

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.

Student Leadership Academy, banned musicians return – Belarus civil society digest

Nobel laureate Alexievich opens intellectual club in Minsk. Mediakritika's manual receives a prestigious ADAMI award. First ever online map of sexual violence against women launched. Costs of protest: info-graph (based on fines).

Budźma and SYMPA organise Fair of City Projects in Maladziečna. RADA invites for talks with youth activists.

Students launch a campaign to reform the obligatory assigned placement for the first job.

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Community development and local governance

[Community change award](#). On 11 December, Office for European Expertise and Communications (OEEC) together with CityDog, [34mag.net](#), *Imena* online magazine and platform Talaka.by invites to the awards ceremony in community development *Zrabili!! Done!* The award is given to the most efficient activists who could change the life in their communities and became heroes of the Belarusian media in 2016.

[Fair of projects in Maladzyechna](#). *Budźma* campaign and SYMPA organised in Maladzyechna, Minsk region, a discussion of 10 local projects submitted for the Fair of Projects. CSOs, initiatives, and individuals presented their vision of what should be done in the town to improve it – from the parking for bicycles to the analysis of the land amelioration effects.

[Petitions.by celebrates one year](#). For the year, the [Convenient City](#) non-profit resource created more than 400 civil petitions, signed by 30-35 thousand people, with 60% of the issues solved. The resource aims to create an infrastructure for people to collect signatures and coordinate their efforts. Political implications and



financial transparency are the two most painful topics for Belarusian officials.

[School of Mayors](#). Organised by *Budźma* campaign and SYMPA, the programme aims to develop the knowledge and skills of activists from all regions of Belarus to participate effectively in the development and implementation of regional policies for sustainable development, inter-sectoral dialogue to protect and promote the public interests. Deadline for applications is 25 November.

Student activism

[RADA Talks](#). On 3 December, Belarusian National Youth Council RADA invites to the brunch to talk about the purposes, motivation and personal life of young Belarusian activists. The brunch is to be led by youth political and civic activists. The event will take place at the Minsk Gallery Ź.

[Student Leadership Academy](#) invites students to participation. Organised by the Centre for Development of Student's Initiatives, the educational 6-month program includes workshops, study visits and the project implementation. The Academy offers scholarships for 20 selected fellows and has four faculties: student rights, quality education, student self-government and public campaigns.

[Students launch a campaign to reform the obligatory assigned placement for the first job](#). The campaign runs under [Student Week](#), dedicated to the International Students Day. An electronic platform Zvarot.by provides an opportunity to sign a collective appeal to the Ministry of Education and the Parliament to cancel the obligatory assigned placement for the first job for graduates. The campaign runs by *Studenckaja Rada* youth NGO.

Human rights

[The first in Belarus interactive map of sexual-based violence against women launched](#). The online [map](#) allows any Belarusian to leave a message what street and what house are not safe because there was violence committed against a woman. The project is implemented by *Radislava* NGO and aimed to make visible the real extent of gender-based violence in Belarus.

[Hotline line for women sums up its 6-month activity](#). The service works at the Centre for promotion of women's rights Her Rights. For the first 6 months the lawyers assisted to 72 women. Most frequently Belarusian women need help in family conflicts as well as issues with employers.

[Legal Initiative CSO launches free online consultations](#). The website [bylaw.pro](#) is to help victims of human rights violations. The project aims to increase access to legal assistance for citizens in need and promote legal literacy of the population.

Cultural activism

[Authorities allow 'Narodny Albom' show with banned performers in the lead](#). The Minsk authorities issued permission to hold a concert themed on the popular project *Narodny Albom* in Minsk, in February 2017. Belarusian rock musicians [Liavon Vołski](#) and Zmicier Vajciuškievič who have long been banned from giving concerts in Belarus for their critical attitude towards Lukashenka's regime star in the show.



[Nobel laureate Svetlana Alexievich opens intellectual club in Minsk.](#) A year after receiving the Nobel Prize [Svetlana Alexievich](#) launches her intellectual club in Minsk. The first meeting will be held on 7 December, at [TUT.BY](#) Gallery with the Russian philologist Olga Sedakova as an invited speaker. The club meetings will be held monthly and designed to help "find the basis, which helps a thinking person to survive."

[Mediakritika manual received a prestigious ADAMI award.](#) Commissioned by an independent media watchdog *Mediakritika.by*, the interactive guide *What is Hate Language?* became the first Belarusian media product, awarded by ADAMI festival that encourages cultural diversity in Eastern Europe. The *Mediakritika* video guide was designed to learn Belarusians to indicate the language of hate and avoid it in everyday life.

Other

[More CSOs to have access to the state budget.](#) Until the end of 2016, the Belarus Parliament will consider the incorporation of the state social contracting in the law on prevention of the spread of diseases dangerous to public health. This means, that CSO services funded by the state can be expanded into new areas, namely, public health and social support of persons released from prison.

[Costs of protest.](#) [TUT.BY](#) issues a rating of activists according to the number and amount of fines discharged. All data is taken from open sources, media and human rights defenders. For 1,5 years, the total fines amounted to almost \$55,000; the list headed by Alieś Makajeŭ, a leader of entrepreneurs with a fine of \$9,700.

[Havary Praŭdu transforms into political party.](#) On 12 November, *Havary Praŭdu/Tell the Truth* movement gathered over 400 supporters in Minsk to sum up the results of its "strategy of peaceful changes" and adopt a strategy 2020. The forum decided to register the movement as a political party – they need 2 years and have at least 1,000 members for this process.

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