

Assessment of the state of civil society in Belarus in Freedom House and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) reports in 1999–2013

Freedom House is a respected international organisation that, since 1997, measures indices of democracy for post-communist countries, including Belarus. Relevant reports are published annually under the title “Nations in Transit. Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia”. The checklist of questions for the index covers seven categories: electoral process; civil society; independent media; national democratic governance; local democratic governance; judicial framework and independence; and corruption.¹ As one can see, the state of the institutes of civil society is only one of seven categories; however, it plays a rather significant role. Numeric ratings accompanying the reports are based on a scale of 1 to 7, with 1 representing the highest and 7 the lowest level of democratic progress. Table 1 below shows the numeric ratings that Belarus received for the development of its civil society in 1999–2013.

Table 1. *The level of development of civil society institutions in Belarus according to Freedom House research²*

Year:	1999	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Score:	6.00	6.50	6.25	6.50	6.75	6.75	6.75	6.50	6.50	6.25	6.00	6.00	6.25	6.50

As the table shows, the state of civil society institutions is consistently bad. This places the Republic of Belarus into the group of consolidated authoritarian regimes alongside countries of Central Asia and, after Vladimir Putin’s third re-election in 2012, the Russian Federation.

¹ See: *Nations in Transit 2014. Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia*. New York, Washington, Budapest: Freedom House, 2014. <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2014/belarus>.

² “Freedom House” reports are published with one year delay. Data for 2014 will be published in the first half of 2015. Data for 2000 are absent, therefore we took 1999 as the starting point – see *Nations in Transit 2005. Democratization from Central Europe to Eurasia*. Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2005. P. 120.

What about the state of the non-governmental organisations (NGOs), independent trade unions, associations of entrepreneurs and religious organisations, which are the main structural elements of civil society in any country, including Belarus?

The score in 2001 worsened, since in January 1999 president Alyaksandar Lukashenka signed the Decree No 2 that required re-registration of NGOs, political parties and trade unions. This document de facto introduced the permission-based principle of registration of association, rather than application-based, which is quite natural for authoritarian regimes. As a result of that re-registration and failure of many NGOs to re-register due to the severe political pressure, the number of NGOs in Belarus decreased from 2500 to 1300.³

According to the report of Freedom House, there were three main events in the life of civil society in Belarus in 2002:

- forced unification of two leading youth NGOs into one (Belarusian Republican Union of Youth, or BRSM);
- change in leadership in official trade unions: they were headed by the ex-deputy head of the Presidential Administration, Leanid Kozik;
- changes in the Law on Religions that provided the Christian Orthodox church with a more privileged treatment than other churches and caused outrage among followers of other confessions.⁴

The year 2003 was rich in events that negatively influenced the sustainability and durability of civil society structures in Belarus. This led to an even lower score in the ranking compared to 2002 (see Table 1). There was a new wave of repression against certain NGOs that could have disturbed the preparations for the referendum that extended the number of re-elections for Alyaksandar Lukashenka, enabling him to become a lifelong president. First of all, several regional resource centres were shut down (in Baranavičy, Homel, Brest and Hrodna). The second target of the repressions were human rights organisations, such as “Legal support to the population” and “Viasna” human rights centre. The pressure was exerted on some youth organisations such as Young Front or Youth Christian and Social Union “Young Democrats”. Authorities shut down the Independent Society of Legal Studies, the lawyers of which actively expressed their solidarity with the third sector in Belarus. Around 40 NGOs had to stop their activities.⁵ Also in 2003, the government announced that it would develop the so-called ‘state ideology’ that would be introduced as an obligatory course in universities. The only Belarusian-language lyceum in Belarus – Yakub Kolas lyceum – was liquidated. The government also introduced

³ See.: U. Rouda. *Palitychnaya Sistema Rrespubliki Belarus*, Vilnius: EHU, 2011. P. 240.

⁴ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2003/belarus>.

⁵ See.: U. Rouda. *Palitychnaya Sistema Rrespubliki Belarus*, Vilnius... P. 241.

stricter punishment for political parties and NGOs for organisation and participation in non-sanctioned demonstrations and street protests/meetings.⁶

A referendum in Belarus removed all legal boundaries preventing the president to be re-elected multiple times. That complicated even more the conditions for the work of NGOs, independent trade unions, associations of entrepreneurs and religious organisations. The law “On Public Associations” was amended on 30 June 2004, allowing it to postpone the activities of an organisation for 6 months or liquidate it, if it breaks the rules of receiving and usage of foreign humanitarian aid. Repressions against NGOs now included pressure against independent research centres (think tanks). In 2004, the Ministry of Justice shut down 42 NGOs including “Centre for Constitutionalism and Comparative Legal Research”. After six months of struggle, the European Humanities University (EHU) lost its licence and had to look for a new home in exile. All above mentioned factors explain why the score for civil society institutions in Belarus, in that year, was the lowest: 6.75.⁷

That sad record repeated in 2005. The main reason for that, was that in November 2005, changes were introduced into the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus that envisaged criminal responsibility for activities in the name of unregistered organisations. This article paved the way for the imprisonment of “Partnerstva” unregistered initiative activists who planned to organise independent monitoring of the presidential election, as well as Young Front activists.⁸ Also in 2005, authorities did not recognise the election of Andželika Borys as the head of the Union of Poles in Belarus (that story attracted plenty of international attention); Protestant church “New Life” was accused of misuse of property. On top of all that, the Independent Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) was deprived of its license and forced to move into exile.⁹

There were not many changes for civil society structures in Belarus in 2006. On the one hand, repressions against NGOs that were perceived by the state to be ‘politicized’ continued and 10 quite well-known organisations were shut down (such as the Renaissance of Homeland Women’s Movement, Union of Belarusian Scouts, Belarusian Union of Children’s and Youth Organisations “Rada”). On the other hand, amendments to the Criminal Code went into force that envisaged criminal responsibility for actions in the name of an organisation liquidated in court or for the discreditation of Belarus and its leader abroad. Authorities continued to fight with the new leadership of the Union of Poles. On the other hand, Belarusian Helsinki Committee (BHC) won a court case in the Supreme Economic Court and was able to continue its work in Belarus. After a three-week long hunger strike, 200 parishioners of the “New Life” church got their unlawfully

⁶ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2004/belarus>.

⁷ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2005/belarus>.

⁸ See.: U. Rouda. *Palitychnaya Sistema Rrespubliki Belarus*, Vilnius... P. 241.

⁹ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2006/belarus>.

confiscated premises back. Still, since the government were not able to provide civil society with minimal freedom from arbitrary interference into their activities, Freedom House gave the civil society in Belarus the same score as in 2005: 6.75.¹⁰

In 2007, several politically active NGOs demanded state registration, such as For Freedom Movement, Viasna, Chernobyl Union of Liquidators and Young Front. Those attempts failed, while seven members of Young Front were criminally convicted for activity in the name of the unregistered organisation. One of the activists, Artur Finkevich, who was already in prison for patriotic graffiti on a building in Minsk, received an extra 1.5 years of imprisonment on top of the original 2 years, for “breaking the prison regime.” At the same time, some organisations were able to continue their work legally, such as the “Supolnasc Centre” or the Belarusian Helsinki Committee. In November 2007, the deputy head of the Presidential Administration met the leaders of the popular Belarusian language rock bands and persuaded them that the state wouldn’t ban their concerts for political reasons if they would distance themselves from politics. Freedom House gave Belarusian civil society the score of 6.50 – that score meant a relative ease of conditions for the activities of the civil society in Belarus.¹¹

The release of two well-known political prisoners, the Young Front leader Zmitser Dashkevich and ex-presidential candidate Alyksandar Kazulin marked the beginning of a relative thaw that included more tolerant treatment of NGOs, trade unions and associations of entrepreneurs. No one was imprisoned based on 193-1 Criminal Code article (actions in the name of the unregistered organisation). The authorities seemed to open up cautiously to dialogue with the opposition. Uladzimir Makei, who at that time headed the Administration of the President, spoke at the Minsk Forum, organised by German elites that were interested in cooperation with Belarus. However, that political ‘thaw’ didn’t influence the score that Freedom House gave to civil society in Belarus: 6.50.¹²

In 2009, the score of civil society in Belarus got slightly higher: 6.25. Due to the dialogue with the European Union, Belarusian authorities slightly improved administrative procedures, making registration or liquidation of NGOs easier. There were no “loud” court cases involving NGO activists or political leaders. At the same time, leaders of some organisations such as the, non-recognised by authorities, Union of Poles were warned that they could become the next targets of 193-1 Article of the Criminal Code. Presidential Administration created consultative councils, inviting representatives of the opposition to them. However, meetings of those councils stopped in November 2009 after Uladzimir

¹⁰ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2007/belarus>.

¹¹ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2008/belarus>.

¹² <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2009/belarus>.

Makei got offended by the speech of an opposition politician, who called those councils “regime’s cover-ups”.¹³

Until the presidential election that took place on 19 December 2010, authorities quite routinely persecuted NGOs, trade unions, associations of entrepreneurs and religious communities. The only exception was the criminal case against the head of Ivianiec branch of the Union of Poles in Belarus, Tereza Sobol, who was accused of official misconduct. Some organisations were not registered, among them: the Association of Civic Education, the Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs, and “Viasna” human rights centre. At the same time, new initiatives got an opportunity to register themselves as so-called “establishments”. This was the form of registration of the group that supported the “Tell the Truth” civil campaign.

The Ministry of Justice suggested to the House of Representatives (lower chamber of the Belarusian parliament) to review the infamous 193-1 Article of the Criminal Code. In order to retain a seat in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Uladzimir Makei extended the mandate of so-called civil consultative councils. Despite the radical reversion of the situation after 19 December 2010, Freedom House gave Belarusian civil society one of the highest scores in this period, 6.00.¹⁴

In 2011, the conditions for the work of civil society organisations have drastically worsened due to repressions against participants of the protests on Independence Square in Minsk. Administrative and/or criminal action were brought against more than 800 people. Despite repressions, civil society found a new form of protest: so-called “silent protest” actions that took place from May to July in Minsk and other big cities in Belarus. When those spontaneous and non-violent gatherings started, the unprepared police were not able to disperse them efficiently.

To prepare for the participation in the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Belarusian NGOs developed a joint National Platform. All these development led to the repetition of the last year’s score: 6.0.¹⁵

In 2012, the conditions for non-governmental organisations, independent trade unions and association of employers remained complicated. Criminal and administrative action was taken against those who supported so-called “teddy bear landing” action that was classified as illegal crossing of the Belarus’ border. In June, the government prohibited audience opinion polls by the companies that do not have permits from the relevant state commission. Several foreign politicians were banned from entering the country to observe parliamentary elections. At the same time, two well-known political prisoners were set free: Andrei Sannikau and Zmitser Bandarenka. Authorities allowed peaceful march on

¹³ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2010/belarus>.

¹⁴ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2011/belarus>.

¹⁵ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2012/belarus>.

the Freedom Day on 25 March. The overall conditions for the operations of civil society worsened and received the score of 6.25.¹⁶

According to Freedom House experts, in 2013 the conditions for the activities of civil society worsened even more (score of 6.5). Despite the substantial decrease in the rate of administrative arrests, 11 political prisoners stayed imprisoned, among them Ales Bialatski, Mikalai Statkievich, Eduard Lobau and Mikalai Autukhovich.¹⁷

The Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index by the United States Agency on International Development (USAID) is one more indicator that allows us to study the condition of the civic sector in Central and Eastern Europe as well as in Eurasia. The sustainability of each country's CSO sector is defined by the following factors: legal environment, organisational capacity, financial viability, advocacy, service provision, infrastructure, and public image. As in Freedom House rankings, each of these dimensions gets a score between 1 and 7, where 1 is the highest and 7 is the lowest.¹⁸

Let's start from the legal environment that plays a key role in studying the Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index. Table 2 shows how the score for this dimension changed for Belarus in 2000–2013.

Table 2. *Legal environment*

Year:	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Score:	7.0	7.0	6.5	6.8	6.9	7.0	7.0	7.0	7.0	6.9	6.9	6.9	6.8	6.8

The legal environment, in which institutions of civil society work in Belarus, has been extremely unfavourable since the very beginning of the consolidated authoritarian rule in Belarus. The relative exception was in 2002, when the Law on Public Associations was signed. However, as stated above, the Decree No 2 signed in 1999 by president Lukashenka introduced the permission-based principle of registration of NGOs instead of the application-based. This has not changed to this day. Moreover, starting from 2001, civil society organisations (CSOs) are obliged to register funding received from abroad either with the Council of Ministers or in the Humanitarian Aid Department at the Administration of the President.¹⁹

Both Freedom House and USAID's experts paid attention to the amendments to the Law on Public Associations adopted in June 2004 that envisaged liquidation or postponement of activities of an organisation for six months, if an organisation fails to comply with above listed requirements. Also in 2004, the referendum approved the

¹⁶ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2013/belarus>

¹⁷ <http://www.freedomhouse.org/report/nations-transit/2014/belarus>.

¹⁸ See: *Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Belarus*. P. 12 http://actngo.info/sites/default/files/files/report_belarus_csosi_2013.pdf.

¹⁹ *Ibid.* P. 3.

lifting of a constitutional ban on a third, or subsequent terms for president Lukashenka. In 2005, changes in the Criminal Code introduced criminal responsibility for actions in the name of unregistered organisations. Those changes came into force in 2006 (the famous 193-1 Criminal Code Article that allows imprisonment for activities in the name of the organisation that was liquidated by the decision of the court and for spreading abroad information that discredits the state and its leadership). This article has not been abolished, despite the suggestion that the Minister of Justice made to the MPs back in 2010.

In 2009, authorities introduced cosmetic changes in some administrative procedures of the application of the Law on Public Associations: on the one hand, they made registering an NGO easier, on the other, it became easier to shut down an NGO, as well. In January 2013, Presidential Decree No 2 introduced restrictions on persons who are under the KGB's or prosecutor's office supervision: they cannot become directors of institutions/ establishments or head the unions of legal persons.²⁰

Thus, the legal environment prevents subjects of civil society from fulfilling their statute goals.

Table 3. *Organisational capacity*²¹

Year:	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Score:	5.0	4.8	4.7	4.8	4.6	4.8	4.9	5.0	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1	5.1

According to indices, the organisational capacity of civil society in Belarus is slightly higher than the conditions set by the legal environment:

Civil society organisations (CSOs) regularly assess the needs of their target audiences and develop services based on the defined needs. At the same time, limited resources do not allow organisations to increase the volume of requested services. Cases of involvement by CSOs of the significant number of people into their activities are quite a rarity.²²

Common problems that existed both in 2000 and 2013 and hindered the organisational capacity were:

- a significant number of CSOs continues to stay in the illegal field;
- the majority of organisations do not provide the division of power between ruling and executive organs inside their organisations;
- strategic planning is present only in big CSOs and international networks;

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Ibid.

²² See: *Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Belarus – 2013*. P. 4. // http://actngo.info/sites/default/files/files/report_belarus_csosi_2013.pdf.

- decision-making is happening inside the closest circle of an organisation's leadership;
- registered organisations are obliged to provide annual reports to the state but they do not publicise these reports in the society.

At the same time, Belarusian CSOs employ highly qualified experts able to provide high-quality services to the wide circles of the population. Many organisations regularly use the services of lawyers, accountants and IT specialists. Nearly all organisations have access to the Internet. The organisational capacity of civil society in Belarus reaches the level of that in countries with hybrid regimes where elements of authoritarianism and democracy coexist. This can be explained by strong links with European countries and the European history of Belarus that has lasted for many centuries.

Table 4. *Financial viability*

Year:	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Score:	6.0	6.0	5.7	6.2	6.2	6.4	6.5	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.6	6.5	6.5	6.4

The low level of financial viability of Belarusian CSOs can be explained by the draconian legislation. For instance, in 2008, the president issued two edicts that introduced the obligation to get permission from the relevant ministry before applying for the registration of a grant in the Department on humanitarian aid²³. In 2013, the Department denied registration of any projects that were selected as winners in the small grants programme run by the US Embassy in Belarus²⁴.

Despite hurdles created by the Belarusian authorities, grants from abroad are the main source of financing of Belarusian CSOs, especially those dealing with human rights or dealing with issues that are close to politics. At the same time, the Department on humanitarian aid sometimes approves foreign funds for social projects. Such projects are also able to get support from business, which however, has not significantly developed over the last 10 years. Independent trade unions are able to collect membership fees. Still, the above mentioned sources of funding are not enough to ensure stable and durable development of CSOs.

Table 5. *Advocacy*

Year:	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Score:	6.0	5.5	5.4	5.7	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.9	5.8	5.7	5.5

²³ See: *Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Belarus – 2008*. P. 5. // http://actngo.info/sites/default/files/files/report_belarus_csosi_2008.pdf.

²⁴ See: *Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Belarus – 2013*. P. 5. // http://actngo.info/sites/default/files/files/report_belarus_csosi_2013.pdf.

During the last 15 years, CSOs have had limited opportunities to lobby for changes in the legislation that would improve their situation or the situations of the social groups they were created to serve. Examples of successful advocacy are usually related to the activities of particular organisations or their leaders that had informal access or relationships with those in power.

When the re-registration of NGOs started in Belarus in 1999, the Assembly of pro-democratic non-governmental organisations that was the biggest coalition of NGOs in Belarus, conducted the “SOS campaign”. The title of that campaign was borrowed from Slovak activists. The campaign focused on providing legal support to the third sector organisations and on informing foreign human rights organisations and governments about rude violations of the freedom of association in Belarus. The overall number of NGOs in Belarus after the re-registration fell from 2500 to 1300. At the same time, the most active members of the Assembly were re-registered. The overall number of members of the Assembly grew from 250 to 700 organisation (one-third of them were unregistered).²⁵ This is an example of the successful advocacy of a coalition of Belarusian CSOs.

In 2008, Belarusian businesses lobbied for the abolishment of the so-called “golden share” rule that allowed the government to nationalise any joint stock company.²⁶ In 2013, the association of entrepreneurs “Perspektyva” succeeded in persuading the government to postpone the realisation of the technical regulations of the Customs Union of Russia, Belarus and Kazakhstan. “Green Network” environmental NGO, successfully lobbied for changes in Water and Forestry Codes²⁷. As one can see, the examples of successful advocacy campaigns are solitary and deserve detailed examination.

Table 6. *Service provision*²⁸

Year:	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Score:	5.0	5.0	4.9	5.1	4.9	5.1	5.4	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.5	5.4	5.3

Civil society organisations provide services in the sphere of civic education, human rights (including minority rights), protection of the environment, healthcare, culture, sports and recreation. The number of organisations that focus their services on current needs of the society is growing every year.

However, organisations that provide such services as a rule have limited financial sources; that creates the problem of projects that do not outlive the grant period and

²⁵ See.: U. Rouda. *Palitychnaya Sistema Respubliki Belarus*, Vilnius, EHU. P. 241.

²⁶ See: *Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Belarus – 2008*. P. 6. // http://actngo.info/sites/default/files/files/report_belarus_csosi_2008.pdf.

²⁷ See: *Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Belarus – 2013*. P. 6. // http://actngo.info/sites/default/files/files/report_belarus_csosi_2013.pdf.

²⁸ Ibid, p. 7.

disappear after the grant is finished. Many such organisations, except for social organisations, are too afraid to advertise their activities since that can bring persecution from the authorities. Therefore many potential clients of CSOs never learn about the opportunities they have.

Table 7. *Infrastructure*²⁹

Year:	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Score:	5.0	4.5	4.5	4.8	5.0	5.3	5.5	5.6	5.5	5.4	5.4	5.4	5.3	5.2

There is no infrastructure that could allow the population to have unrestricted access to the services provided by the Belarusian civil society organisations. At the same time, there are some positive changes in this sphere. The Assembly of pro-democratic NGOs created in the late 1990s, despite the huge decrease in membership, remains the biggest coalition of NGOs in Belarus. In 2013, it united 327 organisations. The Assembly provides informational and legal services, organises cultural campaigns and researches the non-governmental sector.

In recent years, the Lev Sapieha Foundation strengthened its capacity in developing local communities in Belarus. CSO networks, such as “Green Network”, the Belarusian AIDS Network, the Belarusian National Youth Council “Rada”, as well as the Belarusian Association of Lifelong Learning and Enlightening, provide informational, educational and advocacy support to their members.³⁰ The main problem in this field is that CSOs only occasionally cooperate with the authorities and with business.

Table 8. *Public image*³¹

Year:	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Score:	6.0	5.5	5.2	5.6	5.6	5.8	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	6.0	5.9	5.9	5.9

The public image of the civil society organisations has been consistently negative for almost 15 years. Only for a short period, in 2002, when the Law on Public Associations was signed, the attitude of the population to CSOs improved. At all other times that attitude stayed negative, including in 2011, when due to the devaluation of the Belarusian ruble and other economic problems, the electoral rating of the president fell to 20%. In 2013, according to the IISEPS opinion poll, only 32.8% Belarusians claimed they trusted CSOs, while 18.2% did not trust them. At the same time, the majority of Belarusians do

²⁹ Ibid, p. 9.

See: *Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Belarus – 2013*. P. 9 // http://actngo.info/sites/default/files/files/report_belarus_csosi_2013.pdf.

³¹ Ibid, p. 9.

not understand the term “civil society” and do not know what role civil society plays in their lives.³²

The negative image of CSOs is caused by the defamation of these organisations by the authorities that has been in place for years. Civil society leaders and activists have limited access to broadcasting media and do not have enough resources to employ PR specialists. The transparency of their activities is limited, since many organisations are more concerned with the persecution by the authorities than with their own image.

Finally, let’s analyse the overall sustainability of civil society organisations in Belarus in 2000–2013. Table 9 presents this summarising score.

Table 9. *CSO sustainability*³³

Year:	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013
Score:	5.7	5.5	5.3	5.6	5.6	5.8	5.9	6.0	6.0	5.9	5.9	5.9	5.8	5.7

Political liberalisation has not been on the agenda in Belarus for many years. Attempts of civil society organisations to participate in public policy were constantly met with the hostility of authorities. Disappearance of famous politicians in 1999–2000 and persecution of participants of presidential campaigns in 2006 and 2010 that made them political prisoners, made sustainable dialogue with the West impossible for the Belarusian authorities. Only in 2013 one could see first examples of successful advocacy campaigns led by CSOs. The legal environment in 2003–2013 was unfavourable to the civil society. That forced many organisations to register abroad or risk criminal persecution for actions on behalf of an unregistered organisation. As of 31 December 2013, there were 2521 registered public associations in Belarus; still, a significant amount of civic initiatives remained unregistered.³⁴ The CSO Sustainability index in 2000–2013 stayed in the ‘Sustainability Impeded’ category, which is intrinsic for consolidated authoritarian regimes.

We note finally that indices of the level of the development of civil society by Freedom House and by the United States Agency for International Development use the similar methodology and, therefore, complement each other well. Reports on these indices allow politicians and researchers to understand better the processes in civil society in Belarus and political decisions that, according to the government, support the stability of the existing political regime in Belarus.

³² Ibid, p. 10.

³³ See: *Civil Society Organization Sustainability Index – Belarus – 2013*. P. 1. // http://actngo.info/sites/default/files/files/report_belarus_csosi_2013.pdf.

³⁴ Ibid, p. 2. This shows that only by 2013 the number of registered NGOs reached the level of 1999 before the re-registration of political parties, trade unions and NGOs that de facto led to the liquidation of all non-loyal NGOs.

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