

# Russia's Bail-Out, Capital Punishment and Political Parties – Digest of Belarusian Analytics

The return of generous Russian subsidies to Belarus and the death penalty to the alleged Belarusian terrorists were among the most discussed topics discussed by Belarusian analysts. Other issues included migration of young Belarusians and problems of Belarusian political parties with attracting new activists.

[Getting the rents back in. Russia's new bail-out of Belarus](#) – BISS analysts Alexei Pikulik and Dzianis Melyantsou describe some reasons for Russia bailing-out Belarus now. Experts consider that "the 2011 battle for a democratic Belarus is lost, but the war is not". It means that Belarus is being dragged into the sphere of Russia's influence and the Eurasian Union will be on the agenda for the coming years. Although that does not mean the fully-fledged political absorption of Belarus into Russia, the West should redefine its strategy and recognize the facts that in order to democratize Belarus it has to offer unprecedented incentives to the country.

[Sustainability of external debt in Belarus: analysis and policy recommendations.](#) Research Center of the Institute of Privatization and Management, Minsk, released a policy paper by Gleb Shymanovich and Robert Kirchner. Foreign debt of Belarus grew more than 4 times over 2007-2010 from \$6.8 billion to \$28.4 billion. Authors argue that there is no econometric evidence that debt attraction influences economic performance in a positive manner. Instead, the authors found that further debt increases may suppress future economic

development.

At the same time, while debt sustainability is turning into an important issue, the short-term risks are still limited. The policy paper offers a number of policy recommendations, including to fundamentally re-think macro policies and avoid debt-creating inflows; publish debt maturity on regular basis; and expand the analysis of debt attracted by state-owned enterprises.

**Death penalty in Belarus – under the veil of secrecy.** The author dwells upon the most pressing and striking issue of social and political life in Belarus these days – the abolition of death penalty, which she inherently advocates and concludes that the whole truth about the conditions of death penalty execution and the people executed may be revealed only after the death penalty is exterminated from the life of a society, which would help to understand the whole horror of it.

Moreover, the article reveals connections between existence of death penalty and the crime rates, as well as, economic and social problems. It is stated that the decrease in crime rate is not dependent on the possibility of being executed; however, it correlates with the increasing level of social and economic pressure.

**Ease of sentence** – journalist Svetlana Kalinkina gives her emotional reaction to the completion of the case on the explosion in Minsk subway: “I am horrified. Because of the level of a model court in the case of Vitebsk terrorists, because of the level of evidence, because of the level of arguments by which investigators and prosecutors confirmed their point. Because of the ease they recognized the men guilty and sentenced to death. I am horrified”.

**Gender-based approach in education: from theory to practice in Belarus.** Tatiana Shchurko, Agency for Political Expertise,

analyses 7 books recommended by the Ministry of Education for formal gender education, all of which were published recently (2005-2011). The author concludes that, while these modern publications begin to use liberal rhetoric of “gender equality”, the content of these publications does not contain any critique of the existing gender situation in the country.

**Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership is developing, but hard times are coming.** Head of the Belarusian delegation at the EaP CS Forum in Poznan (November 28-30, 2011) Vlad Velichko shares his impressions of its results. Velichko notes that while the Eastern Partnership has some problems with its development, CSF retains positive dynamics – the Forum adopted a new concept, discussed the issue of institutionalization, and even its registration, it was decided to establish a special working group on social dialogue. But there is another question if CSF is productive in its influencing the processes in the Eastern Partnership.

**Why Belarusian youth chooses immigration?** The article discusses the right and willingness of Belarusian youth to immigrate from the unavoidable “power of majority”. On December 9<sup>th</sup> President Lukashenko covered this problem at the meeting of Belarusian Republican Youth Union. The decrease of support for the President among young people is a stable trend. They are actually divided into Europe – and Russia-oriented groups with European ones presently dominating.

Willingness to shift to another culture boosted by the unfavorable political situation and legally unrestricted possibility to immigrate are indicated among the reasons of young people choosing to “find a better life” elsewhere. It’s important to highlight that the majority of them are citizens with active civic position. All the statements are nicely statistically substantiated.

**Parties are student structure, not political structures.** Political analyst Andrei Kazakevich discusses the

situation with the staff turnover in Belarusian parties. The lack of new people coming into the parties is presupposed by the unwillingness to commit to the lasting social risk. The management is also hardly ever changed and that is explained by the reluctance of students and young people to integrate into already created structures. They tend to found new ones without an ingrained system of promotion and established career path, which contradicts the values and perceptions of young people.

*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.*

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## **Social Initiatives Inside Belarus and Political Conferences Outside – Civil Society Digest**

Despite unfavourable environment, Belarusian NGOs continue to launch various initiatives and campaigns in Belarus. Most of initiatives relate to education, human rights and social issues. However, conferences on political issues have to take place outside of the country – in Vilnius and Brussels because often authorities prevent them from taking place in Belarus.

### **International Events**

**US Secretary of State meets with Belarusian civil society delegation.** United States Secretary of State Hillary Clinton [met](#) with a delegation of Belarusian civil society in Vilnius on December 06, on the sidelines of a meeting of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. Ms Clinton said that the United States and the European Union would fight Lukashenka's regime through sanctions and travel bans.

In attendance there were Natalya Radzina, editor of charter97.org; human rights defenders Valyantsin Stefanovich and Tatsyana Ravyaka; Aleh Hulak, BHC Chairman; Syarhey Matskevich, leader of the Assembly of NGOs; Zhanna Litvina, BAJ leader; and Hanna Herasimava, director of the Vilnius-based Belarusian Human Rights House. ([Photos](#))

**Civil Society Conference in Vilnius.** On December 04-05, Vilnius hosted the Civil Society Conference held in parallel with the 18<sup>th</sup> session of the OSCE Ministerial Council. The OSCE Civil Society Parallel Conference [adopted](#) a Resolution "On Reaction of the OSCE and the International Community to Human Rights Crisis in the Republic of Belarus".

In particular, the resolution urges the international community to stop all cooperation with the authorities of Belarus that provides for the transfer of funds to the Belarusian authorities either directly or through companies their control. The document also suggests discussing the prospects of suspending the voting rights of the representatives of Belarus authorities and even suspending the membership of Belarus in the OSCE.

**'Transforming Belarus: Ways Ahead' in Brussels.** On December 07, Carnegie Europe, BISS, and the Office for a Democratic Belarus with the support of Pact [hosted](#) in Brussels an expert forum "Transforming Belarus: Ways Ahead". The forum discussed

the European Union's policies on Belarus in the context of the latest developments in the country and provided recommendations from Belarusian experts on how to change the existing status quo in Belarus according to the will of the country's citizens. ([Photos](#))

In particular, EU Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy Štefan Füle [underlined](#) that the EU's 'multi-dimensional' approach to Belarus had two strands, namely "a tough line towards the current repressive regime" complemented by the policy of engagement "with all those in Belarus who support reform and modernisation."

## **Initiatives and Campaigns in Belarus**

**Public Bologna Committee established.** The expert community and a number of NGOs have decided to [establish](#) a Public Bologna Committee on the basis of National Platform of Eastern Partnership CSF. The Committee's aim is to develop "road map" of integration of the Belarusian higher education in the Bologna process. On December 13, the Committee's founders will hold a press conference on the integration of the Belarusian higher education in the Bologna process.

**Video and Talk Show about Social Contracting.** Promoting the mechanism of state funding of NGOs, ACT has [released](#) a video about the state social contracting and a talk-show "Social Partnership" [produced](#) by Gomel TV. Activities are supported by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.

**BRCS Initiates a Law on Volunteering.** Belarusian Red Cross Society (BRCS) which [conducts](#) a significant work with volunteers [initiates](#) the development of a draft law on volunteering. Earlier a bill on volunteering was prepared and introduced to the Parliament, but it wasn't adopted. A new attempt to draft a bill is scheduled for 2012.

**New Campaign "1%".** International foundation "Idea" is [launching](#) a public campaign "Project "1%". The campaign aims to enact a law on charity and making changes and additions to the Tax Code of Belarus, namely to develop a "rule of one percent."

**Manual on New Media.** The new [manual](#) is the result of the 2-year Belarusian-German project, in which 10 Belarusian NGOs took part. They learned to shoot video, work with Google program resources, use social networks in order to increase NGOs' capacity.

**"Human rights activists against the death penalty".** It was announced at a joint press conference of human rights activists on December 9 in Minsk that more than 165,000 petitions for the abolition of the death penalty in Belarus were [sent](#) to the Presidential Administration by mail.

**Winners in the field of human rights.** On December 13, human rights NGOs will [announce](#) the names of a journalist, a human rights activist and a lawyer, which have gained exceptional achievements in the field of human rights in 2011. The competition was established by Human Rights Alliance.

**The fourth BCD attempt to register.** On December 17, in Minsk party "Belarusian Christian Democracy" will [hold](#) the fourth founding congress. Since 2009, for three times BCD held the founding congress and filed registration documents to the Ministry of Justice, but so far the state registration has not been received yet.

**Coalition of "Six".** Belarusian Popular Front, United Civic Party, "Fair World" Party, Belarusian Christian Democracy, the Movement "For Freedom" and the campaign "Tell the Truth" – Coalition of the "Six" – will [participate](#) in the Parliamentary elections in 2012, but they have not yet defined the format of participation.

**BISS vacancies.** Belarusian Institute for Strategic

Studies [announces](#) new vacancies of an analyst and a public relations specialist. The deadline for applications is December 20.

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