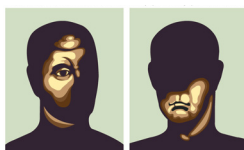




# DIGEST OF STUDIES

MADE BY CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS





Institute of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania  
Institute for Policy Studies «Political Sphere»

# **DIGEST OF RESEARCH OF CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANIZATIONS 2019–2020**

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**Vilnius**

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## Contents

### CIVIL SOCIETY, CIVIL ACTIVISM

CSO Meter. Assessment of the legal environment of civil society activities .....	4
Analysis of the Operating Conditions of Belarusian CSOs Registered Abroad .....	10
Access of Non-Profit Organizations to Banking services. Top 10 Best Banking Practices .....	14
Practice of Public Participation in the Process of Making Environmentally Significant Decisions .....	18
Public Participation in Budget Policy .....	23
COVID-19 in Belarus: Impact on the Non-Government Sector .....	27
Survey of Adult Education Providers on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Their Activities .....	31
Belarusian Society Needs and Belarusian NGOs Capacities .....	36

### PUBLIC POLICY, STATE GOVERNANCE

Use of Social Networks and Messengers in Belarus .....	40
Belarus during the COVID-19 Epidemic Situation: the Nature of the Reaction to the Problem by State and Society .....	44
"Un/equal public spaces of Minsk": assessment of improvement of city waterfronts .....	48
Belarusian Culture and Ethnography .....	53
Modern Youth Issues .....	56
Relevant Issues of Mogilev Region Residents in 2020 .....	60
How Belarusians Changed Over the Last Ten Years .....	64
Social Opportunities for Youth and Their Participation in Community and Government Initiatives .....	68

### HUMAN RIGHTS, FIGHT AGAINST DISCRIMINATION

Monitoring the Right to Peaceful Assembly .....	72
Monitoring Hate Speech in the Belarusian Media Against People from Vulnerable Groups in the Context of the First Wave of the Coronavirus Pandemic .....	78
Monitoring Hate Speech in the Belarusian Media Against LGBTQ+ People in 2020 .....	81
Judicial Protection of Environmental Rights of Belarus Citizens for the 2010-2020 Period .....	84
Online consultation «Barriers to Online Participation», May - June 2020 .....	86

# Civil Society Research Digest 2019–2020

## From contributors

The second issue of the Civil Society Research Digest is based on the same approach that was used in the pilot issue of the digest, which presented research conducted in 2018-2019. As before, the new issue reflects research conducted by Belarusian non-governmental organizations and independent think tanks, the subject of which is both civil society itself and the conditions and environment that are important for civil society and shape its landscape, identify the problem area or characterize the target group.

The second issue of the digest presents research done in 2019 and 2020. This relatively short period marked the time when Belarus was affected by impactful events that affected the country as a whole and significantly changed the environment for civil activity. And while the COVID-19 pandemic had a truly global scale and consequences, the events related to the August 2020 presidential election, followed by waves of protests, repressions, and public solidarity, were already exclusively endogenous and made the entire world to talk about Belarusian civil society. A full-fledged impact assessment and study of the influence on society of these two factors will long be the subject of interest to researchers.

However, there is an almost universal agreement that these consequences are extremely significant and can predetermine the development of conditions for both civil society and the broader society of Belarus in the coming years.

This publication presents both research conducted before the above-mentioned public upheavals, as well as that which was done by researchers who eagerly sought to record empirical data as the situation was unfolding, gathering information on the impact of the pandemic and the political crisis on Belarus. However, the last thematic block is still waiting for a full study in the future – there is no doubt that in the coming years we will see a real stream of research in this regard, including from independent research centers.

The bulk of the research presented in this digest provides other important information: it illustrates the state and problems of the Belarusian civil society in approaching this double crisis of 2020-2021. And in this sense, almost every one of the studies presented in the publication can be seen as a baseline survey for repeated or more extensive research or as a starting point for formulating new hypotheses or theoretical models.

As before, each of the studies is presented in the digest in the most concise form through the presentation of the basic principles of methodology, research problems and research results, its significance and its conclusions and recommendations, formulated by researchers (taking into account traditionally predominantly practical research). Hopefully, each reader will find among the 21 research summaries presented in the digest those that will make him turn with interest to the full reports and research publications – links to them are also provided here.

As always, the contributors to the digest are grateful to each NGO that responded to our call and kindly agreed to submit their work for inclusion in the digest. The work of the researchers, their professional achievements were laid in the foundation of this publication and are a valuable contribution to this joint product.

We will also be grateful for any criticism and suggestions for improving the concept of the digest in order to make its future issues more usable and relevant to the interested audience. If you would like your research to be included in the next issue of the digest, please email [digest.research@gmail.com](mailto:digest.research@gmail.com).

# CSO Meter. Assessment of the legal environment of civil society activities



LINK

**Year:** 2020

**Sphere:** Human rights, civil society

**Keywords:** Freedom of association, funding of non-governmental organizations, freedom of speech, freedom of peaceful assembly, participation in decision-making

**Organization:** Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend),  
Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus

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**Author & partners:** The Belarusian review CSO Meter is conducted within the joint work of a consortium which partners organizations from Eastern Partnership countries:

- Transparency International - Armenia (TIAC),
- MG Consulting LLC (Azerbaijan),
- Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs in cooperation with Lawtrend (Belarus),
- Civil Society Institute (CSI - Georgia),
- Promo-LEX Association (Moldova)
- Ukrainian Center of Independent Political Research (UCIPR), under the auspices of the European Center for Nonprofit Law (ECNL).

## Summary

This report is an update to the CSO Meter, the first issue of which was published in 2019. This update provides an additional overview of current events and trends affecting areas important for civil society organizations, which were recorded in the period from November 2019 to December 2020. This update allows to determine the current situation of civil society organizations in Belarus in accordance with the CSO Meter methodology for 10 key groups of standards and indicators, including legislation and practice, as well as to formulate priority recommendations for improving the environment for civil society for 2021.

## Research Questions

Due to current unfavorable political and legal conditions of the civil society organizations (CSO), some of them are forced to register a legal entity abroad. In practice, and as experience shows, a formal status of registration abroad, on the one hand, helps Belarusian organizations to technically solve the systemic problems which they face at home and opens some of the new opportunities (for example, interaction with the national CSOs of the registration country). On the other hand, registration of organizations abroad leads to new challenges, since, being *de jure* in the registration country, *de facto* they carry out their activities mainly, if not exclusively, in Belarus.

## Methodology

This study is part of a regional review of the legal environment and practices of civil society organizations in the six Eastern Partnership countries in 2020.

The Belarus Review is part of a joint research program covering six Eastern Partnership countries. In addition to national reports, the researchers are preparing a regional report, which reflects the main trends on the level of partner countries.

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 for the activities of non-governmental organizations. Indicators cover both legislation and law enforcement practices, including freedom of association, equality, access to finance, freedom of peaceful assembly, participation in decision-making, freedom of expression, the right to privacy, state protection and support for civil society organizations, cooperation between the state and civil society.

A detailed explanatory note on the CSO Meter methodology is available in Belarusian on the program's website:



This update is the result of analysis and monitoring of legal acts, analysis of advocacy and consultation activities of partner organizations, interviews with civil society leaders, and study of monitoring, analytical and information materials prepared by Belarusian civil society organizations (including materials presented in the international arena, and within the framework of UN and OSCE international procedures).

## Study results

When analyzing the events during the period of this update, the authors came to the conclusion that there was a deterioration in 8 out of 10 areas included in the study in Belarus in 2020. No significant change in the situation has been recorded in two directions. Improvement or approximation to international standards was not observed in any of the 10 dimensions. This picture is significantly worse than in other Eastern Partnership countries.

The main drivers of comprehensive negative changes in most indicators in Belarus during 2020 were:

Country/Area	Freedom of Association	Equality	Access to funding	Freedom of peaceful assembly	Participation in decision-making	Freedom of expression	The right to privacy	State protection	State support	Cooperation between the state and civil society
Moldova	↑	↑	↔	↓	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔	↔
Georgia	↔	↔	↔	↔	↑	↔	↔	↔	↑	↑
Belarus	↓	↔	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↓	↔	↓
Ukraine	↑	↔	↔	↓	↓	↓	↓	↔	↑	↔
Azerbaijan	↔	↔	↑	↓	↑	↔	↔	↔	↑	↔
Armenia	↔	↔	↔	↓	↓	↔	↔	↑	↔	↔

- effects of COVID-19 on public life and the economy (including negative effects of measures taken by the authorities in response to COVID-19);
- a dramatic surge of violence after the August 9 presidential election, when the most massive peaceful protests in Belarus' recent history were met with an explosion of political repression by the state: numerous repressive acts were directed against political opponents, peaceful protesters, human rights activists, election observers, journalists and the media, leaders and activists of civil society organizations.

Both of these factors have been characterized by the crucial role of communication technologies and the growth of Internet penetration, in which Belarus is one of the regional leaders. New communication channels have facilitated the involvement of civil society organizations in response to COVID-19 challenges (especially through the use of electronic communication platforms to collect donations).

Similarly, Internet communication (especially the Telegram messenger) became a means of mobilizing protesters after the election, to which the authorities responded by blocking the Internet almost completely in the first days after the election and later, and by interfering with the confidentiality of personal data by identifying bloggers and checking subscribers of individual telegram channels.



## Research Findings

It is safe to say that the external conditions for the activities of civil society organizations in Belarus in 2020 have changed radically for the worse. This is especially true of freedom of association, access to funding, freedom of peaceful assembly, freedom of expression, the duty of the state to protect rights and freedoms.

As a result of mass repressions and the creation of an atmosphere of fear in Belarus, a large number of organizations lost any possibilities to work towards their mission.

Some civil society organizations are forced to completely or partially cease their activities, abandon entire areas of work done in cooperation with the state, transfer some of their activities to other jurisdictions due to adverse conditions or due to threats to the personal safety of leaders and employees.

## Research Significance

CSO Meter aims to create a foundation that will support regular and consistent monitoring of the environment in which civil society organizations carry out their activities. The information gained from this process can be used to make recommendations and initiate empirically sound advocacy campaigns aimed at creating a more conducive environment for civil society. Stakeholders will also have a better understanding of issues of the environment that civil society operates in, drawing on benchmarks based on international standards.

In the updating phase in 2020, as well as in the pilot study phase of the CSO Meter, each project partner organization in each of the six Eastern Partnership countries developed a country report based on a common methodology. The results of the country reports are summarized in a regional report that ECNL prepares to reflect the regional trends and specifics of each country. CSO Meter together with regional reports and country reports can serve the following purposes:

- Comparing year-to-year performance for each area and track progress or regression.
- Comparing achievements or obstacles in one country with development in any of the other Eastern Partnership countries. This can provide additional incentives to further improve the environment for civil society or ideas for future policies or actions that need to be taken.
- Nominating evidence-based proposals and projects to protect interests and develop policies. The CSO Meter's recommendations can be a guide to carrying out the necessary reforms, they can be used by both the government and its development partners for policy development. Civil society organizations can also use the recommendations to prioritize their advocacy.
- Establishing a debate on identified challenges and proposed reforms.
- Evaluating proposed legislative initiatives in the field of civil society.

- Providing relevant information for further research and analysis of the state of civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries.
- Developing more detailed thematic reports based on information gathered on standards and indicators in each of the 10 CSO Meter areas (for example, by preparing special reports on access to resources or the right to privacy regarding civil society organizations).

## Recommendations

The question of longevity and stability of the negative situation in Belarus, which was noted in the analysis in 2020, remains open - its solution depends on the further development of events in the political sphere and the dynamic of changes in the political regime in the country.

However, the key priorities set out in this update are aimed at overcoming these negative consequences and restoring the basic conditions under which the activities of civil society structures are possible:

- release of all persons recognized as political prisoners, the review and reversal of all their sentences and rulings against them;
- cessation of unmotivated and disproportionate violence against participants and organizers of any peaceful protests, including the demand to end the torture and abuses of the police and intelligence services;
- cessation of all forms of repression and discrimination against protesters, opposition members and civil society organizations, including an end to mass administrative and criminal prosecution, searches, confiscation of media and communications, fines, arrests, bank account freezes and bans on use of funds, cessation of threats to take children out of families, cessation of the practice of illegal intrusion into private homes;
- Investigation of all deaths of protesters and other opposition members, prosecution of those responsible for the killings, and thorough investigation of all allegations of torture;
- cessation of all forms of pressure on civil society organizations, lawyers and human rights defenders, journalists and independent media, including cessation of the discrediting campaign in the state media, and eliminating the practice of blocking the Internet as a whole and of disabling individual websites;
- cessation of abuse of anti-extremism legislation to restrict freedom of expression and freedom of thought, as well as to restrict access to funding for charities, human rights and humanitarian organizations;
- cessation of legislative initiatives aimed at restricting freedom of speech and freedom of association;

- cooperation with the national human rights movement, as well as with the mechanisms of the UN Human Rights Council and the OSCE (Moscow Mechanism) to document human rights violations and restore violated rights, as well as to investigate all such cases and prevent their impunity.

Only after completing these priority steps is it possible to achieve a positive effect from the implementation of the previous recommendations, which were previously set out in the full issue of CSO Meter for 2019 and concerned the systematic improvement of conditions for public activities in Belarus.

# Analysis of the Operating Conditions of Belarusian CSOs Registered Abroad



LINK 1



LINK 2

<b>Year:</b>	2020
<b>Sphere:</b>	Civil society, domestic and foreign policy
<b>Keywords:</b>	Civil society, CSOs (civil society organizations), advocacy campaign, donor organizations
<b>Organization:</b>	Center for 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 and efficiency. The main activities of SYMPA are education, research and monitoring (public finance and public procurement). We bring together people who want to improve the quality of governance in our country.
<b>Contacts:</b>	<a href="http://sympa-by.eu">http://sympa-by.eu</a> , <a href="mailto:sk@sympa-by.eu">sk@sympa-by.eu</a>
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## Summary

The research focuses on Belarusian CSOs registered abroad but operating in Belarus. The context and features of their activities are analyzed. The study discusses the reasons for registering CSOs abroad, the peculiarities of their «dual functioning» in different countries, as well as the main difficulties they face in their activities. The qualities that CSOs must have for successful functioning abroad are highlighted separately, and the impact on organizations of international and national contexts is examined. The work also provides recommendations to various stakeholders on how to make the functioning of the analyzed organizations more efficient.

## Research Questions

Due to current unfavorable political and legal conditions of the civil society organizations (CSO), some of them are forced to register a legal entity abroad. In practice, and as experience shows, a formal status of registration abroad, on the one hand, helps Belarusian organizations to technically solve the systemic problems with which they face home and opens some of the new opportunities (for example, interaction with the national CSOs of the registration country). On the other hand, registration of organizations abroad leads to new challenges, since, being de jure in the registration country, de facto they carry out their activities mainly, if not exclusively, in Belarus.

## Methodology

1. Desk research of the activities of the Belarusian CSOs registered abroad. The main materials used were relevant thematic reports of international and national Belarusian organizations, as well as media publications.
2. Semi-structured interviews with experts and representatives of the Belarusian CSOs registered abroad. In the period from November to December 2019, we carried out 24 interviews. Of these, 6 – with experts from Lithuania and Belarus, 18 with representatives of the Belarusian CSOs registered abroad, 8 of which are registered both in Belarus and abroad, 10 – only abroad.

The samples of both experts and organizations were built according to the «snowball» method, when every subsequent respondent was requested to recommend experts and organizations which would be important to interview on the topic of research.

Representatives of human rights, environmental, research (analytical centers) organizations, as well as organizations working towards increasing the capacity of civil society, regional activism, etc were among the respondents.

Table 1. Classification of problems of Belarusian CSOs registered abroad

Type of problems by the source of origin	Types of problems
Problems caused by the host country	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Problem with servicing Belarusian organizations in foreign banks</li> <li>■ Accounting problem</li> <li>■ Taxation problem</li> <li>■ Legal consulting problems</li> <li>■ Other technical problems</li> </ul>
Problems of transboundary nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ The need to provide and store the original payment documents</li> <li>■ Transport of funds over the border</li> </ul>
Internal problems of the organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Increased infrastructure costs and expenses of organizations on the maintenance of the foreign division</li> <li>■ Problem of lack of knowledge, misunderstanding of the language and rules of the registration country</li> <li>■ Internal problems of the Belarusian CSOs</li> </ul>
Problems due to relations with stakeholders	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Unwillingness of donor organizations to maintain additional costs associated with registration abroad</li> <li>■ Non-recognition of CSOs registered in the EU as Belarusian by the donor community</li> </ul>
Problems of sectoral nature	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>■ Solidarity problem</li> <li>■ Conflict of identities. Lack of integration into the receiving community</li> <li>■ Security threats</li> </ul>

## Study results

The main reasons for the registration of Belarusian CSOs abroad are internal (Belarusian) political, legal, and financial conditions for the activities of CSOs. At the same time, security issues and donor policies are also important. Registration abroad was for most organizations a forced, in many cases an operational decision, behind which there was no organizational development strategy.

Belarusian CSOs which are more «embedded» in the host country, have connections with it, permanent staff, projects, etc are in a better situation. However, this path is not available to all organizations, since it requires not only significant additional costs, but also a revision of the goals, objectives and methods of activities of organizations.

Belarusian CSOs are influenced by the political and legal national contexts of the country of registration. The most significant changes that influenced the activities of Belarusian CSOs abroad are related to the policy of banks in the EU countries (in particular, in Lithuania and Estonia). The tightening of bank requirements for organizations established by foreign citizens significantly, and in some cases, critically hampered the functioning of Belarusian CSOs. At the same time, in the case of Poland, such problems are not noted.

## Research Findings

The activities of Belarusian civil society organizations that register legal entities abroad should be considered at several levels.

The first one is the general unfavorable political, legal, financial and other conditions for the activities of CSOs within Belarus. They are the main reason for the forced search for alternative options/methods of registration and activities of national public organizations, one of which is registration abroad.

The second level is the need to solve technical problems that Belarusian organizations face when they are already registered abroad. At present, it is obvious that one of the most pressing problems for such organizations is servicing in banks of Lithuania, where most of the organizations are registered and, accordingly, have accounts.

The third level is the level of solidarity within the civil society of Belarus itself. It is clear that it is necessary to unite and act together in order to solve high-level problems associated with unfavorable conditions at home and technical problems arising abroad. However, the potential and real possibilities of such an association for joint action are not entirely clear.

## Research Significance

The internal political situation in Belarus forced many Belarusian CSOs to register abroad. The institutional histories and trajectories of such organizations are quite diverse, however, there has been practically no systematic study of their status, as well as the conditions and peculiarities of their functioning.

Academic research on this topic is also lacking. Thus, it can be argued that the issue of the activities of Belarusian CSOs in other countries is poorly researched. This study is intended to fill the lack of knowledge in this area and to describe the current situation of such organizations.

## Recommendations

To solve the problems associated with unfavorable conditions within the country, as well as technical problems arising abroad, Belarusian CSOs need to unite and act together. The search for strategic solutions for joint activities, the development of cross-border cooperation or other options for cooperation with civil society organizations in the country of registration can be a way out for the Belarusian organizations themselves. Another way may be associated with lobbying for the assignment of a special status to Belarusian organizations registered abroad.

It is necessary for foreign donor organizations to work together with the civil society of Belarus and the national governments of the countries where Belarusian CSOs are registered to develop ways to solve both global and technical problems of Belarusian CSOs, taking into account the specifics of their development and the current situation.

For their successful functioning and the ability to solve problems arising abroad, Belarusian CSOs must be financially stable, well managed (have a high level of management culture), have minimum staff in the country of registration, and at least to some extent integrate into the country of registration.

# Access of Non-Profit Organizations to Banking services. Top 10 Best Banking Practices.



**Year:** 2020

**Sphere:** Civil society, human rights

**Keywords:** NPOs, banking services, banks, access to finance

**Organization:** Center for Legal Transformation (Lawtrend) with expert participation of the Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs  
Center for Legal Transformation (Lawtrend) is a non-profit organization the purpose of which is improving legal culture, organizing educational, analytical and research activities in the field of law.

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**Author & partners:** **Olga Smolyanko** - lawyer, director of Center for Legal Transformation



## Summary

The aim of the study was to identify the best practices and problems in the field of accessibility of non-profit organizations (NPOs) to banking services.

The target groups of the study are non-profit organizations, primarily public associations, foundations, institutions, unions (associations) and banks of the Republic of Belarus. The study identified 10 best banking practices in relation to NPOs with a description of the achievements, as well as problems in their implementation. The study is accompanied by the generalized results of surveys of banks, NPOs, analysis of websites and other public information on the availability of banking services for NPOs.

## Research Questions

In addition to commercial organizations, a large number of NGOs are also registered in Belarus. Almost all registered NPOs are recipients of banking services. The need for NPOs to interact with banks is dictated by both legislation and practical considerations. In the past few years, there has been a kind of «boom in internal fundraising» in Belarus, when NPOs have resorted to new funding instruments to exercise their right to access funding: fundraising through crowdfunding platforms, organizations' websites, ERIP, etc.

The use of numerous new instruments of internal fundraising is impossible without the conclusion of an agreement between NPOs and banking organizations. As a result, in recent years, the financial stability of NPOs, along with the former dependence on government restrictions, has become increasingly determined by banking practices. In turn, banks do not always perceive themselves as institutions based on human rights values. In Belarus, the practice of protecting NPOs of their rights to access financing by using payment systems is also not widespread.

## Methodology

1. Analysis of international standards, legislation of Belarus in the field of access to funding for NPOs with an emphasis on access to banking services.
2. Analysis of the website of the National Bank, the Association of Belarusian Banks, websites <https://infobank.by/>, <https://myfin.by/>, as well as websites of banks for information on charitable activities, support for NGOs and initiatives, special offers and tariffs for NPOs.
3. Field research with the analysis of 15 cases of NPO opening settlement, charitable accounts, concluding Internet acquiring agreements with banks, including connecting recurring payments, concluding an agreement with the AIS "Raschet" system.
4. A survey of NGOs on the topic "Accessibility of banking services for NGOs". It was attended by 56 registered NGOs of various organizational and legal forms.

5. Interview with representatives of NGOs.
6. Analysis and interviews of NGOs in the course of consulting activities (in total, more than 100 NGOs took part in the study).
7. Interviewing banks, including by distributing a written questionnaire.

## Study results

The best practices on the access of NPOs to banking services were identified and disseminated among NPOs and banks, with a description of problem areas in the implementation of these practices.

## Research Findings

In a number of cases, Belarusian banks agree to provide special tariffs and benefits for NPOs on an individual basis; they pay a lot of attention to issues of corporate social responsibility, charity, and volunteering.

Some banks provide special conditions for opening, functioning and closing charitable accounts, more favorable conditions for NPO fundraising. At the same time, banks do not always perceive themselves as organizations based on human rights values, do not perceive themselves as a regulator in the implementation of freedom of association (the right to access financing as part of freedom of association), and do not perceive NPOs as individual clients with specific needs in matters of access to banking services due to the non-commercial nature of their activities.

NPOs also rarely engage in advocacy of their rights in relations with banks.

It is necessary to improve the work of banks and NPOs aimed at making NPOs more accessible to financing, in particular, access to banking services, including through the introduction of the best banking practices identified in the study into widespread banking activities.

## Research Significance

This study is the first in Belarus to raise the issues of interaction between banks and NPOs, aimed at studying the availability of banking services. The collection of information in the course of the research showed a great interest, primarily on the part of NGOs, in the research topic. Individual banking organizations also showed interest.

## Recommendations

It is necessary to carry out follow-up actions, both when working with banks and when working with NPOs, aimed at making NPOs more accessible to financing, in particular, access to banking services. The authors of the study recommend that NPOs, when

interacting with banks, seek and monitor the implementation by banks in their activities of the best practices identified in the study, and banks follow good practices and translate them into their activities (including following the principles of corporate social responsibility and human rights-based activities).

# Practice of Public Participation in the Process of Making Environmentally Significant Decisions



**Year:** 2020

**Sphere:** Civil society, state governance and public policy, ecology and environmental protection

**Keywords:** Public participation, the Aarhus Convention, environmentally significant solutions, the right to a healthy environment

**Organization:** Center for European Transformation (CET) is a Belarusian independent think tank founded in March 2010. CET is part of the structure of the International NGO «EuroBelarus». Main subject areas of research and analytics: European Studies and European Union eastern policy, political and economic transformations, the development of civil society, transformations in the humanitarian spheres (education, culture, quality and way of life).

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**Oksana Shelest** – candidate of sociological sciences, senior analyst at the Center for European Transformation.

## Summary

The study analyzes the existing mechanisms for public participation in environmental decision-making and evaluates their effectiveness. The main conclusions of the study are based on a cross-sectional analysis of legislative norms, actual practice of decision-making, perceptions and assessments of different types of subjects about the existing mechanisms of public participation in making environmentally significant decisions. The recommendations are aimed both at improving existing procedures (public hearings) and at expanding citizen participation in environmental decision-making.

## Research Questions

The Republic of Belarus is a party to the Aarhus Convention, which provides for public participation in environmental decision-making. While there are separate mechanisms for public participation in Belarus, their functioning is far from ideal, and the perceptions of various participants about the role of the public are often contradictory. This leads to the emergence of conflict situations and insufficient consideration of the rights and interests of citizens in the course of making environmentally significant decisions.

The most widely used mechanisms for public participation are various types of public hearings, legislative regulation of which is gradually being improved, but this does not lead to an increase in their effectiveness. Obviously, there are other barriers to ensuring the real participation of citizens in making environmentally significant decisions, in addition to the imperfections of the legislative framework. This study is aimed at identifying them.

## Methodology

The main conclusions of the study are based on cross-analysis of legislation, the actual practice of decision-making, ideas and assessments of various types of subjects on existing public participation mechanisms in making environmentally significant decisions, as well as their mutual perception and attitudes for interaction with other stakeholders.

Methods for collecting information and empirical research base: 1) Analysis of legislation (mechanisms for public participation, characteristics of mechanisms relative to the Aarhus Convention); 2) analysis of open sources (cases of public participation after 2014); 3) semi-structured interviews with participants in the decision-making process (32 interviews were carried out).

## Study results

In the course of the study, the pragmatic part as well as attitudes of stakeholders (developers, local authorities, designers, CSOs, local environment activists) about the involvement of the public in decision-making processes were analyzed. As a result, a number of contradictions were found in the attitudes and values of different participants in the process, their understanding of the meaning and importance of public participation in decision-making, as well as a number of specific problems in organizing public hearings,

which significantly affect their effectiveness (nature and timeliness of informing, public opinion mechanisms). One of the most important problems of public participation in making environmentally significant decisions and decisions on construction remains to be the stage of decision-making on which this participation occurs. Based on the provisions of legislation and consultation with experts, a scheme of decision-making stages in relation to the construction of specific objects, as well as the forms of public participation at each stage, was constructed.

## Research Findings

The effectiveness of the inclusion of citizens in decision-making suffers under negative impact of systemic factors, primarily the lack of real local self-government, the effective mechanisms of democracy, separation of the authorities. Public organizations and locals remain those most interested in the involvement of the public in decision-making. Local authorities and developers perceive public discussions as a tedious formality. Informing and including the public at the initial stages of decision-making, access to information, access to justice, the level of involvement and competence of citizens remain to be significant problems.

Understanding the process of participation of the public in making decisions has expanded. This leads to the formulation of new problems: the lack of resources to organize the process of real accounting of public opinion, lack of dialogue and expert competencies in all participants in the process, and the lack of independent intermediaries.

## Research Significance

The study made it possible to analyze the structure of ideas, interests and expectations of various stakeholders from the process of participation of citizens in making decisions on construction, which makes it possible to work more effectively with these parties: local authorities and activists, customers and designers. The study revealed a number of problems that can be solved by introducing amendments to legislative norms and procedures for ensuring public participation. Recommendations have been developed, the implementation of which will make it possible to make existing mechanisms more efficient and which can later be developed into a set of recommended practices to ensure public participation in making environmentally significant decisions.

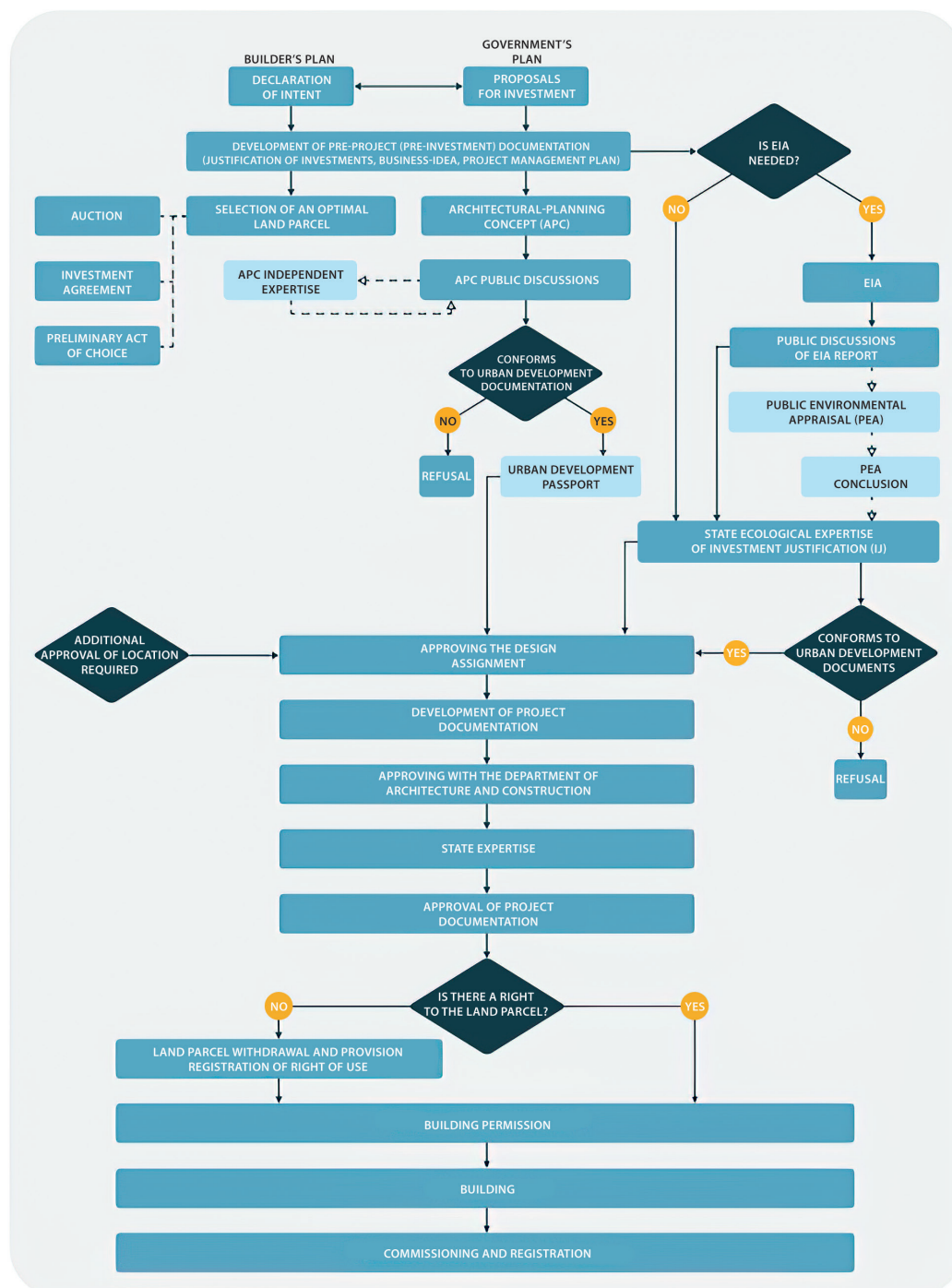
## Recommendations

Recommendations for the improvement of public participation mechanisms in making environmentally significant decisions lie in two planes:

1. Systemic changes concerning the entire complex of public administration: from the introduction of a real mechanism of local self-government, accountability of authorities, democratic forms of participation to people's access to actually functioning mechanisms of justice

- Specific improvements that can contribute to the elimination of some of the issues that generate conflicts: a change in the informing system, the involvement of the public at the earliest decision-making stage, the transformation of public discussions into an accompanying institute, the creation of a system of public monitoring of an object commissioning and post-project monitoring, ensuring the interests of the public are being taken into account, the development of the institution of intermediaries, an increase in the competences and general literacy of the participants in the decision-making process, expanding the terms of public discussions.

*An example of a decision-making algorithm for the construction of a specific object*





	STAGES OF DECISION MAKING	FORMS OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION
1.	CREATION OF IDEA (FROM BUILDING IDEA TO CHOOSING A CONSTRUCTION LOCATION)	CONSULTATIONS, OPINION GATHERING, POLLING, APPEALS
2.	CHOOSING A CONSTRUCTION LOCATION (FROM PROPOSING DIFFERENT OPTIONS TO SELECTING A LAND PARCEL)	CONSULTATIONS, OPINION GATHERING, POLLING, APPEALS
3.	PRE-PROJECT STAGE (FROM START OF DEVELOPMENT OF PROJECT DOCUMENTATION TO EIA OR APC)	CONSULTATIONS, OPINION GATHERING, POLLING, APPEALS
4.	START OF PROJECT DEVELOPMENT/ CARRYING OUT EIA/CREATING APC	APPEALS, COMMENTS
5.	PUBLIC DISCUSSION STAGE	PUBLIC DISCUSSIONS
6.	STATE EXPERTISE	APPEALS, APPEALING DECISIONS
7.	FINISH OF PROJECT DEVELOPMENT	APPEALS, APPEALING DECISIONS
8.	CONSTRUCTION AND COMMISSIONING	CONTROL OF COMMISSIONING AND PROJECT MONITORING



# Public Participation in Budget Policy



LINK 1



LINK 2



LINK 3

<b>Year:</b>	2020
<b>Sphere:</b>	Civil society, public administration and public policy, internet research
<b>Keywords:</b>	Budget policy, civil participation, budget literacy, public administration bodies
<b>Organization:</b>	Center for 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 and efficiency. The main activities of SYMPA are education, research and monitoring (public finance and public procurement). We bring together people who want to improve the quality of governance in our country.
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<b>Author &amp; partners:</b>	<b>Zhanna Kulakova</b> - Analyst of the Kosh Urada (Price of the State) project. <b>Natalia Ryabova</b> - director of Sympa. <b>Svetlana Kulesh</b> - Sympa / Bipart Research Coordinator, Candidate of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor.

## Summary

The paper presents an overview of foreign experience in the participation of citizens in budget policy. It also includes an assessment of the current level of citizens' involvement in the budget process in Belarus. The readiness and needs of such participation on the part of the Belarusian civil society and the general public are analyzed. Based on the results obtained by the authors of the study, recommendations are offered to government bodies and other interested stakeholders to improve civil participation in the budget process.

## Research Questions

The participation of the public in the adoption of budget decisions is one of the most important pillars ensuring the effectiveness of budget policy. International experts advise Belarus to engage the public in the budget process, as this will improve its effectiveness, ensure its transparency and accountability, as well as improve citizens' satisfaction with the quality of government. The citizens themselves want it, but the government is in no hurry to move towards that. Executive and legislative power does not provide citizens with any participation opportunities, and the Supreme Control Body – the Committee of State Control – offers extremely limited possibilities for this.

Citizens are only allowed to offer topics to include a budget audit plan through the CSC site, via a hotline or as part of a personal visit. The mechanism of participation of citizens in the adoption of final decisions in the field of budget policy is absent.

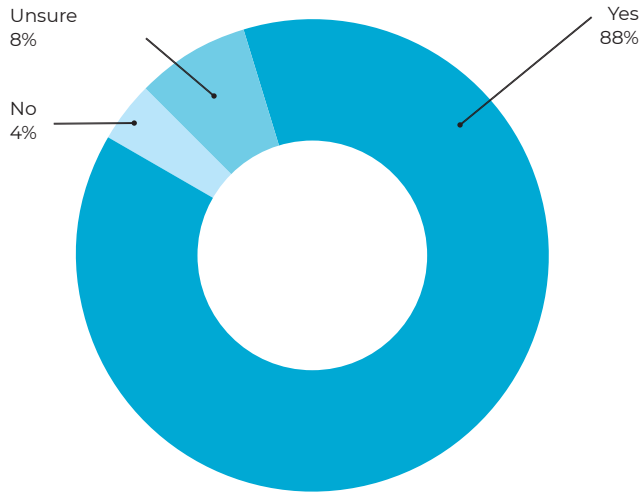
## Methodology

To study the international experience of public participation in the budget process, a qualitative analysis of the relevant information sources and literature was carried out. In November 2019, a focus group discussion was organized with representatives of civil society organizations (CSOs) from Minsk, as well as individual city activists in order to identify their needs and willingness to participate in budgetary policy. Within the framework of the discussion, five key blocks were considered: awareness of civil society about the current budget policy, satisfaction with the current budget policy, the real state of affairs with public participation in budget policy, the need and willingness of civil society to participate in budget policy, possible forms of public involvement in budget policy for local level. To analyze the readiness of Belarusian citizens to participate in budgetary policy in November 2019 – January 2020, an online survey of 1,073 respondents was conducted in a national sample in the pop-up format (pop-up windows) with the participation of the Baltic Internet Policy Initiative.

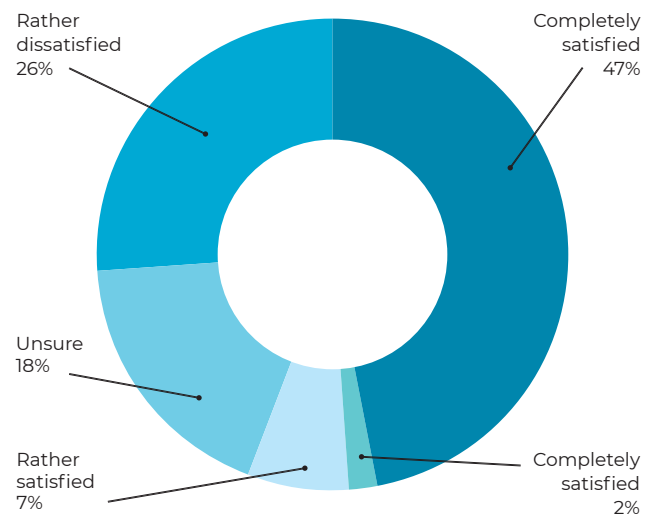
## Study results

Analysis of foreign experience has shown that civic participation in budgetary policy can take place both at the national and local levels and should cover all stages of the budgetary process. One of the most effective instruments for participation in budgetary policy at the local level is civic participation budgets.

*Do you consider it necessary to improve the budget literacy of the residents of your community?*



*How satisfied are you with the way the local government informs citizens about the current budget policy?*



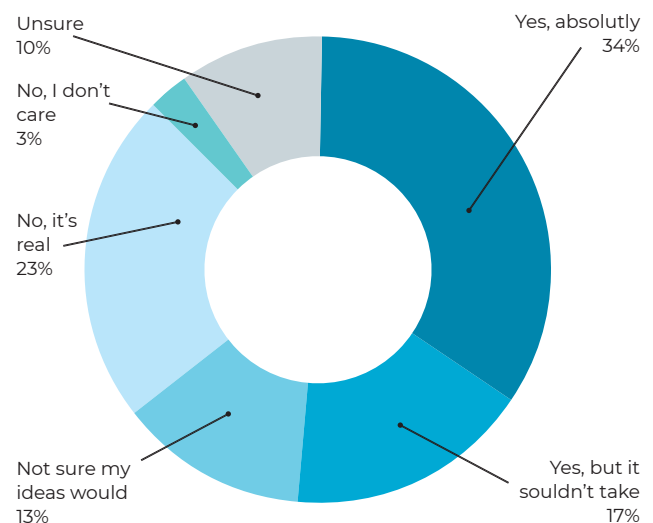
International experience shows that the contribution of CSOs to budgetary policy is often more significant than the contribution from the general public, since CSOs have great expertise.

In Belarus, CSOs regularly try to influence budgetary policy, but these attempts rarely succeed. In such a situation, CSO representatives see their role in providing government agencies with information on the needs of various target groups.

The level of budget literacy of the population in Belarus is low. Most of the respondents do not have an understanding of the difference between the main directions of expenditures of the republican budget, local budgets and extra-budgetary funds, in particular the SPF. However, it is this question that is of the greatest interest to them.

Lack of awareness has led to the formation of a number of budget myths in the mass consciousness, which were identified in the course of this study.

*Would you like to take part in the distribution of some of the budget for road facilities, street lighting, landscaping and other issues that affect the living?*



## Research Findings

In Belarus, there are practically no working and understandable mechanisms for public participation in budgetary policy. The inability to influence this process, as well as the lack of open information, negatively affects people's interest in budget topics and, as

a result, the level of their budget literacy. This also does not allow members of the public to conduct an adequate analysis of the situation and formulate reasonable proposals for improving the budgetary process in our country. At the same time, both representatives of civil society and the population are not satisfied with the budget policy pursued by the authorities and demonstrate a desire to actively participate in this process at all levels.

Most citizens prefer the online format of interaction with government agencies on budgetary policy issues. CSO representatives are ready for face-to-face meetings and at the current stage they see providing government agencies with information about the needs of their target groups as one of their key functions.

## Recommendations

Recommendations to government bodies.

1. With the participation of the public concerned, develop and implement a set of measures aimed at increasing the budget literacy of the population. In particular, take measures to promote Budgets for Citizens published by the Ministry of Finance and ensure wider audience coverage.
2. Increase the transparency of public finances by regularly publishing the most detailed data on budget revenues and expenditures.
3. When developing draft budgets, consult with the expert community and CSOs on budget policy issues by creating special committees.
4. Conduct open discussions of draft republican and local budgets with the participation of the expert community and CSOs.
5. Expand the toolkit through which the public can signal possible violations related to budgetary policy by creating an interactive Internet portal with the function of filing complaints / appeals.

# COVID-19 in Belarus: Impact on the Non-Government Sector



**Year:** 2020

**Sphere:** Civil society, public opinion, media research

**Keywords:** COVID-19, non-profit organizations, non-state media

**Organization:** Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) is a public, research, politically unbiased and policy-oriented institution. The director and analysts of BISS are guided in their activities by the principles of professionalism, transparency and accountability. BISS, while remaining an ideologically and politically neutral institution, adheres to the basic values of an open society and promotes them in Belarus within the framework of its characteristic activities. The methodological basis for the research and analytical activities of the BISS is critical rationalism.

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**Author & partners:** **Vadim Mozhejko** – PhD, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) analyst.

## Summary

Belarusian non-profit organizations faced significant difficulties in their activities, which were aggravated by the indifference of the state, but the experience of using information technologies will increase their independence and inclusiveness.

Non-state media were forced to act in the face of lack of official information and absence of open dialogue on the part of the authorities. The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of paying attention to human capital from different angles. The state underestimated this importance, while non-profit organizations and non-state media, on the contrary, may pay additional attention to human capital.

## Research Questions

The COVID-19 pandemic has become one of the greatest challenges the world has faced in decades. Coping with the epidemic and overcoming the negative non-medical consequences of coronavirus infection is becoming a big challenge even for countries like Germany, which have a strong economy, a stable democratic political system and an experienced civil society. Unfortunately, Belarus faced the coronavirus crisis in a much worse state: during economic stagnation, under an authoritarian leadership and with weak civil society institutions with limited influence.

The Belarusian authorities deny the seriousness of the coronavirus threat and ignore important WHO recommendations, as well as oppose the work of private initiatives and independent media. In such a situation, the main attention is focused on scary medical statistics, as well as on the specific policies and colorful statements of Alexander Lukashenko. However, this hides the impact that the epidemic has on the Belarusian society – on ordinary people, families with children, non-profit organizations, non-state media.

## Methodology

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of the coronavirus epidemic on the non-state sector in Belarus. For this, relevant sociological measurements with primary data were selected. The information was structured and analyzed in three areas: society as a whole, non-profit organizations, and media. Based on this, the long-term effects of the pandemic were identified and recommendations were made to mitigate the effect of the epidemic as much as possible and to minimize the negative consequences. Thanks to the financial participation of international organizations (UNICEF, World Bank, Pact) and foreign donors (USAID, Sida), several representative sociological surveys were conducted during the epidemic in Belarus.

All of them were performed by the SATIO company, using the computer assisted web interviewing (CAWI) method, allowing conducting surveys without personal contact with people, which is extremely important in a pandemic. Additionally, important sectoral data was collected by civil society organizations: Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), Belarusian Organization of Working Women (BOWW).

## Study results

Belarusian state has not expressed desire or readiness to help society cope with new challenges and difficulties in the context of a pandemic. For non-state media and non-profit organizations, this is a quite familiar picture – they regularly face not only the lack of government assistance, but also various pressures instead of support. However, the combination of a lack of resources in a crisis economy and a reluctance to recognize the danger of COVID-19 as such led to the fact that the state did not provide the necessary and expected support to groups that were previously completely loyal to it, including medical and educational workers, families with children.

The actions of the authorities during the pandemic are destroying the long-cultivated image of Belarus as a safe and socially oriented state. The destruction of this image carries long-term socio-political consequences, which have already begun to manifest themselves in the increased politicization of society during the summer election campaign.

## Research Findings

Non-profit organizations in general have been able to adapt their activities to the conditions of the epidemic and will learn useful experience from it. These include new competencies in online activities, which will increase independence from authorities and inclusiveness, as well as the example of the # ByCovid19 initiative – an extremely effective interaction of activists with business and the state. Non-state media have also gained valuable experience of successful work in the context of the epidemic, however, a drop in income threatens with difficulties in development and staffing problems, intensified by moral and psychological pressure on journalists.

## Research Significance

The COVID-19 pandemic has demonstrated the importance of paying attention to human capital from different angles. The state underestimated this importance and, instead of showing concern for the life and health of people, demonstrated neglect and indifference both in public relations and in practice. This approach led to negative assessments from society, which entails unpleasant consequences for the authorities already during this election campaign. It would be useful for state structures to critically interpret this experience and change their approaches to work, showing greater informational openness and building constructive interaction with non-state media.

## Recommendations

Non-profit organizations and non-governmental media can also pay additional attention to human capital. This is the value of activists and journalists who have coped with the difficult work during a pandemic and are prepared for new challenges thanks to their hands-on experience. The importance of inclusive online formats that allow one to take part in the activities of public organizations regardless of their location and physical capabilities. The power of volunteer initiatives that can quickly mobilize and establish constructive

interaction with various actors to solve an urgent problem. Leveraging work experience during the epidemic – including digitalization and the #ByCovid19 campaign example – will help further the development of non-profit organizations and non-state media when the coronavirus pandemic is defeated.



# Survey of Adult Education Providers on the Impact of the COVID-19 Pandemic on Their Activities



Year:	2020
Sphere:	Online research, adult education
Keywords:	Survey, pandemic, COVID-19, provider, adult education
Organization:	<p>The Association of Life-Long Learning and Enlightenment (ALLLE) is a non-profit organization that unites educational and educational organizations and institutions of Belarus. The activities of ADAiA are aimed at coordinating actions for the development of additional and non-formal education in Belarus.</p> <p>The Association for Further Education was registered on February 4, 2011. At the same time, ADAiA member organizations have been cooperating in the field of various educational projects and events for more than 20 years. The priority areas and forms of work of the Association are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>■ advocating for and promoting the interests of organizations working in the field of non-formal and informal education;</li><li>■ promoting the development of non-formal and informal education organizations in the regions of Belarus;</li><li>■ development and implementation of training programs for managers, trainers and facilitators in the field of non-formal education.</li></ul>

Target groups - organizations (non-profit, commercial) in the field of non-formal adult education, managers and teachers / trainers working in the field of non-formal adult education.

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**Author & partners:** **Vasil Pron** - owner and director of the Orange Training Center.  
**Sasha Kuzmich** - is the project manager of the Association of Additional Education.

## Summary

The survey of adult lifelong education (ALE) providers was conducted by the German Association of People's Universities in Belarus (DVV International) and the Association of Life-Long Learning and Enlightenment (ALLLE) to get a clear idea of the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the situation of adult lifelong education in Belarus. This idea arose after one organization asked about the incomprehensible regulation of online education (in terms of paperwork).

The need for analysis also became apparent through the partners' desire to gather information on the real response of different providers to the COVID-19 pandemic: how seriously it affected them, how they assessed the impact, and what decisions they made. The partners also wanted to form their own understanding and identify problems in the legislation (office work, accounting, etc.), how the change in the situation has exacerbated bureaucratic restrictions, whether the transition to online is a solution, and find out whether organizations need help and whether they are ready to ask for it (especially from NGOs), adjust their own activities. The partners did not set a representative study as a goal, but rather sought to collect case studies of individual organizations, as well as draw up their own agenda in the field of advocacy and see the potential for cooperation between different market players.

## Research Questions

Objectives of the survey:

- identify problems and difficulties in the work of providers, taking into account the self-isolation of participants in the educational process;
- assess the changing needs of the providers of additional adult education in Belarus in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic;
- to create a problem field for consulting the providers of Belarusian ALE and advocacy of their interests in order to support survival, save jobs, maintain competitiveness in the Internet space.

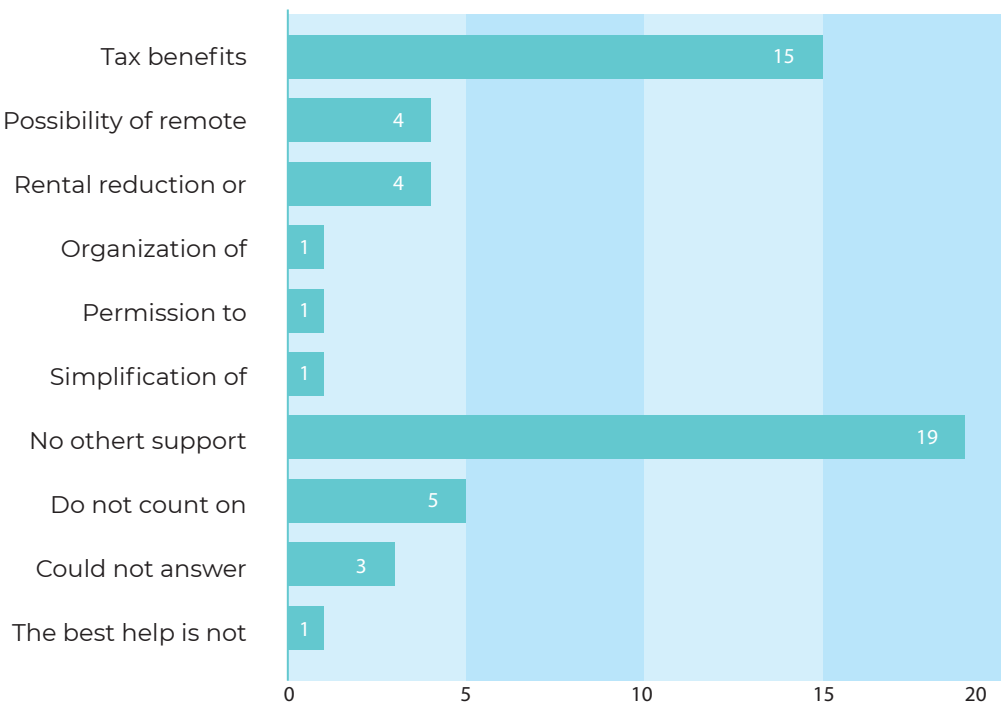
## Hypotheses:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic has affected all ALE providers to one degree or another.
2. The COVID-19 pandemic has caused financial difficulties for most providers.
3. The most significant difficulties for providers are related to the financing of the office, the payment of teachers and the preservation of their jobs.
4. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, providers face limitations in legislation that have not had a significant impact on their activities in the past.
5. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, a significant number of Belarusian ALE providers are trying to transfer their activities online.
6. ALE providers rely primarily on themselves in efforts to respond to the complexities of the COVID-19 pandemic.
7. In a COVID-19 pandemic situation, providers also seek to cooperate and collaborate with each other and with professional communities.
8. In the situation of the COVID-19 pandemic, Belarusian providers do not count on significant state assistance.
9. Assistance of various nature (consultations, advocacy, etc.) is relevant for ALE providers.

## Methodology

The survey was conducted online through an open Google form. The maximum number of representatives of the target group – providers of additional adult education in Belarus of various forms of ownership and sectors (state, commercial, non-commercial) were invited to participate in the survey. The content of the questionnaire can be found at: <https://bit.ly/LLLprov>

Other government support measures that may be useful to providers



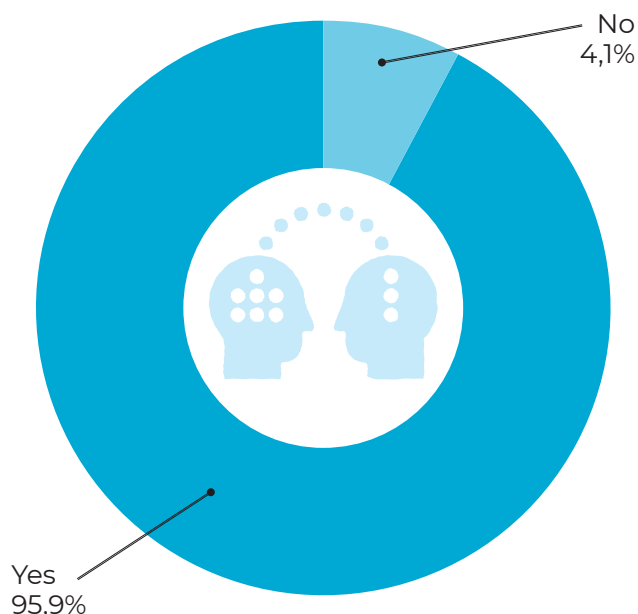
## Study results

The obtained results give an idea of the impact of the situation with COVID-19 on various Belarusian providers of non-formal education and their reaction to it, providing an opportunity to create a problematic field for possible assistance to providers of ALE. The analysis of the survey results confirmed the hypothesis that the COVID-19 pandemic affected to some extent all ALE providers and caused financial difficulties for most of them. The biggest financial difficulties for providers are related to the financing of the offices, the payments to teachers and the preservation of their jobs.

The hypothesis that providers face limitations in the legislation is only partially confirmed by a significant proportion of providers who responded to the survey either had not encountered difficulties or had not yet experienced the consequences. On the hypothesis that providers need help in different spheres (consultations, advocacy), an interesting conclusion was obtained that the doubts and some anxiety of providers are caused by the behavior, skills and values of consumers of online learning, but providers do not even formulate a request for help in that regard.

It should also be noted that the one thing that doesn't appear in the answers about the need for help – a request for marketing assistance in promoting online education services, despite the fact that the competition increases many times over when working in online formats. There is not enough data in this survey to conclude why this is happening, perhaps it is not yet a priority for providers, or just a question of the very possibility of working online is still in the first place, or it reflects old expectations of consumer behavior like it was in offline formats, or other hypotheses. We believe that this topic also requires further research. In general, the hypothesis that the assistance of various kinds (consultations, advocacy, etc.) is required for providers of ALE is quite contradictory. On the one hand, providers state some difficulties and issues, reflect the need for help, and on the other – it seems that they do not have faith in outside help, so they choose to solve the difficulties themselves.

*Are the questions about the online format of ALE relevant for you?*

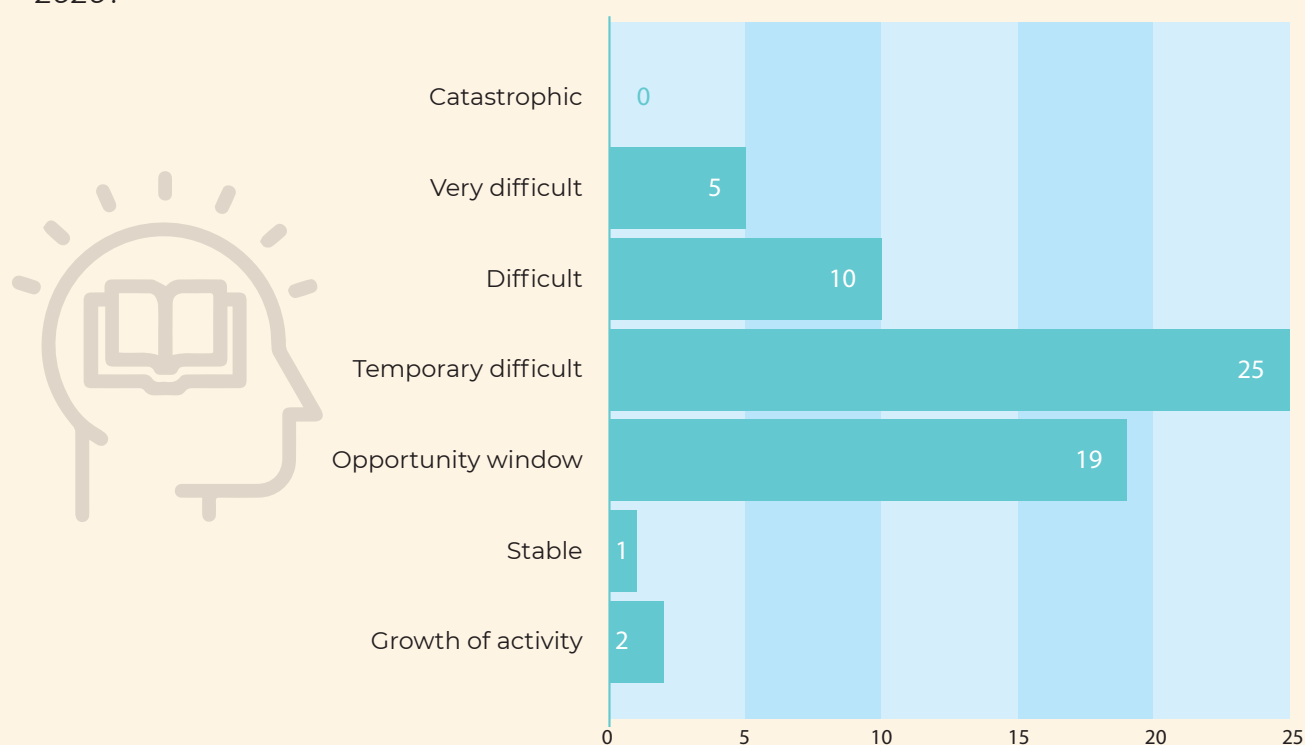


## Research Significance

The following observations made during the survey should be noted:

1. In the process of preparing an analytical note on the survey, the organizers of the study did not find studies, statistics more relevant than those done 5 years ago on the number of providers of non-formal (additional) education in Belarus. In this regard, the relevance of such a study in the field of non-formal (additional) education is possible.

*How do you assess the change in the situation for the organization compared to March 2020?*



2. Despite the existence of the Education Code, which defines additional education, many non-formal education providers cannot or do not want to be classified as additional education and prefer to act on the basis of the general provisions of the Civil Code. This leads to an underestimation of the contribution of non-formal education to the country's development, economy and social processes. It also slows down the formation of the sphere as a whole, the emergence and strengthening of collective players in it, which could improve the framework conditions for the development of non-formal adult education both within the country and for the export of these services abroad.
2. The survey process showed that actions (for example, filling out a survey questionnaire) are more often carried out by providers not because of relevance or their own interests, but due to the presence of personal contacts or personal experience of previous cooperation. It can be assumed that the sphere of non-formal education in Belarus is still in the initial stages of formation, when there are no established mechanisms of cooperation, taking into account the institutional interests of providers. In this regard, it seems important and relevant to intensify the activities of collective participants in the field, which will aggregate providers for cooperation and joint activities for development.

# Belarusian Society Needs and Belarusian NGOs Capacities



**Year:** 2020

**Sphere:** Civil society, public opinion, online research

**Keywords:** Online services, education, NGOs, society

**Organization:** Baltic Internet Policy Initiative is a research center in the field of ICT development, smart cities, e-government, e-democracy and digital media, registered in December 2015 in Estonia. Created to promote the effective use of information and communication technologies to strengthen best practices through strategic advice, benchmarking and exchange of experiences in the Baltic Sea region.

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**Author & partners:** **Mikhail Doroshevich** - head of the Baltic Internet Policy Initiative.  
**Andrei Eliseev** - director of the EAST think tank.

## Summary

The survey was conducted in July 2020, with the aim of identifying the existing online needs of Belarusian society that could potentially be met by NGOs. As part of it, an online survey was conducted on a representative nationwide sample (the number of respondents was more than 700).

## Research Questions

Get up-to-date information on the online priorities of the Belarusian population and the peculiarities of the provision of online services by Belarusian NGOs.

## Methodology

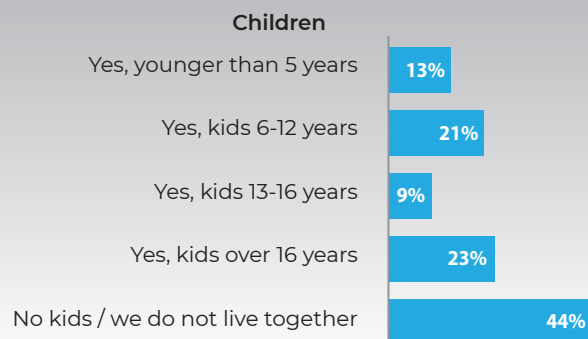
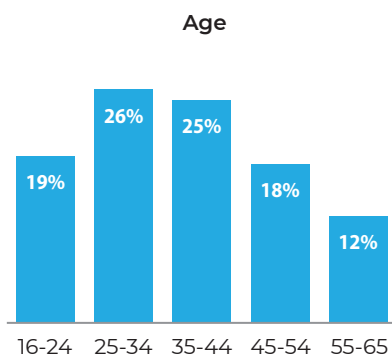
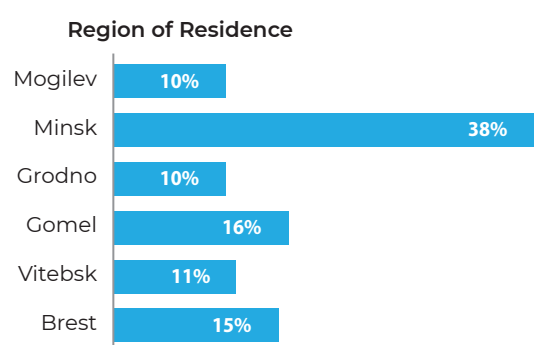
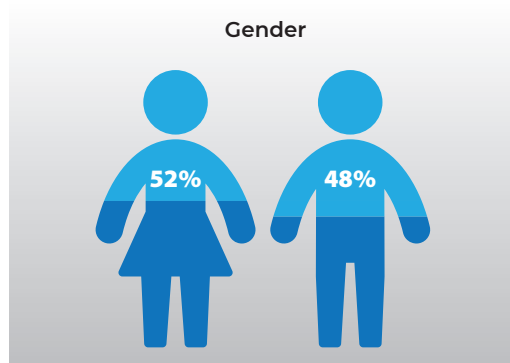
The study was conducted using an online survey in pop-up format, shown to randomly selected users of certain websites.

The research questionnaire consists of 30 questions. The sample structure is adjusted by analytical weighing of data by age and region. Sampling – the actual number of respondents who answered the questionnaire.

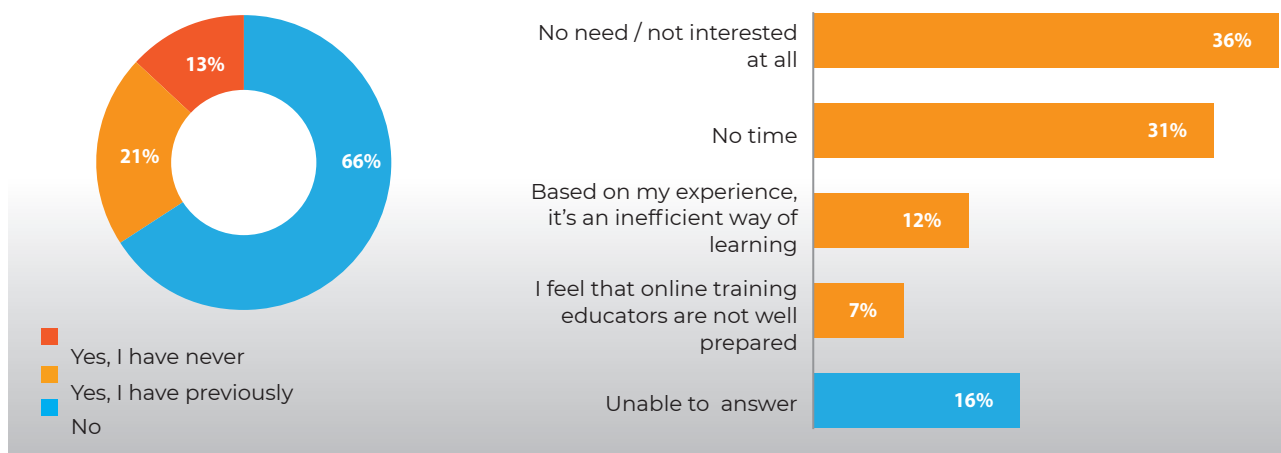
## Study results

During the quarantine/COVID-19 pandemic 50% of the target audience worked in the normal mode, in the office, 20% switched to remote work. 34% want to study online, 13%

### Demographics



### Desires to take online trainings, courses



of them have already participated in online training, courses, etc. The main reasons for refusing to take online courses are lack of time and need to study. Significantly more respondents aged 16-24 have never been online, but would like to try. Significantly more older respondents, aged 55-65, do not want to take online trainings and courses.

The research questionnaire consists of 30 questions. The sample structure is adjusted by analytical weighing of data by age and region. Sampling – the actual number of respondents who answered the questionnaire.

## Study results

During the quarantine/COVID-19 pandemic 50% of the target audience worked in the normal mode, in the office, 20% switched to remote work. 34% want to study online, 13% of them have already participated in online training, courses, etc. The main reasons for refusing to take online courses are lack of time and need to study. Significantly more respondents aged 16-24 have never been online, but would like to try. Significantly more older respondents, aged 55-65, do not want to take online trainings and courses.

42% of the target audience are ready to pay for the training. Video training and learning through a mobile application are the most preferred learning formats. Respondents also note that the most comfortable duration of online training is up to a month. The most interesting topics are topics related to education and acquiring new skills for those who just want to try or have already undergone online training, courses, etc. Many more young people note the importance of obtaining certificates after graduation. Search engines and social networks, messengers are much more popular as tools for finding information about learning among young people. Video training and training via a mobile application are the most preferred training formats. Also, respondents note that the most comfortable duration of online training is up to a month. The most interesting topics are topics related to education and acquiring new skills for those who just want to try or have already taken online trainings, courses, etc. Significantly more young people note the importance of obtaining certificates upon graduation. Search engines and social networks, messengers



are much more popular as tools for finding information about education among young people.

## Research Findings

Finding out about the online needs of the population, analyzing the possibilities for meeting them. To propose recommendations to Belarusian non-governmental organizations on preferred areas of activity and opportunities to expand the possibilities of providing online services to the population based on the analysis of the data obtained.

## Research Significance

The study makes it possible to identify the existing online needs of the Belarusian society, and also allows Belarusian NGOs to obtain additional information on the preferred fields of activity and forms of communication to expand the provision of online services to the population.

## Recommendations

A unique study about the interest in online learning, which is especially relevant during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is advisable for Belarusian non-governmental organizations to pay more attention to the quality of the online services provided, as well as to simplify access to them.

# Use of Social Networks and Messengers in Belarus



LINK

<b>Year:</b>	2020
<b>Sphere:</b>	Civil society, public opinion, internet research
<b>Keywords:</b>	Social network, messenger, interest, popularity, society
<b>Organization:</b>	# DB3 is a research company. Started working in 2009. The company specializes in market research and analytics..
<b>Contacts:</b>	<a href="https://www.linkedin.com/company/db3research">https://www.linkedin.com/company/db3research</a> , mikhail@e-belarus.org
<b>Author &amp; partners:</b>	<b>Mikhail Doroshevich</b> – #DB3 company director

## Summary

The study was conducted in November 2020 and aimed to find out which social networks and instant messengers are most popular among the respondents. Within its framework, an online survey was conducted on a representative nationwide sample (the number of respondents was more than 600).

## Research Questions

Determining the level of popularity of social networks and instant messengers among the surveyed population. Analysis of the change in indicators compared to the 2019 study.

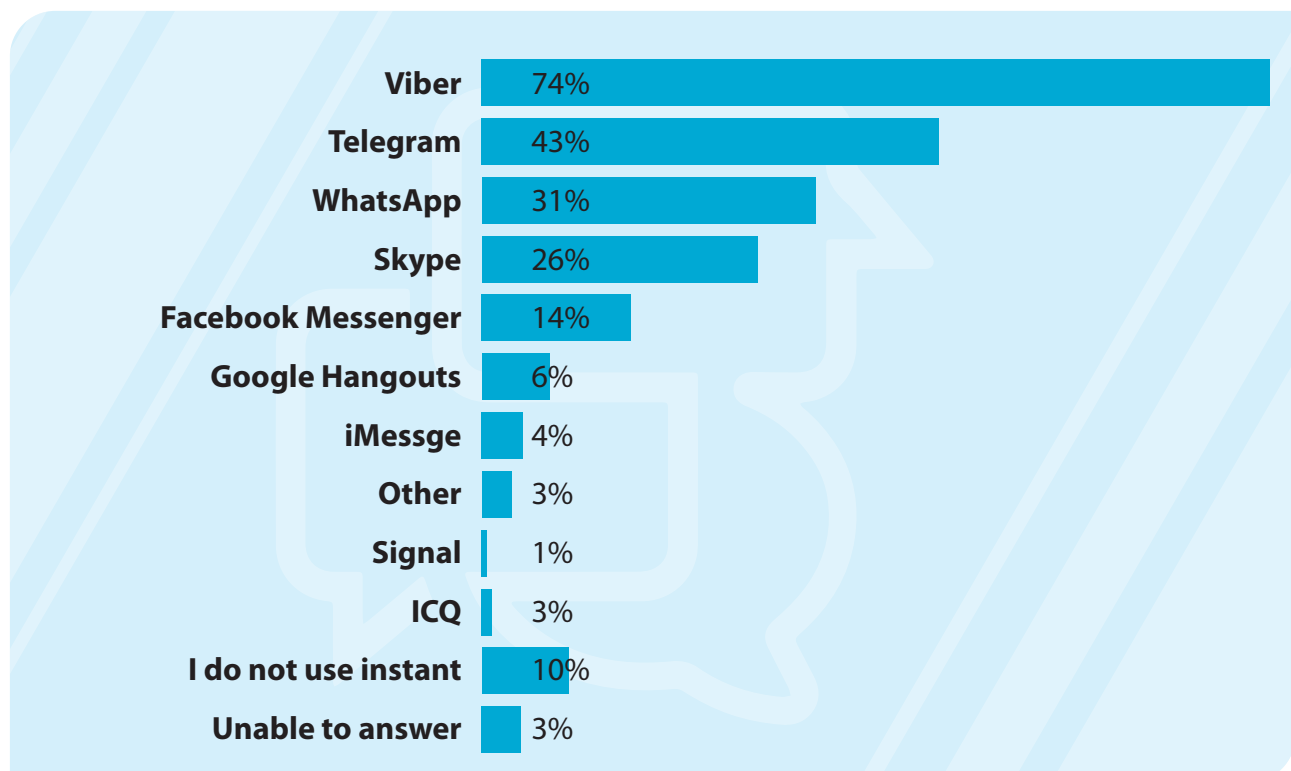
## Methodology

The study was conducted using a pop-up online survey presented to randomly selected users of certain websites. The sample structure was adjusted by analytical weighting of data by gender, age and region. Sample – the actual number of respondents who answered the questionnaire.

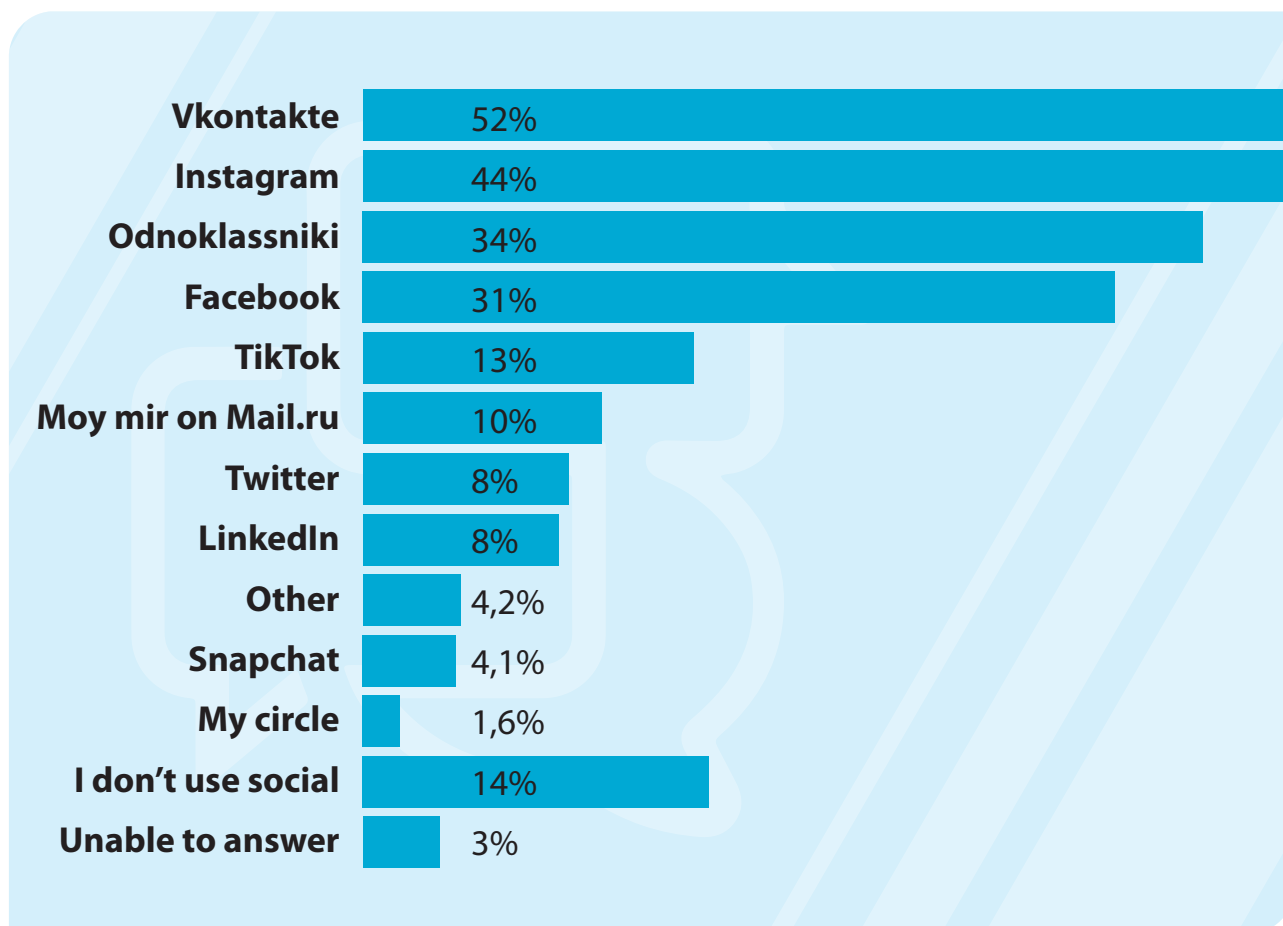
## Study results

Among the top social networks, four platforms are most popular – V Kontakte, Instagram, Odnoklassniki and Facebook. Compared to last year, the percentage of use of V Kontakte

*What messengers does Belarusian Internet audience use?*



*Which social network do Belarusian Internet users use?*



and Instagram has grown, and Tik Tok has appeared and took its place in the top five of the rating, overtaking Twitter. Gender preferences were distributed as follows: women use social networks such as Vkontakte, Instagram and Odnoklassniki much more than men. In the analysis of age group preferences, it is noted that Belarusians aged 15-24 use Vkontakte, Instagram and Tik Tok more often than other age groups.

## Research Findings

To identify and analyze the level of popularity of the studied social networks and messengers among the surveyed population. Show how the level of interest of the surveyed population in social networks and instant messengers has grown or fallen compared to last year.

## Research Significance

To show how the level of popularity of social networks and instant messengers has changed among the surveyed population. To find out how interested the surveyed population is in using social networks and instant messengers based on gender, age and region of residence. To identify the most popular social networks and messengers.

## Recommendations

The material presents the most recent and reliable sociological results of research on the use of social networks and instant messengers.

# Belarus during the COVID-19 Epidemic Situation: the Nature of the Reaction to the Problem by State and Society



<b>Year:</b>	2020
<b>Sphere:</b>	Civil society, public opinion, governance and public policy
<b>Keywords:</b>	COVID-19, crisis, government, business, public initiatives
<b>Organization:</b>	The Center for European Transformation (CET) is a Belarusian independent think tank founded in March 2010. CET is part of the structure of the International NGO «EuroBelarus». The main subject areas of research and analytics: European studies and the Eastern policy of the European Union, political and economic transformations, the development of civil society, transformations in the humanitarian spheres (education, culture, quality and lifestyle).
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<b>Author &amp; partners:</b>	<b>Oksana Shelest</b> - candidate of sociological sciences, senior analyst at the Center for European Transformation. <b>Andrey Yegorov</b> - senior analyst at the Center for European Transformation (until August 2019 - Director of CET). <b>Tatiana Vodolazhskaya</b> - PhD in Sociology, Senior Analyst at the Center for European Transformation.

**Olga Lashkevich** - journalist, editor, analyst.

**Maria Klimentyeva** is a freelancer, a graduate of the Faculty of International Business Communications of the Belarusian State Economic University.

**Kirill Maltsev** is a researcher at the Center for European Transformation.

**Nikita Drachilovsky** is a student of the Law Faculty of the Belarusian State University.

## Summary

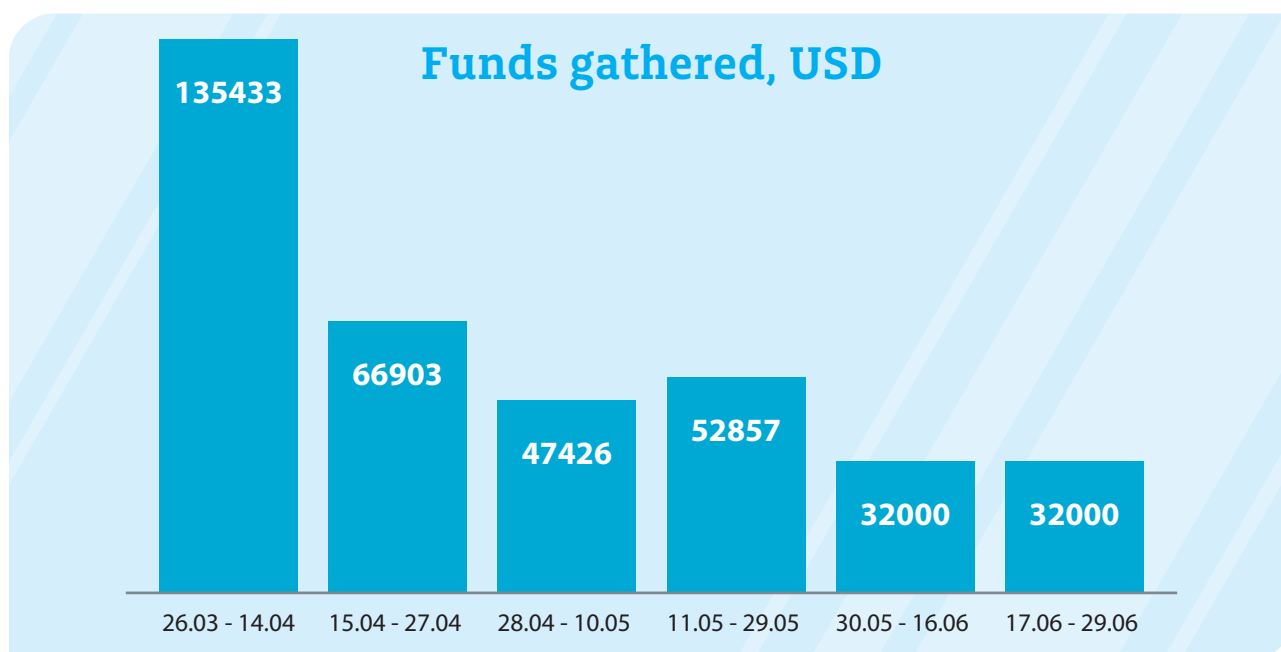
The first wave of COVID-19 was a crisis situation faced by countries around the world. The study analyzed the nature, forms and speed of reaction to the problems arising in connection with COVID-19 on the part of various actors (state institutions, business, civil society), as well as the impact of the situation of the spread of COVID-19 on the citizens of Belarus: general perception of the problem, changes in behavior and lifestyle, assessment of the actions of state and non-state structures.

## Research Questions

The nature of the reaction of the Belarusian authorities to the threat of the COVID-19 pandemic differed from the reaction of the governments of most European countries from the very beginning. For a long time, the problem of the spread of the new coronavirus infection was not recognized at the official level at all. A number of contradictory and inconsistent actions at different levels of government were not accompanied by the development of a coherent strategy and approaches to overcome the threat of the spread of COVID-19 and mitigate the social and economic consequences of the epidemic. At the same time, from the very beginning, there was a fairly large-scale reaction to the problem situation on the part of the Belarusian business, the third sector, public initiatives and activists, and society as a whole. A comprehensive assessment of the reaction of the main public actors and structures is necessary to understand the nature and consequences of the crisis associated with the spread of COVID-19 in Belarus.

## Methodology

Methods of collecting information: 1. analysis of open sources – media, information from websites of government agencies and NGOs, crowdfunding platforms and platforms for creating petitions, social networks and messengers; 2. Secondary analysis of research results related to the topic of corona crisis.



*Trends in fundraising under the ByCovid19 initiative, 26 March 29 June 2020, USD*

## Study results

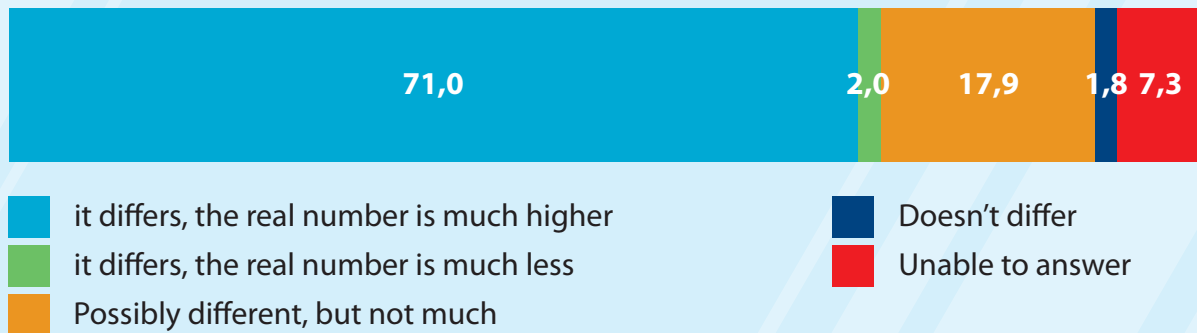
In the situation of the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, government agencies responded in an uncoordinated belated manner, without taking into account the feedback from society. The administrative system turned out to be absolutely incapable of responding to the challenges posed by the spread of the epidemic in the country; this inability was most clearly manifested at the upper levels of government. The structures of business and civil society reacted to the impending crisis most quickly and actively. In addition to taking care of protecting their own business and employees, Belarusian business and civil society quickly and proactively got involved in solving social problems associated with the spread of COVID-19. An important characteristic of the unfolding wave of public solidarity was the viral nature of the spread of ideas, forms and methods of action. In the reaction of the Belarusian society to the coronavirus crisis, we observed a high level of decentralization and self-organization of groups and initiatives throughout the country.

## Research Findings

Set against the background of an extremely unsuccessful response of the public administration system to the crisis, the actions of business and civil society in a crisis situation not only mitigated the consequences of the first wave of the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic, but also, due to the scale of the process, allowed the Belarusian society to look at itself in a new way. We can say that the coronavirus crisis has become a mechanism that triggered public reflection. The main result of this process was a change in the image of «myself» and the image of «others». The volume and variety of forms of mutual assistance, the effectiveness of solidarity actions, understanding of one's own responsibility for oneself and one's loved ones in a situation where the state has withdrawn itself from solving problems, significantly shattered the usual «world picture» of Belarusians, which led, among other things, to a change in the political situation in the country.



Do you think the real number of deaths from COVID-19 is different or not different from the data reported by the Ministry of

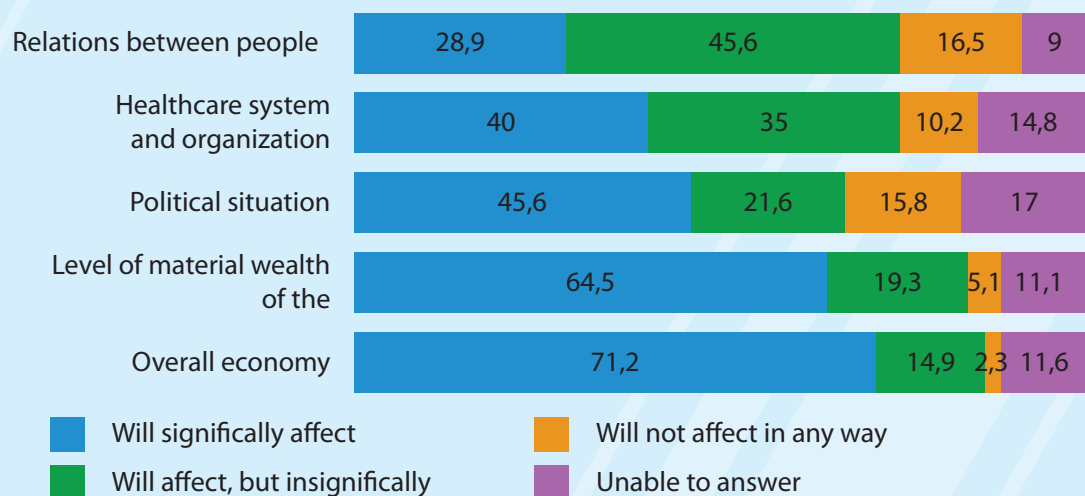


*The level of confidence in the official statistics on the number of deaths due to COVID-19, July 2020, %*

## Research Significance

The study helps to see the picture of the unfolding crisis associated with the first wave of the spread of the COVID-19 epidemic in Belarus, to assess the variety of forms and scale of public solidarity that have emerged in response to this challenge. Description and analysis of the reaction and behavior of state and non-state structures in a crisis situation allows, on the one hand, to understand the characteristics of the public administration system that led to the unfolding of the systemic crisis in Belarus in 2020, and, on the other hand, to assess the potential accumulated by the business and public sector, which was actualized in the form of public mobilization during the first wave of the spread of COVID-19 and transformed into political mobilization of society during the 2020 election campaign.

Will the COVID-19 epidemic affect the following areas of life in Belarus?



*Assessment of the possible impact of the COVID-19 epidemic on various spheres of life, July 2020, %*

# “Un/equal public spaces of Minsk”: assessment of improvement of city waterfronts



<b>Year:</b>	2019
<b>Sphere:</b>	Public opinion, human rights, ecology and environmental protection, urban planning
<b>Keywords:</b>	Waterfronts, landscaping, mobility, inclusiveness, public space
<b>Organization:</b>	<p>The Good City urban initiative was founded in September 2017 by Belarusian urban planners, architects and civil society activists.</p> <p>The main goal is to study and change the public and public spaces of Minsk, taking into account the interests of citizens.</p>
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<b>Author &amp; partners:</b>	<p><b>Alena Lebedzeva</b> – Candidate of Sociological Sciences, Associate Professor of Communication Technology, BSU.</p> <p><b>Ales Krot</b> – urban initiative «Good City», a project manager.</p> <p><b>Aliaksandra Rameyka</b> – Institute of Regional and Urban Planning, architect of the 2nd category.</p>

## Summary

The study was prepared within the framework of the project on the transformation of public spaces in Minsk, taking into account the interests and capabilities of low-mobility groups. The main objectives of the study were as follows:

1. to study several types of urban spaces to take into account the interests of low mobility groups;
2. develop recommendations for their transformation in order to eliminate discrimination against certain categories of citizens.

The recommendations themselves after the study became part of the activities of the urban initiative «Good City», which takes place in the process of their advocacy in the legal documentation for landscaping, which is used by Belarusian city planners.

## Research Questions

If it seems to us that the city has everything necessary for a full life, it means that we can easily get to the main urban resources (work, education, health care, shopping and leisure). If we have the opportunity to take an active part in city life, most likely, the path to key public points does not take us too much effort and time. Conversely, the disadvantages of city life are in the form of dangerous roads and streets, problems with navigation, poor transport connections or constant traffic jams.

If we agree with the idea that the city is a way of life, we can assume that the available opportunities for urban mobility affect not only the appearance of the city, but also the quality of life in it. Thus, mobility is much more than just a mode of transport used by citizens. Life in the city is impossible without constant movement, and the phrase «to be mobile» has long meant «to be modern», «to be successful» and even «to be happy». According to European experts, the quality of life by one third depends on the state of urban (regional) mobility. Moreover, it is regarded as equality of opportunity guaranteed by the Constitution to every person.

## Methodology

The first (preliminary) stage of the study used the texts of expert interviews, from which the definition of urban mobility as the most important element of the friendliness of the urban environment was obtained, as well as the perspectives and components of its measurement.

A total of 25 interviews were conducted, and architects, health and education workers acted as informants. The selection of experts was carried out taking into account the existing ideas about the three basic functions of the urban environment (integration, restoration and development). Based on this, three areas for recruiting specialists were identified: leisure and recreation, health and safety, education and development. In the second stage of the study of urban mobility, a questionnaire survey was conducted, in

which 267 respondents took part. At the same time, the number of parents with young children up to 3 years old, pensioners and people with reduced mobility was artificially increased in the sample.

## Study results

The findings of the study were divided into three semantic subgroups: 1) popular urban waterfronts; 2) the general condition and functionality of city waterfronts; 3) mobility problems associated with visiting city waterfronts.

## Research Findings

Some of the findings of the study:

1. Citizens choose the option of spending time on «their» waterfronts – those they can reach on foot. This is especially true of residents of apartment block areas: Uruchcha, Serabranka, Zielony Luh, Loshitsa. Those who do not have their own waterfronts (within walking distance from home), choose the waterfronts located in the area of the «Niamiha» subway station. The waterfronts in the area of Gorky Park and Victory Park are equally popular with both groups of respondents.
2. A key reason why citizens rarely visit the city's waterfronts is that they are far from the usual routes. The second most important reason is dissatisfaction with the improvement of these waterfronts (primarily their infrastructure), lack of activity points («nothing to do») and places for rest («nowhere to sit»), including those that provide protection from bad weather.
3. The situation with barrier-free environment is worse: 66% of respondents noted the presence of high curbs, steps or other obstacles on the city waterfronts, which are difficult to overcome for the elderly, people with reduced mobility or people with baby carriages / bicycles. 82.4% of respondents drew attention to the lack of public toilets (including those suitable for people with disabilities), as well as places to change clothes and feed young children.
4. Difficulties associated with transport mobility were identified – only 47% of respondents agreed that the favorite waterfront is easy to reach by public transport, and only 21% of respondents can easily reach it by car.

## Research Significance

The water-green diameter of the city of Minsk is a unique natural-architectural object, the pearl of the city and its business card. However, in order to bring real benefits, nature must be «embedded» in urban life at all its levels. After all, accessibility is a much broader concept than the presence of ramps, flat sidewalks and wide footpaths. This is the answer not only to the question «How to get to the waterfront?», But also «Is this walk worth

the effort?». The real accessibility, among other things, is the opportunity to go to a cafe and drink a cup of tea, wait for the rain to end somewhere, make an appointment with friends, change a baby's diaper (if the need arises), listen to street musicians. So far, only a few central areas of water-green diameter can boast of such characteristics. In addition, to maximize its potential, the city's waterfront should be something more than a route from point A to point B, which coincidentally runs along the water.

## Recommendations

Recommendations on creating waterfront projects:

1. **Research.** Before starting any public space project work, research should be carried out: an interview with potential users, surveys, field research and even public discussions, results of which must be included in the final project.
2. **Connections.** It is important to understand the connections between different types of urban spaces: waterfront with adjoining streets, waterfront with adjoining park, etc.
3. **Engagement.** The process of project development must engage all interested parties (locals, city administration and expert organizations), to take their opinions into account.
4. **Uniqueness.** The waterfront project should use urban symbols and a unique urban identity to emphasize the connection of a particular place with the history of the city.
5. **Aesthetics.** The main value of embankments is water, so when designing them you need to provide maximum openness and accessibility to water, for users to fully enjoy it aesthetically.
6. **Security.** The promenade should be safe at all times, even at night, so it is important to pay special attention to lighting, such as dark places under the bridge, so that from afar it is easy to see what is happening there.
7. **Inclusiveness.** Small architectural forms and road cover should be convenient for different categories of citizens: for example, for older people it is easier to get up from the benches the height of which is slightly larger than usual.
8. **Mobility.** An important criterion for the success of public spaces is the ability to reach them on foot, by bicycle or by any public transport.
9. **Information navigation.** Usually the waterfronts occupy a large enough space, which is easier to navigate with a convenient and visible information navigation.
10. **Barrier-free.** The vast majority of waterfront users are pedestrians, so special attention should be paid to the quality of the road cover and the barrier-free environment, so that even in the rain people do not have to jump over puddles.
11. **Separation of lanes.** Scooters and bicycles often move faster than pedestrians, so for added safety one needs to separate their lanes from pedestrian ones.

12. Interactivity. The waterfront is a point of attraction for citizens, so it should provide space for communication or interaction: a place for musicians to perform, watch movies or play tabletop games.
13. Multi-seasonness. In order for a public place to actively exist and develop even in winter, it is necessary to provide cafes, public places where you can hide from the cold, rain or heat, because you want to enjoy the waterfront in both warm and cold weather.
14. Natural needs. Walks along the waterfronts usually take a long time and at a distance from a large concentration of public places, so one needs to provide public toilets at a certain distance from one another. This function can also be performed by cafes, where you can still buy water or have a snack.
15. Zoning of the territory. Since the waterfront is a point of attraction for almost all people, it is important to separate some categories of citizens from each other according to needs: many do not want to spend time near smokers, noisy companies or people walking dogs.

# Belarusian Culture and Ethnography



<b>Year:</b>	2019
<b>Sphere:</b>	Civil society, public opinion
<b>Keywords:</b>	Culture, traditions, knowledge, society
<b>Organization:</b>	Baltic Internet Policy Initiative is a research center in the field of ICT development, smart cities, e-government, e-democracy and digital media, registered in December 2015 in Estonia. Created with the aim of promoting the effective use of information and communication technologies to strengthen best practices through strategic advice, benchmarking and sharing experiences in the Baltic Sea region.
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<b>Author &amp; partners:</b>	<b>Mikhail Doroshevich</b> – head of Baltic Internet Policy Initiative.

## Summary

The study was carried out in November 2019 with the aim to find out the attitude of the online audience to traditional Belarusian culture, as well as to determine the level of knowledge about it. Within its framework, an online survey was conducted on a representative nationwide sample (the number of respondents was more than 500).

## Research Questions

Revealing the level of knowledge of the population about their traditional culture, folklore and ethnography. Analysis of the attitude of society to traditional culture.

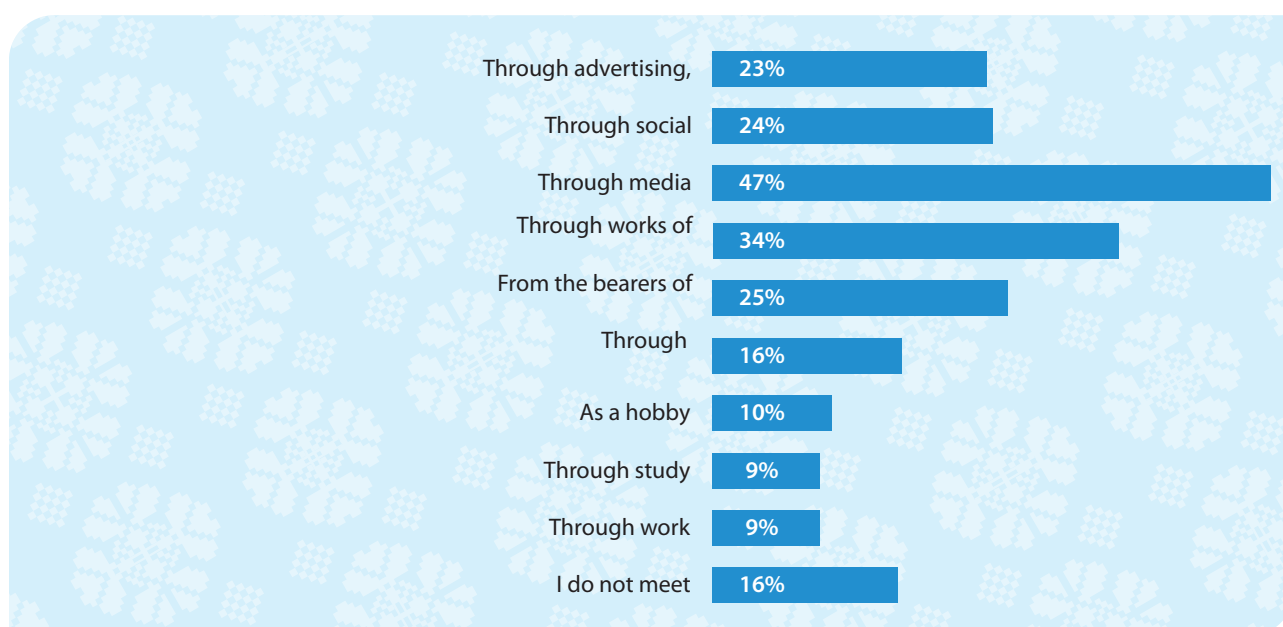
## Methodology

The study was conducted using a pop-up online survey presented to randomly selected users of certain websites. The research questionnaire consists of 8 questions (4 main questions of the questionnaire + 4 socio-demographic questions). Sample - the actual number of respondents who answered the questionnaire.

## Study results

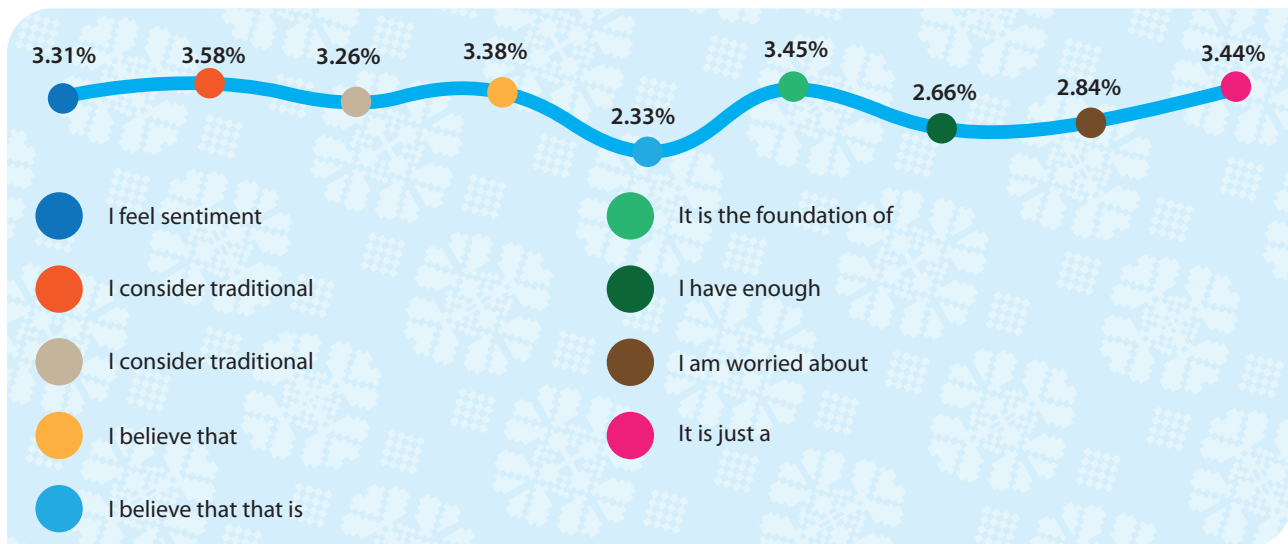
Most often, respondents come across traditional Belarusian culture, folklore, ethnography through media and the Internet. Respondents aged 15-24 are much more likely to encounter it through advertising, fashion, tourism and social media. But people aged 55-74, through these same channels, encounter culture much less often. The respondents generally have a positive attitude towards the traditional Belarusian culture.

*How do you meet the traditional Belarusian culture, folklore, ethnography?*





*Average level of attitude towards traditional Belarusian culture on a 4 point scale (1 - no, 2 - rather no than yes, 3 - unable to answer, 4 - rather yes than no)*



Most of them noted that they consider culture to be valuable, the foundation of national identity. In addition, the respondents are concerned about the further fate of the traditional Belarusian culture. The respondents note that all Belarusians are responsible for the collection, preservation and transfer of knowledge about traditional culture. One third believe that government bodies, officials, scientific institutions, scientists, cultural institutions, cultural workers, educational institutions, Belarusian public organizations and independent initiatives should also take part in the preservation of culture.

Regardless of socio-demographic indicators, old/archival photographs, documentaries and TV shows are of the greatest interest in traditional Belarusian culture. Only 8% said they were not interested in traditional culture.

## Research Findings

Find out and analyze the level of knowledge and interest in traditional Belarusian culture among the surveyed population.

## Research Significance

Show the attitude of the Belarusian society to traditional Belarusian culture, folklore and ethnography. Determine the level of knowledge about traditional Belarusian culture, as well as find out to what extent the population is interested in its study and preservation.

## Recommendations

This study is practically the first study on the attitude towards, and expectations from, the Belarusian culture among the online audience. Since there is a fairly large demand for knowledge in the field of traditional culture, but the existing state structures, institutions and organizations cannot satisfy it, it is advisable to devote more time and attention to this issue.

# Modern Youth Issues



**Year:** 2020

**Sphere:** Civil society, public opinion, youth studies

**Keywords:** Youth issues, values

**Organization:** “Center of Urban Initiatives” - an organisation created in October 2013 by active Mogilev civil activists concerned with urban development. Our goal – initiating and helping implement various projects in the sphere of culture and urban development. This is the first expert-manager initiative of its kind in Mogilev. The Center conducts sociological studies on relevant issues of the city’s urban development, carries out expert support in various aspects of Mogilev’s development, implements projects on development of urban infrastructure, helps form ecological culture with the city’s citizens, and implements educational programs.

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**Author & partners:** **Jurij Bubnov** – doctor of Sociological Sciences, professor, Head of the Department of Humanities, Mogilev State University of Food Technologies.  
**Ol’ga Azarenko** – sociologist.  
**Aleksej Karpenko** – expert of the «Regional Expert Club» initiative.

## Summary

Young people are a sensitive indicator of the changes taking place in society, and their value orientations largely determine the future of society and the country. The survey was conducted among residents of Mogilev and the Mogilev region aged 14 to 35 years. Despite the fact that the object of our research was the youth of Mogilev, we can apply the results obtained to the entire country, since there is no reason to believe that there are fundamental differences in the values of young people living in different regions of Belarus.

## Research Questions

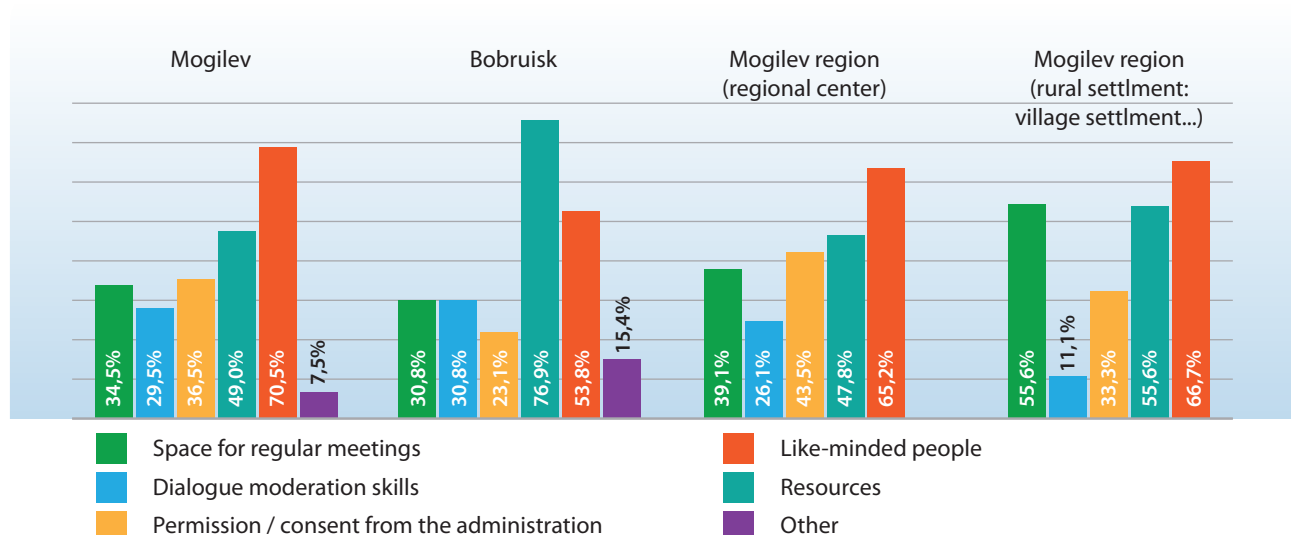
What hinders the self-realization of young people? Are young people satisfied with the organization of their free time? What are they missing? How to make young people active? The authors of the study tried to find answers to these and other questions.

## Methodology

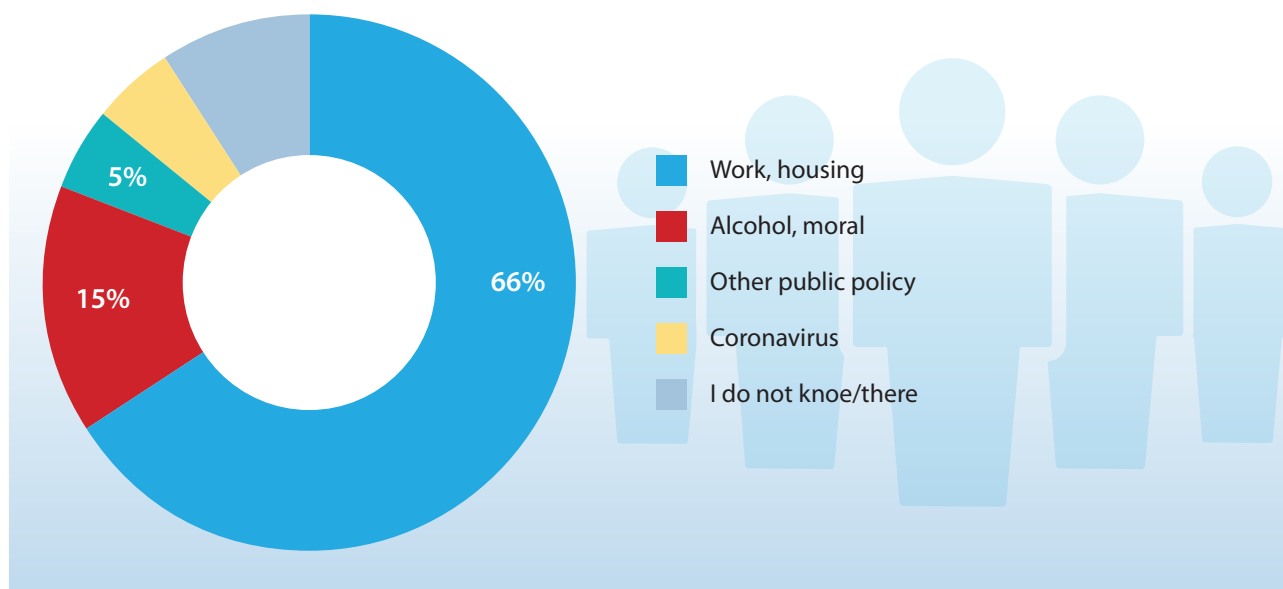
In the current study of youth issues, two sociological methods were used: a massive Internet questionnaire survey, in which 606 people took part, and a survey in the framework of four focus groups.

## Study results

606 people took part in the online survey. 30 people took part in four focus groups. The statistical processing of the survey results was carried out according to the main socio-demographic parameters. Sociological data was obtained that characterizes the attitude of young residents of Mogilev towards various aspects of social life. An analytical note was prepared based on the survey results.



*Generalized responses of participants in an Internet survey on youth issues, in percent*



## Research Findings

Analysis of the survey of respondents shows positive trends in the field of work with youth, but also the need for qualitative changes, increase in the number of priorities, support from the state and the interconnectedness of youth initiatives. The most important factor determining most of the problems of youth is the economic situation in the country and in individual settlements.

The main problems of concern for young people are income levels and employment, most of the respondents show serious concern here. Young people need support from the state and public institutions, despite their sufficient readiness to organize themselves and solve their problems on their own.

## Research Significance

The study of problem areas of Belarusian youth will undoubtedly add empirical material to the base of sociological data characterizing the value orientations, fears and hopes of the younger generation of Belarusians. We hope that talking openly and frankly about existing issues is better and more productive than hiding them.

It is equally important to look for ways to solve social problems. With the help of focus groups, promising ways of minimizing and optimizing certain dangerous social processes were identified. The researchers paid a lot of attention to determining the possibilities of social «self-treatment» with the help of public initiative.

## Recommendations

Based on the results of the study, experts advise to:

- devote more attention to informing the population about work with youth and youth problems;
- expand the range of educational activities;
- work on educating young people, on self-esteem and image of the Belarusian society, on awareness of national values;
- work on filling the media space with local relevant material, and along with state support for youth, it is important to introduce new forms of non-state aid to young people who, for one reason or another, find themselves in difficult situations (we can talk, in particular, about the creation of student mutual aid funds, voluntary donation funds );
- provide free places for self-realization of youth, for example, public spaces (parks, libraries, art studios, etc.).

## Relevant Issues of Mogilev Region Residents in 2020



LINK

**Year:** 2020

**Sphere:** Civil society, public opinion

**Keywords:** Population, issues, utilities

**Organization:** «Center of Urban Initiatives» – an organisation created in October 2013 by active Mogilev civil activists concerned with urban development. Our goal – initiating and helping implement various projects in the sphere of culture and urban development. This is the first expert-manager initiative of its kind in Mogilev. The Center conducts sociological studies on relevant issues of the city's urban development, carries out expert support in various aspects of Mogilev's development, implements projects on development of urban infrastructure, helps form ecological culture with the city's citizens, and implements educational programs.

The Regional Expert Club is an initiative engaged in analytical research of socio-economic processes in the regions. Our goal is to create a competent environment in which an analysis of modern trends in society, infrastructure, cultural sphere of the region, the borderlands of Belarus is carried out. Also, the creation of an adequate forecast and development of recommendations for local authorities and NGOs, a vision of the future development of the region and the Belarusian society as a whole, the search for optimal ways of development.

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**Ol'ga Azarenko** – sociologist.  
**Aleksej Karpenko** – expert of the “Regional Expert Club” Initiative  
**Roman Kazakov** – expert of the “Regional Expert Club” Initiative

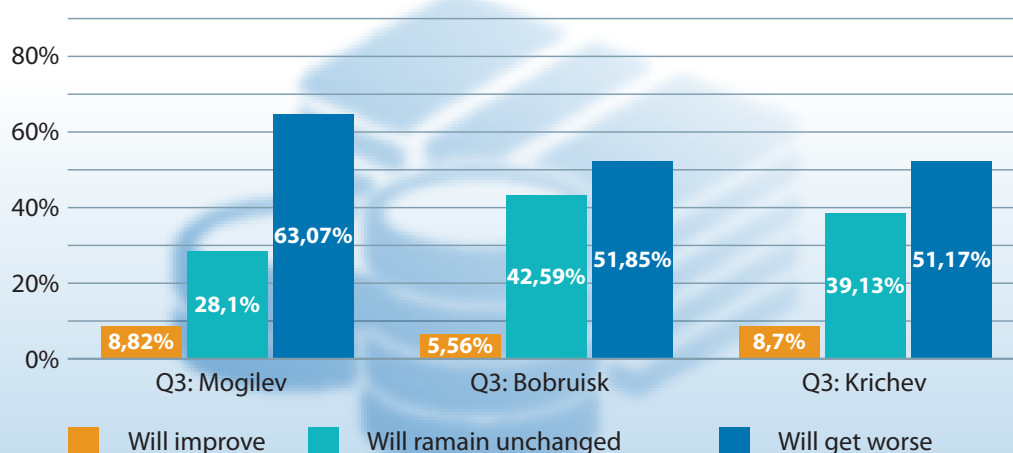
## Summary

The Center for Urban Initiatives and the Regional Expert Club conduct an annual study of topical problems of residents of the Mogilev region. We try to study public opinion and understand what the residents of our city lack in order to improve events and projects. In October 2020, we also decided to find out the opinions of residents of other cities of the Mogilev region. We conducted an online survey of residents of the Mogilev region. In the survey, questions were presented regarding the main problems of cities and the vision of ways to solve them. The range of issues included transport infrastructure, environmental situation, tourist and cultural potential, development of housing and communal services, self-organization of residents and many other problems.

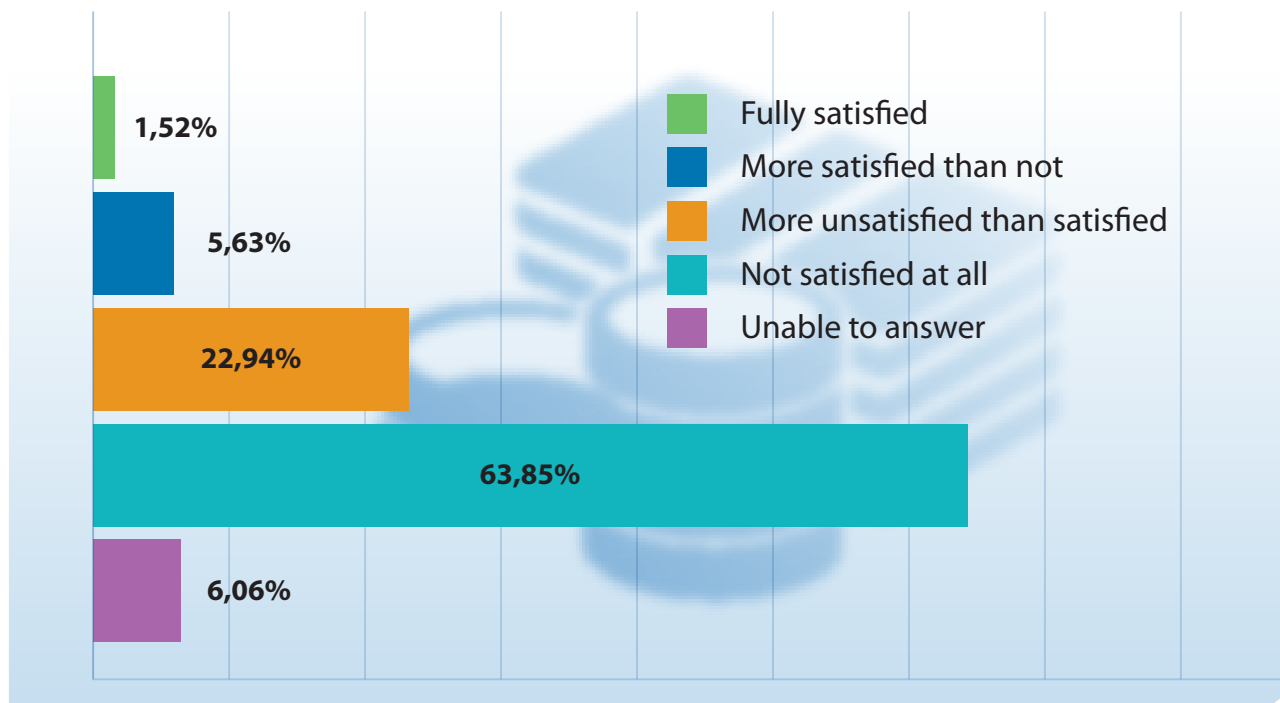
## Research Questions

Financial situation of citizens, service sector, security, perception of place of residence, sources of information trusted by population.

### *Expectations of citizens regarding their future financial situation*



*Are you satisfied with the opportunity to influence city affairs?*



## Methodology

Internet questionnaire survey. A total of 472 respondents were interviewed. Among the respondents, the absolute majority (65.25%) are residents of Mogilev, the second largest group are residents of Bobruisk (11.44%). The third of the main groups of respondents on a territorial basis are residents of the city of Krichev (4.87%). Other respondents represent all cities of the Mogilev region. Most of the respondents are citizens aged 29-39 years (46.4%), 55% of the respondents are women.

## Research Findings

Most of the surveyed representatives of the population of the Mogilev region, especially the able-bodied, mature part of it, that have families and children, are worried about their material well-being, perceive their place of residence negatively, most often without suggesting an intention to move away. The situation in the peripheral cities of the region also causes concern: the problem with employment and jobs there is even more acute than in the regional center. The respondents point to social problems, reveal a high potential for self-organization and solving these problems, all that is needed is the formation of a real working mechanism for influencing local authorities and decision-making, ensuring transparency of resources and accountability of local authorities to the public.

The population of the region is ready to cooperate with local authorities, but at the moment they do not see mechanisms for interaction, they offer their all possible assistance in organizing events and improving cities, but require the readiness of government structures for interaction, democratization. The Belarusian society and the population of the region are ready to make decisions that will help get out of the obvious crisis situation.



## Research Significance

The study is traditional for the Center for Urban Initiatives and reflects annual changes in the situation of the residents of the region and in public opinion.

## Recommendations

The above findings allow us to make the following recommendations:

- local governments and public organizations should pay increased attention to the emotional perception of urban residents of their living conditions;
- pay increased attention to the economic factor and employment;
- these problems are of primary concern to urban residents, they indicate uncertainty in the future and both an anticipated and perceived decline in living standards;
- when mobilizing public forces to solve communal problems, pay attention to the prevalence of certain communication channels, use the widest possible range of resources and social networks, while concentrating on the most common in the given locality;
- establish public dialogue, remember the need for real changes in the mechanisms of self-government and public control;
- strive for greater transparency in the actions of self-government bodies, creation of channels for direct access of the population to information on the activities of local authorities and their activities.

# How Belarusians Changed Over the Last Ten Years



<b>Year:</b>	2020
<b>Sphere:</b>	Civil society, public opinion, human rights
<b>Keywords:</b>	Values, paternalism, studied helplessness, competitionя
<b>Organization:</b>	Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) is a public, research, politically unbiased and policy-oriented institution. The director and analysts of BISS are guided in their activities by the principles of professionalism, transparency and accountability. BISS, while remaining an ideologically and politically neutral institution, adheres to the basic values of an open society and promotes them in Belarus within the framework of its characteristic activities. The methodological basis for the research and analytical activities of the BISS is critical rationalism.
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<b>Author &amp; partners:</b>	<b>Piotr Rudkovskij</b> – PhD, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) director

## Summary

Analysis of the 7th wave of the World Value Survey of Belarus allows us to identify seven important areas in which value shifts have taken place:

1. Belarusians have become happier.
2. The share of paternalistic sentiments in favor of personal responsibility has sharply decreased.
3. The phenomenon of «studied helplessness» is decreasing.
4. Competition is a good thing.
5. Income inequality stimulates development.
6. Belarusians are cautiously returning to politics.
7. In place of a superficial religious majority comes a deeply believing minority.

## Research Questions

The newly formed Republic of Belarus was already covered by WVS polls at that stage (the second wave). Now there is an array of data on Belarus from six waves of surveys, which makes it possible to trace the value transformations in our society throughout the period of independence – from 1990 to 2020. During this time, unique empirical material has been accumulated, which is still waiting for thorough processing.

## Methodology

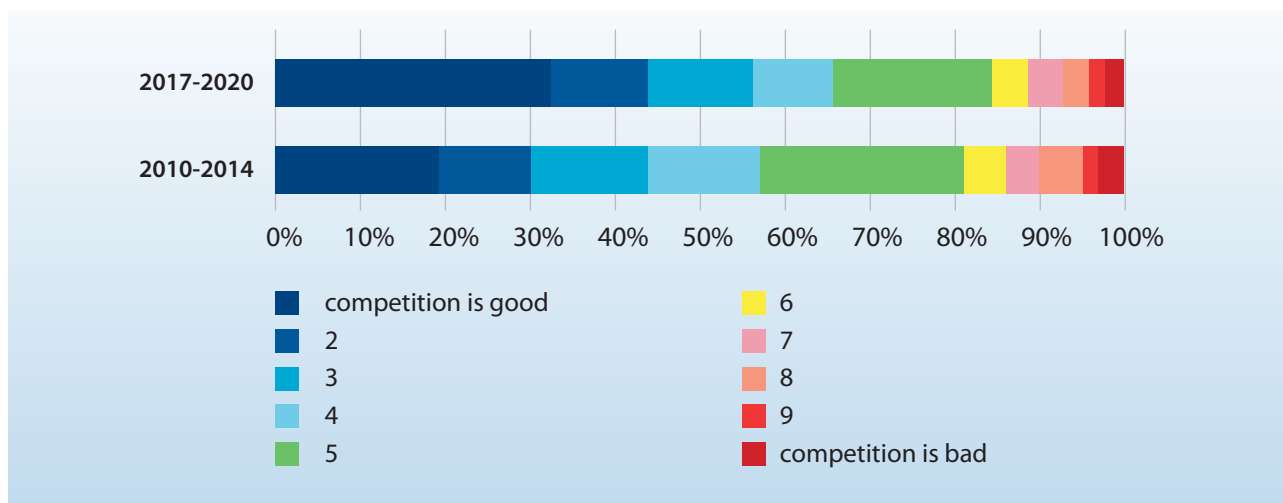
Field work of the 7th wave began in the summer of 2017 and ended in the winter of 2020. During this period, 129 thousand respondents from 77 countries, including Belarus, were interviewed. In Belarus, as in most other countries, surveys were conducted face-to-face. All Belarusian respondents were interviewed in Russian. The size of the representative sample in the country was 1548 people.

The available data allow us to make an introductory review of the data on which value spheres of the Belarusian society have undergone the most significant changes during the last decade (2010-2020).

## Study results

Over the last 10 years, the number of Belarusians who consider themselves «very» or at least «relatively» happy has increased significantly: from 64% to 89%. The number of strong supporters of the thesis that the improvement of people's lives is the task of the state has decreased three times. At the same time, the number of those who believe

Place your point of view on a 10-point scale, where «1» - «competition is good», «10» - «competition is a bad thing».



that people should take responsibility into their own hands has almost quadrupled. The number of those who strongly support the belief that competition is a good thing has increased from 30% to 51%. The number of staunch supporters of the belief that they have complete freedom of choice and that they themselves can influence their lives has doubled. The percentage of those who indicated their maximum commitment to expanding the private sector of the economy increased from 18% to 22%. For the first time in 25 years, the number of those «interested in politics» has begun to rise as the number of those «not interested» decreases. For the first time in 30 years, the proportion of those who believe God is important in their lives has declined. As well as those who consider themselves believers: from 85% at the beginning of the decade to 74% at the end of it. At the same time, the share of deep-seated believers has clearly increased: the number of those who pray several times a day has increased over the past ten years from 6% to 14%.

## Research Findings

Perhaps the most significant change in the last decade has been the growth of Belarusians' faith in their own strength. The number of fatalists («nothing depends on me») has decreased, but the number of strong supporters of the view that they themselves control and determine their lives has doubled.

Declining paternalistic expectations, rethinking the role of competition, a more tolerant attitude to income inequality, moving away from religious conformism in favor of either deep faith or atheism are all natural companions of the trend of human personality autonomy. From the perspective of democratization and building an open society, moving away from predestination is far more important than, for example, a willingness to participate in demonstrations or sign petitions. Fate vs. self-belief is a deeper mental attitude that takes longer to form and is not very susceptible to situational factors.

## Research Significance

Movement towards autonomy is taking place against a background of a high level of criticism of the European Union (EU) and Western values. Although the number of supporters of European integration has increased over the past two years to 32% in early 2020, Belarus remains the most eurosceptic in the Eastern Partnership. Most Belarusians continue to believe that the EU is not conducive to preserving the traditional values of Belarusian society. There is also a high level of sympathy for Russia and the Eurasian Economic Union. The fact that euroscepticism and alienation from the Western world did not prevent Belarusians from forming a belief in their own strength and individualistic ethos means that the above trends are not the product of fleeting imitation, but result from profound mental transformations.

## Recommendations

Last year's election can be called a control exercise in the transition from the «nothing depends on me» to «a lot depends on me.» Viktor Babaryka's arrival in politics was preceded by a period of discussions about «learned helplessness», which resulted in the belief that it was just «forced helplessness», which did not take deep roots and could be overcome. The campaign of the joint headquarters is centered around a simple idea – to return to the people the right to choose, that is, the legal instruments of influence on public life and politics. The political revival of 2020 is partly due to situational factors. But value changes in the Belarusian society are a factor that is quite strong. Without it, we would hardly have seen a political revival. It is quite possible that without value changes the novelty of the current campaign would have ended after the arrest of Sergej Tihanovskij. Regardless of the outcome of last year's presidential campaign, the pressure of value changes on politics will continue.

# Social Opportunities for Youth and Their Participation in Community and Government Initiatives

<b>Year:</b>	2020
<b>Sphere:</b>	Civil society, youth
<b>Keywords:</b>	Youth participation, youth needs
<b>Organization:</b>	<p>The Belarusian National Youth Council RADA is a voluntary union of Belarusian youth organizations. RADA was established in 1992 and officially registered in 1997 with the aim of consolidating the activities of youth organizations in the field of presentation, promotion and protection of their interests.</p> <p>RADA is a full member of the largest regional youth platform, the European Youth Forum. The members of the council in 2020 are 28 youth organizations.</p>
<b>Contacts:</b>	<a href="http://rada.fm">http://rada.fm</a> , <a href="mailto:info@rada.fm">info@rada.fm</a>
<b>Author &amp; partners:</b>	This study was conducted by the Baltic Internet Policy Initiative commissioned by the Belarusian National Youth Council «RADA»..

## Summary

The main task of the research is to study the social portrait of Belarusian youth in order to understand their inclusion and check whether the opportunities and services provided by civil society organizations and government agencies meet the needs and desires of the youth of Belarus.

## Research Questions

Programs for the support, development and participation of young people in the social and public life of Belarus are represented in large numbers both in the public sector of Belarus and at the state level. However, the question of their relevance and ability to meet the needs of young people is rarely studied and raised to the surface. The public sector and youth organizations in drawing up plans for working with young people most often focus on associate youth. This inadvertently complicates participation opportunities for unassociated youth.

Exploring the real interests and needs of young people in social participation will enable NGOs to become more open to young people, improve their work in the field of youth policy, and will help to turn the strategy of youth policy towards the youth themselves.

## Methodology

Data collection for the study was conducted between November 2019 and March 2020 by an online survey in pop-up format, shown by randomly selected users of certain websites. The questions were answered by 1,073 people aged 14 to 31 years. 32% of them are between 14 and 19 years old, 20% are between 20 and 24 years old and 49% are between 25 and 31 years old.

## Study results

Education (formal and informal), participation in decision-making processes and media activity (blogging and journalism) proved to be the most effective for youth participation in solving problems and strengthening their voice. Belarusian youth consider volunteering and membership in civil society organizations, doing business, voting in elections, as well as membership in political parties and public advisory councils to be less effective. 31% of respondents could not answer.

Barriers to active participation in public life are lack of time (44%), lack of information (33%), economic factors (21%), insufficient opportunities for self-realization (20%), corruption and protectionism (14%), as well as a lack of focus (13%). 40% know what a «civil society organization» is, and 35% have used their services. At the same time, awareness of this issue increases with age (37% – 38% – 44%). There is almost no difference between residents of large cities and regions (41% – 39%).

Among young people who are members of public organizations, the largest part is involved in the processes of obtaining and disseminating information, organizing events,

volunteering, working with appeals and petitions, as well as providing financial and material assistance.

The key barriers that prevent young people from using the existing opportunities of public organizations are lack of time (31%), lack of information (30%), lack of finances (27%), limited opportunities for self-realization (18%), inertia and lack of focus (15%), as well as corruption and protectionism (13%). Among the respondents, there are very few who use the capabilities of government agencies to solve their problems – only 11%, while more than 50% do not use them.

## Research Findings

As a result of the research, we came to the conclusion that Belarusian youth actively participates in public life, but is little involved in the activities of public organizations and knows much less and uses the opportunities of government programs and institutions. Civil society organizations better understand the needs of young people and help them to self-realize. At the same time, young people do not use state programs and opportunities. Belarusian youth are fluent in foreign languages: the level of proficiency (88%) and the desire to improve it (78%) are equally high among urban and rural youth. This fact is combined with the main personal interest of young people – travel, followed by family, business, science and education. We recommend paying attention to these topics and the high demand for them as potential for organizations working with youth. Although many respondents were unable to answer what changes will help them in self-realization, the results suggest that a stable personal financial position is seen as the dominant source for self-realization. Hopes for a change in the political landscape are also significant – 11%, and only 5% consider the existing conditions sufficient.

We consider it important to note the dissatisfaction of 95% of young people with the existing conditions which can lead to social tensions or a wave of emigration of young people.

Young people see their participation in public life through business, participation in decision-making processes, and volunteering. Participation in elections and membership in a political party are less popular. This may be due to frustration with the political sphere, lack of information about these formats of participation and examples of politically motivated persecution. It should also be noted that young people are losing interest in the formats of public participation that they used before, and would like to try those that they have not been able to use before. The most effective formats of participation in public life are the acquisition of knowledge and skills, participation in decision-making processes, media activity (blogging and journalism), as well as volunteering and membership in civil society organizations and doing business. Significant barriers include lack of time, lack of information and economic factors. Among the respondents, there are very few who use the capabilities of government agencies to solve their problems – only 11%, while more than 50% do not use them. For comparison: more than 40% of respondents use the opportunities of civil society organizations.

Of all state institutions, young people were assisted only by educational institutions, trade unions and social services, with only 6% of respondents receiving such support. This may be due to a lack of information and clear mechanisms for using government support. On



the other hand, it may be a manifestation of a negative attitude towards state institutions and their products, as they do not meet the current needs of young people and do not meet their needs.

## Research Significance

The study of youth and the youth sector is always of particular importance, as this sector is the most open and active in the life of any society. The power of the influence of young people on social processes, on all spheres of society has always been particularly clear. Researching the needs of young people and constantly updating this data will help to understand how young people can be even more actively involved in society, influence it, accelerate the process of positive change. Attention to the needs of young people also works to strengthen the potential of the whole civil society, as young people actively participate in the life of various spheres.

## Recommendations

The study was conducted before the political crisis in Belarus caused by the 2020 presidential election. Comparing the results of new research on similar topics with the obtained data can provide additional conclusions, as well as show the dynamics of changing processes in social opportunities for young people and youth participation in community and government initiatives.

# Monitoring the Right to Peaceful Assembly



LINK

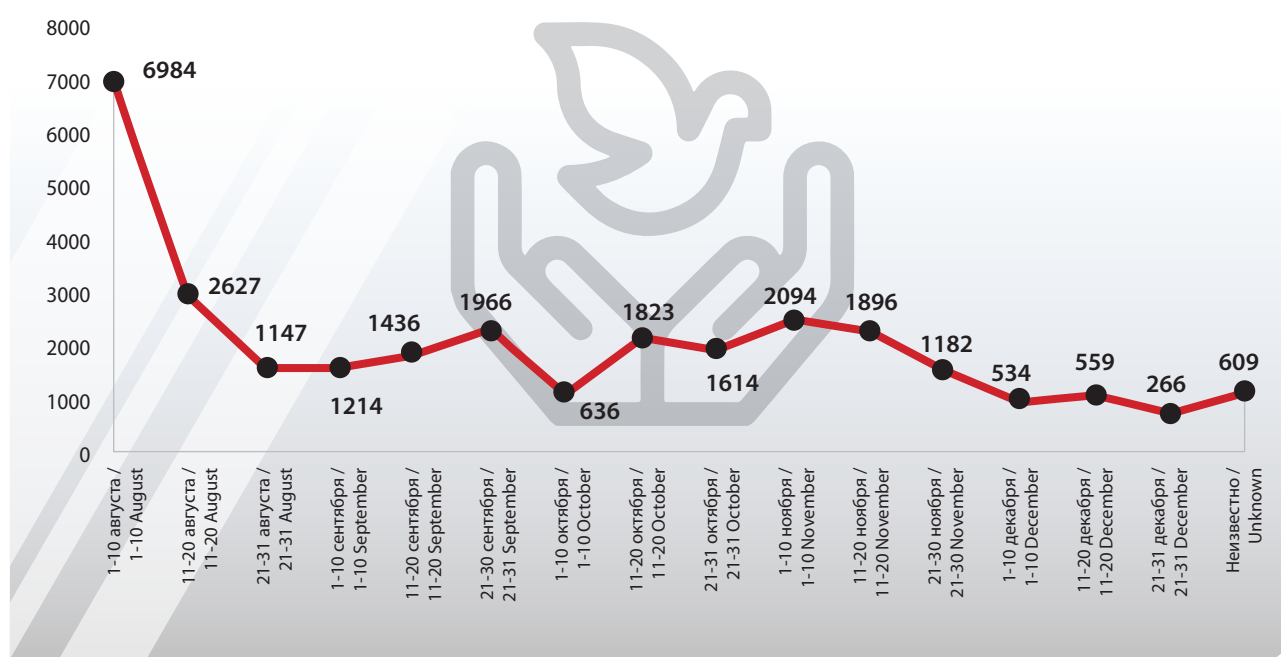
<b>Year:</b>	2020
<b>Sphere:</b>	Human rights, peaceful assemblies, protests, freedom of expression
<b>Keywords:</b>	Human rights
<b>Organization:</b>	Human Rights Center «Viasna», Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Human Constanta
<b>Contacts:</b>	<a href="https://spring96.org">https://spring96.org</a> , <a href="mailto:viasna@spring96.org">viasna@spring96.org</a> , <a href="https://belhelcom.org">https://belhelcom.org</a> , <a href="mailto:office@belhelcom.org">office@belhelcom.org</a> , <a href="https://humanconstantaby.org">https://humanconstantaby.org</a> , <a href="mailto:info@humanconstantaby.org">info@humanconstantaby.org</a>
<b>Author &amp; partners:</b>	<b>Natalia Satsunkevich</b> - Viasna Human Rights Center. <b>Dmitry Chernykh</b> - Belarusian Helsinki Committee. <b>Nasta Loiko</b> - Human Constanta

## Summary

During the mass protests taking place from 9 to 12 August 2020 and in the following months, violence by the authorities was widely reported and identified, including violent dispersal and the use of tear gas, water cannons, flash grenades and rubber bullets. The authorities opened hundreds of criminal cases on charges of participation in mass riots. For the first time in the history of Belarus, thousands of arrested peaceful demonstrators were tortured by law enforcement agencies across the country. Those who criticized the actions of Lukashenko, law enforcement agencies and the authorities were prosecuted, and human rights defenders and journalists were particularly harshly convicted. The rights of minors and the elderly, women, medical workers and other social groups were violated. The human rights situation is in deep crisis and worsening.

This report is based on collected and analyzed information on peaceful protests in Belarus during 2020. Data on the number of protests, their subject matter and characteristics, as well as the characteristics of participation in protests by various social groups were collected from public sources such as the media and social networks, as well as through interactions with individuals or human rights organizations.

In each of the three sections (III-V), which deal with the January to July 2020 meetings (section III), the August 2020 meetings (section IV), and the September to December 2020 meetings (section V), the following data was analyzed: the number of public events held, their features, venues, themes, fundamental differences from public events in 2019. Section VI describes the role of various groups in the post-election protests in August 2020, including the elderly, women, students, and children, and how the state responded to their gatherings or their participation in the broader protest movement. The report concludes with a brief discussion of some of the most prominent court cases against participants in various demonstrations and protest actions.



*Peaceful assemblies by settlements in August 2020*

Minsk	70	Gomel	10	Drogichin	1
Grodno	17	Mogilev	10	Gorki	1
Brest	10	Vitebsk	8	Ivacevichi	1
Borisov	2	Molodechno	5	Ivanovo	1
Fanipol	2	Novopolotsk	5	Kopil	1
Luninec	2	Bereza	4	Kasciukovičy	1
Babrujsk	4	Žodzina	4	Rakov	1
Kobrin	4	Lahojsk	1	Asipovičy	2
Hlubokaje	3	Novogrydok	1	Polotsk	2
Stolbci	3	Pružany	1	Soligorsk	2
Žlobin	3	Valožin	2	Svetlogorsk	2
Baranovichi	2	Braslav	2	Žabinka	1
Lida	1	Ašmjany	1	Rečyca	1
Niasviž	1	Radoshkovich	1	Zaslavl	1

## Research Questions

Traditionally, freedom of assembly and expression in Belarus has been severely restricted both de jure and de facto. Every day, basic human rights are violated and restricted. Presidential election campaign, which launched in May 2020, took place in an atmosphere of fear, repression and human rights violations. Some of Lukashenka's opponents were detained before the elections, others were forced to leave Belarus immediately afterwards.

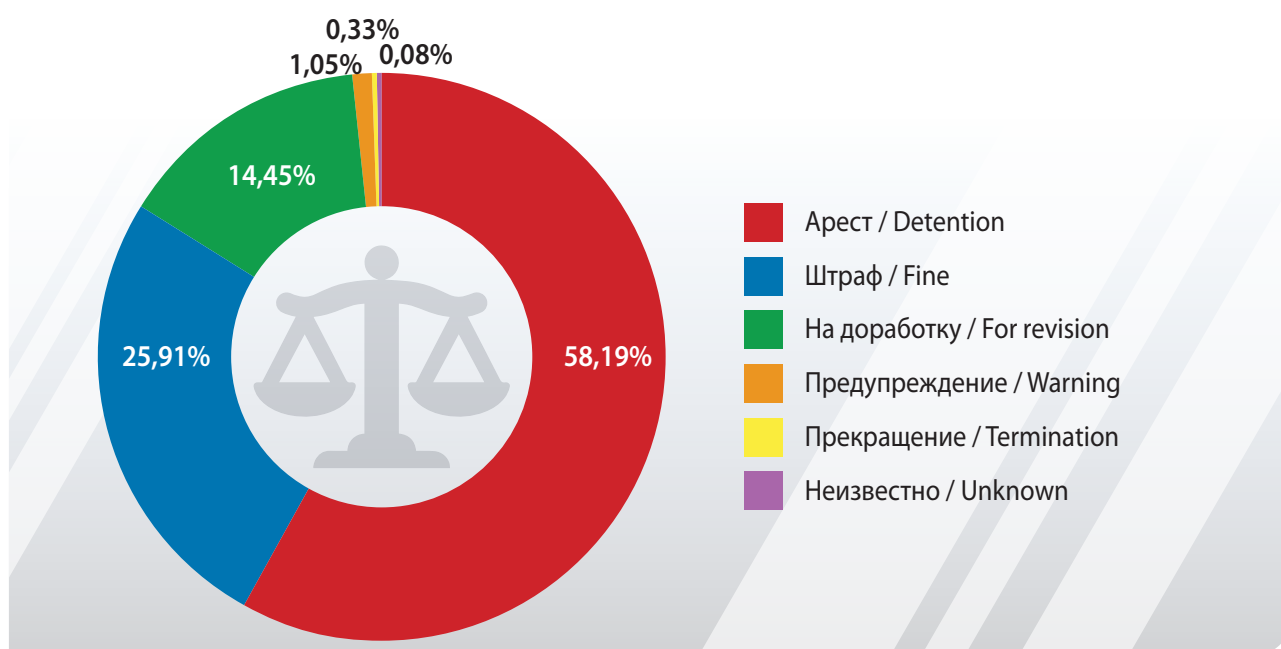
## Methodology

Since 2012, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee and the Human Rights Center «Viasna» have been systematically observing peaceful assemblies in Belarus through structured monitoring. Monitoring data are published in the public domain.

During 2020, 10 peaceful demonstrations were monitored, all of which were non-violent and were conducted to exercise the right to freedom of expression. The decrease in the number of field monitoring carried out is associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as with the actions of law enforcement agencies aimed at ending the demonstrations. In 2020, observer volunteers were not detained. However, we note police misconduct in at least 3 out of 10 monitored assemblies. Some observers assess this behavior of the police as a threat to volunteer and human rights activities. As before, there is no law enforcement contact person to communicate with participants, media and observers.

The last face-to-face observation was carried out on the evening of August 9, the day of the presidential election. Since then, in connection with the mass arrests, the use of non-

### Court decisions



lethal weapons (stun grenades, rubber bullets, water cannons, tear gas), as well as threats to the observers, it was decided to stop monitoring in the field and continue analyzing information from the media and social networks.

## Research Significance

The purpose of this report is to provide information to the general public and contribute to the realization of freedom of demonstration in Belarus. Implementation of the proposed recommendations will contribute to the restoration of the violated rights of participants and participants in peaceful assemblies.

## Recommendations

### To the Government of Belarus:

1. Respect and ensure the realization of the right to peaceful assembly for all people without discrimination.
2. In close consultation with civil society and other stakeholders, develop and enact new national legislation on peaceful assemblies that meets international standards, including, inter alia, a procedure for notification of any assembly, as well as guaranteeing spontaneous assemblies.
3. Provide all victims of disproportionate and illegal actions of police officers with effective legal remedies, take measures to restore violated rights, including paying adequate compensation.

**To the Investigative Committee of Belarus:**

1. Initiate criminal cases and conduct a full-fledged investigation into the murder by police officers of the protest rally participants Alexander Taraikovsky and Gennady Shutov, as well as the death of Alexander Vikhor, who was detained by the police and subsequently subjected to administrative arrest, in order to establish those responsible for their death and bring them to justice. responsibility in accordance with the law.
2. Conduct an investigation of all the facts of the use of special equipment and weapons against persons who took part in the demonstrations, as well as all facts of bodily harm and mutilation as a result of the use of weapons by employees of the internal affairs bodies.
3. Immediately initiate criminal proceedings on the facts of torture and cruel, inhuman, degrading treatment of the demonstrators.

**To law enforcement agencies:**

1. Provide reliable information on the number of people killed and wounded during attempts to violently disperse assemblies by law enforcement officers from August 9 to 12, 2020.
2. Abandon the practice of using weapons and other means of suppressing mass riots against peaceful unarmed demonstrators.
3. End the practice of holding persons in custody in places not intended for these purposes, as well as holding detainees and arrested persons in custody in violation of the established rules.
4. Abandon the practice of persecuting activists for participating in peaceful assemblies only for lack of permission to hold an assembly.
5. Avoid the detention and prosecution of members of the media involved in lawful coverage of peaceful assemblies, as they play a primary role and perform an essential function of providing the public with objective information about assemblies.
6. Police officers must wear a service uniform when protecting public order during public events. Staff members should also wear personal identification (such as name tags or tokens) to help build confidence in the police and so that participants can communicate with the police without hindrance.
7. Ensure strict adherence to the requirements of national legislation and international standards regarding the detention of children, including notification of their legal representatives about the detention, ensuring the right to protection, as well as complete separation from adults before the transfer of children to their parents.
8. Abandon the practice of expulsion of foreign citizens only for participation in peaceful assemblies, take into account personal ties with Belarus and ensure the judicial procedure for verifying the legality of expulsion.

**To the international community:**

1. Continue to monitor compliance with international standards in Belarus, especially with regard to the right to peaceful assembly.

# Monitoring Hate Speech in the Belarusian Media Against People from Vulnerable Groups in the Context of the First Wave of the Coronavirus Pandemic



**Year:** 2020

**Sphere:** Public opinion, internet research, media research

**Keywords:** Hate speech, inappropriate vocabulary, media, vulnerable groups, coronavirus

**Organization:** The «Journalists for Tolerance» human rights initiative is a non-profit civil association of media workers striving for equality and non-discrimination regardless of nationality, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and other characteristics. The initiative increases the visibility of members of discriminated groups, provides a response to incidents of hate speech and hate crimes, and promotes professional coverage of issues related to social groups discriminated against in Belarus. «Journalists for Tolerance» annually monitors hate speech against vulnerable groups in the Belarusian media.

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**Author & partners:** **Anton Barysenka** - Researcher, Journalists for Tolerance initiative.



## Summary

Since February 2020, media attention has been focused on covering the coronavirus pandemic. How in this emergency has the media perception of people from vulnerable groups changed: have they been forgotten or, on the contrary, have they started writing more? The research focused on the following categories of vulnerability: LGBTQ +, people with disabilities, people with intellectual or mental disabilities, people with HIV, migrants / stateless people.

## Research Questions

Journalists for Tolerance regularly monitors hate speech in the Belarusian media. The purpose of the monitoring is to provide a systematic review of the use of inappropriate vocabulary and manifestations of hate speech against vulnerable groups in the Belarusian media. Monitoring in 2019 showed that 3.7% of all media publications contained inappropriate vocabulary and signs of hate speech towards vulnerable groups.

Most often, these were materials about people with disabilities and LGBTQ +. Since February 2020, media attention has been focused on covering the coronavirus pandemic, so we conducted a new monitoring taking into account the changed context. How in this emergency has the media perception of people from vulnerable groups changed: have they been forgotten or, on the contrary, have they started writing more? Continue, increase or decrease the use of inappropriate, stigmatizing and hate speech against people with disabilities, LGBTQ + or people from other vulnerable groups?

## Methodology

As part of this monitoring, we distinguish between «hate speech» and «incorrect vocabulary». By «inappropriate vocabulary» we mean stereotypical language about vulnerable groups that do not pose a threat to security, do not contain calls for violence and do not dehumanize people from vulnerable groups. By «hate speech» we mean statements that threaten public safety, incite hostility and dehumanize certain groups of people. For monitoring, 13 online media were selected that appeal to a wide audience, represent different public positions and have different coverage.

Keyword searches were performed on items published in these media from January to July 2020. The monitoring selected publications that either highlight the situations of people from vulnerable groups, or mention the coronavirus pandemic in a strict connection with origin from China or Iran. Selected materials were analyzed for the content of inappropriate vocabulary. Each publication containing inappropriate vocabulary was further analyzed for the content of manifestations of hate speech.

## Study results

1. 9% of all publications that mention signs of vulnerability use inappropriate vocabulary. Incorrect vocabulary is especially common in publications on the topic of LGBTQ + and mental disorders, less often on topics of disability or HIV.

2. In January - July 2020, manifestations of hate speech are present in only 1.1% of publications that mention signs of vulnerability, primarily publications related to LGBTQ +, as well as migration and HIV.
3. In 9% of publications that mention the coronavirus pandemic in conjunction with ethnicity, there are manifestations of hate speech. Almost all of them are the use of the expressions «Chinese coronavirus» or «Chinese virus».

## Research Findings

1. In January – July 2020, vulnerable groups dropped out of the attention of Belarusian online media: the more publications about the coronavirus, the fewer publications about vulnerabilities. This connection is especially expressive in the dynamics of publications about LGBTQ +.
2. In the context of the coronavirus, more publications have appeared in the media mentioning HIV and migration status. These publications are not about people living with HIV or migrants, but about the coronavirus, described as a viral infection similar to HIV infection, spreading due to the uncontrolled migration of people.

## Research Significance

The monitoring results are addressed to the journalistic community, human rights defenders, representatives of vulnerable groups, as well as educational organizations and initiatives working on the topic of hate speech.

# Monitoring Hate Speech in the Belarusian Media Against LGBTQ+ People in 2020



LINK 1



LINK 2

**Year:** 2020

**Sphere:** Public opinion, internet research, media research

**Keywords:** Hate speech, inappropriate vocabulary, media, vulnerable groups, coronavirus

**Organization:** The «Journalists for Tolerance» human rights initiative is a non-profit civil association of media workers striving for equality and non-discrimination regardless of nationality, gender, age, race, sexual orientation, gender identity and other characteristics. The initiative increases the visibility of members of discriminated groups, provides a response to incidents of hate speech and hate crimes, and promotes professional coverage of issues related to social groups discriminated against in Belarus. «Journalists for Tolerance» annually monitors hate speech against vulnerable groups in the Belarusian media, including separate monitorings of hate speech against LGBTQ+.

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**Author & partners:** **Anton Barysenka** – Researcher, Journalists for Tolerance initiative.

## Summary

The monitoring provides a systematic review of the use of inappropriate vocabulary and manifestations of hate speech towards LGBT people in the Belarusian media.

## Research Questions

We understand «hate speech» as a special way of linguistic construction of models and practices of social inequality and proceed from the premise that incorrect rhetorical strategies are capable of reinforcing (and, in extreme cases, generating) discriminatory practices. We believe the opposite is also true: correct rhetoric can help build relationships between representatives of different social groups based on the principles of equality and mutual respect.

## Methodology

The study is based on a cluster stratified sample representing online media in Belarus. We divided all media outlets into 6 clusters depending on the scale (national and local) and the average monthly number of publications (more than 500, from 100 to 500, less than 100). From the general population constructed in this way, 6 media outlets were selected in each cluster – a total of 36 publications. Content published in these media from January to November 2020 was searched by keywords. After the initial selection of all publications on the topic of LGBTQ +, all materials were analyzed for the content of inappropriate vocabulary. Each publication containing inappropriate vocabulary was further analyzed for the content of manifestations of hate speech..

## Study output

1. In the first half of 2020, 71% of publications in the media contained correct vocabulary regarding LGBTQ+, 29% – incorrect. The share of correct materials in the media is 2.5 times higher than the share of incorrect ones.
2. In the national media, the correct vocabulary in relation to LGBTQ+ was used in 78% of the relevant publications. In the local media, half of the publications on the topic of LGBTQ+ contain incorrect vocabulary.
3. 10% of publications on the topic of LGBTQ+ in the Belarusian media in the first half of 2020 contain manifestations of hate speech.
4. The most common manifestations of hate speech against LGBTQ+ in January – June 2020 are accusations of attempted seizure of power, expansion, domination, accusations of negative impact on society, in particular on the «traditional family», allegations of moral shortcomings of LGBT people of people.
5. In the second half of 2020, 61% of publications in the media contained correct vocabulary in relation to LGBTQ+, 39% – incorrect. The share of correct materials in the media is 1.5

times higher than the share of incorrect ones. The share of inaccurate materials increased by 10 pp compared to the first half of 2020.

6. 21% of publications on the topic of LGBTQ+ in the Belarusian media in the second half of 2020 contain manifestations of hate speech, which is 2 times more than in the first half of the year.

7. The most common manifestations of hate speech against LGBTQ+ in July – November 2020 are accusations of negative impact on society and the state in Western countries, mention of LGBTQ+ to discredit political opponents in a situation of political crisis in Belarus and calls for discrimination against LGBT people.

## Research Findings

In the coverage of LGBTQ+ topics in the Belarusian online media, changes were recorded that could be explained by the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on society and the media. From March to the end of May, the number of publications on this topic has significantly decreased compared to previous months. At the same time, the decrease in the number of publications on the topic of LGBTQ+ is accompanied by a simultaneous increase in the share of publications containing hate speech. This share has more than tripled – from 4% to 14%.

In a situation of two crises at once (the coronavirus pandemic and protests against the presidential election results), the Belarusian media began to cover less on the LGBTQ+ topic, and the level of use of inappropriate vocabulary increased and manifestations of hate speech began to occur much more often. Before the first wave of coronavirus, only every 25th publication on this topic reproduced and supported stigmatizing or discriminatory attitudes towards LGBT people. In the first wave of coronavirus, every seventh publication on the topic contained manifestations of hate speech. At the height of the political crisis, almost every fourth publication contained manifestations of hate speech.

## Research Significance

The monitoring results are addressed to the journalistic community, human rights defenders, representatives of vulnerable groups, as well as educational organizations and initiatives working on the topic of hate speech.

# Judicial Protection of Environmental Rights of Belarus Citizens for the 2010-2020 Period



<b>Year:</b>	2020
<b>Sphere:</b>	Civil society, human rights, ecology and environmental protection
<b>Keywords:</b>	Environmental rights, judicial protection, access to justice
<b>Organization:</b>	«Ecodom» is a public association founded in 1996 to promote an environmentally friendly lifestyle and sustainable development ideas, one of the oldest non-profit Environmental organizations in Belarus. It is important for us that everyone has the opportunity to exercise their right to a healthy environment, can participate in making environmentally significant decisions, and receive up-to-date information about the state of the environment in their country.
<b>Contacts:</b>	<a href="http://ecohome-ngo.by">http://ecohome-ngo.by</a> , <a href="mailto:http://ecohome.by@gmail.com">http://ecohome.by@gmail.com</a>
<b>Author &amp; partners:</b>	<b>Sergej Magonov</b> - lawyer of PA «Ecodom».

## Summary

Review of court cases in protection of the right to a healthy environment and of the procedural rights that constitute it (access to information on environment, participation in decision-making on environment, etc.), initiated by the public in the period from 2010 to 2020. Practically the entire judicial practice on such cases has been gathered.

## Research Questions

The right to a healthy environment is subject to protection, including in court, in the event of its violation by other subjects of legal relations or by the state. In practice, access to justice in such cases faces a number of obstacles. The study examines the issues of access to justice, identifies the most problematic points and suggests solutions.

## Methodology

Review of judicial practice and analysis of cases and decisions on them by comparing different regions of the country, varying the composition of procedural participants (plaintiffs / applicants), and different procedural approaches. Legal analysis of the court process.

## Study output

All court cases of defense of environmental rights of the public are summarized in a general table.

An analysis of the most significant cases is made, obstacles in access to justice are identified, proposals for their elimination are made.

## Research Findings

There are a number of systematic obstacles in access to justice in cases protecting the environmental rights of the public in Belarus, which can be eliminated by improving law enforcement practice. The poor quality of the administration of justice in the country indicates the need for systemic reform.

## Research Significance

The study reflects the state of affairs with access to justice and the prospects for the protection of a particular category of rights, but at the same time it makes it possible to assess the situation with justice in the country as a whole.

## Recommendations

Improving the quality of appeals to the judiciary, as well as building and maintaining a series of strategic court cases.

## Online consultation «Barriers to Online Participation», May - June 2020



**Year:** 2020

**Sphere:** Civil society, internet research, availability of information

**Keywords:** Inclusion, online events, barriers to participation, vulnerable groups

**Organization:** Center for the Development of Effective Communication «Living Library». Mission: development of a society based on the principles of equality, inclusion, non-discrimination and tolerance through effective communication between different social groups and increasing their visibility. The main activities of the organization: 1) development of critical thinking among young people through the methods of non-formal education; 2) changing the attitude of society towards vulnerable groups by increasing their visibility in public space; 3) increasing the inclusiveness of spaces and activities for various vulnerable groups.

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## Resume

During May – June 2020, the Center for the Development of Effective Communication «Living Library» in partnership with the Office of European Expertise and Communication and the online magazine Citydog.by within the framework of the ALL Inclusive initiative conducted an online consultation «Barriers to Online Participation, or How to Ensure Online Inclusion?» The consultations were attended by representatives and representatives of more than 21 NGOs and initiatives, who identified at least 17 vulnerable groups for which there are various barriers to participating in online events.

The final document of the consultations included possible options for overcoming the identified barriers. The consultations also identified at least 5 common barriers to online participation for various social groups.

## Research Questions

In the situation of the coronavirus pandemic, which in Belarus began in March 2020, many organizations and initiatives were forced to transfer their various activities to the online space. At first glance, this was an excellent opportunity for wider participation of different groups and the inclusion of new target groups in their activities. But the more NGOs hold events online, the more we are convinced that by no means online works and is an accessible way of obtaining information for all groups. For online to be truly inclusive, one has to make as much effort as organizing offline events, and in addition, one needs to master various online tools and technologies. To effectively include various vulnerable groups in online events, it is important not only to clearly understand for whom the event is being held, but also to know about the barriers to the participation of these groups and use the tools to overcome those barriers. That is why the consultations were aimed at studying barriers to participation and possible ways to overcome them.

## Methodology

1. In May 2020, a remote consultation was held by commenting and editing the google document <https://bit.ly/online-consultation-2020>, during which groups, barriers and possible solutions were identified.
2. 15.05.2020 an online consultation «(Not) Accessible Online: Barriers» was held to clarify vulnerable groups that face barriers and discuss possible options to overcome them.
3. On June 16, 2020, a workshop «(Not) Accessible Online: What to Do?» for final consultations on the document and its discussion with stakeholders.

## Research Outputs

As a result of the consultations, a detailed table was created that describes possible barriers to participation in online activities, including special needs, and solutions to overcome them for 17 different vulnerable social groups.

## Research Findings

As a result of the consultations, general and specific barriers to participation were identified. General – typical for all participants and participants of online events, specific – relevant only for one or several vulnerable groups. The document based on the results of the consultations does not contain completely ready-made solutions for all groups on all barriers: some barriers to online participation are quite serious, structural, they cannot be changed by the forces of one group or organization.

In doing so, we also want to draw your attention to the barriers. By knowing these barriers, event organizers will have a better idea of the challenges faced by people on the other side of the monitor.

## Research Significance

The consultations actualize the problem of inaccessibility of online events, which at first glance seemed to be the solution to many problems with holding events in a pandemic. Through consultations, we not only outline the scale and scope of the problem, but also offer some solutions without claiming them to be universal. We hope that, knowing the barriers faced by potential participants and participants in events, NGOs and initiatives will be able to increase the availability of their events, and therefore, enhance the effect of their work.

## Recommendations

The final document consists of recommendations for overcoming barriers for various vulnerable groups. As a general guideline, a checklist «How to Ensure Inclusion at an Online Event» has been compiled.

## CHECK LIST «HOW TO ENSURE INCLUSION AT ONLINE EVENTS»

### PREPARATION

- A detailed announcement in a clear and simple language, clear instructions to the participants
- Individual technical support
- Registration for the event (is it necessary and what information is requested)
- Consider that someone can participate from the phone
- Study the program and all the services with which you will work
- Think over the risks: have a plan B and clear instructions on what to do in this situation?
- Assess the need for sign language translation

### IMPLEMENTATION

- Ability to connect to the event in advance
- Diverse ways to participate
- Duplicate information in the chat
- Seek feedback in the process from participants in various forms
- Good technical skills to manage the process in force majeure situations
- What is your own attitude towards the online format?
- Treating participants ethically and creating a safe space

### AFTER THE EVENT

- Grant access to event recording (with subtitles)
- Put the materials of the event and the synopsis in the public domain
- Assess the event (collect feedback)

