

Antisemitism week, hate-speech testing, KEF, Kurapaty monument – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Belarusian cities hold a week against fascism and antisemitism. Political prisoner Zmicier Paliyenka released from prison. A monument to the victims of Stalin-era executions was erected in Kurapaty by the pro-governmental Federation of Trade Unions.

National campaign *Budzma Belarusami!* (*Let's Be Belarusians!* in English) celebrates 10 years. The Golden Age University starts its 10th season.

Journalists for Tolerance initiative developed a service for testing hate-speech. Kastryčnicki Economic Forum (KEF) gathered over 800 high-level guests to discuss global risks and future opportunities for Belarus in the new brave world. Ted X Minsk Women Showing Up conference is to take place on December 1 in Minsk.

This and more in the new edition of Belarus civil society digest.

Civil society

[Week Against Fascism and Antisemitism](#) will be held November 9-16, in Belarusian cities. The Week includes a series of educational activities aimed at promoting the ideas of respect and non-discrimination. The Week program includes films screening, social games, a human library, etc. The Week is initiated by the [Human Constanta](#) with the support of the human rights community.

[‘Official’ monument erected in Kurapaty](#). A monument to the victims of Stalin-era executions was erected in Kurapaty on November 6, by order of the pro-governmental Federation of Trade Unions. The activists involved in the memorization of the repression victims received the monument with [mixed](#) feelings: some commended the government for the initiative; others insisted a memorial in Kurapaty should look differently.

[Political prisoner Zmicier Paliyenka released](#) on October 24 after serving nearly two years in a penal colony in Babrujsk. The activist was prosecuted for his participation in a peaceful gathering. The human rights community named Paliyenka a political prisoner. After Paliyenka’s release, Belarus has one political prisoner held behind bars, [Mikhail Zhamchuzhny](#).

[Week Against the Death Penalty](#). From October 5 to 10, the annual Week Against the Death Penalty was held in Belarus. This year’s events focused on the conditions of detention on death row. Belarus is the only country in Europe and the former Soviet Union, which pronounces death verdicts and executes people. This year two Belarusians were shot, and another four are awaiting execution.

Education

[Students Week 2018](#) is to take place on November 12-18. This is an initiative of the Association of Belarusian students (ZBS) on the occasion of the International Students Day. The Week includes a series of educational and entertaining activities in different cities of Belarus – lectures, speed-dating, student Hackathon, urban quest and more.

[Budzma campaign celebrates 10 years](#). National campaign *Budzma Belarusami!* (*Let’s Be Belarusians!* in English) is one of the most famous and successful public campaigns in the country. For 10 years of its activity, the campaign has reached

thousands of people in various areas, leading the Belarusian language to mainstream and approving that all Belarusian can be fashionable and actual.



Studies at Hrodna's Golden Age University. Source: <http://uzv.by/universitet-zolotogo-veka-v-grodno/>

[Golden Age University in Hrodna kicks off 10th season](#). The opening ceremony of the anniversary academic year took place on October 4, in Hrodna. This year, nearly [200 people](#) aged 55+ became the students of the University. The Golden Age University is a non-formal education project, based on active ageing approach and implemented by the Hrodna-based Studio for Useful Competences.

Media & IT

[Launch Me Media Accelerator selected six best startups](#) at the media Hackathon that took place on October 27-28. The winning ideas are related to Youtube contextual analytics, an article title's generator, an interactive map of Belarusian dialects, etc. *Launch Me* is the first Belarusian accelerator for

technology startups in the media industry. This is an initiative of Press Club Belarus and SPACE in partnership with the British Embassy in Minsk.

[Service for testing hate speech](#) has been developed by *Journalists for Tolerance* initiative. J4T-Checker service allows entering the text, finding incorrect vocabulary regarding vulnerable groups and offering a replacement with an explanation. J4T-Checker works with such topics as LGBT, people with disabilities, people living with HIV, migrants, and more.

[Media Management & IT Forum](#) was held in Minsk, on October 25-27. The forum brought together over 100 participants from Belarus, Eastern Partnership countries and the EU. The forum focuses on four key topics: media management & content creation, investigative journalism, media sustainability & new monetization resources, and IT tools & open source investigations.

High-profile conferences

[TED x Minsk Women Showing Up conference](#) is to take place on December 1, at the Minsk Gallery Ÿ. The event will start with watching the TEDWomen2018 Showing Up global broadcast from Palm Springs (USA). Then four Belarusian bright women will present their creative ideas in economy, design, architecture, and medicine.

[KEF 2018 gathered over 800 high-level guests](#) to discuss global risks and future opportunities for Belarus in the new brave world. Kastychnicki Economic Forum (KEF) was [held](#) on November 5-6, in Minsk, for the 6th time. The conference was opened by Alexander Turchin, First Deputy Prime Minister of Belarus, Katarína Mathernová, Deputy Director-General, European Commission, Satu Kähkönen, World Bank Country Director, and Alexander Chubrik, Director of the IPM Research

Center. [Media](#) call the KEF among the main economic events of the country.



KEF 2018 Conference in Minsk. Source: tut.by

[Global Entrepreneurship Week Belarus](#) will take place for the 8th time, on November 12-18. The main scene of BelExpo will host speakers from all over the world representing multinational companies who will share unique stories of business transformation, development of innovative products and company scale. The content of GEW Belarus is tailor-made for the business community and startup ecosystem.

Ecological initiatives

[Eco Cup International Film Festival](#) takes place in Belarus for the first time. During October 25-30, the Festival of green documentary films is held in Minsk and other Belarusian cities under the slogan *Films That Change the Future*. The festival shows films about what is happening on the planet and with each of us. All films a

[The scenario of energy \[r\]evolution for Belarus](#) will be presented in Minsk, on October 23. The modelling work ([resume](#))

was done in collaboration with the Aerospace Center of Germany. The transition to renewable energy would allow Belarus to be among the advanced countries involved in the transformation of the world energy system. The presentation is organized by environmental CSOs.

[Survey: 40% of Minsk residents are not aware of any urban initiative](#). The rating of the most famous Minsk civic initiatives was conducted among Internet Minskians by the Baltic Internet Policy Initiative. The top best known urban initiatives are the protection of the Minsk historical district Osmolovka, a platform for group appeals Petitions.by and the Minsk Cycling Society; they are recognizable for one-third of those who are aware of the initiatives.

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.