

Third Sector Expanding Despite Difficulties – Belarus Civil Society Digest

CSO Sustainability Index for Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia. The U.S. Agency for International Development CSO Sustainability Index to measure the progress of civil society organisations (CSOs) in the Central and Eastern Europe and Eurasia region. [The report on Belarus](#) suggests that despite the difficult environment in which it operates after the December 2011 presidential elections, the third sector is expanding its capacities. CSOs generate analytical products for use both within the sector, internationally, and in some cases even by the government.

The Belarusian Role Model. [Youth magazine 34mag](#) composed the portrait of an ideal Belarusian. The "researchers" found 50 ideal features relying on their own ideas. In particular, an ideal Belarusian is free, not nagging, speaks good Belarusian, knows the history of Belarus, open minded, ignores state propaganda, travels a lot and has a multiple entry Schengen visa.

Civil Initiatives

Platforma presented the monitoring report. On June 21, CSO "Platforma" held a press conference devoted to the completion of monitoring of Belarusian prisons. The results were presented in the "[Monitoring report on the issues of prison conditions in the prisons of Belarus.](#)" The report highlights that the major reason of the penitentiary system of Belarus is its absolute secrecy for civil society and human rights that provides the possibility of uncontrolled actions for prison staff.

Corporate volunteering in Belarus. On July 5, in the Minsk hotel "Europe", roundtable "Corporate volunteering in Belarus" will present [the survey conducted by the Center for European Studies](#). The survey identifies trends and incentives for the development of corporate volunteering in the country.

Internet against drugs. The initiative "[Antimak](#)" has proposed to the Minsk police department to more actively use the Internet to combat the spread of poppy seeds which contain opium. Activists believe that the dissemination of the proper information through the Internet and media, including the police online resources, will enhance the atmosphere of intolerance for drugs and drug retailers.

Press conference on parking issues. On June 19, a press conference "[Addressing the issues of parking on market principles](#)" took place in Minsk. The event was organized by the Center for Environmental Solutions, Fund "Ecological Transport" and Minsk Cycling Community. The press conference presented a Program aimed at addressing the shortage of parking places in Minsk and based on three points: the zonal charge for parking, the formation of a new structure of parking services and the owner's responsibility for car parking.

Elections

Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections campaign. The human rights defenders have launched [a nation-wide election observation campaign](#) ahead of the September parliamentary election at a press-conference held in Viasna's office on June 21. The Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections campaign is going to involve some 400 observers in 106 constituencies.

Electby started countdown. [The interactive platform of monitoring](#) elections has resumed its work before the parliamentary elections in Belarus, scheduled for September 2012. It is an open platform where anybody can share their

experience and observations of the election campaign. Electby.org is powered by the platform Ushahidi (which means "evidence" in Swahili). It was created by a group of enthusiasts in 2010, before the presidential elections.

Civic Campaign "Nash Dom" (Our House) has launched [the project to the parliamentary elections](#). The activists plan to continue their campaign 'Deputies – to the Answer!' that gathers and publishes information on all candidates, regardless of their political orientation.

Summer schools

Dzedzich invites to summer camp "Zalessie 2012." Brest NGO "Dzedzich" invites young people from all regions to participate in [the volunteer camp](#), which will be held in the village Zalessie (Kamenets district, Brest region) on July 23-29. The volunteers will help in the reconstruction works of the house which will become a community center for young people. The camp will also provide cultural entertainment for the volunteers.

Volunteer historic camps 2012. [Belarusian Committee of ICOMOS](#) (International Council on Monuments and Sites) posted on its website a list of volunteer camps in 2012. The proposal is designed for amateurs of historical heritage, who are willing to spend the summer arranging the archaeological sites in the territory of Belarus. The list also contains the camps, held by NGOs – "Historyka", UNESCO, etc.

Summer School for experts and analysts. Analytical Center "Strategy" and the Research Centre "Mises" invite to their traditional [Summer School](#) for experts and opinion-makers from Belarus and other countries. The topic of this year is "Property and Justice. Belarus and the world at the threshold of the third industrial revolution." The School will be held on July 27-31 in Belarus.

Awards and Contests

“Belarus in Focus”. On June 20, the presentation of the book [“Belarus in Focus: through the eyes of foreign journalists”](#) took place in PEN-Center in Minsk. The book is a compilation of articles from an international competition for professional and citizen journalists writing about Belarus, held by Solidarity with Belarus Information Office in cooperation with Press Club Polska in 2011.

Essay contest. "Liberal Club" together with the CASE Belarus announces an essay contest "[How to conduct market reform in Belarus: economic theory, the experience of foreign countries and the Belarusian specifics.](#)" The aim of the competition is to form a community of professionals in the field of market reforms. Two winners will pass a week-long internship in the Warsaw-based CASE office.

Award "For Freedom of Thought". On June 19, [the traditional awarding ceremony](#) "For Freedom of Thought" name of Vasil Bykau took place at Bykau's homeland, in the village Bychki, Vitebsk oblast. This year bronze statuettes went to local historian Alexander Belokoz and rock musician Lyavon Volsky. The award was established by the leader of the Movement "For Freedom" Alyaksandr Milinkevich in 2008.

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.