

Top 10 Belarus Civil Society Achievements in 2013

Top 10 activities and achievements, which in enriched Belarusian civil society in 2013.

Advocacy of the Year: [Perspectiva NGO](#)

Perspectiva, a small vendors association headed by Anatoly Shumchanka managed to postpone, until 1 July 2014, a complex procedure of certification to confirm the quality and safety of products in accordance with Customs Union regulation. Its advocacy efforts included series of appeals, [meetings with officials](#) as well as [mass strikes](#) due to which the voice of 230,000 small entrepreneurs was heard by the authorities.

“Belarusization” of the Year: [Mova ci Kava](#) courses

Organised at the beginning of 2013 by journalist Katerina Kibalchich first in Moscow, then picked up in Minsk, free educational courses *Mova ci Kava (Language or Coffee)* caused a real stir among Minsk residents. Weekly classes designed for people who want to improve their Belarusian language are attended by [up to 120 students](#). The courses are conducted in an informal manner and are bolstered by inviting well-known Belarusian cultural figures.

Research of the Year: BEROC and CASE Belarus

Two researches are nominated in this category with [Growth Factors of the Economy of Belarus](#) by BEROC and [The influence of Migrants' Money Transfers on Macroeconomic Indicators of Belarus](#) by CASE Belarus winning for their respective analytical reports. The primary reasons for both organisations being awarded the title are their proven methodology, concrete recommendations and communication/outreach efforts to policy-

makers and the general public. They collected respectively [128 thousands viewers/474 comments](#) and [193 thousands viewers/346 comments](#) on TUT.by.

Environmental Save of the Year: [In Defense of Belarusian wetlands campaign](#)

Implemented by a number of environmental CSOs, the campaign managed to stop peat mining in protected areas and save four wetlands. Using [a wide range of tools](#) (information campaign, support of other CSOs and unaffiliated people, creative actions, etc.), the campaign got support even from institutions and people far from environmental issues.

Local Fundraising of the Year: [MaeSens project](#)

For the second time in a row Pact sees the MaeSens project as a successful local fundraising initiative. There are two main reasons for this selection: i) reportedly about \$250 thousand of private donations were collected for charity; ii) a new initiative [Social Weekend](#) was introduced this year giving average people a voice to select and vote for the best grassroots initiatives out there. Under Social Weekend more than 100 grassroots initiatives were competing for local sponsors' support based on people's choice and a public benefit criteria.

Grassroots of the Year: [European Perspective NGO](#)

The European Perspective NGO gave a voice to people who opposed government-backed construction projects in Minsk that affect over 200,000 people. Seven local advocacy campaigns resulted in citizens' self-organising into groups of interest who are able to act independently, protecting their properties' from construction work and articulating their interests via a series of self-initiated public hearings. President Lukashenka [reacted with a recommendation](#) for authorities to conduct a more balanced urban policy.

Innovation of the Year: [Kosht Urada](#)

Kosht Urada (Cost of the State) an interactive on-line resource was launched on December 10, 2013 by the Belarusian Institute of Public Administration Reform and Transformation ([BIPART](#)). Kosht Urada serves to every citizen promoting accountability of the government and transparency of state spending as well as educating general public on how state budget is formed, how much taxes citizen spend on the state and where citizen's taxes go. In the first day of operating Kosht Urada was visited by more than 8000 visitors also the project received considerable media coverage ([here](#), [here](#) and [here](#)).

Art Project of the Year: [Must Act – Must Art street art project](#)

Paid for by local business and coordinated with the Budzma campaign and city administrations, street art community SIGNAL gathered street artists who painted the walls and courtyards in [Mogilev](#) and [Gomel](#). Thus, the project visually and brightly promotes civic practises aimed at creating a friendly and humane urban environment.

New Forum of the Year: [Kastrychnitski Ekanamichny Forum – KEF](#)

On November 5 Kastrychnitski Ekanamichny Forum (October Economic Forum) was launched by a consortium of leading Belarusian economic research institutions, including the IPM Research Center, BEROC and CASE Belarus, with an inauguration conference entitled *New Opportunities or Old Challenges? Scenarios for Belarus Economy*. KEF is designed as a new platform for an open professional dialogue on sustainable development in Belarus in the context of the newest development of global economy.

And last but not least...

For something completely different of the Year

With Presidential elections coming up in 2015, the trophy for something completely different goes to the Green Party of Belarus, which suggested in October that [an octopus should pick a single candidate](#) from the opposition. The prospective candidates should all take a short swim in a small pool with an octopus, and whoever the octopus touches wins the primaries.

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.