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Dear Readers,

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This *LawtrendMonitor* provides an overview of the situation of freedom of association and the situation of civil society organisations in July 2023. It traditionally contains information on new regulations adopted in the Republic of Belarus which concern civil society organisations and news on legal drafting. It contains information on the results of the public discussion of the draft law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organisations", infographics on the situation with Belarusian civic sector in connection with the two-year anniversary of the mass raids to non-profit organisations of Belarus and detention of human rights activists of the Human Rights Center *Viasna*.

Situation of Civil Society Organizations

1. *Lawtrend* experts prepared a review of the situation of freedom of association and the environment for civil society organizations in Belarus in July 2023. It is available on the [Lawtrend website](#).

Legislative News

2. On 30 June 2023, the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 274-3 'On Amending the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Mass Media"' was adopted (the relevant Law of 17 July 2008, No. 427-3).

The Law extends the grounds for revoking certificates of state registration of mass media outlets and for restricting access to websites, online outlets, and news aggregators. Among other things, one of the grounds for this may be the involvement of a media founder or an editorial legal entity in extremist or terrorist activities or inclusion in the relevant lists.

At the same time, the law introduces the concept of a "news aggregator" which means an Internet resource which is used for processing, structuring, and disseminating information publications and (or) materials on the Internet and which posts at least fifty news items per day for five consecutive days, and the number of news items taken from various sources exceeds 50 percent of the total number of posted information messages and (or) materials per day. Online outlets, official websites and other Internet resources of state administrative bodies, local executive and

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administrative bodies, other state bodies and state organisations, as well as online stores are not news aggregators.

3. The Law of the Republic of Belarus of 07.07.2023 No. 275-3 "On the Accession of the Republic of Belarus to International Treaties within the framework of the Shanghai Cooperation Organization" establishes that, in of the process of obtaining the status of a SCO member state, the Republic of Belarus accedes to 22 international treaties of this organisation, including the SCO Charter, the Convention on Privileges and Immunities of the SCO, the Treaty on Long-term Good-Neighborliness, Friendship, and Cooperation of the SCO member states.

The law came into force from 24 July 2023.

4. On 17 July 2023, the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 284-3 ["On Amendments to the Laws on Constitutional Proceedings"](#) was adopted.

5. Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 273-3 of 29 June 2023 "On Amendments to the Laws on Labor Relations" amends the Labor Code of the Republic of Belarus of 26 July 1999.

The document, in particular, additionally regulates remote work. It is defined that remote work may be performed permanently, temporarily (continuously for a certain period of time not exceeding six months within a calendar year), or combined (performed permanently or temporarily with alternation of remote work and work at the employer's location during working hours).

The main provisions of the Law is to take effect on 1 January 2024.

6. [The Law of the Republic of Belarus](#) of 12 July 2023, No. 281-3 'On Amendments to the Law of the Republic of Belarus' amends, inter alia, the Law "On Local Governance and Self-Government in the Republic of Belarus" of 4 January 2010, No. 108-3.

This law was supplemented with Article 361 regulating realisation of civic initiatives. The law defines civic initiatives as measures aimed at improving the quality of life of the population in the administrative-territorial unit or a part thereof, including improvement of the territory, construction (erection, repair, reconstruction, restoration, improvement) of socially important objects, general prevention of offences, prevention of injuries and fatalities, as well as solution of other issues of local importance.



The Law contains provisions on initiators of realisation of a civic initiative, the procedure for submission, and prescribed information for financing of a civic initiative at local level.

7. On 12 July 2023, [the Law of the Republic of Belarus](#) No. 280-3 "On the Application of Special Restrictive Measures" was adopted.

The Law defines the concepts of "special restrictive measures" and "unfriendly acts," as well as the objects of application, types of these measures, and the grounds and procedure for their application.

The Law came into force from 31 July 2023.

8. On 17 July 2023, [the Code of the Republic of Belarus on Architectural, Town-planning, and Construction Activities](#), No. 289-3 was adopted.

The main provisions of the Code are to come into force from 23 July 2024.

9. On 17 July 2023, [the Law of the Republic of Belarus](#) No. 286-3 amended the Code of Criminal Procedure of the Republic of Belarus.

It introduces the possibility of criminal proceedings against a deceased person who committed crimes that have no statute of limitations. The initiation and termination of criminal proceedings against a deceased person were specified.

10. On 17 July 2023, [the Law of the Republic of Belarus](#) No. 283-3 'On Amending the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Publishing in the Republic of Belarus"' was adopted.

The grounds for suspending a certificate of state registration of a publisher, a printer, and a distributor of printed publications were revised.

The main provisions of the law are to come into force on 22 October 2023.

11. [The Law of the Republic of Belarus](#) "On Environmental Protection" in an amended version is set out by the Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 294-3 of 17 July 2023 'On Amending the Law of the Republic of Belarus "On Environmental Protection."'

12. On 17 July 2023, [the Law of the Republic of Belarus](#) No. 296-3 "On Amending the Laws on State Environmental Expertise, Strategic Environmental Assessment, and Environmental Impact Assessment" extended the list of documentation that is subject to state environmental expertise and revised the list of objects for which environmental impact assessment is carried out .



The main provisions of the Law is to come into force from 23 January 2024.

13. [The Law of the Republic of Belarus](#) of 21 July 2023, No. 301-3 "On Amendments to the Laws on Coercive Treatment and Medical and Social Re-adaptation" amended:

- The Law of the Republic of Belarus of 4 January 2010, No. 104-3 "On the Procedure And Conditions for Committing Citizens to Medical-Labour Centres And the Conditions for Staying in Them";
- The Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 349-3 of 7 January 2012 "On the Provision of Psychiatric Support."

14. From 1 July 2023, the amendments to the Law of the Republic of Belarus of 4 January 2014, No. 125-3 "On Physical Training and Sports" introduced by the Law of 19 July 2022, No. 200-3 came into force. Organisations engaged in the development of physical training and sports as of 1 July 2023 are entitled to do this without state accreditation for another six months, i.e. until 31 December 2023.

On 28 June 2023, the Resolution of the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus No. 416 "On Criteria for Passing (Confirmation, Withdrawal) of State Accreditation" was adopted.

The Resolution entered into force on 1 July 2023.

15. Starting from July 11, 2023, changes to the Law of the Republic of Belarus dated August 1, 2002, No. 136-Z "On Citizenship of the Republic of Belarus" have come into effect. Specifically, citizens of the Republic of Belarus who acquire citizenship of a foreign state, obtain a residence permit, or any other foreign state document granting privileges and other benefits are required to inform the internal affairs authorities or diplomatic service within three months from the date of receiving the relevant documents.

The law also provides for the possibility of an individual losing their Belarusian citizenship acquired by birth, due to the existence of a legally binding verdict of a court in the Republic of Belarus confirming their involvement in extremist activities or causing significant harm to the interests of the country, if the individual is outside its borders. The decision to revoke citizenship will be made by a commission on citizenship matters, which will prepare corresponding proposals for the President's consideration.



Results of public discussion of the draft law "On Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations"

16. The results of [public discussion](#) of the draft Law of the Republic of Belarus were summarised.

The proposed new version of the law **provides for the re-registration of all forms religious organizations** existing in Belarus, including the largest nationwide confessional associations ('religious associations') and small religious cells and specific churches ('religious communities').

[Review](#) of the draft law can be found on the *Lawtrend* website.

[According to](#) the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs of Belarus, the received proposals were not taken into account, as they do not contain new and fundamentally changing approaches to legal regulation of the certain sphere of social relations.

Infographics on the situation with Belarusian non-profit organisations

17. With a view to the two-year anniversary of the day of mass police raids to non-profit organisations of Belarus and detention of human rights defenders of the *Viasna* Legal Centre, *Lawtrend* and [OEEC](#) prepared [infographics](#) reflecting the situation of Belarusian non-profit organisations, in particular their forced liquidation and self-liquidation.