

DIGEST OF STUDIES

MADE BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS



Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus
Institute of Political Studies “Political Sphere”

DIGEST OF STUDIES MADE BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS 2018-2019

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Contents

Civil society, civil activism

CSO Meter. Assessing the Civil Society Legal Environment	4
The Belarusian Civil Society: Dynamics of Change in an Unfriendly Environment (2015-2017)	8
Civic Associations and Initiatives: Potential for Engagement	13
Interaction of Civil Society and the State at the National and Local Levels	18
National Public Opinion Poll about Civic Literacy and Activism in Belarus	24
Legal Aspects of NPO Fundraising by Electronic Means in Belarus	28
History, Conditions and Practices of Volunteer Development: Prospects for Belarus	33
Education Trends and Perspectives for Media in the Context of Current Challenges and Requests	36
Online Activism and Digital Rights	40

Public policy, state governance

Reform of the Research & Development sector of Belarus: Challenges and Possible Solutions	43
Gender analysis in the System of Local Government and Self-Government	47
Analysis of Collective E-Petitions of Citizens: Human Rights Aspect	53
Development of Legislation and Practice of Implementation of State Social Procurement in Belarus	57

Human rights, fight against discrimination

Stigmatization of People from Vulnerable Populations by NGO and Mass Media Stuff	60
Hate Speech Monitoring in Belarusian Mass Media	64
How Was the LGBTQ Covered in Belarusian Media in 2019?	67
Accessibility monitoring of the Second European Games in Minsk, June 21-30, 2019	70
Homeless People and the Right to Housing in Belarus	78
Measuring the Belarusian Tolerance Level Towards State Violence	82
Access to Environmental Information: Issues of Implementation and Protection of Rights	86
Freedom of Peaceful Assembly in Belarus as an Influential Factor in the Activities of Civil Society	89
Control Over Lawyers in Belarus - a Threat to Human Rights	92

DIGEST OF STUDIES MADE BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS 2018-2019

Dear readers!

You are holding in your hands the pilot issue of the “Digest of Studies Performed by Civil Society Organizations”, prepared by the Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs and the Institute of Political Studies “Political Sphere”.

When preparing the publication, we placed two main objectives before ourselves: to demonstrate high expert potential of civil society organizations in spheres of their activity and to spread the results of the studies implemented by non-commercial organizations in 2018-2019.

The publication will be useful to representatives of state bodies, bodies of local governance and self-governance, expert councils of state bodies, representatives of international and foreign organizations that specialize on working with Belarus, and to Belarusian organizations of civil society themselves.

In all, 22 studies that were implemented by Belarusian non-commercial organizations in the spheres of legislation, human rights, journalism, politics, ecology and sociology were included in the digest. Some of these studies were presented at the “Civil society studies” section as part of the VIII Congress of Belarusian studies (September 27-29, 2019, Vilnius), others were selected by the Assembly of the NGOs due to the monitoring.

Each study is represented as a resume and main conclusions, from which you can learn about study organizers, its authors, goals, methods and year of the study, keywords, as well as contacts and a link to the full text.

To increase information dissemination efficiency among international and foreign organizations, an English version of the publication was also translated and published.

We wish to thank the International organization Pact, Baltic Internet Policy Institute, Office for European Expertise and Communication, Center for European Transformation, Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend), NGO “Lev Sapieha Foundation”, Center of public administration research «SYMPA», Public campaign “People first”, Human Rights Protection Initiative “Journalists for Tolerance”, Belarusian National Youth Council “RADA”, Johannes Rau International Centre for Education and Exchange in Minsk (IBB Minsk), Human Rights Center «Viasna», Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Human Constanta, Office for the Rights of Peoples with Disability, RPA “Legal Initiative”, PA “EcoHome”, International Educational NGO “ACT” and their partners for carrying out the studies and participating in the preparation of the digest. We wish to thank the Institute of Political Studies “Politics Sphere” separately for their work on preparing the digest text and on preparing it for publication.

Best regards,

Executive Bureau of Assembly of NGOs of Belarus

CSO Meter.

Assessing the Civil Society Legal Environment

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	human rights, civil society
Keywords:	freedom of association, non-governmental organization funding, freedom of speech, freedom of peaceful gatherings
Organization:	<p>Assembly of NGOs of Belarus — largest association of non-commercial organizations and initiatives in Belarus. Assembly of NGOs, through its activities, helps development of the civil sector and improvement of the state of freedom of association in Belarus. The organization was founded in 1997.</p> <p>Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend) — non-commercial organization, the goal of which is increasing the legal culture, organization of educational, analytical and research activity in legal sphere.</p>
Contacts:	http://www.belngo.info , ngo@belngo.info http://www.lawtrend.org , infolawtrend@gmail.com
Link to the publication:	Please click here (English version) Please click here (Belarusian version) Please click here (Russian version)
Authors and partners:	<p>Olga Smolianko, Director, Legal Transformation Center Lawtrend</p> <p>Yury Chavusau, Legal advisor, Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus</p>

Aims

At the moment, the situation in Belarus is relatively favorable for the promotion of legal reforms and the improvement of the conditions of activity of civil society organizations (CSOs). The aim of the study is to support and promote the development of these positive trends through the creation of a comprehensive map of legal reforms that affect the activities of CSOs.

CSO Meter aims to become not only a means of measuring the gradual changes in the environment of civil society in Belarus, but also a new and powerful means of consolidating the efforts of Belarusian CSOs in the field of advocacy of common interests and reforms.

Methods and Techniques

The study is part of a regional review of the legal environment and practice of civil society organizations in the six Eastern Partnership countries in 2017–2019.

The CSO Meter was developed as part of a consultation and cooperation process supported by the European Center for Not-for-Profit Law. The methodology was prepared by a team of local experts during three rounds of consultations with more than 807 CSOs from across the region.

The review covers more than 160 indicators that reflect the degree of compliance of the situation in Belarus with international standards in ten areas that affect the conditions of non-governmental organizations activities.

The indicators relate to both legislation and law enforcement practice. Including: freedom of association, equality, access to funding, freedom of peaceful assembly, participation in decision-making, freedom of expression, the right to privacy, state protection and support, cooperation between the state and civil society.

An online survey of 118 Belarusian CSOs, a series of focus groups and interviews with CSO leaders were organized, and legislation and current law enforcement practices were analyzed. The consultation activities of the organizers of the CSO legal aid study were taken into account, as well as the materials of advocacy activities.

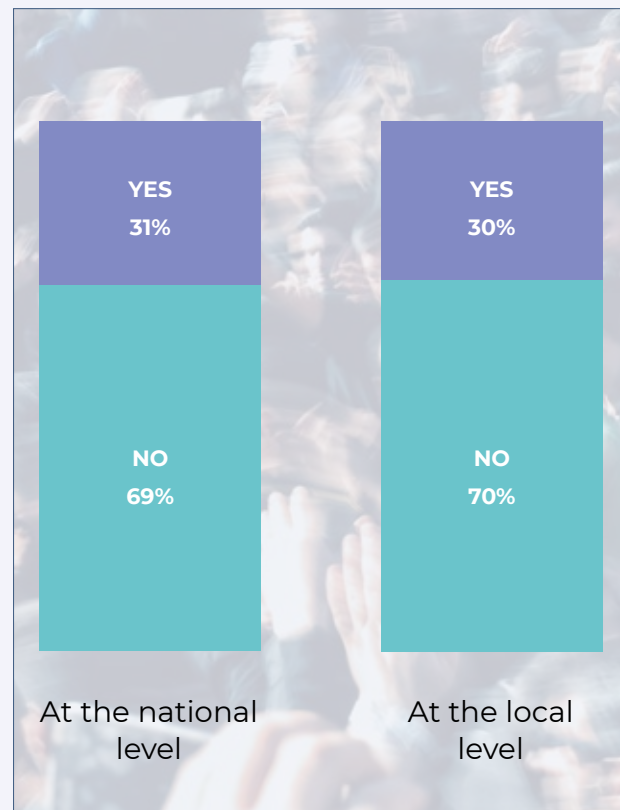
The report was overseen by an Advisory Board composed of representatives of key local stakeholders, which ensures that the conclusions and recommendations of the overall situation in the country are consistent.

Main Results

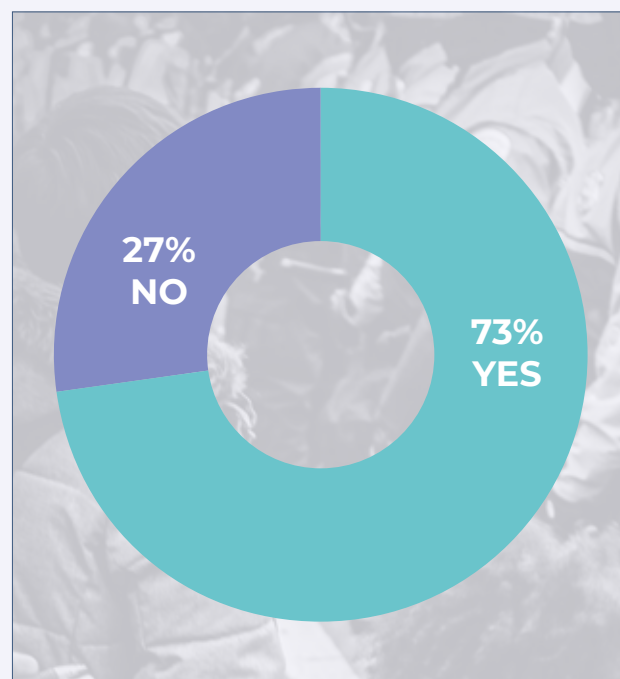
The study allows to formulate the following recommendations for improving the legal environment of CSOs:

1. Amend the legislation on CSO registration so that all CSOs can use a registration procedure close to, de facto, procedure requiring only notification; politically motivated

Has your organization been involved in decision-making processes over the past two years? (according to the results of the online CSO survey)



Has your organization encountered obstacles from the state? (according to the results of the online CSO survey)



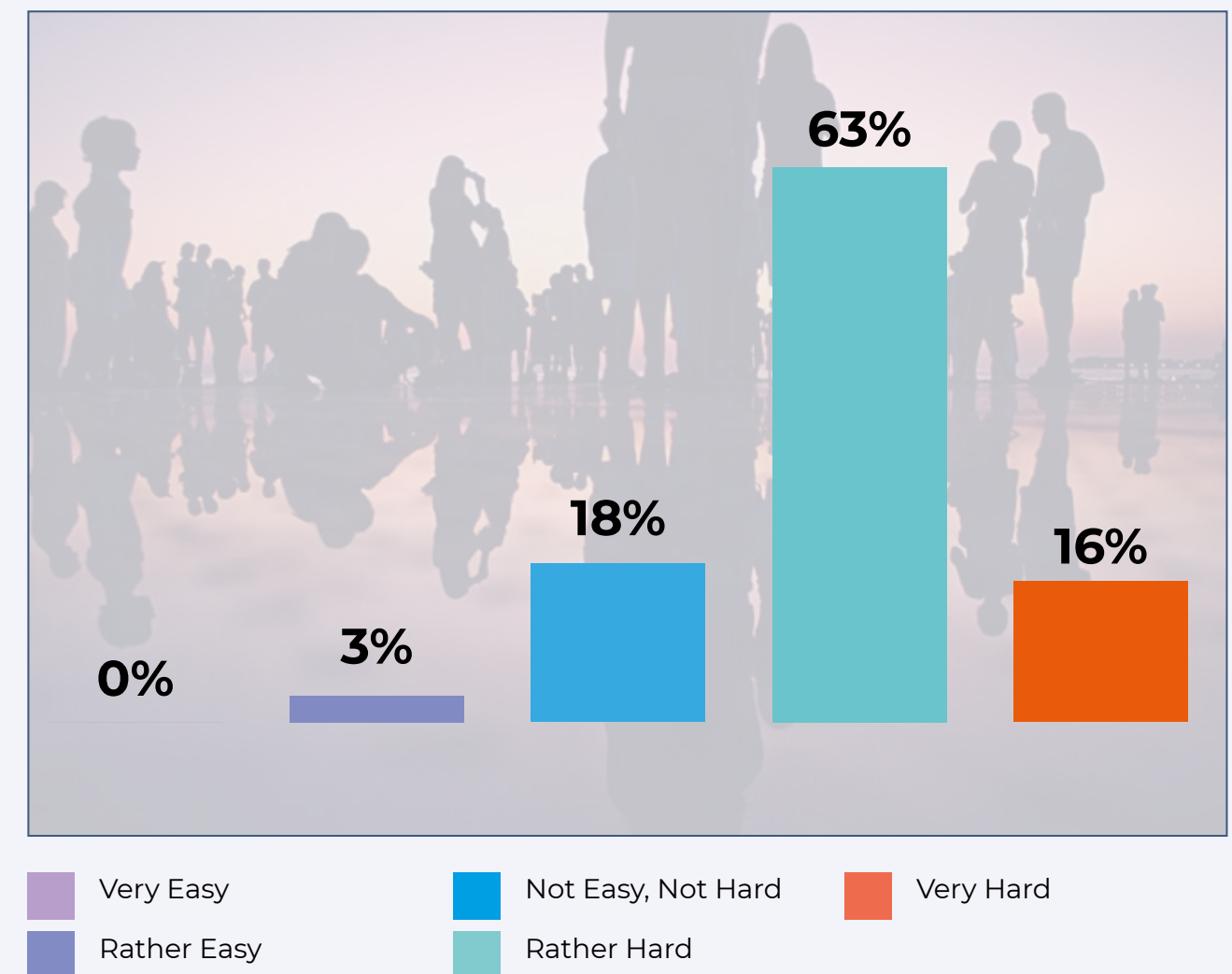
and non-statutory denials of registration should be ruled out.

2. Take into account specific features of CSOs during the process of improving the legislation, giving them the necessary benefits and preferences in connection with their non-profit activities. At the same time, the practice of discriminating against CSOs in comparison with commercial organizations should be avoided.
3. Expand CSOs' access to funding from both local and foreign sources. It is necessary to abolish the limited list of goals for which such funding is possible, and to lift the ban placed on public associations to engage in entrepreneurial activities.
4. Extend the procedure for holding mass events by notification to all non-prohibited locations and make the procedure for holding any pickets the same as the procedure that now applies to pickets for collecting signatures during the election period. Abolish the procedure, mandatory for organizers of mass events, to contract services of the police, ambulance and cleaning organizations.
5. Make all organizational and legal forms of CSOs equal in their right to participate in the decision-making process, using the term «non-profit organizations» instead of «public associations» in the relevant legislation. Disseminate the practice where all interested CSOs are invited to consult on draft legislation, instead of the practice where public authorities decide to invite only individual CSOs. Publish annual legislative plans of the government and the president to develop not only bills but also draft decrees and ordinances.
6. Publish draft laws on the Internet in their current and constantly updated

form in accordance with the current stage of the process of consideration of bills on which they are located, as well as publish draft decrees and decrees of the President at the stage of preparation of such acts.

7. The obligation to submit bills to the parliament, to adopt laws, government decrees, decrees and decrees of the President in two official languages — Russian and Belarusian — should be enshrined in the legislation.
8. Develop, with the participation of interested CSOs, and adopt, a law on the interaction of government agencies and non-governmental NGOs. Legislate provisions on non-discriminatory and open system of funding of non-governmental NCOs out of the state budget on a competitive basis
9. Develop, with the participation of a wide range of CSOs and government agencies, a document on CSO cooperation with the state, and adopt it as a government decree with an action plan for up to three years, providing in the document for funding for CSOs on a competitive basis.

Do you think it is easy for CSOs to work in your country? (according to the results of the online CSO survey)



Very Easy Not Easy, Not Hard Very Hard
 Rather Easy Rather Hard

The Belarusian Civil Society: Dynamics of Change in an Unfriendly Environment

Year of study:	2018
Sphere:	Sociology, civil society
Keywords:	Civil society, civil initiatives, relationship between NGOs and the state
Organization:	<div>Center for European Transformation Legal Transformation Center Lawtrend</div> <div>Center for European Transformation — Belarusian independent think-tank founded in March 2010. CET is part of structure of the International Consortium “Euro-Belarus”.</div> <div>Legal Transformation Center Lawtrend — non-commercial organization, the goal of which is increasing the legal culture and organization of educational, analytical and research activity in the legal sphere.</div>
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Link to the publication:	Please click here (English version) Please click here (Russian version)
Authors and partners:	Aksana Shelest, Andrei Yahorau, Olga Smolianko

The study was initiated by the Belarus National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (BNP).

Aims

The implementation of the objectives of the Belarusian national platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum requires a regular assessment of the state of civil society and the conditions for its development. However, there was no such assessment at the time of the study; the data from various studies gave a description of the fragments of the field and individual processes, but did not pretend to grasp the general trends and characteristics. This study seeks to fill the existing gap of a comprehensive description of the civil society of Belarus, covering the state and dynamics of its development in the period 2015-2017

Methods and Techniques

The study is a “mapping” of the Belarusian third sector for 2015–2017. The first part of the research report is devoted to the description of the volume and structure of the sector, general trends in its development, as well as a detailed analysis of 15 thematic sectors — from human rights to the environment. The second part analyzes the conditions for the development of civil society in Belarus — political, legal, institutional, as well as the impact of changes in the media environment on the third sector.

Principles: participation of the main stakeholders (participatory approach), integration of factual evidence and subjective perspectives of civil society actors; inclusion of data from previous studies and data from existing documentary sources in the research structure

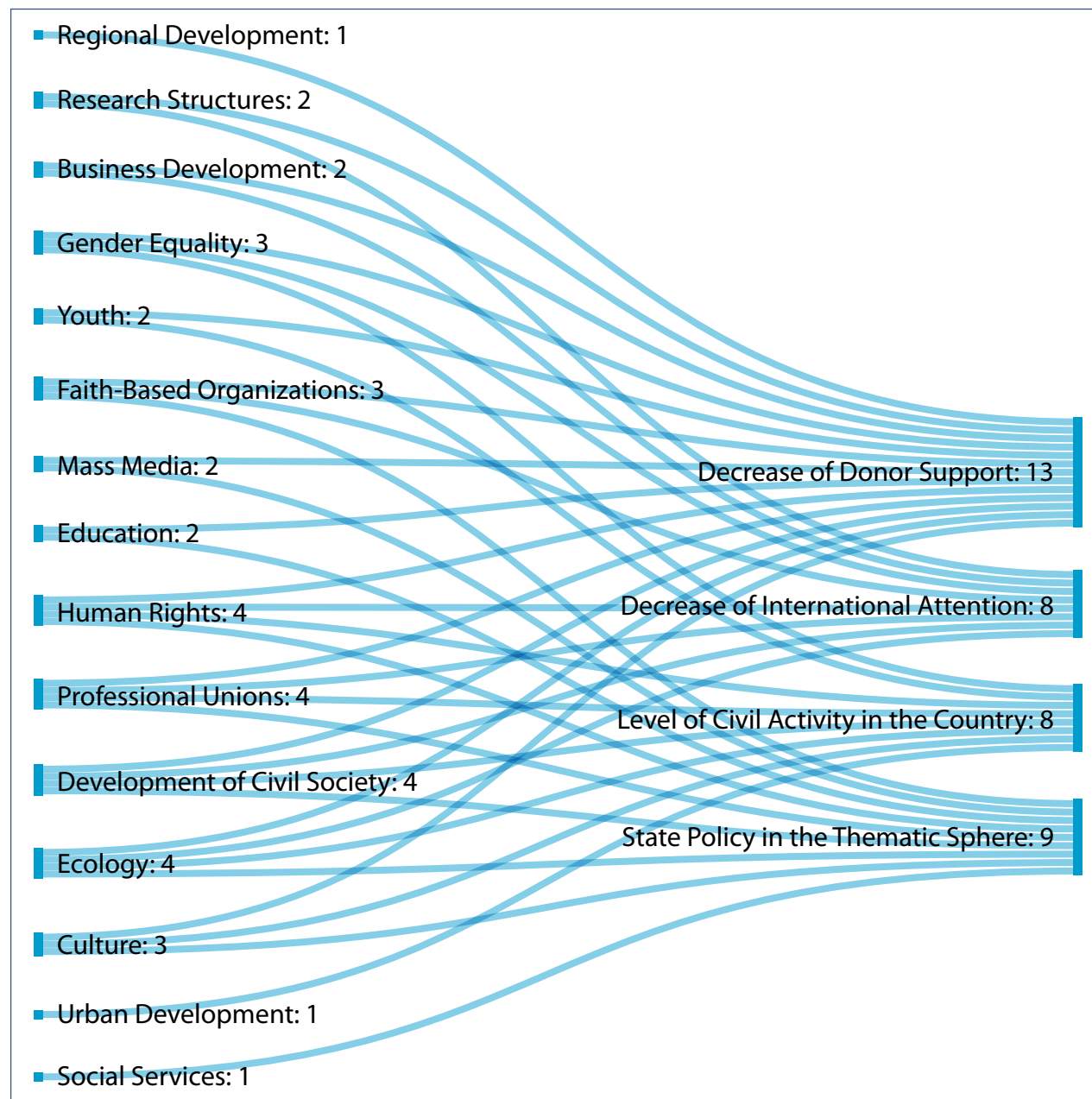
The main methods of collecting information:

- Semi-structured interviews with leaders and activists of the sectors who have at least three years of public activity in their sector. 40 interviews in total. The sample for the interview is balanced by the topic of activity
- Analysis of legislative sources and practice of law enforcement
- Analysis and synthesis of data from previous studies, statistical data and data from documentary sources

Main Results

The number of civil society organizations in comparison with other countries of a similar level of economic development remains quite low. At the same time, more and more informal and non-formalizing initiatives arise, mainly of a social, cultural nature.

There is a disproportion in the development of individual sectors of civil society. Moreover, if earlier the domestic policy of the Belarusian state and the support of Western players worked for the development of different sectors, in recent years, due to a change in the attitudes of international structures, these two policies are becoming closer to each other.

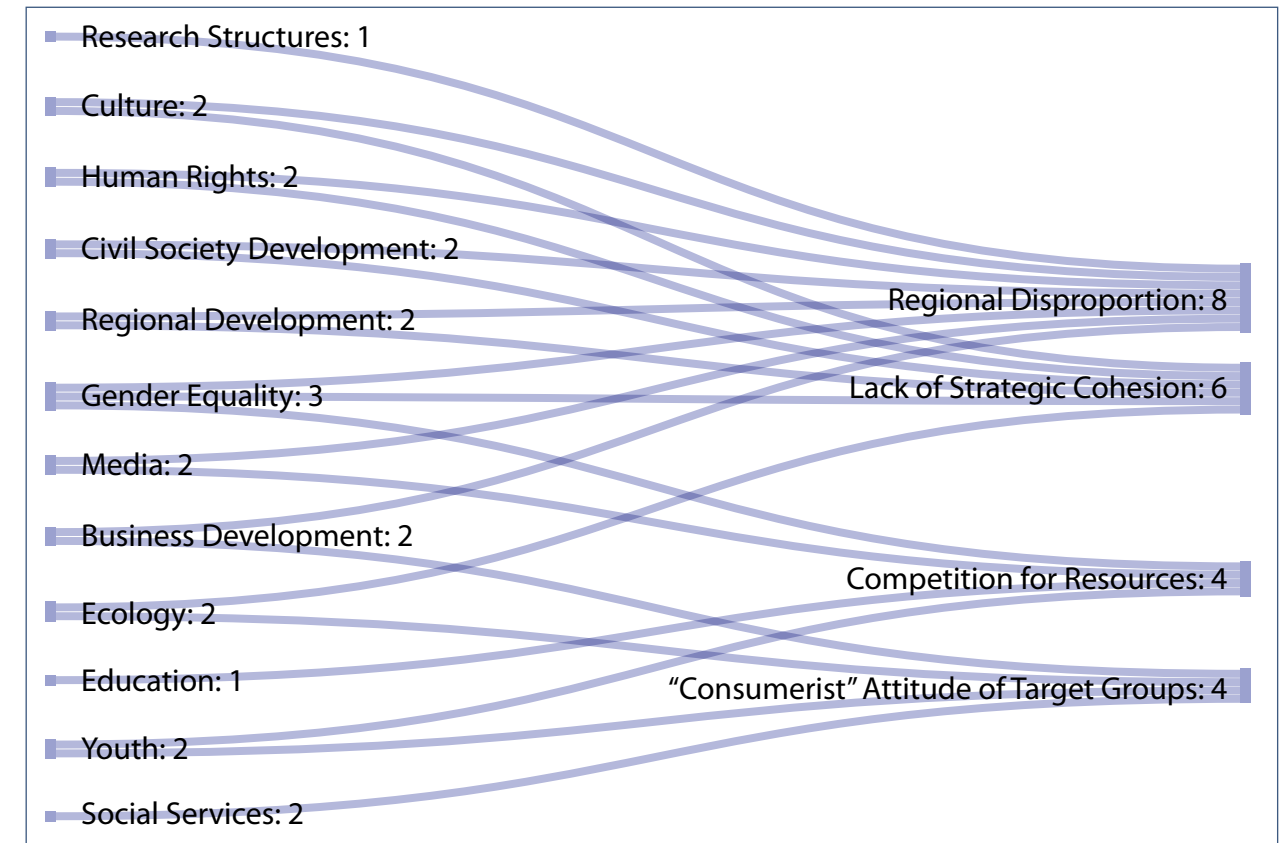


External factors identified by experts from the thematic sectors of CSOs as negatively affecting the development of their sector

As a result, public activity is increasingly being redirected to areas that are far from political and civic education and action.

The regional imbalance in the development of civil society and the dominance of Minsk and large cities as the main places of activity of civil society organizations remain, although in recent years the share of regional activity in individual sectors has been increasing.

The dominance of service-oriented organizations in the overall structure of civil society is increasing, almost no new membership organizations are being created, membership in established organizations of this type is often formal. There is an increase in the number of institutions in the total share of new public organizations. An increase in the number of



The most common internal problems identified by experts from the thematic sectors of CSOs as constraining for the development of the sector

non-member organizations (or formalization, imitation of membership relations) leads to a low demand for democratic decision-making mechanisms.

The separation of civil society by the Belarusian authorities on the basis of its independence and loyalty remains. At the same time, when choosing partners for interaction, not only the current position of organizations or activists plays a role, but also their history. The level of cooperation between government agencies and civil society organizations (CSOs) is limited in most cases to the level of consultation. The participation of civil society in various stages of decision-making is limited to issues of preparation of decisions. Except for rare cases, CSOs are excluded from the stages of selecting decisions, their implementation, monitoring and review.

The influence of donors on stratification within the sector remains high, the discrepancy between their policies and the needs of the sector itself (trends in working with "transparent" organizations, focusing on specific topics, etc.) is observed in almost all CSO sectors. There has been an increase in state-controlled CSOs in the total number of civil society organizations over the past three years, and the increase is noticed in different sectors and directions. Independent CSOs are increasingly being squeezed out of the sphere of foreign gratuitous aid.

The practice of attracting internal resources to support the activities of CSOs is growing, crowdfunding and crowdsourcing tools are being developed, communication and inter-

action with business is intensifying. The spread of such practices is limited, firstly, by the imperfection of Belarusian legislation, which does not contribute to the development of charity and financial participation in public affairs of both individuals and legal entities, and secondly, the level of welfare and civic culture in the country. For a number of areas and topics (human rights activities, infrastructure projects in the field of culture and education, stigmatized topics in social policy), such internal resources in the near future will not be available.

Public awareness of the activities of civil society also remains at a low level, civil society as a subject does not appear on the screen of mass consciousness. The involvement of the Belarusian population in the activities of civil society organizations remains rather low, however, the composition and social structure of the active part of society are changing.

A change in the regional situation, a new round of confrontation between Russia and the West, the unfolding of the information war produce a number of challenges that the Belarusian civil society is not ready to respond to, therefore it is forced to undergo a change in the conditions of its activity, adapting to the new situation.

Political conditions in the country remain stably unfavorable for the development of civil society, despite the rhetoric of liberalization, no real changes have been recorded over the past three years. The level of restrictions on the freedom of activity of civil society, including the unfavorable legal and financial climate, has not changed. There is a gap between legislation and enforcement practice, as well as selectivity of law enforcement

Civic Associations and Initiatives: Potential for Engagement

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Sociology, civil society
Keywords:	Civil society, civil initiatives, volunteering, participation potential
Organization:	<div>Baltic Internet Policy Initiative, Office for European Expertise and Communications.</div> <div>Baltic Internet Policy Initiative is a non-profit public organization. The organization's mission is to promote effective use of digital technologies for democratic practices through research and strategic consulting in Belarus and the Baltic region.</div> <div>Office for European Expertise and Communications is a non-profit organization whose mission is to provide easy access to information and expertise to people and organizations that seek to positively change their lives, the lives of organizations, communities and of Belarus as part of Europe.</div>
Contacts:	http://e-belarus.org , info@e-belarus.org https://oeec.by , oeec.ngo@gmail.com
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Marina Sokolova, Mikhail Doroshevich

Aims

Providing data for the development of strategies, action plans and project proposals of public associations and initiatives. An essential element in the development of strategies, action plans and project proposals is the availability of reliable data on the awareness of the population about the activities of public organizations and citizens' initiatives, their attitude towards them, and willingness to participate in their activities. The study was conducted to obtain such data.

Methods and Techniques

Survey of the Belarusian Internet audience. The survey included the measurement of:

- the awareness and involvement of citizens in the activities of public organizations and initiatives
- the potential for participation in the activities of these organizations and initiatives.

The survey was conducted in the form of a pop-up window shown to website users who were selected in a random order. The sample structure was adjusted by weighting the data by gender, age, region and place of residence of respondents. The questionnaire consisted of 23 questions (17 basic and 6 sociodemographic). The sociodemographic part of the questionnaire included questions about gender, age, place of residence (by region), type of locality, education and employment of respondents. The survey was attended by 1414 respondents.

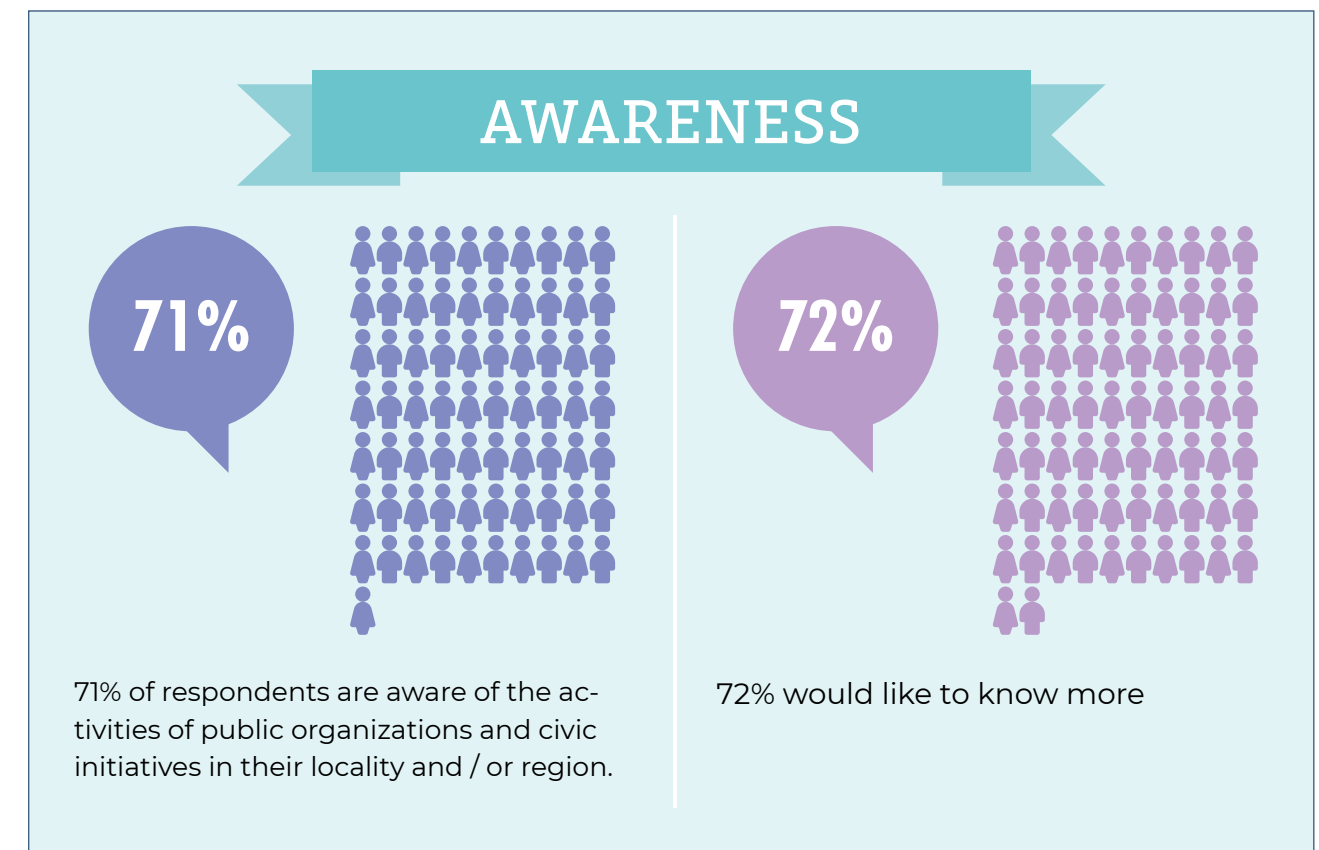
Main Results

The survey showed significant participation potential. The respondents who are ready to take part in the activities of public organizations and citizens' initiatives are three times more numerous than those who are already involved in their activities. The respondents consider ecology, human rights, healthy lifestyle, social sphere and culture to be the most in-demand areas of activity.

According to the survey, 71% of respondents know about the activities of public organizations and initiatives in their locality and / or region. About a third of them are well aware of their activities. Moreover, in rural areas such respondents are fewer than in cities (22 and 30–35%, respectively). The respondents aged 15–24 and 55–74 years are most aware.

69% of respondents have a positive attitude to the activities of public organizations and citizen initiatives, 27% do not see much sense in their activities (answer option “do neither harm nor good”), and 4% do not approve of such an activity. Negative attitudes prevail among respondents over 55 years old living in rural areas.

58% trust the activities of public organizations and citizen initiatives. A clear position with respect to trust was formed among a fifth of respondents (11% trust, 9% do not trust). There are more respondents with such positions in the age group 15–24 years old and among those who are on disability pension. 55% of respondents believe that public organizations should be engaged in solving the problems of local communities, but only



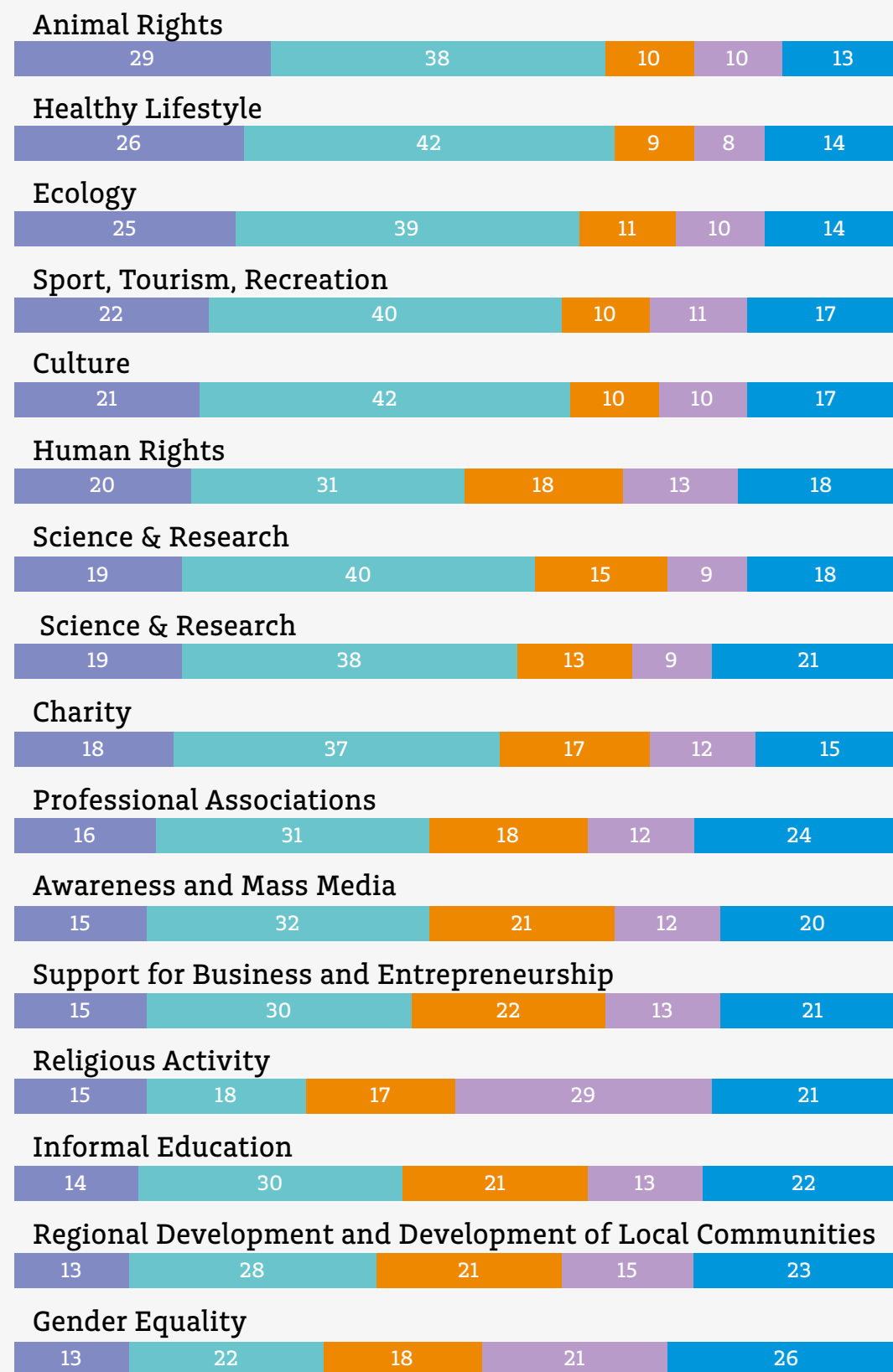
31% agree that this is happening. Reaction in social networks and publications in mass media are the main sources for evaluating the activities of organizations and initiatives. However, the most reliable criterion is the personal experience of the participation of respondents.

Interesting projects and values of public organizations and initiatives motivate the majority of respondents to participate in their activities. For young people aged 15–24, the possibilities of self-realization, contacts with nice people and paid work are more important than for older age groups. With age, the importance of such motives as the values of the organization and the request for help of those who have problems increases. The main barriers to participation, according to respondents, are the lack of information on “how exactly one can participate (who to contact, where and how events are held)”, the lack of activity of organizations to expand the circle of participants (“no one asked or addressed me») and lack of time.

Among respondents who are aware of the activities of public organizations and initiatives in their locality and/or region, 20% are actively involved in the activities, 11% are confident that they will participate, 51% do not exclude this possibility, 12% are not ready to take part and 7% found it difficult to answer. There are more students, retirees by age and those who work more than 40 hours a week among the respondents actively participating in the activities.

Attitude to spheres of activity depends on the age and place of residence of respondents. While ecology is equally important for all respondents, human rights are moved to the second position for the age groups 25–34 years old and 45–54 years old and to the

Confidence in public organizations and citizens' initiatives in various fields



Trust Partially Trust Partially Don't Trust Do Not Trust Hard to Say

third for the age group 55–74 years old. A healthy lifestyle takes the second position for respondents 15–24 years old, the third for respondents 45–74 years old, 4 and 5 for respondents 25–34 and 35–44 years old, respectively. The social sphere is more important for respondents 35–44 years old and 55–74 years old (second position) and less important for respondents 25–34 years old (fifth position). Business support is more important for respondents aged 25–44 (third and fourth positions, respectively). The five most important positions for respondents aged 15–24 years included science, 45–44 years — charity, 55–74 — information.

The survey showed a significant potential for participation in the activities of public organizations and citizens' initiatives. Possible formats for using the potential of participation: more actively informing about the activities of organizations and initiatives, increasing the level of trust in them.

The main criteria for evaluating the activities of public organizations and citizens' initiatives: personal participation in events and reactions in social networks.

Main motives for participation: interesting projects, alignment of values, the desire to help others and the clear goals of organizations and initiatives.

Main barriers: lack of awareness of opportunities for participation, lack of resources (time and competencies) and lack of satisfaction with the activities of public organizations and initiatives. Most in-demand spheres of activity: ecology, human rights, healthy lifestyle, social sphere, culture.

The highest potential for participation: among residents of villages and towns aged 15–24 years.

Interaction of Civil Society and the State at the National and Local Levels.

Year of study:	2018 – 2019
Sphere:	Sociology, civil policy
Keywords:	Civil society, interaction of civil society and state, local policy
Organization:	The center of public administration research «SYMPA» The goal of «SYMPA» is to promote the reform of the public administration system in Belarus in accordance with modern principles and practices: transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, efficiency. «SYMPA»'s main activities are education, research and monitoring (public finance and government procurement). We unite people who strive to improve the quality of governance in our country. The research was conducted within the framework of the program «Together to Work!» in cooperation with the public cultural campaign «Be Belarusians!».
Contacts:	http://sympa-by.eu sk@sympa-by.eu
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Tatiana Kouzina, Natallia Rabava, Svetlana Kulesh

Aims

The aim of the study was to examine the attitude of the population of Belarus to civil society organizations, to determine the level of trust in them compared to trust in other public institutions, as well as to examine the general level and background of trust in Belarusian society.

In addition, given the greater opportunities for citizen participation in decision-making and the tendency to strengthen cooperation between civil society and local authorities, it was interesting to assess the views of Belarusians on the principles and methods of citizen participation in decision-making, and to trace the existing relations.

The study of the relations between civil society and local authorities was conducted in order to identify the specifics of this interaction at the local level, as well as the dynamics over the past few years. The situation of the civil society in Belarus is still characterized as one of the most vulnerable in the post-Soviet space. The process of certain «warming» of the political climate inside the country that was observed in the last few years has not had a noticeable positive impact on the situation of civil society organizations. The current changes can still be called merely a «facade» rather than radical true change. However, it is not only the attitude of the Belarusian authorities towards civil society that has an impact on its dynamics.

Successful development also requires productive interaction with the host society. In this regard, the study of the specifics of the social context in which civil society organizations operate remains very relevant.

Methods and techniques

A national opinion poll aimed at identifying the attitudes of the population towards civil society. The field stage was implemented in December 2017 by the Belarusian Analytical Workshop (BAW). The general population is the entire population of the Republic of Belarus from the age of 18 (inclusive). The sample size is 1,063 respondents aged 18 and over. The sampling error does not exceed 3% with a true probability of 95%. The method of the survey is a questionnaire survey at the place of residence of the respondents.

Focus groups with participation of representatives of civil society organizations involved in cooperation with representatives of local governments and local councils of deputies to identify the main problems in this area. Three 2.5-hour focus group discussions were held in April 2018 in Minsk.

Interviews with representatives of executive and administrative bodies of local government and local councils of deputies, who interact with representatives of public organizations to determine the peculiarities of their perception of civil society of Belarus. The study involved eleven respondents selected on the basis of the size of the settlement (from village councils to the capital). The on average 60-minute long interviews were conducted in July 2018.

Main results

Almost half of the population of Belarus has a tendency to trust people and considers trust a condition for success in life. People with a higher level of generalized trust tend to trust public institutions more. Women and people over the age of 65 have a higher level of trust in general and are more likely to associate trust to people with success in life.

Along with the decrease in the social orientation of the Belarusian state, the belief that it will take responsibility for the well-being of the people is declining. Residents of Belarus tend to rely more on themselves than on the state in difficult life situations. Continuation of this trend can lead to increased civic activism and increased interest in civic participation.

Belarusians are more likely to distrust state and non-state socio-political institutions than to trust them.

Civil society organizations have the lowest level of trust of respondents compared to other social institutions, Belarusian citizens know little about their activities

Against the background of a low level of institutional trust, interpersonal trust and trust in representatives of certain social and professional groups is becoming more relevant. The figure of a public activist has a higher potential for trust compared to public organizations. Officials and politicians have the lowest level of trust. Despite low awareness of the activities of civil society organizations and a low level of trust in them, Belarusians have a fairly liberal view of the relationship between the state and civil society: according

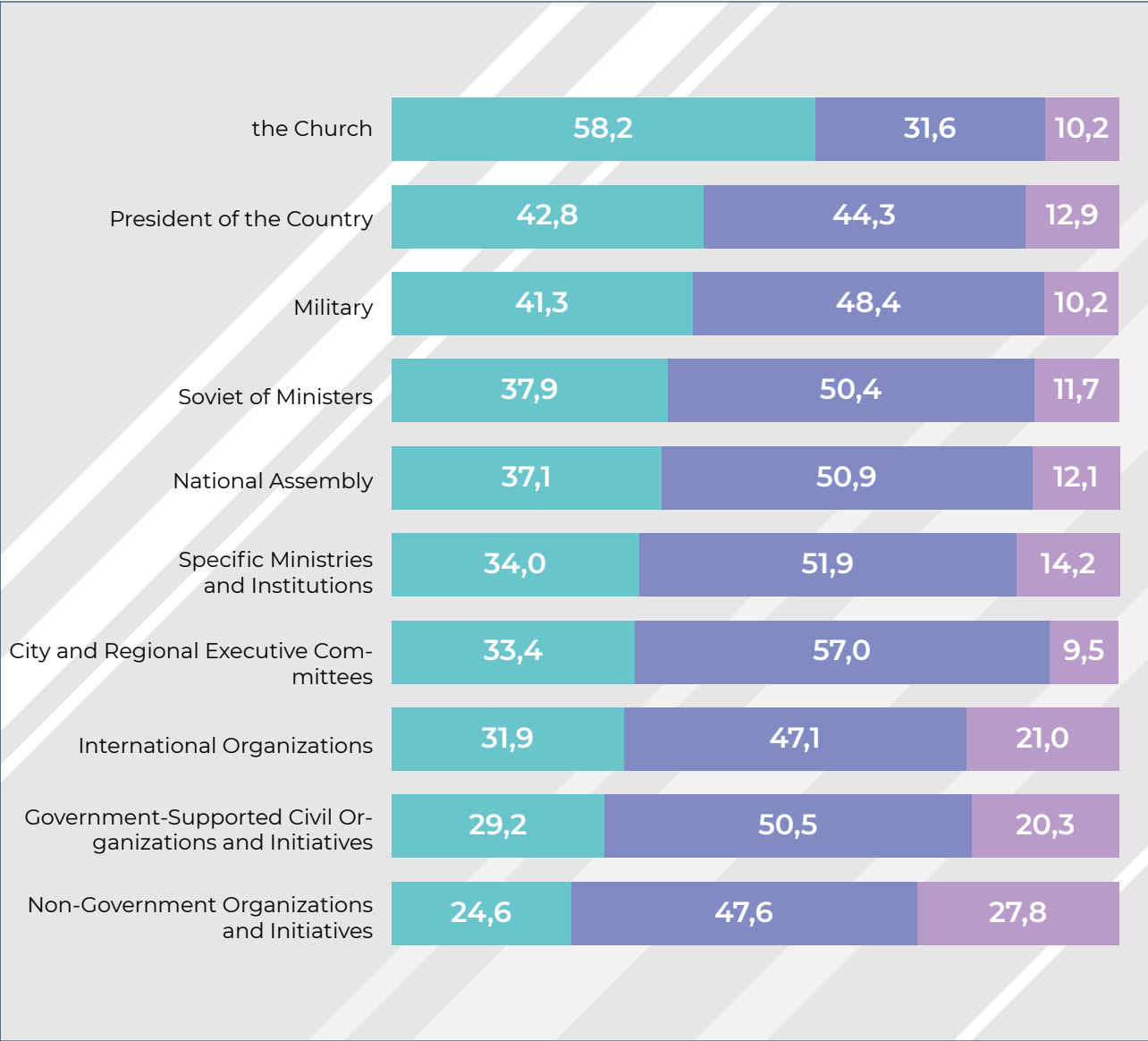
What demands do you think the state has the right to impose on public associations and other non-profit organizations?

Answer options	Share of those who answered, %
Do not engage in corruption, tax evasion, cover up unscrupulous business	50,2
Strictly comply with the law	47,8
Present detailed and accurate reporting	31,6
Conduct activities in a highly effective manner	26,3
Agree on the goals and objectives of the organization with government agencies	16,5
None	7,4
Show loyalty to the government, support initiatives	6,9
Difficult to answer / No answer	6,4
Refuse support from abroad	5,8
Do not participate in political activities	5,1
Refuse close contact with business	1,8

Comparison of results of focus groups with CSO representatives and interviews with local government representatives.

PARAMETER	EVALUATION BY PUBLIC REPRESENTATIVES	EVALUATION BY LOCAL GOVERNMENT REPRESENTATIVES
Assessment of the nature of the relationship	From fruitful cooperation to complete hostility — depending on the scope of activities and proximity to the center	Fruitful cooperation
Need for interaction	Yes, to represent the interests and influence the rules of the game	Yes, for mutual assistance
Problems of interaction	Problems exist at all levels: from legislation to the attitude of officials	No problems
Changes in the nature of cooperation over the past 3-5 years	The situation has improved, but not systematically and not in all areas	The situation has improved
Role of CSOs	Source of financial and organizational resources for local authorities	Helpers in solving problems
Professionalism of interaction between partners	Incompetence of officials in interaction with CSOs and international organizations	CSOs sometimes act as experts in their narrow field of activity (eg wheelchair users)
CSO participation in public councils	Sometimes depending on the field: from fiction to effective interaction	Usually involved. There is no differentiation between pro-government and independent CSOs
Participation of CSOs in public discussions and consultations for government programs and plans	Yes, organizations play the role of facilitators of the process.	Yes
Participation of CSOs in joint activities.	Yes	Yes
Participation of Belarusian CSOs in the implementation of state programs and plans at the local level	As a rule, no, but they know about the availability of state programs and plans	No, low awareness of the availability and content of such documents
Influence on the governing decisions of the authorities	Only through social procurement, public-private partnership	Yes, personal meetings, councils, public discussions, appeals of citizens are named among the mechanisms
CSO assistance from the authorities	Organizational assistance in the socio-cultural sphere	Organizational assistance in the socio-cultural sphere

Respondents' assessment of the degree of trust in social institutions, %



Trust Do Not Trust Hard to Say/No Answer

to the population, the state should create favorable conditions for the activities of CSOs operating legally.

According to Belarusians, the demands that the authorities have the right to make to CSOs should not go beyond the rule of law. The requirements to limit CSOs' contacts with business and politics, as well as their loyalty to the state, are not relevant for citizens. Citizens also do not think that the lack of both cooperative and confrontational interaction with the authorities is necessary.

A share of the population perceives the pressure of the authorities on civil society, but a fifth of citizens have no opinion on the working conditions of civil society organizations in Belarus.

The population of Belarus is more aware of the role of civil society organizations as helpers of the state and citizens in solving social problems and defenders of rights and interests, the function of independent control of the government is poorly understood. More information is needed on the impact of civic participation and control on the quality of decisions made and on how to implement them, including practical examples.

Residents of Belarus are partial to decision making with broad civic participation. However, in their understanding, broad participation means the involvement of stakeholders (organizations and citizens competent in a particular issue) rather than the participation of all comers.

It is possible to assume that public organizations will find the support of citizens by offering their own expertise in conveying their views to the authorities, as well as by acting as facilitators and mediators between citizens and the state in discussions about the decisions they make.

National Public Opinion Poll About Civic Literacy and Activism in Belarus

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Sociology, public opinion, public policy
Keywords:	Public activity, public awareness, public trust
Organization:	<p>International Organization Pact</p> <p>Pact is an international organization that seeks to build strong communities around the world that can ensure a dignified life and participation in democratic processes.</p> <p>Pact has been operating in Belarus since 2005. Pact's activities are aimed at strengthening and developing civil society, expanding access to objective information and involving citizens in positive social change at the local and national levels.</p> <p>Since 2011, Pact has regularly collected sociological data on the main socio-political and economic trends in Belarus, and cooperates with independent Belarusian companies that conduct population surveys.</p>
Contacts:	https://www.pactworld.org/agolontsov@pactworld.org
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	At the request of Pact, the national survey was conducted by MIA Research in August-September 2019.

Aims

The study was aimed at obtaining information about the level of public awareness and activity of Belarusians.

Methods and Techniques

Individual survey (questionnaire) at the place of residence. Number of respondents: 1,507 people, the allowable sampling error — 3%.

The questionnaire used for the survey was tested in 2018, which allows us to make comparisons with last year's results. The results of the study give an idea of what Belarusians think about the relationship between citizens and the state, how they feel about reforms, how much they are aware of the activities of civil society organizations and how much they trust them, what geopolitical vector they choose and how they feel about media literacy and gender equality.

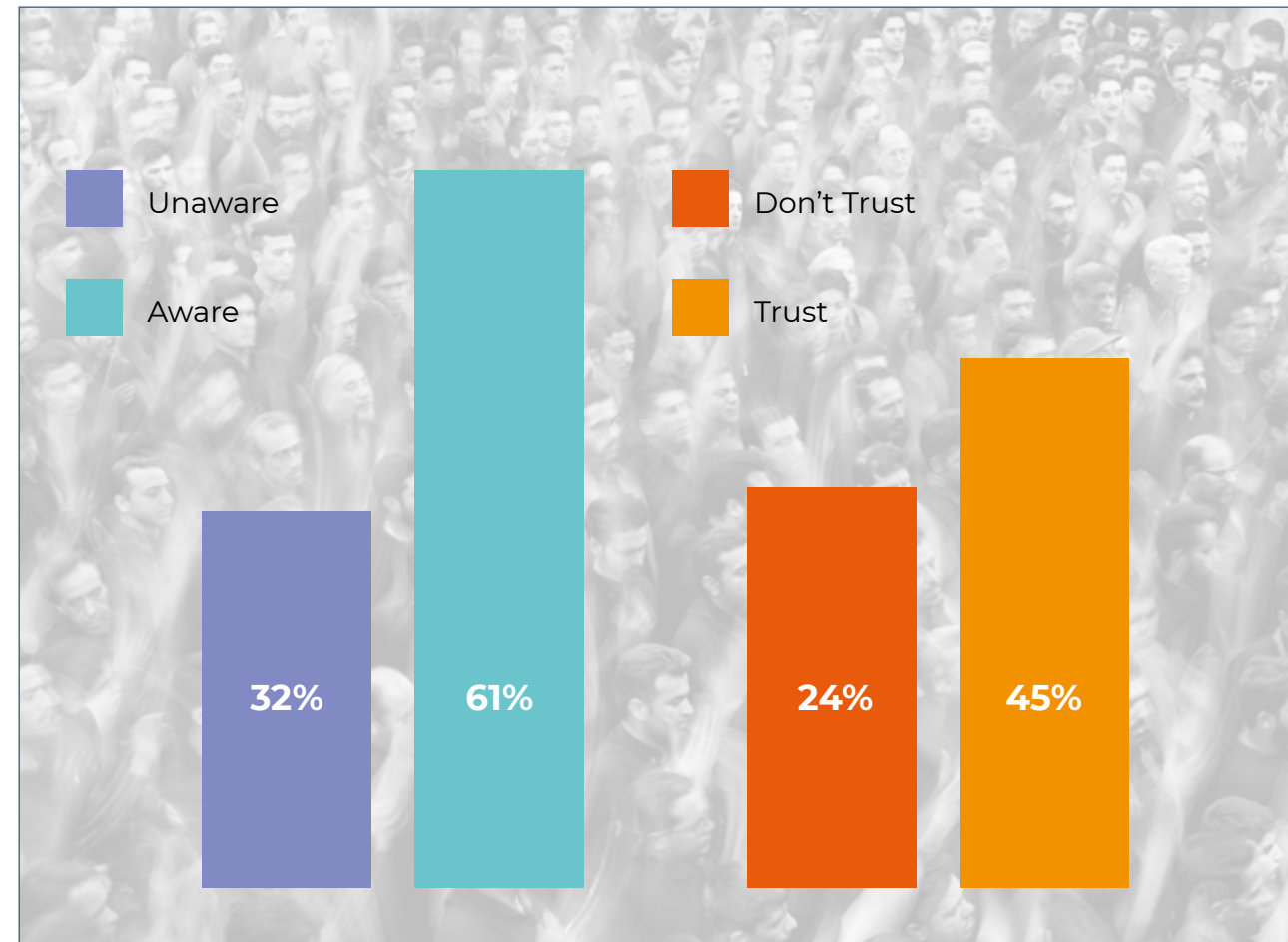
Main Results

Belarusians' perceptions of the influence on state authorities, as well as their attitude to reforms, remain virtually unchanged. As in the last year, the majority of respondents (about 80%) do not believe that their actions affect public authorities at the national and local levels. 36% of citizens (32% in 2018) believe that Belarus needs reforms to reduce the role of the state. At the same time, the number of those who believe that reforms should be carried out in a radical manner, decreased from 19% (2018) to 12% (2019). The economy, health care and the pension system remain a priority in terms of the need for reform.

Citizens' awareness of civil society organizations remains low. 61% of Belarusians know nothing about the activities of non-governmental organizations (NGOs); in 2018, the figure was 68%. Moreover, clarification questions show that the level of lack of knowledge regarding thematic sectors is even higher. For example, 81% of Belarusians do not know about the activities of NGOs engaged in public education, 78% — of human rights organizations. This level is also typical of organizations in other sectors of civil society. The low level of awareness of citizens about the activities of NGOs has an impact on the level of public confidence in civil society organizations.

The low level of awareness of the activities of NGOs continues to have a negative impact on the level of civic participation. Only 3% of Belarusians took part in NGO activities in 2019 (this figure has not changed since last year). More than half of those who did not participate explain this by the lack of information about the possibility of participation. At the same time, 10% of citizens testified that they participated in socially useful activities organized by citizens themselves. This may indicate that Belarusians are more inclined to participate in informal initiatives than in the activities of organizations. The level of participation in solving the problems of the local community (yard, apartment block stairwell, street) traditionally remains high (43%).

Awareness and trust of citizens in NGOs

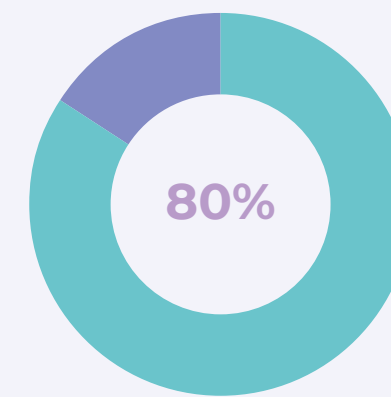


Belarusian media literacy remains low. Most respondents say they face misinformation and propaganda (56%) in the media, but 71% do not worry that they may be consumers of false information, and only 9% say they always check the accuracy of important news from other sources.

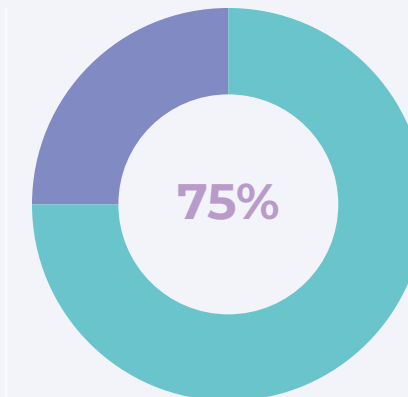
Gender inequality is not perceived as a problem, and many Belarusians do not understand what gender equality is. 12% of Belarusians believe that gender inequality is an urgent problem for Belarus, and only 5% have personally faced this problem. 39% do not consider gender inequality an urgent problem for Belarus, and 32% do not understand what it is.

Belarusians choose to live in an independent country. 43% of Belarusians prefer to live in their independent state, rather than in an alliance with Russia (22%) or in the European Union (18%). Russia, China and Ukraine are considered the most friendly countries; The United States, Japan and Poland are the most unfriendly countries. Threats of military aggression or informational influence from Russia are at the bottom of the list of current threats to Belarusians.

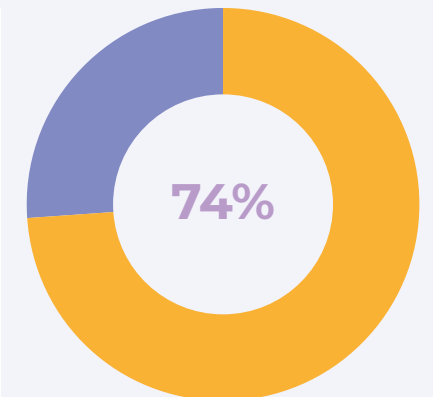
The influence of decisions and actions of citizens



They believe that they do not influence the decisions of the highest authorities and public policy

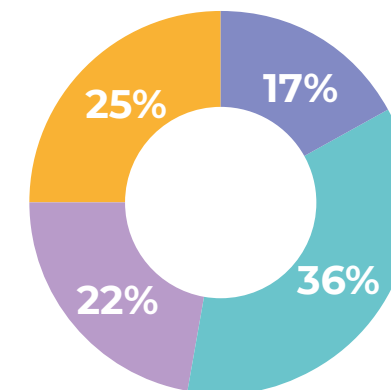


They believe that they do not influence the decisions and policies of local authorities



They believe that they determine the quality of life of families, relatives and friends

The influence of decisions and actions of citizens

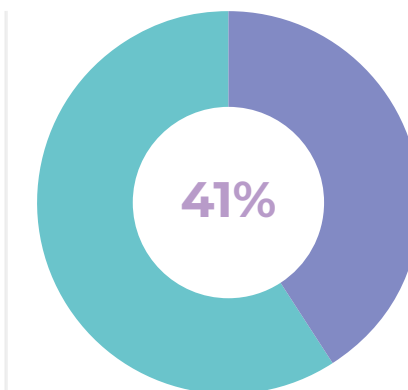


17% — reform is needed to increase the influence of the state

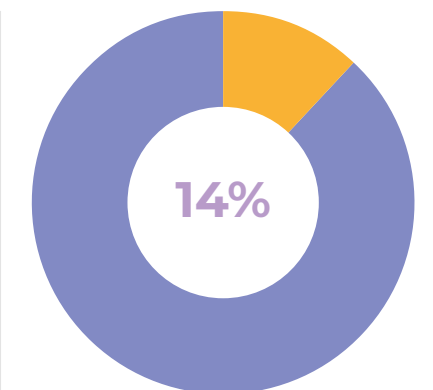
36% — reform is needed to reduce the influence of the state

22% — reform is not needed

25% — no answer



Gradual change is considered the most preferred method of reform.



Shock therapy is considered the most preferred method of reform.

Legal Aspects of NPO Fundraising by Electronic Means in Belarus

Year of study:	2018
Sphere:	Legislation, civil society
Keywords:	Fundraising, crowdfunding, payment system of the Republic of Belarus, electronic money
Organization:	Legal Transformation Center Lawtrend Assembly of NGOs Prepared for the International Center for Not-for-Profit Law (ICNL)
Contacts:	https://www.lawtrend.org/ , infolawtrend@gmail.com http://www.belngo.info , ngo@belgngo.info
Link to the publication:	Please click here (English version) Please click here (Russian version)
Authors and partners:	Olga Smolianko , Director, Legal Transformation Center Lawtrend, Yury Chavusau , Legal advisor, Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus.

Aims

Find out how, from a legal point of view, various mechanisms for raising funds from the general public using Internet technologies and other electronic means in the Republic of Belarus work.

Explain the legal consequences of introducing various mechanisms for raising funds from the general public using the Internet and other electronic means (what is legal and what is not legal, how to use mechanisms in accordance with national legislation, tax consequences, etc.) and develop recommendations on improving legal regulation and practice on the most effective ways to raise funds using Internet technologies and other electronic technologies among the general public.

Methods and Techniques

The study is at the junction of two areas of legislation. On the one hand, the relationships considered in the study are regulated by the rules on possible financial income without signs of entrepreneurial activity for various forms of NCOs and individuals. The specifics of the use of electronic funds in this case is not determined as a special subject of regulation.

On the other hand, for the regulation of legal relations regarding use of electronic mechanisms for fundraising, the general rules governing non-cash payments, the functioning of Internet communications and communications in general are important. The use of these tools for financial transactions is subject to regulation, but their relationship with the activities of NCOs to attract donations is again not taken into account by the legislator.

Main Results

There is currently no special regulation of the use of electronic fundraising tools in Belarus, despite the widespread introduction of new fundraising mechanisms in the country.

The development of new crowdfunding initiatives and new fundraising mechanisms using electronic tools is extremely dynamic in Belarus, with constantly appearing new models and fundraising tools. It seems that the “fundraising boom” now observed in Belarus was the result of a combination of several factors: 1) a change in the financial model of the functioning of Belarusian NCOs in connection with the changed strategies of foreign donors; 2) the absence of special legal restrictions on the use of electronic fundraising tools; 3) the ever wider distribution of Internet technologies and modern means of communication in Belarus.

The market conditions of sources of financial support, legal conditions and the spread of modern communication channels create an environment for the development of new forms of fundraising using Internet technologies and other electronic means of communication. However, a number of factors, such as the existence of provisions on the need to

register funds received by NCOs from abroad, as well as a number of restrictions on tax and financial legislation, problems in the field of enforcement by banking institutions, Raschet System (OJSC "Non-bank financial institution"SSIS"), etc. introduce significant problems in their development.

Recommendations for government agencies

To effectively raise funds by non-commercial organizations, it is necessary to begin a systematic work to harmonize Belarusian legislation in the field of financial activities of non-commercial organizations, expanding the capabilities of non-commercial organizations to attract funding from various sources. Including:

- To develop a clear and concise conceptual framework regarding the funds and other property received free of charge by non-commercial organizations. Including:
- use the unified terms in the legislation of the Republic of Belarus regarding gratuitously received funds and other property, for example, donations or assistance
 - introduce the concept of "target capital" into the legislation of the Republic of Belarus

Repeal Decree No. 300 with the preservation (if necessary) of regulation by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus in relation to state organizations in the event they donate property to other persons in the form of gratuitous assistance.

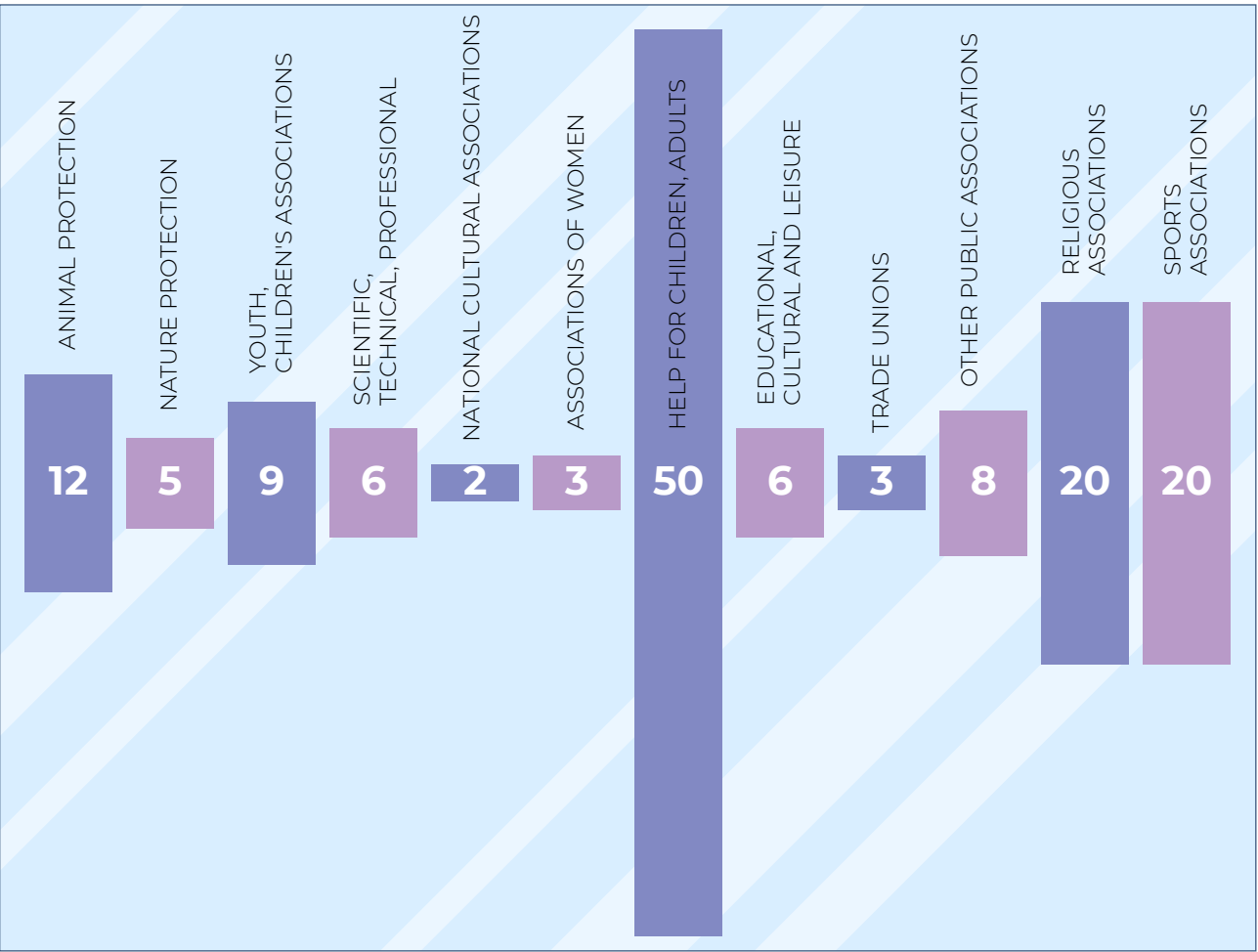
Exclude from the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Public Associations" (art. 20) a ban on the right of public associations to independently carry out entrepreneurial activity.

Exclude from the Law of the Republic of Belarus dated June 30, 2014 No. 165-Z "On measures to prevent the legalization of proceeds from crime, financing terrorist activities and financing the spread of weapons of mass destruction" (Article 7) the norm on the possibility of assessing, by a person performing a financial transaction, the compliance of a financial transaction with the goals of a non-commercial organization, the types and (or) nature of its activities.

Phase out the system of registration of foreign gratuitous aid, replacing at this stage the permissive principle of registration with the declarative one, in which the registering authority will only verify the presence of all required documents and record information on incoming foreign gratuitous aid, while providing for a closed list of grounds for not registering. Set the minimum amount of funds and other property received from abroad, which is not subject to registration. Exclude registration of foreign gratuitous aid from the competence of the Department for Humanitarian Affairs of the Office of the President of the Republic of Belarus and transfer it to the competence of tax authorities.

Exclude from the legislation a list of purposes for which foreign gratuitous aid can be allocated, leaving the ban on the allocation of foreign gratuitous aid for the purpose of using it for the preparation and conduct of elections, referenda, recall of a deputy, member of the Council of the Republic, organization and holding of meetings, rallies, street processions , demonstrations, picketing, strikes, production and distribution of campaign materials, as well as for political work among the population.

Raschet System (OJSC "Non-bank financial institution"SSIS"), number of organizations as of June 26, 2018



Develop a special reporting procedure for non-profit organizations whose income exceeds a certain limit, which will provide information on the provision of gratuitous assistance, including foreign. Such reporting fully compensates for the rejection of the permissive procedure for receiving foreign gratuitous assistance.

Develop and introduce into the Tax Code of the Republic of Belarus the provisions on providing tax benefits to non-profit organizations and recipients of their assistance, as well as provisions regarding compensation received by volunteers.

Exclude the practice of discrediting non-profit organizations in the media. To exclude from article 7 of the Law "On Public Associations" a ban on the activities of unregistered public associations.

Recommendations for Payment Systems and Crowdfunding Platforms

When informing the general public about fundraising for projects, make a clear distinction between crowdfunding and other fundraising by NPOs and crowdfunding projects carried out with the aim of profit-making by commercial legal entities.

Use terminology regarding the types and legal forms of legal entities in accordance with the definitions of the Civil Code and other legislative acts.

Recommendations for Non-Commercial Organizations

Carry out joint actions to amend the legislative norms in the field of financial activities of non-commercial organizations and other issues related to their creation and activities.

If there are unclear and / or conflicting norms in the legislation regarding the receipt of funding, send the relevant inquiries to the competent authorities and make the results of answers available to the public.

Disseminate information on the ways and means of raising funds among wide sections of the population.

Analyze the practical advantages and disadvantages of ways to raise funds and make the results of such analysis available to the public in order to exchange experiences with other non-profit organizations.

Use a variety of fundraising tools.

If the intent is to form the organization's budget using gratuitous (sponsor) aid or foreign gratuitous aid, responsibly approach the development of statutory documents and formulate goals and objectives of the organization basics, taking into account the requirements of the current legislation regarding the possible purposes of raising funds from sources related to such assistance.

History, Conditions and Practices of Volunteer Activity Development: Prospects for Belarus

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Rights
Keywords:	Volunteering, youth, civil activity
Organization:	Legal Transformation Center Lawtrend, Belarusian National Youth Council "RADA", Cultural Center "Korpus" Legal Transformation Center Lawtrend — non-commercial organization, the goal of which is increasing the legal culture and organization of educational, analytical and research activity in the legal sphere. The Belarusian National Youth Council RADA is a voluntary union of Belarusian youth organizations. "RADA" was established in 1992 and registered in 1997 to consolidate the activities of youth organizations in the field of representation, promotion and protection of youth interests. "RADA" is a member of the European Youth Forum "Korpus" is a cultural center aimed at creating conditions for interaction and development of contemporary art and culture, non-formal education and civic activity, and the creative industry.
Contacts:	https://lawtrend.org/ , infolawtrend@gmail.com , http://rada.fm , info@rada.fm
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Elena Tonkacheva

Aims

For several years, the issue of legislative regulation of volunteering was raised in Belarus, but actions in this direction were postponed. However, in 2020 it is planned to adopt the law «On volunteering».

The aim of the study was to research the elements of the infrastructure of the volunteer movement on the example of countries where volunteering has existed since its inception and to study of legal models of volunteering. All this gives an opportunity to «try» different legal models, to see at what stage of development the volunteer movement of Belarus is, and to answer the question of whether we need the law «On volunteering» today.

Methods and Techniques

Analytical study.

Main Results

Approaches to regulating volunteering vary from country to country, depending on internal needs and challenges. In addition to countries where there is no legal recognition of volunteers, such as Turkey and Albania, there are three common models for regulating volunteering in Europe today:

- traditions, self-regulation and analogy as measures of legal regulation;
- volunteering is regulated by various laws;
- a separate comprehensive law on volunteering.

The main task of regulating volunteering is to prevent over-tight regulation. Creating complex systems of volunteering or imposing too many requirements on host organizations and volunteers can demotivate volunteering relationships.

Therefore, first of all, the government and civil society organizations must set clear political goals and objectives that they want to achieve by regulating the scope of volunteering, and ensure that the regulation of one form of volunteering does not harm other forms, especially informal volunteering initiatives.

Second, legislation should facilitate volunteering, not control it. Third, each country must decide whether to introduce legislation on volunteering and how, based on its social, cultural and economic conditions. Finally, legislation should be developed in close collaboration between governments, civil society organizations, experts and other stakeholders.

Infrastructure for volunteering or the infrastructure of the volunteer movement is a supportive environment, working structures and implementation capacity to promote volunteering, mobilize volunteers and support their work. A supportive environment is a set of policies and laws that protect volunteers and encourage volunteering. Working structures are schemes through which volunteers are mobilized, recruited and supported (volunteer schemes, organizations that attract volunteers, agencies to support volunteers, as

well as network and umbrella organizations). Implementation capacities include key resources to support volunteering: funding mechanisms, institutionalized communication channels during policy development, mechanisms for collecting and disseminating data on the contribution of volunteering, and standards of good practice.

On December 26, 2019, Decree No. 482 “On Approval of the Plan for the Preparation of Draft Laws for 2020” was adopted, which provides for the preparation of the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Volunteering activity”. The document envisages that the bill will be ready by November 2020 and will be submitted to the House of Representatives of the National Assembly of the Republic of Belarus in March 2021. Currently, non-profit organizations need to focus on developing proposals for the approaches, structure and content of the future bill, have these proposals ready for submission to the National Center for Legislation and Legal Research of the Republic of Belarus and take all necessary steps to have their representatives included in the working group on preparation of the draft of the Law. Proposals should be prepared in a collective discussion with NGOs that have their own volunteering experience, as well as with the involvement of experts.

Education Trends and Perspectives for Media in the Context of Current Challenges and Requests

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Mass media studies
Keywords:	Education, media, journalism
Organization:	<p>Johannes Rau International Centre for Education and Exchange in Minsk (IBB Minsk)</p> <p>IBB Minsk is a Belarusian-German organization that pursues socially useful goals. It serves as a platform for multi-perspective, intercultural and intersectoral dialogue. Organizes educational and enlightenment programs on a wide range of issues, including sustainable development, media literacy and a culture of memory. It seeks to develop an inclusive society in which there is no discrimination, xenophobia.</p>
Contacts:	http://ibb-minsk.by/ events@ibb.by
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Olga Lashkevich — analyst, journalist, editor. Master of Political Sciences.

Aims

The aims of the work are to analyze the demand for educational services in a professional journalistic environment, formulate conclusions about the media preferences of the broad audience, and identify the expectations of the interested public regarding the reflection of socially significant problems in the media mirror.

Methods and Techniques

The interview was a priority research method: — structured in-depth interviews with journalists and editors of state and independent media (16 people), with experts from NGOs and media relations specialists from NGOs (14 people) were carried out. A questionnaire was also organized among practicing specialists of national and regional mass media (13 people).

To describe the current trends in the media sphere and the differences between the media in Belarus, a brief overview of the structure and state of the Belarusian media space based on a synthesis of statistics and information was made from documentary sources and previous studies conducted by both official and independent sociological centers.

In order to study the preferences of the mass audience, data from gemiusAudience media studies, indicators of various ratings were used; to determine the value structure of the Belarusian society, the results of a national population survey prepared by the IPM Research Center were analyzed.

Main Results

1. There are no deep differences between the representatives of the media community in competency-based preferences, we can only talk about different accents: in publications with a large percentage of information-and-news materials, priority is given to efficiency, possession of technological, multimedia and Internet search skills; when working with analytical material and social stories, analytical, investigative skills, fact checking, special “empathy”, understanding of your audience and promotion skills are given priority; for entertainment media, creativity is becoming a priority, both in terms of content, and from the point of view of its presentation and distribution, also digital literacy is in great demand.
2. Technological changes significantly affect the competence preferences in Belarusian journalism. As the trend for creating visual content will intensify, the interest of editors in specialists who can work with video, cameramen, and video editors is justified. Journalists draw attention to the importance of owning special software for creating and working with short video materials that can motivate the audience to read short texts. Also, the technological changes that have taken place make the connection between journalism and the IT sphere in demand.
3. Marketing shifts actualize money-making skills. Editors need the ability to find additional funds, create new opportunities, attract sales managers involved in product promotion, special projects, and advertising hunting. Ordinary journalists are very much in demand for their SMM skills to promote their content on social networks.

4. Social change necessitates a deep understanding by the media community of the concept of human rights. A modern journalist must possess communication skills proceeding from the legal paradigm, be able to talk, taking into account national, gender, age and other markers. The ability to talk with socially vulnerable groups is of great importance.
5. Educational programs have too much of a bias towards the creative component, while training of managers, marketers, developers, designers specializing in media is not carried out at all or is expensive.
6. In relation to journalism, the demand of society for receiving verified news and assistance in solving urgent problems will remain the main focus. Relevant reliable information distinguishes journalism from blogging, and in the future this trend will only intensify.
7. According to the results of the study, we can conclude that the Belarusian audience is lacking a reflection of its own self in the Belarusian picture. At the same time, there is a request for a view of Belarus in the global perspective. Therefore, the competency that must be demanded is the ability to formulate the local, specifically Belarusian agenda (search for heroes, creating an atmosphere, cultivating ideas) and the ability to connect it to the global context in a qualitative, creative way.
8. The editors, journalists and public activists interviewed during the study agreed that the media in Belarus are influential, but the common point of their views is the idea of local niche impact without the ability to change anything at the level of big politics. To reduce the negative perception of the media, it is important to strengthen ethical and legal competencies, develop mediation skills, deepen fact-checking skills, and strictly observe journalism standards. Strengthening the notions of the benefits of the media can be achieved not only by identifying and contributing to the solution of problems, but also through practical education: the consumer of information is interested in positive cases for solving specific problems, useful explanations and tips on the most varied worldly problems of an ordinary person.
9. The social benefits are seen in both prompt accurate information and in the analytical efforts made: it is important for the media to be able to select information from a huge stream, noise, garbage and generalize it; compare issues across countries, approaches; seek and formulate the rationale for decisions; suggest development options: what can be done, where it is most efficient to move
10. The active public's request for media, on the one hand, is connected with the need to publish its activities, to make it more visible through the media. Therefore, representatives of NGOs have an interest in covering events, projects, and initiatives of their organizations, and they try to build relationships with the media as information partners. On the other hand, public experts speak of a more substantial need for the media to take the initiative in disseminating good NGO practices and in exploring various areas related to civic activism.
11. The study showed that Belarus has poorly personalized journalism: there are not enough author columns, there are not enough people, recognizable personalities,

not enough presence of a journalist in the material, not enough author's style and personality. Therefore, it makes sense to pay attention to schools and courses on journalism of opinions, columnism, even if this can not significantly change the situation.

12. Experts from the media community and public activists most often pointed to an interest to the genre of journalistic investigations, the demand for high-quality analytics, and talk shows with a local agenda. If we talk about journalistic investigations, then, despite the systemic difficulties with their implementation, it is useful to develop the skill of conducting them to hone journalistic craftsmanship and ensure future continuity. It is also necessary to train approaches for conducting investigations outside of the political or corruption context.
13. Both representatives of the media space and public activists believe that cultural and economic journalism is underdeveloped in Belarus: economic observers often go into business structures, and cultural issues are often viewed by publications as a back thought. As a result, it is necessary to consider culture not only as cultural events, but also as issues, in conjunction with social and economic factors. There is a need for joint work of cultural managers and journalists in order to create interesting content together. Schools of business and cultural journalism, as well as their convergence with social issues (working out phenomena in their cultural, social and economic perspectives) may draw attention to this approach in the media environment as well.
14. There is demand for the development of legal and judicial journalism, as it is often superficial and not objective at the present. There is a lot of propaganda from both sides in the presentation of the material, often journalists lack the competencies to cover the legal subtleties, and little attention is paid to describing good practices in protecting interests. Experts also believe that media should play a paramount role in raising the profile of civil society, highlighting a modern bureaucratic culture, countering alienation, popularizing local self-government, developing local communities, creative industries, and issues related to strengthening national cultural identity. All this is important for media educational service providers to consider when planning their programs.

Online Activism and Digital Rights

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Human rights, Internet studies
Keywords:	Human rights, online activism, personal data, digital trust
Organization:	<p>Human Constanta, Baltic Internet Policy Initiative (e-Baltic.org)</p> <p>Human Constanta is a Belarusian human rights organization that works with human rights in three main areas: protecting the rights of foreign citizens and stateless persons, promoting anti-discrimination and non-formal education in areas of human rights, digital rights and freedoms. Our mission is to promote public interests and joint actions in response to modern challenges in the field of human rights in Belarus.</p> <p>The Baltic Internet Policy Initiative (e-Baltic.org) is an independent analytical center for the development of ICT, e-government and e-democracy in the Baltic Sea region.</p>
Contacts:	https://humanconstanta.by , info@humanconstanta.by , http://e-belarus.org , info@e-belarus.org
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Mikhail Doroshevich, Marina Sokolova, Andrew Sushko

Aims

Getting an idea of the attitude to civic activity online and the factors that determine this activity, such as digital competencies and digital trust. Diagnostics of basic attitudes and the degree of relevance of issues in the field of digital rights and freedoms.

Methods and Techniques

In January-February 2019, the Human Constanta and the Baltic Internet Policy Initiative conducted two parallel surveys of Belarusian Internet users: (1) "Online Activism" and (2) "Digital Rights and Freedoms." Both polls were conducted in a pop-up format — a window shown to randomly selected site users. The sample structure was adjusted by weighting data by gender, age, region and city of residence of the respondents. Each questionnaire consisted of 25 questions: 20 basic and 5 socio-demographic questions.

Main Results

The most common forms of online activism fall into the category of "awareness": obtaining information about diverse points of view, contacts with individuals and communities, participating in a group with similar interests (70, 66, and 48 percent of respondents' answers, respectively).

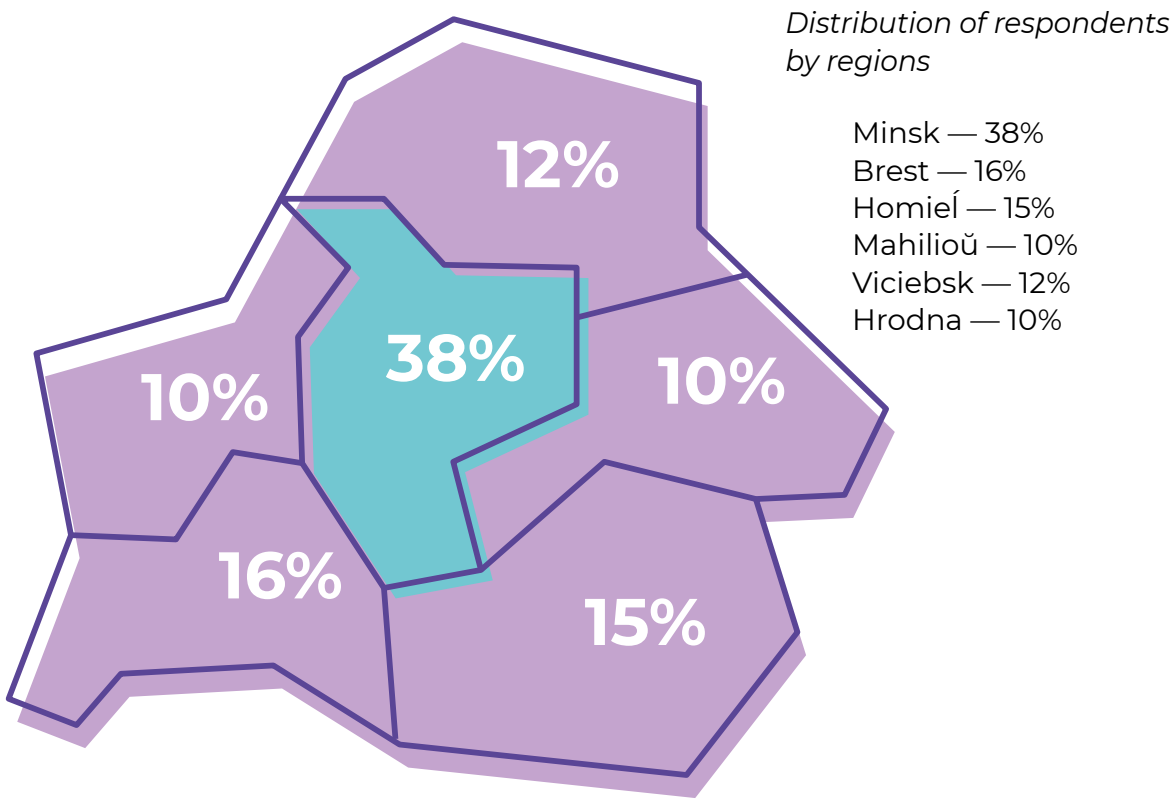
Regarding online "actions" — "helping others"(including crowdfunding), signing an on-line petition, an offer to sign a petition, using hashtags related to a political or social issue, and changing the profile on social networks to show support for the initiative, the community, etc. etc. — 40, 20, 15, 13, and 16 percent of respondents reported respectively.

The survey showed that the idea of digital competence is associated primarily with the ability to quickly find the necessary information. In second place is communication and cooperation, the ability to critically evaluate the quality of information and to ensure the safety and protection of personal data and information. Only 19% of respondents agreed that digital competency included the ability to create content online. The ability to find information is presented not only as the basic, but also as the most demanded skill. The least demanded skill is the ability to create content. Almost 70% of respondents believe that they have the ability to obtain information online.

The survey also showed that respondents were characterized by "trust tension" — understanding the need to collect personal data as a basis for providing services and, at the same time, concerns about improper use of this information.

The analysis of the results of the survey showed that the respondents view the Internet primarily as a free environment for the exchange of information and knowledge (76.4% of answers) and as a space without borders and barriers (50.1% of answers).

The analysis of the results of the survey also showed that 75% respondents visit websites of government agencies, but only 8% believe that Belarus has fully ensured the right of



citizens to access information about the activities of state bodies. Only 27% of respondents filed electronic complaints or inquiries. The number of those satisfied and dissatisfied with the results was distributed approximately equally (11 and 16 percent, respectively). 16% of respondents were fully satisfied with the information provided on the websites of government bodies, partially — 43%.

Reform of the Research & Development sector of Belarus: challenges and possible solutions

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Policy, strengthening the state
Keywords:	Science, research & development, scientific and technical development
Organization:	Institute of Political Studies “Political Sphere”
Contacts:	http://palityka.org/ info@palityka.org
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Andrei Kazakevich , Doctor of Political Sciences (PhD), Director of the “Political Sphere” Institute. Kiryl Haroshka , researcher, “Political Sphere” Institute.

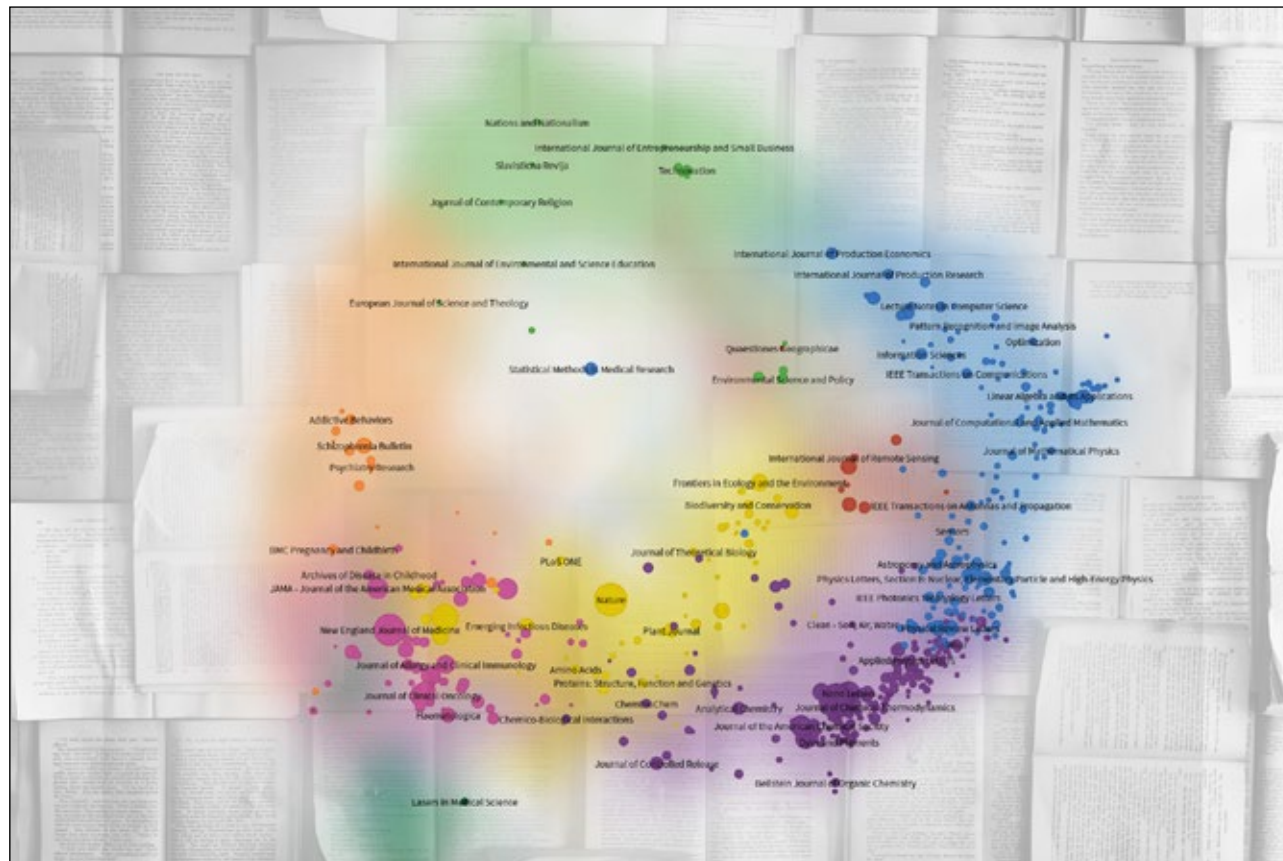
Aims

Since 2008, Belarus has been going through a difficult period in the development of the field of research and development (Research and Development, R&D sector), which negatively affected all the basic indicators of the development of science. The study is aimed at analyzing the situation and the main problems and directions in the development of the sector. In particular, the following problems were considered: transparency of spending financial resources, competitive and project-oriented allocation of funds, conflict of interests and science management system, separation of the sphere of science and higher education, as well as a system for evaluating the results of scientific activity. Recommendations on the development of the sector were formulated.

Methods and Techniques of the Study

The study is based on the analysis of statistical information on financing, the human resources potential of Belarusian science, publications in international journals, regulatory acts that regulate the field, and scientific and technological development programs.

Publications of Belarusian researchers in the Scoups base, 2016



Main Results

Research and development costs

Since 2008, Belarusian science has developed under adverse conditions associated with a significant reduction in public and private funding. In order to maintain and develop the country's scientific potential in the coming years, it is necessary to increase budget expenditures for research and development at least to the level of 2008 — \$ 240 million, as well as stimulate the cost of research and development by commercial organizations. The increase in expenses should be accompanied by reforms aimed at increasing the efficiency of spending public funds: increasing transparency, strengthening the role of competitive and project financing mechanisms, eliminating conflicts of interest in management, developing science in the higher education system, introducing international systems for evaluating the results of scientific activity.

Forecasting.

Forecasting the development of the sphere of scientific research and development should be more realistic and not set unattainable tasks — in particular, rapid growth in the near future of knowledge-intensiveness of GDP to 2% or more. It seems that in the short term, one should concentrate on making up for losses associated with the R&D crisis after 2008 and achieving a knowledge-intensiveness level of GDP of 1%. The achievement of research and development expenditures of 1–1.5% in the next five years should

be considered an optimistic scenario.

Transparency.

The R&D sphere should become more transparent and the distribution of finances understandable and open to the research community and society as a whole. Enshrining in the legislation the obligation for research institutions that receive state funding to annually publish qualitative and financial reports on the expenditure of funds and on the results obtained is required. Financial reports and detailed results reports should be published upon completion of any research programs. Spending through open tenders (in particular Belarusian Republican Foundation for Fundamental Research (BRFFR) and State Committee on Science and Technology of the Republic of Belarus (SCST) should also be more transparent.

Competitive and Project Financing.

In the coming years, the role of mechanisms for competitive and project allocation of funds for research should be significantly increased to 25-30% of total expenditure. Accordingly, the budget of the BRFFR should be increased, and the fund itself should be reorganized and subordinated to the Council of Ministers or the relevant ministry. The general set of mechanisms and forms of support for scientific research should also be expanded. Optimal is to increase project financing while maintaining the existing level of infrastructure support.

Conflicts of interest.

In the management of the scientific field, deep conflicts of interest, primarily related to the special status of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NAS), should be excluded. The powers to coordinate research, control the expenditure of budget funds, redistribute financial resources, determine state programs, expertise and certification should be delegated to ministries, especially the SCST. In turn, the academy should concentrate on research and solving other scientific problems.

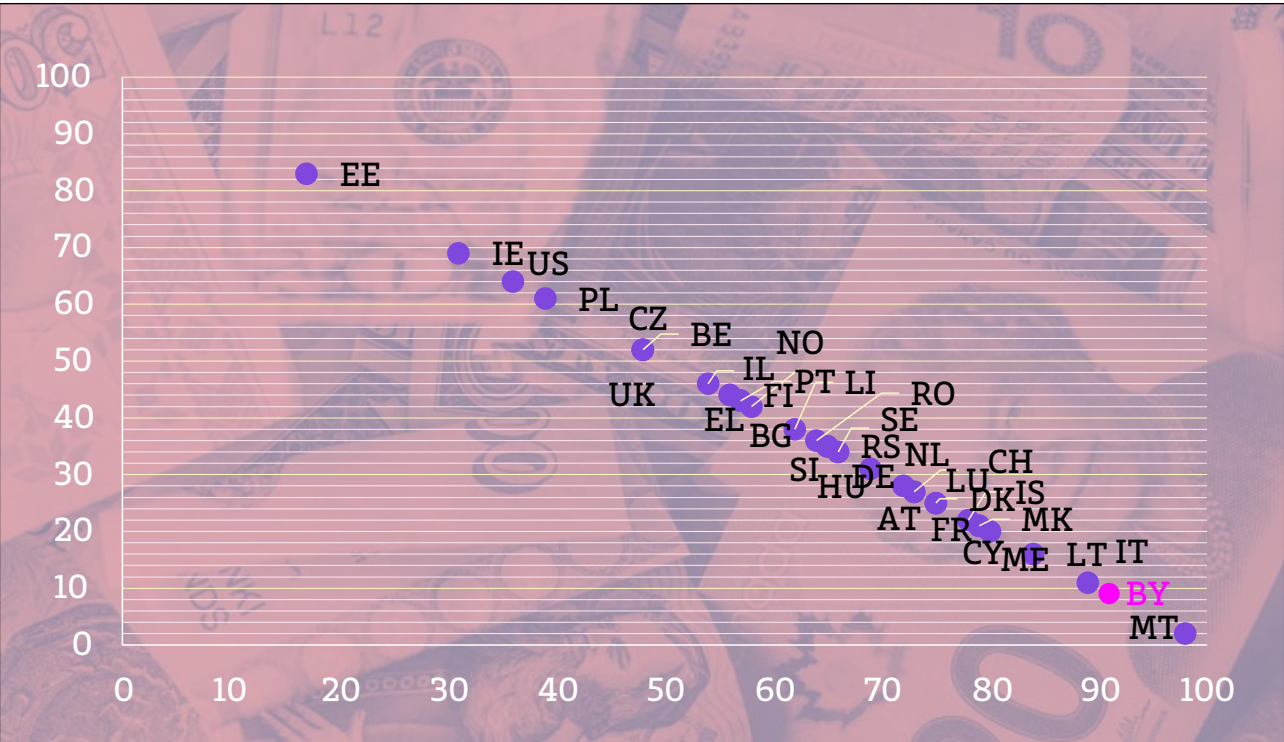
The development of university science.

Organizationally, the biggest challenge for the scientific sector of Belarus is the existence of a clear administrative and economic division between the field of science and education. There is an acute problem of returning science to universities, without which it is impossible to improve the quality of education and the competitiveness of the higher education system. This can be done either through the integration of research institutes with universities, or through a significant increase in the cost of university science. The most optimal seems to be an increase in the support of science at universities through mechanisms of competitive and project financing, rather than infrastructural support, including through new programs under the reorganized BRFFR for central and regional universities.

Criteria for evaluating the results of scientific activity.

The basis for evaluating the results of scientific activity of researchers should be publications and citation indexes in international databases of scientific publications (primarily

Correlation of institutional support (X axis) and project financing (Y axis), %.



ily Web of Science and Scopus). At the same time, mechanisms should be developed that will minimize the negative consequences for individual disciplines and academic communities of adopting international assessment systems. Evaluation of the results of scientific activities should affect career prospects and the level of salaries in the higher education system and academic research institutions. Moreover, special incentive measures should be developed to increase the number of publications in English.

National statistics.

National statistics should collect and publish information not only on the number of researchers and other workers employed in the research and development sector (head count), but also the equivalent in full rates (full-time). Existing statistics do not allow a comprehensive analysis of the costs and staffing potential of Belarusian science. It is also necessary to collect and publish data on the volumes of institutional and project budget financing of research and development (following the example of Eurostat).

Gender Analysis in the System of Local Government and Self-Government

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Gender studies, public policy, state governance
Keywords:	Local government and self-government, local deputy councils, gender analysis
Organization:	NGO "Lev Sapieha Foundation"
	NGO "Lev Sapieha Foundation" is a non-governmental non-political non-profit organization. One of the oldest Belarusian public associations, which was established on June 26, 1992 to promote: <ul style="list-style-type: none">the establishment and development of democratic reforms in the Republic of Belarus in the field of local self-government, economy, science, culture,the development of civil society in Belarus;propaganda of ideas of democracy.
	On May 31, 2001, the Lev Sapieha Foundation was granted observer status in the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe.
Contacts:	http://sapieha.org/ evsapieha@gmail.com
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Aksana Yerafeyeva Miraslau Kobasa

Aims

The authors reveal to the public the essence of gender analysis and the benefits of its use in the system of local government and self-government. For the first time, a number of indicators characterizing the gender peculiarities of the distribution of power in the system of local government in Belarus have been collected.

Particular attention is paid to the formulation of proposals and recommendations for the integration of a gender approach into the activities of local governments in the Republic of Belarus, which is based on the analysis of collected data and further illustrated by examples of practical implementation of gender analysis in foreign countries.

The aim of the study is to identify the benefits of using gender analysis in decision-making at the local level and identify opportunities for gender analysis in local government and self-government as necessary conditions for improving the efficiency of local government in Belarus.

Methods and Techniques

Analysis of primary and secondary information, synthesis, comparison, analysis of best practices. Bodies of local government and local self-government are considered individually in contrast to the usually accepted generalized joint description of them.

Main Results

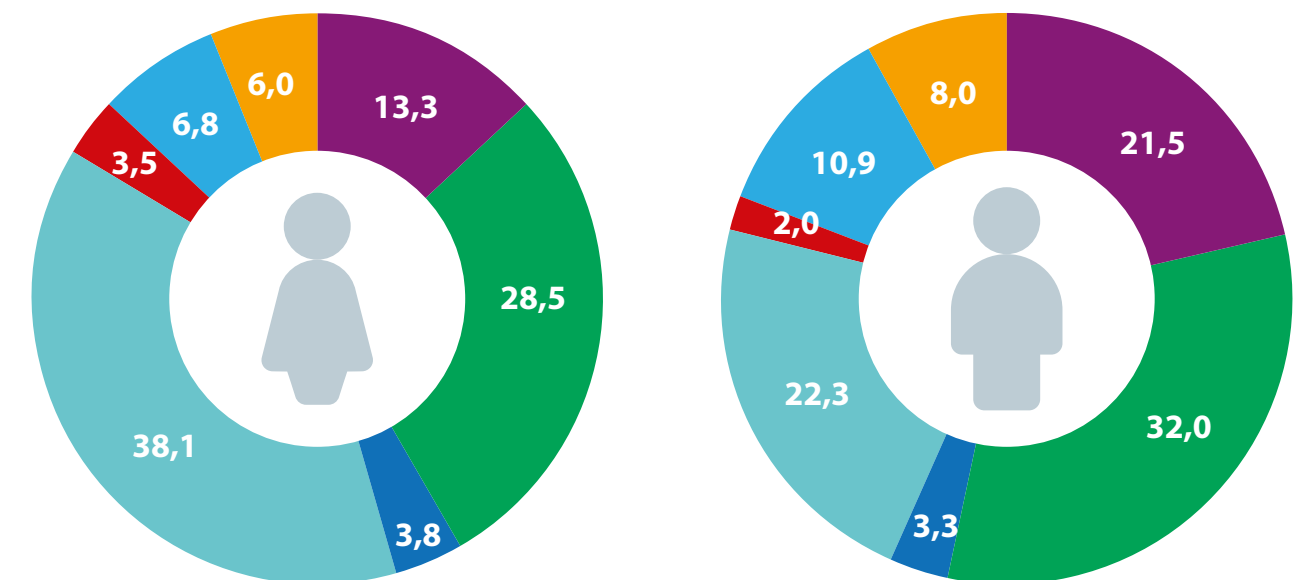
For the first time, a number of parameters for assessing the gender structure of local government and local self-government in Belarus have been quantified. Accentuated features of the gender distribution of power at the regional, basic and primary levels of government. Proposals for the use of gender analysis in local government and self-government of the Republic of Belarus have been formulated. Taking into account the Belarusian context, relevant practical examples of the application of gender analysis abroad are described.

The majority of civil servants in local government are women (72.5%). Men's participation in local governance, especially at the primary level, is low. The share of men in the civil service of local authorities increases from 23.9% at the primary level to 27.7% at the basic level and 33.6% at the regional level.

At the same time, in terms of positions held by women civil servants, there is a gender bias in the levels of government within specific authorities and management: men still dominate them at the highest levels of decision-making — both at the regional and basic, and at the primary level. In the system of local government in Belarus there is a problem of so-called «glass ceiling», typical of the structure of employment in the economy of Belarus as a whole. Among the chairmen of regional and basic executive committees in the Republic of Belarus in all regions, except Homiel, 100% are men.

In fact women as a social group are underrepresented in decision making. Accordingly, a number of gender-based issues are not even realized and formulated in the political

Distribution of civil servants of state bodies and other state organizations of the Republic of Belarus by positions as of December 1, 2017 (%)



- Heads of organizations and their deputies
- Heads of separate structural subdivisions, departments, divisions, sectors and their deputies
- Assistants to the head of the organization, advisers, consultants
- Chief specialists
- Leading specialists
- Other specialists
- Legal specialists

plane. At the level of decision-making in the bodies of representative and executive power, the problems of gender inequality are not actually taken into account.

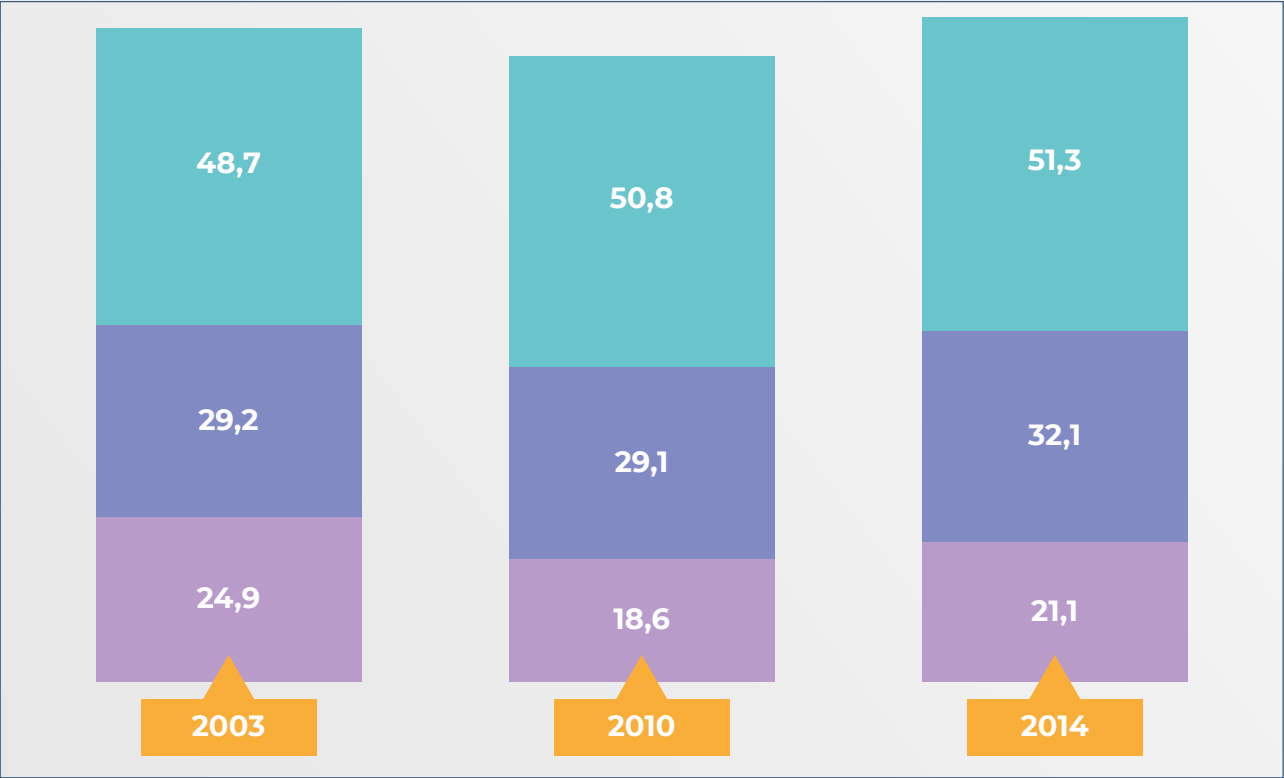
An important link in the local self-government of Belarus are the bodies of territorial public self-government. It is not possible to characterize the structure of their representatives by field, age, educational characteristics in the country due to the lack of data at the national level.

Recommendations for the integration of a gender approach into the activities of local government and self-government bodies in the Republic of Belarus have been formulated, in particular:

A cross-sectoral approach and giving gender issues a priority status in the development of policy documents on socio-economic development. Macroeconomic and structural reforms, which are, in principle, gender-neutral, can have different effects on the male and female cohorts of the population. It is necessary to predict the gender consequences of socio-economic policy measures when justifying them. It is possible to increase the effectiveness of many policies and programs that are not even primarily focused on gender equality, if their development takes into account the weak / insufficient representa-

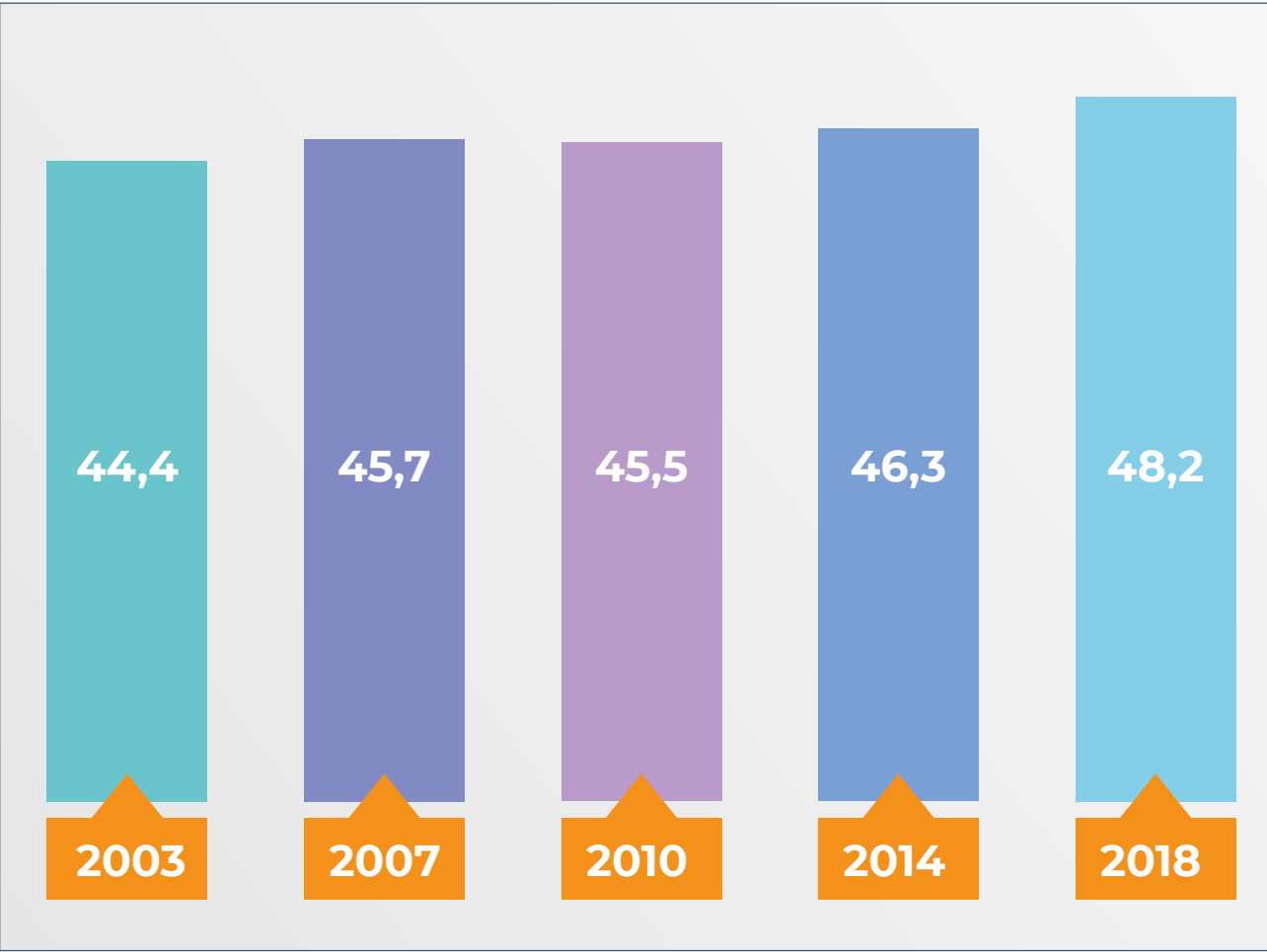
	GENDER DISTRIBUTION	
	WOMEN	MEN
Civil servants, total	67,4	32,6
Including by position:		
Heads of organizations and their deputies	56,2	43,9
Heads of separate structural divisions, departments, divisions, sectors and their deputies	64,8	35,2
Assistants to the head of the organization, advisers, consultants	70,4	29,6
Chief specialists	78,0	22,0
Leading specialists	78,4	21,8
Other specialists	56,3	43,7
Legal specialists	60,9	39,1

Proportion of women deputies of local councils by council levels,%



Council Level: ■ regional, ■ basic, ■ primary

The share of women in local councils of deputies



tion of women (or other discriminated groups) in certain markets and in certain sectors or professions.

Implementation of integrated gender diagnostics, which is a prerequisite for policy development and programs.

Enhanced capabilities for monitoring and evaluation of gender differences. Reliable monitoring of the situation requires reliable data in the field, which is insufficient in Belarus today. Involvement of all stakeholders, including employers, trade unions, and other civil society organizations, is particularly important in this process.

Gender sensitization of civil servants, journalists, teachers; development of gender sensitivity in the society with the help of information and educational campaigns in the media, raising awareness of the benefits of gender equality; popularization of the idea of gender equality and its practical benefits for the economic system as a whole.

Development of the gender education system.

Stimulating the use of gender audit in the practice of public administration, commercial and non-profit organizations, etc.

Distribution of the number of civil servants of state bodies and other state organizations of the Republic of Belarus by regions and the city of Minsk as of December 1, 2017 (%)

			DISTRIBUTION BY GENDER	
	FEMALES	MALES	FEMALES	MALES
Republic of Belarus	100	100	67,4	32,6
Regions and Minsk city				
Brest	12,6	15,3	63,0	37,0
Viciebsk	12,1	11,8	67,9	32,0
Homieĺ	13,2	13,0	67,8	32,2
Hrodna	11,9	13,8	64,1	35,9
Minsk city	24,7	26,6	65,8	34,2
Minsk	14,5	9,4	76,1	23,9
Mahilioŭ	11,0	10,1	69,4	30,6

Analysis of Collective E-Petitions of Citizens: Human Rights Aspect

Year of study:

2019

Sphere:

Sociology, public policy

Keywords:

Citizens' appeals, implementation of civil rights, e-government

Organization:

The center of public administration research «SYMPA»

The goal of «SYMPA» is to promote the reform of the public administration system in Belarus in accordance with modern principles and practices: transparency, inclusiveness, accountability, efficiency. «SYMPA»'s main activities are education, research and monitoring (public finance and government procurement). We unite people who strive to improve the quality of governance in our country.

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Link to the publication:

[Please click here](#)

Authors and partners:

Tatiana Kouzina,
Natallia Rabava,
Svetlana Kulesh

Aims

As part of the study, an analytical assessment of the effectiveness and potential of collective electronic appeals of citizens of the Republic of Belarus to state bodies as an example of civic participation and an instrument for realizing human rights (using the Petitions.by website as an example) was carried out in order to improve this mechanism in accordance with modern Belarus realities

Methods and Techniques

During the study, an array (database) of 1109 electronic appeals of citizens (petitions) created by users on the petitions.by website for 2017 and 2018 and sent to the state bodies of the Republic of Belarus was analyzed. Petitions were analyzed in terms of the presence of an explicit or implicit human rights component. For the purposes of this analysis, a working list of human rights was created on the basis of international human rights treaties ratified by the Republic of Belarus.

In July 2019, a survey was conducted among users of the site petitions.by. The total population — the total number of users of the site petitions.by — is 250,000 users. The sample size is 499 respondents. The survey method is an online survey based on self-selection of respondents.

In addition, 12 semi-structured interviews were conducted with the most active users of the petitions.by website. The invitation to participate in the interview was sent to users who created 4 or more petitions, so 10 participants were selected (6 from Minsk, 3 from regional centers and 1 from the district city).

Main Results

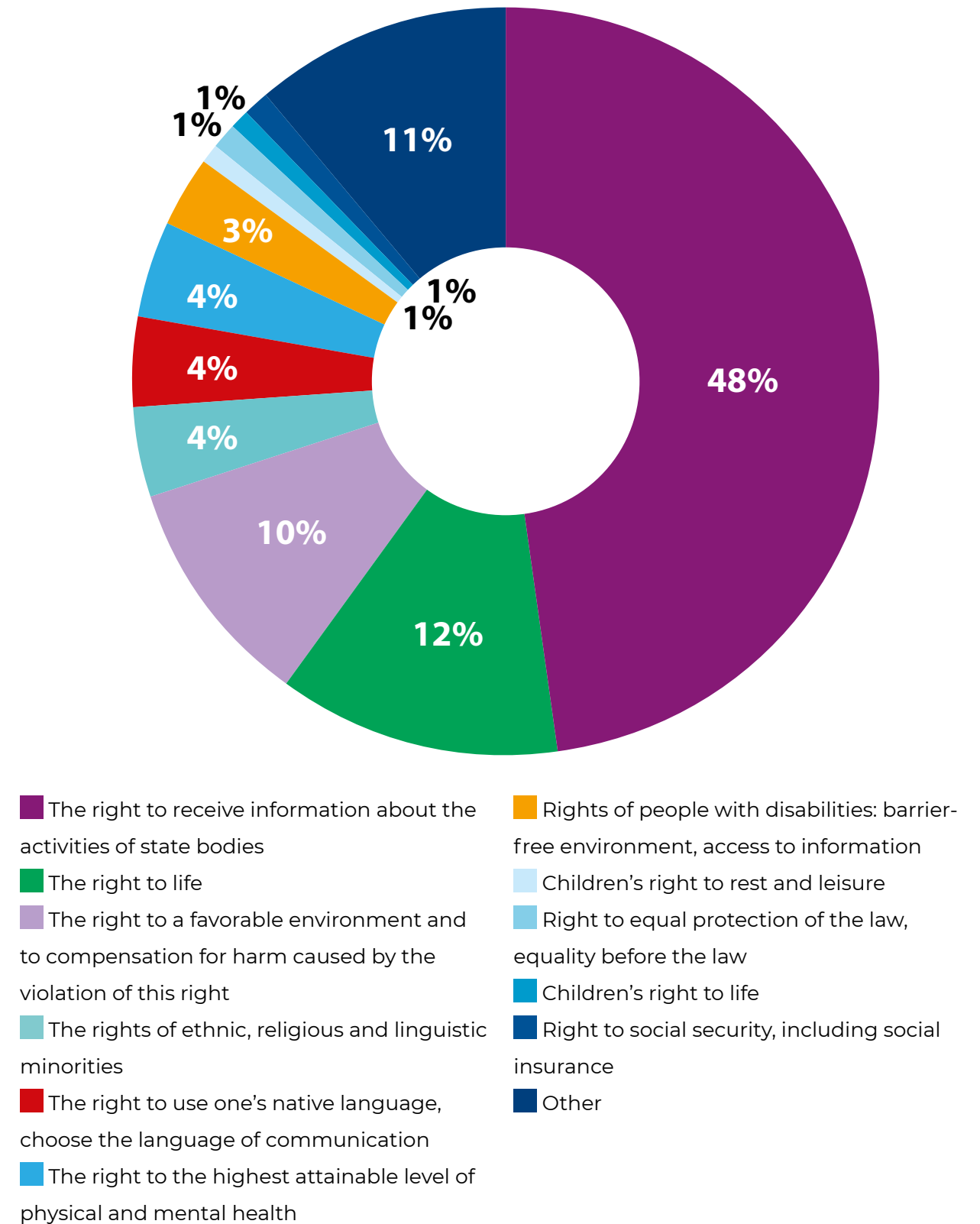
The motivation of the authors of written electronic appeals (petitions), according to their own estimates, is the public good: people believe that they themselves and others write collective appeals to government bodies in order to solve problems involving a large number of people, as well as eliminate injustice and draw public attention to the issue. Moreover, the motive for protecting human rights in the perception of respondents is more common to other people than to themselves.

More than half (51.2%) of the petitions have a human rights component in terms of the issues addressed in them (hereinafter referred to as de facto human rights petitions), however, only less than 10% of the petitions contain a direct reference to human rights.

At the same time about 80% of the petition authors consider the activity of creating the petitions to be protection of rights and evaluate their own petitions as human rights related in 32% of cases, which is the most frequently mentioned topic of the created petitions. The themes of urban infrastructure and ecology, especially if it directly relates to the health and safety of people, are also regarded by the authors as related to human rights.

Almost half of the de facto human rights petitions are related to the right to receive, store and disseminate information on the activities of state bodies, including repeated

Distribution of de facto rights protection petitions on human rights



appeals related to dissatisfaction of authors with the response or actions of state bodies. Among the three leaders are also included the right to life and the right to a favorable environment and compensation for harm caused by the violation of this right

The mention of human rights in the text of the petition is more of a mobilizing, rather than a scary, factor for users signing petitions created by other people. The petitions which refer to human rights, on average collect 2 times more signatures than the overall array.

Men are much more likely than women to author petitions (75% against 25%), while among the signatories of the petitions, the gender imbalance is practically equalized. When signing the petitions, men pay more attention to the rights associated with the public sphere — civil, political and cultural. Women are more willing to sign petitions related to the private sphere, family affairs: education, healthcare, social issues.

There is no relationship between the presence of an explicit or implicit human rights component of the petition and the fact of the response of the state authorities or the time period for its submission.

User satisfaction with government responses to de facto human rights petitions is slightly lower than for petitions that do not contain a human rights component.

Discussion of the topic, especially in the media, according to the authors of the petitions, seriously increases their chances of being examined on the merits. A non-political topic, proper design with links to legislation, «solvability» and the specificity of the problem also help. Human rights are a helping factor only in the opinion of 19% of authors.

The creation of written electronic appeals through the website petitions.by remains a city and even a metropolitan phenomenon: Minsk, in which a fifth of the republic's population lives, generates half of the de facto human rights petitions. However, visible initiatives are already noted in the regions, creating positive examples of the possibility of influencing decision-making through collective appeals.

Despite the fact that the most effective form of participation in decision-making, according to respondents, is to attract media attention, in real life people use collective and individual appeals to state bodies more. Men are somewhat more active in using a wide range of forms of participation, women are more actively using only individual appeals to state bodies. Individual appeals are assessed as a frequently used, but not very effective form of participation.

An analysis of the content of the array of petitions examined showed that 51.5% of the total number of petitions (571 petitions) are de facto human rights, that is, they relate to human rights, but only 8.7% of the total number of petitions (97 petitions) claimed to be human rights by their authors. After analyzing the content of petitions filed by human rights advocates, 7.6% of their total number (84 petitions) were classified as human rights ones, and 1.1% (13 petitions) could not be qualified as human rights ones.

Development of Legislation and Practice of Implementation of State Social Procurement in Belarus

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Rights, public policy
Keywords:	Social demand to the state, non-commercial organizations, cooperation between the state and the NGOs
Organization:	International Educational Public Association “ACT” IEPA “ACT” is a community of coaches, consultants and experts working for the benefit of civil society. To do this, we promote the interests of CSOs and amend the legislation to create a more favorable environment for their activities; train and advise CSOs; conduct research, monitoring and evaluation of programs, projects and organizations.
Contacts:	http://actngo.info/ actngo.info@gmail.com
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Valery Zhurakovsky — coach, consultant on organizational development and strategic planning, coordinator of the IEPA “ACT” program “Promotion of state social procurement in the Republic of Belarus”.

Aims

The study is an analysis of the practice of applying regulations on state social procurement in Belarus and suggestions on ways to improve them. The analytical document is intended to assist the authorities and non-governmental non-profit organizations in increasing the effectiveness of the implementation of state social procurement (SSP) and in developing an appropriate regulatory framework

Methods and Technologies

The analysis of SSP practices was based on a study of documentary sources (legal acts, announcements of tenders on the websites of state customers, contracts, accounting and reporting documents) and the results of individual interviews with representatives of customers and SSP executors.

Main results

The SSP mechanism appeared in Belarus in 2013 with the entry into force of the new version of the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Social Services”. In this law, a separate chapter regulates the SSP mechanism, which allows local authorities to finance social services and social projects of non-governmental non-profit organizations of Belarus (NGO).

In 2017, normative acts were adopted allowing the use of the SSP mechanism also in the field of the prevention of socially dangerous diseases, human immunodeficiency virus (HIV).

Since the implementation of SSP, the number of contracts and the volume of financing of NGOs through the SSP have more than tripled. So, in 2019, 123 SSP agreements were already implemented for a total of 903 thousands BYR (432 thousands USD). Together with the volume of financing, the range of services, the categories of citizens — recipients of services, and the very number of recipients of services are growing. At the same time, there remains a high level of monopolization of the services market within the framework of the SSP. In 2018, 53% of the SSP agreements were concluded with one republican organization — the Belarusian Red Cross Society.

The attitude of local authorities to the use of the SSP mechanism is very different in various regions of Belarus. The difference in the number of contracts concluded differs by more than 10 times. So, in the Homiel region, only 2 contracts for social services of NGOs are concluded annually, while in the Hrodna region in 2018, 22 contracts were concluded.

Less than 5% of government customers took advantage of the legal opportunity to conclude an agreement for a period of more than one year. As a result, there are breaks in the provision of social and preventive services during the competitive process. This also negatively affects NGO workers who find themselves without work and without a salary for the period of the competitions.

The main problem that makes the SSP unattractive to NGOs is the financial conditions of the SSP in the social sphere: only the salaries of employees who provide social services are subsidized (administrative expenses, transport costs or materials are not funded), plus 50% of the social project budget. At the same time, the SSP contractor is obliged to invest his 50% financially (in-kind or volunteer work is not suitable) and he must already have his part of the project financing at the time of the SSP contest. Therefore, the executors of the SSP are mainly large republican public organizations and very few local NGOs.

Over the six years of the implementation of the SSP, out of 428 contracts, only 2 were for financing social projects. The main reason for the lack of competition for projects within the SSP is the exceedingly high regulatory requirement for the amount of co-financing of social projects by NGOs.

Today, there are two separate packages of regulatory documents on the SSP, which are slightly different from each other: in the field of social services and in the prevention of socially dangerous diseases. A comparative analysis of the SSP regulation norms shows that most of the regulation norms of the SSP mechanism in these two areas of application coincide with each other. At the same time, there are non-fundamental procedural differences in the regulation of competitive SSP procedures that create difficulties in the implementation process for those participants who implement the SSP at the same time in different areas.

There is ambiguity in the interpretation of the provisions of the Tax Code regarding the taxation of free services under the SSP. With a difference of two months, the Ministry of Taxes and Duties of the Republic of Belarus gave two opposite interpretations of subparagraph 2.23 of paragraph 2 of Article 196 of the Code, in terms of whether the services within the SSP can be attributed to publicly available social services and, accordingly, whether they are subject to income tax.

At the same time, both NGOs and a number of ministries voiced the need to involve NGOs through the SSP in areas to which the current regulatory documents do not apply. For example, rehabilitation and resocialization services for people who use psychoactive substances, including minors; resocialization of persons who have left prison, etc.

In addition to the sphere of social services and the prevention of socially dangerous diseases, HIV, the legislation declares the need to involve NGOs in the implementation of public policies and / or government programs in 4 areas (culture, healthcare, environmental protection, crime prevention) during the absence of a regulatory mechanism for such engagement in the form of a SSP.

The practice of applying the SSP has shown the viability and relevance of this mechanism in Belarus. Therefore, the adoption of universal legislation on state social procurement, which would propose a uniform mechanism for state financing of NGOs in various areas of socially useful activities, is within the current agenda.

Stigmatization of People from Vulnerable Groups by NGO and Mass Media Staff

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Human rights, mass media studies
Keywords:	Vulnerable groups, discrimination, stereotypes
Organization:	Public campaign «People First» Public campaign «People First» was created in 2019 in support of people from the most vulnerable groups in Belarus — including people with disabilities, people with HIV, migrants, LGBTQ + and others. The aim of the campaign is to help reduce the stigmatisation of vulnerable people by journalists, editors and NGO staff.
Contacts:	#peoplefirst
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Public campaign «People First»

Aims

Determining the degree of discrimination and stigmatization of vulnerable groups in Belarus. Creating a map of superstitions, prejudices, stereotypes, ignorance about various vulnerable groups.

Methods and Techniques

The study was conducted using the online survey method. The questionnaire contained 16 questions and required 8–10 minutes to complete. The total number of respondents is 144, including 28 journalists and editors, and 116 NGO employees. The sample was formed by the snowball method: the link to the questionnaire was distributed with the help of graduates of the Community Connections 2018 program, in the Facebook community «Journalists for Tolerance», through the Facebook page of the Belarusian Association of Journalists. The field phase of the study took place in May — September 2019

Main Results

People with physical, mental or intellectual disabilities, people living with HIV and inpatients are considered unconditionally vulnerable by the media and NGOs.

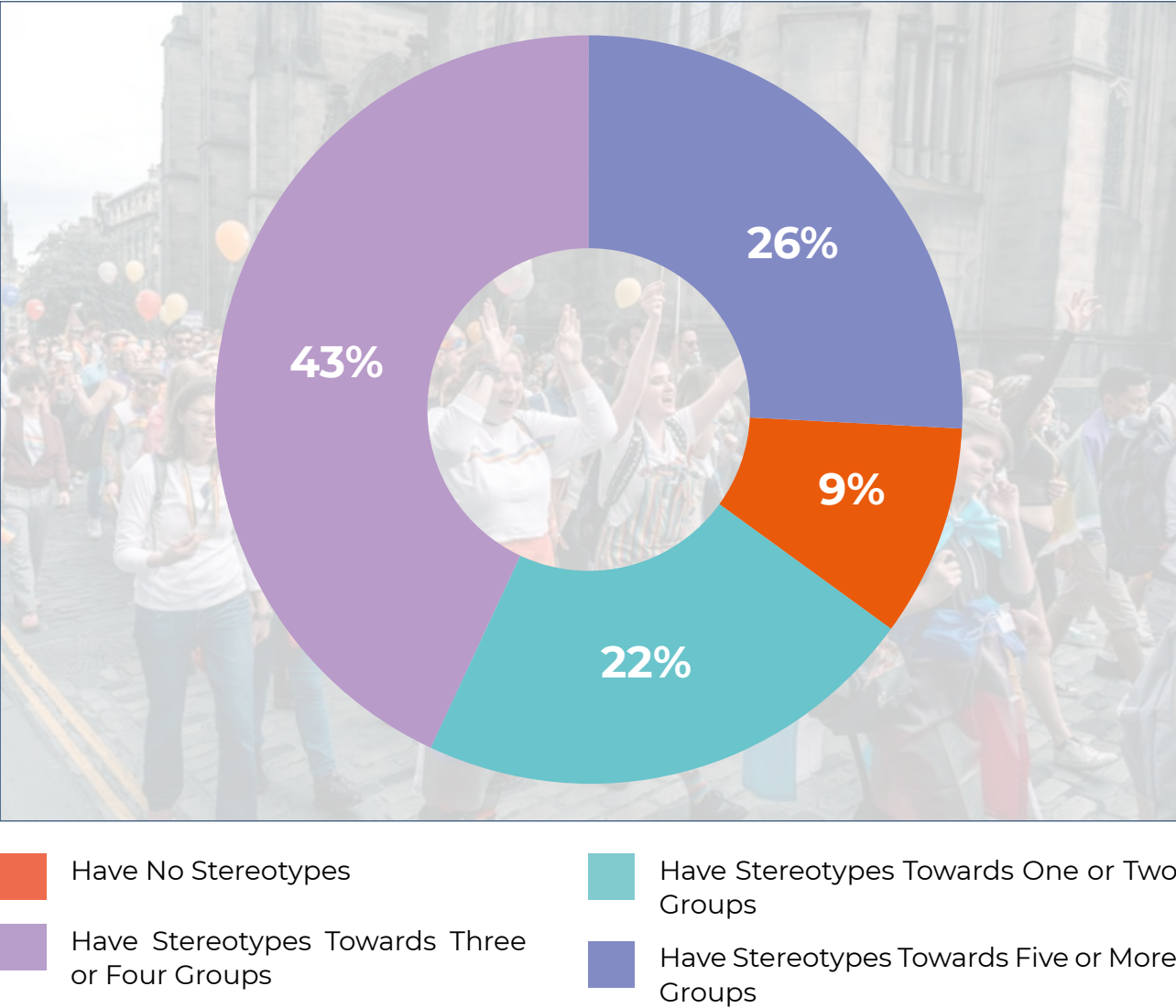
Migrants, people in conflict with the law and injecting drug users are considered rather vulnerable than not vulnerable. As for people with alcohol dependence, LGBTQ + representatives and gypsies, the attitude of the respondents towards them is controversial and ambiguous.

Interestingly, the attitudes of media workers and NGO workers differ slightly in determining what they consider vulnerable groups and what they do not. For example, NGO representatives more often answered that gypsies could not be considered a vulnerable group, and journalists and editors often said so about refugees. But both journalists and NGO workers responded equally often that they could not consider LGBTQ+ a vulnerable. Moreover, the life of this group does not need to be reported in the media.

One of the hypotheses of the study was that the perception of vulnerability of individuals in the population is associated with the experience of professional interaction with members of the group. This is true for people with disabilities and inpatients (more than 70% consider these groups vulnerable, more than 40% have professional experience of interaction) and in relation to migrants, injecting drug users drugs and gypsies (less than 70% consider these groups vulnerable, less than 40% have professional experience).

However, this does not work with other groups: more than 70% of respondents consider people living with HIV to be a vulnerable population, although less than 40% of respondents have experience of professional interaction with this group; conversely, more than 40% of respondents have professional experience of interacting with people with alcohol dependence, people in conflict with the law, with LGBTQ people, but less than 70% of respondents agree to treat these groups as vulnerable. Thus, although professional experience of interaction influences the attitude towards members of vul-

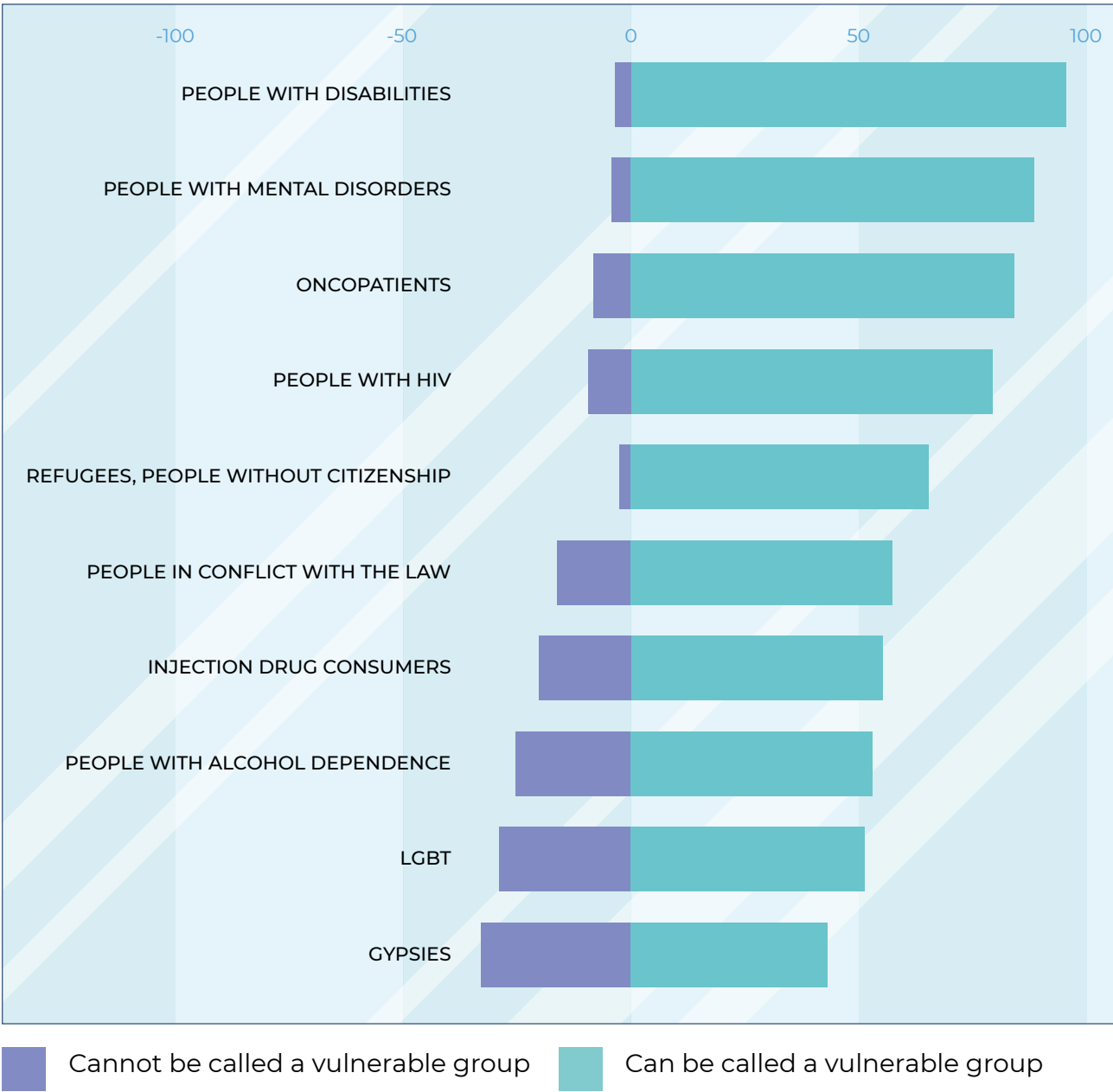
Distribution of respondents by the presence of stereotypes regarding vulnerable groups



nerable groups, this influence is limited by other factors — and the first among them is bias.

According to the study, the strongest of the stereotypes are: people in this group are to blame for their own problems and people from this group would be better to somehow isolate (not to work with them in the same room, or have children from this group study separately from other children). For example, injecting drug users and people with alcohol dependence are to blame for their problems (more than 40% of respondents think so), as are people in conflict with the law (more than 30% of respondents think so) and LGBTQ+ representatives (more than 15% of respondents think so). About 40% of respondents are willing to somehow isolate injecting drug users and people with alcohol dependence, about 20% — people with mental or intellectual disabilities, about 10-15% — people in conflict with the law and LGBTQ+.

If we compare these results with the results of the study «Values of the population of Belarus» (IPM Research Center, 2019), according to which more than 90% of Belarusians consider drug addiction shameful, and more than 70% consider homosexuality shame-



ful, it is clear that the level of bias among media workers and service NGOs is relatively low. However, the groundbreaking assessment at this level allows for more accurate and focused awareness-raising programs for journalists, editors, and service workers on the dangers of stigmatizing vulnerable populations, with recommendations to avoid hate speech and other forms of bullying.

Hate Speech Monitoring in Belarusian Mass Media

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Human rights, mass media studies
Keywords:	Vulnerable groups, hate speech and discrimination, human rights
Organization:	<p>“Journalists for Tolerance”</p> <p>“Journalists for Tolerance” Human Rights Initiative is a non-profit civic association of media workers who strive for equality and non-discrimination, regardless of nationality, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and other signs. The initiative increases the visibility of representatives of discriminated groups, provides a response to cases of hate speech and hate crimes, and also promotes professional coverage of issues related to social groups discriminated against in Belarus. “Journalists for Tolerance” annually monitor hostility towards vulnerable groups in the Belarusian media, including separate monitoring of the hostile language against LGBTQ +.</p>
Contacts:	<p>https://j4t.by/</p> <p>info@j4t.by</p>
Link to the publication:	<p>Please click here</p>
Authors and partners:	Human rights initiative “Journalists for tolerance”

Aims

The purpose of the monitoring is to give an overview of the manifestations of hate speech in the Belarusian media, with particular attention to the following questions:

- Which media categories are more likely to produce hate speech and, therefore, the authors of which media should be the main target group of educational events?
- Towards which groups is the most hostile language directed and, therefore, the protection of whose interests needs to be strengthened?
- What incorrect rhetorical strategies are the most common and, therefore, what should be the content of educational seminars, manuals for journalists, etc.?

Methods and Techniques

The study is based on a cluster stratified sample that is representative of online publications in the Belarusian media. The media website acted as a cluster, the stratification criteria were media audience coverage (republican/regional) and political position (pro-government/independent).

A list of Belarusian media was compiled that met the following criteria: media has a website, in the period July — October 2019 the site was updated more than once or twice a month, the media reaches a wide audience, the media publishes materials on socio-political issues.

216 media that meet these criteria have been identified. 36 media outlets were randomly selected from them, plus the “Vechernyi Mogilev” (“Evening Mogilev”) newspaper, known for its aggressive rhetoric, totaling 37 publications. The materials of the selected media were searched for keywords.

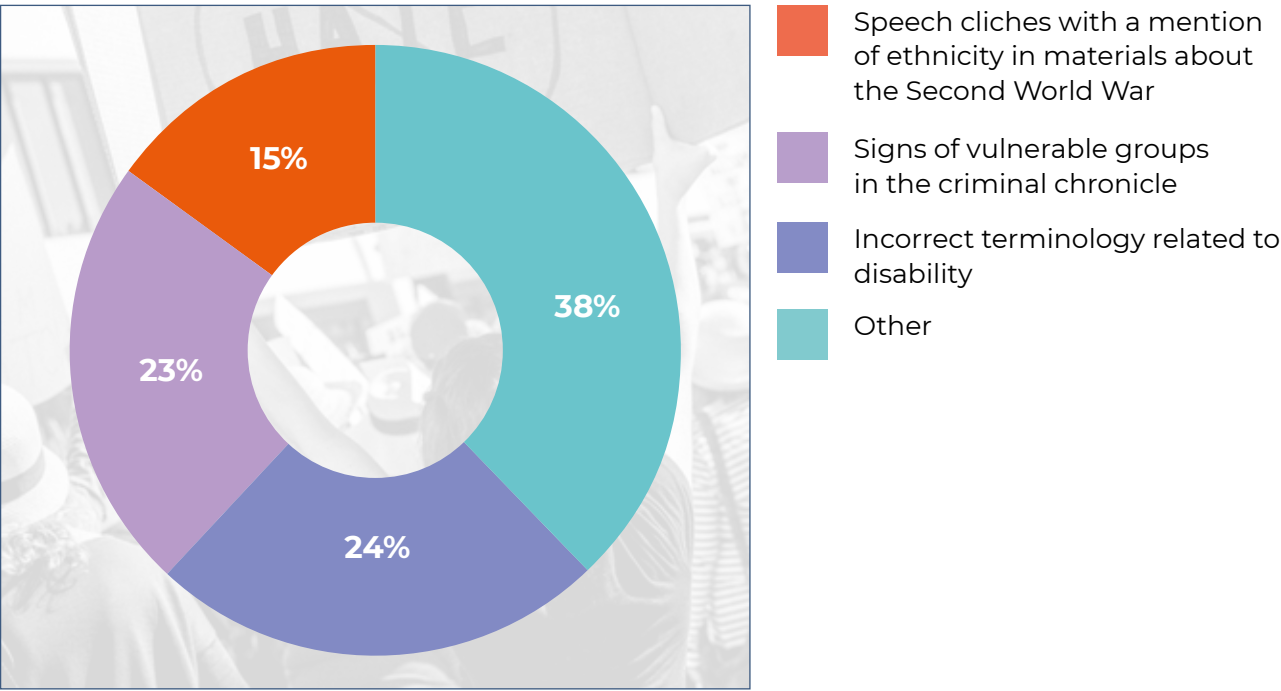
Main Results

In the Belarusian media, mentions of vulnerable groups included in our monitoring are found in about 25% of all publications. Moreover, signs of hostility in relation to these groups are found in less than 4% of all media content released.

The least frequently mentioned group in the media is LGBTQ + (0.26% of all media publications), the most mentioned groups are ethnic (10.3% all publications).

The most publications that are politically correct are related to the mention of religious associations (96% of all materials mentioning the group). However, if a publication about religious associations is politically incorrect, it is highly likely that it will contain harsh negative rhetoric.

Least of all politically correct materials deals with people with disabilities (67.9% of all materials mentioning the group) due to the fact that journalists continue to use the incorrect wording “disabled”, “people with limited abilities” instead of “people with disabilities”. This is almost a quarter of all the materials we found with hostility towards all vulnerable groups. The reason is largely in the terminology of officials who



use these formulations. Almost the same amount of correct materials is published about LGBTQ + (68.8%).

Another approximately quarter (23.3%) of all the hate speech materials we found against all vulnerable groups mentions characteristics of groups in the criminal chronicle. Typical material from this group is the publication of an unprocessed or poorly processed press release of law enforcement agencies, which note whether the detainee had a criminal record, whether he was unemployed, his citizenship, etc.

15% of all hate speech materials we found were in materials about the Second World War with speech cliches indicating ethnicity: “German fascist invaders”, “German occupiers”, “German concentration camp”, “German captivity”, etc.

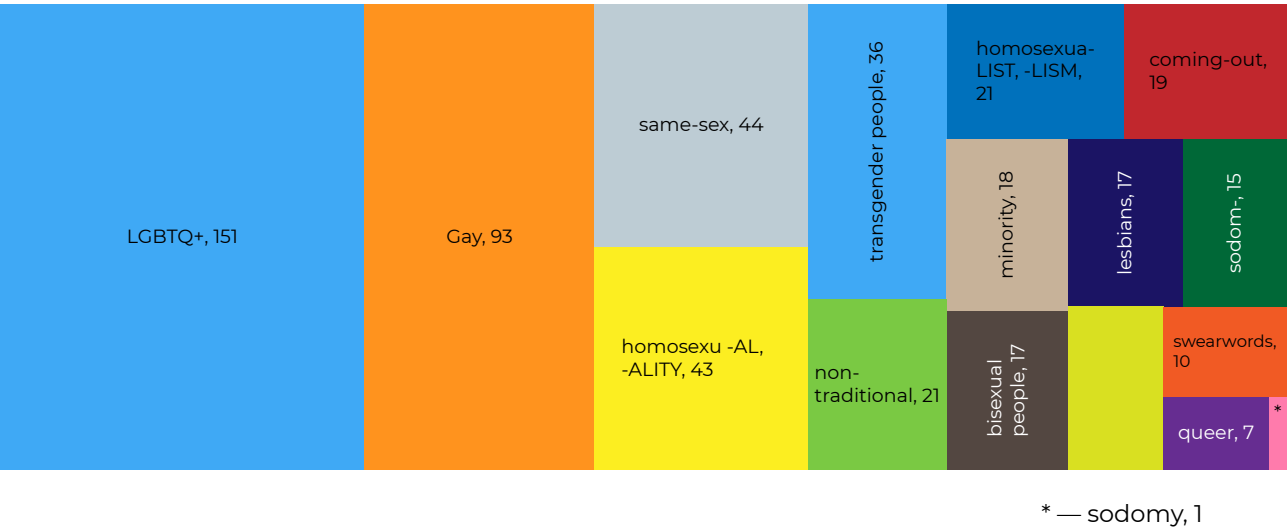
In other materials not related to publications about the Second World War, criminal chronicle and articles with incorrect references to disability, the most severe was the rhetoric addressed to religious minorities (average severity score of 14.3), LGBTQ + (11.5), as well as to those having addiction and experience of imprisonment (11 and 10.8, respectively).

The average severity score of publications by pro-government media is slightly higher than independent (9.1 vs. 7.9), republican — higher than regional (9 vs. 8.3), if we compare these groups without taking into account materials about the Second World War, materials about crime and articles with incorrect references to disability. At the same time, regional mass media, as we note from monitoring to monitoring, are less likely to publish incorrect materials (again, without taking into account three special groups). But they are much more likely to write «Germans» instead of «Nazis» and «disabled people» instead of «people with disabilities.»

How was the LGBTQ covered in Belarusian media in 2019?

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Human rights, mass media studies
Keywords:	LGBTQ+ community, hate speech and discrimination
Organization:	“Journalists for Tolerance” “Journalists for Tolerance” Human Rights Initiative is a non-profit civic association of media workers who strive for equality and non-discrimination, regardless of nationality, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and other signs. The initiative increases the visibility of representatives of discriminated groups, provides a response to cases of hate speech and hate crimes, and also promotes professional coverage of issues related to social groups discriminated against in Belarus. “Journalists for Tolerance” annually monitor hostility towards vulnerable groups in the Belarusian media, including separate monitoring of the hostile language against LGBTQ +.
Contacts:	https://j4t.by/ info@j4t.by
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Human rights initiative “Journalists for tolerance”

Number of publications with keywords



Aims

The purpose of the monitoring is to give an overview of the manifestations of hate speech in the Belarusian media, paying particular attention to the LGBTQ+ community and answering the questions:

- Which media categories are more likely to produce hate speech in relation to the LGBTQ+ community and, therefore, the authors of which media should be the main target group of educational events?
- What incorrect rhetorical strategies regarding the LGBTQ+ community are the most common and, therefore, what should the content of educational seminars, manuals for journalists, etc. be like?

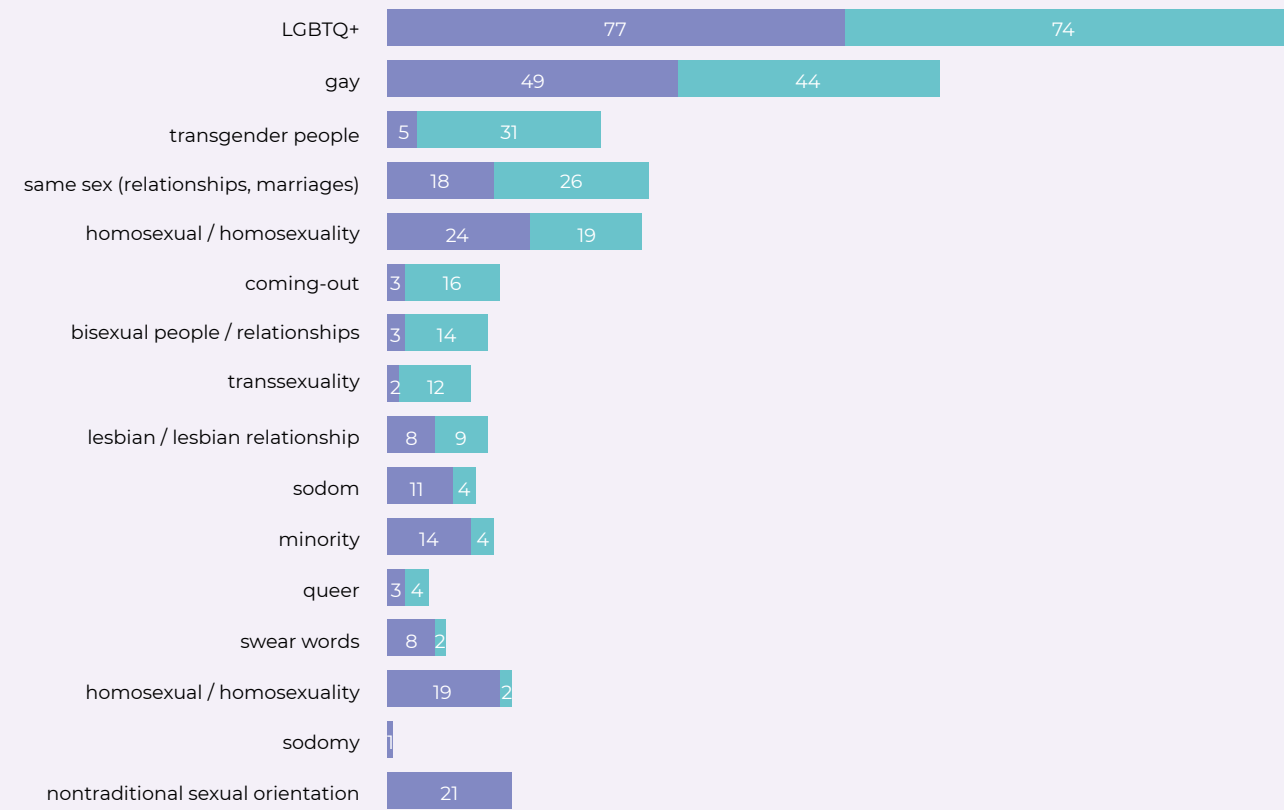
Methods and Techniques

The study is based on a cluster stratified sample that is representative of online publications in the Belarusian media. The media website acted as a cluster, the stratification criteria were media audience coverage (republican/regional) and political position (pro-government/independent).

A list of Belarusian media was compiled that met the following criteria: media has a website, in the period July — October 2019 the site was updated more than once or twice a month, the media reaches a wide audience, the media publishes materials on socio-political issues.

216 media that meet these criteria have been identified. 36 media outlets were randomly selected from them, plus the “Vechernyi Mahilioŭ” (“Evening Mahilioŭ”) newspaper, known for its aggressive rhetoric, totaling 37 publications. The materials of the selected media were searched for keywords.

The number of correct and incorrect publications with keywords



Main Results

1. LGBTQ+ is mentioned in approximately every four hundred publications of the Belarusian mass media.
2. For the first time during our specialized monitoring on LGBTQ+ topics (since 2015), the share of politically correct materials exceeded the share of incorrect ones (2015–2016 – 50% / 50%, 2017 – 53% / 47%, 2018 60% / 40%, 2019 – 43% / 57%)
3. Gays are mentioned in the media more often than other categories of people belonging to LGBTQ+, and often represent LGBTQ+ as a whole (expressions of “gay marriage” including women, etc.)
4. In terms of the number of references to LGBTQ+, independent media outperform pro-government media significantly: the share of materials mentioning LGBTQ+ in them is almost twice as large, 0.36% versus 0.20%.
5. The average rigidity of publications in pro-government media this time is higher than in independent ones, 8.9 versus 7.8.
6. The huge gap between the republican and regional mass media in terms of the harshness of publications (7.0 versus 13.7) was due to the publications of the “Vechernyi Mahilioŭ” (“Evening Mahilioŭ”) and the “s13” resource (Hrodna).
7. The most common sign of incorrect publication is the use of the expressions “homosexuality”, “non-traditional sexual orientation”, etc.
8. The most significant informational events of July — October 2019 to mention LGBTQ+ are the trial of the “Vechernyi Mogilev” newspaper, the beating in Minsk on the basis of homophobia and the expulsion of Pavel Sevyarynets from the PEN Center.

Accessibility Monitoring of the Second European Games in Minsk, June 21-30, 2019

Year of study:	2018, 2019
Sphere:	Human rights
Keywords:	People with disabilities, accessibility, tourism, sports events
Organization:	<p>Educational Human Rights Institution “Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities”</p> <p>“Office for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities” — human rights organization that provides legal assistance, advice on the rights of people with disabilities and the implementation of these rights. The office is engaged in advocacy at the legislative level, creates and promotes innovative resources and services for people with disabilities, holds seminars and trainings, round tables, publishes thematic literature. The office prepares and publishes various monitoring and research on the rights of people with disabilities, proposes initiatives to improve national legislation for people with disabilities.</p>
Contacts:	http://www.disright.org info@disright.org
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Sergey Drozdovsky

Aims

The purpose of monitoring was to assess the accessibility of the infrastructure of the II European Games in Minsk on June 21-30, 2019 (hereinafter the Games) for visitors with disabilities: physical environment, informational, organizational, the possibility of equal participation in events as spectators, tourists, customers.

Monitoring Objectives

- assess the ability for progressive changes in the inclusiveness of the Games through active interaction with the organizers and responsible executors of the Games in the course of their preparation throughout the year (2018–2019)
- monitor the process of participation of people with disabilities in the events of the Games.

Methods and Techniques

To achieve the above objectives, monitoring was carried out to assess the availability of facilities and services that provide for the Games: sports and shooting complex named after Marshal S. Timoshenko; sports and shooting complex “Sporting Club”; fitness center “Uruchye”; sports complex “Olimpiisky” (beach soccer); sports complex “Olimpiisky” (archery); sports complex “Chizhovka-Arena”; Dynamo Stadium; sports complex “Palace of Sports”; sports complex “Palova Arena”; sports base of the institution “RCOP for Tennis”; sports complex “Falcon Club”; Velodrome (sports-complex Minsk-Arena); sports complex “Minsk-Arena”; rowing canal of the institution “RCOP for rowing sports”; places of residence (hotels): “Yubileinaya”, “Europe”, “Arena”, “Belarus”, “Minsk”, “Orbita”, “Sputnik”; Double Tree by Hilton, “Monastyrsky Hotel”, “IT Time”, “Sport”, “Willing Hotel”; central railway station and central bus station; individual retail and cultural facilities, central department stores and shops, cinemas, and recreational parks; transport; Games services; Games information support; organizational capacity of the implementers of the Games.

The list of objects of monitoring was to give a fairly accurate vision of the general accessibility of the Games, their inclusiveness, both for Belarusian viewers and foreign ones. Monitorings were carried out on the basis of a developed instrument for assessing the physical accessibility of objects for various purposes. This tool allows one to objectively establish whether the object under examination meets the requirements for creating an accessible environment, as enshrined in regulatory and technical legal acts in the field of architecture and construction.

The second tool is a photo report and a video report of the state and quality of the elements of accessibility of objects. The third tool is the study and analysis of information sources on the Internet, as well as the analysis of messages from observers, participants and guests of the Games. Observations with filling out accessibility questionnaires were carried out by volunteers (a total of 42 people) from April 12 to June 30, 2019. As a result, 71 objects and environments were evaluated, in some cases consisting of many elements.

The nature of the preparation of monitoring in its communication component with the responsible executors of the Games also did not allow for planning for evaluation of sports and other facilities regarding their inclusiveness in relation to functions, of, for example, journalists with disabilities, trainers, business partners, etc.

Main Results

The very first factor affecting the availability of the Games is information about the Games themselves in the context of the factor of inclusiveness and non-discrimination. Extremely low attention was paid to the information component: both its accessibility and content for persons with disabilities.

For the first time, the offer of tickets to special places for persons with disabilities has achieved equality. The seats in the stands were marked, provided for with tickets,, and were freely available for sale. Venues for the Games are most accessible to fans with disabilities.

None of the facilities meets the full (even minimal) set of requirements. In practice, it can be argued that not a single object is accessible to a blind or deaf person. In most situations, there is a lack of information, including in accessible formats.

It should be noted that the work of volunteers was provided for in the arenas to offer necessary assistance to fans with special needs. Evaluators noted their sufficiently high attention to people with disabilities and their willingness to help.

Fan zones corresponded to the general appearance of mass events held in Minsk, had minimal additional devices for the needs of spectators with disabilities (specialized bio WCs along with common ones).

The catering system was the least prepared to receive fans of the Games with special needs. While maintaining the usual problematic level of accessibility of capital facilities, restaurants and cafes did not comply with accessibility standards when equipping summer areas. This made them inaccessible to persons with disabilities. At the same time, none of the official sites of public catering establishments contained a warning about the unavailability of the venue.

Places of culture, recreation and entertainment have shown a low degree of accessibility.

Among the monitoring results, a trend should be noted: the examined objects were more predisposed to ensure the availability of objects for people with musculoskeletal disorders, the degree of accessibility was significantly lower for people with visual and hearing impairments, and there were no special accessibility measures for persons with mental disabilities. Monitoring also revealed a significant influence of stereotypes and prejudices in creating and ensuring an accessible environment.

During the Games, evaluators did not record cases of aggressive, unfriendly or openly hostile behavior towards persons with disabilities.

Summary table of a relative assessment of the degree of accessibility of facilities and the services they provide for visitors and clients with disabilities during the preparation and conduct of the II European Games in Minsk, the Republic of Belarus

N	OBJECT NAME / ADDRESS	ACCESS TO THE BUILDING	INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY / AVAILABILITY	AVAILABILITY OF A PARKING PLACE AND OPPORTUNITY TO DRIVE UP ON THE SIDEWALK	ACCESSIBILITY OF ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING (INCLUDING RAMP AND PORCH	AVAILABILITY OF THE RAMP / ACCESSIBILITY MEASURES / QUALITY	AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES ON THE MAIN FLOOR	AVAILABILITY OF ACCESSIBLE WC ON THE MAIN FLOOR	NOTES
1	Sports and shooting complex named after Marshal S. Cimasenka								Volunteers
2	sports and shooting complex "Sporting Club"							Temporary	Volunteers
3	Fitness center «Uručča»								Volunteers
4	Sports complex «Olimpic» (beach soccer)							Temporary	Volunteers
5	Sports complex «Olimpic» (archery)							Temporary	Volunteers
6	Sports complex «Čyžoŭka-Arena»								Volunteers
7	Dynama Stadium								Volunteers
8	sports complex «Palace of Sports»								Volunteers
9	sports complex "Palova Arena"								Volunteers
10	sports base of the institution «RCOP for Tennis»								Volunteers
11	Sports and recreation complex Falcon Club								Volunteers

N	OBJECT NAME / ADDRESS	ACCESS TO THE BUILDING	INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY / AVAILABILITY	AVAILABILITY OF A PARKING PLACE AND OPPORTUNITY TO DRIVE UP ON THE SIDEWALK	ACCESSIBILITY OF ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING (INCLUDING RAMP AND PORCH)	AVAILABILITY OF THE RAMP / ACCESSIBILITY MEASURES / QUALITY	AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES ON THE MAIN FLOOR	AVAILABILITY OF ACCESSIBLE WC ON THE MAIN FLOOR	NOTES
12	Velodrome «Minsk-Arena»								Volunteers
13	Sports complex «Minsk-Arena»							Temporary	Volunteers
14	Rowing canal of the institution «RCOP for rowing sports»								Volunteers
15	Bar «Staramies-naja Piŭnica»								
16	Central Railway station						No seating devices		Staff
17	Bus station "Central"						No seating devices	Is not under-administration of the bus station; was not allowed to be monitored	
18	"Minsk" Hotel								
19	Folk kitchen restaurants "Vasilki", Galileo shopping center								
20	"Galileo" Shopping center								
21	Museum of Minsk Horse Drawn Tram History								
22	Michajlaŭski Square								
23	Museum of Belarusian Cinema History								

HUMAN RIGHTS, FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

N	OBJECT NAME / ADDRESS	ACCESS TO THE BUILDING	INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY / AVAILABILITY	AVAILABILITY OF A PARKING PLACE AND OPPORTUNITY TO DRIVE UP ON THE SIDEWALK	ACCESSIBILITY OF ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING (INCLUDING RAMP AND PORCH)	AVAILABILITY OF THE RAMP / ACCESSIBILITY MEASURES / QUALITY	AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES ON THE MAIN FLOOR	AVAILABILITY OF ACCESSIBLE WC ON THE MAIN FLOOR	NOTES
24	Double Tree by Hilton Hotel								staff
25	Belarus Cinema								staff
26	Moscow Cinema								
27	"Galeria" Shopping Mall Victory Park			paid					
28	Victory Park								
29	Museum of Great Patriotic War History								
30	"Sport Time Hotel"								
31	«Kamianica» Restaurant								
32	"Garni" Hotel								Accessible room
33	«Staramiesny Pivavar» Hotel								
34	«Pan Chmielu» Restaurant								
35	"Europe" Hotel								staff
36	«Manastyrski» Hotel								
37	Horse Carriage Exposition								
38	National Library								Conference hall is not accessible
39	Archcathedral of the Saint Maria								
40	"IT Time" Hotel								

HUMAN RIGHTS, FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

N	OBJECT NAME / ADDRESS	ACCESS TO THE BUILDING	INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY / AVAILABILITY	AVAILABILITY OF A PARKING PLACE AND OPPORTUNITY TO DRIVE UP ON THE SIDEWALK	ACCESSIBILITY OF ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING (INCLUDING RAMP AND PORCH)	AVAILABILITY OF THE RAMP / ACCESSIBILITY MEASURES / QUALITY	AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES ON THE MAIN FLOOR	AVAILABILITY OF ACCESSIBLE WC ON THE MAIN FLOOR	NOTES
41	Dana Mall Shopping Mall								
42	"Sport" Hotel								
43	Central General Store (CUM), Minsk			Always occupied					
44	Gorki Park					Rides are not inclusive			
45	Willing Hotel								
46	Archeological Museum								
47	Belarusian State Circus								
48	St. Roch Cathedral								
49	"Arena" Hotel								
50	National Historical Museum of the Republic of Belarus								
51	National Arts Museum of the Republic of Belarus								Volunteers could not enter the Museum
52	Museum of Nature and Environment								
53	«Staramiesny Pivavar» Cafe								
54	General Department Store								
55	«Kuchnistr» Restaurant								
56	Minsk Zoo								

HUMAN RIGHTS, FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

N	OBJECT NAME / ADDRESS	ACCESS TO THE BUILDING	INFORMATION ACCESSIBILITY / AVAILABILITY	AVAILABILITY OF A PARKING PLACE AND OPPORTUNITY TO DRIVE UP ON THE SIDEWALK	ACCESSIBILITY OF ENTRANCE TO THE BUILDING (INCLUDING RAMP AND PORCH)	AVAILABILITY OF THE RAMP / ACCESSIBILITY MEASURES / QUALITY	AVAILABILITY OF SERVICES ON THE MAIN FLOOR	AVAILABILITY OF ACCESSIBLE WC ON THE MAIN FLOOR	NOTES
57	Aliaksandraŭski Square								
58	"Sputnik" Restaurant								
59	"Sputnik" Hotel								
60	National Academical Theater of Janka Kupala								
61	«Staravilienskaja Karčma»								
62	«Svabody 4» Bar								
63	«Jubiliejny» Hotel								

- The specified item has gross non-compliance with accessibility standards.
- Availability of the specified item is more consistent with accessibility requirements.
- Availability of the specified item is problematic or inaccessible for certain categories of disability

HUMAN RIGHTS, FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

Homeless People and the Right to Housing in Belarus

Year of study:	2018, 2019
Sphere:	Legislation, human rights
Keywords:	Human rights, right to housing, homelessness
Organization:	<p>Belarus Helsinki Committee, Human Constanta (Belarus) and Libereco — Partnership for Human Rights (Switzerland).</p> <p>The Belarusian Helsinki Committee focuses on current issues of human rights, including human rights mechanisms and procedures, equality and non-discrimination, business and human rights, monitoring the police as a service for citizens, the death penalty, fair elections.</p>
Contacts:	<p>https://belhelcom.org/</p> <p>http://office@belhelcom.org/</p>
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Vasily Sankovich

Aims

Investigation of the possibility of homeless people exercising their rights.

Methods and Techniques

The report is based on a study of Belarusian legislation in areas directly or indirectly affecting the exercise of rights by homeless people, on relevant publications in the media and other secondary sources of information, as well as interviews with people who identify themselves as homeless. Semi-structured interviews with homeless people, as a rule, were conducted individually in the places of homeless help in Minsk and two regional cities of Belarus from November 2018 to January 2019. Interviews were conducted with 20 homeless people subject to different levels of economic and housing deprivation.

Main Results

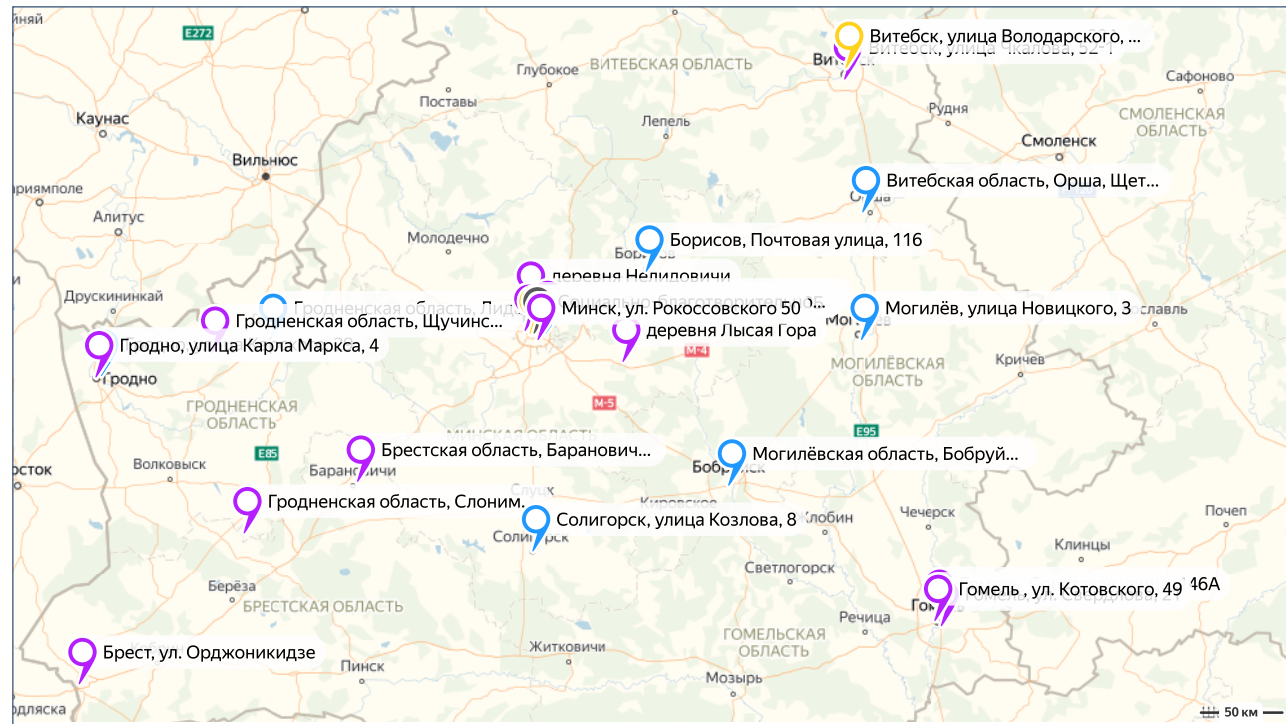
State mechanisms to help the homeless are reduced primarily to the activities of temporary stay centers and periodically conducted assistance actions. Special state programs, plans to take measures to prevent and reduce the level of homelessness were not adopted. The issues of rendering (or refusing to provide) any help to the homeless are within the competence of local executive bodies, which does not guarantee equal access and continuity of assistance.

The lack of a policy regarding the problem of homelessness results in the inaccessibility of reliable statistics on the scale of the problem, which contributes to its neglect by the state social policy.

The existing methods for collecting static data on the number of people exposed to homelessness are inadequate and incorrectly reflect the scale of the problem. Firstly, the definition of homelessness used in the census comes from the narrow concept of homelessness as “the absence of a permanent place of residence” and excludes from this category people living in non-residential premises, as well as a wider range of people without adequate housing. Secondly, a significant part of the information collected by homeless people during the registration process at their location is mistakenly not considered as one of the sources of statistical information, is not published and, probably, is not taken into account during the adoption of measures affecting the homeless.

The perception of insignificance of the scale of the problem of homelessness in Belarus is reinforced by negative stereotypes about the homeless, whose image is based on their “choice” of life on the street. The consequence of this view is the widespread perception that there is no need to take measures aimed at the realization by the homeless of the right to housing. The most characteristic way of stigmatizing the homeless is to use in relation to them the term that implies extremely negative characteristics, but not social and economic deprivation following the loss of housing. In addition to the use of such a language in the media, a similar view of homelessness is reflected in regulations that directly affect the homeless.

A map showing government and non-governmental organizations, as well as initiatives that help homeless people in Belarus.



The problem of homelessness is widespread among people who have served sentences, and is associated with imprisonment. Measures to prevent homelessness in relation to this category of people, that are adequate to the severity of the problem, have not been developed and taken.

A continuation of the lack of a full-fledged state policy on homelessness is the repression of certain initiatives that work to help the homeless, but are not considered as one of possible mechanisms to reduce the severity of the problems faced by the homeless.

The requirement to pay for registration services at the place of stay and to restore documents by the homeless does not take into account the serious financial difficulties that they face. Paying for such services is actually an obstacle to the realization of certain rights, the exercise of which is impossible without the availability of identification documents and a document confirming registration.

The practice of restricting the access of homeless people to public places is not only a discriminatory measure, but also directly endangers their lives and health. While denial of access to public places at night risks causing homeless people to spend the night on the street or in a less secure place, the illegal practice of “clearing” the streets of the homeless through informal detention and subsequent removal outside the city limits is a direct threat to their health and security.

Temporary stay centers are the main instrument of state policy regarding the problem of homelessness, but access to an overnight stay in them is limited due to a number of restrictive factors. The need for registration in the city where the center is located not only limits their accessibility, but also deprives them of access to people living in cities

without centers. The restriction on the maximum length of stay in the centers carries the risk of arbitrary refusal of an overnight stay for people who did not have the opportunity to find housing while staying in the center. The requirement of non-use of alcohol by those living in the centers makes the availability of an overnight stay dependent on the presence or absence of alcohol dependence in a homeless person.

Housing policy aimed at providing housing to people in need of social protection does not actually take into account the homeless, that is, the group whose main characteristic is the lack of adequate housing. The normative regulation of the procedures for obtaining social and commercial housing comes from the prioritization of groups on the basis of need for adequate housing, but such prioritization does not take into account their financial situation, actual level of need, or structural factors of vulnerability in access to housing.

Measuring the Belarusian Tolerance Level to State Violence

Year of study:	2019
Sphere:	Human rights
Keywords:	State violence, torture, ill-treatment
Organization:	<p>RPA “Legal Initiative”</p> <p>Republican Public Association “Legal Initiative” is a non-profit, non-governmental organization dedicated to the protection of human rights. Established in 1996.</p> <p>The main objectives of the “Legal Initiative” are: legal education, protection of victims of human rights violations, improving legislation and changing law enforcement practices, informing international organizations about the human rights situation in Belarus.</p>
Contacts:	<p>http://legin.by/</p> <p>http://gomellawyer@gmail.com</p>
Link to the publication:	<p>Please click here</p>
Authors and partners:	<p>RPA «Legal Initiative»,</p> <p>Center for System Business Technologies «SATIO»</p>

Aims

Identification of the level of knowledge and tolerance of practices of violence and torture by the state, namely:

- determination of the existing level of knowledge about practices of violence and torture;
- determination of which practices are understood as torture or violence and which are not;
- assessment of population expectations from state bodies in the context of the use of violence and torture (should state bodies use violent practices, are they entitled to it, in what cases?)
- study of the level of tolerance to these practices (how much do people accept practices of violence and torture in relation to oneself and to others).

Methods and Techniques

To assess how tolerant Belarusians are to state violence, we interviewed 902 people (on-line survey, CAWI).

The sample is representative of the urban population by gender and age. Sampling error — ± 3.26%.

We showed the respondents several cases of violence and measured indicators related to the perception of the persons involved in the case and actions in relation to them.

Nine main cases: prevention of a terrorist act; confession of stealing pipes by foreman; confession of murder after torture; punishment of a prisoner for drugs; punishment of a drunken citizen insulting police officers; drunk rowdy person in the subway; punishment of a homeless person insulting police officers; use of force for the girl's refusal to fingerprint; punishment of protesters for entering the roadway.

Two additional cases about the conditions of detention: detention of a drunken rowdy man in inappropriate conditions; detention of a jailed prisoner in inappropriate conditions for refusing to go to work.

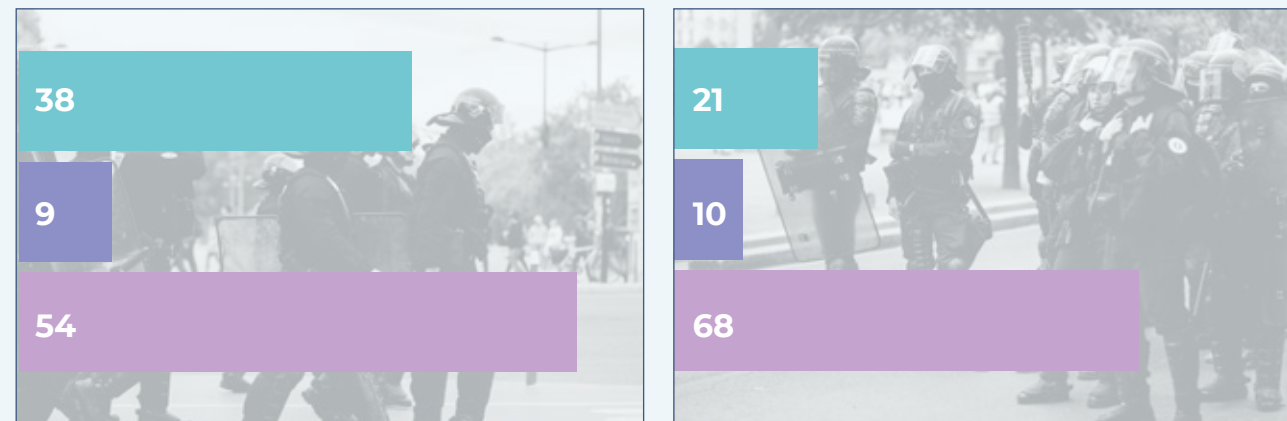
Main Results

People understand violence as excessive punishment for actions that are contrary to the law. In general, if the respondent perceives the actions of the government bodies as violence, he rarely considers them permissible.

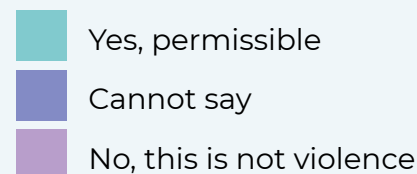
The exception is when: there is a threat to the lives of other people, there is a high risk of a crime or a criminal, the criminal himself openly violates the established rules.

2. A case with a “terrorist attack” is the only case in which more than half of the respondents do not regard the actions of state bodies as violence, and consider these actions permissible.

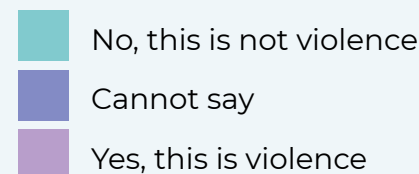
In the subway, a drunk man bothered people, rode on the escalator handrail, and when police officers were trying to detain him, he resisted and broke the nose of one of them. In response, the four of them, trying to immobilize the man, strangled him, putting his knee on his Adam's apple, and hit him hard in the face several times.



Are police actions permissible?



Are police actions acts of violence?



3. The higher the estimated danger of a crime or a criminal, the more often the punishment is not perceived as violence and is considered admissible:

- if the danger of a crime is low, the approval of violent actions drops sharply, even if the sentence is mild;
- actions of state bodies in a situation with a high severity of crime are called unacceptable only if torture is excessive
- people are more likely to justify violence if it is retaliatory (the offender started first)

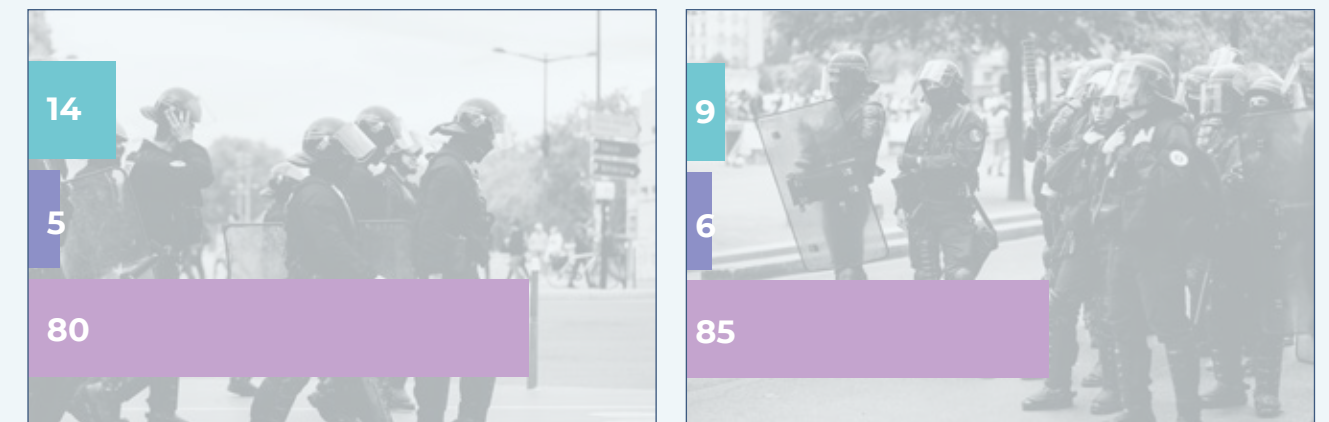
4. Violence is more often justified when a detainee violates the rules:

- 1/4 of respondents allow punishment by state bodies for intentionally violating the rules even with a low severity of crime / low danger of criminal;
- if there is guilt and resistance, the punishment for non-compliance with the rules is not considered violence and is allowed by 1/4 of the respondents.

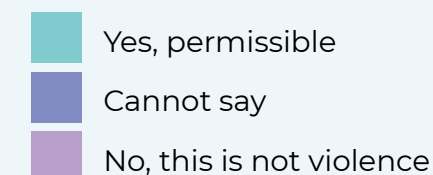
5. The violence tolerance index is quite low among respondents and rarely reaches extreme values:

- 10% of the sample is characterized by extreme rejection of violence;
- 50% of respondents have a tolerance index below 20.1 points (with a maximum of 86 points)
- tolerance to violence increases if a person has not become a victim of crime and has not been subjected to violence with government agencies

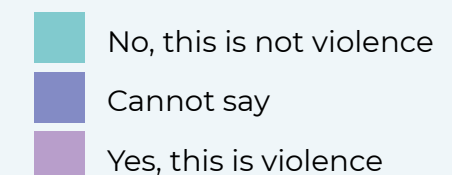
In the evening, on the street, a police patrol stopped a previously convicted citizen in a state of alcohol intoxication. He spoke unflatteringly about the employees of the Ministry of Internal Affairs and insulted the patrolmen. They restrained the drunk, handcuffed him and delivered him to the police station. There they laid him on the floor with his chest down and handcuffed his hands behind his back. The man began to scream from pain, used foul language and insulted the police. To calm down the detainee, they began to choke him with a night stick.



Are patrolmen's actions permissible?



Are patrolmen's actions acts of violence?



- tolerance to violence decreases slightly with an increase in the level of education and with an income of 1000+ BYN.

6. Belarusian society as a whole has a positive attitude towards the death penalty. The proportion of respondents who approve of the death penalty drops when:

- education level increases;
- income exceeds \$ 500;
- a person has been abused by government agencies.

The tolerance index is generally related to the attitude to the death penalty, but it does not determine the attitude to the death penalty. Only respondents who are absolutely intolerant to violence are less likely than average to approve the death penalty.

Access to Environmental Information:Issues of Implementation and Protection of Rights

Year of study:	2018
Sphere:	Environmental rights
Keywords:	Environmental information, access to justice, environmental rights
Organization:	<p>Public association “Ecohome”</p> <p>Public association “Ecohome” is a national public association. One of the main activities of the organization is the promotion of the principles of the Aarhus Convention in Belarus, the protection of environmental rights of citizens. Lawyers of “Ecohome” help citizens and initiative groups to protect their rights to a favorable environment. The “Green Phoneline” information line on environmental issues has been continuously operating since 2016</p>
Contacts:	http://ecohome-ngo.by/ ecohome.by@gmail.com
Link to the publication:	Please click here
Authors and partners:	Sergey Magonov, Tatyana Sinitsa, Grigory Fedorov, Marina Dubina

Aims

To identify the current state of access to environmental information both in the executive authorities of Belarus and other owners of environmental information.

Methods and Techniques

More than two hundred requests were made, the dynamics and quality of their consideration and satisfaction were analyzed, both good practice and examples of non-fulfillment and arbitrary interpretation of legislative requirements by some executive committees is described. As a result of the refusals or inadequate satisfaction of the request for information, 15 cases were initiated and sent to the courts, the results of their consideration are also described in the study.

Main Results

1. There is a significant increase in the availability of environmental information. This circumstance, however, is not a consequence of increasing the legal self-consciousness of the owners of such information who have embarked on the implementation of the provisions of the Aarhus Convention and the norms of national law, but rather by a change in the provisions of the legislation ordering the publication of certain information on the Internet, as well as providing public access to it. However, for whatever reason, obtaining a number of documents has become much easier since 2017, and the problems that had been encountered as far back as 2015-2016, when the district executive committee responded to the request for a copy of the minutes of public discussions with “the law doesn’t contains obligations to provide anyone with copies of the protocols”, are now left behind.
2. Executive authorities are not sufficiently familiar with the rules on public access to environmental information, which is reflected in the non-observance of the deadline for its provision, consideration of requests in accordance with the legislation on appeals of citizens and legal entities, provision of information not in the requested form (for example, instead of providing a copy of the protocol of public discussions, an answer was given in which the contents of the protocol were copied), in the refusal to provide information on far-fetched grounds.
3. Judicial practice in cases in defense of the right to access to environmental information shows that almost with a twofold advantage (9 against 4) the restrictive approach of the courts to the interpretation of the law prevails. Seven lawsuits were absolutely identical to the four accepted for consideration — both on the subject of the dispute and on the composition of the participants, however, the courts did not consider it possible to initiate proceedings and consider the case. This circumstance allows us to conclude that the courts are not fully prepared to consider cases in defense of public interests. Difficulties arise with the determination of the existence of a protected right or interest in the outcome of the case, with the resolution of the issue of the representation of its members by the public organization, as well as with the qualification of legal relations — can they be considered in the proceedings, or is this the subject of administrative-legal relations.

These findings allow us to offer the following recommendations for improving the practice of exercising the right to access to environmental information.

Regarding the gaps in the legislation, the elimination of which would help to improve the quality of access to justice on environmental issues, the most acute issue now is whether courts accept cases for processing. The decision of the Plenum of the Supreme Court with the specification of the grounds for the non-admissibility of such cases and the recommendation to indicate in the court ruling other ways to resolve the dispute, as well as clarifying the specifics of the procedural position of NGOs related to the subject of their activities, would significantly help to remove the problem of access to justice. Of course, questions of the quality and justice of legal proceedings would remain, but access itself would be provided.

To improve the quality of access to environmental information as a whole, it is necessary to:

- increase the professional level of law enforcement officers (public servants, judges, prosecutors, lawyers, lawyers, NGOs);
- increase the general level of legal awareness in society;
- expand judicial practice and publish its reviews for the general public (an example is the 2014 review of the judicial practice in cases related to the application of the Aarhus Convention prepared by the Green Network and the Public Association “Ecohome”).

Freedom of peaceful assembly in Belarus as an influential factor in the activities of civil society

Year of study:	2018
Sphere:	Rights, human rights
Keywords:	Human rights, peaceful assembly, freedom of speech
Organization:	Human Rights Center “Spring 96” Belarusian Helsinki Committee Human Constanta
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Link to the publication:	Please click here
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Aims

A review of current issues and recent developments related to freedom of assembly in Belarus. The issues of providing, facilitating and protecting peaceful assemblies at all levels are considered.

Methods and Techniques

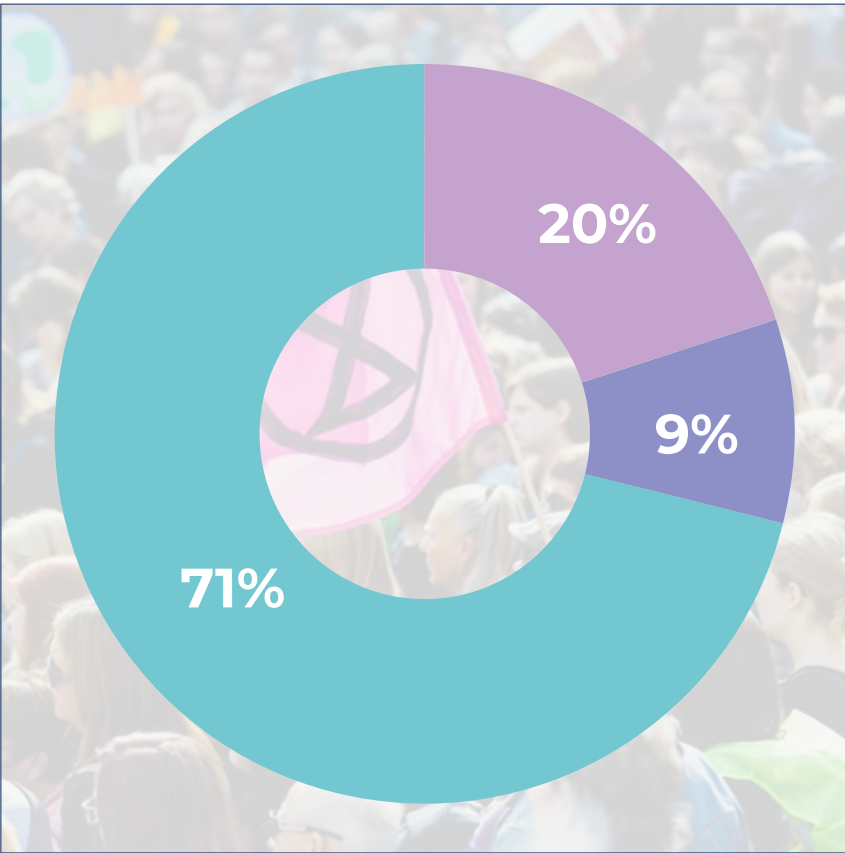
The study contains a full analysis of peaceful assemblies in Belarus for 2017 and 2018, including the number and topics of meetings. Particular attention was paid to the administration of assemblies, legislative regulation, a non-discriminatory approach to peaceful assemblies, criminalization of protests, analysis of current challenges and positive trends.

About 20 individual interviews were conducted in a semi-arbitrary form with key stakeholders. Stakeholders include: meeting organizers — including those who are currently not active but have organized meetings in the recent past; unions; journalists; human rights organizations; representatives of political parties and others.

A quantitative and qualitative analysis of peaceful assemblies in Belarus was carried out.

Primary data was collected on peaceful actions in Belarus during the year with the help of volunteer observers

Each section of the report contains 2-3 examples that describe important conclusions, but do not describe the situation in detail.



Types of assemblies in 2018

- pickets
- demonstrations
- rallies

In addition, an example of a traditional peaceful assembly in Belarus, the Chernobyl Way, is given and described as a separate case study.

Main Results

Based on an analysis of the realization of the right to peaceful assembly in Belarus, it is recommended that the Government of Belarus:

1. In close consultation with civil society and other stakeholders, develop and adopt national legislation on peaceful assemblies that meets international standards.
2. Refuse the practice of persecuting activists, including preventive detention, for participating in peaceful gatherings only for the lack of permission to hold a meeting.
3. Abandon the practice of detaining and harassing observers and journalists because of their legitimate activities in covering peaceful assemblies.
4. Follow the recommendations of the UN Human Rights Committee, adopted in relation to violations of Art. 19 and 21 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.
5. Invite the UN Special Rapporteur on freedom of association and peaceful assembly for an objective assessment of the situation.
6. For representatives of the ministry of internal affairs: to be more open with observers and to ensure a high level of awareness of security measures in peaceful assemblies.
7. To the international community: to promote international human rights standards in the field of freedom of assembly.

Control over Lawyers in Belarus — a Threat to Human Rights

Year of study:	2018
Sphere:	Rights, human rights
Keywords:	Lawyer, human rights
Organization:	<p>Human Rights Center “Spring 96”</p> <p>International Federation of Human Rights (FIDH)</p> <p>World Organization Against Torture (OMCT)</p> <p>Avocats Barreau Paris (www.avocatparis.org)</p> <p>Human Rights Center “Spring 96” is one of the leading non-governmental human rights organizations in Belarus since 1996, a republican association based in Minsk and regional organizations.</p> <p>FIDH is an international human rights organization founded in 1922; in 2016, it unites 184 pro-human rights organizations in more than 100 countries.</p> <p>OMCT was established in 1985 and today is the leading international coalition of NGOs working to combat torture, the death penalty, enforced disappearances and other forms of cruel, inhuman and degrading treatment.</p> <p>Avocats Barreau Paris unites more than 29,000 lawyers — almost half of all French lawyers.</p>
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Link to the publication:	Please click here (English version) Please click here (Russian version)
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Aims

Although lawyers are not the main target of repressive policies aimed mainly at protesters and political opposition, they still suffer from repressions as they cannot properly carry out their professional activities in this context.

The study aims to identify the degree and mechanisms of control over lawyers in Belarus.

Main Results

In Belarus, both at the local and national levels, lawyers associations exist, which creates the appearance of a professional structure capable of guaranteeing the protection of the interests of its members. But when in 2011 the Minsk City Board tried to oppose the introduction of unjustified disciplinary proceedings, it led to the loss of powers of the then chairman of the Minsk City Lawyer Association.

Shortly afterwards, a new Law on Lawyers was passed, which strengthened the control of the Ministry of Justice over the boards and thus over the lawyers profession. Belarus has national legislation that is in complete contradiction with the UN Basic Principles on the role of lawyers. Boards of lawyers have been deprived of their very essence, which is to guarantee the independence of the profession and to regulate professional activities. Access to the profession and its organization have become functions that are now almost exclusively the prerogative of officials of the Ministry of Justice. The Ministry of Justice also oversees the appointment of board chairmen, as candidates, whether of city or regional boards, can run only with the approval of the Ministry of Justice.

Central to the system of possible pressure on lawyers is the right of the authorities to call lawyers for certification, which may take place in a Qualification Commission set up by the Ministry of Justice. In this commission, lawyers are a minority. In addition to the regular certifications that lawyers must pass every five years, since 2011 the Ministry has received the right to conduct an extraordinary certification of lawyers at any time. Both types of certifications include the possibility of conducting an oral examination, the results of which are then difficult to challenge in court. In addition, the lawyer has the right to challenge only the certification procedure, but not the decision of the commission itself. At the same time, the legislation provides extremely vague wording of the certification procedure itself, especially its oral part.

Lawyers interviewed during the study stressed that during the oral examination, the commission does not take into account the specialization of lawyers and, therefore, has the right to ask any question from the field of law, regardless of the specialization of the lawyer. The legal framework does not specify the number of questions that can be asked or the duration of the conversation. If the commission considers that the lawyer does not sufficiently supplement his professional knowledge, his license may be revoked. The decision can be enforced immediately. Although this decision can be appealed in court, in cases that became known to the mission during its work, these appeals did not change the situation, as judges have no greater independence than public prosecutors and deputy prosecutors.

Thus, the procedure of regular and extraordinary certification gives the Belarusian authorities the opportunity to silence people who may seem “uncomfortable” in a “seemingly legal and legitimate” way. The official reason for the exclusion of lawyers is always related to the so-called professional violation.

The existence of such a certification procedure, the methods of which remain very opaque, is a sword of Damocles over the head of every Belarusian lawyer.

A lawyer can pay a high price for their independence, clear professional consciousness and actions in defense of human rights when it comes to a case that the authorities consider politically resonant. As employment prospects in Belarus are very limited, losing the opportunity to engage in professional activities is also a serious economic punishment. As a result, the legal community has a particularly disturbing atmosphere of constant self-censorship.

The lack of boards capable of playing their part in defending lawyers only worsens the isolation of lawyers who could be involved in politically high-profile cases. This vulnerability of lawyers not only affects the entire profession, but also violates the right to defense and a fair trial in Belarus. It is very important to urgently reconsider the role of lawyers and lawyer associations in Belarus and to create conditions for lawyers to freely and independently practice their profession, which will allow them to effectively help their clients. In particular, it is necessary to implement within the framework of national legislation the Basic Principles of the United Nations concerning the role of lawyers, the basic normative document regulating the profession of a lawyer.

In 2020, the Assembly of NGOs of Belarus will prepare the second edition of the “Civil Society Research Digest”. The Executive Bureau of the Assembly of NGOs is open to communication and cooperation with non-profit organizations that conducted their research in 2019-2020. If you would like your study to be included in the next issue of the digest, please write to ngo@belngo.info



The Assembly of Non-Governmental Democratic Organizations is the largest association of nonprofit organizations and civic initiatives in Belarus, which contributes to the development of member organizations and the formation of civil society in Belarus. The Assembly was established in 1997 and unites more than 300 organizations and initiatives.

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The Institute of Political Studies “Political Sphere” is an institution founded in 2009, which specializes in the study of Belarusian politics and society, as well as the organization of conferences of significant public events, including the International Congress of Researchers of Belarus.

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