



Social base of transformation programs in Belarus

Research report
(abridged version)

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Problem definition and research method

The necessary condition of democratic transformations in Belarus is the formation of a strong civil society that should fulfill three main functions: 1) to act as a full-fledged party of the dialogue aimed at defining the country development agenda; 2) to produce the environment of appearing and implementing innovations in the country's economic, technological, and socio-cultural development; and 3) to mobilize the intellectual and human potential so as to implement transformations.

In order to fulfill these functions, it is necessary: 1) to have self-determined subjects in the field of Belarusian civil society, which have their own program proposals and vision of necessary changes across the nation or in a concrete sphere; 2) to have a social base of support and distribution of these tenets and implementation of programs.

Despite all kinds of obstacles to civil society's development (the authoritarianism and repressiveness of the Belarusian state system, the absence of the political field in Belarus, the donor policy, the all-European tendency to institutionalize civil society in the form of NGOs changing the function of a source of public changes and civil control into a place in the fully formed sector structure of public-economic relations), today we can name a number of spheres where there are subjects of civil society, which have program tenets with regard to these spheres and Belarus as a whole. These are the following spheres: university and higher education; national identity and culture; ecology; the rights of socially vulnerable groups (the disabled, patients, women, etc.).

It is much more difficult to characterize the social base of implemented programs. It is obvious that the population of Belarus as a whole has a rather foggy idea of what civil society as a whole is and what its meaning, functions, and purpose are, of who concrete actors are and what programs and campaigns they carry out. It is necessary to admit that we have different empirical data in this respect. Thus, in the report on the results of studies carried out in 2014 by the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS) at the initiative of the International development organization *PACT*, it is said that "the number of citizens of Belarus, who know about activities of public organizations, namely — took part in actions and events of public organizations or received services from them", at the moment of the studies, was 52,1%¹. However, in the same report, it is said that in 2013 this indicator was 30,3%, i.e. during a year the share of those involved in activities of public organizations increased almost twice. In addition to quite natural doubts as to the possibility of so large-scale changes in such a short time, the concretization of this data demonstrates that here there is a different civil society — not the civil society that is the object of our attention and the object of our research. The authors of the studies write, "Among all kinds of public associations, citizens of Belarus are most familiar with the activity of official trade unions (62,1% — in 2014, 51,5% — in 2013, and 53,7% — in 2012)"². It is obvious that these official trade unions, which have practically not changed their essence from the Soviet period, have nothing to do with civil society — thus, this data tells us nothing about our object. The data of other researches does not help to get

¹ See: **Polling Memo: Belarusians' Awareness about Civil Society Increased from 30% to 52%**, International NGO *PACT*, 2014: <http://www.pactworld.org/sites/default/files/BRAMA2014Final.pdf>.

² Ibid.



rid of ambiguity either. The research carried out by the Center for European Transformation together with the Belarusian Institute of Strategic Studies in 2015 demonstrates a low potential of solidarity in Belarusian society and a rather low level of Belarusian citizens' public activity³. According to the research carried out in 2016 by the SATIO Companies Group, only 14,5% Belarusians know about the existence of human rights defending organizations in our country; the highest ratings of popularity of concrete organizations (in particular — Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Belarusian Association of Journalists, and Human Rights Center *Viasna*) reach only the level of 5-6%⁴.

As a whole, the data of various studies make it possible to characterize somehow the available level of Belarusian society's perception and civil activity, but provide not enough material for practical conclusions. It has to do not only with the complexities and restrictions of the technique and methodology of implemented researches, but also with serious theoretical lacunae in the perceptions of Belarusian society.

Today's condition of Belarusian society has not received any reasonable conceptualization yet. All attempts to use the available theories (theories of transit, of the middle class, of democratization; the postcolonial theory, etc.) in order to describe the structure and processes of transformations of Belarusian society do not lead to any success. "Success", as we understand it, would be such a perception of the social structure that not only allows one to explain the observable phenomena and happening events, but also can be a base to build strategies and to plan concrete actions within the framework of the implementation of social transformation programs.

In the conditions of this theoretical uncertainty, we shall use as a "creative hypothesis" the theory of "three worlds" developed by the Belarusian philosopher and methodologist Uladzimir Matskevich⁵. We shall try to describe some characteristics of Belarusian society proceeding from the perceptions described in this theory.

Uladzimir Matskevich builds his concept of dividing all countries and societies on the basis of such a criterion as the attitude towards innovations. The "first world" includes countries that produce innovations; the "second world" — countries that borrow and adapt them; the "third world" resists innovations and consequences of their introduction. It is said that the borders of these "worlds" do not coincide with the borders of national states and within one country, one state, there can live people belonging to different "worlds". The belonging of a country to one of these "worlds" is determined by orientations of its "ruling class". The second important dimension added

³ See: **Belarusian society's solidarity potential**. Research report (abridged version), Center for European Transformation, 22.12.2015: http://cet.eurobeltarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2015_Solidarity-National-Belarus-EN.pdf.

⁴ See: **Belarus: Public Opinion about Human Rights and Advocacy**. December 2016, *Freedom House*: https://freedomhouse.org/sites/default/files/FH_Belarus_HR_Sociology_Report_ENG_PRINT.pdf.

⁵ See, in particular: **Every Day Of A Belarusian**. Uladzimir Matskevich's report at the conference of Flying University and the Center for European Transformation "Imagining Belarus: images and ideas, projects and utopias" (Minsk, 11-12 April 2016), Flying University's YouTube channel, 14.03.2016 (in Russian): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=pG_RIKTCPOE; **The Future Of Belarus: forecasts, projects, dreams, and fantasies**. Uladzimir Matskevich's public lecture within the series of lectures of Flying University and the Center for European Transformation "Imagining Belarus: ideas and images for a joint future" (19 April 2016), Flying University's YouTube channel, 20.04.2016 (in Russian): https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=gztWF6KG_WU.

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by Uladzimir Matskevich proceeding from the context of the globalization processes, which cannot be excluded, as well as proceeding from the task of seeking for agents of development in Belarus, is the scale of self-determination, the border of the world, within which people build their individual plans and strategies, career trajectories, etc. The hypothesis is that the agents of changes who are interested in and can join transformation processes in Belarus are people or groups of people who, on the one hand, are aimed at producing and consuming innovations and, on the other hand, have a national scale of self-determination, i.e. those who plan to build their life (as well as their children's life) within the borders of the country.

An important factor of Belarus' development and the only possibility to occupy a worthy place in the global world is the presence in the country of the human resource belonging to the "first world", i.e. people who are in the forefront of the process of manufacturing and creating technological and social innovations, who possess the corresponding competences and the scale of vision. The problem is that such people are cosmopolitan more often than not when it comes to values and perceptions, as well as the way of life. As territorial criteria are practically losing their value in our high-mobility and more and more digitalizing world, people of the "first world" have "no binding to a place". Accordingly, they are not interested in questions of national politics and countries' problems as they exist in a world of problems, challenges, and transformations of another scale. Then, the next factor necessary for the country's development is the presence of "reformers" — people with a high susceptibility to innovations and, at the same time, with a national scale of self-determination. The third factor (the most problematic one) is the necessity of interaction between representatives of the "first" and "second" worlds with a view of the country's development; however, it is not so easy to cross the borders of the "worlds" — such interaction does not happen automatically.

We are far from the thought to translate at once this developed theoretical idea into the area of operationalization and empirical verification — the more so as the presence of different "worlds" in transformation processes is evaluated according to the presence of subjects who implement these or those strategies of activity and life. The task of our research is to describe Belarusian society from the point of view of the significant characteristics of this concept as a social base of support and implementation of actions in the logics of the "first", "second", or "third" worlds.

The research objective is to provide a substantial and quantitative description of Belarusian society as for the criterion of its attitude towards innovations and the self-determination scale.

The primary tasks of this research are:

1. To reveal the basic characteristics of the Belarusians' innovative behavior, susceptibility and tenets with regard to innovations and social transformations;
2. To describe the Belarusians' "self-determination loci": the borders of the world in which respondents feel "at home", as well as intercommunities and groups which they identify themselves with;
3. To analyze the link between the susceptibility to innovations with way-of-life characteristics as a factor that influences the degree of this susceptibility;



4. To analyze the potential and factors of the Belarusians' activity participation in transformation processes by describing their world outlook and socio-political tenets, as well as their experience of participation in the public-political life and perceptions of civil society organizations as the subject of transformations.

This research was carried out by the **Center for European Transformation**⁶ in **May-October 2016**.

The empirical material of this research is basically the data of the national sociological poll, which field stage was implemented by the **SATIO Marketing Studies Department**⁷ in **August 2016**.

The method of carrying out the poll is a **questionnaire of respondents** according to the place of their residence. The poll is representative for the population of Belarus starting from 16 y.o.

This research uses **the national multistage stratified sample**. The criterion of stratification of the sample is the size of a settlement.

At the last step of the selection, the route sampling with quotas control was used. Sex, age, and education were used as signs limited by quotas. The source of information on the population's socially-demographic characteristics limited by quotas was the data of the last population census and data books. The quota task is constructed in the way to represent the general totality (the population of Belarus) according to the specified parameters. Route restrictions were defined by settlement types.

In order to check the quality of the carried out field stage, the following was done: 1) telephone control of visited respondents (30% of the array); 2) control of the fillability of questionnaires (100% of the array); 3) logic control of the filling of questionnaires (100% of the array).

Having carried out all control procedures, culled, and weighed the data array, the achieved volume of the sample is 1,988 people — with the confidence coefficient of 95% it gives the confidence interval of maximum 2,2%*.

⁶ **Center for European Transformation**, see: <https://cet.eurobelarus.info>.

⁷ **SATIO Companies Group**, see: <http://satio.by>.

* The full version of research report is available in Russian, see: https://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2017_Innovation-Belarus-RU.pdf.

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Susceptibility to innovations in Belarusian society

The first essential measurement, which has to be done so as to come nearer to the achievement of the research objective, is to find out a person's attitude to innovations (in a broad sense of the word "attitude").

An individual attitude to innovations is a complex characteristic, which still requires elaboration and conceptualization. In this research, we have to be limited to an attempt of measuring such a characteristic as the susceptibility to innovations; due to the specificity of our tasks, we are interested in basically social innovations (innovations in the sphere of culture, education, information, social policy, people's ways of life) instead of material and technical inventions and innovations.

At the level of individual consciousness and behavior, the susceptibility to innovations, as we understand it, is an integrated characteristic that has two dimensions:

- 1) **Perception of innovations** (the understanding of innovations, evaluation modality, evaluation of risks, need of innovations);
- 2) **Innovative behavior** as participation in processes of manufacturing and consuming innovations (the real use of innovative products).

Perception of innovations

Analyzing the innovations perception character in our society, we try to describe:

- 1) **The attitude to innovations as a whole**, namely: the evaluation of their place in human lives and society, the modality of this evaluation, the understanding of risks and prospects of innovations;
- 2) **Possession of the information on topical innovations in technical and humanitarian sphere** (at the most general level — the thesaurus level).

The Belarusians' evaluated attitude to innovations — both technical and social — as a whole is rather positive. Evaluating of the ratio of advantages and risks of introducing technical innovations and inventions, the majority of respondents admits the positive influence of innovations on their life and the life of future generations, thus sharing more likely "progressive" than "conservative" attitudes.

Thus, two thirds of respondents think that the incipience of technical innovations and inventions "certainly" or "more likely" brings more advantages than harm. A very small part (4,5% in total) is inclined to think it results in a negative influence (see Table 1).



Table 1. Evaluation of the usefulness of technical innovations as a whole

How do you think the incipience of technical innovations and inventions as a whole brings more advantages or harm?	Number	%
Certainly more advantages	661	33,3
More likely — more advantages	661	33,3
Approximately equal advantages and harm	429	21,6
More likely — more harm	78	3,9
Certainly more harm	12	0,6
I find it difficult to answer	133	6,7
No answer	14	0,7

In spite of the fact that the aureola of science and technical progress has darkled during the latest decades, the Belarusians still highly appreciate their role in the creation of favorable conditions for human life. The overwhelming majority (84,8%) completely or more likely agree that science and new technologies create favorable possibilities for future generations; a bit less (69,9%) is the share of those who highly appreciate the role of new technologies in the creation of comfortable conditions for life directly “here and now”. Only 23% of pollees agree with the statement that “scientific and technical inventions make our life uneasy and dangerous”; however, it is necessary to notice that a quarter of respondents (25,7%) cannot evaluate these risks (see Table 2).

Table 2. Attitude to technical and social innovations, %*

Statements	Completely agree	More likely agree	More likely do not agree	Do not agree	I find it difficult to answer	No answer
Thanks to science and new technologies, more favorable possibilities for future generations will appear	36,1	48,7	4,7	1,2	9,1	0,2
Innovations in social and political life seldom lead to something good	5,6	20,0	35,4	15,8	22,8	0,5
New technologies make our life more healthy, easy, and comfortable	19,6	50,0	11,0	4,3	14,9	0,3
Society’s development requires from time to time rather sharp social and political changes	9,9	24,9	22,6	8,8	33,3	0,4
Scientific and technical inventions make our life difficult and dangerous	4,5	18,5	31,9	18,9	25,7	0,5

* Table is read rowwise.

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The degree of enthusiasm concerning social innovations is slightly lower, although here again the acceptance share is higher than the non-acceptance share. Thus, only a quarter of pollees agree to a greater or lesser degree with the statement that “innovations in social and political life seldom lead to something good”, while 35,4% — “more likely do not agree”, and 15,8% — absolutely do not agree with it. As for the necessity of sharp social and political changes when the situation requires them, respondents split up into three almost equal parts: 34,8% — agree to some extent that sometimes society’s development requires them; 31,4% — do not agree; and 33,3% — have no pronounced point of view in this respect (we notice that the share of those who cannot evaluate this judgement is the highest in this block).

Before that we dealt with the general evaluations and tenets at the level of opinions and declarations. Now we shall pass to the knowledge component and try to evaluate the possession of the information on actual innovations of a technical and social plan — at least, at the most general level: the knowledge of the most general words, the terms that mark these or those concrete innovations or innovative spheres in the technical and humanitarian field.

The list of innovative words we offered respondents of the research includes both really new and already known terms that we, nevertheless, consider innovative ones because they still mark the spheres where there are still social changes or intellectual work. The terminology we evaluated is taken from various spheres, but mainly from the sphere of social and cultural innovations connected with new forms of organizing time and space, education and employment, interaction of people with each other and with environment.

As the results of the poll demonstrate, except for the word “vyšyvanka” (Belarusian traditional embroidered shirt), which has become quite popular in Belarus within the last two years thanks to joint efforts of independent initiatives and state structures, the level of knowledge of other innovative words from social and cultural spheres is not higher than the 20% barrier. Innovative words from the technical sphere are known more — while those from social, labor, and cultural fields (even such as “freelance”, which exists for a long time in Belarus) have a rather limited circle of use (see Diagram 1).

If we translate the whole space of the knowledge of the innovative words into mark evaluations⁸ and if we try to evaluate all pollees’ size of their vocabulary, we receive the following: a little more than half are in the bottom third as for the level of their awareness of innovations (from 0 to 14 points), about a third — in the middle (from 15 to 29 points), and almost one tenth — in the highest third (from 30 to 45 points) (see Table 3).

⁸ We calculated the complex mark of the knowledge of innovative words as follows: at first, respondents’ answers received marks from 0 to 3 — where 0 — “I hear this word for the first time”; 1 — “I’ve heard this word, but I don’t know what it means”; 2 — “I’ve heard about it, but I’m not sure I understand correctly what it means”; 3 — “I know for sure the meaning of this term”. Then the points of all 15 innovative words were summarized. As a result, we received a complex mark of the knowledge of innovative words that changes in the range from 0 (complete nescience of all the proposed terms) to 45 (exact knowledge of all the proposed terms).



Diagram 1. Knowledge of innovative words, %

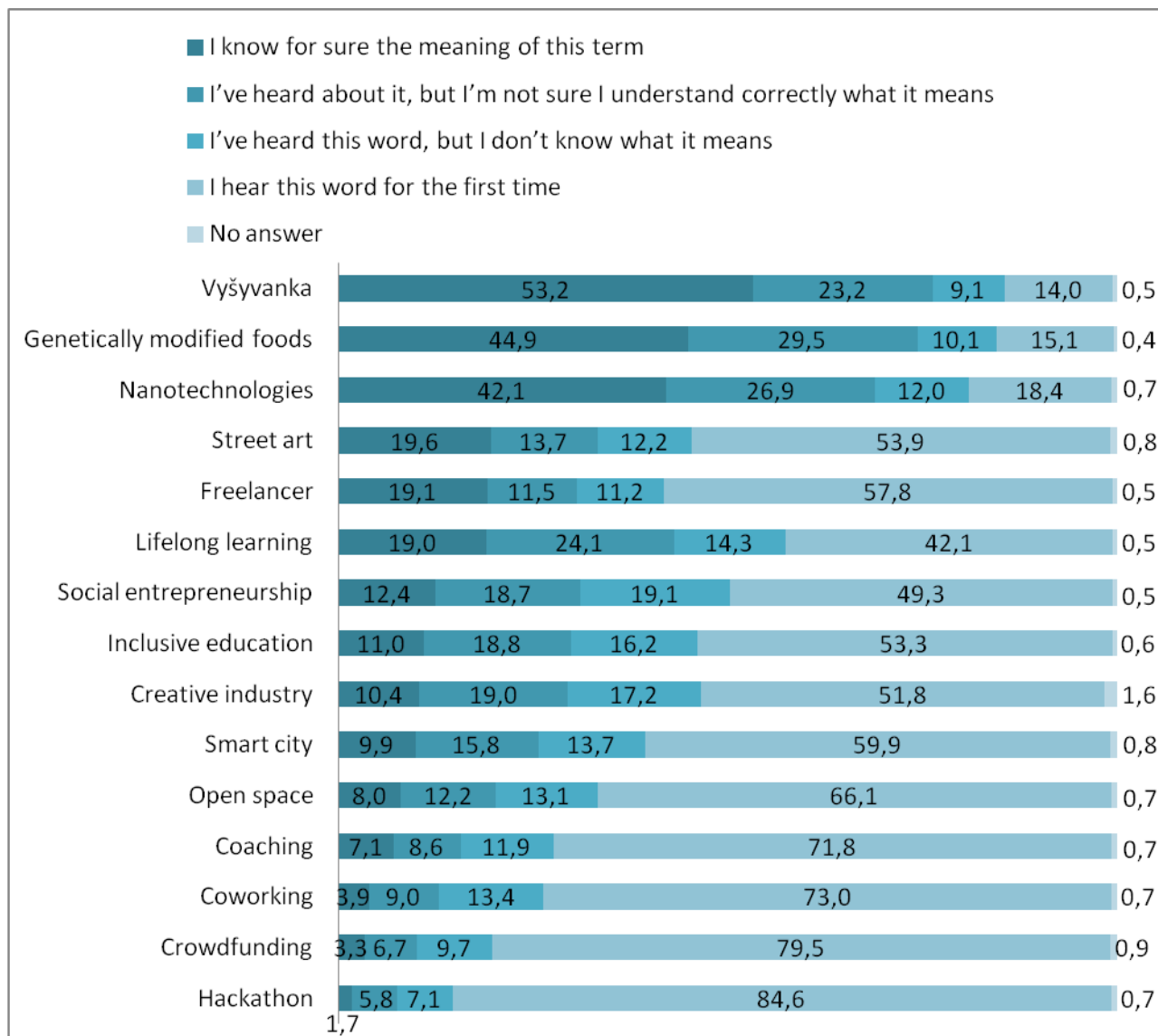


Table 3. Groups according to the level of knowledge of innovative words

Level of knowledge	Number	%
Low (0-14 points)	1077	54,2
Average (15-29 points)	648	32,6
High (30-45 points)	181	9,1
No answer	82	4,1
Total	1988	100,0

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Innovative behavior

In this research, the innovative behavior is evaluated according to the following characteristics:

- 1) **Disposition to consume innovations** as an orientation to reproduce habitual ways of consumption and activity or to use new ones;
- 2) **Intensity of practices of consuming innovations** of a social, cultural, or product character.

Dispositions to consume innovations are measured only in the sphere of product innovations, which is explained by restrictions of the research technique.

The poll data shows that a share of the Belarusians inclined to experiment in their consumption of goods and services is a little higher than the share of those who are not prone to change their consumer habits (see Table 4).

Table 4. Ratio of supporters of “conservative” and “innovative” strategies of consumption

What do you do more often when in the market there appears a new product (goods, service) that can replace the one you trust and have been buying for a long time?	Number	%
I prefer to keep buying the product I trust and not to try the new one	681	34,3
I will necessarily try a new product, at least once	949	47,7
I find it difficult to answer	354	17,8
No answer	4	0,2

The cost of an innovative product plays its role while decision-making, but not the defining one: thus, a share of the Belarusians who are ready to try something new (even if the price is much higher) and a share of those who are not ready to refuse habitual samples (without the dependence on costs) are comparable (see Table 5).

Table 5. Influence of costs on consumers’ tenets concerning innovative goods or services

In what case would you be ready to replace the goods or services you already use with new ones, more contemporary?	Number	%
Only if they cost the same	520	26,1
If the new product is only a bit more expensive	483	24,3
I’m ready to replace an old product with a more contemporary one even if it is much more expensive	227	11,4
In general, I’d prefer not to change the product I know for a new one	344	17,3
I find it difficult to answer	409	20,6
No answer	6	0,3



Now we shall look at real practices of participating in the consumption of innovations: technological, social, and educational ones. We shall begin with the use of the Internet.

It is clear that the use of the Internet itself cannot already be considered a characteristic of the innovative behavior; only 22,6% of pollees do not use the Internet (more 1,7% noticed that they do not know what it is), i.e. in Belarus it became a mass practice (the Internet is used every day by 52,4% of Belarusians; from time to time — 21,6%).

It is much more interesting the solution of what tasks the Belarusians use the Internet for and how diverse is the spectrum of possibilities of the network they use.

It is absolutely predictable that the most widespread variants of the Internet use are for communication with relatives and in social networks, to search for information and to read news, to watch and download music, films, and texts (see Table 6).

Table 6. Purposes and tasks for the solution of which the Internet is used

What do you use the Internet for?	Number	%
To communicate with relatives, colleagues, and friends through email, Skype, Viber, etc.	1141	57,4
To read news	997	50,1
To search for helpful information on the goods and services	837	42,1
To communicate in social networks	836	42,0
To watch and download music, films, and texts	659	33,1
To implement electronic payments, bank operations	359	18,1
To purchase the goods and services, electronic tickets, to book hotels, etc.	340	17,1
To search for and download computer programs and games	262	13,2
To listen to the radio and to watch TV programs	157	7,9
To sell the goods and services	153	7,7
E-learning	72	3,6
Other purposes	34	1,7
No answer	509	25,6

At the same time, almost every fifth respondent uses the Internet to implement electronic payments and bank operations and to purchase the goods and services (18,1% and 17,1% accordingly), more 7,7% — to sell the goods and services. A small, but perceptible part (7,9%) uses the Internet to listen to the radio and to watch TV programs. An absolutely small share (3,6%) uses the Internet for e-learning.

The most used ones in the sphere of services, which we consider rather new for Belarusian realities, are paid medical services (40,3% of respondents answered that they used them within the last year). On the second place as for their popularity are purchases of the goods on credit and home deliveries of products or meals — every fourth Belarusian used these services during the last year. Every tenth took credits in banks. Other services of more specific character (tutor services, nurses, etc.) are not demanded much.

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Due to specific research objectives, we were especially interested in innovations in the educational sphere, lifelong learning practices, the use of traditional and innovative forms of receiving additional education and self-development.

Within the framework of increasing professional education, the most used forms are refresher courses (12,1% of respondents said that they attended them within the last year) and one-time professional lectures, conferences, etc. (11%).

We shall underline that within the last year 5,8% of respondents were involved in independent, self-organized activities to receive professional skills.

Behind the frameworks of professional competences, the intensity of practices used for self-education is much higher. Despite apocalyptic forecasts that visual and Internet communications will supplant text communication and that the culture of reading will “decline”, the most part of the Belarusians (61,7%) still reads books and magazines. Almost a third uses educational TV and radio programs. Museums and libraries have almost the identical audience: 16,6% and 13,1% accordingly.

It is clear that these data say nothing about the content and depth of received knowledge and skills, as well as the motivation to receive them. Nonetheless, the fact that only 23% of respondents said that they did not use anything from the listed forms for self-education can mean rather a high degree of popularity, at least, of the ideology of self-education and self-development throughout all life. Still, the most widespread ones are more traditional forms of self-education: reading, TV, and radio. Only 7,3% of respondents within the last 6 months learned something by means of audio and video recordings; an insignificant part (2,9%) were trained online or studied e-courses.

It is impossible to say either that services of electronic libraries are highly popular — 13% of the Belarusians used them at least once during the last half a year (the audience of libraries and electronic libraries is almost identical; it is crossed only for a third — 4,8% of respondents are users of both traditional and electronic libraries). The share of visitors of open lectures, organizers and volunteers, who carry out social, cultural, and entertaining events, is near to the border of the sample error.

One more sphere, important from the point of view of the innovative behavior, is the sphere of labor employment. Almost a quarter of the Belarusians at least once in their life practiced these or those forms of employment and reception of incomes beyond the traditional forms of work. 8% of pollees noticed that they were freelancers; 6,6% have experience of working in public organizations; a little bit less — experience of conducting their own business (5,9%) and being a handicraftsman (5,3%).

Groups defined by the criterion of the susceptibility to innovations

Being based on the analysis results, we shall split for our further work all respondents in two groups that will set “poles”, “extreme cases” as for the criterion of the susceptibility to innovations. We shall put these groups as possessing high and low susceptibilities to innovations.



To determine these groups, we shall use three significant, from our point of view, criteria corresponding to different aspects of the word “susceptibility” (the general attitude, practical tenets, the information awareness and knowledge):

- 1) **Innovations perception modus** (positive or negative). To introduce this criterion, we shall use answers to the question, “How do you think the incipience of technical innovations and inventions as a whole brings more advantages or harm?” The respondents who answered “Certainly more advantages” or “More likely — more advantages” get in the group that we call “Susceptible to innovations”; those who answered “Approximately equal advantages and harm”, “More likely — more harm”, “Certainly more harm”, and “I find it difficult to answer” — in the group “Insusceptible to innovations”;
- 2) **Tenet to use product innovations**, i.e. the behavior in the sphere of consuming innovations. The criterion is built on the question, “What do you do more often when in the market there appears a new product (goods, service) that can replace the one you trust and have been buying for a long time?” Respondents who answered “I will necessarily try a new product, at least once” get in the group “Susceptible to innovations”. Those who answered “I prefer to keep buying the product I trust and not to try the new one” or found it difficult to answer this question — in the group “Insusceptible to innovations”;
- 3) **Knowledge of new words and phenomena in technical, social, and cultural fields**. Here, we use our complex evaluation of the knowledge of innovative words. We divided the whole sample in two parts with the help of the indicator of the average level of the knowledge of the words and terms we offered (which is 14,65 points). Respondents whose level of the knowledge of “new words” is above average (i.e. those who have from 15 to 45 points) get in the group “Susceptible to innovations”; those who are below average (from 0 to 14) — in the second group.

Thus, these groups are characterized by the following signs:

- **“High susceptibility to innovations”** (HSI) is attributed by us to the respondents who think that innovations and inventions bear more advantages than harm, who are focused to try something new, and who have a rather rich word stock of innovative words;
- **“Low susceptibility to innovations”** (LSI) is attributed by us to the respondents who do not think that the balance of advantages and harm from the introduction of innovations is positive, who prefer traditional consumer practices, and who are not aware of the terms characterizing today’s social, cultural, and technical innovations.

Let's notice that the condition of creating these groups is a combination of all the criteria — therefore, the numerical volume of the groups will be rather small; the majority of the sample remains as though “between” the two groups that set the sui generis “poles” on the continuous scale of the susceptibility to innovations (see Table 7).

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Table 7. Number of the groups as for the criterion of the susceptibility to innovations

Susceptibility to innovations	Number	Share in the sample, %
High	375	18,9
Between high and low	1296	65,2
Low	317	16,0
Total	1988	100,0

As a result of this classification, 375 respondents (18,9% of the sample total amount) are in the group with a high susceptibility to innovations (HSI); 317 (16%) — in the group with a low susceptibility to innovations (LSI). We will use these groups in the further analysis, considering various characteristics of Belarusian society. However, before that, it is necessary to describe the socially-demographic specificity of these groups so as to exclude incorrect interpretations of the connection of various practices with the variable “Susceptibility to innovations”, which we are interested in, because of the mediating influence of ascriptive signs.

The groups with the high and low susceptibilities to innovations essentially differ from each other as for the age and educational structures. The middle age in the HSI group is 34 years old; in the LSI group — 59 y.o. (the middle age of the sample — 43,5 y.o.). There are even more essential distinctions in the educational level — in the HSI group there are twice as less respondents with general education and much more — with higher and incomplete higher education. It is interesting that the share of respondents with vocational secondary education in both groups is almost identical and does not differ from the share of the sample as a whole (see Table 8).

Table 8. Socially-demographic characteristics of the groups as for the criterion of their susceptibility to innovations, %*

		Susceptibility to innovations		Average of the sample
		High	Low	
Sex	Men	44,3	45,6	44,9
	Women	55,7	54,4	55,1
Age, years old	16-24	28,5	2,3	17,8
	25-34	32,0	6,9	21,7
	35-44	13,3	7,8	11,0
	45-54	18,7	18,3	18,5
	55-64	3,5	19,3	9,9
	65+	4,1	45,4	21,0
Education	Elementary education, post-basic education	4,4	8,8	6,2
	General secondary education	26,3	51,6	36,6
	Vocational secondary education	33,9	35,0	34,3
	Higher and incomplete higher education	35,4	4,6	22,9

* Table is read columnwise.



As for places of residence, among respondents with the HSI, there are much more townspeople (86,5% against 61,8% in the LSI group), basically — at the expense of inhabitants of the capital and regional centers (see Table 9).

Table 9. Places of residence of respondents from different groups as for the criterion of their susceptibility to innovations, %*

Places of residence	Susceptibility to innovations		Average of the sample
	High	Low	
Cities with the population of more than 250,000 inhabitants (Minsk and regional centers)	49,8	34,4	43,6
Cities (from 100,000 to 250,000 inhabitants)	8,8	7,3	8,2
Cities (from 50,000 to 100,000 inhabitants)	9,4	3,7	7,1
Cities (from 10,000 to 50,000 inhabitants)	11,3	9,6	10,6
Cities (less than 10,000 inhabitants)	7,2	6,9	7,1
Rural areas	13,5	38,1	23,5

* Table is read columnwise.

Generalizations and conclusions

Summing up the analysis of the character of perceiving innovations in Belarusian society, it is necessary to mark the following:

1. The research data allow us to characterize the Belarusians' generalized perception of innovations more likely as positive. Two thirds of respondents (66,6%) think that the incipience of technical innovations and inventions brings more advantages than harm. A very small part (4,5%) is inclined to think it results in a negative influence.
2. Evaluating of the ratio of advantages and risks of introducing technical innovations and inventions, the majority of respondents admits the positive influence of innovations on their life and the life of future generations, thus sharing more likely "progressive" than "conservative" attitudes. The overwhelming majority (84,8%) completely or more likely agree that science and new technologies create favorable possibilities for future generations; 69,9% is the share of those who highly appreciate the role of new technologies in the creation of comfortable conditions for life directly "here and now". The comparison of perceptions of technical innovations in Belarus and the EU countries demonstrates that for the European space the level of the positive perception of technical innovations is higher (or that the EU inhabitants' attitude to innovations is more well-defined).
3. The analysis of the degree of respondents' acquaintance with the thesaurus of concrete innovations (mainly social ones) shows that a high level of the knowledge of the proposed innovative words is demonstrated by

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almost every tenth Belarusian (9,1%); about a third of respondents (32,6%) is in the group with an average level; a little more than a half (54,2%) is practically not familiar with the terms marking new forms of organizing time and space, education and employment, interaction of people with each other and with environment. The innovative words knowledge level has a distinct correlation with age, education, and places of residence.

4. As for the prevalence of “innovative” and “conservative” strategies of consuming the goods and services in Belarusian society, there is almost a balance: about 50% of pollees (47,7%) is ready to experiment in the sphere of consuming new goods and services. Every tenth Belarusian is ready to pay a higher price for the use of more contemporary goods and services.
5. The analysis of the intensity of the innovative behavior in the consumption sphere shows that technical and commodity innovations and services are more demanded than social and educational ones. In the “consumption” of education and culture, as well as in the sphere of employment and labor attitudes, traditional forms still essentially prevail over the new ones. Nevertheless, new forms of education and self-development practices (e-learning, use of video recordings, visits of public lectures, use of electronic libraries, etc.) gradually become popular, as well as various forms of employment (every fourth Belarusian at least once in his/her life resorted to these or those forms of labor relations that differ from traditional ones).
6. The use of the complex of criteria (general perceptions of innovations, practical consumption tenets, information awareness and knowledge of innovative words) allowed us to split all pollees in two groups with clear differences concerning their level of the susceptibility to innovations. The group with the high susceptibility to innovations (HSI) includes 18,9%; the group with the low susceptibility (LSI) — 16%. These groups essentially differ as for their age and educational criterion; the HIS group is much “younger” and “educated”; besides, in its structure, the share of townspeople is higher.
7. It is necessary to note a quite essential difference in the perception of technical and social innovations. The Belarusians more unequivocally and positively evaluate innovations of a technical character; social and political innovations act more as a problem. It is reflected in the perception modality, the level of knowledge, and the characteristics of the innovative behavior. This consistent pattern correlates with the general situation of innovative development in the global context. Intellectuals and analysts all over the world underline the delay of not only social innovations (as already implemented innovations), but also conceptualizations of social consequences of gustily developing technical progress, as well as risks that rise before the world community in this connection⁹.

⁹ E.g. see: *Serhiy Datsyuk, Social trends of the nearest future* (Translation from Ukrainian into Russian), Flying University, 27.01.2017: <http://fly-uni.org/content/socialnye-trendy-blizhayshego-budushchego>.



Locus of self-determination and peculiarities of self-identification

In this research, the self-determination locus is the borders of a territory within which a person builds his/her past, present, and future. For this research, three types of self-determination are important for us:

- 1) **Cultural-historical** (“East” or “West”);
- 2) **Spatial** (local (“localness”), national, global);
- 3) **Topical-political** (“Europe” or “Russia”).

The Belarusians’ cultural-historical self-determination

As for their cultural-historical self-determination, the Belarusians are still far from the unity of perceptions of themselves. The historical self-determination of Belarus at the level of mass consciousness remains extremely difficult. Almost a half of respondents did not manage to answer which part of the world — eastern or western — historically Belarus is. The others split practically fifty-fifty: 28,2% think that Belarus is part of the Western world; 23,4% — the Eastern one.

Meanwhile, the perception of today’s condition of Belarusian culture has absolutely another degree of definiteness and orientation, unlike historical self-determination — the overwhelming majority (almost three quarters of respondents — 73,7%) considers that Belarusian culture is closer to the Russian one, rather than to the European one. Adherents of an alternative point of view are in the obvious minority — only 7,4%. We shall also note rather a considerable share (17,8%) of those who consider Belarusian culture unique, not being part of either Russian, or European.

Combinations of historical and cultural self-determination are quite diverse. The most numerous group, a third of the population of Belarus, are people who cannot bring Belarus historically either to the “West”, or to the “East”, but consider Belarusian culture closer to the Russian one. The group of consistent “Westerners” as for historical and cultural self-determination is very small — only 3,6%, but there are not many consistent “Easterners” either — a tad less than 1/5 of all respondents (19,7%) (see Table 10).

Table 10. Variants of cultural-historical self-determination of respondents, %

In your opinion, Belarusian culture is closer to European or Russian?	In your opinion, Belarus historically is:			
	Part of the Western world	Part of the Eastern world	I find it difficult to answer	Total
To European	3,6	1,4	2,5	7,5
To Russian	21,0	19,7	33,8	74,6
Neither one, nor the other, it is a unique culture	3,7	2,5	11,7	17,9
Total	28,3	23,6	48,0	100,0

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Respondents are much more unanimous in the question of whether the Belarusian nation has established itself as a nation. Only a tenth part of respondents does not know if it is possible to call the Belarusians an independent, not failed nation; only 5% do not agree categorically with this statement, and 13,2% more — rather do not agree. The biggest part (71,4%) is ready with a bigger or smaller degree of confidence to say that the Belarusians are an established nation.

Among “encumbrances” that do not allow the Belarusians to consider themselves an independent nation, the first place belongs to economic independence — 12,7% of respondents mention it. Other factors (from external recognition to the questions of language, history, and the feeling of unity and integrality) have approximately equally 5-6% of those who think that the very absence of these conditions does not allow us to get established as a full-fledged nation (see Table 11).

Table 11. Factors of incompleteness of the Belarusian nation’s formation

What we lack?	Number	%
Economic independence	252	12,7
Achievements of the global level in science, culture, and economy	132	6,6
Attention to our history and culture	126	6,3
Other countries and nations’ recognition	108	5,5
Prevalence of the Belarusian language	103	5,2
Definiteness in the development direction	100	5,0
Feeling of unity, integrality	97	4,9
Outstanding personalities, opinion leaders, who could be role models for everybody	74	3,7
Something else	5	0,2
All is sufficient	1270	63,9
I find it difficult to answer	162	8,1
No answer	132	6,7

Group identifications as the characteristic of the scale and the self-determination locus

The diversity of cultural and geopolitical orientations is also reflected by the structure of respondents’ identifications. In this research, we used Vladimir Yadov’s classical technique of revealing group identifications; however, we almost completely refused types and a set of groups that are usually used in this technique. We did it because of our research objectives as we are interested not so much in the traditional set of identifications, which make the structure of a person’s social identity, but in the borders of the territory (physical, political, cultural) within which the Belarusians self-determine themselves today.

We used the following set of group identifications:



- **National** (the Belarusians) and **local** (inhabitants of my city, settlement, village);
- **Confessional** (Orthodox, Catholic, Protestant);
- **Cultural-historical** (Russian, European);
- **Geopolitical** (inhabitants of the post-Soviet countries, inhabitants of developed countries);
- **Cosmopolite** (all people on the planet).

Besides, in the list of self-identification criteria, we included the affinity “with the Soviet people”, considering it also as a type of socio-cultural self-determination, let with the phantom intercommunity which real existence remained in the past.

Self-identification as a Belarusian, whatever this word may mean in respondents’ perceptions (understanding), is on the first place as for the incidence; moreover, we practically have no negative self-identification (the share of those who “practically never” identify themselves with the Belarusians is insignificantly small — only 2%). Also strong is local self-identification, the affinity with “locals”: the inhabitants of one’s city, settlement, village (which we rather conditionally call “localness”) (see Table 12).

Table 12. Expressiveness of group identifications with various groups, %*

How often do you feel your affinity with different groups of people — with those about whom you could say, “It is “we”?	Often	Sometimes	Practically never	Hard to say	No answer
With the Belarusians	66,8	17,4	2,0	13,7	0,2
With the inhabitants of my city, settlement, village	53,0	26,6	4,7	15,4	0,2
With Orthodox Christians	43,3	25,3	10,7	20,3	0,3
With the Russians	38,9	26,8	15,1	18,9	0,3
With the Soviet people	25,6	18,5	22,8	32,7	0,4
With Catholics	23,2	27,5	21,2	27,5	0,6
With inhabitants of the post-Soviet countries	22,9	31,2	15,6	29,7	0,5
With Europeans	12,5	26,7	25,2	35,3	0,3
With inhabitants of developed countries	10,3	20,5	24,8	44,0	0,3
With all people on the planet	10,1	17,9	24,0	47,6	0,3
With Protestants	6,6	13,8	34,1	45,2	0,4

* Table is read rowwise.

The poll data confirms the sustainability of the self-identification with the Belarusians and the stability of local identity during the second decade yet. Thus, polls of the early 2000s showed that, although there was a difficult structure and dynamics of Belarusian identity components (civil, territorial, ethnic), already then the identification

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with the Belarusians was characteristic of the overwhelming majority of the inhabitants of the country¹⁰. At the end of the first decade of the 21st century, the identification with one's local community was already quite strong, too. Researchers marked, "Today, the presence of at least the following types of national Belarusian identity is empirically proved: <...> 3) localness ("we" — the group as inhabitants of our small native land, i.e. a village, a city, which is "frequently" chosen by a fifth part of the population)"¹¹.

The following pair as for the force of identifications among the proposed groups and intercommunities is the affinity with the Russians and with Orthodoxes. They are close to each other as for the prevalence of both positive and negative self-identification.

Strong enough is still the self-identification with the phantom intercommunity "Soviet people"; the self-identification with inhabitants of the post-Soviet countries is very close to it.

In general, the self-identification "with the Soviet people" throughout the first decade of the 21st century was considered by sociologists to be "disappearing". Although its prevalence fluctuated during this period within 15-25%, researchers underlined the "leaving" character of Soviet identity, being based on the fact that it was characteristic of representatives of senior age groups, respondents with elementary and incomplete secondary education, and inhabitants of villages, and that it should have disappeared from the structure of the Belarusians' social identity in "a natural way"¹².

However, recent polls demonstrate that the incidence of the identification "with the Soviet people", which in reality does not exist for already a quarter of the century, remains at the same level as at the very beginning of the 2000s when 23,9% considered themselves "the Soviet people" completely and 13,8% more — "in an average degree" (the absence of the comprehension of oneself as "a Soviet person" was underlined by 40% of pollees)¹³. In spite of the fact that in our research a bit different technique is used — it concentrates its attention not on "I-identification", but on "we" groups, the situation looks almost the same — a quarter (25,6%) of the population of

¹⁰ According to studies, in 2000, 68,9% "completely" realize themselves as the Belarusians and 15% more — "in an average degree"; in 2002 — accordingly: 79,3% and 12,5% (See (in Russian): *Lyudmila Naumenko, Ethnicity and citizenship in the consciousness of the inhabitants of contemporary Belarus*, Social and socio-cultural processes in contemporary Belarus: Collection of scientific works / National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Sociology Institute, Minsk, 2003, p. 199).

¹¹ See (in Russian): *Larisa Titarenko, Development of the national identity of the population of Belarus in the conditions of contemporary globalization and integration processes*, Interaction of sustainability and innovativeness in Belarusian society's development: Collection of scientific works / National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Sociology Institute, Minsk, 2009, p. 193.

¹² See, in particular (in Russian): *Ethnic and civil belonging in the perception of the population of contemporary Belarus*, *Lyudmila Naumenko, Tatiana Vadalazhskaya*, Minsk, 2006, p. 40; *Larisa Titarenko, Development of the national identity of the population of Belarus in the conditions of contemporary globalization and integration processes*, Interaction of sustainability and innovativeness in Belarusian society's development: Collection of scientific works / National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Sociology Institute, Minsk, 2009, p. 195-196.

¹³ See (in Russian): *Lyudmila Naumenko, Ethnicity and citizenship in the consciousness of the inhabitants of contemporary Belarus*, Social and socio-cultural processes in contemporary Belarus: Collection of scientific works / National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, Sociology Institute, Minsk, 2003, p. 199.



Belarus in 2016 “often” felt its affinity “with the Soviet people”, 18,5% more — “sometimes”, and only 22,8% “practically never” felt this affinity.

Thus, statistically significant distinctions of the expressiveness of the level of the Soviet self-identification in different age and educational groups have not been revealed. The share of carriers of this type of identity in senior age groups is a little higher; however, these distinctions are not essential (see Table 13).

Table 13. Identification with the “Soviet people” intercommunity in different age groups, %

How often do you feel your affinity with different groups of people — with those about whom you could say, “It is “we”?	Age, years				The average of the sample
	16-24	25-44	45-64	65+	
Often	23,1	23,2	27,0	31,2	25,7
Sometimes	19,4	18,9	18,8	17,4	18,7
Practically never	25,9	25,4	21,8	17,4	23,0
Hard to say	31,6	32,6	32,5	34,0	32,6
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

As for education, the biggest share of those who identify themselves as “the Soviet people” is in groups with post-basic education and higher education (*sic!*). The character of the connection between the level of education and the Soviet identification is not unequivocal, and the connection itself is rather weak — however, even the absence of differences in these characteristics looks quite eloquently (see Table 14).

Table 14. Identification with the “Soviet people” intercommunity in various educational groups, %

How often do you feel your affinity with different groups of people — with those about whom you could say, “It is “we”?	Education				The average of the sample
	Elementary and incomplete secondary education	General secondary education	Vocational secondary education	Higher and incomplete higher education	
Often	37,3	22,0	24,2	32,8	25,7
Sometimes	13,3	19,1	19,2	18,1	18,7
Practically never	20,5	22,0	25,2	20,8	23,0
Hard to say	28,9	36,9	31,3	28,3	32,6
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0

If to add to it the circumstance that 27% of townspeople “often” and 21,5% — “sometimes” feel their affinity “with the Soviet people”, whereas among inhabitants of rural areas there are 20,2% and 14,5% of such people accordingly, then it seems that we observe the process of the “Renaissance” of Soviet identity, which does not

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“leave” together with the senior generation, but gradually becomes “younger”, “more educated”, and “more urbanized”.

The answer to the question why sociologists’ forecasts concerning the “natural” dying of Soviet identity, which were made in the early 2000s, did not work, is simple enough. The official Belarusian ideology diligently broadcasts the Soviet samples and norms by glorifying and romanticizing the Soviet period, while the pro-European part of Belarusian civil society said too early that the de-Sovietization process was completed and concentrated its efforts on other things.

However, the activity aimed at disseminating the European values and at forming the Belarusians’ identity as part of the European one does not bring any visible results. The correlation and feeling of affinity with the Europeans and inhabitants of developed countries is still not widespread among the Belarusians: only 39,2% of respondents “often” or “sometimes” feel that they are part of the European intercommunity and about 30% — at least from time to time — associate themselves with inhabitants of developed countries. The dynamics of the Belarusians’ self-identification as Europeans in time also looks unfavorable for adherents of the European way of Belarus. If in 2000 — 17,7% of inhabitants of Belarus “completely” realized themselves as Europeans, then in 2016 — only 12,5% of respondents “often” felt their affinity with the this group. The negative self-identification level is much more lower in the research of 2016: only 25,2% of pollees answered that they “practically never” feel their affinity with the Europeans, whereas in 2000 — almost a half (47,3%) of pollees “did not realize” themselves as part of this group. However, the reduction of negative self-identification happens not at the expense of the growth of a positive one, but because in the technique used in the research of 2016 there was the variant “Hard to say”, which was chosen by more than a third of pollees. Unfortunately, due to different techniques of studying social identity, which are used in different researches, we cannot draw direct comparisons; however, even taking into account this circumstance, it is possible to say that for the last 15 years the level of “Europeanness” in the Belarusians’ self-identification has not changed essentially and remains quite low.

According to the research, the biggest distance in the Belarusians’ group self-identifications concerns Protestants — the affinity with this confessional group — at least sometimes — is felt only by every fifth inhabitant of our country; here, also, the highest indicator of negative self-identification is observed.

For a complex analysis of the structure of the Belarusians’ group identifications, we carried out a cluster analysis with the inclusion of all types of identifications, which were offered to respondents. As a result, we received four clusters comparable among themselves as for their fullness (16,6% of respondents are in the smallest cluster; in the most numerous one — 28,1%) (see Table 15).

Table 15. Fullness of clusters with a different structure of group identifications

Identification structure	Number	%
Uncertain	330	16,6
Local	549	27,6
East Slavic	558	28,1
Universal	511	25,7
No answer	40	2,0
Total	1988	100,0



A substantial interpretation of the structure of identity in the clusters is not quite unequivocal, although in all variables included in the clusterization process, coefficients of links between the cluster variable and the variables participating in the clusterization are high enough (Cramer's V-coefficient is above 0,45; distinctions are statistically significant).

Two groups we conditionally call groups with “uncertain” and with “universal” structures of group identifications represent two “inverse” cases. The group with the “uncertain” structure (16,6% of respondents) is characterized by the position “Hard to say” practically in all offered types of self-identification. The only groups, which representatives of this group feel a very weak positive link with, is the Belarusians, inhabitants of their settlement, and the Russians; there is practically no negative self-identification in this group. Another kind of uncertainty is demonstrated by the second group, which structure of identifications we named “universal” (25,7% of the sample volume). It is characterized by rather a strong degree of affinity practically with all groups in the questionnaire — with the Belarusians and the Russians, with Catholics and Orthodoxes, with the Soviet people, inhabitants of the post-Soviet and developed countries. The intensity of positive self-identification with different groups differs, but it prevails in all cases, except the identification with Protestants, which has a more difficult structure. Such universality can be interpreted differently; however, it is obvious that if we mean a political context this type of self-identification has in itself the same high degree of uncertainty as the structure of identifications in the first group. In this sense, it is possible to say that both groups have no priorities in the system of topical-political coordinates, although in the first case it has the form of uncertainty and in the second one — maximum “involvement”.

The two other groups are marked by a more selective structure of priorities. They are almost identical as for their number and have some common features; however, distinctions between them are also quite obvious.

The group, which structure of identifications we conditionally call “East Slavic” (28,1% pollees), is characterized by a high degree of positive self-identification with the Belarusians, the Russians, inhabitants of one’s city, village, and Orthodoxes. As for all other groups (except Protestants), they practically have no positive or negative self-identifications — the position “Hard to say” prevails in all parameters. While there is a vividly high affinity with the Belarusians, the Russians, Orthodox Christians, and “locals”, this group is characterized by a high degree of uncertainty in relation to the “Western world”, the post-Soviet countries, the Soviet people, etc.

At last, the group, which structure of group identifications we called “local” (27,6% of respondents), is characterized by rather high positive self-identification with the Belarusians and with inhabitants of one’s city, settlement, village; much weaker (sometimes weak positive, sometimes negative) identification with the Russians, Orthodoxes, and inhabitants of the post-Soviet countries; the prevalence of negative self-identification with all people on the planet, the Europeans, inhabitants of developed countries, as well as Catholics and Protestants. These are people who are engrained in locality — they look at all others with apathy and suspicion; still, for all of them the “eastern” vector is less unacceptable than the “western” one.

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Generalizations and conclusions

1. The question of historical self-determination remains the most ambiguous for the Belarusians' mass consciousness — almost a half of inhabitants of the country has no opinion concerning what part of the world — “eastern” or “western” — historically Belarus is; the others are split in two almost equal parts: 28,2% bring Belarus to the “Western world”, 23,4% — to the “Eastern” one. At the same time, in the topical-cultural plan, the correlation with Russian culture dominates: 73,7% consider that Belarusian culture is closer to Russian than to European.
2. This research data confirms the stability of Belarusian self-identification per se. It is proved by the fact that the most part of the Belarusians (71,4%) is sure to a greater or lesser degree that the Belarusian nation exists as independent; also, there is obvious domination of the identification with “the Belarusians” in the structure of group identifications.
3. The research results make us address again the question of the incidence and character of Soviet identity in our country, which in the early 2000s was considered to be “disappearing” by researchers. The comparison of the data shows that the quantitative expression of the identification with the mythical intercommunity “Soviet people” remains at the former level, but its characteristics have changed. On the average, carriers of Soviet identification become “younger”, “more educated”, and “more urbanized”.
4. With the help of the cluster analysis, four types of group identifications characteristic of the inhabitants of Belarus have been received: 1) “Uncertain” (16,6% of respondents) characterized by a high degree of uncertainty in relation to practically all groups offered for correlation; 2) “Comprehensive” (25,7%) characterized, on the contrary, by a high degree of affinity with the majority of the offered groups; 3) “East Slavic” (28,1%) — a high degree of affinity with the Belarusians, the Russians, Orthodox Christians, and “locals” and a high degree of uncertainty in relation to all other groups: the “Western world”, the post-Soviet countries, “the Soviet people”, etc.; 4) “Local” (27,6%), which representatives can be described as people who are engrained in locality — they look at all others with apathy and suspicion; still, for all of them the “eastern” vector is less unacceptable than the “western” one.
5. The analysis of the structure of the Belarusians' group identifications shows that it cannot be described as something that is uncontroversially within the habitual ideological and geopolitical oppositions and dichotomies; the distinctions in the identifications cannot be reduced to “western” or “eastern”, “progressive” or “revanchist” vectors. There are distinctions, more likely, in the plan of the presence or the absence of identifications of a wider order than “local” and “Belarusian”. I.e. the Belarusians differ from each other more likely not by their choice between “Europeans” and “Russians”, “inhabitants of developed countries” and “inhabitants of the post-Soviet countries”, but by the very fact of referring themselves to all these groups. Out of the four types, only carriers of “universal” self-identification have vividly expressed positive self-identification with supranational and global intercommunities, but — with all of them at once.



6. Distinctions of cultural-historical self-determination and structures of identifications in the groups set by the criterion of the susceptibility to innovations characterize the group with the high susceptibility to innovations as the one that is more focused on the “West” and “developed countries”, but the revealed links are too weak to be paid any serious attention. The obtained data does not allow us to speak about the presence of expressed connections between the susceptibility to innovations per se and the cultural-historical and topical-geopolitical self-determination of the Belarusians.

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Way of life and mobility

We understand a way of life as a certain way of human life or a group of people, certain regularity and qualitative specificity hidden behind a variety of displays and organizing them. Refusing the approach to a way of life as a derivative from a standard of living or belonging to already described and standardized social groups, classes, strata, etc., we should refuse the idea of describing the standard understanding of a way of life of these groups and the subsequent measurement of their conformity (e.g. “urban” and “rural” ways of life).

Complete and complex studies of a way of life are not among the tasks of this research; we will deal only with separate characteristics. Within the framework of perceptions of a way of life as a dynamic category, we shall try to construct an empirical dimension and description of ways of life existing in Belarus in the categories of:

- 1) **Space** where this or that way of life (geographical and social space, “every day of a Belarusan” (EDB) is implemented;
- 2) **Time** and **intensity** (a ratio in this or that way of life of free and necessary time, characteristics of rate, mobility, and rhythm of this or that way of life).

Spare time and “every day of a Belarusan” as a characteristic of a way of life

The very idea of interpreting the notion “way of life” through the topic of visited places and the title “every day of a Belarusan” are borrowed from an article of the Belarusan philosopher and methodologist Uladzimir Matskevich¹⁴, in which he discusses this theme. The characteristic of a way of life through the description of “each day” includes the revealing of space used by a person in the part of life, which in traditional approaches of conceptualization of a way of life concerns leisure. In Soviet and post-Soviet sociology, while describing a way of life, the categories “labor”, “household activities”, “leisure”, etc. were used. We will emphasize the category “spare time” — as a necessary condition for the existence of civil society.

Spare time, unlike “necessary”, “occupied” time, is understood by us as a time that a person can intelligently use to implement his/her interests and needs. In this respect, “necessary”, “occupied” time is not identical to “work” time and can include the time occupied by the implementation of necessary functions of non-labor character if they are routine (care of children or elderly relatives, performance of other social obligations). People, who do not have any spare time, have no chances to lead a full-fledged social and political life; the spare time resource is a paramount resource as for its importance for the existence of a developed and active civil society.

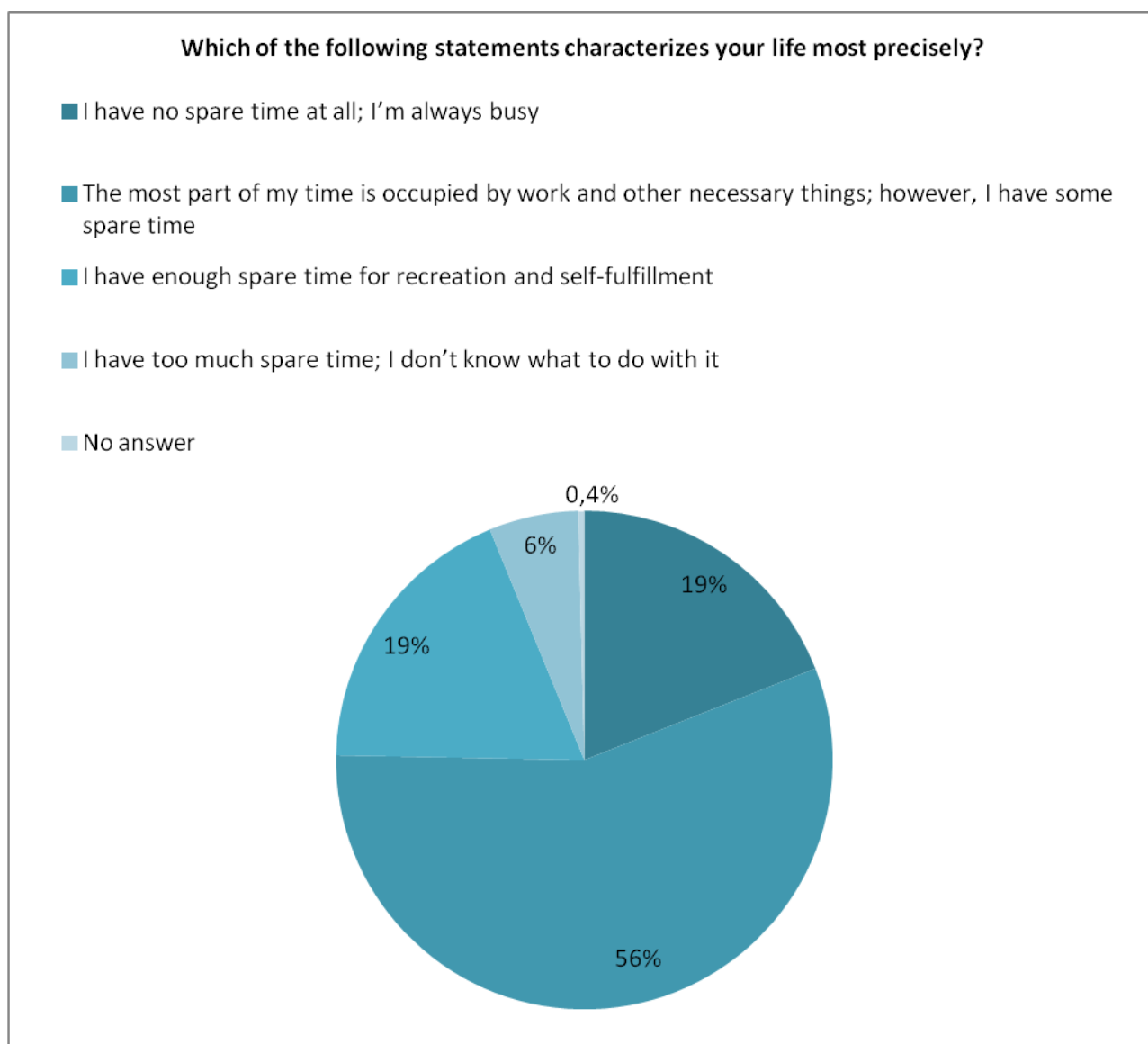
The poll data demonstrates that the Belarusans lack spare time, at least, according to their own evaluations. More than a half of respondents (56,3%) said that they have not much spare time; the most part of time is occupied by work and other necessary things. Approximately a fifth part (19%) of the Belarusans said that they have no spare

¹⁴ See (in Russian): *Uladzimir Matskevich, Don't Think Of A Rufous And Blind Duckbill*, Collection of articles / *Uladzimir Matskevich*, Minsk, 2011, p. 29-32: <https://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/65/58/Utkonos.pdf>.



time at all; and almost as many (18,5%) — that they have enough time for rest and self-actualization. At last, more 5,8% of pollees, in their own opinion, have too much spare time, so much that they do not know how to occupy it (see Diagram 2).

Diagram 2. Distribution of answers to the question on the presence/absence of spare time, %



It is clear that here we deal not with “real” spare time, but rather with one’s self-evaluation of the way of life as the one that allows or does not allow one to waste one’s time on unessential things.

How do the Belarusians spend their spare time? The most widespread way of spending spare time is to be with family (72,7%) and with friends (47,4%). The third place is “Rest, relaxation” (40,5%). Almost a third (30,8%) of the

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Belarusians spend spare time to work at dachas (summer houses) or garden plots. Less than a fifth part of the Belarusians (17%) dedicate their spare time to hobbies; 13,7% more — spend it with computer games and communication in the Internet; 7,4% — to go in for sports. At last, 3,4% of respondents said that they use their spare time to receive education, self-education, and a small number (0,6%) — chooses public work, volunteering, etc. as a way of spending their spare time.

The obtained data describes the Belarusians' way of life from the point of view of the availability of spare time and ways of its carrying out. However, the received description does not provide the completeness of understanding because, first, it is based on self-evaluations and, second, it does not allow us to fix a variety of forms of carrying out spare time, which are important for the description and understanding of a way of life, but which cannot be seized by traditional forms of questions on leisure, spare time, etc. In order to receive the complete idea, we asked respondents to fill the table, in which it was necessary to mark the actual frequency of their visits to these or those places, formats, events and actions. These "places" included places that have to do with leisure forms of carrying out spare time (such as cafes, restaurants, cinemas, circus, zoo, sports competitions and sections, etc.) and places that have to do with public (party meetings, meetings of public organizations), religious (church, mosque, synagogue), and educational (libraries, public lectures) activities.

If to turn the frequency of visiting various places, cultural and public institutions, events and actions, into an ordinal scale and to give points as the frequency decreases (the highest point is "7" corresponds to the frequency "more than once per week"; the lowest point is "1" — "only once"; the variant "never" is zero;) and to count an average score of each of the proposed places, it appears that the first place (as for the average value of the frequency of visits among the Belarusians) belongs to the dacha (summer house) — almost a half of the Belarusians (45,4% in total) goes to the dacha minimum once per week. Religious institutions (church, house of worship, mosque, synagogue; depending on one's religion) appear on the second place as for the frequency of visits. We shall underline a big gap between these two most visited by the Belarusians places — only 8,1% of respondents visit temples of their religion once a week and more often; about a quarter (25,5%) — at least, every month or a bit less often; 22,7% — 1-3 times per year (most likely, "during big holidays", i.e., conditionally speaking, Easter and Christmas).

Then, there are entertaining establishments: cafes, bars, cinemas, concerts or entertaining programs, restaurants (a third of the Belarusians (30,5%) visits them not every year; every fifth (21,5%) has never been there).

The frequency of visiting "cultural establishments" (libraries, theaters, museums) is consistently decreasing — about a third of the Belarusians has never been there; visited only once — 18,4% (library), 29,5% (museum).

With the identical average (quite low) frequency, respondents visit sports competitions and sections, as well as such more specific forms of leisure as the circus and the zoo (every tenth Belarusian (10,7%) at least once a year visits these places).

Participation in public life occupies the last place as for its intensity: three quarters (74,5%) of respondents have never in their life been at a meeting of a public organization, association of proprietors, etc. 90% — never participated in a meeting of any party. Less than a fifth part of pollees (18,9% and 18,4%, accordingly) visited at least once a club and a public lecture (see Table 16).



Table 16. Frequency of visiting various places, events and actions*

Places	More than once a week	Once a week	1-3 times a month	1-2 times a quarter	1-3 times a year	Less than once a year	Only once	Never	Average
Dacha	25,0%	20,4%	16,8%	5,8%	4,7%	3,8%	2,3%	21,3%	4,28
Church, house of worship, mosque, synagogue, etc.	2,3%	5,8%	10,4%	15,1%	22,7%	13,6%	9,5%	20,7%	2,68
Cafe, bar	0,9%	3,1%	11,9%	16,3%	19,6%	22,7%	11,9%	13,6%	2,66
Cinema	0,5%	1,5%	7,4%	11,6%	17,0%	29,7%	15,7%	16,5%	2,22
Concerts, entertaining programs, etc.	0,8%	0,8%	2,9%	9,2%	21,9%	29,3%	16,4%	18,8%	2,02
Restaurant	0,5%	0,7%	3,2%	8,0%	18,5%	30,5%	17,1%	21,5%	1,89
Library	1,1%	2,1%	5,4%	6,1%	7,6%	25,4%	18,4%	33,9%	1,63
Theater	1,0%	0,5%	1,1%	3,9%	11,8%	28,1%	24,1%	29,5%	1,46
Museum	0,2%	0,4%	1,7%	3,0%	9,9%	28,9%	29,5%	26,4%	1,41
Sports competitions (as a spectator)	1,0%	1,3%	2,8%	5,6%	11,0%	18,6%	14,9%	44,9%	1,36
Sports section, fitness classes, etc.	5,1%	4,3%	4,0%	3,0%	3,7%	10,5%	10,1%	59,4%	1,36
Zoo	0,1%	0,4%	0,8%	2,3%	7,1%	23,9%	36,3%	29,3%	1,21
Circus	0,2%	0,4%	1,2%	2,4%	6,5%	23,2%	35,0%	31,1%	1,20
Meeting of a public organization, association of proprietors, etc.	0,7%	0,6%	0,9%	1,6%	4,1%	7,9%	9,7%	74,5%	0,57
Clubs, circles	0,9%	1,1%	1,8%	1,6%	1,8%	4,9%	6,9%	81,1%	0,50
Public lecture, discussion	0,4%	0,5%	0,9%	1,6%	2,3%	5,3%	7,5%	81,6%	0,41
Party meeting	0,1%	0,3%	0,7%	0,4%	0,9%	3,2%	4,4%	90,0%	0,21

* Table is read rowwise.

The cluster analysis that included all data on places, events, and actions visited by respondents at leisure allows us to pinpoint only two groups differing as for this characteristic of a way of life (see Table 17).

Table 17. Number of clusters by the criterion of the frequency of visiting various places, events, and actions

	Number	%
"A moderate way of life"	1320	66,4
"An active way of life"	560	28,2
Missing values	108	5,4
Total	1988	100,0

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A more numerous group we conditionally characterize as a group with “a moderate way of life” is two thirds of the whole sample and differs from the second group (which way of life is also conditionally called “active”) not so much by different preferences, but rather by a smaller variety of forms of carrying out spare time. Among the visited places of this group, there are almost no such places as the circus and the zoo, museums and theaters, party and public meetings, clubs and circles, public lectures and discussions. The intensity of visiting other places of the sports-entertaining industry is also lower than in the second group, although differences are not so vivid here. These groups are united by the two indisputable “leaders” in the Belarusians’ way of life — dachas and religious institutions. The intensity of visiting these two “places” is almost identical in both groups.

Social-demographic characteristics of these two groups do not differ much. The analysis shows the presence of a weak (although significant if viewed through the general totality) connection between the degree of activity of a way of life and the age (in younger age groups, the share of those with “an active way of life” is higher; Cramer's V-coefficient = 0,242) and the place of residence (among townspeople, the share of those with “an active way of life” is 33,9%; among the rural population — only 17,5%; Cramer's V-coefficient = 0,154).

Social and territorial mobility as characteristics of a way of life

At the present day, mobility is one of basic characteristics; it is important to take it into consideration while analyzing almost all social processes and phenomena. Rates of changes both in the world of technologies and in the world of social norms and practices demand high variability and adaptability, constant readiness to move. The globalization of the labor and education market stimulates a high degree of professional and territorial mobility. The innovation “race” sets a system of factors of success — both individual and corporate, country, regional — in which a high degree of mobility is one of the major factors. Thus, social, professional, and territorial mobility per se is an important component of the innovative potential of a person or a country.

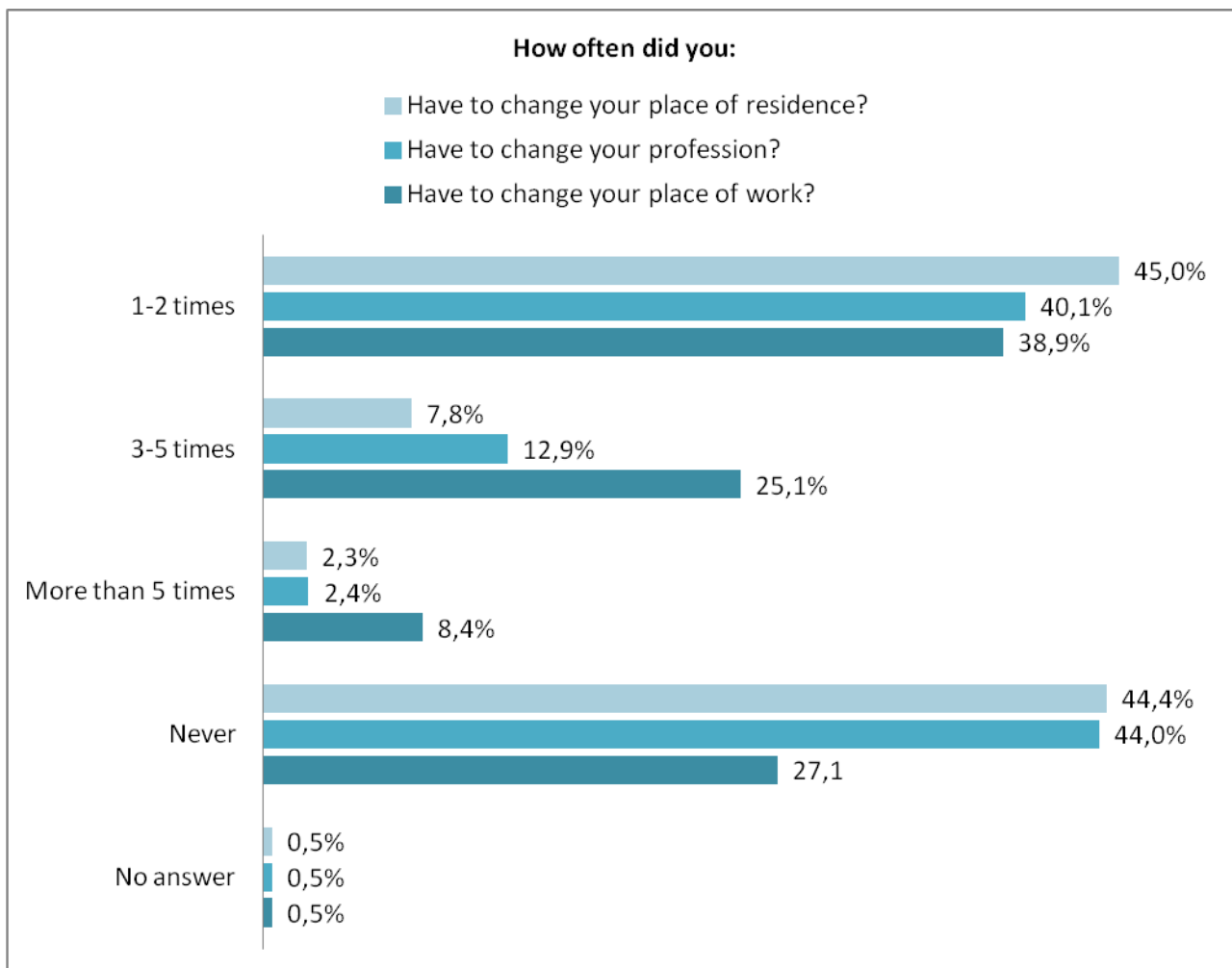
Considering mobility as a characteristic of a way of life, we assume that a frequent change of the place of residence, job, or field of activity, and acquaintance with other countries, form or correct a certain way of life; they are also connected with other characteristics important for research objectives: the susceptibility to innovations, the structure of identity, potential or actual public-political activity.

As a whole, the level of the Belarusians’ territorial and professional mobility is low. Almost a half of citizens of Belarus (44,4%) never changed their places of residence and 44% — their profession. The level of labor mobility is a little bit higher: only a quarter of respondents (27,1%) never changed their work places, 38,9% — changed 1-2 times and a quarter (25,1%) — 3-5 times (see Diagram 3).

Thus, during his/her life, every tenth Belarusian (10,1%) has changed places of residence three and more times; 15,3% — profession; almost a third (33,5%) — places of work.



Diagram 3. Territorial, professional, and labor mobility, %



One more important factor that influences a way of life is an experience of staying outside of the country. More than a half of pollees (59,6%) answered in the negative the question “During the last 3 years, have you been abroad?”

Here, the age dependence is directly opposite to the one observed during the analysis of territorial and labor mobility. During the last 3 years, about a half of respondents at the age from 16 to 44 have been abroad, while in the group from 45 to 64 y.o. only a bit more than a third (36,6%) has been abroad; in the group of 65+ y.o. — 16,5%.

The most widespread purpose of leaving Belarus is vacation, tourism: almost a quarter of the Belarusians (24,7%) used such a possibility for the last three years. The next widespread purposes are: shopping (10,7%) and visits to relatives or friends (10,5%). According to respondents’ answers, trips with working or educational purposes are not so widespread: only 5,5% mentioned working purposes; 2,2% — educational ones (see Table 18).

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Table 18. Purposes of leaving Belarus during the last three years

If you left Belarus during the last three years, for what purpose?	Number	%
Vacation, tourism	492	24,7
Shopping	213	10,7
Visits to relatives or friends	208	10,5
Business trips	71	3,6
Temporary or permanent job	38	1,9
Participation in training, seminars, conferences, etc.	30	1,5
To receive education at university abroad	15	0,7
Other	10	0,5
I've not left Belarus within the last three years	1185	59,6

“Planned” labor and educational mobility beyond the country’s borders is a little higher than the one existing now: 5% of pollees answered that during the next five years they plan to receive education in another country; 11,5% — to find a temporary or permanent job; 7,6% make even more serious immigration plans, planning to obtain citizenship of another country or to leave Belarus (see Table 19).

Table 19. Planned inter-country migration

Are you planning during the next 5 years:	Number	%
To receive education in another country	99	5,0
To find a temporary job in another country	149	7,5
To find a permanent job in another country	79	4,0
To obtain citizenship of another country	45	2,3
To leave Belarus	105	5,3
Nothing of the above	1582	79,6

It is clear that plans to receive education abroad is more characteristic of young people: 13,4% of respondents from 16 to 24 y.o. have such plans; in the group from 25 to 34 y.o. — 7,5%. In general, the 16-24 age group is the most focused on any mobility that has to do with trips abroad — here, the share of those who plan to leave Belarus so as to find a temporary or permanent job or to obtain citizenship is almost twice higher in comparison with the 25-34 y.o. group, which, in its turn, advances in these indicators the more senior ages. Only plans to leave Belarus forever unite these groups: about 9% of respondents younger than 34 y.o. plans to leave forever. Another question is whether these plans are implementable — however, even if they are just daydreams, these figures look not too consolatory.

The experience of being abroad supports plans of migration in the future. Practically in all kinds, except for education reception, among those who have been abroad during the last three years, the share of those who plan to find a temporary or permanent job, to obtain citizenship, or to leave forever, is 2-3 times higher than among those who have not been abroad. However, here the age can play its role — therefore, it is not right to unequivocally speak about cause-and-effect relations in this case.



Mobility indicators are connected with the characteristic of a way of life, which we described through the “every day of a Belarusan”, in very many different ways. In the group with an “active way of life”, indicators of territorial, professional, and labor migration are almost identical and sometimes even concede to indicators of the group with “a moderate way of life”. In case with inter-country mobility, the situation is different — its level among those who conduct an “active way of life” is considerably higher.

Way of life and the susceptibility to innovations

In this subsection, we shall see how the characteristics of a way of life analyzed by us differ in groups with different degrees of the susceptibility to innovations¹⁵.

There are essential differences between the groups as for the availability of spare time (Cramer's $V = 0,343$). Respondents in the group with a high susceptibility to innovations (HSI) have much less spare time than those in the group with a low susceptibility (LSI) (one should remember that here we deal exclusively with people’s self-evaluations and subjective perceptions of the degree of their busyness). Thus, in the LSI group, the share of those who have enough time for rest and self-actualization is almost twice higher than in the HSI group; the share of those who do not know what to do with their spare time in the HSI group is insignificantly small (1,1%), while among respondents with the LSI those are 15,8%.

There are even more essential distinctions between the groups as for the characteristic we conditionally named “every day of a Belarusan”, which describes the intensity of people’s visits to various leisure, cultural, educational, and political places, events, and actions. The share of respondents leading “an active way of life” in the HSI group is almost 5 times higher than those in the LSI group (Cramer's $V = 0,417$). As a whole, as for the intensity of a way of life, HSI respondents are split in two almost equal parts: a half of them conducts “moderate” and a half — an “active” way of life; while among LSI respondents — a “moderate way of life” is conducted by the overwhelming majority (88,6%) (see Table 20).

Table 20. Distribution of respondents with different degrees of the susceptibility to innovations as for the intensity of their way of life, %*

Clusters of a way of life	Susceptibility to innovations	
	Low	High
“A moderate way of life”	88,6	49,2
“An active way of life”	11,4	50,8

* Table is read columnwise.

The interrelation of the intensity of a way of life and the susceptibility to innovations proves logically and empirically the connection with the level of territorial and social mobility. Similarly to the way these characteristics are connected with the intensity of a way of life, the level of territorial, professional, and labor

¹⁵ See report chapter: “Groups defined by the criterion of the susceptibility to innovations”.

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mobility practically does not differ in the groups with high and low susceptibilities to innovations; moreover, HSI respondents are even a little bit more “settled” than the LSI group (however, this connection is very weak, although distinctions are statistically significant) (see Table 21).

Table 21. Territorial, professional, and labor mobility of respondents with different degrees of the susceptibility to innovations, %*

How often did you:		Susceptibility to innovations	
		Low	High
Have to change your place of residence?	Never	43,1	50,3
	1-2 times	49,1	39,2
	3-5 times	5,7	8,2
	More than 5 times	2,2	2,4
Have to change your profession?	Never	46,8	55,1
	1-2 times	40,2	32,2
	3-5 times	10,8	10,9
	More than 5 times	2,2	1,9
Have to change your place of work?	Never	26,3	38,0
	1-2 times	38,9	36,4
	3-5 times	27,2	19,4
	More than 5 times	7,6	6,1

* Table is read columnwise.

As for inter-country mobility, all is different here (Cramer's V = 0,494). The share of respondents who have been abroad during the last three years in the HSI group is almost 4 times higher than in the LSI group and is almost two thirds (66,4%) (see Table 22).

Table 22. Inter-country mobility of respondents with different degrees of the susceptibility to innovations, %*

Have you been abroad during the last three years?	Susceptibility to innovations	
	Low	High
Yes	17,2	66,4
No	82,8	33,6

* Table is read columnwise.

Respondents with the high susceptibility to innovations are also more inclined to plan trips abroad, but not to leave Belarus forever (see Table 23).



Table 23. Share of those who plan trips to other countries in the near future in groups with different degrees of the susceptibility to innovations, %

Are you planning during the next 5 years:	Susceptibility to innovations	
	Low	High
To receive education in another country	1,9	9,5
To find a temporary job in another country	5,3	9,3
To find a permanent job in another country	1,6	6,9
To obtain citizenship of another country	0,6	3,4
To leave Belarus	6,3	5,3

Generalizations and conclusions

1. Proceeding from the perception of spare time as a necessary (although — not sufficient) factor of the existence and development of civil society in the country, we have to constate a lack of this resource in the Belarusians' way of life. Only the fifth part of the Belarusians, according to their own evaluations, possesses spare time necessary for rest and self-actualization. But even the available spare time is used by the majority of the Belarusians for the things that are far from self-development and participation in political processes. The most widespread forms of carrying out spare time are communication with family and friends, relaxation, and dachas.
2. Among all places, events, and actions offered in the research, the "dacha" is in the lead, considerably advancing religious institutions and places of entertainment (cafes, bars, cinemas, concerts), which are on the second and third places. Thus, the most widespread venues of spare time are: "the summer house — church — to have a rest". Clubs, public and party meetings, public lectures and actions are visited by the Belarusians much less often than the circus and the zoo.
3. If the Belarusians' way of life can be distinguished somehow from the point of view of offered places, it can only be done with the degree of the general intensity of visiting them, but not according to any qualitative or specific characteristics. The cluster analysis divided respondents in two groups: those who lead "a moderate way of life" (66,4%) and "an active way of life" (28,2%). The social-demographic characteristics of these two groups do not differ much; there are no essential distinctions between them as for the availability of the resource of spare time, either.
4. The analysis of different types of mobility as a characteristic of a way of life shows that, as a whole, the level of territorial, professional, and labor mobility inside the country remains stable enough and rather low: only every tenth Belarusian (10,1%) changed a place of residence three and more times, 15,3% — profession, almost a third (33,5%) — a place of work. The same concerns the level of inter-country mobility: the most part of respondents (59,6%) during the last three years never left Belarus; trips abroad with educational and working purposes are not widespread. "Planned" labor and educational mobility abroad is a little higher: 5%

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plan to receive education in another country during the next five years, 11,5% — to find a temporary or permanent job, 7,6% — to obtain citizenship of another country or to leave Belarus forever. Inter-country mobility has an accurate age specificity; young people go abroad more and want to leave the country forever more.

5. The analysis of the level of mobility, depending on the intensity of a way of life (“moderate” and “active”), shows that the level of territorial, professional, and labor mobility in these groups is similar; as for the level of inter-country mobility — both actual and planned — distinctions between groups are essential and do not depend on the mediating factor of age. In all age groups of the cluster “Active way of life”, indicators of inter-country mobility are higher than in corresponding groups of the cluster “Moderate way of life”».
6. The analysis of characteristics of a way of life in groups with different susceptibilities to innovations shows that they differ as for the availability of spare time (respondents with a high susceptibility to innovations have much less spare time) and the intensity of people’s visits to various leisure, cultural, educational, political places, events, and actions: the share of respondents conducting “an active way of life” in the group with a high susceptibility to innovations (HSI) is almost 5 times higher than in the group with a low susceptibility to innovations (LSI). As for the characteristics of territorial, professional, and labor mobility, the groups do not essentially differ from each other, which cannot be said about inter-country mobility, which level in the HSI group is 4 times higher than in the LSI group.



Characteristics and factors of the Belarusians' participation in the country's political life

As characteristics of participation in political life, we shall consider a number of tenets, perceptions, and evaluations, as well as practical active involvement in these or those forms of social and political activity:

- **Tenets with regard to socio-political transformations** — an evaluation of the stage that Belarus has passed during the years of its independence; tenets on the transformation/preservation of the situation in various spheres; a definition of spheres where transformations are needed;
- **Political representation** — the presence of institutions and subjects that, according to people, represent and protect their interests. It is important to find out, who, from the point of view of respondents, represents their interests now, as well as the vision of who, in general, can carry out this representation. The task is to evaluate the place and role of different subjects (including civil society organizations) in real or potential relations of political representation of citizens and groups;
- **Experience of participation in political life** — we are interested in various kinds of such participation: from participation in various forms of solidary actions to the implementation of one's own initiatives.

As factors that influence the degree and forms of respondents' participation in political processes, we shall consider both traditional characteristics, which have to do with the social-demographic specificity, and intrinsic criteria the focus of our attention is concentrated on: the susceptibility to innovations, the structure of group identifications, and a way of life.

Socio-political situation in the country: an evaluation of the passed stage

During the last ten years, the time when the brand "Belarusian stability" was fixated in the official discourse and the "Belarusian quagmire" — in the oppositional one, according to inhabitants of the country, the most stable thing has been the political system: 45% of respondents think that nothing has changed here. In the evaluation of changes of the political system, there is the minimum number of both positive and negative evaluations: only 9,8% consider that something has changed for the better; however, deteriorations are marked by only 13% of respondents. The others notice the absence of changes or find it difficult to answer this question — the greatest number of those who found it difficult to answer is observed here. According to respondents, the condition of Belarusian culture remains "stable", too, — 40,7% of pollees have not noticed any changes over the last 10 years; still, here there are more positive evaluations: every fourth Belarusian (25,7%) thinks that in this sphere there are changes for the better.

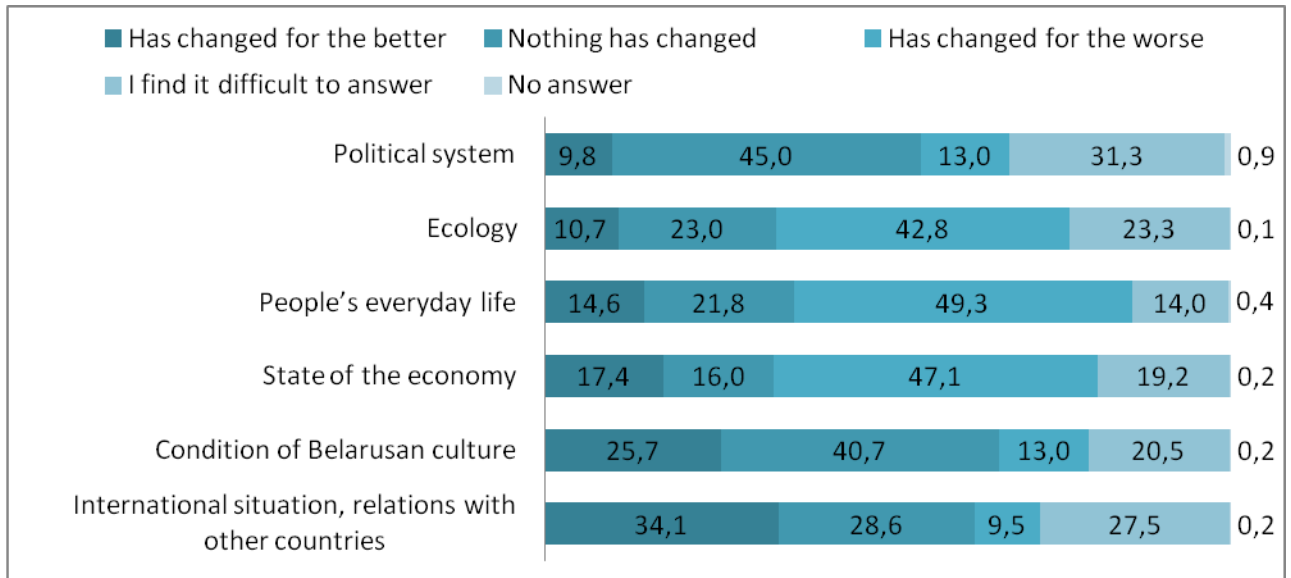
The Belarusians think that the biggest changes for the better during this period have happened in relations with other countries, the strengthening of Belarus' place on the international scene. Here, there is the biggest number of positive evaluations (34,1%) and the least number of negative ones (9,5%) (see Diagram 4).

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Diagram 4. Evaluation of changes in various spheres during the last 10 years, %



The evaluations of changes in the economy and in people's everyday life are very close — only 17,4% and 14,6% of pollees accordingly think that in these spheres something has changed for the better, while almost a half (47,1% and 49,3% accordingly) underline negative changes. One more “unsuccessful” sphere, from the point of view of changes, for the last decade, is ecology: only one out of ten Belarusians considers that here there have been positive changes, while 42,8% mark changes for the worse.

Social-demographic characteristics do not render a big influence on the evaluation of changes of life in different spheres. As a whole, it is possible to notice that respondents of an active age (25-64 y.o.) are more critical than youth and the senior age group, especially in their evaluations of changes in the economy and people's everyday life, as well as changes in the political system. As for education, the most “optimistic” is the group with incomplete and general secondary education (this connection correlates with the age because the most part of this group are pupils and students, or older people). There are practically no differences in evaluations of townspeople and villagers: townsfolk are a little more critical when they evaluate changes in the economy and everyday life; in the other spheres (including in the evaluation of changes of the ecological situation), their evaluations are rather close.

Distinctions in the groups with different degrees of the susceptibility to innovations have no system character; however, they are specific enough. In the group with a high susceptibility to innovations, changes in the economy are evaluated much more critically; changes in Belarus' international position — much more positively. At the same time, among respondents of this group, there is a bigger share of those who constate the absence of changes in the country's political and cultural life¹⁶.

¹⁶ Distinctions between groups, which reach 10%, are only taken into consideration hereinafter.

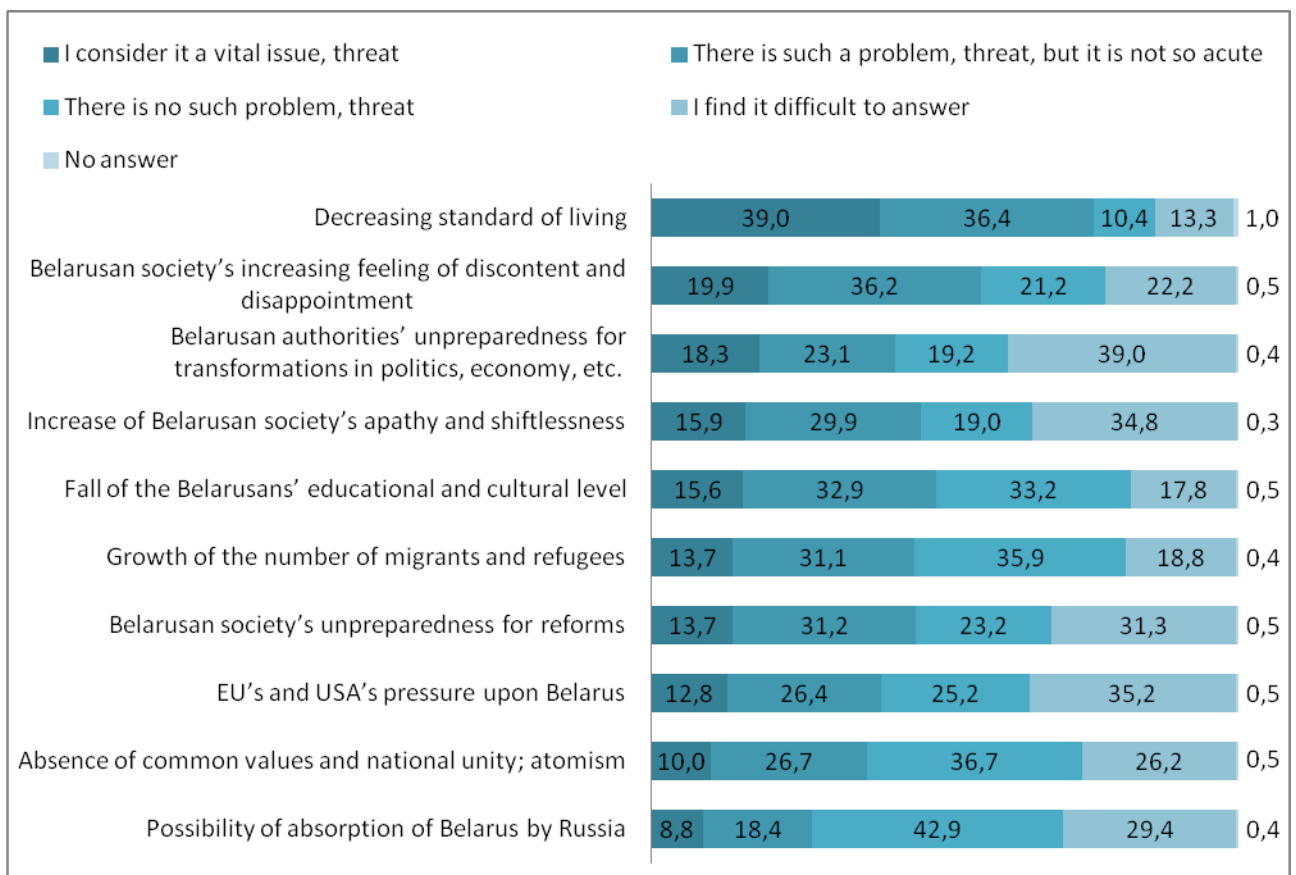


Evaluations of carriers of different types of group identities have some specificity as well. Carriers of “East Slavic” and “Universal” identities evaluate changes in all spheres of life over the last 10 years more positively. The group of carriers of the identity we call “Local” differs from others by the maximum share of those who constate the inalterability of political life in the country and most negatively evaluate changes in people’s everyday life. The group with the “Uncertain” identity differs from others only by big shares of those who found it difficult to answer.

Evaluation of the current state of affairs and tenets on the transformation/preservation of the situation

In the list of problems and threats, which are topical for Belarus today, the sharpest one, according to the Belarusians, is the problem of the decreasing standard of living: 39% called it essential — and almost as many (36,4%) admit the presence of this problem, but do not think it is very acute. Probably, in connection with this problem, the problem of Belarusian society’s increasing feeling of discontent and disappointment is perceived as topical (see Diagram 5).

Diagram 5. Evaluation of Belarus’ topical problems and threats, %



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Problems and challenges that have to do with the external context appeared on the periphery of public consciousness; Russia's threat to Belarus' independence is at the tail end of the rating of problems; the Belarusians do not think that the absence of common values and national unity in the country is a vital issue. According to respondents' evaluations, a more serious problem is the pressure upon Belarus from the EU and the USA, although this threat is far from the "top" of the most topical ones.

As we see, the standard of well-being and economic problematics remain the most topical in mass consciousness. From the Belarusians' point of view, the most effective way of solving economic problems is to develop economic relations with Russia. However, it is necessary to underline that this idea is not so widespread as one may expect — less than a half of respondents (47,5%) called it a way of coming out of the economic crisis. The second popular variant is to create conditions for the development of business and entrepreneurship (39,1%); then — to develop economic relations with the EU (35,9%). A quarter of the Belarusians (27,4%) supports the simultaneous development of economic relations with both Russia and EU (see Table 24).

Table 24. Respondents' perceptions of necessary measures in order to come out of the economic crisis

In your opinion, what steps Belarus should make within the next year so as to start coming out of the economic crisis?	Number	%
To develop economic relations with Russia	945	47,5
To create effective conditions for the development of small business and entrepreneurship	778	39,1
To develop economic relations with the EU	714	35,9
To increase the size of allowances, privileges, pensions	609	30,7
To support state-run enterprises that are in a difficult situation	573	28,8
To weaken state regulation in the economy	238	12,0
To strengthen state regulation in the economy	228	11,5
To return to ironclad regulation of the national currency rate	171	8,6
I do not think that Belarus is in a crisis situation	65	3,3
Other	8	0,4
I find it difficult to answer	343	17,2
No answer	4	0,2

The balance of supporters of measures aimed at overcoming the economic crisis, which are borrowed from planned and market economies, is almost equal. Thus, 12% of pollees support the weakening of state regulation in the economy and practically as many (11,5%) — the strengthening; 39,1% — to create conditions for the development of small business and entrepreneurship and a little bit less (30,7%) — to increase the size of allowances, privileges, pensions, and almost as many (28,8%) — to support unprofitable state-run enterprises.

Perceptions of how to overcome the crisis tell us about respondents' orientations on this or that type of economy and state administration. The data analysis demonstrates that these preferences have rather an accurate age specificity: with the increase of respondents' age, the level of support of such measures as the increase of the size of allowances, privileges, and pensions is growing (from 20,3% — in the younger age group of 16-24 y.o. — to



48,6% — in the group of 65+ y.o.) and, on the contrary, there is decreasing support of such measures as the development of economic relations with the EU (from 43,1% to 23,1% accordingly), the creation of conditions for business development (from 41,9% to 22,4% accordingly), and the weakening of state regulation in the economy (from 15,3% to 1,9% accordingly). The level of support of such ways of overcoming the crisis as the strengthening of relations with Russia, support of unprofitable state-run enterprises, the strengthening of state regulation in the economy, and rigid regulation of the national currency rate does not depend on age.

The higher the educational level is, the more the support to the strengthening relations with the EU is (from 18,1% in the group with initial and incomplete secondary education to 44,7% — in the group with higher education) and with Russia (from 38,6% to 52,9% accordingly), the creation of conditions for business development (from 15,7% to 53,8% accordingly), and the weakening of state regulation in the economy (from 3,6% to 21,3% accordingly), while the support of such measures as the introduction of allowances and privileges is less (from 47% to 26,1% accordingly). In comparison with villagers, townspeople are more inclined to support business development (43,2% against 27,8%) and the weakening of state regulation (14,1% against 6,6%).

It is notable that if the support of transformations in the economy, which have more likely a market character, has rather an accurate connection with social-demographic characteristics, then steps and measures, which reveal the adherence to the planned economy (the support of unprofitable enterprises, state regulation of the economy as a whole or of the exchange rate), without dependence on the incidence, do not depend on them.

This consistent pattern remains during the analysis of distinctions between the groups as for the degree of their susceptibility to innovations. In the group with a high susceptibility to innovations, the level of supporting all market measures, as well as the development of economic relations with Russia and the EU, is considerably higher. Still, between the two groups, there are practically no differences in the level of supporting steps within the logic of the planned economy (see Diagram 6).

At last, one more characteristic of the tenets on the transformation or preservation of the situation is a common generalized orientation on the preservation or change of the situation in the country. The share of respondents who think that it is important personally for them to change the current situation is almost twice as higher than those who prefer to preserve the status quo (44,2% against 23,2%). The high share of those who found it difficult to answer (31,3%) is traditional for this kind of questions.

The share of those who support changes in the age groups of 16-24 y.o. and 25-45 y.o. is growing with an educational level increase (see Diagrams 7-8).

The urban population does not deny any traditional social consistent patterns either and has a smaller degree of conservatism than the rural one (see Diagram 9).

However, the biggest distinctions are revealed in the criterion of the susceptibility to innovations (Cramer's $V = 0,237$). More than a half of the group with a high susceptibility to innovations supports the transformation of the situation, while less than a third supports it in the group with a low susceptibility (see Table 25).

Also, there are more supporters of changing the current situation in the groups with “Universal” (53,7%) and “East Slavic” (47,9%) identities (see Table 26).

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Diagram 6. Support of measures aimed at overcoming the economic crisis in the groups with different susceptibilities to innovations, %

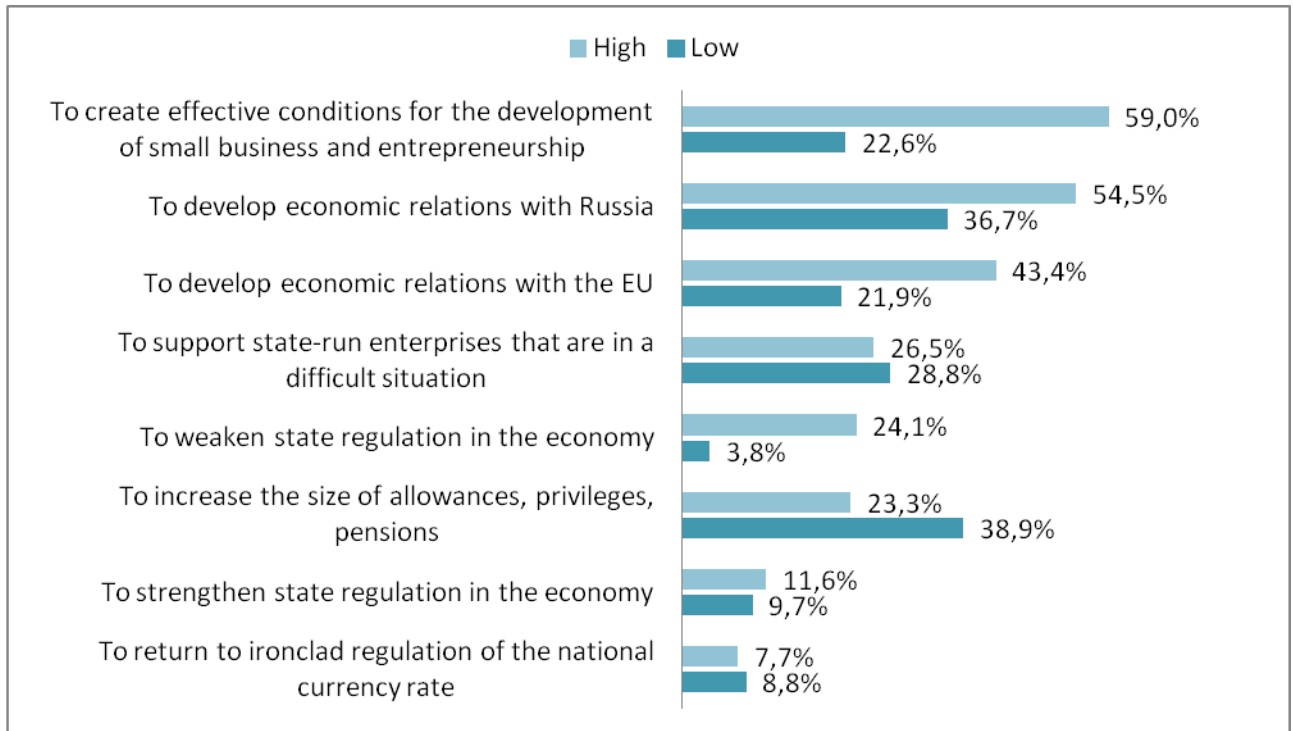


Diagram 7. Tenets on the preservation or change of the situation in the country in age groups, %

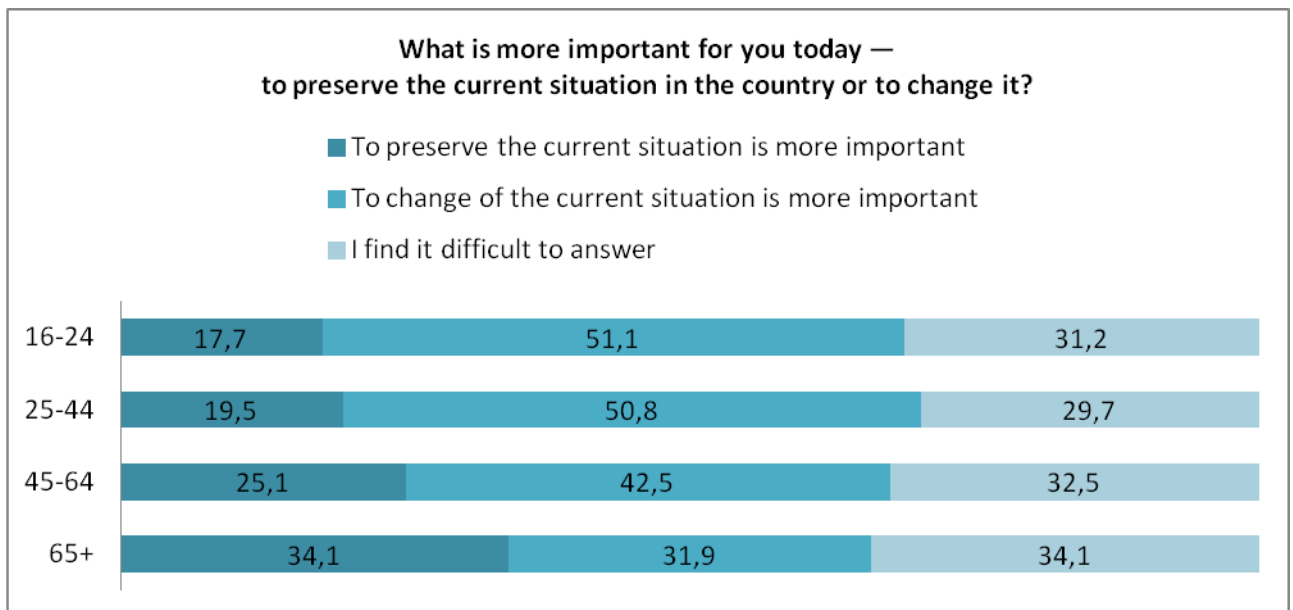




Diagram 8. Tenets on the preservation or change of the situation in the country depending on the educational level, %

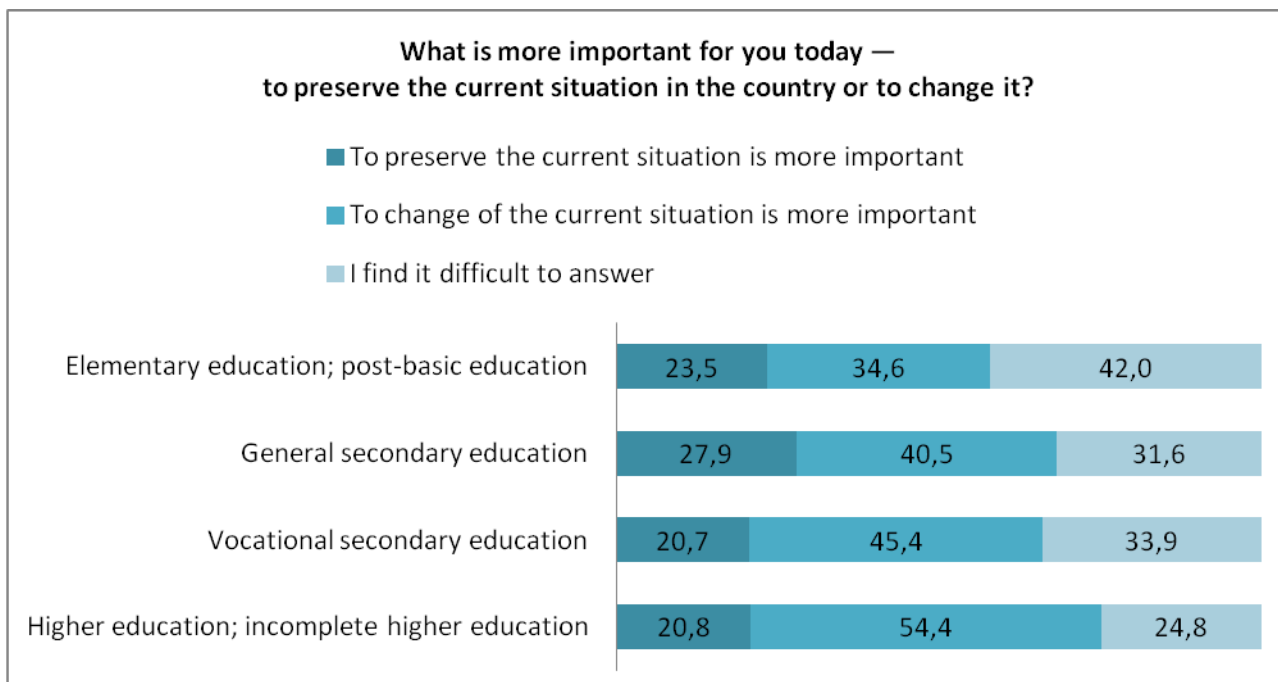
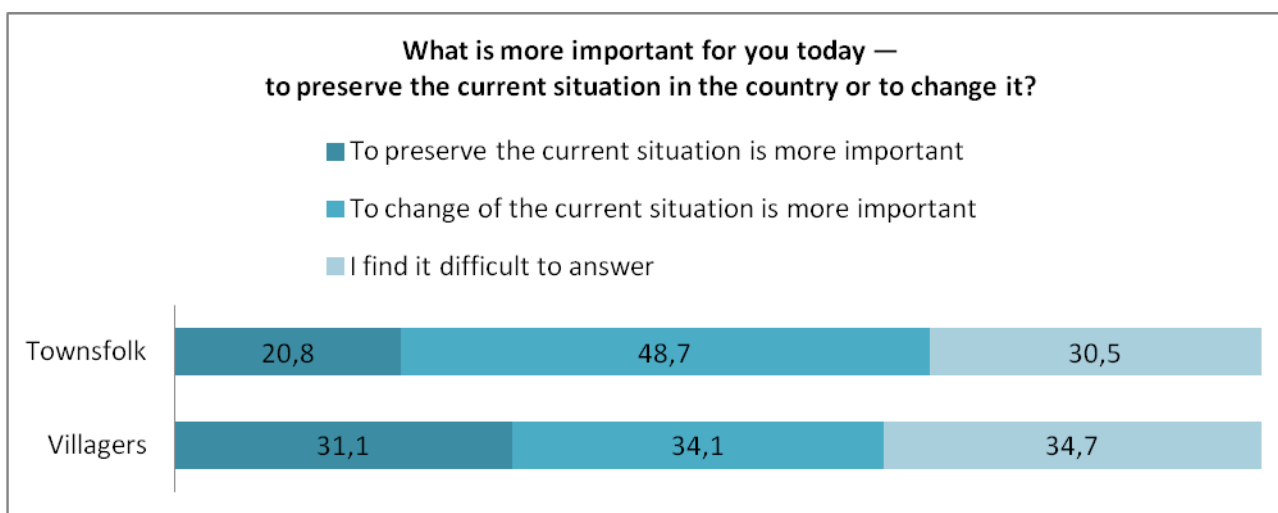


Diagram 9. Tenets on the preservation or change of the situation in the country among townfolk and villagers, %



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Table 25. Tenets on the preservation or change of the situation in the country among respondents with different degrees of the susceptibility to innovations, %*

What is more important for you today — to preserve the current situation in the country or to change it?	Susceptibility to innovations	
	Low	High
To preserve the current situation is more important	27,9	19,0
To change of the current situation is more important	30,1	53,6
I find it difficult to answer	42,0	27,3
Total	100,0	100,0

* Table is read columnwise.

Table 26. Tenets on the preservation or change of the situation in the country in groups with different types of identifications, %*

What is more important for you today — to preserve the current situation in the country or to change it?	Structure of group identifications			
	Uncertain	Local	East Slavic	Universal
To preserve the current situation is more important	20,8	28,9	21,0	23,0
To change of the current situation is more important	37,3	38,5	47,9	53,7
I find it difficult to answer	41,9	32,6	31,1	23,4

* Table is read columnwise.

Political representation

The purpose of this subsection is to describe the structure of the Belarusians' views on who represents their interests at the political level, what structures and institutions express their opinions and defend their interests. The data of numerous studies demonstrate that Belarusian society thinks that an individual cannot influence anything and that nothing depends on him/her even at a local level, let alone at the national level¹⁷. However, the question "Who represents your interests at the national level?" was answered "Nobody" by only 15,6% of

¹⁷ Thus, according to a poll carried out by the SATIO Companies Group in June 2016 at the initiative of the international NGO *Pact*, 99% of the Belarusians think that they cannot influence the state policy and decisions of the authorities at both local and national levels (See: **The State of Belarus' Society: Civic Literacy Test**, International NGO *PACT*, February 2017: http://www.pactworld.org/sites/default/files/Belarus_Civic%20Literacy%20Test_Memo_English_Final.pdf).



respondents. A quite considerable part (27,6%) found it difficult to answer this question, which can be considered “Nobody” (if we treat it in the logic of any delegation of power). Still, the most part of Belarusian citizens identifies in the actions of these or those institutions and structures the representation of their interests. The leader in this question is, of course, the president of the country — almost a third of the Belarusian population (32,6%) considers him a representative of their interests. The second and third places belong to deputies of local councils (17,5%) and deputies of the National Assembly (13,3%). The mass media, public organizations, and opinion leaders have the similar rating of around 7-8%; political parties are in the end of the list of “political representatives” (see Table 27).

Table 27. Respondents’ perceptions of who represents their interests at the national level

How do you think, who represents your interests and the interests of people like you at the national level?	Number	%
The president of the country	647	32,6
Deputies of local councils	349	17,5
Deputies of the National Assembly	265	13,3
Mass media, journalists	166	8,4
Public organizations	151	7,6
Separate people, opinion leaders	134	6,7
Political parties	79	4,0
Someone else	6	0,3
Nobody	310	15,6
I find it difficult to answer	548	27,6
No answer	5	0,2

Popularity of concrete subjects in society is defined by the social capital and potential of influence of these subjects, possibilities to implement their programs and actions, although these are not the only and even crucial resource. In the Belarusian situation, when independent CSOs are marginalized, have limited access to broadcasting and communication channels, as well as the stigma of the “fifth column”, it is rather difficult to count on wide popularity of concrete organizations. Nonetheless, we decided to try to measure the level of popularity of some organizations and civil initiatives. The list includes several largest NGOs (Belarusian Helsinki Committee, Belarusian Association of Journalists, Assembly of NGOs, Human Rights Center *Viasna*, Green Alliance, *EuroBelarus* International Consortium), intellectual initiatives and initiatives in the sphere of education (Flying University, Belarusian Collegium), and a number of young, but intensively developing initiatives (Public Bologna Committee, Office of the Rights of People with Disabilities, *Mova Nanova* Belarusian language courses, *Budźma bielarusami!* cultural campaign, Talaka.by).

The poll results were predictable enough — less than a third of the Belarusian population know about the most well-known of the listed organizations — the Belarusian Association of Journalists; only 5,7% know “what it is and what it does” — the rest (23,4%) only know about its existence. The popularity of human rights defending, ecological, and intellectual initiatives is approximately at the same level. Perhaps, we expected a bigger level of popularity of wide civic initiatives like *Budźma bielarusami!* and *Mova Nanova*, but their level of popularity happened to be at the general rather low level, too.

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Besides, not the last places in the rating, if we wanted to make it, are occupied by nonexistent organizations invented by us only for this research — the Creative Ideas Platform (2,2% of pollees know what it is and what it does, and more 12,4% “heard this name”) and the Ecological Way (2,1% and 10,9% accordingly). It means that we cannot be sure of the received ratings as it is quite possible that people who answered questions reacted to beautiful words or false memories, or marked organizations automatically without thinking.

Questions-traps (names of nonexistent organizations) were put by us in the questionnaire in order to increase the adequacy of interpretation of the received results. The methodical approach in this case is to exclude from the analysis the respondents who answered that they know about the activity of the nonexistent organizations, thus raising the “competence level” of the sample. Certainly, it does not mean that it provides the full adequacy of the evaluations of the remained respondents, but we did not find a different way of correction.

Thus, the subsample of “competent respondents”, i.e. those not “trapped”, is 1,588 respondents (i.e. 79,9% of the whole sample). The distribution of answers in this subsample shows that the awareness of the organizations offered for an evaluation fluctuates within the sampling error, which was slightly overcome only by the Belarusian Association of Journalists (see Table 28).

Table 28. Level of popularity of civil society organizations and initiatives among “competent” respondents, %*

Name	Yes, I know what it is and what it does	I’ve heard this name, but I know nothing about their activity	It’s the first time I hear about them
Alternative Youth Platform	2,0	10,5	87,6
Assembly of NGOs	1,0	8,1	90,9
Belarusan National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum	0,9	8,3	90,7
Belarusian Association of Journalists	2,8	15,4	81,8
Belarusian Helsinki Committee	1,5	8,1	90,4
Belarusian Collegium	1,1	7,8	91,1
Budźma bielarusami!	0,6	7,6	91,8
Green Alliance	0,6	5,0	94,4
Flying University	0,4	2,2	97,4
<i>EuroBelarus</i> International Consortium	0,8	4,2	95,0
Mova Nanova	1,4	4,9	93,7
Public Bologna Committee	1,2	6,5	92,3
Office of the Rights of People with Disabilities	2,2	9,4	88,4
Human Rights Center <i>Viasna</i>	1,1	2,1	96,8
Talaka.by	1,9	10,5	87,6

* Table is read rowwise.



The conclusion is simple and deplorable: the overwhelming majority of Belarusian citizens knows nothing about activities of independent NGOs and civic initiatives, and this level of awareness (or rather ignorance) practically does not depend on either duration of activity, or character of an organization, or sphere of its activity.

However, besides the conclusion on the level of popularity of concrete organizations, it is also important for us to constate that when we deal with the data on the level of trust in public organizations, a share of people who think that public organizations represent their interests, etc., we can hardly apply this data “to ourselves”, to the circle of the organizations we consider the “real” “third sector” in Belarus. The research carried out by the Center for European Transformation in 2012, dedicated to the perception of the topic of human rights in Belarusian society¹⁸, showed that we have the widespread absence of elementary literacy at the level of basic perceptions (e.g. when the human rights defending activity is confused with the activity of law enforcement bodies or members of the bar). It is necessary to admit that at the level of mass perceptions the Belarusians understand public organizations as something unknown to us, which obviously has nothing to do with the cluster of the organizations and initiatives we mean when we speak about public organizations.

One more significant parameter, which can be considered to be influencing the potential of the Belarusians’ support to these or those initiatives and programs of civil society organizations, is the topicality of these or those topics that are significant for processes of transformations (respondents were also offered to compare several common topics concerning the innovative sphere).

In the rating of topics to be evaluated, the “top 5” as for the interest degree includes: “medical discoveries that will increase life expectancy” (79,3% of respondents are interested in this topic), “new ways of prophylaxis and treatment of oncological diseases” (72,6%), “the history of Belarus, the preservation of the historical and cultural heritage” (71,2%), “climate change” (68%), “computerization, the development of the Internet” (63,7%). On the periphery of mass interest, there are: gender problematics (the topic of equality of rights of men and women interests only 41,2% of respondents and the same number is not interested in it at all; we shall say that it is the highest “negative rating” in this question); such a quite specific topic as the formation of Belarusian identity (nevertheless, 37% demonstrate a certain interest in it); and changes in the educational system in connection with the Bologna Process (24,8%). We shall underline that the Bologna Process for a half of the Belarusians is the absolute terra incognita: 52,8% of pollees have never heard anything of it (see Diagram 10).

Among respondents with a high susceptibility to innovations, the interest in all offered topics is expressed more strongly — however, the strongest distinctions concern the topics that have to do with computerization and the Internet (Cramer's $V = 0,611$), the use of alternative energy sources (0,444), the Bologna Process (0,384), and the formation of Belarusian identity (0,354). A similar, but weaker connection is observed with the criterion of the activeness of a way of life. These distinctions are practically not mediated by socially-demographic characteristics; the only essential dependence is revealed between the age and the interest in the computerization topic (Kendall's tau-b coefficient = 0,367); the interest in other topics has no vivid age or educational specificity.

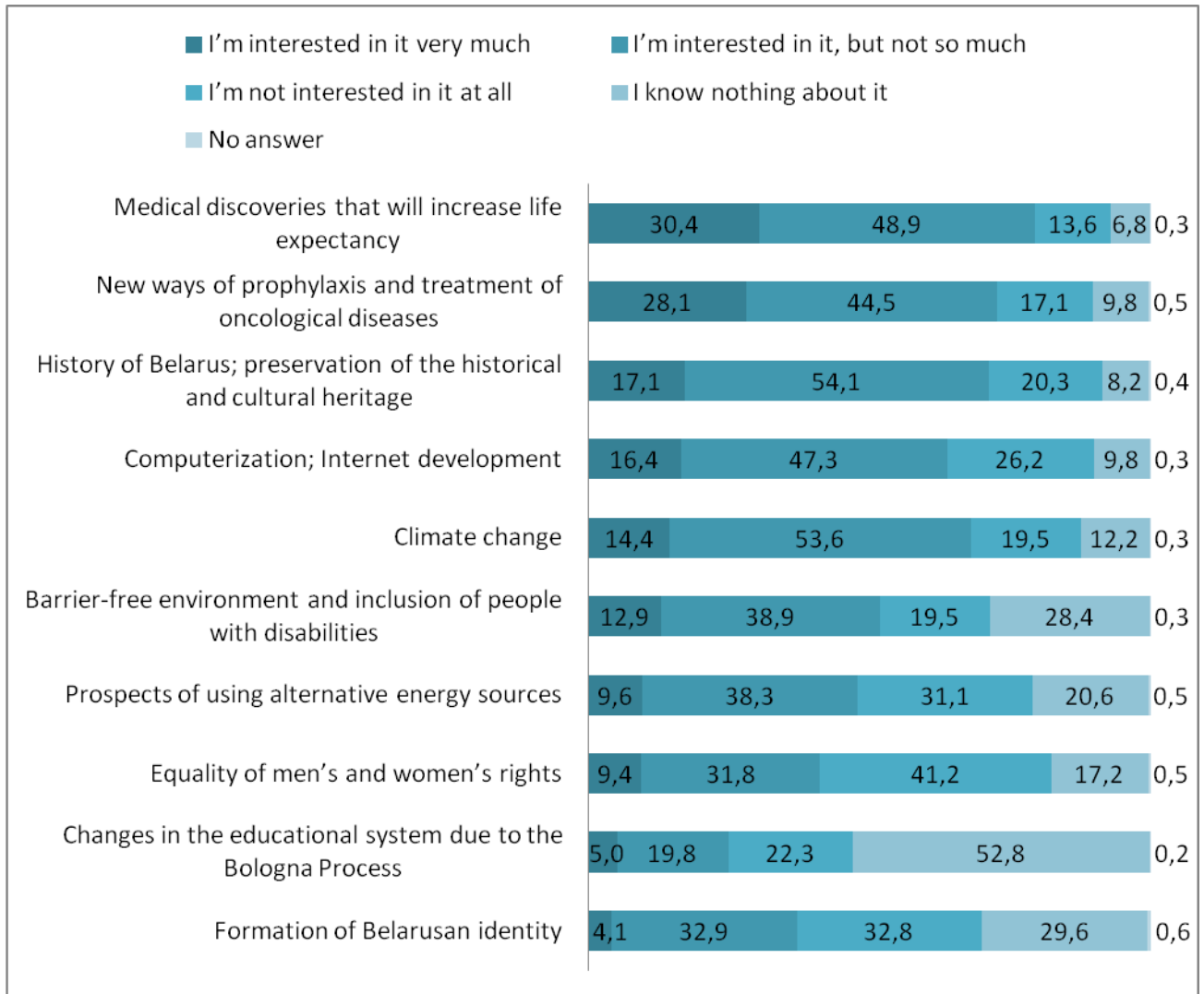
¹⁸ See: *Aksana Shelest, Andrei Yahorau, Belarusians' ideas of human rights and rights defense activities*, Center for European Transformation, 07.11.2012: <http://eurobelarus.info/files/File/CET-Report-HR-en.pdf>.

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Diagram 10. Level of interest in various topics, %



Experience of participating in political life

The last characteristic we review in this section is the experience of participating in political life, i.e. forms and intensity of such participation: from participation in various forms of solidary actions to the implementation of one's own individual initiatives.

Participation in elections of different levels is traditionally considered to be the main display of civil activity in democratic countries. Despite the widely known features of elections in Belarus, as well as the distribution of real power between various branches, for the majority of the Belarusians their participation in elections is also the basic (and often the only) form of political participation.



As for other forms of participation in public-political life, the Belarusians' involvement in their implementation remains at a quite low level. We have already touched this topic a little bit during the analysis of the "places" where the Belarusians spend their spare time, indirectly characterizing participation in the activity of political parties and public organizations. We remember that while analyzing the characteristics of "every day of a Belarusian" such "places" as meetings of public organizations, associations of proprietors, and party meetings appeared in the rear guard of places and actions visited by respondents.

This data is also confirmed by the fact that during a retrospective description of their experience only 6,6% of respondents marked that they happened to work in public organizations, 5% have experience of participating in activities of informal communities and initiatives, and 1% happened to create public organizations or to begin their own projects in public, political, or cultural spheres.

Thus, the "layer" of the Belarusians whose experience in participation in the political life of the country is more diverse than traditional participation in elections, as a whole, is very thin.

Of all kinds of solidary actions that unite citizens' voluntary activity in order to achieve socially significant purposes, only participation in actions aimed at gathering humanitarian aid or donations is spread more or less widely: almost a half of the Belarusians took part in this sort of actions at least once in their life. As for such forms of self-organization as signatures for collective appeals, petitions, participation in cultural, ecological, or other public events, actions, and initiatives, public statements in support of someone or something, participation in protest actions and street actions, more than two thirds of respondents have no such experience at all.

Characteristics of the Belarusians' participation in solidary actions were studied in detail in our previous research¹⁹; we shall notice that despite some differences in shares of respondents who said that they have experience of participating in these or those forms of activity, the present research, as a whole, repeats the drawn conclusions. Thus, the generalization of the research data with the help of a cluster analysis²⁰ leads to the same two typological groups we call: "Those who periodically participate in solidary actions" (20,5%) and "Those who sporadically participate in solidary actions" (79,5%). In the 2015 research, the ratio of these groups was similar: 23,3% against 76,4%.

A distinctive feature of the first group is that a considerable part of this group has experience of regular or at least periodic participation in two-three more or less widespread forms of joint actions, whereas representatives of the second group have very small experience of participating in any forms of self-organized actions.

In this research, we were interested not so much in quantitative characteristics of these groups, but in the connection of the experience of participating in solidary actions with the factors we are interested in — the susceptibility to innovations, self-identifications, and a way of life. The data analysis demonstrates the presence

¹⁹ See: **Belarusian society's solidarity potential**. Research report, Center for European Transformation, 22.12.2015: http://cet.eurobelarus.info/files/userfiles/5/CET/2015_Solidarity-National-Belarus-EN.pdf.

²⁰ 1,973 questionnaires participated in the cluster analysis; 15 questionnaires were excluded because some questions were not answered.

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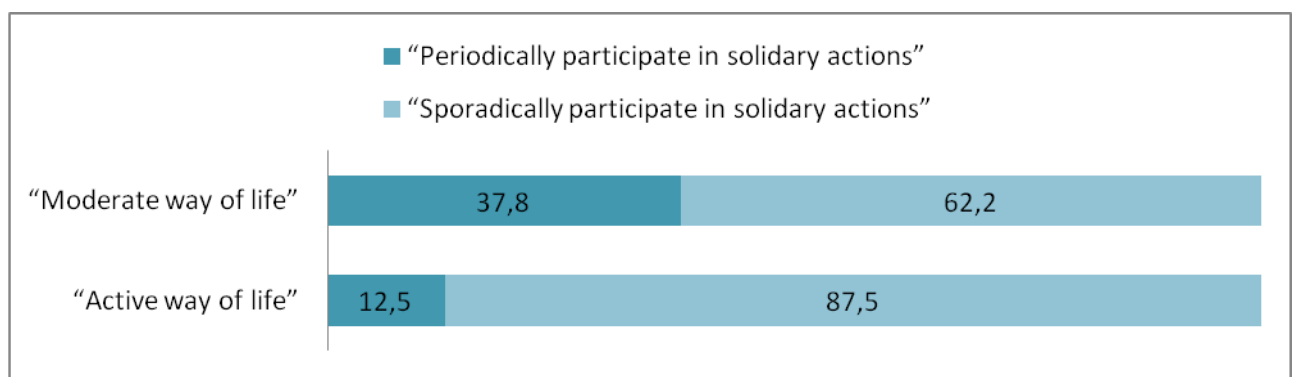
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of the connection of all the listed criteria with the intensity of respondents' participation in solidary actions, although there are various intensities.

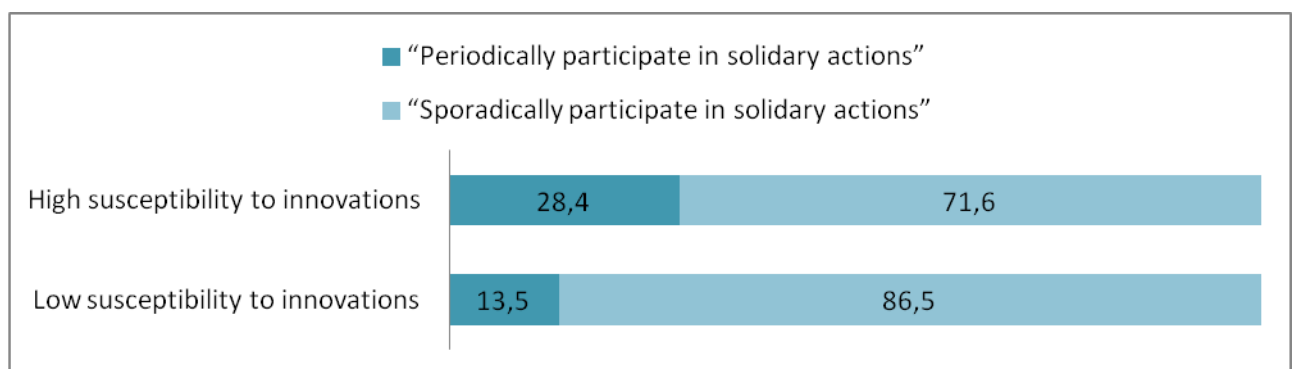
The participation experience is connected most closely with the characteristics of a way of life (Cramer's $V = 0,289$). The general "activity" of a way of life is converted in various forms of joint actions — as a result, among the respondents who lead, according to our classification, "an active way of life", the share of "those who periodically participate in solidary actions" is three times higher than among those who conduct "a moderate way of life" (see Diagram 11).

Diagram 11. Participation in solidary actions of respondents who lead various ways of life, %



Not so strong (however, significant too) is a connection between public activity and the susceptibility to innovations. A share of those "periodically participating in solidary actions" among respondents with a high susceptibility to innovations is more than twice as high in comparison with the group with a low susceptibility to innovations (see Diagram 12).

Diagram 12. Participation in solidary actions of respondents with different susceptibilities to innovations, %



Among respondents with different types of group identifications, the highest intensity of participating in solidary actions is demonstrated by respondents with the "Universal" type of identification (25,9% of respondents of this group are in the cluster of "those who periodically participate in solidary actions"), the lowest — with the "Local" type of identification (the similar indicator is only 13,7%).



Generalizations and conclusions

1. The Belarusians evaluate the changes that happen in the country in very different ways. During the last ten years, according to the inhabitants of the country, the most stable spheres are the political system and the condition of Belarusian culture. The Belarusians think that the biggest changes for the better during this period have happened in relations with other countries, the strengthening of Belarus' place on the international scene. Almost a half of respondents underline negative changes in the economy and in people's everyday life (47,1% and 49,3% accordingly). One more "unsuccessful" sphere, from the point of view of changes, for the last decade, is ecology.
2. Generally speaking, today's Belarusian society is more aimed at changing the situation. The share of respondents who think that it is important personally for them to change the current situation is almost twice as higher than those who prefer to preserve the status quo (44,2% against 23,2%). The share of those who support changes in the age groups of 16-24 y.o. and 25-45 y.o. is growing with an educational level increase.
3. The evaluation of positive and negative changes over the last ten years demonstrates that the standard of well-being and economic problematics remain the most topical in mass consciousness. In the list of problems and threats, which are topical for Belarus today, the sharpest one, according to the Belarusians, is the problem of the decreasing standard of living. Probably, in connection with this problem, the problem of Belarusian society's increasing feeling of discontent and disappointment is perceived as topical: its presence is noticed by more than a half of pollees (56,1%). Problems and challenges that have to do with the external context appeared on the periphery of public consciousness; Russia's threat to Belarus' independence and the pressure upon Belarus from the EU and the USA are at the tail end of the rating of problems; the Belarusians do not think that the absence of common values and national unity in the country is a vital issue.
4. Along with the falling of the standard of well-being, a considerable part of respondents say the problem is that the Belarusian authorities (41,4%) and whole society (44,9%) are not ready for reforms. The balance of supporters of measures aimed at overcoming the economic crisis, which are borrowed from planned and market economies, is almost equal. Thus, 12% of pollees support the weakening of state regulation in the economy and practically as many (11,5%) — the strengthening; 39,1% — to create conditions for the development of small business and entrepreneurship and a little bit less (30,7%) — to increase the size of allowances, privileges, pensions, and almost as many (28,8%) — to support unprofitable state-run enterprises. From the Belarusians' point of view, the most effective way of solving economic problems is to develop economic relations with Russia. However, it is necessary to underline that this idea is not so widespread as one may expect — less than a half of respondents (47,5%) called it a way of coming out of the economic crisis. The development of economic relations with the EU is supported by 35,9%.
5. Perceptions of how to overcome the crisis tell us about respondents' orientations on this or that type of economy and state administration. These orientations have rather an accurate age specificity: with the

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increase of respondents' age, the level of support of such measures as the increase of the size of allowances, privileges, and pensions is growing — and, on the contrary, there is decreasing support of such measures as the development of economic relations with the EU, the creation of conditions for business development, and the weakening of state regulation in the economy. The higher the educational level is, the more the support to the strengthening relations with the EU and with Russia, the creation of conditions for business development, and the weakening of state regulation in the economy is.

6. The level of Belarusian citizens' activity in the public-political sphere remains quite low; the experience and forms of participating in the country's life are seldom beyond the traditional ritual participation in elections of different level. Only 6,6% of respondents marked that they happened to work in public organizations, 5% have experience of participating in activities of informal communities and initiatives, and 1% happened to create public organizations or to begin their own projects in public, political, or cultural spheres. Of all kinds of solidary actions that unite citizens' voluntary activity in order to achieve socially significant purposes, only participation in actions aimed at gathering humanitarian aid or donations is spread more or less widely; other forms of self-organization are not widespread. Only one fifth of respondents have experience of participating in solidary actions at least with some periodicity; the other part of the Belarusian population participates casually, sporadically.
7. In spite of the fact that different studies demonstrate a critically low level of Belarusian citizens' influence on decision-making both at local and national levels, both in reality and in perceptions of the Belarusians themselves, the most part of respondents thinks that these or those institutions and structures represent their interests at the national level. Almost a third of the Belarusian population (32,6%) considers the president of the country to be a representative of their interests; 17,5% — deputies of local councils; 13,3% — deputies of the National Assembly. The mass media, public organizations, and opinion leaders have the rating of around 7-8%; political parties are in the end of the list of "political representatives".
8. The level of awareness of and trust in civil society organizations remains rather low. The overwhelming majority of Belarusian citizens knows nothing about activities of independent NGOs and civic initiatives, and this level of awareness (or rather ignorance) practically does not depend on either duration of activity, or character of an organization, or sphere of its activity. A quite insignificant share of pollees (7,6%) thinks that public organizations represent their interests at the national level. Moreover, a comparison of different studies shows a high degree of the instability of evaluations of civil society organizations as for various parameters, which means most likely that the perceptions of civil society, NGOs, and their specificity in the Belarusians' mass consciousness remain extremely blurry and superficial, and therefore — these perceptions are strongly influenced by situational factors.
9. A bit more optimism is caused by the level of the Belarusians' interest in topics that are important to launch transformations in concrete spheres, which have no direct relation to political changes. We shall mark a rather high level of interest in ecological problematics, as well as questions of the history of Belarus and



cultural heritage preservation. Simultaneously, the imitating character of already going processes of reforms is obvious — thus, the level of awareness of and interest in the education system reforms in connection with the fact that Belarus joined the Bologna Process remains very low despite the fact that more than a year elapsed since the moment these transformations were started at the moment of the poll.

10. The groups set by us as for the criterion of the susceptibility to innovations differ from each other by a number of considered characteristics of respondents' public-political activeness. Respondents with a high susceptibility to innovations much more critically evaluate changes in the economy, much more positively — changes in the international position of Belarus. In the group with a high susceptibility to innovations, the level of supporting all market measures, as well as the development of economic relations with Russia and the EU, is considerably higher. More than a half of the group with a high susceptibility to innovations supports the transformation of the situation, while less than a third supports it in the group with a low susceptibility. There is a significant connection between public activity and the susceptibility to innovations. A share of those “periodically participating in solidary actions” among respondents with a high susceptibility to innovations is more than twice as high in comparison with the group with a low susceptibility to innovations. Also, in this group, the interest in all offered topics is expressed more strongly; the biggest distinctions are fixed in the topics connected with computerization and the Internet, the use of alternative energy sources, the Bologna Process, and the formation of Belarusian identity.
11. As for distinctions between carriers of different types of group identifications, here, the most obviously vivid are “East Slavic” and “Universal”. Carriers of these types of identities evaluate changes in all spheres of life over the last 10 years more positively; among them, there are also more supporters of changing the present situation. The group of carriers of the identity that we called “Local” differs from the others by the maximum number of those who constate the inalterability of political life in the country and most negatively evaluate changes in people's everyday life.

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Conclusion

Summing up the implemented analysis, we return to the tasks in view and theoretical thoughts that underlie the research. One of tasks of this research was to construct at a first approximation a system of criteria that would allow us to “seize” the characteristics of “new strata” in the scheme of “three worlds” proposed by the Belarusian philosopher and methodologist Uladzimir Matskevich. It is necessary to admit that the implementation of this task is far from being over. The set of criteria used in this research is not full and does not allow us to classify the groups satisfying the initial rationales of the model. One of the reasons of this relative failure is a considerable number of contradictions in respondents’ evaluations and tenets, which may attest both low competence of respondents and inadequacy of used scales. Nevertheless, the obtained data allows us to describe Belarusian society from the point of view of a number of characteristics significant for the transformation potential analysis.

The starting point, the main criterion in this case, is the Belarusians’ attitude to innovations. Society’s openness to the perception and implementation of technical and social innovations and the presence of qualification and human qualities allowing society to participate in global processes define the potential of the country’s development in the near future. The presence of the political will and the launch of processes of reforms in various spheres can actualize this potential. The conducted research allows us to describe Belarusian society as a quite balanced one in its attitude towards innovations. Almost equal shares of the Belarusians declare conservative and innovative strategies of consumption; the volumes of the groups, which are “polar” as for the criterion of their susceptibility to innovations, are almost equal. Generally, the basic characteristics of the consumer behavior allow us to count that the implementation of technical innovations in Belarus will have a rather wide base of support, certainly, if there is competent marketing taking into account changes in the general economic situation in the country.

Prospects of implementing social innovations look less optimistically. Basically, the fact that social and political innovations act as more problem ones, which is reflected in the perception modality, at the level of knowledge, and in the characteristics of the innovative behavior, does not characterize the Belarusian situation as unique. It is a characteristic of the general process of innovative development at the contemporary stage when the comprehension and account of the influence of technical innovations on a person and social relations goes “post factum”, and social innovations are often late in comparison with technical ones. However, in our case, we deal not so much with the unsynchronization of these processes, but rather with a difference in the basic perception, the deficiency of humanitarian competence. Of course, it is good that in our country there gradually appear new forms and perceptions of education and self-development, social policy, space and time organization, various forms of self-employment and public activity; however, the cumulative “weight” of these transformations is meanwhile insignificant enough.

For this very reason, it is so important to describe the places and forms where there are the innovative behavior and tenets on innovations today. One of the basic questions of this research was to determine the connection between the attitude to innovations and other criteria important for the characteristic of the transformation potential — self-identification, a way of life, and public-political activity. The groups of respondents with high and low susceptibilities to innovations carried out the role of a model that we used to test the presence or the absence of these connections. It is clear that we consider a part of Belarusian society that has a high susceptibility



to innovations to be “the advanced class”, which is the basis of possible democratic transformations. According to our evaluation, this “class” includes a fifth part of the Belarusian population. It is rather a considerable share sufficient for the support of started processes and for the broadcasting and advertising of concrete innovations, etc.

What are the social-demographic, self-identification and way-of-life dimensions of this group? The social-demographic “portrait” of this group is quite predictable: in comparison with “an average Belarusian”, and especially in comparison with the “control” group with a low susceptibility to innovations, this group is younger, more educated, and more urbanized.

These are people who live with a higher (for Belarusian society) intensity, visit a considerable number of places and events, which is why they have no spare time. Thus, in order to get them involved in public-political life, it will be necessary to refuse some forms of spending spare time.

As for the cultural-historical self-determination and structures of self-identifications, this group has no accurate differences from the other part of Belarusian society. Among the people of this “class”, there are the same various variants of perceptions of the historical belonging of Belarus and its cultural affinity with one of the “poles” in the system of coordinates “East-West”. Although those “susceptible to innovations” demonstrate a tad higher propensity to be identified with the western vector, it is impossible to say that this characteristic defines the “portrait” or specificity of the group.

The situation with the identity structure is even less clear. It is paradoxical, but among respondents with a high susceptibility to innovations there are more carriers of the “Local” type of identity in comparison with the “control” group with a low susceptibility to innovations and in comparison with the share of carriers of “Universal” identity. With a certain share of presurmise, it is possible to say that about a third part of Belarusians susceptible to innovations is people of the “second world” (who are part of innovative processes and who have local identification, i.e. they are engrained in the country) — and a bit less or approximately as many — people of the “first world” (whose identifications have the universal type). Certainly, these are quite approximate evaluations; adequate and confident evaluations require a lot of additional information on tenets, competences, and patterns of respondents’ behavior.

This difficulty also has to do with an interesting and even a little bit unexpected picture of group self-identifications of the Belarusians as a whole, which came to light in the course of this research. We tried for the first time to set a question between a local community and various regional and global intercommunities and faced the fact that the basic distinction between the Belarusians is not in whether they identify themselves with the western or eastern worlds, with the countries and peoples of the post-Soviet territory or with developed countries, but in whether they identify themselves with intercommunities of a scale bigger than the country or not. Only one of the self-identification types can be characterized by a weak binding to the cultural-historical and geopolitical context (we called it “East Slavic”). The other two substantially certain types are indifferent to all these dimensions: the “Local” type is characterized by almost the identical negation of any self-identifications, except for the “local” and “Belarusian” ones; “Universal” — by the consistent acceptance of all regional and cultural contexts (the Russian and European contexts, the context of developed and post-Soviet countries, Orthodox and Catholic, as well as the Soviet self-identification as a whole).

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One more important thing while describing the group with a high susceptibility to innovations, which our attention is concentrated on, is the fact that there are much more vividly expressed tenets on the transformation of the situation, instead of its preservation, and higher characteristics of public activity against the general rather low level. While characterizing this group as a base of transformations for programs and directions, which civil society organizations are especially active in, it is significant that among those who are susceptible to innovations there is a higher level of actualization of such topics as the use of alternative energy sources, the Bologna Process, and the formation of Belarusian identity.

We complete our attempt to provide a positive description of the potential of public and economic transformations by mentioning three negative factors that appeared in the research and that represent threats of different types for transformation processes.

The first one is the “Renaissance” of the Soviet identification. The not finished (and even not started properly) processes of de-Sovietization, the Soviet nostalgia and the support of Soviet history and achievements in the Belarusian authorities’ discourse, and the absence of a system to oppose it among pro-European-oriented civil society have led to the fact that the level of self-identification with the mythical nonexistent intercommunity “Soviet people” in 2016 almost coincides with the level of the early 2000s. However, in comparison with the times when Soviet identity was considered to be “leaving”, disappearing naturally, its carriers became younger, more educated, and more urbanized. The revanche of the Soviet values and identity can become a serious obstacle in the way of Belarusianization and Europeanization.

The second threat to the country in general is probably not so serious, but still it must be mentioned — the lowest degree of actualization in the Belarusians’ mass consciousness of any problems, except for economic ones. The problematics of the decreasing standard of living forces out all other threats and problems to the periphery of public consciousness and perception. With the deterioration of the general economic situation, the Belarusians will be even less sensitive to all other — both internal and external challenges. On the one hand, it complicates the reception of support to any programs that do not result directly and quickly in the increase of the standard of living of the population (i.e. in general — all programs, except for populist ones) and, second, it creates threats to the safety of the country.

And, at last, the third negative factor, which is especially important in the context of analyzing civil society’s role and place in transformation processes, is the insuperable (or, at least, not surmounted even now) barriers between the quite narrow circle of activists who gather and work in NGOs and the multitude of the Belarusians, well, maybe this multitude is not so wide, but sufficient to launch processes of changes, at least, in separate areas. The social capital and popularity are the necessary characteristics of subjectness that is able to start any activity-related programs. The level of popularity of the majority of significant NGOs that have projects and programs of changes, according to the research, seldom exceeds the sampling error. Moreover, Belarusian society in general poorly distinguishes different forms of public and political activity, and hardly is the majority of the Belarusians able to distinguish GONGOs from normal NGOs, human rights defenders from lawyers, a public intellectual from a populist, and a qualified analyst from a demagogue. Gathered during the years of its existence, the expert and activity potential of the third sector demands capitalization and, probably, new forms of



organization and positioning, which would allow it to surmount this barrier in the broadcasting and discernment. Meanwhile, the only and quite obscurely worked out idea in this direction is the idea of the “fourth sector”²¹.

²¹ See: **Civil society and problems of contemporary social transformations**. Tatiana Vadalazhskaya's report at the international conference of the Center for European Transformation “Postcommunist transformations: reconsideration of democratic transit programs” (Minsk, 28 November 2014), YouTube channel of EuroBelarus life, 30.11.2014: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B6WAJCR3ONk>; Serhiy Datsyuk. **The Fourth Sector** (Translation from Ukrainian into Belarusian), Center for European Transformation, 25.12.2014: <https://cet.eurobelarus.info/by/library/publication/2014/12/25/chatsverty-sektar.html>.

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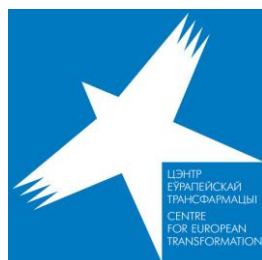
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