

# The Mova Cup, Embroidery Day, Hotline Green Phone – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Mova Cup took promoted the use of the Belarusian language trying oneself in various sports. The Embroidery Day will celebrate the Belarusian national dress.

All-Belarusian Congress for Independence scheduled for December. The European Humanities University welcomes new students.

A special hotline Green Phone received over 120 complains from Belarusian citizens regarding the urban environment.

## **Interaction between the state and civil society**

[Belarus temporarily restricts ways of crossing the border with Lithuania to cars only](#), citing lack of capacity. This means no more pedestrian crossing. This decision sums up government-and citizens relations: government does not adapt to citizens demand, it makes citizens adapt to its capacity.

[Parliament responds the e-appeals of the citizens](#). In 2015 Belarus will develop the law 'On the treatment of animals'; criminal responsibility for cruelty to animals may be introduced already in the next session of Parliament. Such a response is received by the activists of a public campaign 'NO cruelty to animals' on their electronic appeals to the Parliament on the issue of improving the legislation.

[Radio Racyja journalist denied accreditation seven times](#). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs for the seventh time denied accreditation to Viktor Parfionenka, journalist of the Radio Racyja. For the last semester, several journalists have been held accountable for contributing to Belsat and Radio Racyja;

penalties include warnings and pretty huge fines.

## **Cultural events**

**Mova Cup**. On 28 September Minsk hosted the National Sports Festival Mova Cup/Language Cup. Everyone was invited to try oneself at various sports, wherein communicate in Belarusian. Front persons of the Festival were stars of Belarusian sports, including the famous swimmer Alexandra Herasimenya.

**Embroidery Day**. On 5 October for the first time the Embroidery Day will be held in Minsk. The festival is intended to show that the Belarusian national dress is stylish and noticeable. At the event, visitors will be able to buy clothes and other items with some features of traditional Belarusian culture, play Belarusian games, listen to the music bands, etc.□

**The second European Intercultural Festival sums up the results**. This year the 2nd European Intercultural Festival in September was held under a slogan 'Getting to know each other better'. During 10 days of exhibitions, movie and photo shows, discussions and lectures, master-classes and presentations in Minsk, Grodno, Mogilev and Brest hundreds of participants united by the Festival had a chance to learn more about the culture of Belarus, Germany, Georgia, France, Denmark, Sweden, Norway and other countries.

## **Green events**

**Hotline Green Phone received more than 120 complaints on the urban environment**. On 16-20 September a special hotline *Green Phone* worked as part of the international campaign Mobility Week. According to the results, the Belarusian city residents call the following top 3 most actual urban environmental problems: parking in green areas and playgrounds (about 90% of all calls), the lack of green areas in the courtyards and the absence of a barrier-free environment.□

**Green Forum was held in Grodno on 27 September**. CSOs,

representatives of government agencies and environmental activists were invited. The agenda included discussions on the most pressing environmental issues and presentations of environmental events and campaigns implemented in the Grodno region. The Forum was planned to result in making a map of regional environmental issues as well as meeting organisations and activists for their further cooperation. The organiser was Green Alliance network.

## **Education**

[The annual United Students of Belarus \(USB\) Rally](#) will take place in Lithuania on 1-5 October 2014. Organised by the Eastern Europe Studies Centre, the USB Rally is an opportunity to meet Belarusian youth studying around the world, as well as to join the informal international network of Belarusians. The 8th USB Rally is devoted to the development of multicultural dialogue in attempt to establish a reciprocal conversation with other cultures, develop an open and active society through development of Belarusian identity.

[School of trainer skills](#). In October-November 2014, training Centre of the portal Kariera.by together with partner organisations in Minsk (Business Club IMAGURU), Brest (Brest Regional Development Fund) and Grodno (VIT NGO) opens groups on basic education in 'School of trainer skills'. The aim of the course is to prepare participants for independent work as trainers using the principles, content and methods of non-formal education.

[Pilot Art Leader School will start in October in Minsk](#). A unique international educational project of the Centre for Visual and Performing Arts *ART CORPORATION* aims to attract young leaders to shaping the cultural space of the country, as well as develop their skills for the implementation of art projects at a high international level. Representatives of all art professions under the age of 35 years with their own project ideas in the field of theatre or cinema are invited to

participate.

[\*\*EHU welcomes nearly 400 new students.\*\*](#) Three hundred ninety-two new students will begin their studies at European Humanities University (EHU) this fall. On Tuesday, 30 September an official ceremony opening Academic Year 2014-15 will be held on campus in Vilnius. More than 95% of the new students are from Belarus, with the rest hailing from countries that include Russia, Ukraine, Lithuania, and Kazakhstan.

## **Competitions**

[\*\*Journalistic competition 'Choose Life'.\*\*](#) Belarusian Association of Journalists, Belarusian Helsinki Committee and Penal Reform International announce a call for journalistic materials on the subject of the death penalty. Materials are accepted until 30 September.

[\*\*Contest 'People's journalist – 2014'.\*\*](#) Project *People's journalist* announces a new competition of materials from the citizens of Belarus. The aim of the competition is to include people in the joint activities, so they can see that together can achieve results and solve specific problems. Among the criteria for the best materials are topics that will not be released in the official media, Belarusian language as the main, etc. Materials are accepted until 15 October.

## **Other**

[\*\*All-Belarusian Congress for Independence to be held in December.\*\*](#) Academician Radzim Garetsky, Professor Mikola Savitsky, writer Uladzimir Arlou, director Uladzimir Kolas and prof. Mikhail Pastukhou joined the organising committee headed by Alena Anisim, deputy chairperson of the Belarusian Language Society. According to the organisers, the ground for the congress is related to an agreement on the Eurasian Economic Union that carries a direct threat to the independence of Belarus.

[Alternative CSO report at OSCE HDIM side event.](#) On 26 September representatives of the Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs together with the Legal Transformation Centre held a side event in the frames of the OSCE Human Dimension Implementation Meeting 2014 in Warsaw. The side event focused on the presentation of the alternative report on the freedom of association and legal status of CSOs in Belarus, which was prepared by Belarusian CSOs in the frames of the second UN Universal Periodic Review cycle.

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## **Online Travel to Belarus, USB Rally, Kraj.BY – Belarus Civil Society Digest**

*Budzma* campaign and the Belarusian Language Society launch the second season of a weekly Kraj.BY program which is online-travel throughout Belarus.

Legal Transformation Center *Lawtrend* has released the latest data of its monitoring on information provided at the official state web sites of Belarus.

*Falanster* Minsk NGO invites to a meeting to discuss the topic how to improve the city's infrastructure for its residents. A particular attention will be paid to the expanding community of cyclists.

## Cultural events

[The EESC announces registration to the USB Rally 2014.](#) The Eastern Europe Studies Centre invites Belarusian students to register for the annual United Students of Belarus (USB) Rally that will take place in Lithuania on 1-5 October 2014. USB Rally is an opportunity to meet Belarusian youth studying around the world, to exchange experience and contacts, as well as to join the informal international network of Belarusians residing at home and abroad known today as the USB. This will already be the 8th USB Rally taking place in Lithuania.

[Kraj.BY invites for online travels again.](#) From 12 August the *Budzma* campaign and the Belarusian Language Society launch the second season of a weekly Kraj.BY program. The program offers online-travel into the world of mystery, intrigue and attractions throughout Belarus implemented by creative association PAN-studio. The program host is actor Paval Kharlanchuk.

[Exhibition 'Visual Maps of Historical Memory, or the Grand Duchy of Lithuania on Ancient Maps'](#) takes place in the Minsk venue CEKH, from July 24 to 31 August. The organisers – Belarusian Philosophical Space, the Flying University, Publishing House *Ekanompres* and TSEKH space – are offering a view at ancient maps of Europe and the world to try to see Belarus in different historical contexts and scales, to initiate discussions that may lead to rethink about the "borders" of Belarus.

[Art-Environmental exhibition is held on 7-31 August in the Gallery Ź.](#) Weekly lectures and presentations are related to the environment and the arts; a discussion on the relationship of ecology and art highlights the responsibility of art. The final event will be the Eco-Cultural Festival on 31 August. The organisers are *AgraEkaKultura* non-profit entity, the Minsk Gallery Ź, *Ecodom* NGO, Green Alliance and the Centre for Environmental Solutions NGO.

[Budzma in Hrodna](#). On 5 August in Grodna, the *Budzma* cultural campaign organised a Press Club on covering cultural issues in the regional media. That day a [talk show](#) 'Belarusian business as a Concept in the Holiday Industry' tried identifying the prospects for promoting Belarusian theme in event business and indicated that archery and throwing spears, picnics in the Empire style, traditional wedding with embroideries are quite feasible to be organised in Belarus.

## **Discussions**

[City for people](#). On 23 August *Falanster* Minsk NGO invites to a meeting to discuss the topic how to improve the city's infrastructure for its residents. A particular attention will be paid to the expanding community of cyclists. The purpose of the meeting is to consider a bicycle in the city from the point of view of different road users, to assess the needs of bicycles, cars and pedestrians, in order to launch a mutually beneficial dialogue.

[Round table on services for disabled](#). The Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship invites to take part in the round table '*On the State and Development of Small Business in the Service Sector: a View of Consumers. The Problem of Accessibility for People with Disabilities*'. The event took place on 6 August in Minsk, at the Ministry of Trade venue. Among the speakers are representatives of government and non-government organisations.

## **Civil society reports**

[Belarusian Public Authorities Online](#). Legal Transformation Center *Lawtrend* has released the latest data of its monitoring on information provided at the official state web sites of Belarus. The data show that no one of the 98 investigated web sites of Belarus' executive bodies at various levels hasn't got the maximum possible index (100%), reflecting the degree of regulatory compliance with the completeness, relevance and

accessibility of information online. The report concludes that active interaction with the citizens and transparency, that is the essence of e-governance, still remain marginal practises.

[Monitoring the Accessibility of the World Hockey Championship 2014](#). The Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities releases the final report on monitoring the accessibility of environment, held before the start of the IIHF World Championship in Minsk. The report analysing the information on different facilities – railway stations and airports, sports complexes, hotels, shops and other places of the service sector – indicates the unsatisfactory degree of accessibility. The report includes recommendations that are important to consider while carrying out the large-scale sporting events.

### **Interaction between State and Civil Society**

[The Belarusian justice ministry has denied state registration for a new human rights organisation](#) called the Movement for the Implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, or Pact (Covenant). The founders of the organisation filed a registration application and the required package of documents on 27 June. Mikhail Pastukhou, a former judge of the Constitutional Court, was elected chairman of the organisation at its founding conference. The activists call the pretexts of denying registration ridiculous; in particular, among the reasons for refusal is that the date of birth of one of the founders was stated as 21 June 1949, whereas the correct date was 26 June 1949.

### **Other**

[The International Visegrad Fund](#) is announcing a call for proposals for Extended Standard Grant projects within the Visegrad 4 Eastern Partnership (V4EaP) program. The purpose of the call is to promote democratisation and civil society in the countries of the Eastern Partnership through medium-term projects aimed at providing access to the experience of the



Visegrad Group countries in democratic transformation, EU integration, civil society building and regional cooperation. Deadline is 22 September 2014.

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# **Gender Equality, How To Modernize The Belarusian Economy – Belarus Civil Society Digest**

The Eastern Europe Studies Centre together with Stefan Batory Foundation invites the public to a discussion on gender equality in Belarus. The project Civic Dialogue hosted a panel discussion on how to modernise the Belarusian economy.

The Central Electoral Commission of Belarus agreed to implement some of the changes proposed by the Helsinki Human Rights Committee. Now the central governing bodies of political parties and other public associations will have the right to send observers to precincts during voting.

## **Civil society campaigns**

[Art Siadziba launches a campaign to buy its own premises.](#)

Deprived of rent for the fifth time, Art Siadziba has launched the Building Art Siadziba Together! campaign to raise

money for its own premises. The organisers plan to collect \$200,000 to purchase their own premises in Minsk's downtown and create an independent cultural and social space open to all Belarusians. The campaign has its own website [dom.artsiadziba.by](http://dom.artsiadziba.by) – an interactive house where anyone can buy bricks, each of which costs \$5.

**Discussion of a universal gender webportal.** [Eastern Europe Studies Centre](#) (EESC), together with the Stefan Batory Foundation invite the public to the event *GenderBY.com: Creation of an Internet Portal on Women's Rights in Belarus*. The discussion is to raise points on the key aspects of creating a universal and interactive Internet portal about gender equality in Belarus (tentative name – [www.genderby.com](http://www.genderby.com)) and establish a working group for its development. The meeting will be held on 14-15 March at the EESC office in Vilnius. The contact e-mail: aivaras.zukauskas (at) [eesc.lt](http://eesc.lt).

**[The 2<sup>nd</sup> Social Forum set to take place in Minsk](#)**. On 10-11 April the Minsk International Education Centre (IBB) will host the 2<sup>nd</sup> Republican Social Forum. Organised by IBB and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, the Forum is to propose recommendations for the development of social services on the basis of multi-stakeholder participation and dialogue. The Forum's thematic areas will include such topics as NGOs on the market of social services, public support for and trust in NGOs, socially responsible economics and partnerships in the social sphere, etc. All types of organisations, except political parties, are invited to participate.

## **Courses and training**

**[Leadership for women](#)**. The forums SYD and IRI have begun accepting applications for participation in leadership courses for young Belarusian activists entitled *Expanding representation and opportunities for women in political*

*parties and NGOs*. The course aims to teach a group of young Belarusian females about gender issues, women's leadership and international experience in this field. The training will be held in Lithuania; all of the invited lecturers are gender experts from Belarus, Lithuania and Sweden. The application deadline is 10 March.

[Non-formal education for all generations portal](#). On 17 February a new Internet portal *Non-formal education for all generations* was presented in Minsk. Initiated by the Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs, the web platform serves as a hub for communication for providers of non-formal educational services and consumers of these services and aims to provide timely and complete information to citizens of all ages about possibilities for self-development and improvement in various areas of an individuals' personal and professional competencies.

[Civic Dialogue: Paths to modernise the economy of Belarus](#). On 25 February in Minsk, Civic Dialogue hosted an expert roundtable on *Strategies for the Modernization of the Belarusian Economy*. [No government officials attended](#) the event, though they had previously declared their willingness to participate. At the same time, the organisers believe that the conclusions derived from the roundtable could be used when drafting the state strategy of development of Belarus until 2030.

[Training course on cross-sectoral dialogue](#). CSO representatives are invited to participate in the educational course *Developing the capacity of CSOs in conducting cross-sectoral dialogue*. The course is organised by the ACT educational NGO and the Assembly of Democratic NGOs and aims to develop the competencies required to conduct effective dialogue with other sectors (government, business, international agencies, etc.) in the interests of specific target groups that are being served. The training course consists of six 3-day training sessions; the first training

will be held on 24-26 March.

## **Eco-events**

[Energy Club presented Austrian experience in Minsk](#). The Energy Club launched a series of events dedicated to the EU's energy efficiency and renewable energy sources policy (RES). [The first gathering](#) for the new series took place on February 26 in Minsk. The invited speaker, Prof. Herbert Lechner, Deputy Executive Director of the Austrian Energy Agency guided the audience through the EU's Climate and Energy Policy, while suggesting practical examples of how Austria deals with its own energy security challenges. The event is organised under the auspices of the ODB EU-Belarus Task-Force programme.

[Eco-campaign Social Network. Live launched](#). The new campaign aims to convey important environmental information to citizens who do not use the Internet, as well as raise the level of social activity and the level of personal responsibility of Belarusians in general. Graduates of the School of the Environmental Activism together with the Green Alliance prepared five leaflets, which describe in detail where one can deliver clothes, dispose of paper products or dangerous waste. Everyone can take part in distributing leaflets, printing them out and posting them in public places.

## **Interaction between the state and society**

[The right to public dissent is taken away](#). In Belarus, the public discussion of urban development projects will be conducted in only two formats – either through strictly informing participants and conducting an analysis of public opinion or through the work of a commission. Public meetings with the massive participation of citizens will no longer take place. These "innovations" have been included into a resolution of the Council of Ministers, which is entering into force on 1 April 2014.

[Viasna fails to protect website in court](#). On 18 February the

Central District Court of Minsk heard a complaint filed by the Deputy Chairman of the Human Rights Centre *Viasna*, Valiancin Stefanovich, to challenge a decision by the Prosecutor General's Office to blacklist the [spring96.org](http://spring96.org) website as a resource with restricted access. The court ruled that Valiancin Stefanovich was legally an improper plaintiff, because he is not the owner of the website [spring96.org](http://spring96.org), and the blacklisting of the website did not violate his personal rights.

**Another prosecutor's warning to independent journalists.** On 19 February Jury Dziashuk was summoned to the Prosecutor's Office of the Lida district, where the journalist received an official warning, referring to a ban on working for foreign media without accreditation, as well as the inadmissibility of the publication of unverified information.

**BHC complaint satisfied – CEC reverses the admission of observers.** On 19 February the Central Election Commission satisfied an appeal by the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and amended the Regulation on Election Observers: now central governing bodies of political parties and other public associations will have the right to send observers to precincts during elections. According to human rights defenders, it is a positive step as the procedure is more liberal.

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# **Bialiacki, Civil Dialogue, Roundtables in Minsk – Belarus Civil Society Digest**

A new project Civic Dialogue gathered representatives of both state and independent think tanks, journalists and officials.

Participants of the “What Do Belarusian Businesses Think” discussed results of latest research on competitiveness of Belarusian regions.

Ales Bialacki may be amnestied, opposition candidates appeared on state TV. International Congress of Belarusian Studies calls for panels.□

## **Interaction between state and civil society**

[Opposition on state TV.](#) On 20 January a Belarusian state TV show called ‘Position’ raised a topic of the upcoming local elections. Two opposition figures – Valery Ukhmalov, the Spravedlivy Mir political party, and Alexander Volchanin, United Civic Party – had a direct opportunity to talk with pro-governmental candidates and the CEC chair in the TV air.

[Bialacki may be freed if his debt has really been paid off.](#) Human rights defender Ales Bialacki may be amnestied if all the money he owed has really been paid, Alexander Lukashenka said on 21 January in reply to a question from BelaPAN Director General Ales Lipai during a meeting with Belarusian media leaders. Lukashenka said that he was unaware of the fact that the amount that Bialacki was ordered to pay was paid off with donations a long time ago and tasked to find out whether or not that was true.

[Statkievich may be freed if he applies for pardon.](#) Former

presidential candidate Mikola Statkievich may be released from prison if he applies for a pardon, Alexander Lukashenka said on 21 January in reply to a question from BelaPAN Director General Ales Lipai during a meeting with Belarusian media leaders. On 22 January Maryna Adamovich, Statkievich's wife, received a letter from her husband, in which Statkievich [reiterated his position not to write any petition](#) for pardon.

[Belarusian Foreign Ministry responded](#) to representatives of a number of animal protection organisations – Zoo chance, Cat and Dog, Superkot, APB-BirdLife Belarus, etc. – that appealed to the Ministry with a proposal for joining Belarus to the Council of Europe Conventions on the protection of animals. The Foreign Ministry agrees that it's necessary to toughen the penalties for cruelty to animals, but the officials are waiting for addressing the issue of the profile government bodies.

### **Roundtables, public lectures and conferences**

[Civic Dialogue project launched](#). On 29 January Minsk hosted an expert roundtable "Belarus-EU relations after the Vilnius summit of Eastern Partnership". The event was attended by representatives of state and independent think tanks, governmental officials, EU representative, journalists.

The event took place under [a new project Civic Dialogue](#) – an open platform aimed at discussion of actual problems and promoting a culture of constructive and mutually respectful dialogue between different social groups of Belarusian society. The project partners are the Centre for Strategic and Foreign Policy Studies and a newspaper "Zviazda".

[Appeal of the Belarusian civic activists to cease bloodshed in Kyiv](#). On 23 January the Belarusian civil society organisations and civic activists issued an open appeal to cease bloodshed in Kiev. The appeal urges all parties involved in the current

political crisis in Ukraine to get consolidated and to undertake a peace-support mission.

[What Do Belarusian Businesses Think](#). On 31 January in Vilnius, Eastern Europe Studies Centre (EESC) and the Belarus Research Council (BRC) conducted the fourth live open panel discussion in series "What Do Belarusians Think?" The discussion is aimed at analysing the results of the latest economy research on the competitiveness of the regions in Belarus, carried out by the Research Centre of the Institute for Privatisation and Management.

[Pavel Daneika's public lecture](#). On 31 January in Minsk, economist and BEROC director Pavel Daneika conducted a public lecture on "The phenomenon of private business in Belarus." The lecture was held as a part of the cycle "Urbi et Orbi" of Flying University and presented that today Belarus has its own unique business sector, which is radically different from the Ukrainian and Russian.

[Public Lecture by Andrei Degtyarev](#). On 3 February at the business centre Imaguru, a Russian expert in the field of public policy analysis, Professor Andrei Degtyarev conducted a public lecture "Decision-making in the modern system of public administration: Theoretical Models and Applications." The lecture was held under the auspices of BIPART project of the School of young managers in public administration (SYMPA).

[Roundtable on cooperation between CSOs and media](#). On 27 January the Assembly of NGOs held a round table on the cooperation between CSOs and the media. Journalists and civil activists met to discuss how to draw journalists' attention to civil sector and how to build up ways of effective communication between public sector and the media.

Media expert Pauliuk Bykouski presented results of his analysis how media cover the Belarusian CSOs activity; in particular, one of the study's conclusions is that Belarusian



CSOs provide for the media much more negative stories about their divergences than their successes. One can find the presentation (in Belarusian) [here](#).

### [International Congress of Belarusian Studies calls for panels.](#)

Organising Committee announces the collection of applications to create sections/panels for the IV International Congress of Belarusian Studies which is to be held on 3-5 October 2014 in Kaunas (Lithuania). The organisers do not set clear thematic or disciplinary limits, leaving an opportunity for the academic and expert community to articulate their own priorities and interests. Deadline is 20 March 2014.

[Webinars for wheelchair users.](#) From March 2014, Republican Association of Wheelchair Users starts a series of webinars on topics that cover wheelchair users' needs and interests. In real time anyone will be able to participate in webinars through the Internet. The first webinar will be held on the theme "Accessibility".

[NGOs and local elections round table.](#) On 20 January in Minsk, the Assembly of pro-democratic NGOs conducted a round table on the topic *NGOs and local elections: challenges, threats and opportunities*. Civil activists from Vorsa, Gomel, Viliejka, Brest and Minsk discussed their role in the campaign and came to conclusion that the election campaign could become another opportunity to work with the public and unite local residents.

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# 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).