

CharkaShkvarka Index, McDonald's in Belarusian, Talaka.by – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Belarusian civil society organisations try to measure the falling value of the Belarusian rouble. Internet platform "Talaka.by" has launched a new service that will help spread the word about about civil society projects.

McDonald's launched its website and menu in Belarusian. A crowdfunding campaign help independent publisher Lohivau raise over \$32 thousand in a month.

Civil Society Initiatives

[BIPART develops CharkaShkvarka Index](#). The Index helps to calculate the real rate of the Belarusian ruble. The basis for the Index is cost of standard glass of vodka and 100 grams of pork. In this "currency" BIPART independent think tank counts the salaries of the population and finds out how far the ruble can be devalued. Among neighbouring countries, Poles have the highest *CharkaShkvarka* Index; Belarusians take the penultimate place.

[McDonald's website now in Belarusian thanks to Mova Nanova](#). The world famous fast-food chain McDonald's launches the menu in Belarusian, thanks to free translation from *Mova Nanova* (Language Anew) initiative. The free Belarusian translation [Language First-Aid service](#) has been available on the *Mova Nanova* website for several months now. About 40 firms and entrepreneurs have already benefited from it, among them a network of petrol stations A-100, Protection of Homeland Birds and others.

[Internet platform Talaka.by launches a new service #TalakaNaviny](#). The service allows anyone to share the news about social projects, urban practises, events or activities beneficial to communities. The news should not affect politics or religion. After posting the news become available to more than 6.5 thousand subscribers in Talaka.by groups.

Belarus in Numbers

[In Belarus there are 2,596 registered NGOs](#). In 2014, the Ministry of Justice registered 86 newly-established non-governmental organisations (1 international, 13 republican, 72 local), 3 unions (associations) of non-governmental organisations, 11 local foundations. In comparison to 2013, the total number of registered NGOs increased by 2.9% and to the moment reaches 2,596 NGOs. The most frequent activity among registered NGOs is sports and physical training (684 NGOs). □

[CSR Forum gathers over 150 participants](#). On 26 February the IV International Forum on Corporate Social Responsibility was held in Minsk. Organised by the [Fund of Ideas](#), the Forum became a platform for the exchange of ideas and experience in promoting corporate social responsibility for over 150 representatives of CSOs, business, local authorities, international and national experts. Among partners of the Forum there are UNDP, Pontis as well as Pact with USAID support.

[New discussion *What Do Belarusians Think will take place on March 12*](#). The Office for European Expertise and Communication (OEEC) and the Belarus Research Council (BRC) invite to the seventh live panel discussion titled *What Do Belarusians Think: Who Is Your City Minsk?* to discuss the tendencies and problems of development of the Belarus' capital – the city of Minsk. The event will be held on March 12, in the [TUT.BY](#) Gallery starting at 7 pm (Minsk time). The online streaming will be available on Naviny.by, New Europe, Citydog and

Delfi.ru.

[Amnesty International Report 2014/15](#). The Amnesty International has released its regular report 2014/15 that documents the state of human rights in 160 countries and territories during 2014. Namely, the report states that Belarus remained the only country in Europe to carry out executions; the right to freedom of expression was severely restricted and journalists faced harassment; NGOs continued to be arbitrarily denied registration.□

Interaction between State and Civil Society

[Ministry of Information and independent newspapers: 5 warnings in 4 days](#). Within four days, independent newspapers received from Ministry of Information five warnings. The recent ones went to newspapers Intex-Press, Gantsavitski Chas, Borisovskiye Novosti, Reklamny Borzhomi and a regional Gazeta Slonimskaya. One of the reasons for warnings is shortening Republic of Belarus to RB. Until now, there were only two warnings, and only for Narodnaya Volya.

[Crowdfunding helps raise half of fine for Lohvinaŭ book shop](#). People have collected about \$32.5 thousand in a month during the campaign #SaveLohvinau. Minsk Economic Court fined the bookshop Lohvinaŭ and ordered to return 'the illegal income' (about \$63,000) to the budget for selling books without a license. Under the campaign, an [online auction of art works](#) was launched to support Lohvinau book house – artists sell their works and donate the funds received to the book house (the auction is to work until March 10).

[Journalist denied visa to Belarus](#). David Crawford was going to be a lecturer at the [Press Club Belarus](#) on 27 February. The topic of the long-time planned seminar was journalistic investigation and work of Berlin-based CORRECT!V, among all their participation in investigation of the shooting down of the Malaysian plane over Ukraine last summer. The seminar has

not been cancelled, instead it will be held in the format of a webinar on 27 February at TUT.by Gallery.

Information Ministry is the most closed state body. The Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) held a survey among its members asking to evaluate the work of press services of state agencies and the degree of their openness to the public. The Ministry of Information was named the most closed state body; the best grade was given to the Ministry of Emergency Situations. The aim of the survey is to ensure better access to information, more openness of public institutions.

Program to support rural initiatives. The Representative Office of the German Adult Education Association (Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V.) in Belarus announces the launch of educational and counseling Program to support rural initiatives *Adult Education and Rural Development*. The program's objective is to strengthen the capacity of rural initiatives that undertake historical, cultural and educational activities in rural areas. Deadline for applications is March 25.

Mikalaj Dziadok to spend one more year in prison. On 26 February Mikalaj Dziadok's trial ended in Mahiliou prison #4. He was supposed to be released a few days later but the court imprisoned him for one more year. Anarchist movement activist, recognised as a **political prisoner** by the Human Rights Centre *Viasna*, Mikalaj Dziadok was imprisoned for 4.5 years in May 2011 under Article 339-2 (malignant hooliganism).

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.

New Charity Technologies and Education Initiatives – Belarus Civil Society Digest

This week is marked with significant intensification of civil society activities, in particular in the field of human rights. Civil society organisations are adopting new charity technologies through online tools and attempt advocacy attempts, and it seems that governmental bodies began to make available draft laws for public discussion.

Challenges of EU strategy towards Belarus discussed in Minsk.

On February 18, a 'round table' initiated by Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies [took place](#) in Minsk. Its agenda included the challenges of the EU – Belarus relations and their development, as well as the impact that the visa ban imposed on some representatives of the Belarusian regime has on the EU – Belarus relations. The round table was attended by about 20 members of the Belarusian expert community, civil society and human rights organisations.

Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs celebrates its 15th anniversary.

On February 22, the [Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus](#), the largest association of Belarusian NGOs, celebrates its 15th anniversary. Now the Assembly consists of more than 300 organisations – both registered organisations and unregistered initiatives. After three unsuccessful attempts to register in Belarus the Assembly got a legal status in Lithuania (in July 2011). This year VII Congress of the Assembly is to be held.

School of Educators-2012. Education Centre "POST" within the

framework of the "Flying University" program conducts a training course "[School of Educators](#)". The School is to represent POST's experience and the concepts in the field of informal education. It will also provide an opportunity to get acquainted with some successful practices of the educational work, to evaluate their effectiveness, as well as develop trainers' skills. The course will be held in Minsk, from February to June 2012 in the format of interactive seminars, workshops and lectures.

Distance learning for lawyers in nonprofit law. Republican NGO "[United Way](#)" invites students and the NGOs members to participate in the e-learning for lawyers. The program includes a wide range of issues relating to the legal regulation of non-profit organisations. The course is practical and considers the real issues faced by nonprofit organisations. Study period is March-December 2012.

EHREL in action. On February 16-19, the Belarusian Human Rights House hosted a working meeting and training within the framework of the project Electronic Human Rights Education for Lawyers ([EHREL](#)). Coordinators, experts and project partners discussed the key issues and perspectives of the project. The curriculum of the project, carried out simultaneously for Azerbaijan, Belarus, Moldova, Russia and Ukraine, aims at teaching jurists and lawyers professional use of international and constitutional law in the jurisprudence.

In-depth course on human rights. [Belarusian Human Rights School](#) announces a competition for participation in the in-depth course on human rights, aimed at deepening the knowledge of motivated young people in the field of human rights, enhance their practical application in the professional and public spheres. Young Belarusians of 20-30 years old, who have a basic knowledge of human rights are invited to participation in the program. The course will be held in March-June 2012, at the Belarusian Human Rights House in Vilnius (Lithuania).

School of Local Governance. Educational NGO "Leu Sapieha Foundation" within the framework of the "Flying University" holds the [School of Local Governance](#)." The School will present the Foundation's long-term achievements in the field of local governance. The School will be held in Minsk in March-June 2012.

Study tour for Belarusian lawyers in Lithuania. Konrad Adenauer Stiftung (KAS) and the Institute for Development and Training EDUCATIO announced a call for applications to participate in a study tour for Belarusian lawyers in Lithuania "[Exchange jurisprudence in favor of the Belarusian people](#)." The project goal is to gather a group of Belarusian lawyers, advocates and people involved in legal issues in the political parties / NGOs, in order to enable them to review the legal system of Lithuania and other European countries.

Charity online store. Charitable NGO "Belarusian Children's Hospice" has launched a charity online store www.takprosto.by, where everyone can put their goods, which can be bought by other online users. The money from the deal goes to the bank account of the organisation.

On line service of charitable meetings. Online auction "[Mae сЭHC](#)" was launched in October 2011 and has already [collected](#) about 60 million rubles and sold more than three thousand meetings. The project offers two ways to participate in a charity – one can fill out a questionnaire and to offer himself/ herself as a lot, and then go to a meeting with the winner of the auction, and also one can buy a meeting with a pleasant person. The money raised organisers give to charity – usually for children with serious illnesses.

Web platform for national monitoring. Crisisby.net developed by a group of Internet activists from different cities and countries, is a platform for national monitoring of crisis events in Belarus. The platform allows gathering and organising messages from multiple sources, applying them on

the map, presenting in the form of graphs and tables. Everyone can send a message; post a link to the text, video or photos.

New office of EuroBelarus and Forum Syd in Vilnius. On February 21, [in Vilnius a joint office](#) of the International Consortium "EuroBelarus" and the Swedish organisation "Forum Syd" has been opened. The event was attended by leaders of EuroBelarus and Forum Syd, as well as representatives of diplomatic missions, international organisations and Belarusian NGOs in Lithuania. The purpose of the new Office is the promotion of civil society in Belarus.

Press-conference of the DisRights Office. On February 28, [Office for the Rights of People with Disabilities](#) conducts a press-conference in Minsk. The main purpose of the event is to summarise outcomes of the regional stage of the Office campaign. The speakers are Sergei Drozdovskiy, the Office coordinator, and Jamie Bolling, Executive Director of the European Network for Independent Living (ENIL). The event starts at 12:00, at the hotel "Yubileyny".

International Conference on alternative methods of rehabilitation. Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs in conjunction with the Branch of the Russian State Social University in Minsk [invite](#) to take part in the 2nd International Scientific Conference on alternative methods of rehabilitation of children and adults with disabilities, HIV/AIDS, cancer and other serious illnesses. The Conference will be held on 30-31 May 2012 in Minsk.

Volunteers wanted for building environmentally friendly houses. [International NGO "Ecodom"](#) (Minsk), together with the charity organisation "Houses instead of Chernobyl" (Germany) invites to participation in building of environmentally friendly houses in Lepel district, Vitebsk region. The project needs in builders on a volunteer basis (11 people) and translators of German (5 people).

Invitation to discussion about Legislation on Philanthropy.

Legal Transformation Centre invites to discuss the necessity to develop legislation on philanthropy in Belarus. For this purpose, the Centre's web site has created [a special section](#) with documents on international experience in the legal regulation of charitable organisations, reference to media publication, etc.

Experts of civil society involved in the drafting of the pension reform. In March 2012, the government should get [a pension reform project](#), developed by independent Belarusian experts, including representatives of the Business Union of Entrepreneurs and Employers. The experts are going to stir up the Belarusian authorities, and, above all, the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection regarding the issue of reforming the current pension system.

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