

Entrepreneurs Ready to Protest, Public Discussions in Minsk – Belarus Civil Society Digest

IDEA is organising a discussion of Ukrainian events in Minsk. European Cafe hosts public lectures by European intellectuals.

Minister of Culture of Belarus, Boris Svietlau handed Fond of Ideas an honorary diploma for organising an exhibition and significant contribution to the development of modern Belarusian art.

Legal Transformation Centre (Lawtrend) presents the 5th edition of the quarterly electronic overview of significant events in the field of Internet freedom, protection of personal data and access to information in Belarus.

Discussions on Belarus

[Panel discussion in Minsk](#). On 25 June IDEA Belarus global magazine invites to the panel discussion devoted to the situation in Belarus in the wake of Ukrainian crisis. Panelists will discuss lessons and consequences of the conflict in Ukraine for Belarus. Among the speakers are Andrej Dyńko, Nasha Niva newspaper, Siarhiej Kizima, PhD, and Aliaksandr Lahviniec, the "Movement for Freedom". The event will take place at the Minsk hotel "Europe".

[European Café continues hosting public lectures](#). On 11 June the *European Cafe: Open Space in Europe* project hosted a public lecture of an Estonian researcher, Dimitri Mironov on transformation of higher education from Soviet to European standards. On 17-18 June political analyst from Lithuania

Gintautas Mažeikis delivered public lectures on the crisis of European humanism in post-Soviet space in [Minsk](#) and [Viciebsk](#). A series of public lectures by well-known European scientists is implemented by the Centre for European Studies.

[Food for Thought Event in Brussels](#). The Office for a Democratic Belarus and the Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies invite to the Food for Thought event entitled 'Why Belarus is different'. Dzianis Melyantsou, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies and Siarhei Bogdan, Belarus Digest will contribute to the discussion why Belarus is different from the other Eastern European countries; whether the strategic importance of the country changes in view of the Ukraine events. The discussion is to take place on 23 June in Brussels.

[Really Free Market-2: come and take free!](#) On 15 June the Minsk venue CECH hosted the second Free Fair that is a real alternative to existing market relations based on mutual assistance and cooperation, according to the organisers. Visitors can bring their things and take others' what they need for free. Throughout the day, the Fair will be accompanied by a DJ and closed with a concert.

Education

[Recommendations on the inclusion in non-formal education](#). First time in Belarus, Association for Life Long Education and the Office of the Rights of Persons with Disabilities have developed a brochure on inclusion for specialists in the field of non-formal education. The brochure's recommendations will allow the providers of educational services to make their activities more inclusive, ie make non-formal education accessible to people with disabilities.

[Vilnius School on Human Rights](#). Belarusian human rights school, organised by the international community of human rights organisations, announces a call for participation in

the Summer School on Human Rights in 2014. Under the program, participants will learn about the history and philosophy of human rights, as well as methods and means to protect them at the national and international levels. Participation in the program arise open for young Belarusians of 18-25 years old, interested in acquiring knowledge in the field of human rights.

[Youth:ON leadership course](#). Youth Educational Centre *Fialta* invites to participate in the program *Youth:ON* for leaders of youth organisations and initiatives. The program aims to develop and increase the sustainability of initiatives and organisations working with young people. The program provides thematic training and consultations with local and foreign experts, as well as the Fair of Best Practices.

Belarusian NGOs

[Pact is established in Belarus](#). A new human rights republican public association *Movement for the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights* has been established in Belarus. The organisation unites Belarusian citizens on whose complaints the UN Human Rights Committee made or is going to make a decision. A new CSO is to contribute to the execution of Belarus of its international obligations on human rights issues. The organisation has been called "Pact".

[e-Lawtrend #5](#). Legal Transformation Centre (Lawtrend) presents the 5th edition of the quarterly electronic overview of significant events in the field of Internet freedom, protection of personal data and access to information in Belarus. The issue covers the period March-May 2014 and raises such topics as future of Internet governance, manual on Human Rights for the Internet user, new restrictions on access to information in Belarus, an overview of Lawtrend activity, etc.

["Patriot" launched the first ever Belarusian-language website](#)

[of the fight club](#). Patriotgym.by resource created in partnership with the cultural campaign *Budzma!* The [new website](#) has been designed to attract to the club talented children who will support senior colleagues fighting traditions. The website's founders also expect that the example of the Belarusian-language website to inspire other sports organisations to actively use national language.

Interaction between state and civil society

[Citizens help Viciebsk authorities to celebrate the City Day](#).

On 10 June an open presentation of cultural ideas *Fair Projects* was held in Viciebsk in a new format – it was held in the official venue of city executive committee and with participation of authorities. The Fair initiated by *Budzma* cultural campaign is designed to improve and expand the official program of the City Day celebrations. The Fair presented seven projects including Dance open air, Fotosushka, Football freestyle, etc.

[Minister of Culture of Belarus, Boris Svetlau handed Fond of Ideas an honorary diploma](#)

for organising an exhibition and significant contribution to the development of modern Belarusian art. It comes about the open-air exhibition *Avant-gARTe: From Square to Object* and *One Hundred Years of the Belarusian Vanguard* at Yakub Kolas Square in Minsk. More than ten thousand visitors attended the exhibition; its website was visited by more than fifty thousand users.

[Officials: Painting Bykau is an ideology issue](#).

Painters were fined for 4.5 million roubles each (about \$400) for their attempt to draw Vasil Bykau in the centre of the city. The graffiti on the transformer vault had not been allowed by the city authorities and was removed. The graffiti initiated by the SIGNAL street art community was considered to be dedicated to the writer's 90th anniversary.

[Baranavichy entrepreneurs ready to protest in Minsk](#). Private

entrepreneurs want to protest against the changes introduced by Alyaksandr Lukashenka's order #222. The order obliges private entrepreneurs to have documents proving where they bought their products after July 1.

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European Cafe, Citizen Journalism, Green Mahiliou – Belarus Civil Society Digest

European Cafe hosted a public lecture in Minsk. Budzma organised a Day of the Belarusian Language for young people. “For Freedom” invites for the school where the current situation in Belarus and the existing potential of the Belarusian civil society will be discussed.

Ihar Pastnow, a paediatrician and psychiatrist in Vitsyebsk who openly criticized the head of the Regional Executive Committee, will have to attend a mental health hospital for compulsory psychiatric care. Two NGOs were denied registration.

[European Café goes on its meetings](#). On 7 September at the TUT.by gallery the project “European Café: open space in Europe” hosts a public lecture by Timm Beichelt “Germany and the EU: Face to Face with their Eastern Neighbours.” Timm Beichelt is a Professor of European Studies at the European University Viadrina Frankfurt. The meeting is a continuation

of a series of meetings with prominent European figures, organised by the Centre for European Studies.

"Budzma z movay!" for young intellectuals. The campaign "Budzma!" conducted a Day of Belarusian language at a camp for young participants who were playing intellectual games. The program included several games in Belarusian including "Media Alphabet" and "What-Where-When?" as well as a literary-musical event and a Belarusian dance.

Presentation of 2012 Sustainability Index. On 29 August a presentation of the results of 2012 Sustainability Index of civil society organisations (USAID methodology) took place in Minsk. The event was organised by the international NGO "ACT" with informational support from the Office of European Expertise and Communications. The invited experts discussed strategies to improve sustainability in the third sector, taking into account the results of the Index.

Seminars, grants

School "Belarus Today: Challenges and Prospects for Development". The school was organised by the movement "For Freedom" and will take place on 15-20 October in one of the neighboring European countries. The purpose of the school is to provide fellows with a comprehensive vision of the current situation in Belarus and discuss the existing potential of Belarusian civil society. Participation in the school is available for Belarusians of 18-30 years old who are active in social and political issues.

Citizen journalist 2013: Let's Make it Better! The contest "Citizen Journalist" continues and invites all to apply with articles, photos, videos, audio or blogs about local issues. Thus, the team supports the wave of local campaigns "Let's Make it Better!" initiated by the Assembly of Democratic NGOs. All works will appear on the website narodny.by, the best will be offered to independent newspapers and TV media. The

deadline for submissions is 10 September.

[Eastern Partnership Youth Forum 2013](#). On 22-25 October Eastern Partnership Youth Forum will take place in Kaunas (Lithuania), under the Lithuania's Presidency of the EU Council and the Eastern Partnership Platform 4 "Contacts between people". The event will gather about 200 young people and aims to increase sustainable political/civic commitment to further support non-formal learning and recognition of the process of work by young people through cooperation with those working with youth.

[Embassy Funds for Belarus 2013](#). MATRA/HRF for Belarus launched a new call for proposals focused on the development of civil society in Belarus. The Embassy has two programme funds available for 2013: the Small Embassy Projects Programme (Matra Fund) and the Human Rights Fund. Date of closure for the round is 15 September 2013. The Embassy is empowered to extend grants in principle to a maximum of Euro 25,000.

[First billboard with a picture of the HIV-positive citizen](#) of Belarus opened in Minsk on 21 August. Eugeni Spevak, a member of the Belarusian community of people living with HIV and the face on the billboard, said that 20 similar billboards will be placed throughout the country. The event "Why am I living with HIV for a long time" was organized by the World Health Organisation, with the support of the Ministry of Health of Belarus, UNDP, etc.

Green events

[Agro-Cultural-Festival in Minsk](#). Ecodom NGO and ecological entity "Agro-Eco-Culture" invite those interested to the Eco-Cultural Festival 2013, which is traditionally held at the Minsk Gallery "Ÿ" during the last days of summer. The Festival program includes presentations, master classes, tastings and concerts that can be attended by both adults and children.

[SILC invites for training on ideology](#). Swedish International

Liberal Centre (SILC) is inviting interested parties to participate in the training “Political party ideology”. Politically and socially active youth of 18-35 years old are welcome to submit applications till September 22. The main objective of the course is to improve the knowledge of young political activists to better understand political ideologies and explore their different aspects.

[Birdrace 2013](#). APB BirdLife Belarus NGO is welcoming participants to take part in the X Open Championship of Ornithology Racing. Competitions will be held on the first Saturday of autumn (on September 7) from 6 am to 6 pm. According to regulations, the winner is the team that during the day of the tournament registers the largest number of species of wild birds naturally occurring in the territory of Belarus.

[“Green Map” in Mahiliou](#). The Internet project serves as a guide between authorities responsible for waste collection and disposal and those who want to properly get rid of their waste. At the moment, Mahiliou Green Map contains 68 points where one can drop secondary material resources, waste, as well as to give away unnecessary items. The project’s initiator is the Centre for Environmental Solutions.

Interaction between state and civil society

[Monitoring of public councils](#). The Ministry of Economy of Belarus has monitored the activities of public advisory councils and working groups in the state bodies. Monitoring data indicate that 29 advisory councils and working groups which include representatives of the business community continue to act. The Ministry concluded that the councils are a real platform for dialogue between the government and business.

[Two NGOs registration were turned down](#). On 21 August the Supreme Court of Belarus upheld the denial of registration for

the United Civic Party's youth wing "[Young Democrats](#)". A Department of Justice of Brest Regional Executive Committee refused to register the NGO "[Brest Christian Democrats](#)."

[Doctor in Vitebsk who openly criticized authorities sent to psychiatric hospital](#). On 21 August Ihar Pastnow, a paediatrician and psychiatrist in Vitsyebsk who openly criticized the head of the Regional Executive Committee has been sent to a mental health hospital for compulsory psychiatric care.

[Program director of Radio "Racyja" banned entrance to Belarus](#). The Program Director of the Belarusian Radio "Racyja" Yury Leszczynski, planning his holiday, wanted to come to Belarus. Having visited the Consulate of Belarus in Bialystok, he received a visa denial a week after applying for a tourist visa.

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Mens Club, Strikes, Illegal Polls – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Strikes of entrepreneurs in Belarus dominated the public opinion over the last days. How the authorities reacted to the protests? Budzma's ADNAK attracted a large crowd with its innovative award ceremony.

The Council of Europe together with Belarusian authorities organised a round table on death penalty. Treci Sektor, a Belarusian NGO, decided to do something for Belarusian men and launched the Mens Club as a platform for public discussion.

Interaction between State and Civil Society

[Entrepreneurs strike in Belarus](#). About 70% of entrepreneurs in markets and shopping centres of Belarus did not come to work in Minsk and regions in the day of the strike on 27 June informed the analytical centre of the Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs held a one-day strike against the introduction the technical regulations of the Customs Union "On the safety of products of light industry." The entrepreneurs protest got wide coverage in both [independent](#) and [state media](#). On the same day one of the strike organisers, the leader of "Perspektiva" NGO [Anatoly Shumchanka](#) was detained and sentenced for 5 days of administrative arrest.

[Liability for illegal polls affirmed in law](#). The House of Representatives of the National Assembly of Belarus adopted the amendments to the Code of Administrative Offences and Procedural Code of Administrative Offences. Among others, the new law provides liability for illegal conducting polls ([Article 9.28](#)). Lawyer Yuri Chausov believes that the law may enter into force as early as this summer.

[Against the death penalty in Belarus](#). On 21 June the House of Charity in Minsk hosted a roundtable "Religion and the death penalty". Most participants, including the Metropolitan Filaret, spoke out against retaining the death penalty in Belarus. The event was organised by the Council of Europe in cooperation with the Belarusian authorities. The round table was attended by representatives of the churches, Belarusian officials, delegates of the Council of Europe, diplomats and

human rights activists.

[Eco Forum cancelled](#). Scheduled on 28-30 in Polotsk, Eco Forum of CSOs was cancelled in two days before the opening and postponed till the fall. The reason is that authorities denied providing a venue for the event, as well as the hotel referred to technical problems. About 100 participants among them representatives of Belarusian environmental CSOs, foreign experts and the media were registered to participate in the Forum.

[Public Council without public organisations](#). 21 people have become members of the recently established Public Council under the Ministry of Internal Affairs, whose first meeting takes place on 28 June. All members are representatives of arts, culture, religion, law, industry, sports, the media, and parliamentarians. The Council, however, does not include any representative of CSOs.

[Attorney returned her license](#). Minsk attorney Tamara Garayeva, whose license was revoked after she refused to defend Irina Khalip, reportedly was reinstated as a licensed advocate. According to the Belarus Ministry of Justice, she followed the procedure and applied for reinstatement of her license after 3 years of its revocation. According to the Ministry representative, none of the other eight disbarred lawyers applied for a reinstatement of their license, "because they found better-paying jobs".

[State-run radio provides space for CSO leader](#). On 29 June the First National Channel of Belarusian Radio holds an online conference with the Chairman of the Presidium of the Republican Confederation of Entrepreneurship, Vladimir Karyagin. The topic of the online event is "Business development in Belarus."

Social Initiatives

[Social Weekend competition](#). On June 20, online charity

platform "MaeSens" launched a competition for social projects Social Weekend. The organizers invite others to take part in the competition of projects which propose a solution to social problems. Participants will have an opportunity to get an expert opinion from a competent jury, find an investor for the project, as well as to win grants in the amount of \$ 1,000, \$ 700 and \$ 500 dollars and create their own fundraising page on the platform MaeSens.by.

[**34mag launches "Bicycle" project.**](#) An interactive map for cyclists that covers all of Belarus and answers where it is possible to rent a bike, repair it, etc. The project aims to collect all bicycle spots in one place and thus to make Belarus a truly bike-friendly country. "Bicycle" is an interactive map, so it provides the ability to add valuable points to all users.

[**AIIESEC established in Belarus.**](#) The Committee of the largest student organization in the world after several attempts has finally been registered in Minsk. AIIESEC (Association Internationale des Étudiants en Sciences Économiques et Commerciales) has 82,000 members from 131 countries. The main activity is organization of training and youth exchanges abroad, organized by the students themselves.

[**Children's Help Line celebrates its 2nd anniversary.**](#) On July 7, Nationwide Children's Help Line 8-801-100-1611 celebrates two years of its activity. For 2 years the line operators have received more than a thousand calls totaling 8,592 minutes. International NGO "Ponimanie" with the support of the Minsk City Executive Committee invites to join the celebration which will be held at the Gorki Children's Park in Minsk.

[**AD.NAK! ceremony in Minsk.**](#) On 27 June the award ceremony of the IV Festival of Belarusian-language advertising took place in Minsk. The event was organised by the campaign "Budzma!" together with online portal Marketing.by and other promotional companies. Among the goals of the Festival is to collect the

best marketing and advertising products and pay attention of the professional community to Belarusian language. This year, 314 works by 105 participants were submitted to participate in the Festival's contest.

[Men Club in Grodno](#). The first public discussion and educational club for middle-aged men (30-45 years) launched in Grodno. Members of the Club will have an opportunity to analyze their own life experience, discover their capacity, to expand the circle of friends, and to obtain useful life skills. Club meetings will be held once a week on Saturdays.

[Sport event for wheelchair users](#). On 22 June in Minsk, Republican Association of Wheelchair Users conducted a sport event in memory of the legendary Belarusian wheelchair user Nikolai Kolbasko. The agenda included sports, workshops, exhibitions, and individual program for children. The event was aimed to attract wheelchair users to an active lifestyle and physical education, as well as exchange of experience in the integration and rehabilitation of wheelchairs.

[The Night of Culture with Belarusians](#). On 5-6 July one of the most important events in Vilnius "The Night of Culture" will be held for the seventh time. This year Belarusian artists and CSOs will take an active part in the open-air event and present seven Belarusian projects in the Old Town of Vilnius. Entrance to all events is free. Coordination of Belarusian projects is implemented by the youth association "StudAlliance".

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Why Is the Belarusian Language Disappearing? – Belarus Civil Society Digest

The disappearance of the Belarusian language from the public space, a visa free campaign, the commemoration of Vitali Silitski and summer schools feature among the top civil society news this week.

Belarusians can learn more about their history in the 1990s thank to the new project '90s.by', European Café held a public lecture on the European Union, and will the protestant church 'New Life' face accusations of the illegal use of a building for a prayer? All this and more in this edition of the Belarus Civil Society Digest.

Social Campaigns

[Samakhod 2013](#). The campaign "Visa Free!" presents the second Festival of mobility "Samakhod" (Self-Propelled) which is to be held in Minsk on June 21-22. The Festival will be opened with a concert of groups Akute and Clover Club and be continued at the creative cluster ME100. The second day of the event's agenda includes workshops, lectures, and performances. The Festival's topic is human mobility. Participation in all events is free.

[Silitski is remembered](#). On 11 June two years ago Vitali Silitski, a prominent Belarusian political scientist, and the first BISS director, passed away. Silitski became well-known in the international scientific community with his concepts of preventive

authoritarianism and authoritarian international. This year Silitski's colleagues and friends gathered for an evening of remembrance in Minsk.

[Nash Dom initiates an amendment to the Law on the status of deputies](#). Activists of the civic campaign Nash Dom appealed to the Committee on Regional Policy and Local Self-Government of the Belarus National Assembly regarding the amendment to the Law "On the Status of Local Councils' Deputies." Nash Dom offers to reduce by more than three times the number of voters in districts at the written request of which can be heard by an extraordinary report of a local deputy.

[Where did the beauty go?](#) Digital-studio «Aguru» launched a non-profit social project admova.by, dedicated to the issue of the disappearance of the Belarusian language. The first video under the project caused, though, the most **[controversial reaction](#)** in Bynet this week.

[Culture improves life](#). The campaign Budzma! released another video in the frame of its concept "Culture Improves Life." The video presents a number of talented individuals who answer the question "why?" with projections for their profession – including the writer Uladzimir Arlou, editor of the Belarusian Wikipedia Pavel Selitskas, lawyer Darya Katkouskaya, athlete Vitaly Gurkou, etc.

["Chronicle of Judgement Time" presented at BAJ website](#). The series of mini-movies "Chronicle of Judgment Time" includes eight films that are dedicated to the members of Belarusian Association of Journalists who suffered in the name of freedom of speech: Ales Bialiatski, Zmitser Bandarenka, Iryna Khalip, Andrei Pachobut, Natallia Radzina, Pavel Seviarynets, Anton Surapin and Siarhei Vazniak. The project originated with the informational support of the **[Human Rights Center Viasna](#)**.

[Back to 90's](#). The new multimedia project 90s.by shares the

most intense period of Belarusian history – the decade stretching from 1990 to 1999. The project authors are ambitious and willing to cover everything: from elections and crises to rock festivals and the first "McDonald's." Each article will contain interviews with direct participants, fragments of memories, statistics and interesting facts, archival photos and videos, and related links. Among the goals of the web site is to inspire people, because in the 1990s Belarusians were acting on the principle of "if you want something – do it."

Green Initiatives

[CES environmental videos](#). Center for Environmental Solutions created a series of videos, called "Collect old batteries separately". The videos are dedicated to World Environment Day and tell why it is important to dispose of used batteries in special urns and what danger these wastes bring to health and the environment. The videos are created with the support of the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection and planned to be broadcast on national TV.

[15 thousand signatures in support of Belarusian wetlands](#). 15,000 Belarusians provided their signatures against the extraction of peat in the partial reserves which were forwarded to the Council of Ministers, the Ministry of Natural Resources, the Minsk Regional Executive Committee on 5 June. The coordinators of the campaign "In Defence of Wetlands" note that the signatures were collected less than planned.

Belarus and the European Union

[Minsk hosts conference on Belarus-EU partnership](#). The Institute of Philosophy of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus under the auspices of the MFA of Belarus and the EU Office in Belarus host to an international conference "Belarus-European Union: Problems and Partnership Prospects" on June 13-14. The program of the conference

comprises reports and greeting speeches on behalf of the MFA, the EU Office and foreign diplomatic missions.

[European lecture in café](#). On 18 June a public lecture "Modernization of the New Strategy in Eastern Europe: the Impasses and Leapfrogging" took place at a Minsk cafe. The lecturer was Dr. Pal Tamás, a professor of Corvinus University (Budapest, Hungary). The lecture was held in the framework of the project "European Café: Open Space of Europe" implemented by the Centre for European Studies.

[NP conference in Minsk](#). On 1 June the National Platform conference titled "Between the Eastern Partnership and the European Dialog on Modernization" was held in Minsk. The conference resulted in the election of a new Coordination Committee and its chairperson – Ulad Vialichka, supported by 37 out of 44 representatives of the organisations attended. 26 Belarusian organisations were recommended for the 5th meeting of the Civil Society Forum out of 33 applicants – a marked decline of 300% when compared to the previous Forum.

Education

[Workshop for school teachers](#). Belarusian School Society and the web site Nastaunik.info invite educators, librarians and teachers to participate in the workshop "The School as a Platform for the Formation of Social and Civic Competencies". The seminar will be held on 22-24 June near Minsk; organisers cover all related costs.

[Summer historical school](#). From June to August, the Skaryna Language Society under the campaign "Budzma" starts summer school of history "History on Vacation" held by Dr Aleh Trusau. The participants will have an opportunity to see and discuss historical films and take part in a historical quiz. The School is free.

Interaction between State and Civil Society

[Closed hearings on "espionage case"](#). On 12 June the hearings on the case of Andrei Haidukou, 23-year-old Navapolatsk resident, who is accused of "high treason", started at the Vitsebsk Regional Court. No one, including journalists and human rights defenders, were allowed to attend the hearings. Andrei Haidukou was arrested in November in Minsk "while he was hiding with information which could be relevant to foreign intelligence services".

[Economic Court again against "New Life"](#). On 13 June church "New Life" received a summons from the Minsk Economic Court for the initiation of proceedings against the church. The document offered the church community to leave the building it occupies in 7 days. But the next day, on 14 June the authorities informed the church that they had [suspended the proceedings](#).

[Journalist warned for work with Belsat](#). The prosecutor's office of Smaliavichy district issued a warning to an independent journalist Ales' Silich for contributing to a foreign mass media service without accreditation.

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