

Minsk Court will not Evict a Protestant Group – Civil Society Digest

The Marketplace of Youth Initiatives announces results in Brest. Fond of Ideas conducts a talk show on corporate social responsibility. The Liberal Club presents an alternative view on public administration reform. The Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities presents national polling results. Euroradio accreditation in Belarus is renewed. Online security for dummies.

INTERACTION BETWEEN STATE AND CIVIL SOCIETY

New Life Church ordered to vacate its prayer house. [The Minsk City Economic Court](#) has ordered New Life Church to vacate its prayer house by 5 December. The church council decided that they will stay in the prayer house 24 hours a day and ask God to bring the authorities to their senses and show them what to do and how best to react to their actions. On 4 December, the owners of the building (Minsk municipal authority) withdrew their claim and the eviction court proceedings were discontinued.

The Ministry of Culture has replied to the complaint of the public round table "[Let us protect Kurapaty](#)" about the construction of Bulbash-Hall in Kurapaty tract. "It has been discovered that the construction was started in the protected zone. Moreover, the Ministry of Culture has ordered Belrestinvest and Minsk Province Executive Committee to stop the construction in the protected zone of historical and cultural value", according to the letter signed [by deputy Minister of Culture Victor Kurash](#).

Investigative Committee will cooperate with NGO. According to

the signed Engagement Plan, [the Investigative Committee and the NGO Understanding](#) will closely cooperate in the field of prevention of illegal acts against minors and the investigation of indecent treatment of children.

Community issues in state newspaper. [A community based initiative of Minsk district Masyukovschina](#) has ensured that the largest state newspaper, Sovetskaya Belorussia, posted a publication on 27 November devoted to an actual community issue: reducing queues in clinics through their informatics. The journalists used examples from other clinics to illustrate the pros and cons of adopting information technology in healthcare.

Thirty-three rights groups call for release of Byalyatski. The 33 member organisations of [the Civic Solidarity Platform](#) have urged the Belarusian authorities to release human rights defender Ales Byalyatski and allow the Vyasna human rights group to continue its operations. The statement condemned [the recent confiscation of Vyasna's office](#), an apartment in a residential building in Minsk that belonged to Byalyatski prior to his conviction.

Customs to burn "[Belarus Press Photo 2011](#)" albums. Such a conclusion can be reached after reading the official letter of [Ashmyany customs](#) sent to Belarusian photographer Alyaksandr Vasyukovich, from whom they confiscated 41 copies of the photo album on 12 November. The album was published officially and brought to Belarus a year ago.

Belarus renews accreditation for Euroradio bureau. The accreditation of Euroradio's bureau in Minsk is [valid through to 10 November 2013](#). The correspondents bureau was opened in Belarus in November 2009. There are 10 accredited journalists, including Euroradio's Editor-in-Chief and Bureau Director Vital Zyblyuk.

CIVIL SOCIETY ACTIVITIES

Market place of youth initiatives in Brest. The project for civil activists known as [Market place of youth initiatives](#) were summed up in Brest. This year it was attended by 24 young people who have implemented 47 socially significant initiatives. The project is implemented by the Happy Childhood foundation together with the Regional Development Agency Dzedzich.

Drug market reduced. Analysts of the civil initiative Antimak (Against Opium Poppy) stated that the trade in smoking mixture in Belarus has been reducing. The initiative's coordinator, [Alexander Shpakovsky](#) notes that there are no official statistics yet, but the drug market has become quiet after the adoption of the Law "On narcotic drugs, psychotropic substances and their precursors and analogs" in October 2012. The Antimak civil initiative launched in 2008 is [struggling against drug-addiction](#) in order to preserve the life and future of Belarusians.

CSR talk show. On 27 November, Fond of Ideas conducted a talk show titled [Corporate Social Responsibility 2013: expectations and opportunities for business](#). The event was attended by representatives of business, governmental bodies, CSOs and media. The starting point of the discussion became [the recent Fond of Ideas' market research](#) on "Implementation of the principles of corporate social responsibility at the Belarusian enterprises".

Alternative view of public administration reform. On 27 November, in Minsk, the [Liberal Club](#) together with governmental experts in public administration presented a joint brief paper with an alternative view of the future reform of the Belarusian public administration system. The document explains why Belarus needs these reform and what risks will accompany it.

Web portal usebelarusy.by launches voting for seven treasures of Belarus. "[Treasures of Belarus](#)" are to be determined in seven categories: names, events, nature, architecture, food, ceremonies, and songs. In each category, visitors can vote for the nominees from seven different epochs of Belarusian history. To be launched on Christmas Eve, the popular vote offers all Belarusians not only to identify the brightest people and events, but also once again to see the richness of Belarusian history.

An Online Security for Dummies website has been created [to help ordinary users](#), who are not programmers and system administrators to better understand computer security.

Avangard flash mob. On 25 November in Minsk, a flash mob was held on the initiative of youth NGO [Avangard](#), headed by Marat Abramovski. Due to the cold weather, it was decided to conduct the mob in the Minsk indoor shopping centre New Europe. The event brought together about 100 participants [who started to dance at the scheduled time](#).

New survey of DisRight Office. On 26 November, the [Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities](#) presented the results of a poll to identify some aspects of treatment of people with disabilities. [The survey was carried out by IISEPS](#) in the fall of 2012. In particular, the Office coordinator Sergei Drozdovskiy noted that during the last 2 years negative trends remain in place: society's attitude to education and employment of people with disabilities as well as governmental policy in the field of disability have not changed.

Service to find work for people with disabilities launched in Belarus. [HeadHunter Belarus, RABOTA.TUT.BY project](#) launched a new service for marking jobs available to people with disabilities. It will help to quickly find qualified job for vulnerable groups Organizers made reference to a recent national survey conducted by IISEPS at the request of the Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities.

International Day of Persons with Disabilities. From 15 November to 15 December in Minsk, the BelAPDIiMI NGO is conducting an ["Anti Indifference"](#) campaign to mark International Day of Persons with Disabilities. The purpose of the campaign is to show that people with disabilities can and should participate fully in society, and society can become more open and compassionate in accepting such people.

Diaspora Congress in Tallinn. On 23-25 November, Tallinn (Estonia) hosted the [V Congress of the New Belarusian Diaspora in Europe and the U.S.](#), which was attended by about 50 participants. The Third Way organisation, established by a political refugee Pavel Morozov, hosted the event. At the Congress the participants discussed the strategy for 2013-2015, Internet-primaries as a method of choosing a coordinating council of opposition, and opportunities for working with the diaspora.

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.