



Assisting local civil society to work more effectively in developing transparency and accountability of law enforcement bodies in Belarus Republic



Project factsheet

Main donor: European Commission

Key partners: Belarusian Helsinki Committee

Duration: 24 Months

Project contact details

The Project will be managed by Penal Reform International's office in Russia.

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Background

Civil society organizations (CSOs) in Belarus have raised concerns that the human rights of people in contact with law enforcement bodies are not upheld and violence is reported by detainees.

This project has been developed to respond to these concerns. In his assessment the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the human rights situation in the Republic of Belarus, Miklós

Haraszti, found that human rights remain systemically and systematically restricted, especially in the case of the freedoms of association, of assembly, and of expression and opinion, as well as the guarantees of due process and fair trial. The UN Committee against Torture expressed serious concern "... about numerous, consistent reports that detainees are frequently denied basic fundamental legal safeguards, including prompt access to a lawyer and medical doctor and the right to contact family members". PRI recently produced a report on: "National mechanisms for the prevention of torture in Eastern Europe Belarus, Russia and Ukraine in consultation with national experts."¹

The project aims to address the issue by facilitating discussion and relationship building between CSOs, law enforcement and legislative authorities to engage on the subject of improvements to conditions of police detention and monitoring of police facilities by CSOs. The project also seeks to enhance the capacity and knowledge base of law enforcement personnel on human rights of defendants/arrested people and enhancing CSO capacity to monitor police stations and produce reports to inform further dialogue and humanization of law enforcement activities in Belarus.

The project will work with law enforcement departments within the Ministry of Interior. Monitoring reports discussed with the authorities and police administration will be published and disseminated among governmental bodies and other parties adding to the transparency of the police.

Project details

Overall objective

To strengthen the role and contribution of civil society in the development of transparency, accountability and the humanization of law enforcement bodies of Belarus.

Specific objectives

1. Increasing civil society organisations (CSO) human rights dialogue with legislative and law enforcement bodies.
2. Supporting the humanisation of the justice system through capacity building of law enforcement bodies.
3. Building capacity of civil society groups to undertake a watchdog role, in particular through the observation of police units.

Activities

1. Recommendations for legal amendments: 2 open discussions to facilitate contact and communication between CSOs and decision-makers; 2 public forums to improve dialogue and networking between CSOs.

¹ PRI 2012 available at <http://www.penalreform.org/files/eastern%20europe%20torture%20v7%20web.pdf> The research has been produced as part of Penal Reform International's project *Strengthening institutions and building civil society capacity to combat torture in nine CIS countries* in partnership with Bristol University and with the financial assistance from the European Union under the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR).

2. Capacity Building: 10 workshops on awareness-raising on the human rights of detainees for 250 police workers and lawyers; 3000 information brochures for law enforcement workers;
3. Strengthening civil society: 2 trainings on human rights issues and monitoring instruments for civil society groups; development of a guide for police station inspection and monitoring of 50 police units; preparation of 4 monitoring reports with recommendations.

Expected results

1. Civil society's participation in human rights dialogue with legislative and law enforcement bodies enhanced.
2. Improved legal literacy and knowledge of human rights standards of police personnel and lawyers.
3. Capacity of civil society groups to perform watchdog function increased.