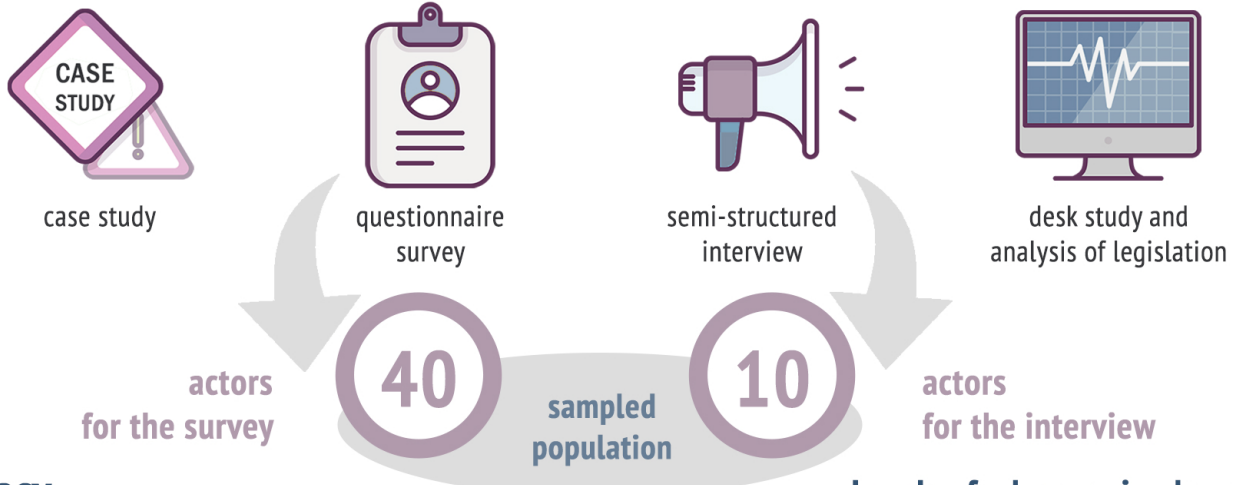


Advocacy in Belarus: Experience of Civil Society Organizations

Methodology



Advocacy



Advocacy means focused actions of various actors in order to change the existing policy or influence decisions of elites, government and state institutions by encouraging civic participation in the promotion of a common goal or a public interest. Advocacy includes a set of linked actions aimed at achieving **systemic changes** by influencing decision-making authority institutions (including elites) in order to find out solutions of public issues and change public opinion about them.

Levels of advocacy implementation



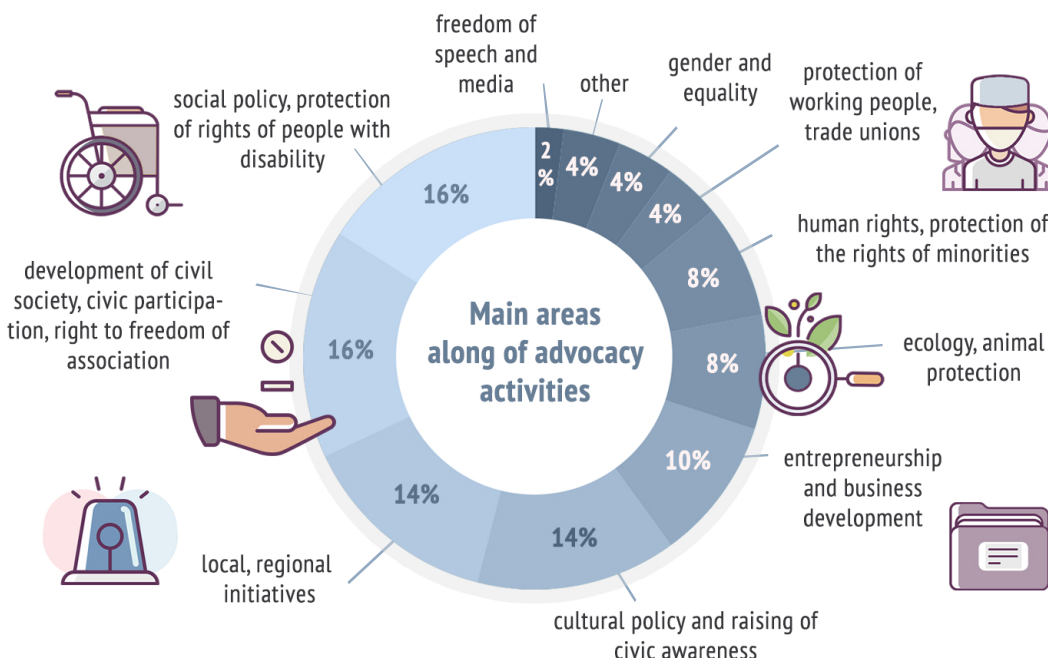
- **change of public policy and legislation**, including all stages of political cycle from policy development to its implementation



- improvement of physical and social conditions, including **changes of political, administrative, and public practices**



- a shift in **public attitude** towards a problem



Successful advocacy campaigns

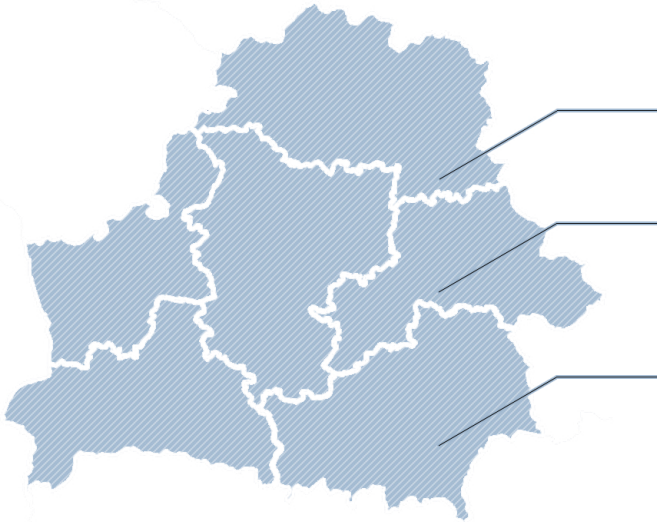
- **a campaign against peatlands draining:** *Green Network*
 - Resolution No. 754 of Council of Ministers suspended
- **promotion of contracting NGO social services by the government:** *International Educational NGO ACT*
 - contracting of NGO social services by the government legitimized
- **promotion of law against animal abuse:** *animal protection initiative group*
 - animal abuse criminalized
 - the law on animal abuse under discussion



sectoral overview

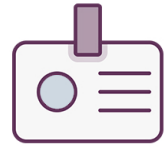
oeec.by/advocacysector/

Advocacy in Belarus: Experience of Civil Society Organizations



Legal context of advocacy

in Belarus there is no legislative definition of advocacy



there is a lack of effective mechanisms of partnership of civil society and the state national legislation

the state national legislation and law enforcement practices to a great extent hamper advocacy processes and involvement of citizens in policy making



Research Findings



The main restriction and also the main factor determining the success of any campaigns is a hypothetical politicization of an advocated topic or problem, i.e. whether **the authorities perceive it as a political issue**



When promoting legislative change the main target for activists is **executive instead of legislative power**, while executive power has significantly greater authority in this area



Specifics of civil sector in Belarus is that civil society organizations **consolidate with great difficulty** and they rarely involve citizens in their activity



Decision-making process of authorities in Belarus **lacks transparency**; civil activists have no or can hardly gain access to decision makers

Recommendations

To advocacy actors



Set clear **long-term goals** reflecting the desired changes **ensured by decisions** taken at the appropriate levels



Engage **motivated citizens** in **decision making, implementation and assessment** of local initiatives in public policy and local projects by their active **integration into** advisory and coordinating **public councils**



Engage the Belarusian **analytical community** - experts, researchers, think tanks, academicians - in advocacy campaigns **at all the stages**

To advocacy actors, international organizations, and development agencies

Use a **program approach** to the development of the sphere focusing on longer, at least two or three-year advocacy projects (**multi-year projects**) with mid-term assessment and a **possibility of adjusting activity** and **budget** revision in the course of their implementation



To advocacy actors, international organizations, development agencies, and implementers of donor programs

Initiate joint thematic activities for **experience sharing** and **networking**

Document and present in the form of **case studies** all the materials of advocacy campaigns

