

Human Rights Award 2017, information security, Women and Elections – Belarus civil society digest

Documentary Film Festival on Human Rights Watch Docs goes to Minsk cinemas. Good Neighbor master class tells how to make a playground. MAKEOUT announce a contest for anti-discrimination stickers. Human rights community delivers its award.

Blakit online project visualises data on public procurement. SYMPA invites to masterclasses on effective local governance by a Polish mayor in Brest and Minsk. Journalistic conference in Minsk: pressure on freelance journalists in Belarus is unprecedented. The first KEF School of Economics is open for students of regional universities.

Onliner and Talaka announce a competition for projects to make life in Belarus better. Teplitsa School of Urban Initiatives opens enrollment for its third season in Mahilioŭ. PraRovar Forum takes place in Minsk to discuss cycling development in Belarus.

This and more in the new edition of Belarus civil society digest.

Human rights

[Documentary Film Festival on Human Rights Watch Docs Belarus](#) will be held in Minsk, on 14-17 December. The festival is held in Belarus for the third time, and for the first time, it comes to one of the Minsk central cinemas. The festival is initiated by *Zviano* CSO and gathers support via crowdfunding. The festival aims to draw attention to the most actual events

and create a space for discussion. Admission is free.

[National Human Rights Award 2017](#). On 8 December, in Minsk, the 9th National Award of the Belarusian human rights defenders was delivered in three nominations. Human rights defender of the year became the head of the Belarusian Documentation Centre Raisa Michajloŭskaja, Journalist of the year – journalist Radio Liberty Halina Abakunčyk, and Campaign of the year – campaign to assist to repressed By_Help.

[Contest of anti-discrimination stickers](#) is announced by MAKEOUT project. The contest raises the topic of gender-neutral toilets and experience of gender-non-binary and transgender people. The best stickers will be printed and available to stick in the cultural spaces of cities, like toilet doors with traditional “Male” and “Female” to make visible Other experience.

Media

[Presentation of the report on information security of Belarus](#). On 14 December, in Press Club, Research Centre EAST will present the results of the study *Information Security in Belarus: How Serious the Issue And What To Do?* The researchers analysed the Belarusian media landscape to assess the availability of disinformation sources, calculated vulnerability and resistance indices related to foreign information attacks, and prepared recommendations.



Conference “Prospects and Challenges for Freelance Journalism in Europe. A special focus on Belarus” in Minsk. Photo: baj.by

[Prospects and Challenges for Freelance Journalism in Europe Conference](#) took place in Minsk. The conference organised by Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) and International Federation of Journalists (IFJ) highlighted that the pressure on freelance journalists in Belarus is unprecedented. Thus, in 2017, freelance journalists in Belarus suffered interference from the authorities over 180 times. The conference adopted a [Resolution](#).

Governance

[Blakit visualises data on public procurement](#). The new online platform will allow journalists and stakeholders to analyse what state companies are buying and to inform representatives of civil society about suspicious transactions. Thus, the project will help accelerate the reform of public procurement

in Belarus. *The Blakit* project team plans to release the project by the end of 2017.

[Women and Elections gender conference](#) was held in Minsk. The event presented a study on the participation of women in democratic politics in Belarus. The 12 parties and political organisations participated in the poll and noted that the activity of Belarusian women increased in three circumstances: due to the economic crisis, the shock after the events of 2010 and the spring protests of 2017.

[How to make an effective local government](#). On 2 and 3 December, the SYMPA Research Centre for Public Management and *Budźma!* campaign invite to master classes on effective local self-government with Krzysztof Zacharzewski, a philosopher, civic activist, and the current mayor of Złocieniec town in Poland. The speaker will talk about the citizens' participation in decision-making processes, tools to improve the transparency of government etc.

[Study: Self-regulation of Business in Belarus](#). On 29 November, the Liberal Club invites to the presentation of its fresh study on the prospects of business self-regulation on the example of advertising activities. The presentation and the subsequent discussion will raise a point whether business, the state, and consumers are actually ready for self-regulation.

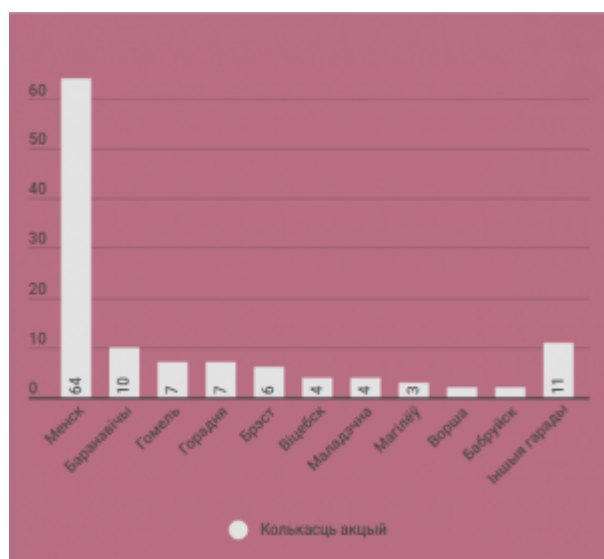
Local and urban activism

[Good Neighbor: how to make a playground and find resources for it](#). On 18 December, in Minsk, the Office for European Expertise and Communications invites to a master class, where activists will share their experience on establishing playgrounds in their yards, as well as architects and engineers will present new creative ideas.

[Teplitsa School of Urban Initiatives invites for the third](#)

[season](#). The *Teplitsa/Greenhouse* School in Mahilioŭ includes a series of meetings and lectures that will help the participants to become more proactive and active in improving life in the city. Based on the results of the training, students develop and implement urban projects. The School is traditionally organised by the Mahilioŭ-based Urban Initiatives Centre.

[PraRovar Forum](#) takes place on 24-26 November, in Minsk. *PraRovar/ Pro-Bike* Forum is dedicated to the development of cycling at the city and national levels and aims to acquaint Belarusian cyclist activists from different cities and synchronise their activities for the development of urban cycling in Belarus. The event is held within the framework of the EU-supported project *Urban Cycling in Belarus*.



[Rating of Belarus' protest cities for the recent two years](#) is composed by Sxod.by site. Minsk heads the list – in 2016-2017, Belarus observed 124 street protests and 64 of them run in the Belarusian capital. The 2nd place is taken by Baranavičy city, Brest region, with 10 protest actions.

[#Paskarenne national interactive competition of projects](#) is launched by Onliner.by together with [Talaka.by](#) non-profit platform. #Paskarenne/ #Acceleration competition aims to support any Belarusian projects – from social and urban to entrepreneurial and technological. The prize fund is \$2K. The projects' development will be covered in the format of a reality show. The winner will be announced in February 2018.

Other

[School of Economics KEF 2018](#). The first round of the KEF School of Economics is open for students of regional universities. The School aims to improve the knowledge of students on economics and create regional communities of students interested in economics. The school is organised by the Centre for Economic Research BEROC and the IPM Research Centre. The deadline is 5 January 2018.

[Overview of CSOs dealing with children and young people with disabilities](#) is presented in an analytical report of the ENCON project – Enhancing CSOs Contribution to Evidence-Based Policy Making for Vulnerable Groups. The project is implemented by CASE Belarus in concert with the ACT NGO and international partners.

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.

Realists winning, Russian factor poll, Belarusisation increased – digest of Belarusian analytics

Only 5% of Belarusians want Belarus to become a part of Russia according to the fresh polling data by the Belarusian

Analytical Workshop.

Chris Miller sees Moscow's plans to make Belarus a cornerstone of its Eurasian integration project as unsuccessful.

Grigory Ioffe argues that realists winning the tug of war with idealists, both in the Belarusian government and in the opposition.

The opposition is split on street protests tactics. Belarusization has not ended and even increased, argues Alieh Trusaŭ.

This and more in the new edition of digest of Belarusian analytics.

Belarus-Russia relations and Eurasian integration

[Belarus: Sitting on Two Chairs Is What the Doctor Ordered](#) – Grigory Ioffe considers Belarus' sitting-on-two-chairs foreign policy. The expert believes that there is no mischief, just a genuine desire to sustain itself as an independent state in a problematic neighbourhood known as the historical 'bloodlands'.

[Realists Winning Tug of War Over Belarus](#) – Grigory Ioffe observes the ascending realism in Belarus in the growing understanding domestically that a) so-called Eurasian integration is no universal master key, but rejecting it altogether is harmful and unrealistic; and b) improving relations with both the EU and the US is vital because the sources of technological progress and healthy economic strategies are in the West.

[Only 5% of Belarusians want Belarus to become a part of](#)

[Russia](#). However, the Russian factor of impact on Belarus remains: 63% of the Belarusians positively assess the annexation of Crimea; the influence of Russian media on residents of Belarus is 60%. The fresh polling data by the Belarusian Analytical Workshop were announced at the round table, organised by the [Minsk Dialogue](#) expert initiative.

[Belarus and the Failure of the Russian World](#) – Chris Miller sees Moscow's plans to make Belarus a cornerstone of its Eurasian integration project as unsuccessful. Given its culture, history, and economy, no country is a more natural member of the 'Russian world' than Belarus. But over the past two years, no country has done more to demonstrate the weakness of Russian efforts to reestablish hegemony in the post-Soviet space.

Spring 2017 mass protests

[The Opposition Is Arguing About Street Tactics](#) – Naviny.by analyses two current tactics of street activities of the Belarusian opposition – sanctioned and unauthorised actions – and concludes: in fact, there is no single solution. If, as a result of proper use of a particular political situation, the action turns out to be really mass, then, regardless of its status, it would become an important event on the political scene.

[Situation in the Field of National Security and Defence of Belarus. March 2017](#) – According to the monthly Belarus Security Blog, the most important event in March was a wave of repression by the authorities, which was characterised by extreme



chaos. The Belarusian leader managed to choose the worst from all bad decisions in the field of domestic policy. It jeopardised the prospects for Belarus' relations with the West.

[How Belarusians will rhyme 'Lukashenka, go away!' Next Time?](#) –

Naviny.by discuss the situation when Belarus authorities have managed to decrease a wave of street protests, but they do not have a program to make the population's life normal. Moreover, now the government itself, with its unsuccessful absurd decisions becomes 'the main factor of destabilisation.'

Other

[Belarusian Courts Don't Speak In Belarusian On the Internet](#) –

Legal Transformation Centre *Lawtrend* releases a study, which highlights the current judiciary state and problems of communication of activities on its websites and outlines the possible ways to improve the situation. The researchers hope that the Supreme Court, that is to become a common portal for the entire judicial system, will take into account the study's recommendations.

[Freedom Of Association And Legal Conditions For Non-Commercial Organisations in Belarus in 2016](#) –

Legal Transformation Centre and Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs release an annual review which highlights the most important trends and developments related to the public associations and other forms of civil society in Belarus in 2016. Namely, the authors notice a trend of switching of CSOs to fundraise money inside the country.

[Popular Myths About the Belarusian Economy](#) –

Grigory Ioffe analyses some common stereotypes of the Belarusian economy. For example, it is true that Belarusian state-run enterprises produce a larger fraction of the country's gross domestic product compared to its post-Soviet neighbours. However, Belarus significantly outperforms Russia and Ukraine on social

indicators such as morbidity, mortality and social infrastructure.

[Belarusisation Has Not Ended and Even Increased](#) – [Alieh Trusaŭ](#), Chairperson of the Society of Belarusian language believes that dispersal of Belarusian protests in February and March did not affect Belarusisation – on the contrary, it started to grow: a Belarusian-language band presented the country at the Eurovision Song Contest, the number of hours in the Belarusian in school increased etc.

Belarus policy

[Public procurement from a single source in Belarus: analysis and recommendations](#) The paper explores legal regulation of procurement from one source and procedures for their conduct, official statistics on public procurement..

[Public procurement from a single source in Belarus: analysis and recommendations.](#) The paper explores legal regulation of procurement from one source and procedures for their conduct, official statistics on public procurement, official information on procurement from a single source and public discussion of the issue. Since procurement from one source is one of the procedures of public procurement, the scope of this research includes legal regulation common for all procedures.

During the analysis of the data the authors also focused on the interrelation of procurement issues from one source with other issues of legal regulation, including antitrust regulation, protection and development of market competition, antidumping policy during tenders and other.

[Monetary policy and financial stability in Belarus: current state, challenges and prospects.](#) This work is devoted to the current state of monetary policy and banking sector of Belarus. The paper shows that in the 4th quarter of 2016 – 1

quarter of 2017 significant changes in the monetary environment took place, the most important of which is the convergence of inflation expectations with actual inflation. Along with this favourable trend, a number of problems of the banking sector continue growing and threatening financial stability. Among them are bad debts and a systemic excess of liquidity in the banking system.

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