



ACTIVITIES REPORT

Creating a safer, freer, and more stable neighbourhood of the European Union

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Eastern Europe Studies Centre

ABOUT EESC

The Eastern Europe Studies Centre (EESC) is a non-profit organisation dedicated to promoting human rights, democratic values and active civil society in the EU Eastern neighbourhood. Founded in 2006, EESC focuses on improvement of the social and civil environment through people-to-people contacts and better understanding of our Eastern neighbours. The Centre fulfils this mission by providing high-quality independent analysis on social, political and economic developments in the EU Eastern Partnership countries and by implementing development cooperation projects in Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, as well as by expanding the partner network and common projects in Azerbaijan and Armenia.

The geographical scope of EESC involvement also includes Afghanistan, Burma and Cuba. Since 2007, EESC has been engaged in awareness-raising projects aiming to bring the issue of human rights violations in Burma and Cuba into Lithuanian public discourse. In 2010, EESC joined the Lithuanian government's efforts to support and enable Afghans to build their own capacity and has developed several competence-raising projects in Ghor Province. Many activities related to developing countries such as Afghanistan, Burma and Cuba became possible only because of the wide network of EESC partners all over the world.



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1. Civil society conference *Eastern Partnership Reality Check: Political Challenges and Future Agenda for Civil Society* (November 2013). The panel on Ukraine after the (non)signing of the Association Agreement included Ukraine's opposition leaders Arseniy Yatsenyuk, Vitali Klitschko, Petro Poroshenko and Oleh Tyahnybok, and former Polish President Aleksander Kwaśniewski.



2

2. Roundtable discussion *Eastern Partnership after the Vilnius Summit: the View from the Partner Countries* (October 2013).

3. Roundtable Discussion *Lithuanian Foreign Policy in Focus: Lithuanian-Polish Relations Reconsidered* (May 2011). Former Lithuanian President Valdas Adamkus attended the discussion.



3



4. Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė presents an award to EESC Director Kristina Vaičiūnaitė for EESC's contribution to the Lithuanian Presidency of the European Union Council (January 2014). Kristina Vaičiūnaitė has been the Director of EESC since the Centre's establishment in 2006.

EESC is convinced that success in creating a safer, freer, and more stable neighbourhood of the EU rests upon a deep and thorough knowledge of the region of engagement. Thus, stimulating academic interest in Eastern Europe is among the key priorities of EESC. During the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2013, EESC was to the fore in providing strategic insights and policy recommendations for the EU Eastern Partnership Initiative and continues to closely follow the outcomes of the Vilnius Summit. In addition to its first-hand expertise on Eastern Europe, the Centre also leads Lithuanian public debates on emerging foreign policy and international security issues.

EESC's commitment to filling the gap of open discussions on challenges and success stories of the Eastern European region is also reflected in its researches. Among the most read EESC publications are the analysis on processes in the EU Eastern neighbourhood published under the headline *Eastern Pulse* and *Bell*, a Belarusian info letter written exclusively by Belarusian authors. EESC analysts take an active role in regional research initiatives, as well as engaging fellow scholars from the EU Eastern Partnership countries in EESC-led projects. Meeting challenges together in order to make the Eastern European region a success story is our vision.

RESEARCH

EESC is the leading Lithuanian think tank specialising in the EU Eastern neighbourhood and provides insights and policy recommendations to decision makers in Lithuania, the EU and Eastern Partnership countries.

EESC scholars regularly monitor and analyse political, economic, social and cultural processes in the Eastern Partnership countries. Commissioned and independent analyses of EESC contribute to Lithuanian and EU policymaking towards a safe, stable, economically strong and pro-European Eastern neighbourhood. The research also stimulates academic interest in Eastern Europe, engages political scholars in neighbouring countries and intensifies dialogue between the academic and practical arenas.

During the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union in the second half of 2013, EESC provided support to one of the Presidency's priorities – strengthening the EU Eastern Partnership Policy. As part of the initiative, several studies, including *Eastern Partnership after Vilnius: A Mission Accomplished, Mounting Tasks Ahead* by Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Vytautas Keršanskas, Kristina Vaičiūnaitė and Balázs Jarábik (1), were published. The almanac *Lithuania's success story for Ukraine* (2) sharing Lithuania's experiences while integrating to the European Union was prepared for Ukrainian readers.



Eastern Partnership after Vilnius: A Mission Accomplished, Mounting Tasks Ahead

Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Vytautas Keršanskas, Kristina Vaičiūnaitė with Balázs Jarábik¹

Vilnius Summit: More Hope, Less Hype

Disregard what will happen at the EU's Eastern Partnership Summit at the end of November, Vilnius is about to bring both an achievement and important lessons to learn. The Vilnius Summit will accomplish the original mission - to give a European perspective to the region. Part of this achievement is due to the rapidly changed paradigm of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP): the South, one time priority of the French Presidency of the EU, is now burning in the aftermath of the Arab Spring. But there is too much hype instead of the hope that Vilnius should bring. It is, however, important to remember the historical context. The EaP was announced in 2009 after a long soul-searching on how to answer Ukraine's Orange Revolution, right after the EU's historical enlargement in 2004. Among the reactions, wider Europe as a policy was vague and the ENP was too wide and technical. The Association Agreement, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement (DCFTA) and visa facilitation, has the necessary technical/legislative element, the facilities and programs provide engagement with wider parts of society, while the association is bold enough in a vision

to become a "middle-man" in an integration process. But for those in the region assuming that the EU is the solution for all woes, please consider - it took nine years to find this answer.

Although the interest of political elites as well as of the people in the region is there, Eastern Europeans lack clarity about what is at stake, the benefits this process may bring and the sacrifice (aka reforms) it will take. Therefore, greater understanding, some fixing, and upgrading combine to outline just some of the mounting tasks ahead.

This paper frames the post-Vilnius planning from this historical perspective, arguing that the policy needs a boost in technical implementation and capacity of both the EC and partner countries and some necessary fixing, "mending the gap", between the EU and Eastern partners. It also brings forward ideas toward upgrading the policy's strategic appeal for "associated partners to be" in order to keep the momentum going.

Focusing on implementation will certainly be key, but the political will in the region could evaporate amidst the upcoming elections (Moldova 2014, Ukraine 2015). Ukraine and other countries in the region should realize

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¹ We would like to express our gratitude to analyst Simona Klimoska for her help during the preparation of the paper.

² See Larus Delmar and Katerina Wikström, Beyond the Vilnius Summit: challenges for deeper EU integration with Eastern Europe, European Policy Centre, Policy brief, October 24, 2013, https://www.epp.europa.eu/media/136764/attach/white_paper_beyond_the_vilnius_summit.pdf



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EESC also conducts research and provides strategic insights and policy solutions on key Lithuanian foreign policy questions.



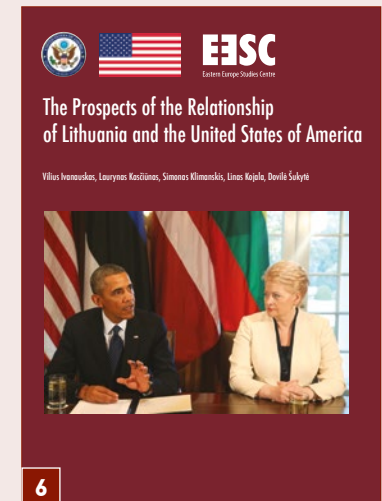
3. Eurasian Union: a Challenge for the European Union and Eastern Partnership Countries by Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Ramūnas Vilpišauskas, Raimondas Ališauskas, Živilė Dambrauskaitė, Vytautas Sinica, Ihor Levchenko and Victor Chirila (2012).

4. Visa-free Regime Between Russia and the European Union: Impact on Lithuania by Vilius Ivanauskas, Tomas Janeliūnas, Vytis Jurkonis, Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Raimundas Lopata, Tadas Pikčiūnas, Vladas Sirutavičius and Dovilė Šukytė (2012).

5. Eastern Partnership in a Changed Security Environment: New Incentives for Reform by Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Vilius Ivanauskas, Vytautas Keršanskas and Linas Kojala (2014).

6. The Prospects of the Relationship of Lithuania and the United States of America by Vilius Ivanauskas, Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Simonas Klimanskis, Linas Kojala and Dovilė Šukytė (2014).

All of EESC's research papers and publications are available online at www.eesc.lt.



CONFERENCES

EESC has earned an excellent reputation for the organisation of many conferences on political, economic, security, and civil society issues of Eastern Europe. The Centre has become an acknowledged meeting place for open discussion.

In June 2014, the International security experts' conference *Partners in European Security: Search for Greater Synergy between EU Common Security and Defence Policy and Eastern Partnership Policy* brought together security experts from all six Eastern Partnership countries, EU Member States and institutions, including government officials.



1. International security experts' conference *Partners in European Security: Search for Greater Synergy between EU Common Security and Defence Policy and Eastern Partnership Policy* (June 2014) was opened by Lithuanian Minister of National Defence Juozas Olekas.



2-3. International security experts' conference (June 2014) focused on changing the security environment in Europe and possible ways for greater EU engagement with the Eastern partners on security and defence issues.



4-5. Civil society conference *Eastern Partnership Reality Check: Political Challenges and Future Agenda for Civil Society* (November 2013) was attended by more than 300 participants and had over 7000 online viewers.



The civil society conference *Eastern Partnership Reality Check: Political Challenges and Future Agenda for Civil Society* (November 2013), which took place on the eve of the 3rd Eastern Partnership Summit, was hosted by Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė. It brought together civil society leaders and key experts from the Eastern Partnership countries and the European Union. Such distinguished political figures as Štefan Füle, European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy, Pat Cox, 21st President of the European Parliament, and initiators of the EU Eastern Partnership Policy Radosław Sikorski, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland, and Carl Bildt, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden, also attended the conference.

6. Civil society conference *Eastern Partnership Reality Check: Political Challenges and Future Agenda for Civil Society* (November 2013) was opened by Lithuanian President Dalia Grybauskaitė.





1. Informal Forum of Intellectuals: Russia Today with Andrei Kurkov, Olexandr Butsenko, Andrei Piontkovsky and Artiom Troitsky. Moderated by Leonidas Donskis, Lithuanian MEP (May 2014).

2. Discussion *The Upcoming Eastern Partnership Summit in Vilnius: What are the Expectations and Prospects for Success?* with Bruce Jackson, Founding Director of the Project on Transitional Democracies (March 2013).



3. Belarus Research Council discussion *What Do Belarusians Think?* (April 2013).

4. International seminar *Main Pillars of Belarusian Regime: Strengths and Weaknesses* (May 2014).



DISCUSSIONS, SEMINARS & ROUNDTABLES

The organisation of discussions, seminars and roundtables is yet another important part of EESC activities and provides a forum for open discussions on the most significant and sometimes very specific East European issues. Such events allow EESC experts to present their research findings as well as to bring together fellow experts on Eastern Europe to discuss the latest events and developments.

EESC also organises off-the-record discussions for Lithuanian decision makers. Every month representatives of the Seimas, the Office of the President, Ministries of Foreign Affairs and National Defence, and also policy analysts, members of academia and leading journalists are invited for a *Morning Coffee with the Eastern Pulse*. Such meetings allow opinions and views to be shared among decision makers, strengthen inter-institutional cooperation and, most importantly, become a platform for new foreign policy and security initiatives. Following each meeting, an analytical text under the headline *Eastern Pulse* is published and presented to EESC readers.



5. Roundtable discussion *Russia Reality Check* with Lithuanian Minister of Foreign Affairs Linas Linkevičius (May 2014).

What will determine Ukraine's future scenarios?

Marius Laurinavičius, dr. Laurynas Kasčiūnas, Linas Jokšas

What will the geopolitical status of Ukraine be after Russian aggression? What is Russia's projected vision of Ukraine? Will Ukraine's political and economic system change? Are we going to witness the scenario of the Orange Revolution, which in any event did not bring any sustainable results? What will be the role of oligarchs in post-revolutionary Ukraine? What is the future of the EU Eastern Partnership policy? These are just a few of the questions that the research centres and analysts analysing processes in Eastern European seek to answer. The Eastern Europe Studies Centre is joining these discussions.

1. Russia's projected model of Ukraine: from federalisation to division of the state?

Russia's projected vision of Ukraine, at least in part, depends on the ideological, cultural and geopolitical concept that Vladimir Putin and key decision makers in his environment rely on. The "Putin doctrine" is the imperial idea of Ukraine as "Little Russia" or, more precisely, an interpretation of the idea proposed by Anton Denikin, the famous general of the White Guards. Putin mentioned the doctrine for the first time on 24 May 2009 at the graves of Denikin, Putin's favourite philosopher and writer Ivan Ilyin and writer Ivan Shmelkov at the Donskoy Monastery in Moscow. "Read it. It has reflections on Greater Rus, Little Russia and Ukraine. He says that nobody is allowed to interfere in our relationship, this has always been Russia's own business", Putin said after asking the journalists whether they had read Denikin's memoirs.

During Putin's appearance on the TV show "Interview with Putin" on 16 December 2010, the Russian President spoke more clearly and precisely. After Putin replied to Alexander Zaslavskiy, a banker considered to be his friend, that "he who does not regret that the Soviet Union broke up, has no heart, and he who wants to restore it in its original form, has lost his heart", he then developed his doctrine on Ukraine as "Little Russia".

"Путин возложил цветы к могилам "голубороссических" - Деникина, Ильяина, Солоневича", *Новости*, 24 May 2009. Retrieved from: <http://www.newsru.com/russia/24may2009/sr.html>

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Bell BelarusInfo Letter

Issue 1 (02), 2014

DID LUKASHENKA MANAGE TO CONSOLIDATE SUPPORT IN THE LOCAL ELECTIONS?

*Ryhor Antashevich is an analyst at the Center for Transition Studies, an editor of the Belarusian internet magazine *Belas* and a PhD student at the University of Warsaw.*

Yusuf Dzhafar graduated from the Higher State University in history and neo-colonial studies in 2011. Dzhafar explores the problems of national minorities in Poland in the period 1918-1939; he is an author of two scientific publications on this topic. He actively participates in public movements in Belarus.

The first issue of this year's *Bell* is dedicated to discussing the local elections held in Belarus in March. According to independent observers, right from the start the elections were as usual, fraught with violations. However, are the elections, which are of little interest to the population, a sign that their opinions have changed?

While the official recorded turnout was as high as 77 per cent, it is said that this number was inflated to demonstrate to the international community the support of the population for Lukashenko's regime. Despite the fact that several representatives of the opposition parties managed to win a few seats in local councils, in general the election outcomes were practically known in advance.

The first article in this issue by Ryhor Antashevich

reviews this year's local elections and wonders whether the results are the sign of something new. The author argues that Lukashenko fails to restore previously held support as he is failing to deliver his electoral promises. Therefore, although his influence rests on the shoulders of a loyal bureaucracy, the most influential officials acquire more and more power on his behalf.

The second article by Yusuf Dzhafar covers difficulties encountered by opposition parties during elections. The author maintains that elections were as usual uninteresting and unattractive and that the opposition parties failed to mobilise for a common action. For this reason, the search for a common candidate for the presidential elections will take time.

Yusuf Dzhafar, Editor

WAS THE TURNOUT AT THE LOCAL ELECTIONS A SIGN OF SOMETHING NEW?

Ryhor Antashevich

Municipal elections in Belarus have been traditionally marked by violations and singular cases of independent candidates becoming local councillors. The authorities have left the demands behind and significantly inflated the turnout by fraud and coercion to vote.

The authorities believe that the high turnout might prevent people from supporting Lukashenko's regime. However, the ratings show that trust in the leadership has not yet recovered since the economic crisis. The Belarusian leader is failing to fulfil his electoral promises, his starting position for the 2015 presidential campaign is weak.

As there are no changes in the opposition community, there might be a shift from within the regime. The level of public discontent in Lukashenko might make him rely more on the establishment.

Unbelievably high turnout

According to the Central Electoral Committee

(CEC), a total of 77.4 per cent of Belarusians turned out to vote for the local elections on 23 March, this includes those who voted on the day itself and during early voting. Official data were slightly above the turnout at parliamentary elections in 2012 (74.61 per cent), but below that of local elections in 2010 and 2007 (79.5 and 79.2, respectively). The official turnout in Belarus was well above the turnout at local elections in Lithuania and Poland.

Local election (election year and year)	Turnout
2010	79.5
2007	79.2
2012	74.61
2014	77.4

However, the official results differ considerably from findings of post-voterhood sociologists. Independent observers claim that the turnout has been inflated at the majority of polling stations, with a difference of as many as 100 voters at some polling stations on the main voting day only. A regular polling station in Belarusian cities covers

SKAITINAI

Apie Lietuvos ir tarptautines aktualijas

Nr. 2
2011
November

UNCOMFORTABLE MOMENTS OF SOVIET HISTORY IN RUSSIA'S CURRENT POLICY: IS THERE ROOM FOR THE INJURED NORTH CAUCASUS NATIONS?

Vilnis Ivanavskas

October 30 is the Day Remembrance of the Victims of Political Repressions in the post-Soviet space. Former Soviet Socialist Republics have different attitudes toward and solutions to the issues of the painful past. Russia's rhetoric regarding the USSR is arguably the most cautious, especially when discussions about the past touch upon Caucasus issues. Foreign observers usually limit their analyses of Russia and the Caucasus to the discussion of the Russia-Georgia relations incorporating South Ossetia, Abkhazia or Chechnya issues. On the other hand, the range of topics related to the Caucasus as a geopolitically and ethnically problematic knot may also cast light on minority ethnic groups of the Caucasus which are outshone by news dealing with larger Caucasian ethnic groups. Thus nations like the Chechens and the Balkars are left on the periphery of the information space.

The present article addresses the issue of historical memory and the deportation of nations during the World War II and in the post-war years, which is just as relevant for Lithuania. The relation between the historical truth and Russia's politics is common not only to the Caucasus, but also to the Baltic States, Poland or other societies that have witnessed Soviet tanks. One the other hand, the situation of the nations brought together under the BSSSR is rather specific. Escalation of their issues is a matter of Russia itself, since these nations are denied equal opportunities in getting into the great narrative of Russia's history, they hardly get into the field of international relations except for instances when Georgia makes attempts at advocating their interests, or a Western state takes a sporadic interest in their affairs.

Escalation of the latter topic is unambiguously related to Russia's standpoint: the extent to which this trajectory of memory is relevant or threatening the present, and what other opportunities there are for historical truth other than the truth constructed by the Kremlin administration. This question is also gaining momentum in the context of the increasing marginalisation of ethnic groups. For example, as Russia celebrated National Unity Day on November 4, Russian March, a rally that has already been organised for several years, took place and mobilised from five to seven thousand participants. The rally abounded with posters and slogans, which were explicitly hostile toward people from the Caucasus residing in Russia, and emphasized that Russia is to be ruled by Russians.

1. Exiles and genocide in Stalin's time

Stalin's policy of exiles ("relocations") affected the Caucasus to a particularly great degree. For example, in 1944, almost the entire Balkar ethnic group (about 37 thousand people) was deported to

DECEMBER, 2013

MOLDOVA REALITY CHECK SUCCESS STORY BEFORE THE STORM?

2ND NON-PAPER



INTRODUCTION

The "Reality Check" is a policy review process aiming to gather insights from top domestic and international analysts, practitioners, diplomats and policy-makers working in and on the Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries, with the ambition to provide a realistic policy framework based on evidence on the ground. The first such a review was the Belarus Reality Check enacted in Vilnius, Lithuania in October 2012.

Following the first Moldova Reality Check session held in Bratislava during the GL08/SEC 2013 conference on 20 April 2013, the second event took place on 5 November, 2013 in Vilnius, Lithuania at the premises of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania. The meeting was organised after the first hundred days of Leacnic's government and only a few weeks before the EaP Summit in Vilnius.

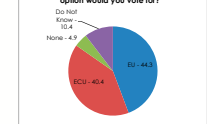
The review group comprises top Western, Moldovan and regional analysts with a particular emphasis on the independent character of the group in order to deliver evidence-based and balanced policy advice for the post Vilnius Summit period. Reality Check meetings are held under the Chatham House Rule and the list of participants is not distributed. This non-paper, summarizing the debate held in Vilnius with

additional fact-checking and peer review, is released to contribute to the policy debate in and outside of Moldova.

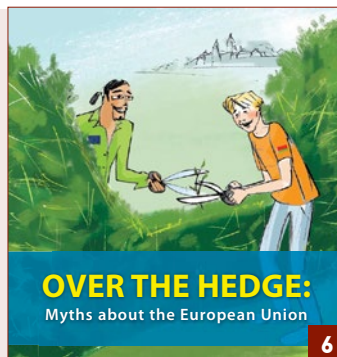
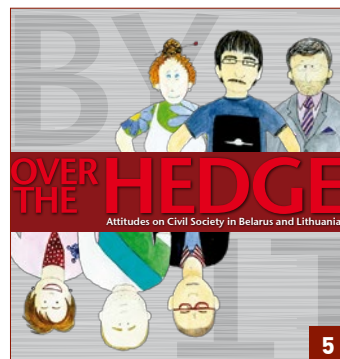
CONCLUSIONS

Domestic Affairs: Reforms lost in geopolitics
Among the EaP countries, Moldova is a frontrunner in understanding that European Union (EU) integration is primarily about domestic reforms rather than about foreign policy. But being distracted by geopolitics – now with a lot of help from Russia – the main homework, the transformation of the governance model, is lagging behind.

If you had to choose between adherence to the European Customs Union or the European Union, which option would you vote for?



Source: What Do Moldovans Think? Public Opinion Poll, Slovak Atlantic Centre and Central European Policy Institute, Slovakia/AT, November 2013



PUBLICATIONS

In addition to analytical studies and research, EESC regularly publishes the following:

1. *Eastern Pulse* – a monthly publication on processes in the EU Eastern neighbourhood, including policy recommendations for EU and Lithuanian decision makers.
2. *Bell* – a Belarusian info-letter written exclusively by Belarusian authors. The publication provides first-hand analysis on political, economic and social developments in Belarus.
3. *Readings* – a regular analysis of topical issues in Lithuania and around the world.
4. *Eastern Partnership Reality Check Non-papers* – these are the products of the Reality Check meetings, fact-checking and peer-review process comprised of Western and regional analysts aiming to achieve evidence-based and balanced policy advice. There are four Reality Check series devoted to Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine respectively.
- 5-7. *Over the Hedge* – series of comparative studies prepared in an easily understandable format (including cartoon characters) about human rights, political and economic developments in Belarus and other Eastern European countries. The *Over the Hedge* booklets are always followed by short and attractive cartoons.



1. Parliamentary election observation mission to Georgia (May 2008). Presentation of the EESC election observation report at the press conference (from left to right: Emanuelis Zingeris, Member of the Seimas, Antanas Valionis, former Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania, Director of CEGSTAR (Georgia) David Chichinadze and EESC Director Kristina Vaičiūnaite).



2. Parliamentary election observation mission to Ukraine (October 2014)

3. Parliamentary election observation mission to Georgia (May 2010).





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4-5. Presidential election observation mission to Ukraine (May 2014).

ELECTION OBSERVATION MISSIONS

EESC has been involved in election observation activities in the EU Eastern neighbourhood since 2008. EESC has already organised a number of short and long-term election observation missions to Georgia (2008, 2010, 2012), Ukraine (2012, 2013, 2014), and Belarus (2012). Furthermore, EESC experts are regularly invited to participate in international long-term and short-term election observation missions in the Eastern Partnership countries.

Before each election observation mission, EESC provides training during which observers are familiarised with the political situation in the country of destination, party and electoral systems, election procedures, as well as the duties and rights of election observers. Each EESC-led election observation mission aims at contributing to smooth electoral processes and ensuring the collection and evaluation of information on the electoral processes, vote counting procedures and announcement of the results.



1-2. Instructor Vilija Navickaitė (far left) visiting a girls' school in Chaghcharan, Ghor Province (2012). The student is delighted to receive a Lithuanian fairy tale book as a present (2012).

3. Meeting of training participants with a representative of the Ministry of Agriculture of Lithuania to discuss the use of advanced technologies in agriculture (2010).

STRENGTHENING LOCAL COMMUNITIES

Over the years EESC has implemented numerous projects focused on strengthening the competence and social capacities of local communities in Afghanistan and Georgia.

EESC has joined the Lithuanian government's efforts to support and enable Afghans to build their own capacity and has held several trainings for representatives of the non-governmental (NGO) sector and local administration. The trainings were held to support the Lithuanian-led Provincial Reconstruction Team in Ghor Province in central Afghanistan. In 2010, six representatives of Ghor NGO's and local administration were invited to Vilnius for intercultural, communication, project management and fundraising training. This initial training was followed up a year later by further training in Ghor, and also included meetings with local government and the NGO community. As a result, two funding proposals on raising the competences of local teachers and increasing civil participation were prepared for submission to international donors. In 2012, fourteen NGO leaders and representatives of local administration were provided with organisational development trainings.



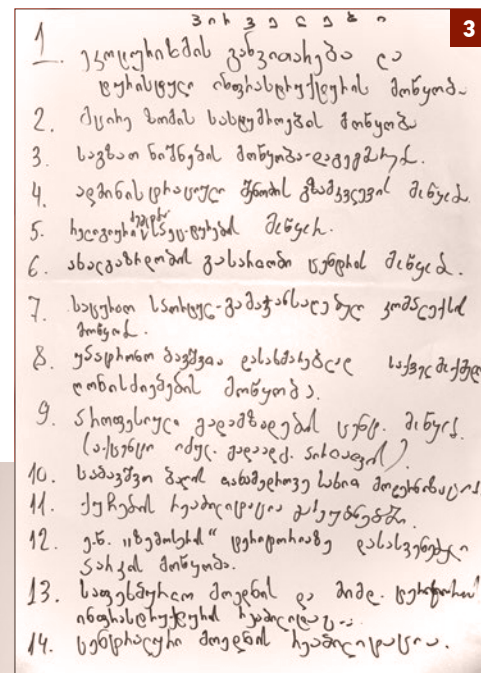
4. Trainings in Ghor Province executed under the EESC project *Enhancing Organisational Management Capacities of the Representatives of Administration and Non-governmental Sector of Ghor Province of the Islamic Republic of Afghanistan. Organisational Development: from Community Empowerment to Participation in Global Processes* (2011).



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1-3. Training for Khashuri municipality staff and infrastructure and economic development professionals, Georgia (2011).



In 2009, EESC started a long-term project in Georgia aiming to build Georgia's regional capacity by transferring Lithuania's expertise in regional development. The project included renovation and equipment supplies to youth and cultural centres, schools for extra-curricular activities and local cinemas. Representatives of local authorities and the Ministry of Regional Development and Infrastructure of Georgia were invited to visit Lithuania as part of a study tour to impart practice of local governance. As a result, in 2010 many project activities, including social events, lectures, cultural evenings and creative workshops, were held in renovated infrastructure. The third phase of the project focused on raising the expertise of Khashuri municipality staff, as well as infrastructure and economic development professionals.



4. A dance performance in Khulo Region, Georgia (2009). The roof of the school was renovated under the framework of the project *Developing Competence and Social Capacities in the Regions of Georgia: Infrastructure Development and Imparting Lithuanian Regional Practice*.

5. Youth Centre in Terjola Region, Georgia (2009). The Youth centre was reconstructed under the framework of the project *Developing Competence and Social Capacities in the Regions of Georgia: Infrastructure Development and Imparting Lithuanian Regional Practice*.



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1. Over 150 participants from more than 30 countries gathered for the high-level policy event *Empowering Women in Development: Challenges Beyond 2015* (September 2014).



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2. Informal Reception “soirée lituanienne” of the high-level conference *Women Enhancing Democracy: Best Practices* (July 2011).



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3. High-level policy event *Empowering Women in Development: Challenges Beyond 2015* (September 2014). Olga Bogomolets, advisor to the President of Ukraine and one of the coordinators of the Maidan medical service, gives an opening speech to the participants.

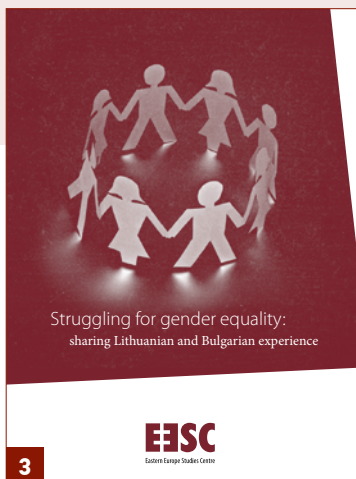
4. Forum *Tools and Tactics for Communicating Your Cause* held in Vilnius (2013) to develop the leadership and advocacy skills of young Belarusian, Lithuanian and Ukrainian women based on democratic values and the use of new communication technologies.



4



1-2. Comparative studies about the human rights situation in Belarus and other Central and East European countries
Over the Hedge: Is the Gender Gap Closing? Belarus and Lithuania (2014)
and *Politics is Not for Women?* (2013).



3. Analytical study *Struggling for Gender Equality: Sharing Lithuanian and Bulgarian Experience* by Meta Adutavičiūtė, Jūratė Guzevičiūtė and Genoveva Tisheva (2013).

STRIVING FOR GENDER EQUALITY

EESC works to raise awareness of prevailing gender inequality and seeks to empower women by fostering public discussions on equal opportunities and women's rights and improving the skills of NGOs working on gender-related issues in the EU Eastern neighbourhood.

In 2011, EESC contributed to the organisation of the high-level conference *Women Enhancing Democracy: Best Practices*, co-hosted by President of Lithuania Dalia Grybauskaitė and President of Finland Tarja Halonen. The conference was also attended by Hilary Clinton, United States Secretary of State. In 2014, another high-level policy event *Empowering Women in Development: Challenges Beyond 2015* took place under the auspices of the EESC.

Since 2012, EESC has been executing the project *Women's Rights in Belarus – Investing in the Future*. The project focuses on advocating the passing and ratification of two gender-related laws for Belarus: Law on Equal Rights and Equal Opportunities of Women and Men and the Law against Domestic Violence. The project provides assistance for Belarusian experts drafting the laws and for women NGOs organising nation-wide awareness raising campaigns on gender issues.



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1. USB Rally 2007.
2. USB Rally 2011.
3. USB Rally 2008.
4. USB Rally 2009.
5. USB Rally 2010.



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EMPOWERING YOUTH

EESC has been implementing a programme of annual rallies gathering together Belarusian students studying abroad since 2007. Rallies called *United Students of Belarus Rally* (USB Rally) cover a broad range of topics from human rights issues to the national identity of Belarusians. The network comprises Belarusian youth studying outside Belarus as well as active Belarusians continuing their education in their motherland. The aim of the rallies is to unite Belarusian youth from around the world into a viable communication and cooperation network, to promote their civic consciousness and activity. The informal network of Belarusian students around the world provides its members with the opportunity to gain knowledge and share expertise and ideas. It also facilitates cooperation in organising local or joint cross-border activities. In 2013, USB Rally alumni established a new initiative – *Global Belarusian Leaders*, which is a global network of successful professionals and talented active people affiliated to Belarus.



6. Founding Meeting of the *Global Belarusian Leaders*. The initiative was welcomed by Evaldas Ignatavičius, Lithuanian Ambassador to Belarus (2013).

RAISING THE EXPERTISE OF RESEARCHERS

Another of EESC's target groups are independent experts in East European countries that are a source of unbiased information and expertise.

Since 2008, EESC has been implementing the project *Raising the Expertise of Grassroots Level Researchers in Belarus*. The project was initiated to strengthen the Belarusian research community by providing young and prospective grassroots-level Belarusian researchers with new learning opportunities. Project participants attend training on such topics as policy-paper writing, research communication and knowledge exchange between researchers and policymakers. They also receive an internship opportunity in leading Baltic, Nordic and Polish think tanks. In addition, since 2008 EESC has published the Belarusian info-letter *Bell*, which was established as a special platform for young Belarusian researchers to share their analyses.



1-2. Training *From Commenting to Policy Impact* for beginning Belarusian researchers (May 2013). Kristi Raik, Senior Research Fellow at the Finnish Institute of International Affairs led the training.





EESC is a co-founder of *The Eastern Partnership Reality Check*, a policy review process aimed at gathering insights from top domestic and international analysts, practitioners, diplomats and policymakers covering the Eastern Partnership countries in order to hold discussions behind closed doors. It aims to satisfy demand for a more in-depth policy in this area. Under the aegis of Lithuania's EU Presidency (July–December 2013) the first review was the Belarus Reality Check held in Vilnius in October 2012. Since then, similar Reality Check processes have been established for Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. After each Reality Check meeting the non-papers are released in order to contribute to the policy debate both in and outside the Eastern Partnership countries.



3. *Ukraine Reality Check* held in Kiev, Ukraine (October, 2014).

4. *Belarus Reality Check* held in Brussels, Belgium (April 2014).

EESC is also a co-developer of the *Belarus Research Council (BRC)*, a loose network of Belarusian polling agencies, think tanks and donors supporting social science research in Belarus. Under the initiative, Belarusian researchers are regularly invited to attend training on such topics as policy-paper writing, research communication and data analysis.

In order to enhance stakeholder coordination and ensure quality and availability of research results, BRC's stakeholders gather for coordination meetings twice a year. Based on previous meetings, BRC put together its research database that now contains 169 research papers conducted in 2012–2013. It also initiated a Belarusian think tank rating to be finalised in 2014.

1. Belarus Research Council meeting in Vilnius (June 2014). Presentation of the Belarusian think tank rating.

2. Belarus Research Council meeting in Vilnius (June 2014). Presentation of the newly founded Belarusian think tank *The Ostrogorski Centre*, a non-profit organisation dedicated to analysis and policy advocacy on the problems facing Belarus in its transition to a market economy and the rule of law.



EMPOWERING TRADE UNIONS

1-2. The feasibility study *Are the Independent Democratic Trade Unions of Belarus the Engine of Social Reforms?* by Siarhei Alfer and Aliaksei Kazlou (2012).



Independent Belarusian trade union activists is a group of Belarusian civil society involved in EESC capacity-building projects. They also receive practical training on recruitment, membership management, communication, bargaining etc. From 2010 to 2012, such training and seminars were organised under the EESC project *Broadening the Agenda of Trade Unions in Belarus: Representation, Support and Promotion of Human Rights and Culture of Democracy*.

The project also focused on analysing the situation of trade unions in Belarus. A feasibility study *Are the Independent Democratic Trade Unions of Belarus the Engine of Social Reforms?* identified possible ways to use the potential of trade unions and to promote them as leading actors in both forming public opinion and involving Belarusian society in democratic processes.

In 2012, EESC organised an international conference *Broadening the Agenda of Trade Unions in Belarus: Representation, Support and Promotion of Human Rights and Culture of Democracy*, which gathered about 70 leaders of trade union movements, experts and donors from the Eastern Partnership countries, Lithuania, Poland, Nordic and other countries.

1. Photography exhibition *Coming Closer. Cuba* (2010). The exhibition revealed another Cuba, the one you would not find in travel catalogues. The Cuba photo-story was told by two Cuban and two Lithuanian photographers.



2. Members of the civil organisation *Damas de Blanco*, Cuba (Women in White, Cuba 2008). EESC organised a screening of the film *Damas de Blanco*. Photo by Sigitas Babilius.

3. Baltic working forum on Cuba *Imparting Lessons Learned: Linking the Baltic Experience to the Promotion of Democracy in Cuba* held at the *Seimas* (from left to right: Kristina Vaičiūnaitė, EESC Director, Osvaldo Alfonso Valdes, former Cuban Liberal Party president and political prisoner, Jesus Gracia Aldaz, former Spanish Ambassador to Cuba, and representatives of the Lithuanian Homeland Union Andrius Kubilius and Vytautas Landsbergis) (October 2007).





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HUMAN RIGHTS ADVOCACY

EESC has been implementing human rights advocacy programmes in Belarus, Burma and Cuba. It also contributes to various awareness campaigns, including the annual human rights film festival “Inconvenient Films” in Lithuania.

EESC has been implementing its Cuba programme since 2007. Under the framework of the programme the EESC organises meetings and film screenings and publishes articles on the human rights situation in Cuba. In March 2010, EESC, in cooperation with Czech NGO *People in Need*, organised an exhibition in the Seimas of the Republic of Lithuania called *Coming Closer. Cuba*. The exhibition disclosed the stagnation of the island, its people and their stories as well as the collapsing beauty of Havana.

EESC has been a partner of *People in Need* in the project supporting human rights organisations in Burma since 2009. Every year EESC hosts representatives of Burmese human rights organisations, who visit EU Member States and raise awareness of human rights abuses in Burma. During their visits, Burmese human rights defenders are introduced to the local human rights situation, its most successful practices, and are able to attend professional training and have meetings with their Lithuanian counterparts.

4. EESC helped organise the screening of *Burma VJ: Reporting from a Closed Country* (2009).

5. Screening of the documentary *Girl Rising* followed by a discussion about the education of girls in developing countries (October 2013).

DEMOCRACY AND DEVELOPMENT ASSISTANCE FUND

In 2007 EESC expanded its field of activity by establishing the Democracy and Development Assistance Fund. Its aim is to promote freedom and democracy in Eastern Europe by strengthening cooperation across borders and building networks to implement development-oriented projects that would support emerging democratic processes in the region. The Fund has six programmes with the main beneficiaries being NGOs, individuals and groups from the Eastern Partnership countries.



1. Humanitarian aid to war victims in Georgia (August 2008). EESC coordinated the Lithuanian humanitarian action. With the help of volunteers, the military and NGOs, clothes, sleeping bags, bedclothes, toiletries and other essentials were delivered to war victims in Georgia.

2. In 2014, the Democracy and Development Assistance Fund together with other Lithuanian NGOs joined a fundraising campaign to support victims of Ukraine's Maidan. The funds collected were used to support those who were injured at the Maidan and their families.



NETWORKING

EESC has an extended partner network, which facilitates project implementation and analytical activities. EESC is happy to have partners in Lithuania, the European Union Member States and EU Eastern Partnership countries as well as in Burma, Canada, Cuba, Japan, Norway, Russia, and the United States. It is a founding member of the *European Partnership for Democracy* (Brussels), an independent European non-profit organisation supporting democratic transformations outside the European Union, and an active member of the *Lithuanian National Non-Governmental Development Cooperation Organisations' Platform*. The Centre is also engaged in the *Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum* (under the framework of the EU Eastern Partnership Initiative) where EESC Director Kristina Vaičiūnaitė is a member of the Steering Committee.



1. Annual development cooperation conference
Lithuanian Development Cooperation: Interests, Needs, Competence (December 2009).

2. Visit of Latvian NGO leaders to EESC to learn about the experience of Lithuanian NGOs of the Lithuanian Presidency of the Council of the European Union (April 2014).

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