

## **EaP CSF Statement of Solidarity with the human rights defender Elena Tonkacheva**

The Steering Committee of the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership, expresses deep concern because of the decision of Belarusian authorities to cancel residence permit and deport for three years the Belarusian human rights defender, chairperson of the Board of the Legal Transformation Center (Lawtrend) Elena Tonkacheva.

Since 1985, Elena Tonkacheva, citizen of the Russian Federation, has been living in Belarus where she finished school, received higher jurisprudential education, has a constant residence and a job, family and property. We know Elena Tonkacheva as an active figure of civil society of Belarus, qualified expert, and leader of the human rights defending organization. For 20 years, she and her organization have rendered professional legal and expert support to numerous non-commercial organizations in Belarus and people in the situations when human rights have been infringed. The formal basis for the residence permit abolition is the facts that Elena Tonkacheva broke traffic regulations (she insignificantly exceeded the speed limit).

We believe that the decision to cancel the residence permit and to expel her from the territory of the country is a politically motivated and disproportionate sanction in comparison with the danger of the committed misdoing. The real basis for this decision is Elena Tonkacheva's political position and active human rights defending activity.

*Therefore:*

- 1) We address to the EU Office in Belarus, diplomatic missions of the EU countries and the USA, the UN Office in Belarus, other international organizations and structures, with the request to provide any possible support to Elena Tonkacheva and to stop the process of extraditing the human rights defender;
- 2) We address to civil societies of the countries of the Eastern Partnership and the EU countries with the request to demonstrate active solidarity with Elena Tonkacheva;
- 3) We also address to participants of the Civil Society Forum to demonstrate solidarity and we ask:
  - to sign and send by post the petition to the Citizenship and Migration Department of the Municipal Department of Internal Affairs of the Minsk City Executive Committee and the Citizenship and Migration Department of the Pieršamajski Regional Office of Internal Affairs of Minsk with the request not to expel Elena Tonkacheva from Belarus and to renew her residence permit (sample: [http://www.lawtrend.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Hodatajstvo\\_Elena-Tonkacheva.docx](http://www.lawtrend.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/11/Hodatajstvo_Elena-Tonkacheva.docx));
  - to send the petition by fax: the Citizenship and Migration Department of the Municipal Department of Internal Affairs of the Minsk City Executive Committee - fax 8-17 331-81-68, the Citizenship and Migration Department of the Pieršamajski Regional Office of Internal Affairs of Minsk - fax 8-17 280-01-62;