

Council of Europe Action Plan for Belarus 2016-2018

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Action Plan for Belarus 2016-2018

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

BSU	Belarusian State University
CoE	Council of Europe
CM	Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe
CODEXTER	Committee of Experts on Terrorism
COMUS	Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns
Congress	CoE Congress of Local and Regional Authorities
CPT	European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment
CSOs	Civil Society Organisations
EaP	Eastern Partnership
ECHR	European Convention on Human Rights
ECRI	European Commission against Racism and Intolerance
ECRML	European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages
ECSR	European Committee of Social Rights
ECtHR	European Court of Human Rights
EDC/HRE	Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education
ESC	European Social Charter
EU	European Union
GR-DEM	Rapporteur Group on Democracy
GRECO	Group of States against Corruption
GRETA	Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings
HELP	European Programme for Human Rights Education for Legal Professionals (the HELP Programme)
INGO	International Non-governmental Organisation
MONEYVAL	Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-governmental Organisation
ODIHR	Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights
ODGP	Office of the Directorate General of Programmes
OSCE	Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe
PACE	Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe
PCF	European Union/Council of Europe Eastern Partnership Programmatic Co-operation Framework
Pompidou Group	Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking of Drugs
Venice Commission	European Commission for Democracy through Law
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation

GENERAL OVERVIEW

In its reply to PACE Recommendation 1992 (2012) “The situation in Belarus”, adopted at its 1149th meeting (14 September 2012), the Committee of Ministers¹, recalled that its strategic objective remains the *rapprochement* and accession of the Republic of Belarus (thereafter Belarus) to the Council of Europe (CoE) on the basis of the Organisation’s values and principles, pursuant to the Declaration adopted at the 2005 Warsaw Summit.

The Committee of Ministers also reiterated stronger involvement of Belarus in the common European legal space through commitment to its standards which can only be of benefit to the Belarusian people. It further reiterated its call on the Belarusian authorities to take full advantage of their participation in the CoE’s co-operation mechanisms in order to better apprehend the values promoted by the CoE and to apply the standards of the Organisation.

Since 2012, the Secretary General met on several occasions, with the Minister of the Foreign Affairs of Belarus, Mr Vladimir Makei. The latest meeting took place on 3 December 2015, at the margins of the OSCE Ministerial Council in Belgrade, Serbia. The meetings have served to reaffirm the CoE’s long term goal in seeing Belarus become a member state of the CoE. In response, the Minister expressed the intent of the Belarusian authorities in taking steps towards a closer alignment with CoE standards, and to improve and strengthen co-operation with the CoE. Moreover, Belarus has continued to express interest in joining some CoE conventions.

Belarus is currently a Contracting Party to ten CoE treaties: the European Cultural Convention (CETS No. 018); the European Convention on Information on Foreign Law (CETS No. 062); the Additional Protocol to the European Convention on Information on Foreign Law (CETS No. 097); the Convention on the Conservation of European Wildlife and Natural Habitats (CETS No. 104); the Anti-Doping Convention (CETS No. 135); the Convention on the Recognition of Qualifications concerning Higher Education in the European Region (the Council of Europe/UNESCO Lisbon Recognition Convention (CETS No. 165); the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption (CETS No. 173); the Civil Law Convention on Corruption (CETS No. 174); the Additional Protocol to the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption (CETS No.191) and Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No.197). Belarus is also a member of four Partial Agreements (the European Pharmacopoeia, the European Commission for Democracy through Law (Venice Commission), the Group of States against Corruption (GRECO) and the Enlarged Partial Agreement on Sport (EPAS).

Furthermore, Belarus participates in several intergovernmental committees of the CoE: Steering Committee for Educational Policy and Practice (CDPPE), Lisbon Recognition Convention Committee; Steering Committee for Culture, Heritage and Landscape (CDCPP); European Steering Committee on Youth (CDEJ); Steering Committee for Human Rights (CDDH) and its subordinate bodies; European Committee on Legal Co-operation (CDCJ); Steering Committee on the Media and New Communication Services (CDMSI); the Committee of Legal Advisers on Public International Law (CAHDI) and *ad hoc* European Committee for the World Anti-Doping Agency (CAHAMA).

Co-operation between the Council of Europe and Belarus

To date, the CoE co-operation activities with Belarus covered priority areas as outlined by the Committee of Ministers and discussed respectively during the GR-DEM meetings on 17 April 2012, 5 July 2012, 18 June 2013, 21 January 2014 and 7 July 2015, such as: abolition of the death penalty, independent media, civil society and human rights, education, cultural co-operation and youth, judiciary, local self-government, gender equality, combatting drug abuse and trafficking, the fight against corruption and the fight against cybercrime.

Belarus was a participating country in two thematic projects of the Eastern Partnership Facility 2011-2014 (CoE-EU Joint programme, EaP) which provided support to the reform processes in the Eastern Partnership countries (fight against corruption and fight against cybercrime).

¹ [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/AS\(2012\)Rec1992-final](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/AS(2012)Rec1992-final)

The CoE Information Point in Minsk has been in place since 2009, as a joint regular project between the CoE and the Belarusian State University (BSU). It played an important role in the step up of co-operation. The Information Point promotes awareness of the CoE, its activities and standards, and supports the organisation of CoE's events and activities in the country, both in the capital, Minsk, and in the regions. The Information Point also facilitates the visits of national counterparts to the CoE and visits of the CoE Secretariat to Belarus.

The present Action Plan for Belarus 2016-2017 is a joint initiative of the CoE and the Belarusian authorities. The document is a strategic and sectorial programming instrument, allowing for an inclusive and coherent approach to co-operation. It aims to assist the country in CoE areas of expertise.

The Action Plan is structured around priorities defined jointly between the CoE and the Belarusian authorities. These priorities are in line with those identified by the Secretary General and the Committee of Ministers for Belarus², covering the following areas:

- Protecting and promoting human rights;
- Ensuring justice;
- Combatting threats to the Rule of Law; and
- Promoting democratic governance and participation.

The Action Plan places a strong emphasis on the promotion of equal opportunities for women, children and youth.

Gender equality will be mainstreamed throughout the CoE's projects. In addition, the CoE will promote the active participation of civil society in project activities. For this purpose, the Guidelines on gender mainstreaming and Guidelines on CSOs participation in CoE's co-operation activities are also taken into account.

The main beneficiaries of the CoE co-operation with Belarus include state institutions, civil society and the general public. Country-specific actions will be complemented with coherent regional undertakings.

IMPLEMENTATION AND REPORTING MODALITIES

The implementation of this Action Plan will be jointly assessed by the CoE and the Belarusian authorities. For this purpose, a Steering Committee will be established, which will be composed of representatives of the CoE and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs with engagement of other national stakeholders involved in the implementation of the Action Plan as agreed and appropriate. The Steering Committee will meet regularly to assess the implementation of projects and address the challenges faced.

The CoE will provide regular updates on the progress and results of the Action Plan. To this end, the Office of the Directorate General of Programmes (ODGP) will submit one interim and the final report to the Committee of Ministers (CM).

The ODGP will ensure the co-ordination of the implementation of the Action Plan, whereas the operational services in Strasbourg will be responsible for the implementation of different actions included in this Action Plan with the assistance of the CoE Information Point in Minsk.

Actions included in the Action Plan are designed according to CoE criteria. Funding is to be provided from the CoE's ordinary budget, voluntary contributions from donor countries and international organisations, including the CoE/EU PCF 2015-2017³.

PARTNERSHIP AND CO-ORDINATION

The CoE will co-ordinate its activities both with national and international partners present in the country to avoid duplication and enhance synergies. All projects will aim to ensure national ownership and strengthen the capacity of national partners.

The Council of Europe will co-operate closely with bilateral and multilateral donors active in the key priority areas of the Action Plan.

² Action Plan's co-operation activities cover priority areas outlined by the Committee of Ministers in the documents CM/Inf(2015)20, CM/Del/Dec(2014)1190/2.1bis, DPA/Inf (2012)06, DPA/Inf(2011)8 and discussed during GR-DEM meeting on 7 July 2015.

³ Council of Europe Eastern Partnership Programmatic Co-operation Framework (PCF) 2015-2017.

In implementing activities, the CoE will co-operate closely with the United Nations entities, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC), the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). The CoE will also co-ordinate its activities with the European Union (EU), including the European Monitoring Centre for Drugs and Drug Addiction (EMCDDA), as well as with the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and its Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODHIR).

The EU will be a major partner for the implementation of activities in all sectors of the present Action Plan. The PCF will be the principal instrument for the implementation of the joint activities. Through the PCF, and most specifically in Belarus, the CoE will work on the implementation of European human rights standards at national level, good governance and fight against corruption.

1. PROTECTING AND PROMOTING HUMAN RIGHTS

1.1 Sector Overview and Priorities

The CoE actions in this sector aim to promote the organisation's human rights standards in Belarus. They take into account the results of the CoE activities implemented in the country in 2012-2015, in particular through the Council of Europe Information Point in Minsk. The main priorities in this sector, as identified by the Belarusian authorities and the CoE, include:

- capacity building on specific themes related to the European Convention on Human Rights (ECHR) and European Social Charter (ESC), and to the European Court of Human Rights (ECTHR) case-law as well as decisions and conclusions of the European Committee of Social Rights (ECSR) for judges, prosecutors and lawyers;
- fostering dialogue on the death penalty issue;
- advise on the optimal model of the national human rights institution;
- development of legal and policy framework to eliminate all forms of violence against women, children and domestic violence;
- activities on social rights, data protection and media freedom.

The CoE's actions in this sector take into account the fact that Belarus is a Contracting Party to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No. 197), as well as the interest of the Belarusian Government to the Council of Europe Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence - Istanbul Convention (CETS No. 210), and to the Council of Europe Convention on the protection of children against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse - the Lanzarote Convention (CETS No. 201). The activities in this sector are also based on the results of the Round table "Religion and Death Penalty", organised by the CoE in co-operation with Belarusian authorities in June 2013, International workshop "National Human Rights Institutions: Establishment and Functioning" organised in July 2014 by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Belarus, the CoE, the UN Resident Coordinator's Office and the UNDP in Belarus, as well as the joint CoE and OSCE/ODIHR Conferences on issues of gender equality and participation of women in public life held in Minsk, in June 2015 and in June 2016.

The CoE actions envisaged in this sector will also provide for a sustainable approach to human rights training of legal professionals.

The CoE will support awareness-raising of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (ECRML, CETS No.148).

Throughout the EaP region, various levels of advancement and development in the protection of individuals with regard to the processing of personal data are to be noted. Belarus is not a Contracting Party to the CoE Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (Data Protection Convention, CETS No. 108). Nevertheless, the issue of data protection is one of the priorities of the national authorities. The proposed regional project aims to provide assistance to all six countries participating in the project on data protection, including Belarus, focusing on each country's needs.

The freedom of the media and professional and responsible journalism remain topical issues not only in Belarus, but also in other countries in the region. Through project activities, the CoE intends to promote media freedom, responsible journalism and to enhance the role of national parliaments in this area.

Sources of justification:

Convention for the protection of Human Rights and Dignity of the Human Being with regard to the Application of Biology and Medicine: Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (the Oviedo Convention, CETS No. 164);
 European Charter of Regional and Minority Languages (ECRML, CETS No. 148);
 CoE Convention for the Protection of Individuals with regard to Automatic Processing of Personal Data (CETS No. 108) and the European Social Charter (CETS No. 163);
 Recommendation Rec(2004)4 of the CM to member states on the European Convention on Human Rights (CETS No. 005) in university education and professional training; Protocols No. 6 (CETS No. 114) and No. 13 (CETS No. 187) to the ECHR; PACE Resolution 1857 (2012) "The situation in Belarus" and Recommendation (1992)2012 "The situation in Belarus"; PACE introductory memorandum (AS/Pol(2015)05) "Situation in Belarus"; PACE Memorandum "The situation in Belarus" (AS/Pol(2015)05);
 Decisions of the Committee of Ministers CM/Del/Dec(2001)769/4.4; CM/Del/Dec(2015)1226/4.1, Document CM/Inf(2015)20 on the abolition of the death penalty in Europe;
 Outcomes of the co-ordination meeting on co-operation priorities between the Council of Europe and Belarus for 2015-2017, Strasbourg 6-7 July 2015.
 Results of the Round table "Religion and Death Penalty", 21 June 2013;
 results of a Specialised Conference on the Council of Europe legal Standards and Conventional framework on 15-16 September 2015; Requests from the BSU;
 Challenges identified in the Secretary General's annual report on the State of Democracy, Human Rights and Rule of law and in particular its recommendations with a view to social rights.

1.2 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To promote CoE standards in the field of human rights and to strengthen the system of national human rights protection in Belarus.

1.3 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

1.3.1. *Fostering dialogue on the death penalty issue*

➤ *To foster dialogue between the authorities and civil society advocating on the issue of abolition of the death penalty, whereby:*

- The awareness of executive, legislative and judicial authorities and the general public on the need to introduce moratorium on execution of death sentences and subsequent abolition of the death penalty is raised; and
- The dialogue between the relevant Belarusian authorities and the civil society on the introduction of the moratorium on execution of death sentences and subsequent abolition of the death penalty is supported.

The abolition of the death penalty in Belarus remains the top priority for the CoE and a major obstacle to taking steps towards becoming a CoE member state. In this respect, the CoE continues to maintain dialogue and to work together with the Belarusian stakeholders to raise awareness on the question of death penalty abolition. Moreover, significant efforts have been made by the PACE to resume dialogue with the national authorities on the issue regarding the protection of human rights and human dignity by abolishing the death penalty when the PACE Rapporteur visited Belarus in early 2015.

Through the proposed action, the CoE will be able to disseminate information about the ECHR, about the European experience in abolition of death penalty and to raise awareness concerning the death penalty with a view of changing the public opinion towards its abolition.

1.3.2. Human rights training for legal professionals and students

➤ **To strengthen human rights training of legal professionals, whereby:**

- Legal professionals, who undertake continuous training, receive regular thematic training on human rights.

Distance learning courses are introduced into the curriculum of the Institute for Retraining and Qualification Upgrading of Judges, Prosecutors and Legal Professionals at the BSU (the Institute) using the tools and methodology of the CoE HELP Programme. Stemming from the previous successful co-operation developed between the CoE and the Institute, this action implemented in the framework of the Action Plan, will provide for a sustainable approach to human rights training of legal professionals and law enforcement officers with the participation of international consultants and lawyers from the Registry of the European Court of Human Rights. Regular training sessions and seminars will be organised in Minsk, at the premises of the Institute.

Another action in this sector envisages providing self-learning materials on the CoE and its human rights system, study visits to the CoE including the European Court of Human Rights, and HELP distance-learning courses.

The CoE will also work to develop the capacity of judges, prosecutors, lawyers and investigators in the use of applicable CoE human rights standards in national proceedings; including through the introduction of HELP tools and methodology in the continuous education provided by the Institute. The introduction of HELP tools will allow raising awareness among the target audience on the CoE human rights standards, ECHR's system and the ECtHR case-law.

➤ **To introduce a human rights culture among law students in Belarus, whereby:**

- The human rights dimension in the curriculum of law students is introduced;
- The participation of Belarusian students in the René Cassin competition is supported; and
- Self-learning materials and online courses of the CoE HELP Programme are offered to the students of Law faculty and Faculty of International Relations of BSU.

The CoE will promote the introduction of HELP courses on the European system of human rights protection into the curriculum of faculties of law and faculties of international relations throughout the country. The HELP Programme's self-learning materials available to everyone will help the beneficiaries to increase the knowledge on European human rights standards and to use the elements of a training methodology successfully applied in many CoE member states.

Additionally, the CoE will also co-operate with the BSU in order to support the preparation of a group of students for the Human Rights René Cassin competition in 2016.

1.3.3. Assistance in taking decision on the optimal model of the national human rights institution

➤ **To assist national authorities in taking decision on the optimal model of the national human rights institution, whereby:**

- A dialogue is facilitated between the authorities and the civil society on the optimal model of the national human rights institution; and
- Expertise is provided on the best practices among the CoE member states with efficient national human rights mechanisms.

1.3.4. **Bioethics**

➤ **To raise awareness and promote CoE human rights standards in biomedical field (bioethics) and to provide basis for further co-operation of the Belarusian authorities and the CoE in this field, whereby:**

- The awareness of executive, legislative and judicial authorities, as well as professionals concerned, of CoE human rights standards and work in the biomedical field (bioethics), including the Convention on Human Rights and Biomedicine (Oviedo Convention, CETS No. 164) and its Additional protocols (CETS No. 168, 186, 195 and 203), is raised;
- The legal regulatory framework of organ transplantation with a special attention to the rights of donors and recipients is improved; and
- Further public discussions on main challenges to the human rights protection in biomedicine are fostered.

Under the proposed project, a number of seminars/trainings on the CoE standards in the field of human rights and ethics in biomedicine will be organised for representatives of executive, legislative and judicial authorities, medical professionals.

The Belarusian experts will familiarise themselves with main issues related to the human rights protection in biomedicine, including legal framework and challenges faced. The awareness of relevant Belarusian stakeholders on the CoE Convention against Trafficking in Human Organs (CETS No. 216) will also be raised.

1.3.5. **Regional and Minority Languages**

➤ **To promote the protection of minority languages based on the good practices of the European Charter for Regional or Minority Languages (thereafter ECRML, CETS No. 148), whereby:**

- The awareness of executive, legislative and judicial authorities in Belarus of the ECRML is raised;
- The capacity of the national authorities to protect minority languages is reinforced; and
- The list of Charter provisions adapted and applicable to the minority languages is prepared in consultation with representatives of the relevant authorities, NGOs and Council of Europe experts on the ECRML.

The proposed action is the first step in discussing national minorities and minority languages in Belarus. It will contribute to awareness-raising about the ECRML and minority issues in the country, and promote dialogue between relevant stakeholders.

1.3.6. **Violence against women and domestic violence, violence against children, trafficking in human beings**

➤ **To enhance co-operation between the CoE and Belarus in the area of human rights protection, notably in the areas of combating violence against women and domestic violence, violence against children and trafficking in human beings, whereby:**

- The awareness of executive, legislative and judicial authorities of the relevant CoE conventions is raised;
- The capacity of national institutions to prevent and combat violence against women and domestic violence is reinforced by strengthening legal, regulatory and policy framework and building and strengthening institutional and operational capacities;
- The capacity of national institutions to promote and protect children from violence is reinforced and awareness of violence, and in particular sexual violence, is raised;
- The capacity of national authorities to fight against human trafficking is improved; and
- The co-operation between state institutions and civil society in preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, violence against children and trafficking in human beings is strengthened.

Belarus has not yet signed nor ratified the CoE Council of Europe Convention on the Protection of Children against Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (Lanzarote Convention, CETS No.201), but has expressed an interest in becoming a party to it and harmonising its legislation with its provisions. The CoE will provide technical support to Belarus in this regard. Within this framework, co-operation activities will be developed with a view to promoting the principles of the Convention and taking into consideration the 1st Implementation report of the Lanzarote Committee. Support will focus on improving legal and policy frameworks to protect children from violence and strengthening institutional and operational capacities in line with the said European standard.

Concerning violence against women and domestic violence, co-operation will be developed within the proposed project "Violence against Women" by providing support in improving and strengthening legal, regulatory and policy frameworks and providing support in building and strengthening institutional and operational capacities.

In 2013, Belarus became the first non-member State to accede to the CoE Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (CETS No.197). The first monitoring visit by the Group of Experts on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings (GRETA) in Belarus was organised 18-22 April 2016. Co-operation in the field of fight against trafficking in human being will be developed in the light of the findings of the GRETA's evaluation report.

1.3.7. Data protection

- ***To support the development of right-based legislative and regulatory frameworks on data protection, thus enhancing the right to data protection, whereby:***
 - The awareness of executive, legislative and judicial authorities of the Data Protection Convention (CETS No.108) is raised;
 - Support to the effective implementation of data protection principles in the country is provided;
 - Progress towards the establishment of a supervisory authority entrusted with the task of overseeing the implementation of the data protection legislation is made; and
 - An increased proportion of the recommendations of the CoE regarding legal, policy and regulatory framework on data protection are implemented by national authorities to align with European standards.

1.3.8. Information society and internet governance

- ***To support improvement of activities of the national stakeholders on Internet governance, whereby:***
 - The national legal framework is reviewed in the light of European standards;
 - The dialogue between national Internet governance stakeholders is established and supported; and
 - The international co-operation on Internet governance is enhanced, information on best practices and experience is provided.

1.3.9. Promotion of co-operation in media sphere

- ***To contribute to promotion of professional and responsible journalism, whereby:***
 - Journalists are better informed about their fundamental human rights as reflected in CoE standards and their protection is enhanced, in particular with improved professional codes;
 - National legislation and regulations are improved in line with European standards; and
 - The awareness of media professionals of freedom of expression and media freedom, along with the need of a responsible approach towards on-line journalism is raised.

The CoE project activities will promote professional and responsible journalism and will encourage national stakeholders to protect copyright on the Internet.

➤ **To further develop national legislation regulating media sphere, whereby:**

- Parliamentary initiatives concerning the safety of journalists and impunity of attacks against them are prepared and discussed, and recommendations are developed;
- Understanding among parliamentarians of the standards and existing practices in CoE member States to ensure media freedom, in particular through public service broadcasters, is enhanced; and
- The awareness of the principles and necessity of fair and balanced coverage of election campaign is increased among MPs.

In the framework of the proposed action, the dialogue between parliamentarians and public broadcasters will be promoted and areas of for possible reforms will be identified.

1.3.10. Social rights

➤ **To promote the respect of social rights and to raise awareness of the European Social Charter (ESC), whereby:**

- The awareness and knowledge of the ESC are increased among policy makers, public officials and civil servants, judges as well as civil society;
- The awareness and knowledge on standards and required reforms with regard to an effective guarantee of social rights are enhanced; and
- The respect of social rights in particular for persons with disabilities is promoted.

Through the proposed action, the CoE will initiate discussion on the situation in Belarus in respect of the guarantee of social rights in particular for persons with disabilities and will support the further development of legislative framework and practice in this field. The action will be built on an exchange of experiences with international experts and with INGOs.

1.3.11. Gender equality

➤ **To promote gender equality, whereby:**

- The awareness of the CoE instruments ensuring gender equality is raised;
- National legislation and regulations are improved in line with European standards; and
- Co-operation between national authorities and civil society on gender equality is fostered.

The gender expertise of draft laws is applied alongside with the legal expertise to ensure the constitutional principle of equal rights and opportunities of men and women as well as the international human rights and gender equality standards. Such expertise has high importance to prevent negative consequences of gender unbalanced draft laws.

The CoE will assist in elaborating and implementation of the gender expertise methodology of the draft laws taking into consideration experience of other states.

The results of the joint CoE and OSCE/ODIHR Conference on issues of gender equality and participation of women in public life held in Minsk, in June 2015 and in June 2016, will be taken into account while preparing further events in Belarus on issues of gender equality.

➤ **To ensure women's access to justice, whereby:**

- The obstacles to women's access to justice are identified, necessary support to remove these obstacles is provided;
- Development of the legal and policy framework to prevent and combat all forms of violence against women and protect victims is supported; and
- Gender sensitive legislation is developed.

Under the regional project, national research study will be developed, and specific legal and procedural, as well as socio-economic and cultural obstacles to women's access to justice will be identified.

Measures to ensure that the justice chain is gender-responsive and addresses the needs of the most disadvantaged women will be designed. Professionals involved at the different stages of the justice chain (judges, prosecutors, lawyers, law enforcement) will have improved knowledge and skills on gender equality, women's rights and non-discrimination.

2. ENSURING JUSTICE

2.1 SECTOR OVERVIEW AND PRIORITIES

The co-operation between the CoE and Belarus in the field of justice covers the following jointly defined priority areas:

- Constitutional justice;
- Criminal and civil justice; and
- Penitentiary.

This co-operation is based on the experience and expertise of the CoE on constitutional, criminal and civil justice. The on-going co-operation is limited mostly to the co-operation between the Constitutional Court of Belarus and the CoE Venice Commission. This co-operation created a good basis for the continuation of joint activities in the future.

The CoE, through the Venice Commission, will provide support to the Constitutional Court of Belarus by organising activities on current constitutional case-law, international standards in the field of constitutional justice, as well as the case-law of the European Court of Human Rights and possibly the European Court of Justice.

Participation of Belarusian representatives in the work of the expert intergovernmental bodies acting in the legal field and in the CoE events such as those attended by Belarusian legal professionals or the staff of the registries of the Belarusian courts contributed to awareness-raising among legal practitioners and civil society on CoE relevant standards.

As regards the penitentiary, Belarus is not a Contracting Party to the European Convention for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CETS No. 126). The CoE will work closely with national stakeholders on awareness-raising on relevant standards in the area of penitentiary, such as standards of the European Committee for the Prevention of Torture and Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment (CPT).

Sources of justification:

Associate membership of Belarus in the Venice Commission; CM Recommendation No. R(98)7 Concerning the Ethical and Organisational Aspects of Health Care in Prison.
Belarus enjoys observer status with the European Committee on Legal Cooperation (CDDJ)

2.2 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To promote the rule of law in Belarus.

2.3 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

2.3.1. *Constitutional justice*

➤ ***To bring the legislation and practices in the field of constitutional justice in compliance with European constitutional standards and best practices, whereby:***

- The rule of law is enhanced through the Constitutional Court case-law; and
- The role of Constitutional Review Bodies in ensuring the Rule of Law in law-making and law enforcement legal community is strengthened.

The CoE will work closely with the Constitutional Court in order to encourage the wider application of the rule of law principles through its case-law and recommendations to other State organs.

The action in this field will also allow the Constitutional Court of Belarus to get acquainted with the experience and best practices of Constitutional Courts of other countries. Organising study visits could be an option.

Through the CoE actions organised on the topic, the Belarusian civil society will have an opportunity to express itself on the topic of the rule of law.

2.3.2. Criminal and civil justice

➤ **To support improving justice system, whereby:**

- Judicial professionals are provided with information on best practices and experience on justice issues; and
- National legal framework regulating the work of courts is reviewed; obstacles to criminal and civil justice are identified.

Under the regional project, the CoE will assist the national stakeholders in improving the legal frameworks and practices.

3. COMBATTING THREATS TO THE RULE OF LAW

3.1 SECTOR OVERVIEW AND PRIORITIES

The co-operation between the CoE and the Belarusian authorities encompasses the following priority areas:

- International legal assistance;
- Fight against corruption;
- Fight against money-laundering;
- Fight against terrorism;
- Enhancing criminal justice action on cybercrime;
- Increasing the efficacy of both supply and demand reduction of illicit drugs; and
- Fight against counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes.

Belarus is a Contracting Party to the Criminal Law Convention on Corruption (CETS No. 173), the Civil Law Convention on Corruption (CETS No. 174), and the Additional protocol to the latter (CETS No. 191). Belarus participates in the GRECO that monitors the implementation of the Organisation's anti-corruption instruments by all the members of this Group.

The CoE actions in this sector aim to support the participation of Belarusian representatives in regional anti-corruption activities, and to strengthen the capacities of the public administration and criminal justice sector to effectively prevent and fight corruption in line with CoE standards.

Belarus and the CoE have experience of co-operation on criminal justice, on cybercrime and electronic evidence in the Eastern Partnership countries. Belarus is familiar with judicial and law enforcement training concepts, with financial investigations and law enforcement/Internet service provider co-operation.

In the area of drug demand and supply reduction, co-operation activities will be implemented jointly by the CoE Pompidou Group and the Belarusian authorities.

The Belarusian authorities made several requests to the Co-operation Group to Combat Drug Abuse and Illicit Trafficking of Drugs (Pompidou Group) for support in organising and contributing to the drug policy debate in the country, in particular in the criminal justice area. This confirms Belarus' interest in the work of the Pompidou Group and broadens the scope of the proposed activities. In 2015, Belarus participated in two law enforcement projects of the Pompidou Group, in particular on drug trafficking through airports and the prevention of diversion of chemical precursors for the production of illicit drugs. At the request of the State Customs Committee, the Pompidou Group organised an expert mission to assess their drugs detection and enforcement work at Minsk-2 airport.

Within the framework of the present Action Plan, the Pompidou group action will aim to set the basis for reliable data collection and processing that will serve drug policy more effectively, and foster nation-wide dialogue on the latest developments and strategies designed to reduce both supply and demand of illicit drugs, embrace evidence based approaches in drug policy and support awareness raising and training of Belarusian professionals in the drugs field, in particular through the participation of national representatives in law enforcement activities and to strengthen the capacities of the public administration and criminal justice sector to effectively prevent substance use disorders and illicit trafficking in drugs and the diversion of drugs precursors.

Sources of justification:

European Convention on Extradition (CETS No. 024), European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and Additional Protocols to the Convention (CETS No. 030, 099, 182), European Convention on the Transfer of Proceedings in Criminal Matters (CETS No. 073), Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons; European Convention on the Suppression of Terrorism (CETS No. 090); GRECO Joint First and Second Round Evaluation Report on Belarus (Eval I/II (2013) 1E); Results of the GRECO's Third Round Evaluation visit to Belarus; Interest expressed by Belarus in MONEYVAL, Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism; Co-operation in Cybercrime Octopus and Budapest Convention, as well as Cybercrime@EAP project 2011-2014; Interest expressed by the Belarusian authorities to co-operate with the Pompidou Group in such areas as reduction supply and demand for illicit drugs, drugs in prison, law enforcement (the State Customs Committee and the Police), and prevention of drug use among young people; Decision of the CM on the request by Belarus to be invited to sign the CoE Convention on the counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health, 1190th meeting, 5 February 2014 (CM/Del/OT(2014)1190); Interest expressed by Belarus in CODEXTER; Interest expressed by the Belarusian authorities in the Committee of Experts on the Operation of European Conventions on Co-operation in Criminal Matters (PC-OC).

3.2 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To better prevent corruption, money laundering and cybercrime in line with the European standards, as well as improve the legal framework.

3.3. SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS

3.3.1 International legal assistance

➤ To enhance international legal assistance, whereby:

- The awareness of executive, legislative and judicial authorities of the European Convention on Extradition, the European Convention on Mutual Assistance in Criminal Matters and the Additional Protocols to the Convention, the European Convention on the Transfer of Proceedings in Criminal Matters, the Convention on the Transfer of Sentenced Persons is raised;
- Information on experience of mechanisms and structures functioning under the aegis of the CoE treaties mentioned above is provided;
- Legislative and institutional frameworks are improved; and
- National capacities on international legal assistance are fostered.

Within the framework of the present Action Plan, the CoE activities will be focused on increasing Belarusian authorities' awareness and knowledge of best practices and methodologies of the Committee of Experts on the Operation of European Conventions on Co-Operation in Criminal Matters (PC-OC). The Belarusian experts will be involved in some PC-OC events on the ad-hoc basis.

Development of international contacts of the Belarusian experts in the sphere of international legal assistance will be emphasised.

3.3.2. Fight against corruption

➤ **To enhance fight against corruption at national level, whereby:**

- The awareness of executive, legislative and judicial authorities of relevant CoE conventions is raised;
- The awareness of GRECO and its work in Belarus is raised;
- Legislative and institutional frameworks are improved;
- Effective mechanisms to prevent corruption in public administration are introduced;
- A co-operation agreement between anti-corruption agencies, public administration and law enforcement is established and effectively implemented; and
- Legislative and institutional frameworks concerning ethics, codes of conduct and conflicts of interest are developed.

The action in this field involves convention-based activities and aims to strengthen the capacities of the public administration and criminal justice sector to effectively prevent and fight corruption in line with CoE standards.

The CoE will assist Belarus in improving the framework and the capacity to fully implement legal aspects of prevention and criminalisation of corruption, particularly in terms of implementing relevant GRECO recommendations following its two monitoring reports on Belarus. The CoE will help strengthen the capacity to prevent corruption in public administration, judiciary, prosecution, and law enforcement authorities; to improve legal frameworks concerning ethics and codes of conduct; conflicts of interest; prohibition or restriction of certain activities; and declaration of assets, income, liabilities and interests.

Within a regional project, the CoE activities will be focused on the fight against corruption on specific areas (i.e. education and health sector); prevention and integrity mechanisms for practicing professionals and increasing good governance when delivering public services. The action aims to develop regional capacity and cross-border co-operation on identified common challenge areas in the fight against corruption, where cross-border and international co-operation is necessary to combat corruption as a criminal offence, and other forms of financial and economic crime. It will also help to strengthen the national capacity in detecting and combating money-laundering and other financial and economic crime.

➤ **To assist national authorities in building their capacities to fight corruption, whereby:**

- Selected sectors of public governance are reviewed for corruption risks;
- Belarusian prosecutors and prosecutorial investigators are trained on corruption in the private sector; and
- Belarusian prosecutors and prosecutorial investigators are trained on criminal liability of legal persons for corruption offences.

Whereas Belarus seems to have a rather low level of corruption affecting everyday life of citizens, according to international surveys, there are very few anti-corruption activities such as training, public conferences or similar activities visible to the public and general administration. Under the proposed project the Belarusian counterparts will participate in CoE trainings that would allow them to enhance their professional capacity.

Additionally, the ranges of training of the CoE will cover issues such as criminal liability of legal persons and political financing. Civil servants and civil society will be informed about anti-corruption concepts and specific tools such as asset declarations.

3.3.3. Fight against money laundering

➤ ***To enhance fight against money laundering, whereby:***

- The awareness of the Belarusian authorities of the Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime, Council of Europe Convention on Laundering, Search, Seizure and Confiscation of the Proceeds from Crime and on the Financing of Terrorism is raised;
- Legislative and institutional frameworks of fight against money laundering are improved; and
- National capacities on search and fight against money laundering and other financial and economic crimes are fostered.

Within the proposed regional project, the CoE activities will be focused on increasing Belarusian authorities' awareness and knowledge of best practices and methodologies of the Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL). The Belarusian experts will be involved in some MONEYVAL events on an ad-hoc basis.

Development of international cooperation of Belarus on search and suppression of channels of financing of terrorism will be emphasised. Expert risk assessment on money laundering and financing of terrorism in Belarus will be carried out.

3.3.4 Fight against terrorism

➤ ***To enhance fight against terrorism, whereby:***

- The awareness of the Belarusian authorities of relevant CoE instruments in this area is raised;
- Legislative and institutional frameworks of fight against terrorism are improved in line with European standards; and
- National capacities on fight against terrorism are enhanced.

Belarusian experts will be involved to CODEXTER conferences and international co-operation events on ad hoc basis, especially those devoted to fighting radicalisation on the Internet and links between organised crime and terrorism.

3.3.5. Cybercrime

➤ ***To strengthen criminal justice action on cybercrime in Belarus, whereby:***

- The awareness of executive, legislative and judicial authorities of the Convention on Cybercrime (Budapest Convention, CETS No. 185) is raised;
- The reform of criminal procedure law, in line with the Budapest Convention, including conditions and safeguards of Article 15, is promoted;
- Capacities of the authorities responsible for international co-operation with regard to cybercrime and electronic evidence are enhanced; and
- Co-operation with the private sector entities for prevention and investigation of cybercrime is facilitated.

Within the proposed regional project, the co-operation between the CoE and Belarus in the field of criminal justice action on cybercrime was launched. In the framework of this action, the CoE will support the country by providing analysis of current initiatives, challenges and opportunities regarding international and public/private co-operation in this field, including creation of information resources, tools and standards forms for such co-operation. Belarus will continue to contribute to and benefit from participation in international events on cybercrime, with a view to maintaining awareness of latest cybercrime trends and challenges, and to network with colleagues from different countries and organisations.

3.3.6. Drug use

➤ ***To establish a dialogue and raise awareness about new trends in drug trafficking among the law enforcement, whereby:***

- Awareness among relevant professionals about the latest trends and developments in drug-trafficking and related law enforcement is raised;
- Review and proposals for adjustments to drug enforcement legal frameworks and implementing protocols are prepared; and
- International co-operation is enhanced.

The purpose of the proposed action is to establish a dialogue and raise awareness about new trends in drug trafficking, including as regards new psychoactive substances, designer drugs and diversion of chemical precursors for the production of drugs. Attention should also be paid, among other issues, to Belarusian capabilities to repress drug-related cybercrime.

Capacity building would include modules/lectures by international experts in initial and on-going training for police, customs and other law enforcement officials, as well as study visits, support to participation in relevant international conferences and platforms (including those organised by the Pompidou Group). Drug transit routes through Belarus should be identified and remedial action proposed.

➤ ***To enhance capacity for drug treatment in detention, whereby:***

- Relapse of former prisoners is reduced contributing to a healthier society; and
- National policies and services concerning drug treatment in prisons are reviewed and improved.

The healthcare in prisons is a fundamental aspect, alongside social support and reinforcing the ability of persons with drug problems to cope, which can take the form of therapeutic communities. Harm reduction in custodial settings is an essential component of any strategy against HIV, Hepatitis B and other epidemics of blood borne communicable diseases.

➤ ***To assist in developing effective drug policies in respect of prevention and health care responses to drug abuse, whereby:***

- The number of people who use drugs and delay onset of drug use among young people is reduced;
- The adverse health consequences of drug use are reduced, thus reducing future health and social costs associated to or resulting from drug abuse; and
- Follow-up actions to reduce drug related deaths are identified.

A condition for effective drug policies is the gathering of accurate and complete data. Consequently, these objectives will involve first of all assessing the arrangements for data collection and gathering of data from different sources and the modalities in which this information is made available to policy makers. Identifying potential gaps will permit to make proposals with a view to ensuring that reliable data underpins drug policy and its implementation.

The actions in this field will involve co-operation among different stakeholders such as education and health authorities. Specific action should be taken to facilitate dialogue among various stakeholders, including with civil society organisations. Participation of Belarusian representatives in the Pompidou Group's 2016 Executive Training will be a milestone in developing constructive relations between authorities and non-governmental organisations.

The prevention strategies will be examined. Understanding triggers and patterns of drug use among young people is essential for prevention strategies, for delaying onset of drug use and responding effectively to occasional and problematic use. The growing use of the Internet and the rise in synthetic and designer drugs also has to be addressed. Health care and treatment options will be examined with a view to making any necessary adjustments. Coupled with support and harm reduction measures, this action should improve the health consequences of drugs use, reduce the health care cost associated to conditions and diseases resulting from drug abuse, and reduce the number of drug-related deaths and overdoses.

3.3.7. Fight against counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes

- **To improve fight against counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes, whereby:**
 - The awareness of the Belarusian authorities of the Convention on the counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes involving threats to public health (MEDICRIME Convention, CETS No. 211) is raised;
 - Legislative and institutional frameworks on the fight against terrorism are improved;
 - National capacities on the fight against counterfeiting of medical products and similar crimes are fostered.

According to the decision of the Committee of Ministers 5 February 2014, Belarus was invited to sign the MEDICRIME Convention⁴. The CoE will support the country to sign and ratify this international treaty by providing necessary expertise and review of the national legislation in line with the European standards.

4. PROMOTING DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE AND PARTICIPATION

4.1 SECTOR OVERVIEW AND PRIORITIES

- The priorities of this sector as jointly defined by the CoE and Belarusian authorities include:
 - Co-operation in the field of culture, education, youth and sports;
 - Bern Convention-based activities;
 - Civil society; and
 - Local governance.

The co-operation of the CoE and Belarus in the field of culture, education, youth and sports is based in the European Cultural Convention and CoE relevant expertise. The objective of the action in the Action Plan is to align the national higher education system with principles and goals of the European Higher Education Area through the implementation of the Belarus roadmap for higher education reform, support the efforts of the national authorities in the development of cultural co-operation, support to the youth and to contribute to strengthening the Council of Europe values through the promotion of sport for all.

The convention-based activities in this field will include the participation of Belarusian representatives in CoE activities based on the European Cultural Convention (CETS No. 018), the Bern Convention (CETS No. 104) and participation of Belarusian representatives in events organised by the Congress and other activities in the field of local democracy. Moreover, the CoE will provide policy advice as well as legal and technical assistance targeted to support the legislative and territorial-administrative reforms undertaken by Belarusian authorities.

The CoE will support civil society and relevant authorities with a view to enhancing civil participation in the decision-making process and participation of Belarusian NGOs in the CoE's events and activities.

In the framework of a regional project, the CoE will provide assistance to relevant counterparts in order to improve the electoral legislation and its implementation.

⁴ [https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/Del/Dec\(2014\)1190/2.4](https://search.coe.int/cm/Pages/result_details.aspx?Reference=CM/Del/Dec(2014)1190/2.4)

Sources of justification:

Anti-Doping Convention of the Council of Europe (CETS No. 135);
 CM Recommendations on the youth policy of the CoE; CM Recommendation Rec(2006)1 on the role of national youth councils in youth policy development;
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)7 on the responsibility of public authorities for academic freedom and institutional autonomy;
 Recommendation CM/Rec(2012)13 on ensuring quality education;
 Congress Recommendation 128 (2003) on the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life;
 2015 Report by the Secretary General on the state of democracy, human rights and rule of law, chapter 3;
 CoE Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (National Action Plan for Belarus 2015-2017);
 Evaluation Report on the results of the expert visit by the CoE Monitoring Group on Anti-Doping (3-6 February 2015); Report on the results of the consultative visit by the experts of T-RV Standing Committee to Minsk (25-28 November 2013); Yerevan Communiqué adopted by the Ministers of the European Higher Education Area in May 2015;
 Magna Charta Universitatum;
 Belarus roadmap for higher education reform in accordance with the values, principles and goals of the European Higher Education Area;
 Joint Council on Youth: Priorities for the Youth Department's programme 2016-2017; Proposals from Belarusian youth governmental and non-governmental partners during study visits to Minsk and Strasbourg in 2015;
 Joint Programmes on the setting-up of the Emerald Network (2009-2011 and 2012-2016); EU/CoE Joint Programme "Community led urban strategies in historic towns" (COMUS); Capacity Building on Cultural Policy – 'Compendium' Cultural Policy Profile;
 Code of Good Practice for Civil Participation in the Decision-making Process (2009).

4.2 OVERALL OBJECTIVE

To promote good governance in various spheres of activities of public life and society in Belarus in alignment of the CoE principles, including higher education, culture, sports, youth, civil society, local democracy and elections.

4.3 SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES AND EXPECTED RESULTS**4.3.1. Democratic governance and higher education reforms**

➤ ***To align the higher education system of Belarus with the principles and goals of the European Higher Education Area, through the implementation of the Belarus roadmap for higher education reform, whereby:***

- University autonomy is fostered and the academic freedom at higher education institutions in Belarus is enhanced;
- The capacity of teachers and students to develop democratic governance at universities and to promote democratic culture and active citizenship in universities and communities is strengthened;
- A National Qualification Framework compatible with the Qualification Framework of the European Higher Education Area, and which will ensure comparability of the higher education system of Belarus with other European higher education systems, is developed and implemented;
- The development and implementation of quality assurance mechanisms that comply with the requirements of the European Higher Education Area is facilitated; and
- Mobility and employability for the public/ national/international labour market through quality improvement and internalisation of higher education institutions in line with the European Higher Education Area is supported.

The objective of the CoE action is to align the higher education system of Belarus with principles and goals of the European Higher Education Area through the implementation of the Belarus roadmap for higher education reform.

The strategic reform of the university governance system will be supported and the institutional autonomy and academic freedom enhanced in line with the Magna Charta Universitatum and the CoE Recommendation Rec/CM(2012)7 on the public responsibility for academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

- ***To support integration and/or further development of education for democratic citizenship and human rights education in the national education system, in accordance with the Council of Europe Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education, whereby:***
 - Educational policy and practice are strengthened in line with Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education (EDC/HRE) standards;
 - School curriculum is improved through analysis and integration of the principles of the Charter on EDC/HRE;
 - The capacity of a number of educational professionals, youth leaders and youth workers to teach and promote EDC/HRE in formal and non-formal education is increased; and
 - The number of non-governmental organisations, including youth organisations that advocate for and support the implementation of quality standards for human rights education programmes and activities, is increased.

In 2010, the CM adopted the Charter on Education for Democratic Citizenship and Human Rights Education⁵, which provides a common framework for action in this field. Although not a member state, Belarus participates actively in the activities related to the implementation of the principles of the Charter. Through the proposed regional project, the CoE will work closely with national authorities to prioritise the work on the Charter at national government level and at educational institution level. The CoE will promote the use of its tools and resources to encourage the training of teachers, school leaders and other educational staff on the Charter.

- ***To promote the CoE PESTALOZZI programme for the professional development of teachers and education actors, whereby:***
 - The best education practices and experience are provided; and
 - The training materials of the PESTALOZZI programme are disseminated among the Belarusian experts.

Implementation of the PESTALOZZI programme is coordinated by the National Liaison Officer, who is responsible for awareness raising of the national education institutions and civil society on the development of the programme, selection of the participants and organising of the trainings and seminars.

4.3.2. Culture

- ***To support Belarus in developing cultural policies based on the European Culture Convention (CETS No.018). To promote the protecting of cultural heritage, whereby:***
 - The capacity of national institutions for modernisation of cultural policies is strengthened;
 - The role of cultural heritage at national and local development is strengthened; and
 - Further involvement of Belarus in the European intercultural dialogue.

The Action Plan will contribute to strengthening the co-operation with Belarus in the field of cultural heritage including through the CoE/EU Joint Programme “Community led urban strategies in historic towns” (COMUS). This action will include exploring and testing urban planning models that respond to the practical problems in small- and medium-sized historic towns.

⁵ Recommendation CM/Rec(2010)7 adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 11 May 2010 at the 120th Session.

The project aims at promoting cultural development in the country including through Heritage-led urban projects (Heritage Rehabilitation projects). It will also contribute to the integration of Belarus into a multilateral policy analysis and information structure and network of leading European cultural policy experts (Compendium)⁶.

The CoE will continue to support the European Heritage Days in Belarus.

4.3.3. Youth

➤ ***To support the emergence and development of practices of democratic youth participation in youth organisations and youth policy-related institutions in Belarus and access to human rights education for non-formal learning practitioners, whereby:***

- An understanding of the main values and approaches of the CoE among Belarusian youth leaders and public sector actors is fostered;
- Standards and practices of democratic youth participation in youth organisations and local authorities are introduced, notably through the Revised European Charter on the Participation of Young People in Local and Regional Life;
- Co-operation and partnership between key governmental and non-governmental actors in the development of youth policy are strengthened;
- The co-management system in decision-making processes in the youth policy field is promoted;
- The recognition of youth work and non-formal education is supported;
- The capacity of youth workers and non-formal education actors to include and deliver human rights education in their activities is strengthened;
- The implementation of the No Hate Speech Movement Campaign is supported; and
- Co-operation between national youth policy actors and the CoE Youth Department is enhanced.

The CoE will develop co-operation with Belarus in the youth sector to ensure that the engagement of Belarusian young people in CoE activities is broad, deep-rooted and long-term in nature. Activities in this sector aim to support the emergence and development of democratic youth participation practices in youth organisations and youth policy-related institutions, as well as access to human rights education and other CoE activities for youth.

Through the proposed project, the CoE will support the development of a culture of democratic youth participation in youth organisations and public authorities, through the dissemination of CoE instruments and tools on youth participation and human rights education.

The "50-50" training course on democratic youth participation at regional and local levels will support the development of partnerships with youth organisations, whereas the Summer University for Youth will provide information on the CoE and its youth policies.

The training course for multipliers in human rights education with young people based on Compasito and Compass will mainstream human rights education in youth work and youth policy in the country through the development of competences (knowledge, skills, attitudes) of youth workers, leaders and trainers to implement initiatives, projects and programmes at local, regional and national levels.

⁶ Compendium system: <http://www.culturalpolicies.net>

4.3.4. Sports

➤ **To contribute to the strengthening of Council of Europe values through the promotion of sport for all and to make sport healthier, safer and fairer**, whereby:

- The awareness of executive, legislative and judicial authorities of the Anti-Doping Convention (CETS No. 135), Council of Europe Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions (CETS No. 215), and the Convention on Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events (CETS No. 218), is raised;
- Recommendations reflected in the Evaluation reports of the Standing and Monitoring Committees (T-DO, T-RV and possibly European Sports Charter) are implemented;
- Measures taken on anti-doping policy by Belarus are confirmed by the CoE experts from the Monitoring Group of the Anti-Doping Convention; and
- Assessment on the possibility of Belarus acceding the following CoE treaties is conducted:
 - Additional Protocol of the Anti-Doping Convention of the Council of Europe;
 - Convention on Integrated Safety, Security and Service Approach at Football Matches and Other Sports Events;
 - Convention on the manipulation of sports competitions.

The objective of the CoE action in the field of sports is to contribute to the strengthening of CoE values through the promotion of sport for all and to make sport healthier, safer and fairer.

The CoE will help the country to improve the legislative basis with the aim of defining its National Anti-Doping Agency's obligations, and supporting sports organisations, governmental departments and public bodies towards the implementation of the CoE anti-Doping Convention, as well as the WADA Code and the International (UNESCO) Convention against Doping in Sport.

The CoE activities will focus on building consensus on the integrated safety, security and service approach at football matches and other sports events; setting-up the basic processes and structures to co-operate in the international fight against the manipulation of sport competitions; awareness-raising and support the development of child protection policies within sports organisations.

During a follow-up visit to Belarus experts from the Monitoring Group of the Anti-Doping Convention of the CoE will assess the measures taken on anti-doping policy.

It is also expected that the action in this sector will help the Belarusian authorities to become technically and legally apt to accede the CoE sports conventions.

4.3.5. Bern Convention-based activities

➤ **To contribute to the protection of biodiversity in the country and support the achievement of the world targets on protected areas and biodiversity agreed by the UN Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD)**, whereby:

- The awareness of executive, legislative and judicial authorities of the Bern Convention is raised;
- The scientific identification of the Emerald Network areas in the country and their scientific evaluation is completed and the Emerald Network is launched;
- The introduction of the Emerald Network in national legislation and the subsequent national designation of all Emerald sites is supported; and
- Inter-ministerial and stakeholder co-operation in the planning of conservation objectives and management measures for the Emerald sites is facilitated.

The activities under proposed project will be built upon successes of the previous co-operation between the CoE and Belarus in the field of the protection of biodiversity. This project will aim at finalising the creation of the Emerald Network in the country.

The national designation of the Emerald sites and the preparation of their conservation plans should be an open process at national level, involving all relevant stakeholders, national authorities, local actors and future managers of the Emerald sites. The project will seek to ensure that an open consultative process is put in place in all target countries, including Belarus, so as to facilitate the acceptance and smooth future management of the Network at the national level.

Scientific work on the Network creation will be combined with activities such as visibility and awareness-raising campaigns on sustainable management of the areas of special conservation interest, but also inter-ministerial and inter-stakeholders' meetings to debate the inclusion of the Network in the national legislation. These will prepare the ground and facilitate the planning process of the management measures which will be implemented in each Emerald site.

4.3.6. Civil society

➤ ***To support civil participation in the decision-making process, whereby:***

- Dialogue and interaction between civil society and relevant public institutions is strengthened;
- Civil society actors involvement in decision-making processes is enhanced;
- Public authorities' access to methodology for consultation and interaction with civil society is improved; and
- Contacts between Belarusian civil society and authorities with their counterparts in the CoE are fostered.

The CoE will promote the exchange of experience and best practices as regards civil participation, the creation of better environment for functioning of NGOs. Furthermore, the CoE will also promote the culture of civil participation and specific mechanisms to ensure the active participation of civil society in democratic decision-making.

Within the proposed regional project, regional studies on strategic and immediate priority issues related to the interaction between public authorities and NGOs will be produced, published and used by all relevant stakeholders.

The Belarusian NGOs and the state bodies will be encouraged to participate in the CoE events devoted to this topic. The engagement of Belarusian civil society representatives in the Council of Europe' activities will be supported and expanded.

4.3.7. Local democracy

➤ ***To provide CoE legal expertise and policy advice on improvement of local self-government, whereby:***

- The legal and institutional framework of local self-government is improved based on the best practices of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (CETS No. 122);
- The legal and institutional framework is improved;
- Institutional and leadership capacities of local authorities are enhanced including through implementation of the training course "Leadership Academy"; and
- The administrative capacities of local authorities are strengthened.

The project will promote the exchange of experience and best practices as regards civil participation and will foster the culture of dialogue and participation.

The CoE will provide advice and capacity-building. The Belarusian NGOs and the state bodies will be encouraged to participate in the CoE events devoted to this topic.

4.3.8. Electoral issues

- **To support improvement of the electoral legislation and its implementation**, whereby:
- Institutional and operational capacity of election administration to organise electoral process in line with the CoE standards is enhanced; and
 - Information on the CoE and other international election standards is provided.

The CoE will provide assistance to Belarus in improving electoral legislation and practice taking into consideration best practices, international experience, PACE, Venice Commission and ODIHR/OSCE recommendations.

The Venice Commission remains ready to assist the Belarusian authorities in improving electoral legislation and practice in compliance with European standards.

5. COUNCIL OF EUROPE INFORMATION POINT IN MINSK

5.1 OVERVIEW

The Information Point in Minsk was opened on 8 June 2009 as a joint regular annual project between the Council of Europe and the BSU in liaison with the Belarusian authorities.

The Information Point in Minsk is the only project of this kind within the Council of Europe, due to specific relations with Belarus. The Secretariat regularly reports to GR-DEM on its activities and requests an authorisation for the extension of the project.

In 2013, further to the proposal of the CoE and in agreement with the Belarusian authorities, the project was, for the first time, prolonged for two years (2014-2015). In 2015, project was further prolonged for the period 2016-2017.

Sources of justification:

Relevant decisions of the CM and/or GR-DEM for 2016-2017; Decision of GR-DEM of 7 July 2015 (Synopsis GR-DEM(2015)CB5); CM Decision on Abolition of the death penalty in Europe, 1237th meeting, 7-8 October 2015 (CM/Del/Dec(2015)1237); Chapters devoted to the functioning of the CoE Information Point in Minsk in the Programmes of Activities for Belarus until 2013.

5.2 OBJECTIVE AND EXPECTED RESULTS

- **To raise awareness in Belarus on fundamental values, legal instruments, achievements, policy and activities of the Council of Europe, whereby:**
- CoE events in Belarus are organised and supported;
 - CoE information materials, including video/audio materials, are translated, published and distributed;
 - Visits of CoE representatives to Belarus and of Belarus representatives to the CoE are organised and supported; and
 - Information on the CoE and its activities is provided to public organisations and citizens upon their request.

The Information Point will work to raise awareness of government institutions, NGOs, mass media outlets, universities and other institutes of higher education and citizens of Belarus and to provide them with information on fundamental values, legal instruments, achievements, policy and activities of the CoE.

APPENDIX I. FINANCIAL TABLE

TOTAL BUDGET: € 7 037 121⁷

SECTORAL AREAS	TOTAL FUNDS SECURED	ADDITIONAL FUNDS REQUIRED	SECTORAL TOTALS
1. Protecting and Promoting Human Rights	€ 527 332	€ 1 110 000	€ 1 637 332
2. Ensuring justice	€ 421 999	€ 0	€ 421 999
3. Combatting Threats to the Rule of Law	€ 633 332	€ 600 000	€ 1 233 332
4. Promoting Democratic Governance and Participation	€ 754 458	€ 2 730 000	€ 3 484 458
5. CoE Information Point in Minsk	€ 140 000	€ 120 000	€ 260 000
TOTAL	€ 2 477 121	€ 4 560 000	€ 7 037 121

⁷ Including regional projects

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The Council of Europe is the continent's leading human rights organisation. It comprises 47 member states, 28 of which are members of the European Union. All Council of Europe member states have signed up to the European Convention on Human Rights, a treaty designed to protect human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The European Court of Human Rights oversees the implementation of the Convention in the member states.