



2012

Event of the Year: Educators and Researchers

We could not choose between significant events organized by educators, capacity builders and researchers in 2012. Our choice would be the educators, as they managed to conduct both of their national events in Belarus. Nevertheless, researchers gained both in quality and quantity, being at a core of modernization attempt of the Belarus government (at least part of it), as well as of the EU's modernization policy.

On October 12, [the First Capacity Building Fair](#) took place in Minsk. The Fair was organized under the Marketplace project which promotes a market model of consulting services for CSOs in Belarus. The Fair was attended by more than 150 providers and CSOs-customers of capacity building services. On December 7-9, [the 4th Festival of Non-Formal Education](#) took place in Minsk. The Festival was attended by about 250 participants – teachers, trainers and other people sharing the values of life-long learning and non-formal education.

On September 28-30, [The Second International Congress of Belarusian Studies](#) took place in Kaunas, Lithuania. The event was attended by about 300 scholars from around the world involved in studying Belarus and East-Central Europe. The final agenda includes 20 sections in different fields like regional development issues, Belarus relations with other countries, etc. On May 25-26, Vilnius hosted an international conference "[The Future of Belarus](#)" dedicated to the 20th anniversary of independent studies in Belarus and the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS). The conference was attended by about 100 well-known Belarusian and international researchers, experts, civil society leaders. Following the conference, a book was published titled "The future of Belarus. Opinion of independent experts".

Evidence of the Year: Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS)

The September-October public opinion poll of [Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies](#) (IISEPS) showed the real results of September parliamentary elections - regardless of numerous declarations and evidence of the opposition representatives, they were valid: 17.4% of respondents had voted early, and 49% - on September 23. Only 9.6% answered they had boycotted the elections, and another 24% said they had not participated in voting due to other reasons. Some Belarusian politicians [expressed distrust in results of the poll](#). In his turn [Oleg Manaev responded](#) that there is a very little difference between both authorities and opposition who manipulate the truth to the same extent.

Watchdog of the Year: Mediakritika

A new analytical media project was launched – [Mediakritika.by](#). Created by a team of Belarusian journalists, it is aimed at comprehensive critical analysis of the media in Belarus. The new project has a slogan "Truth Loves Criticism" and sets the task to improve the quality of the Belarusian journalism by monitoring the quality of news as it is presented in all Belarusian media.

Cross-Sectoral Cooperation of the Year: Mark Chagall Open Air Exhibition

During the summer season, [an open air exhibition of reproductions of works by Mark Chagall](#) worked at the Yakub Kolas Square in Minsk. The exhibition was dedicated to the 125th anniversary of the artist. The project was implemented by the "Fond of Ideas" paid for by Belarus business and opened by the Minister of Culture.

Advocacy of the Year: Social Contracting by ACT

During the year, the law "[On Social Services](#)" passed all levels of approvals and was adopted on July 13, 2012. One of the most important parts of the bill is introduction of the mechanism of social contracting that allows nonprofit organizations to get funding from the state budget. The main advocate for this change was [NGO "ACT"](#).

Political Project of the Year: Election Monitoring

Political parties managed to agree and deliver partisan poll-watching - [For Fair Elections](#) - of the 2012 parliamentary elections in a coordinated fashion and with a clear methodology based on the local conditions. Two additional project were operating in a coordinated fashion. [The interactive platform of monitoring](#) elections resumed its work before the parliamentary elections in Belarus of September 2012. It is an open platform where anybody can share their experience and observations of the election campaign. Electby.org is powered by the platform Ushahidi (which means "evidence" in Swahili). [The "Human Rights Defenders for Free Elections"](#) campaign is an independent and non-partisan joint initiative of the Human Rights Center Viasna and Belarusian Helsinki Committee. From the very first day of the election 95 long-term observers began their work, covering 106 out of 110 election districts. They prepared weekly reports on the course of the election process, which were processed, presented and spread as the campaign's weekly and preliminary reports on all stages of the election.

Belarusian Language Promo of the Year: AD.NAK! by Budzma

[Festival of Belarusian-language advertising and communication AD.NAK!](#) is a platform that unites the most active professionals in advertising and communications field and aims to interest others to do advertising and create communications in Belarusian. This year the event was held for the third time and attracted over 300 applications from more than a hundred participants. The Festival is organized annually by [Budzma!](#) civic campaign.

Branding of the Year: Tsmoki-Minsk

At the beginning of 2012 [Budzma!](#) launched a pilot addition to their campaign – Searching for Tsmok – which aimed to provoke wide public discussion of 'cool' Belarusian cultural heritage and the country's brand. Tsmok is a mythical Belarusian dragon, friendly to people, who represents richness in every sense of the word. As a result, the most popular Belarusian professional basketball club Minsk-2006 was [renamed to Tsmoki-Minsk](#) (Цмокі-Мінск).

Local Fundraising of the Year: MaeSen project

In December 2012, [the project MaeSens](#) transferred 40 million BYR to charity, and this means that the mutual assistance to children has increased \$100,000. One-year-old MaeSens project raises funds for the treatment of seriously ill children and orphanages by organizing the online auction of meetings, where anyone has the opportunity to set a meeting with him/her or to buy a meeting with a person he/she liked. In 2012, the project was awarded as a "Best Startup of the Year" by [Bynet users](#).

Pro Bono of the Year: Minsk United Branding Team

Self-organized Minsk United Branding Team offers to design alternative brands for Minsk. Minsk United Branding Team, a voluntary mixed group of creative professionals and civic activists with [a dedicated page on Facebook](#), starts designing city brand, alternative to INSTID proposal. [The team is open for anyone interested](#) and declared its three main principles as: Professionalism; Inclusivity; and Love to city/country and self-respect.

New Topic of the Year: Working with the Elderly

The issues dealing with intergeneration interaction and non-formal education accessibility for older people became the main topic of Festival of Non-Formal Education of 2012 "[Non-formal education for all generations](#)". The Grodno-based NGO "Third sector" for 3rd year implements a project "[Golden Age University](#)" for Grodno residents of pension age; this year the University is attended by 140 people.

Effective Cooperation with State Authorities of the Year: RAIK

Due to the RAIK's initiative, the National Airport Minsk approved a policy to adopt the quality standard of service for persons with reduced mobility. In addition, from January 26, "Kind Button" was launched in Belarusbank ATMs all over Belarus. The initiative of [Republican Association of Wheelchair Users](#) (RAIK) provides an opportunity for users of plastic cards transfer the money to the charity for the Association. From April 14, RAIK launched a charity project "Kind Call". Every resident has the opportunity to make a paid call from local phone and donate for the rehabilitation of disabled persons in wheelchairs. Also,

Last but not least....

Rural citizen of the Year: "Village Girl"

Kseniya Degelko's 'I am from the village' song [gathers over one million views on Youtube](#) in a few weeks period and spark heated debate. Produced by a GONGO, it is characterizing what kind of (civil) society our partners are operating in and trying to influence.

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