



Civil society's role and place in the system of donor assistance to Belarus (2006-2014)

Working paper (summary)

Centre for European Transformation



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Introduction

There is a need to monitor external development aid to Belarus in order to make this process more open and to broaden the possibilities of public control over the distribution of donor assistance. In order to be able to form a well-founded judgement, it is necessary to lean on concrete facts and real data, and this research is carried out to present such information.

This research presents an overall picture of external assistance to Belarus from 2006 to 2014¹ and underlines the questions of financial support to civil society's activity, as well as the place of the EU and its Member States in the general system of donor assistance. This work is a continuation of the researches carried out by the Center for European Transformation in 2013 and 2014².

The data on development assistance to Belarus is taken from open sources (OECD statistics, public documents of the EU and other structures — foreign affairs ministries, national development agencies, and foundations).

Main findings:

- Europe is the region most actively providing development assistance to Belarus. Donors from the EU (Member States and Institutions) provide more than half of the entire development aid Belarus receives, while share of the biggest non-European donor, USA, is only 15%;
- Civil society development (assistance to the democratic participation, human rights and media and free flow of information areas) is one of main development assistance priorities in Belarus;
- Aid to civil society development is implemented not only by the civil society organisations (both Belarusian and foreign), but as well by external, non-civil society, stakeholders (donor governments, multilateral organisations etc.);
- The donor community lacks common vision and cohesion in providing assistance to civil society development in Belarus, which results in varying donors' priorities in supporting different areas and diverse donors' strategies for CSOs engagement.

For more detailed analysis please consult the full report (available in Russian)³.

¹ On the reason of periodicity of reporting to OECD statistics on the amount and structure of assistance to individual countries, an adequate analysis is possible only up to 2014, the full data on donor assistance in 2015 will be available by mid-2017.

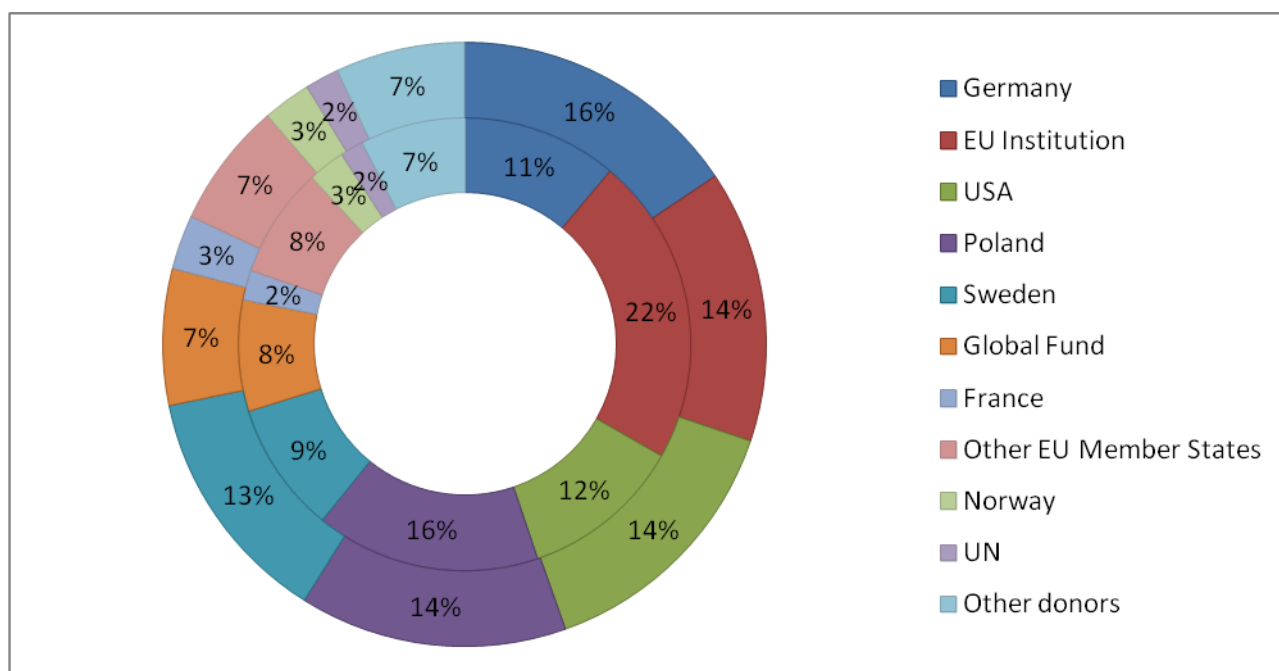
² See: *Karyna Shyla, Andrei Yahorau. Civil society's role and place in the system of the EU's donor assistance to Belarus*: http://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/File/Aid-Assistance-WD_EN.pdf; *Alena Zuikova, Andrei Yahorau. Civil society's role and place in the system of the EU's donor assistance to Belarus (2006-2012)*: http://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2014_Aid-Assistance-WD_2006-2012_EN.pdf.

³ See: *Alena Zuikova, Andrei Yahorau. Civil society's role and place in the system of donor assistance to Belarus (2006-2014)* (in Russian): https://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2016_Aid-Assistance-WD-2006-2014_RU.pdf.

Main donors of assistance to Belarus and the role of the EU

From 2006 to 2014, the total amount of donor assistance to Belarus was more than 1 billion USD (1037 million)⁴. Belarus receives development aid from more than 30 donors from all over the world (states, multilateral structures and organisations). However, **six donors shaped 80% of total aid amount during all the analysed years: Germany, Poland, Sweden, USA, EU Institutions and The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria** (see Diagram 1, outside circle). **More than half of aid to Belarus was allocated by the EU (Member States and Institutions).**

Diagram 1. Shares of main donors in the structure of assistance to Belarus, 2006-2014 (outside circle), 2014 (inside circle), %



⁴ All calculations of the aid volumes are carried out in the US dollars.



Role and place of the civil society

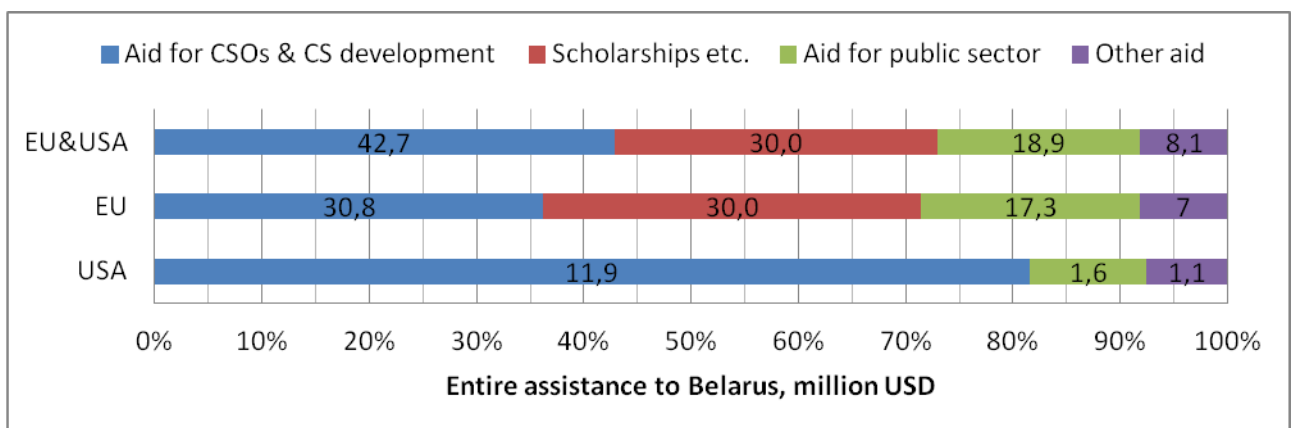
We understand aid to civil society as assistance to the areas of democratic participation, human rights and media and free flow of information. Let us emphasize that the assistance provided to these areas is not synonymic to the notion “aid to Belarusian CSOs”.

While looking at the role of civil society as a stakeholder that implements projects with financial support from donors, **we focus on donor aid that is provided directly to CSOs.** It means that the CSOs bear the responsibility for the use of money resources and have essential powers connected with the administration of these means and the definition of concrete ways of their use within the target frameworks. It should be noted that the CSOs implement projects not only on the civil society development areas but in other thematic spheres as well.

The results of the analysis allow disproving the popular opinion that the donor aid goes entirely to support CSOs and democratization. Indeed, supporting civil society is important priority for donors, yet not exclusive one, furthermore, share of aid to civil society development that the CSOs receive is actually small.

So, in 2014 share of support to civil society was 42% of entire aid from the EU and USA⁵ to Belarus (36% of EU aid — 30,8 million and 82% of USA aid — 11,9 million, see Diagram 2). It should be noted right away that not all these assets were given to CSOs to support civil society development: part of this aid supported CSOs’ activities in other thematic areas and other part financed civil society development activities by other stakeholders, this aspect will be detailed in the following. By comparison, donor support to Belarusians’ participation in European academic and other educational structures and projects (scholarships for studying at universities in donor countries, financing academic exchanges, activities of Western cultural centres in Belarus etc.) made 35% of entire EU aid to Belarus in 2014 (30 million).

Diagram 2. Breakdown by spheres of aid by USA and EU (Institutions and Members States), by EU and by USA, 2014, million USD, %



As for donor aid allocated to the Belarusian public sector (ministries, local authorities, public enterprises etc.), in 2014 the EU allocated roughly⁶ 17,3 million (20% of its entire aid to Belarus), USA allocated 1,6 million (11%).

⁵ In this document, we focus on these donors since they shape more than 80% of assistance to Belarus.

⁶ The exact evaluation is not possible because of clear references to the Belarusian government as beneficiary are missing in project descriptions in many cases.

Main donor is EU Institutions. So, most funds (almost 7 million) were allocated by the EU Institutions to the energy sector (within EU-UNDP programme “Supporting the Transition to a Green Economy in the Republic of Belarus”; projects in the areas of nuclear safety and energy efficiency). Privatisation and entrepreneurship development received quite significant support (more than 3 million were allocated by Austria and Sweden), as well as decentralization (2,4 million under EU-UNDP programme “Support to Local Development in the Republic of Belarus”). USA financed project in the area of SMEs development, supported WHO in its fight against tuberculosis and supported public and private higher education institutions (strengthening institutional capacities).

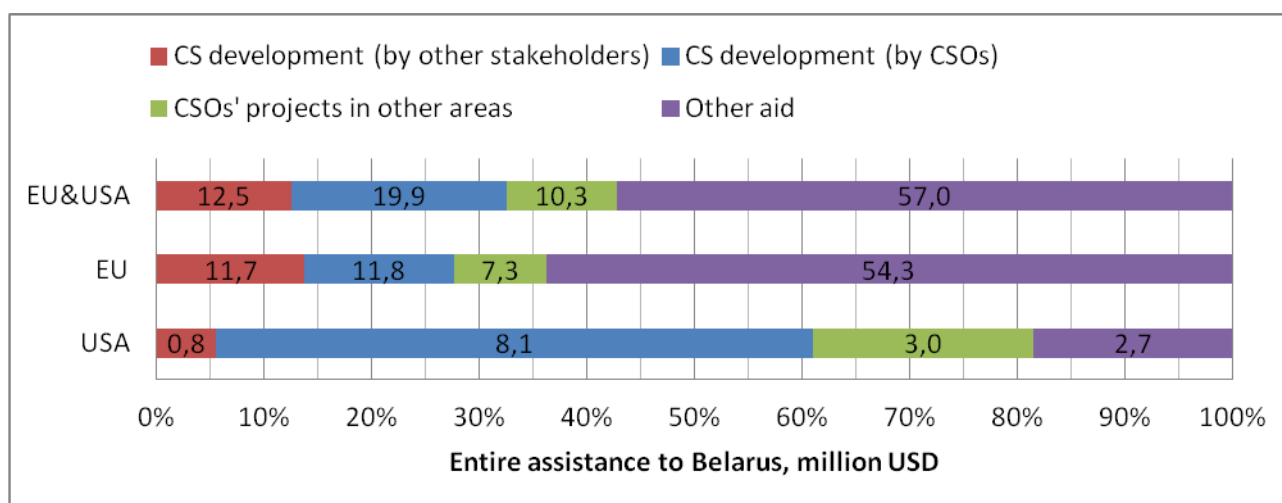
Now let us have a closer look on how donors support CSOs and civil society development in Belarus.

CSOs play significant role in implementing assistance to the civil society development, yet we consider important to stress that an **important part of support to civil society is implemented not by the CSOs but by other stakeholders** — donor governments, donor universities and research institutions, and by multilateral organizations. In the EU assistance their role is comparable with the role of CSOs: in 2014 the EU allocated 23,5 million to civil society development, only 50% of which (11,8 million) were implemented by CSOs (yet we should mention that during 2006-2014 the role of CSOs increased manyfold). In the USA assistance the role of non-CSO stakeholders is less important: the CSOs implemented 90% of the entire USA support to civil society development (8,1 of 8,9 million).

It should be noted as well that **CSOs implement projects not only in the civil society development area**. So, in 2014 the CSOs received support amounting to 19,1 million from the EU and 11,9 million from USA. As it was mentioned earlier **CSOs' activities aimed at civil society development were supported with 11,8 million by the EU and 8,1 million by USA**, and around one third of aid allocated to CSOs supported their projects in other thematic areas (food security, environment, services for vulnerable groups etc.).

From there, in 2014 assistance to CSOs in the area of civil society development was only 20% of entire aid to Belarus by EU and USA, 14% of EU assistance to Belarus and 60% of USA assistance to Belarus (see Diagram 3). It should be noted that often these are foreign CSOs that play main role in civil society development projects while the Belarusian CSOs are their local partners. It means that the role of Belarusian CSOs is possibly even smaller than that, but open data is not sufficient to estimate it.

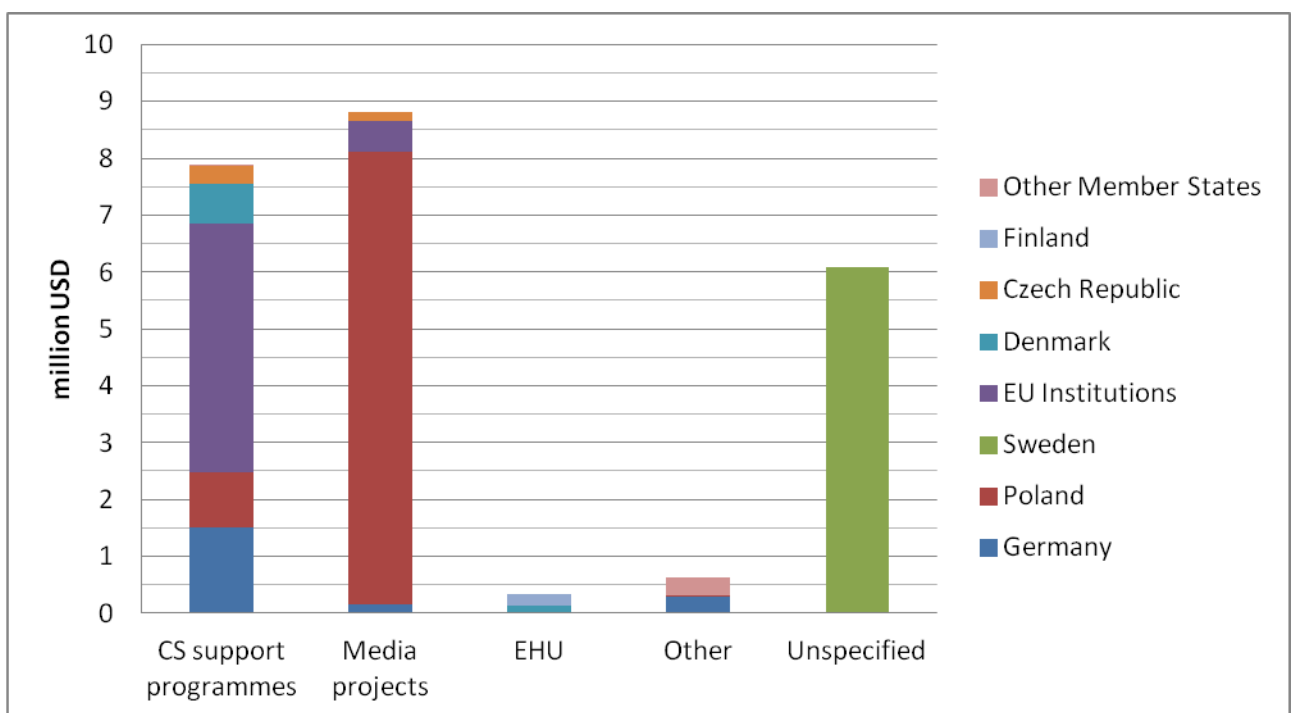
Diagram 3. Shares of different types of support to civil society in the entire assistance to Belarus by USA and EU (Institutions and Member States), by EU and by USA, 2014, million USD, %





Let us pay attention to concrete mechanisms of civil society support. **At least one third of EU support to civil society is disbursed via civil society support programmes** (see Diagram 4). The following EU donors have such programmes: **Germany** (Support Program Belarus — in 2014 there were 1,1 million allocated via this programme, Strengthening of civil society cooperation, Goethe Institute — 0,4 million); **Poland** (Support for Democracy programme by Solidarity Fund PL — 0,9 million and small grants by Polish Aid — 0,09 million); **EU Institutions** (CSO-LA, EIDHR, entire aid in 2014 amounted to 4,4 million); **Denmark** (Civil Society Programme 2012-2016 Belarus — 0,7 million); **Czech Republic** (Transition Promotion Program — 0,28 million), also Czech Republic and Slovakia contributed to **Visegrad Fund** (both allocated 0,02 million). Most probably, Sweden has such programme as well. Generally, projects within such programmes are implemented by CSOs.

Diagram 4. Types of civil society support by EU (Institutions and Member States), 2014, million USD



Noteworthy, financing foreign media projects falls under the category of civil society support: **Belsat TV channel** (6,5 million by Poland and 0,5 million by EU Institutions), radio stations **Euroradio** and **Radio Racyja** (1,5 million by Poland, 0,15 million by Germany and 0,17 million by Czech Republic). Support to these foreign media projects amounted to one third of the EU assistance to civil society in 2014.

Furthermore, some donors provide support to EHU considering it support to civil society development. So, Denmark and Finland contributed 0,13 million 0,2 million respectively to the EHU Trust Fund. Other donors support EHU within their aid to higher education (EU Institutions — 1,3 million, Lithuania — 0,3 million, Poland — 0,1 million).

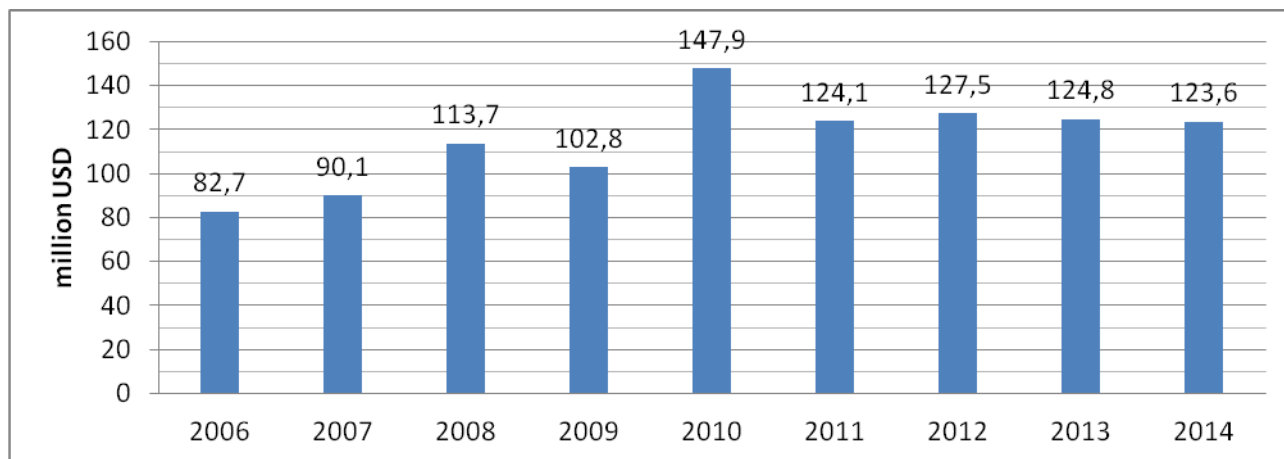
USA provide support to civil society through USAID Civil Society Development programme, including Community connections, NED grants for CSOs, US Embassy small grants.

Conclusion

In the light of analysis, we conclude that **Belarus has great potential to receive foreign development assistance but does take advantage of it.** This finding is based on several observations.

First, during 2011-2014 the amount of entire assistance to Belarus did not increase (see Diagram 5).

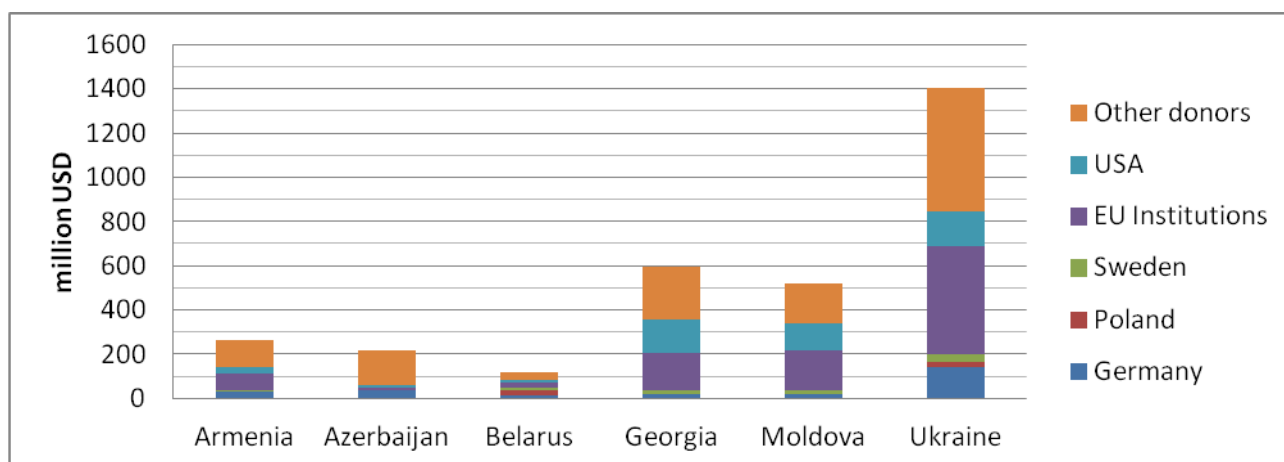
Diagram 5. Dynamics of amount of entire annual assistance to Belarus, 2006-2014, million USD



Second, donor aid is mostly concentrated in the areas that do not engage Belarusian government (education in Western universities, civil society). Donors provide assistance to public sector as well, yet the projects supported translate, generally, the development goals into financing enhancement of infrastructure.

Third, compared with other Eastern Partnership countries, Belarus receives quite few assistance. Although there are many factors that affect the amount of development aid (size of the recipient state and its population, geography, geopolitics etc.), in the Eastern Partnership region one of the most important factors is commitment to the democratic path. Therefore, the states where democratic reforms are more intense receive consequently much more aid from donors. The amount of development assistance to Moldova and Georgia is five times as big as that to Belarus, despite the fact that these countries are much smaller than Belarus and despite the fact that they are as geographically close to Europe as Belarus (see Diagram 6).

Diagram 6. Amount of development assistance to Eastern Partnership countries, 2014, million USD





Therefore, it is likely that donors reached some kind of limit of assistance they can allocate to Belarus without reforms. In light of this, Belarus could unlock its potential as assistance recipient only by initiating democratization reforms. Reforms in public governance would unleash donor assistance, first, in terms of support to building democratic political institutions. Second, opportunities to receive aid to infrastructure development would increase as well, also because of increased credibility of public bodies engaged in these projects, which could be reached through enhanced transparency.

Third, it is critical to underscore that the reforms would break new ground for increased support to civil society as well. Reforms would have positive impact on the CSOs environment allowing them to implement more far-reaching activities and to receive support more freely. Further, in light of transformations the opportunities for CSOs to participate in decision-making will increase, enhancing their role on national scene.

For more detailed analysis please consult the full report (available in Russian)⁷.

⁷ See: Alena Zuikova, Andrei Yahorau. **Civil society's role and place in the system of donor assistance to Belarus (2006-2014)** (in Russian): https://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2016_Aid-Assistance-WD-2006-2014_RU.pdf.

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The Center for European Transformation (CET) is an independent Belarusian think-tank founded in March 2010. The CET is a member of the EuroBelarus International Consortium.



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