

Trees Rally, Swamp Campaign, MaeSens – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Belarusian third sector demonstrates a remarkable diversity of activities – from campaigns to save trees and energy to initiatives against drug abuse and new student organisations.

New student association – BOSS. On October 5, Minsk hosted a conference on student self-government, where students discussed the situation with self-government in the Belarusian universities. The result of the conference was the creation of [the Brotherhood of Organizations of Student Self-government](#) (BOSS), aimed to carry out the coordinating work to protect the rights and interests of students.

IT geeks for civil society. [Drupal-gathering](#) which to take place on December 15-16, announces a competition for social projects, initiatives and CSOs to create their website for free in one day. The organiser is [youth CSO "Falanster"](#).

Cyclists at the border. Group of Belarusians managed [to get into Poland on the bikes](#) at the checkpoint Brest – Terespol ("Warsaw Bridge"), which was impossible for cyclists before. The action was held by the Brest youth NGO "Dzedzich" and Minsk Cycling Society, under the campaign "[For Cycling Brest!](#)"

MaeSens.by – 1! On November 11, a charity auction of meetings MaeSens.by celebrates its one-year anniversary. The project goal is to raise funds for the treatment of seriously ill children and orphanages. Funds collected through the auction – anyone can put up a meeting with him/her or to buy a lot with a person he/she likes. [The reports on the use of funds](#) are available on the website. In 2012, the project was awarded in

the category "[Best Startup of the Year](#)".

Training for entrepreneurs. On October 23, the Bel.Biz team held a training in Minsk entitled "[How to become a more effective manager?](#)" 14 representatives of small and medium enterprises took part in the event. The training was one of 44 trainings available within the international program for representatives of SMEs 'Business Edge' (BE). These trainings have been designed by IFC and held in Belarus with USAID support.

Trees rally. Youth activists of "[European perspective](#)" held a rally in support of the local residents who are struggling to keep the park of Friendship of Peoples. On October 30, in the park the posters appeared on the trees: "Investors, be friends for the park!", "Officials cut down us!" [Activists of the districts Vostok-2 and Uruchcha-2](#) signed an open letter in which they expressed their "solidarity and support for citizens of the Soviet district, who protect the park "Friendship of Peoples" from trees' cutting". The appeal also calls for the city administration to abandon plans to build a sports center in the Park, "not to provoke social conflicts." The process of negotiations between citizens and authorities is facilitated by civic initiative "European perspective."

"Swamp" campaign launching. On October 25, [a public campaign for the preservation of wetlands](#) in protected natural areas has been launched. The initiators of the campaign are APB BirdLife Belarus, Green Alliance, EcoDom, Center for Environmental Solutions. The campaign started with collecting signatures through the website Change.org. Also a public appeal to the relevant government authorities is being prepared.

The Festival of Energy-Saving Ideas starts in Belarus. It is timed to the International Day of energy saving, which is annually celebrated globally on November 11. This year, the Center for Environmental Solutions proposes to hold the

Festival under the slogan "[Tie Socks – Turn off the Heater!](#)" One of the main Festival's category "Best pair of warm socks" will assess handmade socks of natural materials submitted to the competition. The winners will get e-books, all the socks will be sent to an orphanage.

Belarusian Transport Experts Learn from Lithuanian Experience.

On September 24-27, representatives of the Belarusian Union of Transport Workers (BUTW) [travelled to Vilnius](#) on a study tour organized by the Brussels-based Office for a Democratic Belarus in cooperation with the Office for European Expertise and Communication (Minsk, Belarus) in the frames of the project "EU and Belarus: Sharing Knowledge". The Lithuanian National Road Carriers' Association LINAFA hosted the event in Vilnius. On October 4, the Second National Conference, entitled "[Public Transport in the Republic of Belarus: current state and perspectives of development](#)" took place in Minsk. More than 80 delegates from all six regions of the country, including representatives of the local authorities, transport companies and vehicle manufacturers joined the conference.

Journalism for people with disabilities and without. The initiative group "[Step Forward](#)" invites to participate in a session for young people of 16-30 years. The workshop is to be held on November 3-4, in Grodno. The participants will not only get the basic knowledge and skills on journalism, but also learn how to properly raise the topic of disability in the media.

Antimak. Coordinator of the public initiative "[Antimak](#)" [Alexander Shpakovsky](#) and journalist Euroradio Yevgeniy Voloshyn made a 'raids' around Minsk and found that finally it became difficult to get "bubki" – poppy seeds mixed with opioids, the most popular raw material for drugs' producing in Belarus. Activists do not expect that this situation will last for a long time, because the new Law "On Drugs", which came into force at the end of October, contains nothing to prohibit

"bubki."

Discussion "Art and new media". On October 25, in Minsk (free cafe "Fisher House") online magazine "New Europe" will conduct a discussion "[Contemporary art and new media in Belarus](#)". The event is to be attended by editors of portals [34mag.net](#), [ArtAktivist.com](#), [CityDog.by](#), [Generation.BY](#), [KyKy.org](#), [pARTisanmag.by](#).

The film "Square. Women". A new documentary "[Square. Women](#)" was posted on YouTube portal. The idea of the film belongs to the well-known writer [Svetlana Aleksiyeovich](#). The film was shot with a cell phone's video camera. The plot includes a number of ordinary conversations with far from the politics women whose life has changed since the events of December 19, 2010.

Inconvenient films discussion. On October 22, the Lithuanian Centre for Human Rights and the Belarusian Human Rights House invite to a screening of the film "Belarusian Dream" and a discussion "[Is it possible to dream in the Island of Stability?](#)" The invited panelists are Freedom House Project Director Vytis Jurkonis, editor of the independent newspaper "Vitebskij Kurier" Oleg Borschevskij, Coordinator of "European Belarus" civic campaign Pavel Marynich, etc.

'Belarus in Focus 2012' is the second edition of a competition for journalists writing about Belarus for an international audience. Held by [Solidarity with Belarus Information Office](#) in collaboration with Press Club Polska, the competition aims to highlight articles that attempt to present a new, original side to Belarus and explore the country beyond the label of 'Europe's last dictatorship'. The deadline for submissions is January 15, 2013.

Viva Belarus! /Жыве Беларусь! The [first trailer of movie Viva Belarus!](#) is available on YouTube. The plot is based on the true story and tells about modern Belarus, youth and its

struggle for democracy. The screenplay was made by Krzysztof Łukaszewicz and Franak Viachorka. The film is accompanied by music of rock-legend Lavon Volski. Premiere of the film took place at the Cannes Film Festival on May 22, 2012.

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.

Belarusians in Washington Mark 16th with Film Screening Documenting Soviet Atrocities



On October 16, 2009, a screening of “The Soviet Story” followed by a reception was organized by members of the DC chapter of the Belarusian-American Association (BAZA) as part of the activities aimed to commemorate the International Day of Solidarity with Belarus.

“Given the current repressive and dictatorial regime in Belarus, we thought it appropriate to commemorate the 16th with a screening of this film that documents past atrocities that Belarus has suffered under the Soviet regime,” said

Alesia Kipel, co-chair of the DC chapter of Belarusian-American Association in her address to the audience.

“The Soviet Story” is a 2008 documentary film about Soviet Communism and Soviet-German collaboration before 1941, written and directed by Edvīns Šnore. The film argues that there were close philosophical, political and organizational connections between the Nazi and Soviet systems before and during the early stages of World War II. It highlights the Great Purge as well as the Great Famine, Katyn massacre, Gestapo-NKVD collaboration, Soviet mass deportations and medical experiments in the GULAG.