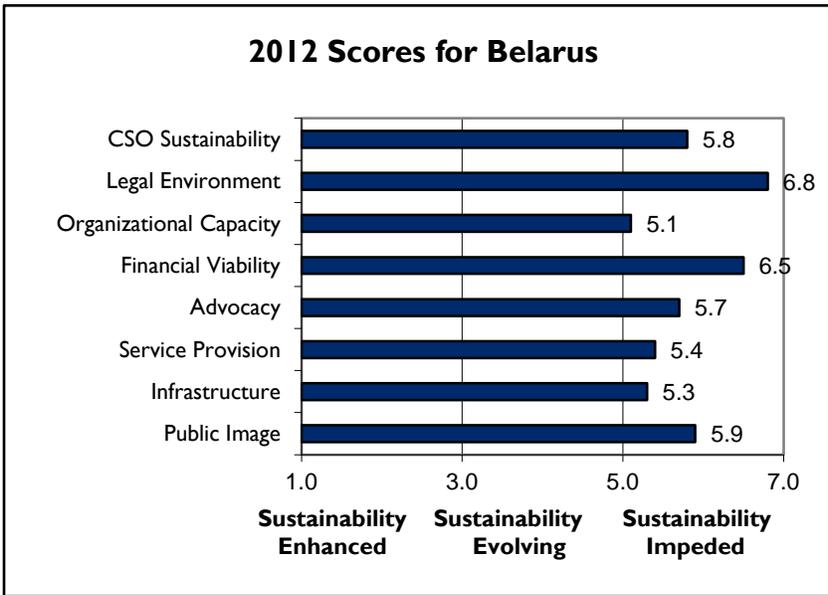
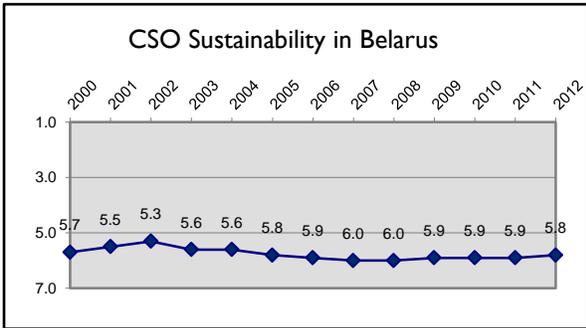


BELARUS



Capital: Minsk
Population: 9,625,888
GDP per capita (PPP): \$16,000
Human Development Index: 50

CSO SUSTAINABILITY: 5.8



Government repression of Belarusian CSOs eased in 2012. Civil society activists were subjected to less harassment, including searches and administrative detentions. CSOs managed to organize a number of major public events during the year, although public authorities denied space for some congresses, conferences, assemblies, and festivals.

During 2012, CSO advocacy, lobbying, and involvement in public policy resulted in greater public awareness of key issues at the national level, and in

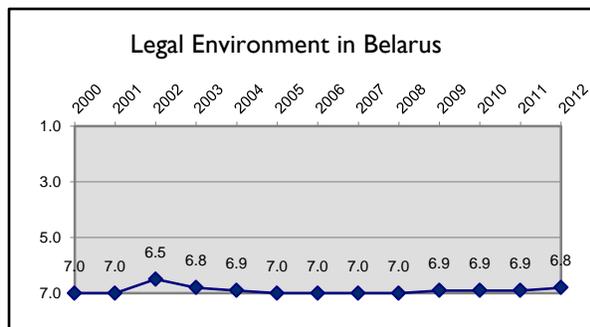
some cases led to the adoption of favorable legislation. CSOs are more focused on gaining public recognition and are therefore increasingly in contact with their target groups, creating their own press services, and promoting themselves on the Internet and through social networks. An innovative market-oriented mechanism that facilitates interaction between organizational development consultants and CSOs was launched. In order to sustain their services, more CSOs strive to secure local resources, including by charging fees.

As of December 31, 2012, there were 2,477 CSOs registered in the country, including 229 international, 688 national, and 1,560 local organizations; thirty-one unions (associations) of CSOs; and 139 foundations. During 2012, 111 new CSOs registered, including two international, ten national, and ninety-nine local groups.



Approximately half (51 percent) of the newly registered organizations are sports organizations; no women's or human rights organizations were registered in 2012.

LEGAL ENVIRONMENT: 6.8



Both existing legislation and its implementation hinder the development of CSOs in Belarus. A few experts, mainly based in the capital city, provide qualified legal assistance to CSOs.

CSOs require a permit from the state authorities to register. The registration process is complicated and costly in comparison to the registration of for-profit organizations. Registration authorities generally approve or deny a CSO's registration application in one month; if more information is required, it takes

another month to complete the process. The registration fee is about \$60 for local CSOs and \$115 for national CSOs. Online registration is not available for CSOs.

Government officials have a wide range of grounds upon which they can deny registration to or dissolve a CSO. It is still a criminal offense for an unregistered organization to engage in activities and a few members of unregistered groups received threatening or warning letters in 2012.

Given the difficulty of registering a public association, initiative groups often register as nonprofit institutions, which can be established by a single person by notifying the local authorities and is less expensive. Other organizations continue to register abroad, especially in the neighboring countries of Lithuania and Poland.

Some institutions were dissolved in 2012 for allegedly violating various laws. For example, the Informational and Educational Institution Platform, which protects prisoners' rights, was dissolved for failing to report taxes.

Legislation impedes the effective operation of CSOs. Foreign funding and anonymous donations are subject to compulsory registration with government bodies, which requires a letter of support from state authorities. A CSO is required to have a legal address in a non-residential building, which imposes considerable costs. The Council of Ministers maintains a special list of over 400 registered organizations that enjoy reduced rent for state-owned premises in which they have their offices, although no clear criteria were used to compile the list.

The repression of CSOs and activists eased in comparison to 2011. However, activists were increasingly forced to submit unscheduled tax returns and declare their incomes for the past several years. The leaders of Ecodom, the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies, and Human Rights Center Viasna submitted such declarations. An increasing number of non-political activists – including human rights defenders, environmentalists, and independent analysts – were held administratively liable and paid fines this year. Previously, mostly political activists were penalized.

Many activists, including the leaders of the Belarusian Association of Journalists and the Belarusian Helsinki Committee, were temporarily forbidden to leave the country in 2012. Ales Bialatski, Head of the Human Rights Center Viasna, is still in prison, and the Belarusian authorities refused to cooperate with the UN Human Rights Committee's examination of the case.

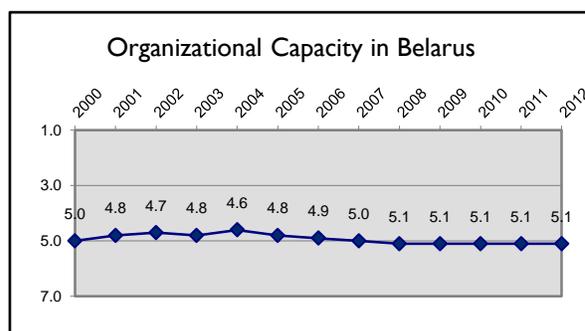
The registration authorities determine whether foreign aid is exempt from tax on a case-by-case basis. Foreign and local donors – both legal entities and individual entrepreneurs – are only allowed to support certain

causes listed in official regulatory acts. Philanthropists only enjoy tax benefits for donations to certain sports organizations and associations of disabled people. CSOs cannot engage in entrepreneurial activities.

On the positive side, amendments to the Law on Social Service, which was adopted in June 2012 and came into force on January 1, 2013, permit the state to procure social services from CSOs. These amendments were drafted in partnership with CSOs.

ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY: 5.1

CSOs increasingly cooperate with target audiences both to meet donor requirements and because they are increasingly aware of the benefits of involving communities. For example, CSOs worked proactively with their constituents to develop bicycle infrastructure in Grodno and Brest. CSOs also engaged their constituencies to oppose the density of over-developed districts in Minsk, the construction of new industrial facilities in Smolevichi and Svetlogorsk, and the felling of trees in a park in Minsk.



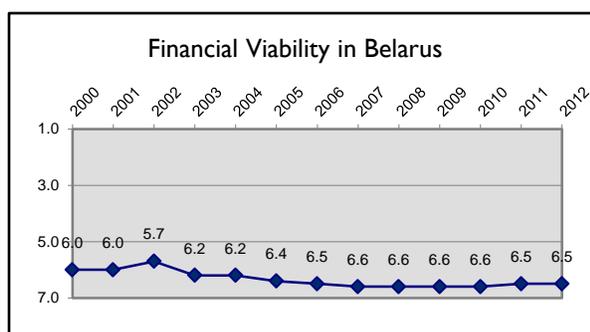
Many CSOs base their activities and decision making upon strategic plans. CSOs increasingly consider strategic planning not simply as fashionable, but as a development tool that helps them achieve more impact. Regional CSOs, however, still rarely incorporate strategic planning into their work and few have well-formulated missions or strategic plans.

More CSOs are beginning to understand the importance of developing systems for internal democracy, including separation of powers, group decision making, and organizational transparency. Some CSOs separate the responsibilities of the governing body and management, but only on paper. In many CSOs, individuals continue to serve both on the board and as management.

Few CSOs have human resources practices such as contracts, job descriptions, or personnel policies. Most CSOs lack resources to maintain paid staff or provide personnel with minimal benefits, such as paid sick leave or holidays and contributions towards their pensions. A number of CSOs face difficulties recruiting volunteers and establishing volunteer management systems, generally due to a shortage of skilled staff.

Most CSOs have increased their technical bases through members' personal contributions and donor funding and therefore have the equipment they need to conduct their work. However, CSOs still lack resources to buy licensed software.

FINANCIAL VIABILITY: 6.5



In 2012, Belarusian CSOs started to seek ways to increase the share of local resources in their budgets. Many organizations collect membership dues, which some have increased to cover their organizational costs. The IDEA Fund promotes corporate social responsibility (CSR) among large and medium businesses.

A number of organizations, such as the Belarusian Consumer Rights Protection Society and some sports CSOs, are entitled by law to earn income. Most CSOs,

however, have to establish for-profit organizations in order to earn income legally. Although this complicates their management structures and taxation, some organizations still do this. For example, this year Education Center POST registered an informational and consulting institution to make it possible for their constituencies to pay for necessary services. Some faith-based organizations have manufacturing facilities and allocate part of the money they earn to social programs. Other CSOs legalize income from their services by treating it as membership fees or donations.

The legislation permitting the government to procure CSO services has not come into effect yet. Nevertheless, local authorities have provided some funding to CSO-run HIV prevention projects as a pilot in eight regions of the country.

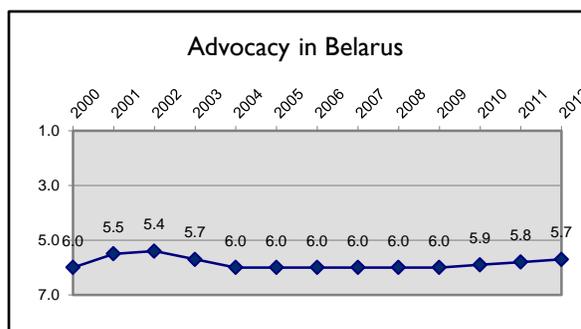
Despite these efforts to diversify resources, foreign funding is still the main source of support for Belarusian CSOs. CSOs still require authorization to use foreign aid. In 2012, the Department for Humanitarian Activities of the Presidential Property Management Directorate denied authorization to CSO projects in education, the social sphere, and rural development, mainly on the grounds of their “inexpediency.” Funding for the denied projects came from the United States, Germany, and Sweden. In some cases, foreign-funded projects that complement the government’s priority areas and are supported by authorities have also been banned. For example, a project by the Association of Life-Long Education and Enlightenment was denied registration despite the fact that it had the support of a specialized parliamentary committee and local authorities.

CSOs that have been operating for a long time have financial management systems in place, as well as highly qualified accountants and specialized software. However, due to the complicated environment for mobilizing resources, CSOs are forced to employ semi-legal fundraising schemes, undermining financial transparency within the sector. Few CSOs can afford independent audits; therefore, external audits are only conducted when donors insist on them.

ADVOCACY: 5.7

In 2012, CSOs intensified their advocacy activities, which garnered increased public attention.

The authorities cooperate closely with the independent CSOs they trust as these organizations provide them with access to information, external investments, and contacts. CSOs continue to participate in public councils on agro- and eco-tourism, sustainable development, social issues, and development of condominiums. The Steering Committee at the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection meets regularly to consider CSO proposals. In 2012, nine CSOs became members of the working group discussing the Water Code of the Republic of Belarus.



In 2012, CSOs initiated and continued numerous advocacy activities in different spheres of public life. For example, CSOs pushed for amendments to hunting regulations. CSOs also implemented a campaign against torture and raised public awareness of the need for a barrier-free environment for the disabled. The Budzma Belarusami! campaign succeeded in getting the Minsk 2006 basketball club renamed Tsmoki (Dragons) in honor of a mythical figure in Belarusian national culture. Solidarity campaigns were organized with political prisoners on the occasion of the fiftieth birthday of human rights activist Ales Bialatski, who has been in prison since 2011. CSOs broadly use the Internet for advocacy. For example, the Record Keeping in Belarusian campaign encourages citizens to submit their letters to state bodies in Belarusian, which forces the authorities to respond in Belarusian as well.

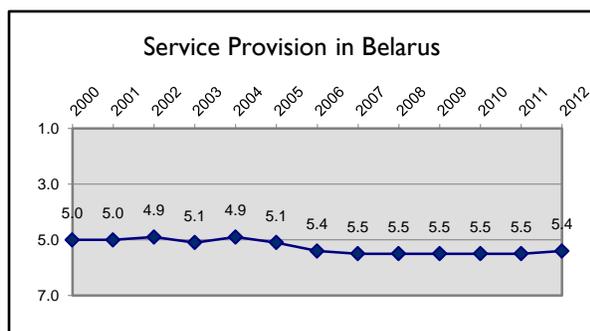
With support from a number of CSOs and partners, Belarus was banned from joining the Bologna process, which presents unified educational standards across Europe, until 2015 because of its failure to ensure academic freedoms and protect students from repression. The newly registered CSO Office of European Expertise and Communications, along with a number of other interested CSOs and state organizations and agencies, are helping Belarus prepare for eventual inclusion into the Bologna process.

CSOs also managed to influence the law making process this year. Advocacy by ACT and other socially-oriented organizations led to the adoption of the amended Law on Social Service, which allows the government to procure social services from CSOs.

CSOs continue to be actively involved in the creation of sustainable local development strategies; approximately twenty such strategies – known as Local Agendas 21 – have been published to date.

Despite these positive developments, many CSOs, especially at the local level, are not yet ready to engage proactively in advocacy, both because they are unaware of their role in public policy and are apprehensive of being harassed by the authorities.

SERVICE PROVISION: 5.4



CSOs render a wide range of services in various areas, including health care, social services, and information, training, and consulting services to the public, government, and other CSOs. New services are being developed in the areas of computer technologies, informational security, energy efficiency, environmentally safe materials, and life-long and informal education, including new forms such as distance learning. Some CSOs issue publications in print and electronic form. The Legal Transformation Center’s Lawtrend Monitor provides specialized legal

information, while the Belarusian AIDS Network’s Together news bulletin provides information in the area of HIV prevention. While the range of services provided by CSOs is constantly expanding, their quality and volume remain low and not all regions of the country are covered.

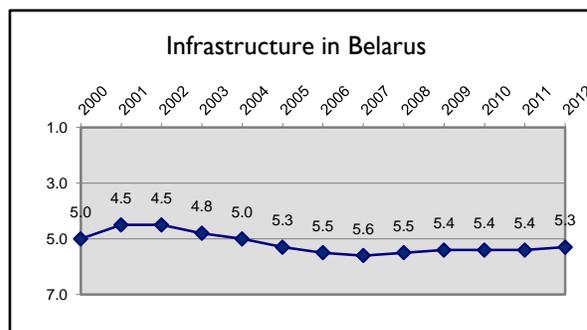
Many organizations base their activities on analyses of their clients’ and communities’ needs. According to the results of monitoring performed by the Alternative Youth Platform, an increasing number of youth organizations are assessing the effectiveness of their services, studying the needs of their target groups, and involving them in planning.

The overwhelming majority of CSOs rely on donor funds to provide services and recover costs, which throws the sustainability of their services into question. Faith-based organizations proactively seek charity donations to sustain their services. In some cases, CSOs charge membership fees to recover costs. In rare cases, CSOs obtain state funds to provide services. For example, the Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs regularly gets state funding to organize specialized health camps, but only the sixteen member organizations that are currently included in the National Register of Youth and Children’s Organizations are eligible to receive these funds.

In 2012, the Bureau of Organizational Consulting, a nonprofit institution, conducted the first research in the country focused on price formation for CSO organizational capacity services.

INFRASTRUCTURE: 5.3

Various CSOs provide the traditional services of ISOs and resource centers, but carry out broader functions as well. CSOs' demand for support services has shifted. The expertise of Belarusian think tanks is increasingly in demand. CSOs request their services when preparing grant applications or analytical publications, international organizations and programs request assistance in reviewing their priorities and technical assistance interventions, and the state seeks their services to better understand trends in the CSO sector. CSOs still have a great need for organizational development services. There are organizations that provide such services with highly qualified trainers and training materials in Russian and Belarusian. Distance learning programs have been gaining in popularity among civil society representatives as Internet access improves.



In 2012, major Belarusian CSOs launched the Organizational Development Marketplace. The Marketplace facilitates transparent interaction between consultants and CSOs seeking organizational capacity building services, and partly covers the organizations' expenses for these services.

Networks that bring together organizations based on their areas of activity – such as Greenet, Alternative Youth Platform, Association of Life-Long Education and Enlightenment, Belarusian AIDS Network, EuroBelarus – all provide information, training, and advocacy support to CSOs. The National Platform of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum unites approximately sixty CSOs to promote the development of the sector. However, efforts to consolidate the Platform's work are difficult due to competing priorities, as well as the low success rates of such efforts in the past.

The number of organizations in Belarus that re-grant foreign funds is growing. For example, EuroBelarus re-grants funds from the Swedish Forum Syd and the Lev Sapieha Foundation re-grants funds from the European Association of Local Democracy Agencies. This practice, however, is still not transparent. With rare exceptions, CSOs choose not to report on their activities and finances in order to avoid problems with the strict registration procedures for grants and donations.

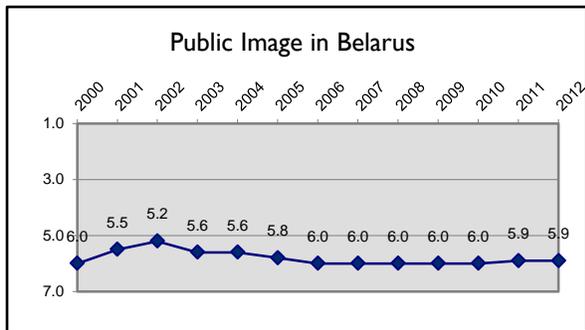
CSOs work with the state through national and regional councils. The effectiveness of these councils depends on the presence of mature CSOs in the region and the level of trust between individual officials and CSO representatives. CSO-business cooperation has been developing through the UNDP Global Compact, which promotes the social responsibility of business. Major businesses organize charity programs through CSOs. For example, Coca-Cola Beverages Belarus funds auto rallies promoting HIV/AIDS prevention among teenagers through the Belarusian Association of UNESCO Clubs.

PUBLIC IMAGE: 5.9

The public image of CSOs has not improved. Most citizens do not understand or recognize the term civil society and are not aware of the role the sector plays in the country's development.

Media coverage of CSOs is often politicized. State-owned media regularly chastise Belarusian civil society for being funded by Western donors, which perpetuates the sector's negative public image.

In 2012, media coverage of individual CSO activities and issues, such as ecology and support to people with disabilities, improved. However, with the exception of some individual media outlets, such as the Warsaw-



based Euroradio, the media lacks the desire and capacity to provide analysis of civil society as their communication with CSOs is weak and CSO news is not in high demand by the general public.

CSOs are intensifying their public relations activities to overcome their negative public image. Many major organizations now have staff members responsible for public and media relations. Specially organized press services covered major events in the sector in 2012, including the Organizational Development Fair of

Non-Profit Organizations, the Festival of Non-Formal Education, and the National Platform of Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Conference. CSOs are actively developing websites, newsletters, and mailing lists, and are increasingly using social networks. Some organizations are also establishing their own media outlets. For example, Consortium EuroBelarus created EuroBelarus.info and the Alternative Youth Platform (RADA) established AMPby.org.

The authorities' perception of CSOs did not change in 2012. The government still mistrusts certain organizations, primarily human rights organizations, although some state organizations interact with CSOs working in their areas. For example, the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment Protection works closely with environmental organizations and the Ministry of Health works with HIV service organizations. For the most part, the business sector does not understand what civil society does or how it functions.

Belarusian CSOs have not adopted a code of ethics. CSOs rarely publish annual reports, as the state does not require them to and CSOs' clients and other stakeholders do not demand them. The few CSOs that do publish reports list activities, but withhold financial information.