



Annual Activities Report 2017

BELARUS NATIONAL PLATFORM

THE KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

- Despite the rise of socio-political tensions in spring 2017, the Belarus National Platform succeeded to keep the door open for a dialogue between the independent Civil Society groups / networks and government officials
- The civil society expanded its presence in the EU-Belarus relations through a proactive participation in the formats of EU-Belarus coordination Group and EU-Belarus Human Rights Dialogue. CSO representatives proposed to the main stakeholders ideas for improvement of these formats
- The Platform gathered and distributed objective information about the consequences of March 2017 socio-political developments in Belarus for Civil Society and media actors
- Belarusian CSOs made some proposals regarding possible formats of their participation in implementation of several national plans (Interagency plan on Human rights and Action plan on implementing Convention on the rights of people with disabilities).

ACTIVITIES OF THE PLATFORM IN 2017

Main processes and their outputs at the National level, where BNP played its role



- Participation of civil society representatives in the negotiation formats of EU-Belarus Coordination Group (3-4 April 2017) and EU-Belarus Human Rights Dialogue (20 July 2017) – presenting position and recommendations on behalf of civil society actors;
- Adoption of the non-paper “Belarusian-European relations on the upgrade -

Is it possible to achieve more in 2017-2020?” developed by Andrei Yahorau (Centre for European Transformation) and taken for implementation by the BNP Coordination Committee.

- Co-participation together with EaP CSF in [advocacy campaign to support further sustainability of Belsat channel](#) based in Poland.
- Co-organising and implementation of the [EaP CSF Monitoring Mission on the civil society, media and human rights situation in Belarus](#) (March-April 2017).
- Participation in a series of CSO consultations, working meetings and public events to systemize sectorial work of the BNP.



- 7 meetings of the BNP Coordination committee during the reported period to coordinate BNP work inside Belarus and within EaP CSF frame.

Main themes where BNP has been working during the past year

- Situation on Human Rights in Belarus and EU-Belarus Human Rights Dialogue
- Freedom of speech and freedom of association
- Monitoring implementation of the EHEA Road Map of reforms in Higher Education in Belarus
- Enabling environment for small and medium business development in Belarus
- Various aspects of Implementation of the Convention on the rights of people with disabilities
- Perspectives of coordinating efforts of civil society actors and international institutions to stimulate good governance and local self-governance progress where possible in present conditions.
- Establishing and participation in the EaP Gender Policy Network (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova).

For the last years BNP as policy actor from civil society side in EU-Belarus and EaP processes has already reached some position and voice. At the same time BNP faces significant challenges in moving forward on this way. One of the main objectives of BNP mentioned in BNP strategic plan is development of BNP capacity to fulfil its goals. Unfortunately, BNP has faced problems with getting sustainable funding for both BNP capacity development as well as its working formats and guaranteeing expected productivity at the level of WGs, SWGs and ad-hoc commissions. There is also some gap or mismatch in understanding and expectations regarding CSOs role and limits in policy processes from the side of the main stakeholders. For the last year BNP operated based exclusively on BNP members support, which is rather limited in present conditions.

RELATION OF THE BNP WITH KEY EXTERNAL STAKEHOLDERS

Belarusian National Platform has adopted earlier its Strategic plan for 2016-2018 and BNP priorities 2017-2020. These documents became a good basis for systemic communication\ cooperation with key stakeholders: BNP representatives participate in regular meetings with representatives of the EU Delegation in Belarus and from time to time also meet with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus.

Head of EU Delegation Ms. Andrea Wiktorin is open and cooperative counterpart in dialogue with civil society, often takes part in CSO conferences and other events, especially the ones supported by the EU. Belarusian civil society is always invited to the meetings with the EU officials coming in Minsk with various missions.

BNP has become a de-facto recognised stakeholder by the Belarusian MFA. Thanks to facilitation role of EU Delegation in Belarus during this year BNP succeeded to improve its communication with Belarusian MFA – series of meetings both within EU-Belarus Coordination group and Human Rights dialogue but also at bilateral bases (MFA-BNP representatives) have taken place in spring-summer 2017. This improvement become possible both thanks to more open position of MFA regarding contacts with civil society and thanks to



facilitation role of EU Delegation in Minsk. It is hardly possible to predict how these contacts will progress, but BNP is interested in developing and intensifying such communication, based on existing policy formats and adopted national implementation plans

(Interdisciplinary plan on Human rights, National implementation plan on the Convention of the rights of people with disabilities etc.).



Despite this long-term progress with comparatively slow dynamic in stakeholder relations, BNP and civil society at large are still much dependent on political context and unsustainable environment. The most picturesque evidence of that was socio-political crisis that has taken place in March-April 2017 during and after manifestations against Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus No. 3 "On the Prevention of Social Dependence", also called "decree on parasitism". Despite of the fact that all protests were exclusively peaceful, didn't violate the rule of law, national security, morality, rights and health of other citizens, Belarusian authorities chose the way to suppress complaints of citizens. Such an approach didn't contribute to strengthening the atmosphere of stability, security, trust and respect in the society. In these circumstances Belarusian National Platform initiated EaP CSF Monitoring Mission on the civil society, media and human rights situation in Belarus (March-April 2017).

BNP in the future will be also able to timely react to any serious challenges related to the Belarusian state policy, monitor and give opinion/recommendations on the implementation of the Belarus-EU programs.

STATEMENTS, APPEALS OF THE BELARUS NATIONAL PLATFORM

EaP CSF BNP statement on the situation of the illegal Construction inside the protected area of massive Soviet repressions in Kurapaty boundary <https://cet.eurobelarus.info/ru/news/2017/02/27/zvarot-bnp-u-suvyaz-z-s-tuatsyyay-buda-n-tstva-aho-nay.html>

EaP CSF BNP Appeals on Authorities to immediately release peaceful protesters <http://eap-csf.eu/index.php/2017/03/17/belarusian-civil-society-condemns-arrests-calls-on-authorities-to-immediately-release-peaceful-protesters/>

EaP CSF BNP Calls for Postponement of EU-Belarus Coordination Group Meeting <http://eap-csf.eu/index.php/2017/03/31/statement-on-the-events-of-25-26-march-2017-in-minsk-and-other-belarusian-cities/>

EaP CSF BNP Statement on the Recent Action against the Independent Trade Unions leaders <http://eap-csf.eu/index.php/2017/08/04/belarusian-national-platform-of-the-eap-csf-condemns-politically-motivated-actions-against-rep-trade-unions-leaders/>



INFLUENCE OF THE BELARUS NATIONAL PLATFORM IN THE BELARUS LEGISLATION / DECISION MAKING PROCESS

In present state of affairs it is still hardly possible to speak about civil society capacity to influence legislation or having access to decision making process. At the same time, it is possible to see some promising steps and results of BNP efforts in developing communication and cooperation with the key stakeholders in Belarus and at EU level:

- BNP has taken relevant and significant place in the format of EU-Belarus Coordination Group with its monitoring data and concrete proposals, also made some proposals on improvement of the format of EU-Belarus Coordination Group in the future through
- more intensive dialogue between meetings and specifying \ detailed expert discussion between the authorities and civil society on a number of issues.
- Belarusian CSOs made some proposals regarding possible formats of their participation in implementation of several national plans (Interagency plan on Human rights and Action plan on implementing Convention on the rights of people with disabilities).
- CSO from respective WGs also made their proposals on improving business environment in Belarus and liquidation of consequences of practicing Decree "On the Prevention of Social Dependence".
- BNP ad-hoc commission also provided 2 interim reports on implementing Road map on higher education reform in Belarus, also presented its expert proposals and recommendations to the new edition of Education Code in spring 2017.
- Belarusian gender equality activists together with their EaP partners established EaP Gender Policy Network (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova) as a follow up of the project supported within 2016 EaP CSF re-granting scheme.

GENERAL INFO ABOUT BNP



Belarusian National Platform was established in July 2010 with the mission of strengthening solidarity, participation and influence of civil society organizations for democratic transformation and European Integration of Belarus by ensuring a dialogue with the public and the European institutions in the bilateral and multilateral dimension. At the moment BNP unites around 80 independent Belarusian civil society actors: think-tanks and research centres, establishments, foundations, trade unions and CSO networks.

BNP sees itself as an open and democratic platform for dialogue, promoting common positions, advocacy and any other joint actions described in its Strategic plan and Regulations. BNP Strategic plan adopted in 2016 identifies the following objectives for the period 2016-2018:



- Increasing the extent and quality of CSO participation of Belarus in the BNP to consolidate positions and advocacy interests of civil society, the development of solidarity through concrete joint public campaigns and the work of the thematic groups, taking into account the [EaP CSF policy document on advocacy](#).
- Increasing the impact of the BNP on the state and development of the Belarusian-European relations through direct or indirect talks, public campaigns, public hearings, the use of any windows of opportunities for public participation in decision-making, including independent assessment and monitoring.
- Strengthening the capacity of participating organizations to implement activities aimed at democratic transformation in Belarus, and integration with the EU.
- Development of BNP capacity to ensure its ability to implement the previous goals. Thematic priorities identified by the BNP Coordination Committee for 2017-2020 are:
 - Bologna process and the implementation of the provisions of the «Road map of reforms of higher education in Belarus».
 - Development of the private sector and entrepreneurial activity, including the questions of developing small and medium enterprises.
 - Inclusion of questions of the implementation of the Interdepartmental Plan of implementing the recommendations addressed to Belarus within the framework of UN mechanisms in the format of the European-Belarus dialogue on human rights and real participation of the public in decision-making.
 - Power safety, including the complex scenario of the future of the energetic branch. BNP aims to expand spectrum of roles that civil society can \ is allowed to play in multilateral dialogue of stakeholders in policy process, actin as:
 - Stakeholders: evaluation of real needs of target groups, participation in goal setting and development of criteria for feedback;
 - Experts: concepts, technology, expertise (including international level);
 - Partners: joint contribution (human, financial, information, intellectual resources), horizontal communication;
 - Watchdogs: public control, monitoring and evaluation;
 - Promoters: public discussion and promotion of best practices and successes, access to citizens;
 - Consumers: the use of results of reforms, guarantee the stability of change (if happens);
 - Service providers: offer of a specific range of services and projects for different target groups.