changes in the electoral law; the process of coalition building of the opposition forces; and the readiness of the official Minsk to start another cycle of the Belarusian-European relations.

[What Should Institution of the Ombudsman be?](#) – Legal Transformation Centre gives its response to the [draft Concept of National Institution on Human Rights in Belarus](#). The experts consider the proposed concept as quite liberal; namely the document provides that an Ombudsman can have a meeting with any official, including the president, at his/her first request. However, experts strongly protest against the position that the ombudsman should be appointed by the

president, as it is limited a lot freedom to criticise.

[Situation of Human Rights in Belarus in 2012. Review-chronicle](#) – Human Right Centre *Viasna* presents the analytical review on the basis of the monthly reviews of the situation of human rights in Belarus in 2012. Each of the monthly reviews includes the analysis of the most important events which influenced the observation of human rights for the given period, as well as the most evident and characteristic features of the abuses registered at that time.

Society

[Nationwide public opinion poll of March 2013](#) – in March 2013, Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) conducted a public opinion poll covering the most topical aspects of life in Belarus. Namely, for the last three months "economic well-being" of Belarusians has worsened. However, this mood is not directly transferred to the president whose electoral rating rose slightly compared to December, from 31.5% to 33.4%. Ratings of opposition have been declined: only 13.1% of respondents trust in opposition political parties, while 60.9% do not trust.

[Generation.by Examines the Kalinowski Program](#) – Online edition *Generation.by* identifies 13 interesting facts of the largest Kalinowski programme which celebrates its seventh anniversary. The programme supports the repressed Belarusian students by enabling them to continue education at Polish universities. In particular, it is noted that, in general from 2006 to 2012, about 685 people took part at the Program, 100 of them completed the full cycle of education (bachelorship and Master's degree). Each year, the Polish government spends for the Program about 1.25 million euro.

[Social Nihilism of Liberal Junta](#) – Victoria Kharkevich, conservative centre NOMOS, makes a contribution to the debate

between conservatives and liberals. The author strongly criticises the main statements of [the recent Alexander Adamyants' article](#), ranking him as a representative of "nihilistic reservation of liberalism". She invites all intellectuals of any direction to overcome their stamps and scheme and come to a new vision of themselves, the world and the future, what she calls a "conservative futurism".

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KaliLaska, Minsk Branding, Green Initiatives – Civil Society Digest

Belarus remains the last country in Europe which keeps capital punishment. Activists of campaign "Possessed. Against the Death Penalty" produced a clip and explained why it should be changed. Apart from "green" events, Belarusian activists launched social campaigns including Belarus Days in Sweden with roundtable on media in Belarus.

BelNetwork anti-AIDS issues annual report. Everyone who wants to learn Belarusian language has a chance to participate in the project "Mova ci kava". Budzma became the partner of that initiative. From April 2013 Belarusian elderly in Minsk for the first time will have an opportunity to become the students of the Third Age University.

[KaliLaska opens](#). On 5 April, the first charity

store KaliLaska will be opened in Minsk and aimed to help the homeless, children's homes, large families, shelters for animals. The shop takes second-hand things from population: about 20% of them are sold for money then; the bulk goes to vulnerable groups for free. Team of KaliLaska is an association of friends "who have decided to move from words to action: do something useful for the world".

[Minsk Branding Team held public hearings](#). On 25 March, the public initiative Minsk Branding Team held open public hearings at live TV.TUT.BY. The meeting included presentations of research results of opinions of citizens on the Minsk brand (according to Group SATIO), the best submitted concepts, as well as an open discussion among professionals, the media and indifferent Minsk residents.

[Possessed. Against the Death Penalty](#). The campaign against the death penalty produced a video to the first anniversary of the execution of Uladzislau Kavaliou and Dzmitry Kanavalau, sentenced to death on charges of terrorism. The story tells why the Belarusian human rights activists oppose the death penalty, and what everyone should do to change the situation.

[BISS on tut.by's Amplituda show](#). On 20 March BISS analysts Elena Artemenko and Andrei Eliseev were invited experts of a television TUT.by program *Amplituda* on the topic *Migration of Belarusians*. The experts told where, when and why Belarusians are leaving the country, as well as explained the migration impact on the demographic situation in Belarus. The material caused heated discussion of readers and collected more than 1,000 comments.

Educational Opportunities

[Third Age University in Minsk](#). From April 2013, the first department of the Minsk City University of the Third Age is to be launched. Elderly people will be trained on computer skills under the faculty *Information and Communication Technologies*.

The project aims to create conditions for further education of elderly and is implemented by Belarusian Association of Social Workers, supported by German Foundation *Memory, Responsibility and Future*.

[ICT study visit](#). E-Governance Academy (Tallinn) and Pact, Inc announce a call for participants for a study visit *Public-Private Partnership for Development of E-governance*. The visit is to take place on 28 April – 4 May 2013, in Tallinn and continues a series of events for the Belarusian participants to introducing to the experience of the Estonian ICT sector.

[Mova ci kava continues its regular lessons](#). Every Monday the Minsk residents have an opportunity to gather at the Gallery Ÿ to study Belarusian in an amusing and relaxed way. On 18 March more than 80 persons attended a lesson on the topic *World through Belarusians' View*. [The campaign Budzma is a partner](#) of the initiative.

[REC recruits trainers](#). The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC), with the support of Sida, announces a call for trainers/facilitators to assist the REC in organisational viability support work for the he project "[Supporting Environmental Civil Society Organisations](#)" (SECTOR). A group of ten trainers will be trained, and it is expected that four or five of them will be contracted under the project to provide support to CSOs to carry out self-assessments and draft organisational development plans.

[Economic and Business Education Abroad](#). On 7 April, Belarusian Economic Research and Outreach Center (BEROC) together with IPM Business School organise the conference *Economic and Business Education Abroad*, which will present opportunities for economic and business education in Europe and the U.S. The conference will present the programmes of leading educational institutions of Ukraine, Hungary, Poland and Lithuania.

'Green' Events

[Earth Hour in Belarus](#). Earth Hour 2013 was held on 23 March at 8:30pm-9:30pm. Belarus joined the global campaign for the fifth time. The Green Alliance appealed to heads of the ministries and large industrial enterprises with a request to turn off the lights on billboards, and other communal property, where the blackout is not critical. [Center for Environmental Solutions](#) offers a series of related events for school pupils, including participation in the creation of the video "60 seconds for the Earth."

[International Day of Sparrow](#). On 30 March BirdLife Belarus invited to celebrate the Day of Sparrow in Baranovichi (Brest region). During the day, a series of events is to be conducted – putting up birds houses in the park, quiz "What bird am I?", master-class on making birds out of unconventional materials, lotteries, sale of souvenirs and gifts from the test with the image of birds.

[Capacity development for environmental CSOs](#). The Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) announces a call for environmental CSOs which are interested to get support in their capacity development. The organizers are to provide ongoing support of a facilitator during all the process. CSOs that will design a long-term development plan successfully are eligible to receive a grant of up to 8,000 euro to improve their capacity.

Abroad

[Update From Belarus](#). On 12 April, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace (Washington, DC) hosts a discussion of the current situation in Belarus with a delegation of professional and CSO Belarusian leaders. Speakers will include Yury Chavusau, the Assembly of Pro-Democractic NGOs, Janna Grinyuk, the Center of System Business Technologies, and Yury Zisser, creator and founder of [TUT.BY](#). Travel for this delegation is supported by USAID and Pact.

[Belarus Days in Sweden](#). On 19-21 March “Belarus Days” were celebrated in Sweden. The agenda included a round-table discussion *Media under pressure* with the participation of Zhanna Litvina, BAJ, Yuliya Slutsкая, Solidarity with Belarus Information Office, etc. Also several other events were held with the participation of the Belarusian and Swedish human rights defenders, representatives of Amnesty International, Belarusian musician Liavon Volski.

[Belarus in Focus: International journalists awarded in Warsaw](#). Winners of the international journalism competition ‘Belarus in Focus 2012’ were awarded on 15 March in Warsaw. The competition received 60 articles from 36 journalists from 16 countries all over the world. The most articles were sent by journalists from Belarus, the United Kingdom, and Poland.

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Human Capital: Leave Cannot Stay – Digest of Belarus Analytics

Belarusian experts discuss migration, philosophy of barricades and coexistence, urban development and the readiness of the official Minsk to start another cycle of the Belarusian-European relations among other issues.

[Human Capital: Leave Cannot Stay](#) – BISS paper examines

migration and immigration attitudes of Belarusians in the light of sociology. The study is based on the results of a fresh national survey (December 2012 – January 2013). One of the preliminary findings does not prove an assumption that most Belarusians want to leave the country – this figure is comparable to 2009. At the same time disproportionate big number of those who wish to leave Belarus for permanent residence are people with higher education (mainly specialists in economics), and of high social status.

[From Philosophy of Barricades – To Philosophy of Coexistence](#) – sociologist Oleg Manaev in his interview for Mediakritika.by tells about the nature and focus of the complex processes taking place in the Belarusian media. In particular, Manaev considers that division of Belarusian nation into two groups with different values and understanding of reality is historical and is unlikely to disappear any time soon. Nevertheless, “we need to transition from the philosophy of barricades to the philosophy of coexistence with each other. After all, we are one nation – Belarusians”.

[Compaction in a Black Way](#) – Denis Kobrusev, European perspective NGO, provides in-depth analysis, how a scheme of compaction and urban conflicts occur in Minsk: how developers find a necessary piece of land, how the area is trimmed and what is being done to ensure that citizens are legitimately unable to protect their own interests. The author illustrates his arguments by specific fresh case studies of buildings in Minsk.

[2012 Results: Andrei Pachobut is an Absolute Civil Society Champion](#) – the Assembly of NGOs summarised the results of the CSOs awards ceremonies held in the year 2012 and found out that Andrei Pachobut, a journalist from Hrodna, became an absolute civil society leader. He was named the journalist/civil activist of the year five times: the Young Front, the Assembly of NGOs, the Svetlana Naumova’s, Human

Rights Alliance's and the newspaper's "NashaNiva" awards.

[The Conservative Revolution: Breakthrough to the Past](#) –

Alexander Adamyants, Center for European Studies, continues to debate between liberals and conservatives. In his article, the author presents the dispute as a competition of ideas about the present and future of Belarus. The expert believes that the current conservative futurism is a breakthrough in the past, in a bygone era which has only of historical-philosophical sense, but nothing more.

[Civil Society in Post-Soviet Europe: Seven Rules for Donors](#) –

The west's contribution to building more democratic and open societies in the post-Soviet region leaves much scope for improvement. Orysia Lutsevych at Chatham House draws lessons and offers recommendations – pillars – to both public and private donors. Namely, the author suggests make citizens "actors for change" not "consumers of democracy assistance".

[Position Paper on European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarus](#) –

the Coordinative Council of the Belarusian National Platform has produced a position paper on the European Dialogue on Modernisation with Belarus. In their paper the authors express their position on the current status, problems and prospects of the Dialogue. They reaffirm their full support for the Dialogue, but draw attention to the need to make changes.

[Nashe Mnenije – 10 years. Expertise as a Cure for Boredom](#) –

in 2012 an online project of the Belarusian expert community *Nashe mnenije* celebrates 10 years. The authors of the portal discuss the most important events in the history of the project. They also talk about the features of the Belarusian expert community. In particular, the experts believe that there are no more than 300 publicly employed analysts in Belarus, including New Europe and other editions, as well as such institutions as Political sphere, BISS, BEROC, etc.

[BISS Trends #12](#) – BISS presents the 12th issue of the BISS-Trends quarterly monitoring of main trends in political, economic, legal, geopolitical and cultural spheres. From now on, semiannual BISS-Trends together with monthly BISS-Timeline issues will replace the BISS-Trends quarterly format. In the fourth quarter of 2012, the experts noted the continuing stagnation or regression as regards virtually all the trends considered. Social and political life was only slightly enlivened by the parliamentary elections, and stagnation continues here.

[ABC. Political Review # 1, 2013](#) – Analytical Belarusian Center presents its first Political Review in 2013. The paper examines proposals on changes in the electoral law; the process of coalition building of the opposition forces; and the readiness of the official Minsk to start another cycle of the Belarusian-European relations.

[Improving the Situation in the World. What is Important for Belarusian Women?](#) – In January, the United Nations launched a global survey "My World", where everyone can choose what she/he thinks the most important for a better world. Six priorities of Belarusian women looks like as follows: better health care, honest and effective government, protection from crime and violence, affordable and quality education, protection of forests, rivers and oceans, non-discrimination and harassment. The first four priorities coincide with the global one.

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Quo Vadis Belarusians? – Belarus Civil Society Digest

The snow storm “Xavier” did not discourage Belarusian civil society from new projects and initiatives.

BISS recently discussed migration and Liberal Club “diagnosed” Belarus at roundtables in Minsk. The DisRight Office launched a new phase of an accessibility campaign. The Festival of Central European literature Shengenka opened in Minsk. Gomel activists campaign want to preserve historical wooden buildings.

The government asked business to form partnerships. Due to Constitution Day, Belarusians had the opportunity to query the Chairperson of the Constitutional Court.

Civil Society Activities

[BISS roundtable on migration](#). On 14 March, in Minsk, the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) held a roundtable *Quo vadis, Belarusians? The Impact of Migration on the Economy and Society*. The event presented some results of a recent national survey on migration, as well as [a study on migration](#), published by the Consortium for Applied Research on International Migration CARIM-East. The event brought together experts on migration topics from government bodies, independent research institutes and international organisations.

[Human rights defenders put new questions](#). The first anniversary of the execution of Uladzislau Kavaliou and Dzmitry Kanavalau, sentenced to death on charges of terrorism, is being marked in March. During a press conference held in Minsk on 13 March, the mother of one of the executed, Liubou Kavaliouva and human rights defenders declared that they start

a series of actions in order to get the information about the place of Vlad Kovalev's burial and issuing his body.

From Accessibility to Equality. Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities is launching a new phase of the information campaign *Accessibility* under the slogan "From Accessibility to Equality" aimed to visualise and expand understanding of accessibility. The Office has produced four video-clips, where people with disabilities tell their real stories. The Office has also announced a **competition for the best graphic** "Accessible to the disabled."

Roundtable of liberals. On 15 March, in Minsk, the Liberal Club held a roundtable, aimed at gathering those who are in Belarus to declare their commitment to liberalism and to give them an opportunity to explain what kind of ideals they actually defending. The round table was attended by Yaroslav Romanchuk, Mises Center, Oleg Gaidukevich, the Liberal Democratic Party, Yauheni Preiherman, Liberal Club, etc.

Marketplace in Hrodna. On 26 March, in Hrodna the Capacity Development Marketplace is to hold an Open House day for CSOs and providers from the Grodno and Brest regions. The event is a continuation of **the first national Capacity Development Fair**, held in Minsk in October 2012, and is designed to present the regional market of organisational development's services for local nonprofits.

Bell's Call for papers. The Vilnius-based Eastern Europe Studies Centre after releases the electronic newsletter "Bell". "Bell" is a monthly electronic analytical publication comprising articles written by Belarusian researchers and journalists. Next "Bell" issue "Russia's mounting influence in Belarus" is expected to be published in the middle of April.

MediaBarCamp 2013: Survive in the Web. On 9-12 May, in Lithuania, the 6th International MediaBarCamp, dedicated to the use of new opportunities of online media and the development

of media activism, will be held. The participants – media, CSOs, political organisations – will have an opportunity to present their online projects at special presentations and in working groups. The organiser of MediaBarCamp 2013 is the Swedish International Liberal Centre (SILC).

Cultural Events

[Shengenska in Minsk](#). On 12 March, Festival of Central European literature *Shengenska* opened at the Minsk Gallery Ÿ. The Festival consists of five events and aims to introduce the works of well-known Czech, Slovak, Hungarian, Polish writers, philosophers and political scientists translated into Belarusian. The project initiator is Laboratory of Science and Art of Translation, its co-organizers are the campaign Budzma Belarusians! and the Association of Belarusian Writers.

The latest book by [Joanne Ivy Stankievich](#) recently came out with Outskirts Press. “Living with a Scent of Danger, European Adventures at the Fall of Communism” is about the 13 years the author and her husband spent in Europe: 1988-2001, when he worked for Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. They interfaced with KGB and Foreign Ministers and participated in the transition from Communism to, mostly free, societies in Eastern Europe.

[34 sights of Belarus](#). Online magazine [34mag.net](#) prepared a subjective guide titled *34 sights of Belarus*, a concise guide to places for Belarusian and foreign visitors. The guide contains a map and a witty description of the proposed architectural monuments.

[Gomel tries to preserve wooden buildings](#). Gomel CSOs, which work to preserve local historical wooden buildings, plan to hold informal public hearings and develop consolidated actions. The hearings are to be held with the support of Gomel Democratic Forum. Earlier, on 13 March, Gomel activists with the police's assistance [managed to prevent the destruction](#) of

a monument of wooden architecture. [Youth CSO Talaka](#) also appealed to the city authorities to take one of the buildings on the organisation's balance to make there a museum and a youth cultural centre.

[Belarusian Week in Vilnius](#). On 25-30 March, the Belarusian Week will take place in Vilnius. The program of the Week includes various events such as conference, festival of short films, music festival, which are going to begin with the solemn celebration of Freedom Day on 25 March. The Organising Committee invites all Belarusians in Vilnius and Belarusian guests of the Lithuanian capital to join the celebration of the Freedom Day.

[Belarusians collect money to save old Belarusian films](#). A campaign on the Internet has begun raising money to save old movies shot by *Belarusfilm*. Since the cost of restoration and digitisation of the films are not provided for in the state budget, Belarusians themselves decided to save them for their own money.

Trainings and Seminars

[Raising the expertise of young researchers in Belarus](#). The Eastern Europe Studies Centre (EESC) together with BISS launches an opportunity for the Belarusian beginner researchers in social sciences to further develop their expertise and analytical skills. Within the framework of the programme "Raising the Expertise of Grassroots Level Researchers in Belarus" and in collaboration with the Belarus Research Council, new Belarusian researchers will be provided with training and a scholarship to spend time at a leading European think-tank.

[New consultants](#). Clearing House Project recruited a new set of consultants who will provide free services to Belarusian CSO on developing project proposals for competitions held by the European Commission and other programs. Five new consultants

will take part in a series of informational meetings and workshops that will soon take place in different Belarusian cities.

[Seminar on quality assurance in higher education](#). On 26 March, in Minsk, the Office for a Democratic Belarus (Brussels, Belgium) together with the Office for European Expertise and Communication (Minsk, Belarus) will organise a seminar on quality assurance in higher education. The seminar will be conducted in the frames of "EU and Belarus: Sharing Knowledge programme". The organisers encourage participation of representatives of the Ministry of Education, researchers, academics from Minsk and regional universities of Belarus.

[Conference on elderly education and socialisation is coming](#). Over a hundred people applied to the International conference, to be held on 29-30 March in Grodno and dedicated to the socialisation and intellectual, physical and social revitalization of elderly. Actual challenges and best practises will be discussed by representatives of the nonprofit, state and educational organisations from Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Lithuania and Russia. The conference is organised by the Third Sector Centre in cooperation with the registered association DVV International.

Interaction between the State and Civil Society

[Authorities are asking for help from business](#). On 13 March, at a meeting of the Assembly of business circles, The government of Belarus and business once again tried to establish a dialogue. Economy Minister, Nikolai Snopkov urged entrepreneurs to strengthen partnerships with the state. Business said they are not against cooperation, but are waiting on the authorities to improve the business environment.

[Constitutional Court online](#). On 15 March, Belarus Constitution Day, a state-run news agency Belta conducted an online

conference with the Chairperson of the Constitutional Court, Piotr Miklashevich. All internet users had an opportunity to ask questions in this open discussion.

[ARCHE gets third registration denial](#). As reported by the acting editor-in-chief of the magazine, Ales Pashkevich. According to him, the reason for the registration denial appears to be wire-drawn.

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Do Well-Situated Belarusians Need European Values? – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

Do well-situated people need European Values? Does the new Russian foreign policy doctrine prompt changes in Minsk to turn to the West? Analysts also examine if there are any pro-Western trends in foreign policy and society.

Belarusian experts discuss whether the Western Partnership has potential and the recent indicators in the economy. Mediakritika's survey reveals Belsat is not far ahead of state-run channels by international journalism standards.

Society

[The Main Character – Authorities](#) – Mediakritika.by presents a

content analysis of three Belarusian TV channels (two state run channels and the Warsaw-based Belsat) for the last six months of 2012. The survey noted that the main newsmaker for both public and independent channels remains the authorities – national or local, while the Belarusian opposition had almost no coverage.

Moreover, all channels were far from meeting basic professional standards – separation of facts from opinion, standards of completeness, and reliability and accuracy of presenting information.

[Does Belarusian IT Programmer Need European Values?](#) – Dmitry Galko of the online magazine New Europe discusses why the high income of the IT community does not guarantee the ideological shift to the active rejection of the current political system. The expert believes that satisfaction with personal situation wins out, and highly paid groups prefer to maintain the status quo.

[Media in Belarus – 2012. Final Analytical Review](#) – BAJ issued a final report of the media situation in Belarus in 2012. The main conclusion is that the media situation in Belarus during 2012 changed together with the socio-political situation. A critical point of the year was the three criminal cases against journalists in summer 2012.

[Oleg Manaev: We Have to Distinguish Serious Sociology from Boloney](#) – on 8 February, Professor Oleg Manaev conducted a public lecture titled *The Future of Belarus as a projection of the current* under the cycle *Urbi et Orbi*, the Flying University. On the eve of the lecture, TUT.by journalist talked to Manaev about possible scenarios of the future of Belarus and sociology in Belarus.

[Review-Chronicle of Human Rights Violations in Belarus in January 2013](#) – The Human Rights Centre Viasna issued its monthly thematic review. The experts note that the first month

of the year brought no changes in the human rights situation. 12 political prisoners remained in jail, and the persecution and pressure on public and political activists, human rights defenders and independent media continued.

[Freedom of Associations in Belarus in 2012](#) – the Assembly of Democratic NGOs and the Legal Transformation Center released the annual review of freedom of associations and the legal status of non-profit organizations in Belarus for 2012. The paper highlights the most important trends and developments related to the legal conditions of different forms of civil society organizations.

Politics

[Integration Is Given a Boost](#) – Grigory Ioffe observes that while Minsk has been recently trying its best to revive its relationships with the West, reciprocal steps have not yet been undertaken by the Western countries and international structures. In contrast, the analyst lists a number of recent success stories which show that Russia has been energetically and conspicuously acting to tighten its bonds with Belarus.

[Lukashenka Gave the KGB Special Mission to the West?](#) – Alexander Klaskovsky, naviny.by, focuses on the foreign policy of Belarus: the Belarusian president again demonstratively shows interest in the Western direction, in that time he had just returned from Sochi, where he waited in vain for over a week, for Vladimir Putin. BISS analyst, Denis Melyantsou believes that in this way Lukashenka again starts to shake geopolitical swings to impress the official Moscow; although PR moves may follow real steps towards unlocking relations with Brussels and Washington.

[New Russian Foreign Policy Doctrine](#) – Dzianis Miliantsou, BISS, breaks down the new Russian Foreign Policy Doctrine, signed in February by Vladimir Putin. According to the analyst, Belarus is losing its exclusive status of Russian

ally, while the doctrine demonstrates Russia's willingness for constructive cooperation with the West.

[Can the Eastern Partnership Work?](#) – Jana Kobzova notes that the EU has been promoting its interests in Eastern Europe by exporting its values and building more political and business links with the region, but the strategy has thus far not worked to the EU's liking. To make the Eastern Partnership an initiative worthy of its name, the EU should continue to promote both its interests and values in its Eastern neighbourhood, but it also needs to invest much more in cultivating new partners in the region.

[Policy Brief: National Security, January 2013](#) – Belarus Security Blog issued its monthly review of national security of the country. The authors observe that the first month of the year has not brought significant changes. The previous threats to the sustainability of Belarusian state remain: the poor quality of public administration, human resources crisis in the government, the negative trends of foreign trade, limited funding of national security and defense, etc.

[Western Vector of the Belarusian Foreign Policy](#) – Alexander Shpakouski, Analytical Center for Conservative Concepts, observes that since the appointment of Vladimir Makey to a post of the head of foreign policy department there is a noticeable intensification of contacts with the West countries, first of all with the EU and the USA. The expert believes that in such situation pressure and imposing of unilateral understanding are unacceptable, but joint movement in the direction of creation social and fair, democratic world way is necessary.

[A Potential Rapprochement with the West and the Prospects of Economic Liberalization](#) – Grigory Ioffe notes that Belarus's Ministry of Foreign Affairs has generated a flurry of activity on the country's western flank. Reviewing the recent trends, the expert cautions that there is still a great deal of

harmony between Belarus's political regime and many ordinary Belarusians. Western attempts to base its relationships with post-Soviet countries on a putative community of values have apparently exhausted their potential.

Economy

[On the Fantastic Figures of Labor Migration](#) – Andrei Eliseev of BISS, questions whether the number of Belarusian migrants of 1,3 million people, voiced by some experts, is realistic. Using simple math and available official statistics data, Eliseev shows exaggeration of these numbers and promises to devote his next paper to the issue of real numbers of Belarusian labor migrants. The article is posted in the section *Blogs analysts* on the updated [BISS website](#).

[Economicus Obscuricus: Economic Results of Belarus in 2012](#) – Anton Boltochko, Liberal Club, analyzes the economic policy of Belarus in 2012 with the ranking of economic victories and defeats. The expert says that every victory allowed maintaining the relative stability of the entire system. In particular, euphoria, caused by exports of solvents / thinners / biofuels, prevented the officials to focus on reforming the economic system after the crisis 2011.

[Belarusian Monthly Economic Review, February 2013](#) – the IPM Research Center has released February issue of its monthly review which covers recent developments in political and economic life of the country. Namely in January, Belarusian Potash Company – an exclusive distributor of Belaruskali and Uralkali – signed a new contract on supply of 1 m tones of potash fertilizers at a price of 400 USD/t to China. This is 70 USD/t lower than a price of a previous contract with China. In general, this event might stipulate a number of negative outcomes.

[Lessons From the 2011 Belarusian Devaluation](#) – The paper shows that the currency crisis and inflation of 2011 rapidly

decreased the level of well-being of the Belarusian society. The state tried to cushion the crisis effects but their policies had a very limited effect. Mechanism of index of prices appeared to protect the poorest social groups in Belarus from the currency crisis effects. However, the group of pensioners seemed to be the most harmed by the politics of the state.

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