



ANNUAL REPORT 2016



Office for European Expertise
and Communications

Maryna Nasenka:

Working for “Office for European Expertise and Communications” is a magnificent opportunity to be with people who never stop, who have countless ideas and inspiration.

I am happy to be the part of the team whose work is appreciated not only by me, but also by thousands of Belarusians.

Alesya Balchunas:

2016 has become a year of discoveries for OEEC. We have managed to involve new people into our team, to get new experience of work with international organizations, local initiatives and leaders who are improving their lives. One of the greatest things about the OEEC is that our team is changing but no one leaves: everyone who has been a part of OEEC stays forever. Thanks to all who helped us, shared experience and was interested in our work!

Valeria Volkogonova:

Working in the team gives me a chance to develop myself in various directions, to experiment with formats and styles. When you feel support of your colleagues, it is easy to try things you haven't dared to do before. Our work is always based on the analysis of our past Programmes: we aspire to do things that were absent before, things that now are needed. As I see it, this is the main sense, interest and love to what you do.

Svetlana Zinkevich:

Five years for the organization is the time when the organization is perceived as an equal partner and its opinion is valued, and along with that still there is a lot of energy, inspiration and desire to create, invent and search for new opportunities. In 2016 we paid a lot of attention to building our work on the basis of needs of our target groups. All our implemented Programmes improved the ability of our participants to influence the processes that are important for them. Thank you for the trust, support and cooperation – these are the things vital for our results!

Maryna Korzh:

We have grown up a lot as professionals during this year. 2016 was full of vivid events, trips around Belarus, experiments and incorporation of innovations into our Programmes. Participants of our Programmes learned about gender-sensitive approach, advocacy, community needs assessment, business plans, urban festivals and civic initiatives :) Thanks to everyone who was close to us and motivated us for new achievements!



OUR STRATEGY

MISSION

To ensure easy access to information and expertise for people and organizations, which strive to positively change their lives, the lives of their organizations, communities, and Belarus as a part of Europe.

OUR STRATEGIC GOALS



Contribute to strengthening the role of organizations and communities in addressing priority issues through their capacity development.



Promote expertise and evidence-based data in the sectors, in which civil society organizations work.



Ensure communications between various actors, aiming to develop issue-based sectors and civil society in general (sector-change communication).



Secure functioning of OEEC's balanced organizational structure, based on the principles of transparency, accountability, voluntary participation, with effective management, governance, and quality service provision.



OUR TEAM



**Svetlana
Zinkevich,**
Director



Maryna Korzh,
Programme
coordinator



**Alesya
Balchunas,**
Chief accountant



Maryna Nasenka,
Information and
communication
officer



**Valeria
Volkogonova,**
Administrator

OUR BOARD

Tanya Korovenkova, Chair of the Board, Information Company BelaPAN

Valentina Leonchik, Republican public union “Belarusian Union of Transport Workers”

Dzianis Melyantsou, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies

Iryna Alkhovka, International public association “Gender Perspectives”

Natalia Bondarenko, Belarusian State Univeristy



KEY ACHIEVEMENTS 2016



3193

people are subscribed to our pages in social networks and our newsletters



80

volunteers participated in our work



58

people enhanced their skills in our long-term educational Programmes



200

guests took part in the events where we presented expertise



66

articles about best practices of work within communities were published in well-known Belarusian media



3534

people participated in our events



COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT MAP 2016

Participants of the Programmes of “Office for European Expertise and Communications”



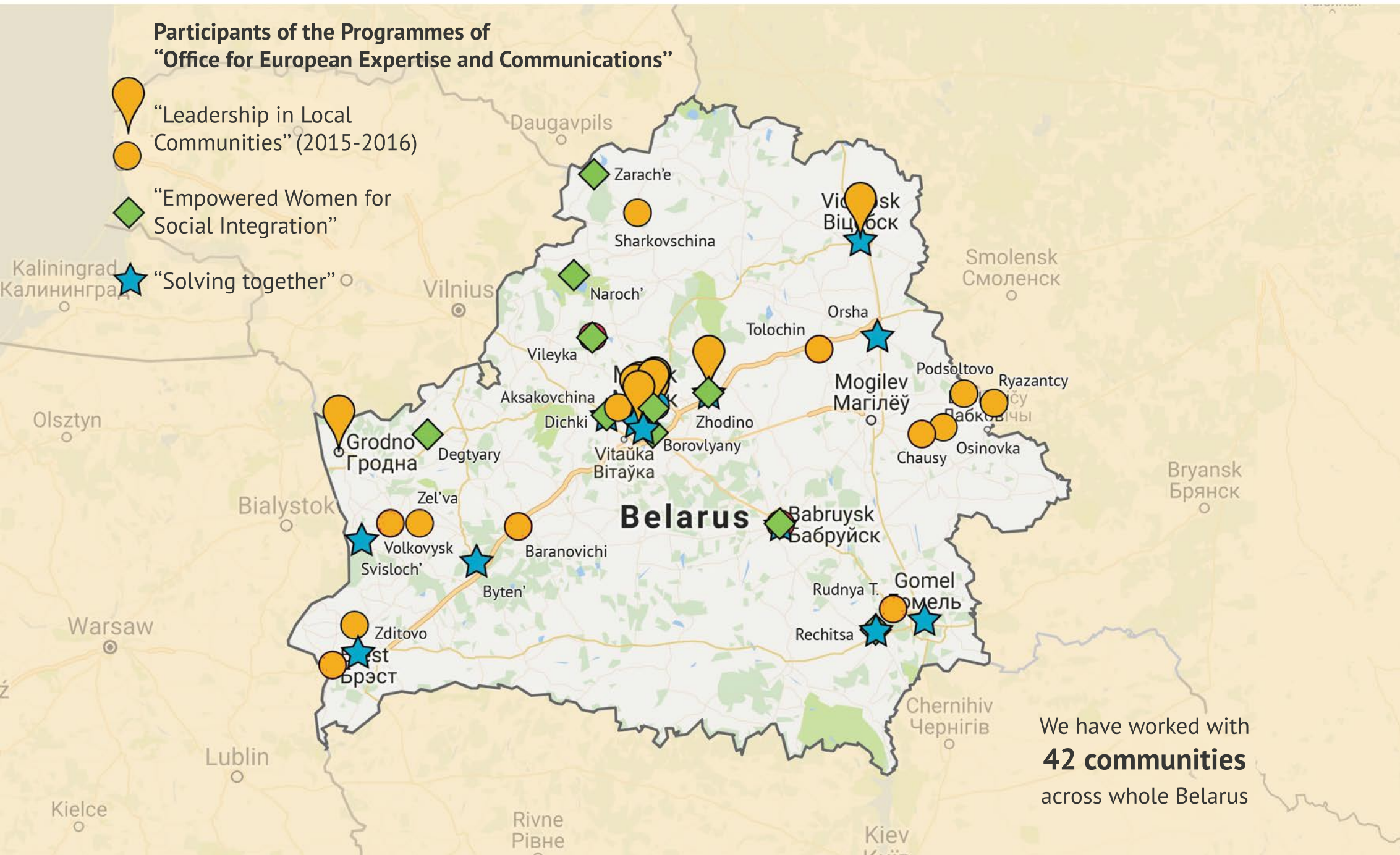
“Leadership in Local
Communities” (2015-2016)



“Empowered Women for
Social Integration”



“Solving together”



We have worked with
42 communities
across whole Belarus



CAPACITY BUILDING OF COMMUNITIES

Leaders from all the regions in Belarus participated in **educational Programmes** of “Office for European Expertise and Communications” in 2016. We managed to reach out to 42 communities and include more than 4600 people in assessing and solving local problems. Together we identified around 140 local problems, 90 of which were solved during the year, and the rest is being solved at the moment.

These inspiring numbers are the result of 4 of our Programmes that aim on developing the capacity of local communities. In our work, we are not only enhancing the competences and skills of our participants – we motivate people to mobilize the community, include vulnerable groups in needs assessment and further problems solving, and we share innovative tools of advocating interests on local level.

Leadership in Local Communities

“Leadership in Local Communities” is a Programme that gives a chance to active and resourceful people to improve their lives and lives of their communities. The long-term Programme consisted of **3 main educational modules** where we discussed needs assessment, development and implementation of initiatives, search for local resources and negotiations, and **2 additional modules** on advocacy held in partnership with International Educational NGO “ACT”. The Programme united participants from 26 communities: together they identified 119 local problems and engaged 2600 people who helped to solve more than 60% of issues before the end of the Programme.

During this year, we proudly shared the achievements of our alumni, we talked about new best practices used in the communities and facilitated the dialogue between the media and local communities. As a result, more than 40 articles about the work of our leaders and their

experience of solving the local needs were published in regional and republican media.

The contact making event organized in cooperation with the US Embassy for the participants of the Programme inspired the creativity of the leaders. Local activists networked with prominent people from various sectors, and new joint projects, initiatives and articles in media appeared afterwards.

The Programme is implemented by “Office for European Expertise and Communications” in partnership with International non-profit organization Pact.

Denis Nikiforov: “While I participated in the Programme “Leadership in Local Communities”, I improved my skills in identifying needs of local community by engaging people and finding solutions together. The course gave me an opportunity to meet active, bright and caring leaders of the communities and resourceful people from civil society organizations, international programmes, and business”.



Sport region

Let's do sport! The local initiative "Sport region" that was implemented in Mstislavl region in Mogilev oblast inspired the community to train more and helped to fulfill the lack of youth and adults' leisure. From February to October people interested in physical education met with expert trainers and sportspersons at workshops dedicated to football, handball, basketball, and swimming. Together they organised trainings and tournaments in Mstislavl town and in a small village Khodosy nearby. Along with that, they met celebrities of Belarusian sport, took part in contests, movie screenings, and final city marathon.

The local initiative was implemented in partnership with the Department of education, sport, and tourism of Mstislavl regional executive committee and LLC "Mike Diesel" within the EU/UNDP project "Support to Local Development in the Republic of Belarus".

Solving together

Have a look on the old problems with the new glasses! The Programme "Solving together" became an opportunity for female leaders of local communities to develop their competences in assessing and solving local problems with focus on interests of women and vulnerable groups as parts of local communities. During the Programme, from July to December, **15** participants from **12** communities learnt how to use gender-sensitive method of needs assessment, how to negotiate with local authorities, hold group meetings, promote interests of vulnerable groups, and cover their own achievements in the media.

The Programme is implemented in partnership with non-governmental organization "Nectarius" (Lithuania).



Elena Grinchik: "The Programme helped me to improve my competences in work with local community. Showing my interest to life, problems, sorrows and joys of people, I could unite them around me. For example, after children's playground was built, we wanted to paint it. Together with Zoya, the head of the village, we decided to engage people in the activity. While visiting houses in the village, we found those who wanted to give the paint and colour the playground. People determined the day and time of colouring, they wrote an invitation and then they came with their families, bringing so much of paint that some is still left to paint something other time".



Empowered Women for Social Integration

The Programme “Empowered Women for Social Integration” that was implemented from July to November was focused on the issue of social integration of women through engaging them in entrepreneurship sphere, helping them to obtain new skills and to reveal their potentials in business management.

13 women from **10** small towns successfully participated in the Programme, developed their business-plans, and some of them were even able to launch their own business. Four new business-initiatives were launched as the result of the Programme: participants started to sell their manufactured production and organize paid leisure for children and families.

The Programme is implemented by Martuni Women’s Community Council (Armenia) in cooperation with Migrant Families NGO (Moldova) and “Office for European Expertise and Communications” (Belarus) under Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Re-granting Scheme.



Anastasia Leonovich: “I was really impressed with the Programme. Meeting you, other participants, and the expert on business development Natalia Dolbik helped me to clearly understand what should I do to launch my business. Listening to the stories of success and failures of other participants, I was thinking about my own idea: how to avoid these mistakes, what can I use to succeed and what I should leave out. Non-formal education is something that moves you forward, helps you to see skills in yourself that you have never thought were there.

It has been six months since I have registered my own enterprise, an agency for celebrations arrangement – “Give the happiness”. Steadily I move forward. I’m ready to develop myself more, to work hard, and I’m very glad that I could start my business with your Programme. I genuinely hope that I will succeed”.





PROMOTION OF EXPERTISE

We firmly believe that Belarusian expertise values as much as European expertise. We use reliable information in our work, and we share it with our colleagues. **Three** new overviews of Belarusian civil society sectors were published in 2016. Sectoral overviews were dedicated to the current situation in the sector of youth organizations, sphere of organizational development, and advocacy. We have also organized two public discussions “What do Belarusians think” covering topics of the Bologna process and pensions reform. All in all, **more than 200** people participated in our public events where we promoted expertise. We have managed to invite representatives from the civil society, business, and government to build an inclusive and diverse discussion.

Sectoral analysis

Analysis of civil society sectors in Belarus is the analytical dimension of our work. The goal of sectoral overviews is to evaluate the situation in the sectors, learn about their needs and perspectives to facilitate productive dialogue based on reliable data between various actors who are interested in development of the sector.

In addition to 4 previously published sectoral overviews, we have presented three new studies in 2016. The overviews were made to examine the conditions of the sector of youth organizations, sphere of organizational development, and advocacy. The sectoral analysis of youth organizations became an excellent example of a sphere where leaders of the sector were actively involved in focus-groups and agreed on joint actions after the results were published.



Dmitry Dobrovolski, secretary general Belarusian National Youth Council “RADA”: “Sectoral analysis of youth organizations is a valuable contribution to deeper understanding of potential partnership between youth organizations which is so important for the development of effective youth policy and cooperation between youth associations in Belarus. The advantages of the evidence-based youth work are highly recognized and shared in national policies of state-member in the Council of Europe. Sectoral analysis of “Office for European Expertise and Communications” is one of the first firm steps for Belarus to provide with researches that encompass all the sphere of the youth policy”.

What do Belarusians think

“What do Belarusians think” is a series of live discussions which is being held by “Office for European Expertise and Communications” in partnership with international non-profit organization Pact and USAID from September 2014. The discussions improve the visibility of debates between experts and, along with that, they create a welcoming space to talk about important matters relevant to the Belarusian society.

In 2016, we have held two discussions tackling hot topics in the society: the Bologna process and pension reform that were attended by more than 110 guests and experts.





**PROMOTION
OF BEST PRACTICES
AND INITIATIVES**

While we educate and empower the communities, we focus our efforts on promotion of the best practices and initiatives as we believe that ideas and projects from different regions can be replicated all across Belarus. In 2016, “Office for European Expertise and Communications” co-organized contests of social projects Social Weekend and became a part of media initiative dedicated to people improving the world around us.

We are happy to share practices that are beneficial for our organization and tell about civil society to those people who are doing their first steps in it. This year we have united **more than 80** young people who did internships and participated as volunteers in our work.

Stories about people who improve the world

A joint initiative between “Office for European Expertise and Communications” magazine about Minsk CityDog.by, online-magazine “Imena”, 34mag.net and Talaka.by platform has been launched in August. More than 60 articles about how Belarus is changed by caring people who gather the communities around were published within the initiative.

A training for regional press was held in autumn, and journalists could develop their skills in covering activism there. In December, we hosted the Community Change Award “Zrabili” (“We did it!”) for the best initiatives on community development where most remarkable activist projects were awarded. We also thank TUT.by and Zavtra.by portals who joined us in implementation of the initiative.

Social Weekend

Together with LLC “MaeSens”, “Office for European Expertise and Communications” has been the co-organizer of the contest of social projects Social Weekend since 2015. The contest was launch in 2013, and from that time it has united people who are improving the world around us and philanthropists who are ready to support valuable projects. More than **340** projects took part in the 7th and 8th Social Weekend that were held in 2016.

During this year “Office for European Expertise and Communications” has been active in training the projects. We shared opportunities on how to promote project ideas, look for additional resources, engage local community, work with the team and communicate with media.



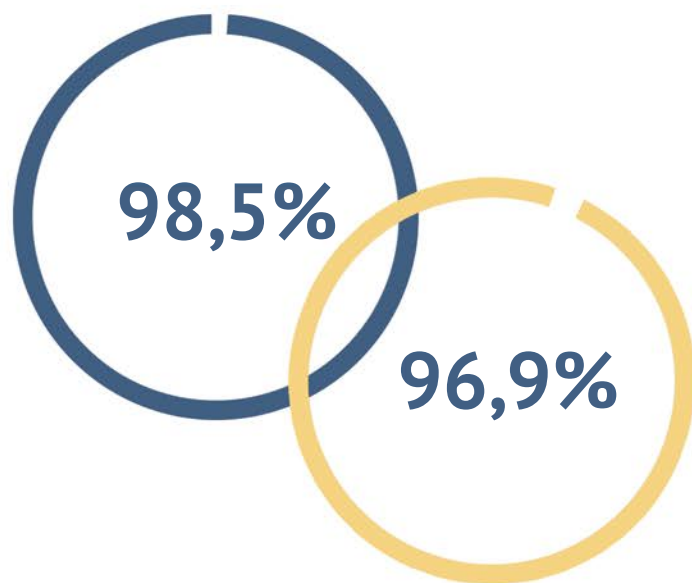
Alexandra Drab, volunteer: “Thanks to the OEEC, I’ve learned about social sphere and I have become instantly engaged in it. My Mom subscribed to the monthly newsletters of OEEC and she tells everyone the latest news on Kotovka, my friend created her own project and sent it to Social Weekend. My Facebook is enriched with hundreds of new friends, and my head – with hundreds of innovative ideas. And the best part of it is that I know how to implement them and I’m doing it now”.



EVALUATION OF OUR WORK IN 2016

In the end of 2016, we have evaluated the efficiency of our work during the year. More than 70 people participated in evaluation of our Programmes and services, and their quality. The evaluation form was distributed through our pages in the social networks and our newsletters.

BENEFITED FROM COOPERATION
WITH OEEC



WOULD RECOMMEND OTHERS
TO COOPERATE WITH OEEC

THE MOST WELL-KNOWN INFORMATIONAL SERVICES

76,1%

WEB-SITE

73,1%

NEWSLETTERS

THE MOST WELL-KNOWN PROGRAMME OF COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

76,1%

PROGRAMME "LEADERSHIP IN LOCAL
COMMUNITIES"

THE MOST WELL-KNOWN PROGRAMME OF BEST PRACTICES PROMOTION

88,1%

CONTEST OF SOCIAL PROJECTS
"SOCIAL WEEKEND"

Vasili Kukharchyk, Pact: "The long-term partnership between Pact and "Office for European Expertise and Communications" has created a unique initiative – the largest Belarusian forum for civil society organizations and civic initiatives that work with community development. I firmly believe that the forum which will take place in March next year will become a permanent platform for cross-sectoral dialogue and will facilitate civic participation in initiatives dedicated to improving the quality of life on local level in the country".



APPRECIATION

For support, help and cooperation we would like to thank:

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Forum Syd
LLC “MaeSens” and Social Weekend
The Embassy of Great Britain in the Republic of Belarus
The Embassy of the United States of America in the Republic of Belarus
EU/UNDP Project “Support to local development in the Republic of Belarus”
Mstislavl regional executive committee
LLC “Mike Diesel”
Non-governmental organization “Nectarus” (Lithuania)
Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum
Martuni Women’s Community Council (Armenia)
Migrant Families NGO (Moldova)
International educational NGO “ACT”
Magazine about Minsk Citydog.by
Magazine 34mag.net
Online-magazine “Imena”
Portal Zavtra.by
Portal TUT.by
Platform Talaka.by
Social information establishment “Gorodskoe razvitie”
Campaign “General plan for Minsk”
Petitions.by – resource “Comfortable city”
“Pontis” foundation
“Interakcia” foundation

International public association “Gender perspectives”
Baltic Internet Policy Initiative
Informational educational establishment “New Eurasia”
“ArtIdea”
Belarusian Helsinki Committee
Assembly of Non-governmental organizations in Belarus
Youth organization “Falanster”
School of young managers in public administration SYMPA
Research centre BIPART
Legal transformation centre Lawtrend
Centre for European transformation: CET
Youth education center “Fialta”
Support Programme of Belarus of the Federal Government of Germany
The Representative Office of the German Adult Education Association
 (“Deutscher Volkshochschul-Verband e.V.”) in the Republic of Belarus
Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House
The Association of Life-Long Learning and Enlightenment
East European Democratic Centre (EEDC)

And we would like also to thank:

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and Communications**

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