

Census of Belarusian-Speakers, Pressure on Freelancers – Belarus Civil Society Digest

A new initiative of Mova Nanova – Census of Belarusian-speaking Population aims to demonstrate that Belarusian-speaking people exist in all sphere of life all over the country.

Minsk Hub has launched a campaign promoting the facilitation of Schengen visa procedures. Now every Belarusian can sign the Free to Move e-petition.

Sviatlana Alexievich, the 2015 Nobel laureate, was awarded with “The Civil Leader of the Year”.

Civil society initiatives

[Mova Nanova has launched Census of Belarusian-Speaking Population](#). The idea of the campaign initiated by free lessons in Belarusian is to show that Belarusian-speaking people exist in all spheres of life and all over Belarus. The Mova Nanova web site contains a template that allows for everyone to post a photo, name, occupation and location. Launched on 18 January the viral campaign has already collected about 1,300 posters with distribution in social networks.□

[Minsk Hub has launched a campaign promoting the facilitation of Schengen visa procedures](#). Global Shapers Minks Hub, an initiative of the World Economic Forum, has started the Free to Move campaign which promotes facilitation of Schengen visa procedures. The Free to Move e-petition calls upon the

European Parliament and EU countries' Permanent Representatives to the EU with the request to endorse the Commission's legislative proposal.

[Civil Society champions 2015 were awarded in Minsk](#). On 15 January the Assembly of NGOs arranged the 7th Civil Society Champions Award Ceremony to estimate leaders and the most significant events of the last year in the third sector. An award "The Civil Leader of the Year" was given to Sviatlana Alexievich, the 2015 Nobel laureate; the Campaign of the Year was a solidarity campaign with the cadets of the Jastrambelskaja school; the Media/Journalist of the Year nomination took a blogger Anton Matolka.□

[Talaka.by sums up its results in figures](#). A non-profit platform [Talaka.by](#) has calculated its major achievements for 2015 in numbers. Among them, 50 trained consultants in project consulting; 8,165 participants involved in the contest #RazamMinsk; 126 projects placed at Talaka.by; 15 successful crowd funding campaigns; 136,752 unique visitors of the web site; 3.6 million contacts covered by the publications about Talaka.by, etc.

[A Belarusian attends the WEF Annual Meeting 2016](#). On 20-23 January Minsk Shapers Hub founder Denis Kolga attends the World Economic Forum Annual Meeting in Davos. Minsk Hub is among 50 Hubs of the Global Shapers Community honoured to be represented at the prestigious event. At the WEF the Belarusian presents an idea to set up in Belarus a long-lasting international platform, which would deal with resolution of conflicts which affect post-Soviet countries.

Education

[Call for sections for the 6th International Congress of Belarusian Studies](#). Organising committee announces call for sections for the 6th International Congress of Belarusian

Studies that will take place on 7-9 October 2016 in Kaunas, Lithuania. Sections (panels) can be disciplinary, thematic or focus on particular narrow problems. Application deadline is 15 March.

[Eastern European School of Political Studies \(EESPS\)](#) in cooperation with the Council of Europe announces a call for fellows. Belarusian citizens under 35 years old are invited to participate. The program includes three or four educational sessions, the first of which is scheduled in Ukraine, and the last – in Strasbourg (the World Forum for Democracy). Deadline for application is 16 February.

[Good Neighbour](#). The Office for European Expertise and Communications (OEEC) launches a new service under the Leadership in Local Communities program. The new program *Good Neighbour* will offer free consultations, mentorship assistance and thematic workshops in the field of community development to Leadership course participants and any interested activists across Belarus.

Interaction between state and civil society

[Student activist got expelled from the Belarusian State University](#). Hleb Vaikul is the participant of the student march of *Love and Solidarity* that took place in Minsk, on 2 December 2015. Later he was fined Br3.24 mln (around \$170) for violating the order of holding mass events and expelled from Philology Faculty on grounds of [alleged poor progress](#). According to the student, the real reason of his being withdrawn is his public activity.

[Authorities want to deprive Ales Bialiacki of place of residence](#). Ales Bialiacki, the head of the Human Rights centre *Viasna*, has received a ruling from the department of

enforcement of judgments that a part of his flat falls under arrest. According to the writ of execution, 18/100th share of Ales Bialiacki's flat, in which he lives permanently with his family, shall be arrested as part of the property to be confiscated, within his criminal case of 2011.

[Perspektiva was refused the premises for the forum](#). The Forum of Entrepreneurs is scheduled for 25 January but all attempts to find the venue in Minsk failed. Accordingly, Perspektiva NGO that organised the [previous forums](#) has released a statement, that declares that the Forum is thwarted by authorities, but Perspektiva is to continue to operate under the legal framework. The [statement](#) has been published on Facebook page of Perspektiva Head Anatoli Shumchanka, as the Perspektiva's [website isn't available](#).

[BAJ appeals to president's administration on persecution of freelancers](#). The Belarusian Association of Journalists sent a request to the president's administration with the view to clarifying the reasons for the renewed persecution against some journalists under article 22.9 (unlawful production and distribution of mass media products). To the moment, the total number of [cases](#) is 38; the total sum of the fines in 2015 amounted to 8,000 euro.

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Successful Crowdfunding, Protestants Allowed to Gather For Prayer – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Mova Nanova website has reached 100,000 views per month. First success of Belarusian crowdfunding at Talaka.by – animated Peppa Pig collects 164% of the needed amount. Stakeholders continue discussion on establishment of the National University for Belarus.

First Mahiliou city picnic gathers more than 1,000 people. Minsk authorities for the first time allow the Protestants to gather for a mass prayer. Regional volunteers collect and deliver aid assistance for the wounded in the conflict zone in Ukraine.

Civil Society Initiatives

[Mova Nanova website reaches 100,000 views per month.](#) The traffic of an updated website of Mova Nanova, free Belarusian language courses, has reached 100,000 views in a month. The most popular section is Mediateka, where one can find several thousands of Belarusian videos, audio materials and books. Mova Nanova/ Language Anew was founded in early 2014 and work in 10 Belarusian cities; weekly the courses are attended by 650 people.

[Discussion on establishing the National University goes on.](#) EuroBelarus Information Service continues a series of interviews with different stakeholders on the initiative of establishing the National University. In her interview Dr. Tatsiana Sshytsova, the EHU professor, reasons

whether Belarus needs such university and why: “Belarus strongly needs powerful constructive social initiatives. Retrograde Europe’s import is a mistake. Belarus is European to a degree it develops institutes in common-European context, reflexively identifying its experience in plural field of European cultures.”□

[First success of Belarusian crowdfunding at Talaka.by.](#) On 1 June the first successful crowdfunding campaign at Talakosht crowdfunding platform has finished. Project Peppa Peg that aimed at making a Belarusian language audio version of a known cartoon, has collected 61,85 million rubles (about \$4,300); that is 164% of the sum needed. For two months of the campaign, the project was financially supported by 135 people.

[First Mahiliou city picnic collects more than 1,000 people. Dranik Fest is next!](#) On 30 May the first ever city picnic was held in Mahiliou. The organisers – City Initiatives Centre – tried to make it as different as possible: people could play Frisbee, twister, chess laser tag. The aim of the picnic was to inspire Mahiliou residents on collaborative actions. Now the City Initiatives Centre has an ambition to hold the second **[Dranik Fest](#)** that last year got a very positive feedback.

[Regional Social Weekends identify winners.](#) On May 22, Vitsebsk hosted finals of a regional Social Weekend, which brought together social ideas and business to support them. The competition presented eight projects of various topics; Grand Prix went to the Paralympic Fencing project. On May 30, the finals for regional projects is to be held in **[Brest](#)**. The Social Weekend is organised by MaeSens charity platform together with the Office for European Expertise and Communications (OEEC).

[Humanitarian route Initiative Belarus-ATO helps Ukrainians in need.](#) Homel volunteers collect and deliver aid assistance for the wounded in the conflict zone in Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees. The money collected were enough to purchase a car

for the medical service. The key principle of the initiative is not to arm any of the parties, but to help people who are left without protection – the wounded, the bereaved families, refugees.

[Competition of public art objects at Brest](#). Agency of regional development *Dzedzich* opens a competition for creation of city installations and small architectural forms in Brest. The aim of the competition is forming of progressive cultural field in Brest and development steps in new forms of actual art. Everyone is welcome take part and make Brest more attractive.

Interaction between state and civil society

[Minsk authorities for the first time allowed the Protestants to gather for a collective prayer](#). The day before Saint Easter evangelic Christians gathered to pray in the walls of Chyzouka Arena Ice place. As organisers explained, the place was supposed by Minsk city council. The collective pray was attended by about 800 people and the Christians are perceived that first ever approved mass-pray (after several rejections) is caused by their community social work.

[Political prisoner Yury Rubtsou sentenced to two years in penal colony](#). On May 28, the Pružany District Court has sentenced a political prisoner Yury Rubtsou to two years of imprisonment in a minimum security penal colony on charges of evasion of serving his initial sentence. In the autumn of 2014, the Gomel activist Yury Rubtsou was sentenced to 1.5 years of special settlement on charges of insulting the judge. During the Charnobylski Shlyakh rally, Rubtsou was wearing a [T-shirt with the inscription](#) "Lukashenka, go away."

[Easier terms for setting up trade unions in Belarus](#). The procedure of setting up trade unions has been simplified in Belarus in accordance with ordinance No.4 signed by Alexander

Lukashenka on 2 June. The related amendments will create more favorable conditions for the operation of trade unions, enforcement and protection of social and labor rights and interests of employees.

[In 2015 Belarusian journalists fined for more than \\$5,000.](#)

Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) tracks a chart of fines to journalists for violating article 22.9 of the Administrative Code (unlawful production and distribution of mass media products). In 2015, the whole amount of fines is 85 million rubles, or about \$5,600.

Other

[Delegation of European Parliament announces a 2-day visit to Belarus in June.](#)

Delegation of European Parliament headed by the chief of delegation on Belarus Bogdan Zdrojewski will have a two-day visit to Minsk on 18-19 June. The delegation plans to meet families of political prisoners, opposition and civil leaders and Belarus officials.

[Top 30 websites in Belarus in April.](#) Marketing.by presents the top 30 resources that have the largest coverage in Belarus in April 2015. Now Bynet has 5 million followers. In April, the Belarusian portal [TUT.BY](#) beat [youtube.com](#) service and takes 5th place in the ranking. As before, the top 30 primarily consists of search services (Google.com – 1st place), social networks (Vkontakte – 2nd place), shopping sites, and entertainment services.

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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).

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events in Belarus. It often goes beyond the hot stories already available in English-language media.

Guardian Training in Minsk, Kastrychnitski Economic Forum, Open Data Community – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Over 50 companies offer discounts for students participating in the free language course Mova Nanova.

KEF conference 'The Global Context, Local decisions: the potential of the private sector in Belarus' will take place in Minsk. Belarusian state officials, independent economists and experts expected at the event.

All Minsk grassroots are being collected in a single google document. Open data community helps Belarusians benefit from publicly available data.

Education

[Students of Mova Nanova courses get discounts of 50 companies.](#)

Discounts from 5 to 25% are available upon presentation of a student card, which is delivered to all 600 students of *Mova Nanova* (Language in a New Way) free Belarusian language lessons in Minsk and other cities. Among the companies that joined the discount program are bookstores, cafes, photography, mobile accessories, trips, clothing and even visits of basketball games.

[Guardian's New East network journalist workshop in Minsk](#). On 29 October The Guardian's New East network, Belarus in Focus, and the Belarusian Association of Journalists will hold a half-day workshop for English-speaking journalists based in Belarus who write, or want to write, for international audiences. This workshop will look at how news and current affairs from Belarus are covered by English-language media organisations, and focus on ways that journalists in Belarus can expand and diversify this coverage for international audiences.

[Mova ci kava in Warsaw](#). *Mova ci kava*/Language or Coffee, free Belarusian language lessons expand its activity till Warsaw, Poland. The first class, led by Siarhiej Pieliasa, editor at independent TV channel Belsat and Taciana Niadbaj, a poet, took place on 13 October at cafe OSIR. Topic for the first lesson is 'Let's get to know each other'.

New initiatives

[All Minsk grassroots are being collected in a single table](#). It's an open, free, collaborative google-doc that could be supplemented by anyone who has information about Minsk civil society initiatives or organised communities. The idea to create such a document belongs to a well-known Russian urbanist, [Sviat Murunov](#) who attended Minsk with a workshop on urban communities about a year ago.

[The Open Data community in Minsk](#). Community Open Data collects numerous data from open sources and makes them visible and clear to take decisions on specific city issues – to control budget costs, improve infrastructure, monitor public security, etc. At the technical level, open data is a huge Excel- or CSV-files, that contain useful information but it must be extracted and analysed in order to be clear/accessible for ordinary citizens.

[Film Festival on problems of human trafficking](#). To the

European Anti-Trafficking Day, Gender Perspective NGO together with the Minsk cinema 'Victory' present a Film Festival of La Strada program, devoted to the problem of human trafficking. The movie screenings are held on 16-18 October; admission is free.

[Capacity Development Fair to help meeting CSOs and providers at the market](#). On 31 October the Third Fair of CSO Capacity Development that is to take place in Minsk. This year an annual popular event will become a true market where customers (CSOs) will have real money to buy services of the consultants. To provide CSOs of purchasing capacity, the Marketplace announces a Fair call for CSOs to get pre-approved vouchers and make deals with providers directly at the Fair. The [registration for the Fair to participate](#) is open until 20 October.

Conferences

[Public voting at the Social Weekend 4](#). Social Weekend 4 is a public contest of social ideas that are posted at the web site for public and expert voting and the best ones get support from local business. Among 160 ideas submitted this year, part of them are linked to local community development and designed by the fellows of the current round of [the Fellowship program](#) organised the Office of European Expertise and Communications (OEEC) and Pact.□

[KEF conference 'The Global Context, Local decisions: the potential of the private sector in Belarus'](#) will be held 5 November in Minsk. The Belarus' Minister of Economy, head of the World Bank in Belarus, and others are expected to attend the conference conducted under Kastychnitski Economic Forum (KEF). The KEF is a platform for open professional dialogue on sustainable development in Belarus in the context of the global economy. The conference is organised by IPM Research Centre in cooperation with BEROC and CASE Belarus with support of USAID/Pact and the Association of European

Businesses.

[Sector Analysis of Regional and Local Development study](#) is to be presented on 24 October in Minsk. The study was commissioned by the Office of European Expertise and Communications (OEEC). One of the study's conclusions concerns the CSOs that are not significant actors in the sector, however, their potential, the work implemented and the funds attracted allow to classify them as important agents of change at the territorial level. The presentation will start at 2:30 pm, at the *Viktoria* hotel.

Cultural events

[Festival of the Independent Belarusian Culture](#) took place on 6-10 October in Wroclaw, Poland. The festival was held for the sixth time and includes not only concerts and exhibitions, but also discussions on Belarusian politics and economy. Organiser of the festival is the fund 'For Your and Our Freedom'.

[Lyntupy invites for Festival](#). On 11 October at the border between Belarus and Lithuania, Lyntupy village hosted a Festival 'Dream of Blue Lakes'. The festival suggests its visitors an exhibition of homemade textiles, embroideries, works of arts and crafts, fair of local services, tasting of local food, master-class on contemporary street art, etc. The event is organised by Lyntupy's residents and vacationers with the support of the local administration.

Analytics

[Belarusian NGOs: Plenty of Leaders, but Who are the Authority?](#)

– The research of solidarity potential in the Belarusian civil society, conducted by the Centre for European Transformation (CET) and the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) at the beginning of the year, aimed at assessing and giving intentional interpretation of the social and political solidarity in the Belarusian civil society. All in all 150 organisations were selected as respondents. The research shows

that Belarusian third sector is a crowd of leaders no one of which has enough authority to set reference points and program of solidarity actions.

[Watchdog Function in the Perception of Belarusian NGOs. Needs Assessment of NGOs in Civil Monitoring](#) – The study was performed by the Centre for European Transformation (CET) and commissioned by Belarus Watch NGO in the summer of 2014. The research shows that the watchdog function is not typical of Belarusian NGOs. Not all organisations see a specific effect or do not really understand why they need civil monitoring, and respectively they do not plan to include this function in their activities.

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Mova Nanova for Kids, Age Friendly City Campaign, TechMinsk – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Now Mova Nanova invites Belarusian children for free Belarusian languages courses. Golden Age University announced an Age Friendly City campaign in Hrodna to improve the quality of life of older people.

Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies

(IISEPS) releases fresh data of a September national poll. It turns out that the Belarusians are ready for changes, but it is less associated with the opposition.

Belarus in the international focus

[EaP Media Freedom Watch: Belarus is again at the bottom.](#)

Georgia remains the leader of the Eastern Partnership Media Freedom Index for the first half of 2014. Azerbaijan and Belarus are at the end of the ranking. The EaP Media Freedom Index is compiled quarterly and calculated by summing up the points obtained by participant countries in four sections – Politics, Practise, Broadcasting and Internet and new media.

[Program to support grassroots in Belarus. Civic Belarus Czech](#)

[NGO](#) invites to cooperation and offers a program of long-term support for the groups of local activists. The mission of the program is not only the financial support of grassroots; the priority is capacity development of initiatives and improving the quality of their work. Applications are accepted until 17 November 2014.

Education

[Mova Nanova launches Belarusian courses for kids.](#)

Free Belarusian courses *Mova Nanova for Kids* started on 5 October at the Minsk Gallery Ÿ. Children of 4-7 years old (preschool age) are invited to participation. According to the organisers, the first class has about 100 small students enrolled. It appears that one more Belarusian courses *Mova ci Kava / Language or Coffee* also start a new season as soon as on 1 October they had [a casting of comperes.](#)

[TECHMINSK Fall Batch 2014.](#)

On 1-31 October TechMinsk, the first International Entrepreneurship School in Belarus, has started its work. TechMinsk prepares the next generation of global entrepreneurs and change makers from Eastern Europe and help them build rapid high growth companies and go global. A

5-week program is a combination of educational, mentoring and networking tools. 80% of all courses are taught in English.

Civil society activities

[Human rights activists announce week against the death penalty in Belarus](#). Various human rights activities will be held from on 5-10 October under the slogan 'The death Penalty is Murder'. The events will be attended by honorary foreign visitors, ambassadors, famous creative people, relatives of executed convicts shot and sentenced to death, advocates and activists of the abolitionist movement in Belarus. The Human Rights Centre 'Viasna' invites everyone to join the activities of the Week.

[Age Friendly City Campaign to be developed in Hrodna](#). On 1 October on the International Day of Older Persons, at a media breakfast, Hrodna Golden Age University announced the start of developing an Age Friendly City campaign in Hrodna. The campaign's goal is to engage representatives of public, government, academic and profit organisations in the development of specific actions aimed at improving the quality of life of older people and using their potential for the benefit of society. The organisers also presented for journalists the latest results of [the Global AgeWatch Index 2014](#).

Analysis

[Voice of the People is for the People](#) – Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) releases fresh data of a September national poll. According to the survey, the Belarusians are ready for changes, but it is less associated with the opposition. Namely, 17.5% of the respondents consider themselves involved in civil activities, almost 40% participated in various charity events, and 18% signed a petition. The level of trust to the president continues to rise: 45.9% in March, 49.6% in June, and 53.5% in

September.

[Presentation of a research on a potential for solidarity in Belarusian civil society](#) is to take place on 7 October in the Minsk business club IMAGURU. The research was conducted by the Centre for European Transformation (CET) and Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) and notes a decrease in the ability of citizens for joint effective political and social action, despite the growing number of petitions, public statements, and collecting signatures.

[Belarus' Public Sector: Values, Expectations and Perceptions of Reforms](#) – Belarus in Focus Information Office (aka SBI0, Solidarity with Belarus) releases its policy paper – a comprehensive overview of Belarusian public sector employees held in Minsk and regions in 2014. The differences in values, attitudes to life, risk tolerance and attitude towards labour mobility of the public sector employees revealed in the study were among its main results. These differences depend on the size of the community in which the public sector employees live, and on their age.

Interaction between state and civil society

[Zmicier Vajciushkevich officially excluded from the 'black list'](#). The musician is preparing for his first legal solo concert after a three-year break. Minsk city executive committee issued a certificate for Zmicier Vajciushkevich's concert, which is planned on 29 October in Minsk. [Black list](#) appeared in 2011 and includes well-known musicians, writers, actors from Belarus, Russia, Europe and Hollywood who anyway protest against repression after the presidential elections of 2010.

[Human rights defender Alena Tankachova may be stripped of her residence permit](#). Alena Tankachova, leader of the Minsk-based Centre for Legal Transformation, also known as *Lawtrend*, told that Belarusian authorities were seeking to annul her

residence permit. Although she is a citizen of Russia, she has lived in Belarus for nearly 30 years and is not going to leave.

[Supreme Court upholds registration denial to human rights NGO.](#)

The Supreme Court on 30 September upheld the legality of the position of the Ministry of Justice, which refused to register the national human rights NGO 'Movement for the implementation of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights' (Pact/Covenant).

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ePramova, Mova Nanova, Local Elections Observation – Belarus Civil Society Digest

A new online platform ePramova invites Belarusians to discuss public issues with politicians and civil society activists. Its users can ask any question and watch videos of politicians answering them on the website.

How do Belarusian experts view the situation in Ukraine? International Consortium EuroBelarus and the Belarusian National Platform organised a roundtable in Minsk 'Ukraine Today: What We Can and Should Do in the Current Situation?'

A new web site Nazirannie2014.spring96.org aims to

get Belarusians who are interested in election observation involved.

Campaigns and projects

[New discussion platform ePramova launched](#). The European Humanities University announces its participation in the launch of a new online platform called ePramova. ePramova is designed to encourage Belarusian citizens to become more actively involved in raising and discussing public issues that are important to them. The [ePramova platform allows users](#) to pose questions to political parties, political leaders and civic organisations that will in turn be answered. Filmed responses from respondents can be uploaded online.

[Mova Nanova goes to regions](#). On 10 March free Belarusian language courses *Mova Nanova/ Language in a New Way* were held in Gomel and attended by about 30 people. On 14 March *Mova Nanova* launched its courses in Hrodna. Earlier the civil initiative opened a branch [in Babrujsk](#). The organisers are extending the concept of non-academic study of the Belarusian language through interactive teaching methods outside of Minsk, where classes are very popular and attended by 200-300 people weekly.

[Human rights defenders launch an interactive web resource for election observers](#). Nazirannie2014.spring96.org site not only includes detailed instructions on how to become an observer and to behave properly at a polling station, but also includes unusual stories that have happened to observers during previous election observations. The new interactive platform of the campaign "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections" is aimed at involving Belarusians who are interested in assisting in election observations.

[Interactive platform Electby.org renewed its work](#). The platform of civic monitoring Electby.org allows anyone to document on an interactive map any violations recorded during

the 2014 local election campaigns – campaign oddities, the pressure on democratic candidates and activists, manipulation of ballots, etc. One can submit evidence and add his/her "pinpoint" on the map through the web site or by e-mail, Twitter and SMS.

Seminars and discussions

[**Seminar on CSOs' financial stability**](#). On 29 March in Minsk, ICNL together with the Centre for Legal Transformation and the Assembly of Democratic NGOs will hold a seminar *Financial Stability of CSOs: International Experience and Perspective for Belarus*. The event seeks to present Belarusian and international legal expertise on how to ensure the financial stability of CSOs, as well as to discuss practical issues of fundraising within the country and abroad. The seminar is open to all interested CSOs.

[**Budzma's spring discussions**](#). The cultural campaign *Budzma!* invites people to a series of spring offline talk shows dedicated to the discussion of the interaction of culture and society. Every week the Minsk creative space THEKH will gather experts, researchers and celebrities to discuss the culture of 'being actual' (on 18 March), the culture of philanthropy (on 26 March), the culture of partnerships (on 1 April), etc.

[**Research on visa regime intermediaries in Belarus**](#). On 13 March Minsk hosted a roundtable *Visa Mediation in Belarus: How to Reduce the Costs of Schengen Visas for Belarusians*. The BISS analyst Andriej Jelisejeu and the independent expert Julija Muryhyna presented the preliminary findings of their research *Some Aspects of Visa Regime Intermediaries in Belarus*. In their presentation the experts raised the issues on the visa mediation regulations of the EU according to its legislation and establishing the practise of mediation in Belarus.

[Social Entrepreneur course from Talaka.by](#). Beginning 18 March, an innovative training course *Social Entrepreneur* has opened its course for registration. The course is being organised by the Talaka.by initiative and is guided at providing a comprehensive course of training for social entrepreneurs who will be able to implement social projects in the future in Belarus. Twenty of the best students will be given an opportunity to present their projects to potential investors. At the moment 190 people have already signed up to participate.

[Euromaidan from Belarusian perspective](#). A roundtable entitled 'Ukraine Today: What We Can and Should Do in the Current Situation?' was held on 14 March in Minsk. The discussion was organised by the International Consortium EuroBelarus and the Belarusian National Platform. The participants suggested creating a position of a special rapporteur within the National Platform to monitor the situation in Ukraine and offer a quick response, should it prove to be necessary.

[BAJ Statement on violence against journalists in Crimea](#). On 12 March the Board of the Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) adopted a statement which claims that a situation when journalists are prevented from performing professional duties is impermissible. BAJ calls on all people and organisations involved in the conflict to put an end to the violence and to ensure normal conditions for journalists work.

'Green' events

[Protecting nature in an urban environment](#). Is the title of a new project launched by the Brest regional branch of APB BirdLife Belarus. The project aims to preserve bio-diversity in Brest, improving residents' understanding of ecology and environmental protection, the introduction of interactive methods for Brest schools and institutions. The project is creating a unique complex interactive training program of environmental education in an urban environment.

[Online monitoring of biodiversity](#). APB-BirdLife Belarus NGO launched an online database for monitoring areas important to bio-diversity conservation, namely, areas important for birds. Now anyone can view the data collected and use it both for professional purposes and general guidance. Any user can contribute to the map and thus help to collect information on areas important for birds, monitor their condition, as well as join in to help solve any potential threats against them.

[School of Environmental Activism](#) announces a call for fellows for 2014. The mission of the School of Environmental Activism is to develop ecological thinking and expand the "green" movement in Belarus through a series of trainings. Organised by the Green Alliance, an annual school provides practical skills and offers its fellows the chance to design and implement eco-projects or have internships in other Belarusian CSOs. Deadline for applications is 29 March.

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.