

ANNUAL ACTIVITIES REPORT

BELARUSIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM NOVEMBER 2014 – END OF OCTOBER 2015

KEY TOPICS/ISSUES OF FOCUS FOR THE BELARUSIAN NATIONAL PLATFORM

The activities of the Belarusian National Platform (BNP) were concentrated on the several main topics:

1. EU-Belarus relations and civil society involvement in the dialog between the EU and Belarusian authorities;
2. Support of the Independent Bologna Committee efforts in promoting the Road Map of Reforms in Higher Education in Belarus during Belarus accession to the European Higher Education Area;
3. The work in the frames of the European Dialog on Modernisation and the REFORUM project;
4. Internal development of the EaP Civil Society Forum: support of the Structural Reforms of the Forum and EaP CSF Strategy for 2015-17 development;
5. Positioning on the main issues of EU-Belarus relations and the development of the political situation in Belarus;
6. Round tables and discussions on specific issues EU-Belarus cooperation and civil society development;
7. Organisational development of the Belarusian national Platform.

ACTIVITIES AND KEY ACHIEVEMENTS

1. **EU-Belarus dialogue.** The general involvement of the Belarusian civil society into EU-Belarus dialogue remained quit poor. The communication between BNP and EU Institutions was quite difficult and limited, due to the hard process of the EU dialogue with the Belarusian authorities. The position of the Belarusian authorities was not supportive for the civil society involvement and they didn't see the civil society and BNP as one of the parties the process. While the BNP positive had positive attitude towards EU-Belarus dialogue restoration, we stressed the need to include the voice of civil society, and in particular BNP, in the course of negotiations. Until now, the problem has remained and civil society organizations do not have the institutional capacity to influence decision-making. At the same time, we stress the growth of positive attitudes and openness of the EU Delegation in Minsk as well as much better relations between

BNP and EU Institutions, some Member States embassies in Minsk, EU officials after the December, 2014. In particular:

- a. On December 2, 2014 a meeting with the BNP Coordination Committee and the head of bilateral relations department of the Eastern Partnership of the European External Action Service Dirk Schuebel and representatives of the EU Delegation to Belarus was held.
 - b. On March 18, 2015 the meeting of the National Platform participants and the consultant of the Swedish development agency SIDA - Tim Vickery on possible support for EaP CSF National Platforms was held.
 - c. On March 19, 2015 the Embassy of the Republic of Poland with the assistance of BNP organized a meeting of representatives of Belarusian NGOs and the delegation of the Ambassadors for EaP from the 8 EU Member States.
 - d. On May 4, 2015 the BNP Coordination Committee took part in the consultations on ENP revision on the invitation of EU Delegation in Belarus.
 - e. On June 29, 2015 a meeting of BNP Coordination Committee and EU Commissioner on European Neighbourhood Policy & Enlargement Negotiations Johannes Hahn was held.
 - f. During the year the representatives of the BNP Coordination Committee participated in a joint meetings of Belarusian civil society organisations with the representatives of the EU Institutions and the EU Member States, in particular the working group on Eastern Europe and Central Asia COEST, the Delegation on relation with Belarus of the European Parliament, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Latvia and others.
2. **Bologna Process.** The great achievement of the Belarusian civil society, Independent Bologna Committee and the Belarusian National Platform was the inclusion of Belarus in the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) on conditional basis and with the obligations to implement the "Road map of Reforms in Higher Education" (May, 2015). This become possible due to cooperation of the Independent Bologna Committee and the National Platform and their activities in active lobbying of the need to reform the higher education system in Belarus at the level of the Secretariat of the EHEA, the European Commission, the European External Action Service, the EU Member States.
 3. BNP have been working in the frames of **European Dialogue on Modernisation** and the REFORUM project aimed at the support of the Dialogue.
 4. Belarusian National Platform was actively involved in the preparation, discussion and adoption of decisions on **structural reforms the Civil Society Forum** and the new **strategy for the 2015-2017** development. As a result the reforms was adopted at the annual forum in Batumi (November 2014): the management structure of the CSF has been simplified and optimized (reduced number of members of the Steering Committee of the EaP CSF, established by the Working Group Councils etc.), the role National



Platforms was increased, thematic groups through the Working Group Councils has been more tied to the national context of the EaP countries. The new strategy of the CSF is included a lot of the strategic proposals of the Belarusian National Platform.

STATEMENTS, RESOLUTIONS AND APPEALS

BNP adopted a number of **statements, resolutions and appeals** concerning the development of the Eastern Partnership, the situation of military aggression against Ukraine, the repression against activists of the Belarusian civil society, human rights situation in Belarus and other. In particular:

2014/11/03. The statement "The solidarity with human rights activist Alena Tonkacheva" // <http://npbelarus.info/?p=1743>

2015/03/05. The appeal "On the actions of the international community concerning the military conflict in the Eastern Ukraine" // <http://npbelarus.info/?p=2025>

2015/03/06. The appeal "On the situation with the murder of Boris Nemtsov" // <http://npbelarus.info/?p=2016>

2015/04/15. The appeal "On the recognition of the European perspective for the Eastern Partnership countries» // <http://npbelarus.info/?p=2153>

2015/05/19. The Statement on the eve of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga "Geopolitical crisis in the region and the need to reform of the initiative"// <http://npbelarus.info/?p=2302>

2015/06/25. The resolution of the Conference of the BNP "Civil Society in Belarus: Challenges of stagnation and statisation of the third sector" // <http://npbelarus.info/?p=2487>

2015/09/10 The position of the Belarusian National Platform of the Civil Society Forum "On possible resumption of the cooperation between Republic of Belarus and the European Union" // <http://eng.npbelarus.info/?p=200>

ROUND TABLES AND DISCUSSIONS

A number of **round tables and discussions** on specific issues EU-Belarus cooperation and civil society development were organised by the National Platform. In particular:

- a. The meeting of Belarusian Civil Society Forum delegates (November, 12). On November 12, on the eve of the VI Forum of Eastern Partnership CSF a meeting of delegates was held. The task of the meeting was in coordination of the Belarusian delegation to the future EaP Civil Society Forum. Delegates discussed and supported



the new strategy of the Civil Society Forum for the period of 2015-2017// <http://npbelarus.info/?p=1758>

- b. Round table "OSCE Guidelines on Human Rights Defenders" (December 8). Within the framework of the Working Group №1 of BNP a round table devoted to the adoption of the OSCE / EDIHR Guiding Principles for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders was held. The participants discussed the role of this document to strengthen the human rights community in Belarus.
- c. The Conference of BNP (December, 22). On December 22, Minsk hosted a conference of the Belarusian National Platform "The potential of Eastern Partnership for the development of Belarusian civil society". On the agenda there were the issues of the Platform's activities assessment and strengthening its members. The Conference also summed up the VI Civil Society Forum results as well as some possible threats to the development of BNP because of growing pragmatism of relations between the EU and the "problem" countries of the Eastern Partnership // <http://npbelarus.info/?p=1859>
- d. Round Table "Problematic issues of small entrepreneurs and their reflection in the "National Platform of Belarusian Business - 2015" (February, 9). On February, 9 in Minsk within the framework of the Working Group №2 of BNP a roundtable with business community was held. The business community has initiated this round table in connection with the growing problems of business, and also because the problematic issues of small entrepreneurs have not yet received comprehensive reflection in the "National Platform of Belarusian Business - 2015". The need to analyze and discuss these problems was especially relevant in the context of advocacy to help business associations to make consolidated input in "National Platform of Belarusian Business - 2015" // <http://npbelarus.info/?p=2006>
- e. The working meeting of the Working Group №4 of BNP "Contacts between people" (April, 10). At the meeting there was an exchange of information concerning actions of civil society organizations in the framework of the 4th working group at the national and international level, organizations discussed upcoming plans and possible synergies within the group, as well as the channels of communication between the organizations.
- f. Round table "On the eve of the Eastern Partnership Summit in Riga: Challenges and Priorities for civil society of Belarus" (May, 5). The round table of the Belarusian National Platform was held on the eve of the Riga Summit. Representatives of civil society organizations discussed the current situation in the Eastern Partnership, the development of relations between Belarus and the EU, as well as a common position of the members of the National Platform for the European Neighbourhood Policy revision // <http://npbelarus.info/?p=2226>

10. 1st Meeting of the Working Group 1 of BNP (June, 5). The representatives of the Working Group №1 of BNP evaluated the Riga summit and set up the priorities on the eve of the meeting of the group WG-1 of EaP CSF in Brussels // <http://npbelarus.info/?p=2404>

11. The round table of BNP on the assessment of the post-electoral situation in Belarus (October, 12). On October 12, Minsk the meeting of the Belarusian National



Platform on the assessment of the post-electoral situation was took place. Participants of the meeting agreed with the conclusions that the recent presidential elections cannot be considered as free, open and democratic. It was stated that in the human rights situation in Belarus there is no any substantial improvements // <http://npbelarus.info/?p=2712>

12. On 14 October, in the wake of the Belarusian presidential election, the panel discussion on the state of EU-Belarus relations was organised by the EaP CSF and hosted by MEP Bogdan Zdrojewski at the European Parliament // <http://eap-csf.eu/en/news-events/news/eu-belarus-relations-a-new-round-of-engagement-in-the-new-geopolitical-situation/>

GENERAL INFO ABOUT THE NATIONAL PLATFORM

The Belarusian National Platform was founded in July 2010 and Belarus was the second Eastern Partnership country after Armenia to establish a National Platform. Members of the National Platform are civil society organizations (NGOs, initiatives, associations) who signed the Memorandum of cooperation (see http://www.eap-csf.eu/assets/files/Downloads/english/Memorandum_29.10.2011_EN.pdf). Till the moment National Platform includes 74 members, 4 of them joined BNP during the reporting period. An annual Conference of BNP elects Coordination Committee. It serves as the governing board of the BNP and consists of 7 members elected for a one-year term and country's national facilitator.

Web-page: <http://npbelarus.info/>

