



How the Regional Social & Political Situation Impacts the Belarusian Civil Society Organisations' Condition.

The CSOs Acting under Relocation



INTRODUCTION: AUTHORS, TERMINOLOGY AND METHODOLOGY

This analytical document has been co-authored by experts representing two NGOs – the Lawtrend and the OEEC – and is a continuation of systemic operations pertaining to monitoring and assessing the conditions, needs or prospects of the Belarusian civil society organisations' activities. The authors hereof look into the problems, challenges, requirements, operational conditions and planning horizons specific to an individual target groups of the Belarusian CSOs, which have found themselves under the forced relocation¹ (staying abroad) circumstances.

The analytical document text refrains from using in its Russian-language original grammar any feminine gender-specific job titles; however, we emphasize that our research embraces the interests of persons of all gender identities, their equity, equality or inclusivity being taken into consideration.

For the purpose of this research, the term “civil society organisations” (or CSOs) covers any voluntary and self-governed organisations or other entities founded to achieve non-profit objectives, i.e. unrelated to making and distributing profits among their members. The CSO totality includes the entities or organisations set up both by individual persons, whether physical or legal ones, and by groups of any such persons. They may be based on membership by individuals or entities, but also can be based on other principles than the membership one. The CSOs might not be formalised as a legal person or a subdivision thereof, while remaining informal structures or public initiatives and coalitions, which do not have a legal standing of an entity. That being said, specifically for the purposes of this research, relocated organisations mean the Belarusian CSOs, which perceive themselves as relocated organisations or initiatives, whether registered or not outside of Belarus, where their personnel and/or members and volunteers are staying in full or in part. The CSOs founded by the Belarusian nationals, granted with a legal status and transferring their operations/activities abroad prior to 2020, have been left outside the scope of this research.

The years between 2021 and 2023 have witnessed some unprecedented repressions against the Belarusian civil society. The pressure brought to bear by the civil society organisations, including a mass-scale winding-up,² by their members or participants, also in the forms of penal persecution with long prison terms given and a general social and political situation in the country have compelled many a CSO to relocate in full or in part. Unlike previously, when numerous CSOs registered abroad and transferred their financial activity hubs there due to the complications related to registration and financial operations in Belarus, it is the decision-making hub that is often transferred abroad now. Considering the fact that numerous out of the most experienced and respectful Belarusian civil society organisations have been relocated, the entities in question address meaningful tasks

1 According to the research authors, the notion of “relocated organisations” does not refer to the situation in place due to the repressions and a forced departure from Belarus by the CSO management or members, or the organisations staying under the new jurisdictions. Nonetheless, inasmuch as the notion has been firmly entrenched in the civil society environment, the research authors will be bound by it.

2 In conformance with the Lawtrend [monitoring](#), by late August 2023, the Belarusian civil sector's losses, beginning with the post-election 2020 period, had already amounted to at least 1,407 institutionalised NGO forms, such as public associations, trade unions, political parties, endowments and non-governmental institutions or associations.

to promote the Belarusian agenda at an international level, to interact with the Belarusian target groups left without their traditional support or to advocate the interests of the Belarusian nationals, who were forced in these recent times to abandon in large numbers their country, at the international or regional levels, and directly in the nations of the Belarusians' stay.

There are many questions arising as to the relocated CSOs. For example, their funding went up or down, were their security-related risks reduced due to the relocation, how pro-actively and efficiently the relocated CSOs structure their coalition work and partnerships with other Belarusian CSOs, democratic forces and entities or bodies in the relocation countries, should the relocated organisations be eyed at all as Belarusian ones, also because some of them have refocused their activities shifting them to the issues of the diaspora and/or target groups in their host countries, or else implement their partnership programmes with a participation by many countries' CSOs, for example, the Eastern Partnership nations. Not all the problems or needs among the relocated CSOs are obvious either for the organisations themselves, or for any other stakeholders. The situation is further aggravated by the fact that the relocated organisations' problems and needs quite often differ from one relocation country to another, as well as because of the fact that many organisations have their personnel, members and participants staying in different countries, with their decision-making hubs being different from their registration nations.

The numbers of studies with regard to the Belarusian civil society organisations, whether public or non-public ones, have been within the recent two years high as never before.³ However, we miss till this very day a broader picture on the situation across the Belarusian civil society, among other things, due to the need for complying with security requirements, due to the ever-changing external conditions, due to a certain lack of coordination among the research centres and because of a restricted information access inside Belarus. Considering the fact that the relocated CSOs represent a vital component of the Belarusian civil society, keep on their activities in the interests of Belarus and have a high potential to lobby their country's interests abroad, the authors hereof do believe that this research will foster a better understanding of the broader picture and a better strategy development across the Belarusian civil society in its entirety. The research findings may likewise be used to advocate the interests of the Belarusian organisations relocated abroad, which fact is paramount under the conditions when many organisations have essentially found themselves in new jurisdictions.

In order to summarise the current situation prevailing among the relocated Belarusian civil society organisations and to conduct analyses within the framework of this research, the following empirical data bodies have been used:

3 For example,
1. [Положение организаций гражданского общества: результаты опроса](#) (The Conditions the Civil Society Organisations Are in: Survey Findings) (Lawtrend).
2. [Организации гражданского общества Беларуси на начало 2023 года: состояние, связи, потребности](#) (The Belarusian Civil Society Organisations as of Early 2023: Condition, Connections and Needs) (The Centre for New Ideas jointly with the Centre for European Transformation).
3. Все новое – хорошо забытое старое? Обзор ситуации с инициативами белорусского гражданского общества, возникшими после 2020 года. Мониторинг (июль – декабрь 2022 года) (Are All the New Things Just Well Forgotten Old Ones? A Review of the Situation around the Belarusian Civil Society Initiatives Arising after 2020. Monitoring (July through December 2022) (A BIPART project).
4. [Свобода ассоциаций и правовое положение организаций гражданского общества](#). Обзор за 2022 год (Freedom of Association and the Legal Status of the Civil Society Organisations) (Lawtrend) 2022 Digest
5. Перспективы и сценарии будущего для белорусского гражданского общества: разные горизонты 2027 (Prospects and Future Scenarios for the Belarusian Civil Society Organisations: Various 2027 Horizons) (Belarusian CSO experts in cooperation with the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung with support from the Federal Foreign Office).

1. Data sourced from an *ad hoc* research-specific anonymous survey (referred to hereinafter as “the survey”) carried out among the relocated Belarusian CSO representatives, which data provide the basic information derivation underpinning this research. The authors hereof are not in a position to claim that the survey findings are representative of the entire Belarusian relocated CSO totality: however, they are keen to note that the survey covered the CSOs of widely different activity profiles and based in different countries; and it covered 55 representatives of the relocated Belarusian CSOs. That being said, the survey terms and conditions included an indication to a possible involvement in it of a single representative from one CSO. Consequently, the survey findings enable some conclusions on the major trends pertaining to the relocation of the Belarusian organisations abroad.

2. The Lawtrend’s counselling practice materials related to consultations provided to the relocated organisations and activists (consultations on the host country legislation, consultations at the legislation interface between the host country/-ies and the Republic of Belarus and consultations on the laws in effect in the Republic of Belarus). For the purpose of this research, we have analysed the relevant enquiries.

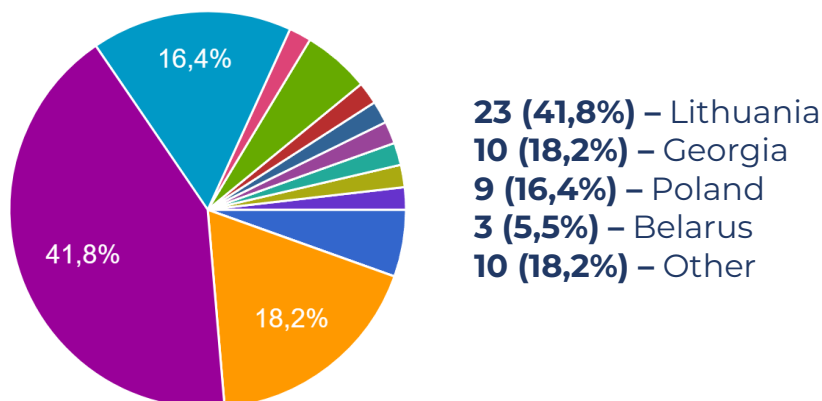
3. A secondary analysis into the research on the Belarusian civil society in 2020 to 2022 conducted by the civil society organisations’ experts and by other research centres (including the findings of publicly accessible or non-accessible studies carried out by the Lawtrend and the OEEC).

DESCRIPTION OF THE BELARUSIAN RELOCATED ORGANISATIONS

It is next to impossible to provide an exact headcount of the Belarusian civil society organisations located at the present time abroad. The geographic scope of the Belarusian CSO host countries is quite broad: the UK, the USA, Germany, Latvia, Estonia, Czechia, Ukraine and other countries. The most popular relocation countries between 2020 and the first half of 2023 were Ukraine (following the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion in 2022 many Belarusian CSOs were forced to relocate repeatedly to other countries), Georgia, Poland and Lithuania. The numbers and characteristics of the Belarusian CSOs in these nations also varies a lot. Thus, for instance, the highest number of the Belarusian CSOs and, among other things, the best-known ones, is located in Lithuania. The distinguishing feature of Georgia is that it hosts at least 50 to 70 initiatives, primarily, the grassroots or new ones founded following their leaders' relocation. That being said, the "old" relocated organisations staying in the country, apart from their other activities, develop some programmes to support such initiatives.

At the same time, the relocated CSOs sometimes struggle to name their specific relocation country, since many organisations have their personnel,⁴ including their managerial staff, located in different countries. Most frequently a CSO registration country and/or the place of the CSO manager/management stay, i.e. its decision-making hub, are indicated as the relocation country. That being said, the registration country and the decision-making hub country may also differ. Some participants of the survey conducted for the purpose of this research noted that due to their team distribution across various countries, to the need for ensuring safety and security of their members or participants in Belarus and to infeasibility of holding fully-fledged team meetings, their activities at the present time have been reduced to those performed by individual persons, rather than by the team as a whole. Numerous CSOs keep on operating in a remote format, among other things, by taking joint decisions online.

In what country your CSO's decision-making hub is situated? 55 answers



⁴ The term "personnel" used in this research applies both to individuals officially employed by the CSOs and to individuals working for the CSOs under civil law contracts, including gratuitous ones. Throughout this text it may be used as a synonym to the terms "members" or "participants."

The highest number of the CSOs covered by the survey have indicated Lithuania as their decision-making hub.

12.6% (7 participants of the survey) were at a loss to answer the question on their decision-making hub, or else responded that the decision-making hub is distributed, difficult to determine or that decisions are taken online.

The Belarusian relocated CSO group is rather heterogeneous. By and large, such CSOs can be tentatively split into three large categories:

1. Organisations related to the new political opposition (both those formed abroad earlier and the new 2020-2023 initiatives). These are various politically guided initiatives, which, notwithstanding, organisation-wise represent CSOs and declare their affiliation to or even representativity of the Belarusian civil society (the ecosystem includes the Popular Anti-Crisis Management, Coordination Council, United Cabinet, organisations created around Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya's office, as well as other entities related to the political agenda). Most of these organisations are not membership-based.

2. Organisations falling back on the new Belarusian diaspora: persons abandoning Belarus after the 2020 elections and relocated for fear of repressions or following the beginning of the full-scale Russian invasion of Ukraine. The group has a large share of organisations based on membership or on a direct access to their beneficiaries. Many of these organisations only began their activities in Belarus in 2020 or 2021, or else already started them abroad.

3. CSOs relocated in full or in part, the majority of which earlier operated inside Belarus and, being repressed against, having to transfer a significant part of their activities abroad. Most of these CSOs, to a greater or lesser extent, seek to preserve as much as possible their HR and links to their target groups or connections with their stakeholders inside the country and seek to act to the uttermost within the framework of their previous mission, by adjusting for that quite often their operational methods and forms. At the same time, some of them were forced to suspend their activities for a certain period or to modify their mission, operational vectors or teams in full or in part.

Depending on how they structured their work in their relocation countries, among other things, from the legal perspective, the Belarusian relocated CSOs could be classified as follows:

1. Belarusian CSOs registered abroad prior to 2020 but continuing their core activities before their relocation following the 2020 presidential elections from Belarus. Having an experience of working under a foreign legislation (first and foremost, in the matters related to financial operations or bookkeeping), such CSOs face fewer difficulties of an administrative or technical nature after their relocation. At the same time, these CSOs, too, encounter a number of hardships in structuring their activity, starting with planning and reviewing their tasks and objectives through getting a legal status for or employing their members and participants.

2. Belarusian CSOs registered abroad following the 2020 presidential elections due to relocation in full or in part of these organisations' members and participants. Quite a few among these CSOs had been registered in Belarus and at the present time are under a winding-up process. A part of them were created in Belarus in 2020 or 2021 and the relocation became for such CSOs a push towards a rapid organisational development and a subsequent registration.

3. Belarusian CSOs registered abroad after 2020 by their leaders with a long non-profit sector work record under a new name and/or with new objectives. Quite often such CSOs are set up by managers of the organisations undergoing a winding-up process in Belarus and have refreshed teams. Frequently but not always so, these organisations position themselves as successors to the CSOs, which had been located in Belarus.

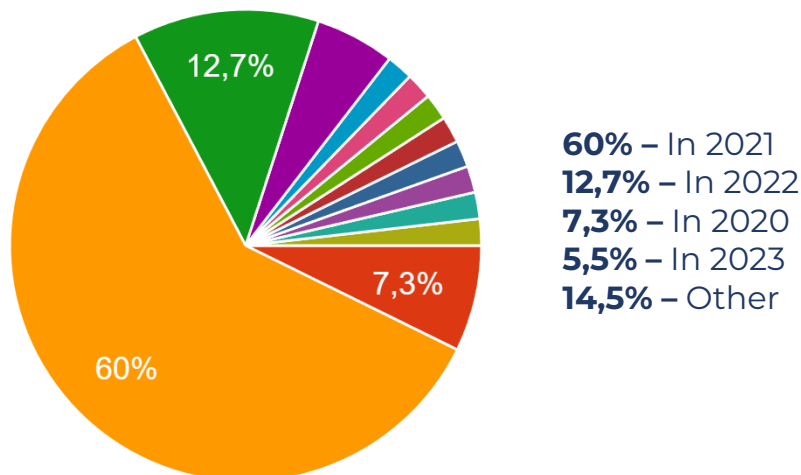
4. Belarusian CSOs perceiving themselves as relocated in full or in part following the 2020 presidential elections, but staying abroad with no registration status. Such a condition covers prevalently the new initiatives arising after 2020 or small organisations and grassroots initiatives. Some of these CSOs build their activities in partnership with other Belarusian relocated organisations registered abroad.

5. Belarusian CSOs perceiving themselves relocated ones, but already springing up abroad and initiated by the Belarusians who had been compelled to leave Belarus following the 2020 presidential elections. Such CSOs are set up by new teams and quite often by activists who were not engaged earlier in the non-profit sector. Most of such CSOs operate in the form of initiatives and have no registration status, while many of these were created between 2022 and the first half of 2023.

RELOCATION PERIOD AND REASON: SURVEY FINDINGS

Most of the relocated CSOs (60%), according to the survey conducted, indicate to 2021 as their relocation time; 12.7% mention 2022; 5.5% refer to 2023; and a mere 7.3% indicate to 2020 as their relocation period. Such a situation is completely objective: the year of 2021 became a year, when mass-scale repressions started with regard to the CSOs in Belarus and against their management, members or participants. Notwithstanding, in spite of the fact that CSO relocation at this point in time is not already massive, it still continues. That being said, relocation of the CSO themselves or individual CSO members and participants is ongoing.

When was your CSO relocated?

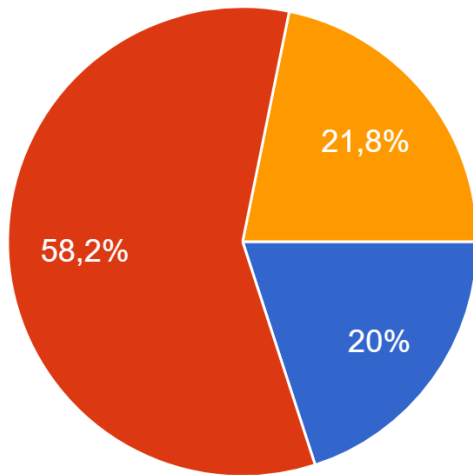


12.6% of the CSOs covered by the survey have indicated that the relocation was a long-term process, rather than a single-time action.

58.2% of the CSOs covered by the survey see themselves as partially relocated organisations (when most members and participants have relocated abroad, yet a part of them remain in Belarus); 21.8% of the CSOs note that just a few employees have relocated, while the majority remain in Belarus; and 20% of the CSOs consider themselves as being fully relocated organisations.

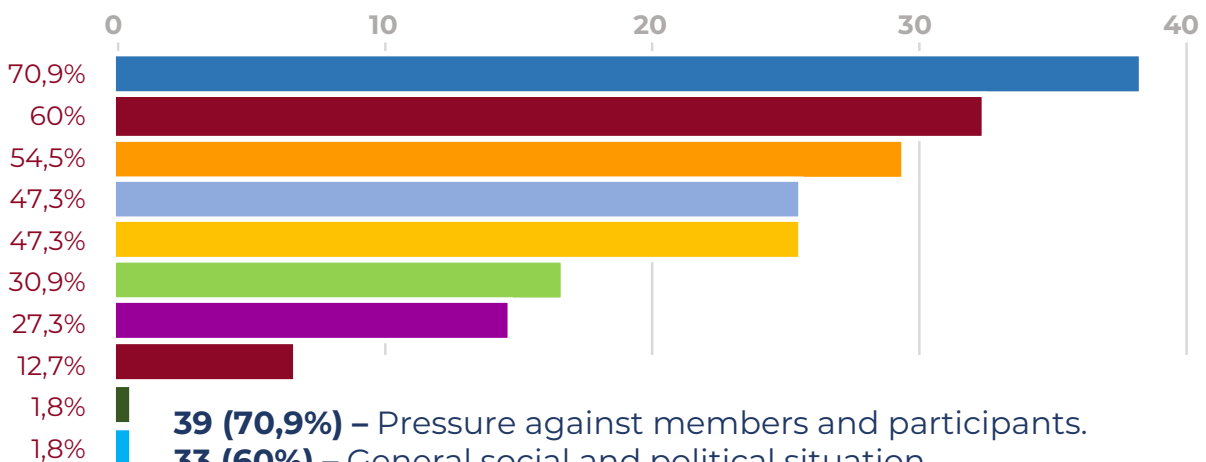
Relocation has been going on prevalently due to pressures exerted on specific CSO members and participants or to their persecution. The major relocation reasons (several answer options were possible) included pressure against their members and participants that was mentioned by 70.9% of the CSOs; 60% indicated to the general social and political situation in the country; 54.5% specified administrative or penal persecution of their members and participants; 47.3% each were tallied by pressure on the CSOs (for example, rummage or bank account blocking) and forced winding-up; 30.9% indicated pressure on other CSOs; 27.3% mentioned complicated funding access; and 12.7% specified coercion to collaboration on behalf of the law-enforcement authorities.

Do you believe that your CSO is



58,2% – Partially relocated.
21,8% – Just a few employees have relocated and the majority remain in Belarus.
20% – Fully relocated.

Name the reasons for your CSO relocation: several options can be chosen

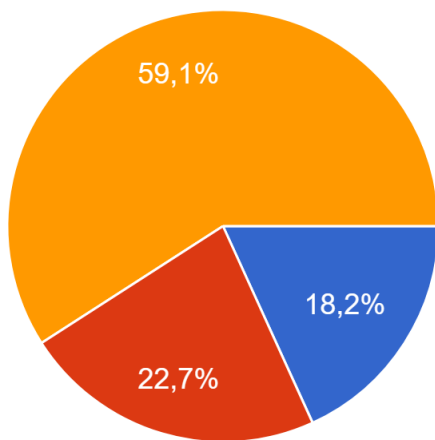


39 (70,9%) – Pressure against members and participants.
33 (60%) – General social and political situation.
30 (54,5%) – Administrative or penal persecution.
26 (47,3%) – Pressure on the CSOs (for example, rummage or bank account blocking).
26 (47,3%) – Forced winding-up.
17 (30,9%) – Pressure on other CSOs .
15 (27,3%) – Complicated funding access.
7 (12,7%) – Coercion to cooperate with law enforcement agencies.
1 (1,8%) – Different views of the team members on how the Belarusian NGO may survive, and as a result, part of the team decided to leave and create a new organisation in another country.
1 (1,8%) – The organisation was created already in exile by people who were mainly subjected to one of the noted types of persecution.

BELARUSIAN CSOS' ACTIVITY UNDER RELOCATION

The majority of the relocated CSOs, covered by the survey that are still not registered abroad are considering at the present time the need for their registration (59.1%), 22.7% are not planning their registration, whereas 18.2% have plans underway to register their organisation in the short term.

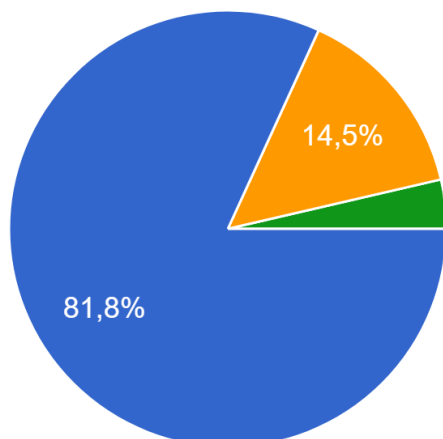
If the CSO is not registered abroad, then:



59,1% – We consider the need for its registration.
22,7% – We do not plan a registration.
18,2% – We plan to register it in the short term.

Most of the Belarusian CSOs relocated in full or in part abroad see themselves at the present time as specifically Belarusian organisations without associating their activities with their host countries. Self-identification as a Belarusian CSO was indicated by 81.8% of the relocated CSOs covered by the survey; 14.5% of the CSOs sometimes struggle to self-identify; while 3.6% of the CSOs were at a loss to answer. None of the CSOs covered by the survey answered that it did not feel as a Belarusian organisation.

When under relocation, do you feel that your CSO is a Belarusian organisation?



81,8% – Yes.
14,5% – Sometimes we struggle to self-identify.
3,6% – I am at a loss to answer.

Education and outreach were named as a major activity vector by the CSOs covered by the survey as their core vector; and 58.2% mentioned human rights. A considerably smaller part indicated to other spheres as their major activity directions: local development, town planning and representing interests of other vulnerable populations – 16.4% of the CSOs; 14.5% of the CSOs named representing youth's interests and international cooperation as their core activities; and 12.7% of the CSOs specified science, research, representing women's interests, social services, charity and environment protection and 10.9% stated culture and arts. Just a small fraction of the CSOs specified enterprise development (5.5%); and *bona fide* state governance (3.6%). One CSO named each of the following activities: physical training, sports and travel, information resource development or information. By and large, the picture provided on the CSO activity profiles complies with the findings from other research in the area. Beginning with 2021, according to the research conducted by the Lawtrend and the OEEC, the activity vectors defined most frequently by the CSOs as their chief activity vectors have been represented by education and outreach, as well by human rights. In the second half of 2022 and the first half of 2023 human rights as a CSO activity vector in terms of their proliferation came ahead of the civil society development directions (for example, please, refer to *The Condition of the Belarusian CSOs: survey findings*¹). A similar picture with regard to the most widespread areas of focus among the Belarusian CSOs (irrespective of their relocation) is also provided by the research entitled *The Civil Society Organisations in Belarus as of Early 2023: Condition, Relations and Needs*² carried out by the Centre for New Ideas (CNI) jointly with the Centre for European Transformation (CET). Such a concentration of the CSO sector on just a handful of focal areas might lead in the future to an unhealthy competition.

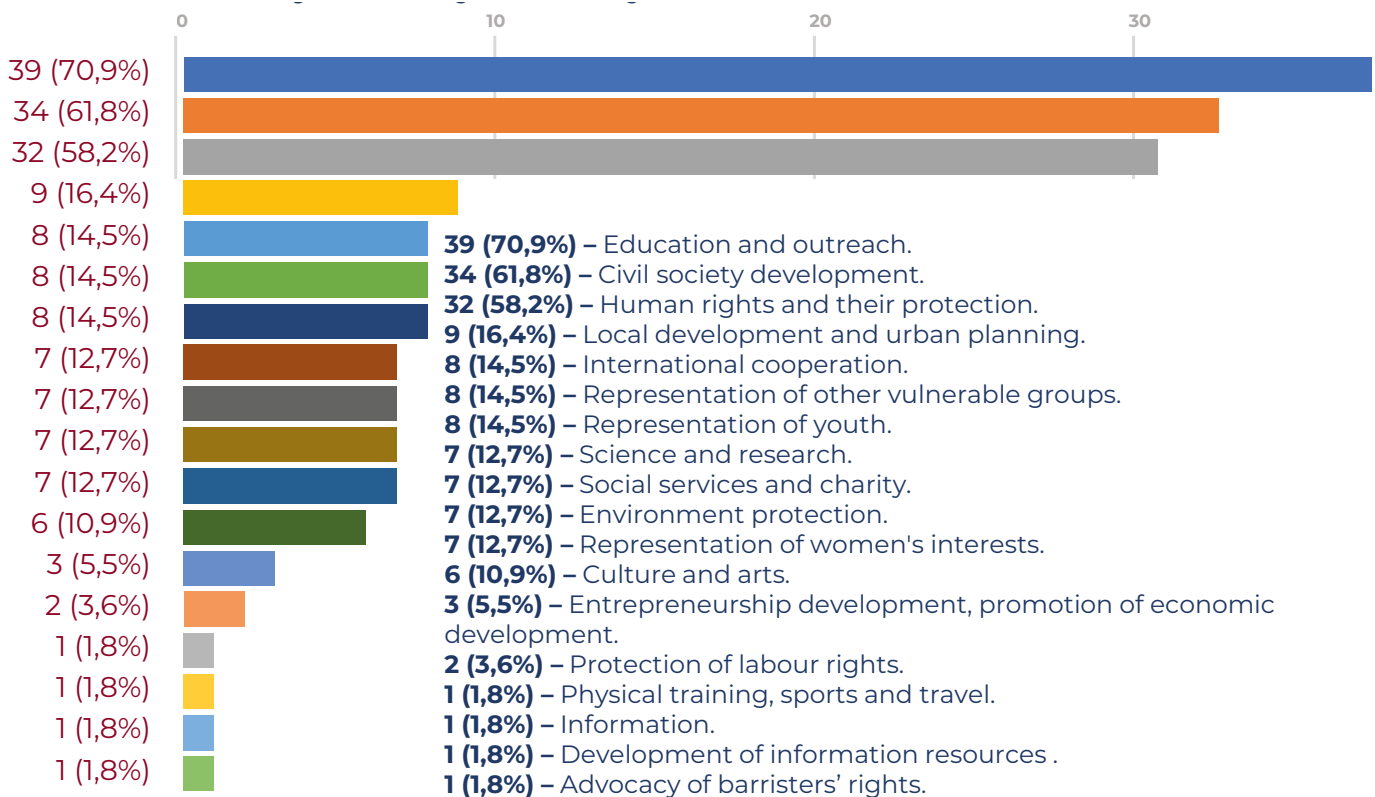
The CSO activity methods are still diversified. At the same time, a large share of the CSOs focus their operations on education, outreach and analytics. 81.8% of the CSOs covered by the survey have mentioned holding educational events; 60% conduct research and engage in analytical work (that being said, a mere 12.7% of the CSOs identify themselves as an R&D organisation); 47.3% are involved in monitoring actions; 45.5% do regional-level advocacy; 38.2% provide legal or safety and security counselling; 29.1% offer psychological support; 27.3% each is shared by capacity development counselling and public actions staging; 25.5% do interest advocacy for target groups in Belarus; 18.2% do target group interest advocacy with their relocation countries' authorities; 14.5% provide social services; and 9.1% draft legislative enactments. Among auxiliary activity methods, we could mention information, information dissemination, media product support, as well as providing financial assistance to victims of repressions and holding cultural events.

Most of the relocated CSOs try to preserve their activity focus on their target groups inside Belarus. 89.1% of the CSOs covered by the survey, given a possible choice of several answer options, have indicated that they keep on working with their target group in Belarus, but do so at a low-key level. In the meantime, a restricted direct access to their target groups and a lost connection with multiple target groups inside Belarus are pointed to by many CSOs as a substantial change occurred due to the relocation. Numerous CSOs cover with their operations the Belarusians and the Belarusian organisations abroad. Thus, for instance, 50.9% of the CSOs covered by the survey have declared the temporarily emigrated Belarusian nationals and 30.9% did so in respect of the

1 Lawtrend. The Condition of the Belarusian Civil Society Organisations: Survey Findings. <https://research.lawtrend.org/>

2 Centre for New Ideas. The Civil Society Organisations in Belarus as of Early 2023: Condition, Relations and Needs. <https://newideas.center/organizacii-grazhdanskogo-obshhestva-belarusi-na-nachalo-2023-goda/>

What are the major activity areas of your CSO?



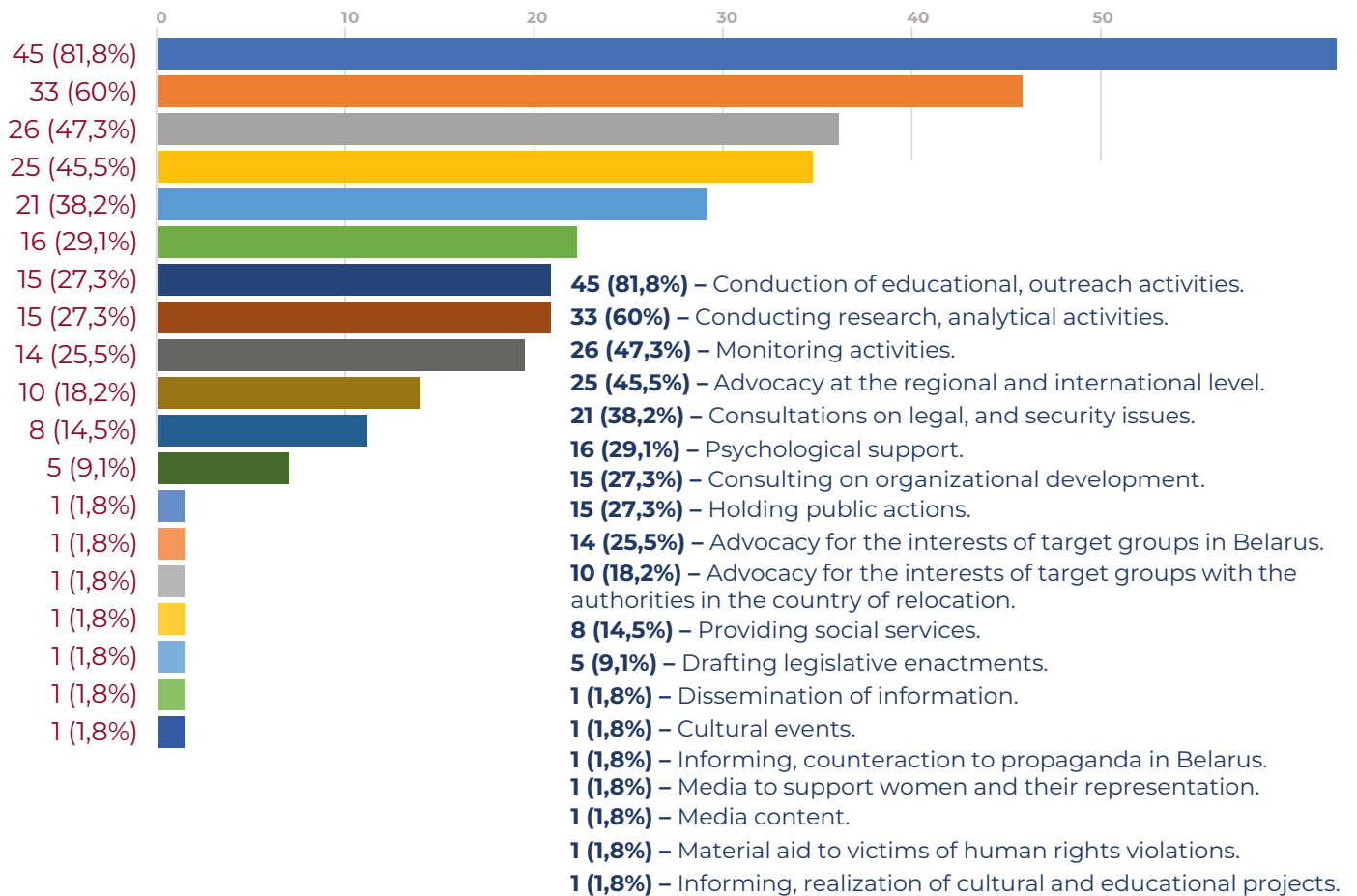
relocated Belarusian organisations as their target group, while 25.5% work with the diaspora. 34.5% do advocacy and cooperate with the international bodies and organisations. Some CSOs orient their activity towards the relocation country's nationals (among the CSOs covered by the survey they account for 16.4%), as well as towards the nationals of other countries who do not reside in Belarus (such CSOs account for 5.5%).

We might assume that in the long run, with the relocation time being extended and with continued repressive practices inside the country, the departure of the CSOs from their target groups inside Belarus will become ever greater, while the human and expert potential among the CSOs themselves will go down. An ever-higher percentage of the CSOs orienting their operations towards the Belarusian diaspora and/or the relocation country nationals is also a possibility.

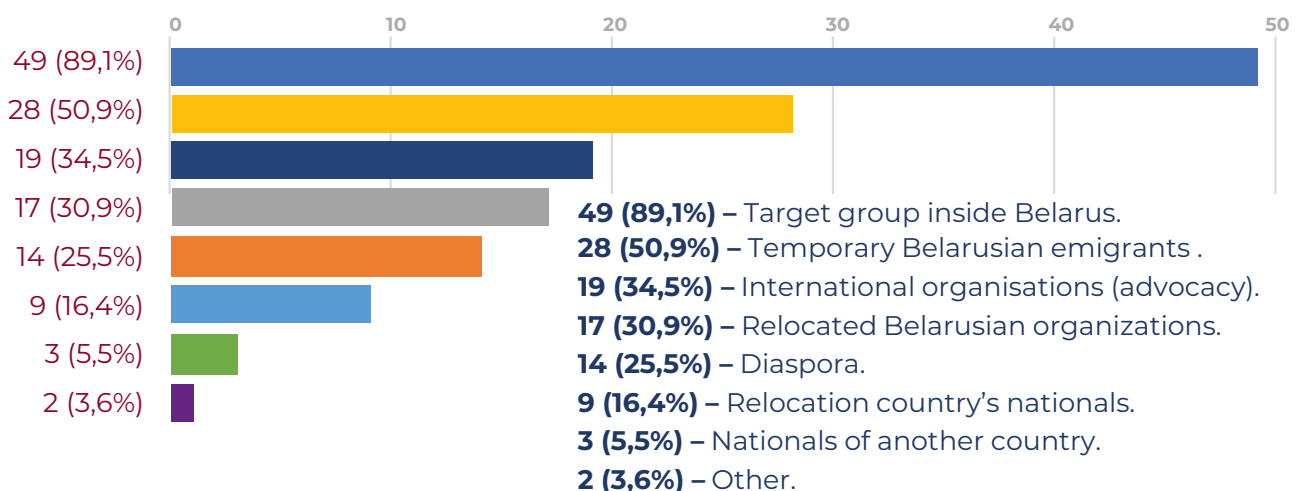
Most relocated CSOs have already felt a rupture from the CSOs, which continue their work on the Belarusian territory. Among the CSOs covered by the survey, 40% have stated that they rather feel than do not a rupture from the organisations remaining in Belarus; 27.3% do feel such a rupture; 21.8% rather do not feel it; 5.5% of the CSOs were at a loss to answer the question; and a mere 5.5% said they did not feel any rupture from the CSOs inside Belarus. Such a situation is well to have been expected. Many of the Belarusian CSOs earlier engaging in Belarus in partnerships have been wound-up and/or were compelled to emigrate. Besides, cooperation and even a simple communication of the CSOs inside the country with relocated organisations may bring along big risks for the former, particularly so, if the relocated CSO has opted for a public activity strategy.

Since they have found themselves in the jurisdictions with a much more favourable legal climate with regard to their financial activities as compared to Belarus, the relocated CSOs enjoy a

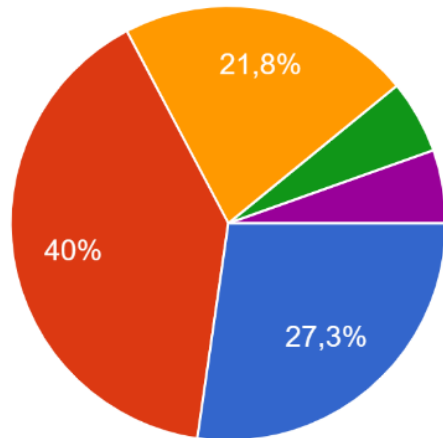
What are the main activity methods of your CSO?



With what target group does your CSO work?



Do you feel a rupture from the Belarusian organisations remaining in Belarus?

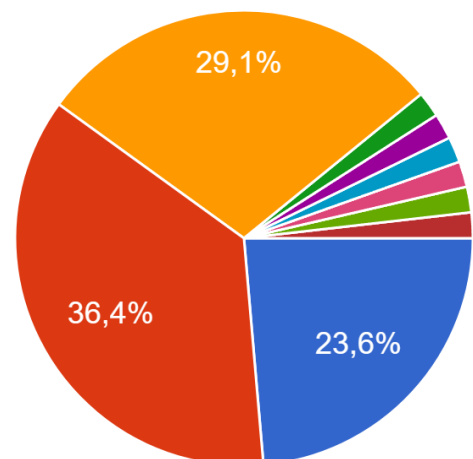


22 (40%) – Rather yes.
15 (27,3%) – Yes.
12 (21,8%) – Rather no.
3 (5,5%) – I am at a loss to answer.
3 (5,5%) – No.

much better access to their foreign donors' funding, as well as opportunities to raise financing via crowdfunding platforms placed abroad. At the same time, many of the newly sprung initiatives and small organisations stress that the donor bids are untransparent and non-public; consequently, funding access for them is complicated, especially if larger-amount grants are concerned. The difficulties related to funding access are likewise pointed to by the CSOs, which lack a registration status and which at the present time are unready for a registration in the new jurisdictions.

Has the funding amount raised by your CSO changed after the relocation?

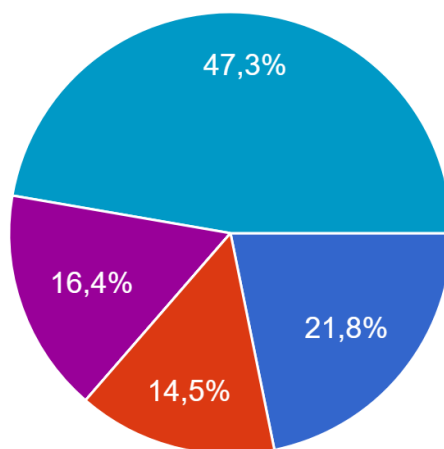
20 (36,4%) – Went down.
16 (29,1%) – Remained the same.
13 (23,6%) – Went up.
1 (1,8%) – We had no funding in 2020.
1 (1,8%) – Increased in absolute numbers, but due to the high cost of living, relatively, did not increase.
1 (1,8%) – No funding .
1 (1,8%) – Created after the relocation.
1 (1,8%) – We almost have no funding.
1 (1,8%) – We did not have the experience yet.



Answering the question on the funding amounts raised by the CSOs following their relocation, 36.4% of the CSOs covered by the survey have pointed out that their funding amount dropped; 29.1% that their funding amount remains the same; and 25.4% declare a funding increment. Some individual CSOs state almost a complete lack of funding or a missing fund-raising experience. That being said, many CSOs indicating at an increased funding amount stress at the same time a considerable increase, due to the relocation, in the administrative and technical expenses suffered

by the CSOs themselves, as well as in their employees' personal expenditures. In this respect, with growing funding amounts, many CSOs observe an actual reduction in the funding amount channelled to the CSO operations, as well as an actual reduction in the CSO personnel incomes or lack among the CSO staff of any social or labour guarantees (sick leave payment, paid holidays, etc.).³ The problem leads, among other things, to an outflow from the CSOs of skilled specialists and experts, or to their part-time engagement in the CSOs, or to them performing their functions at their time off at their main job.

Does your CSO has employees from among the relocation country nationals?



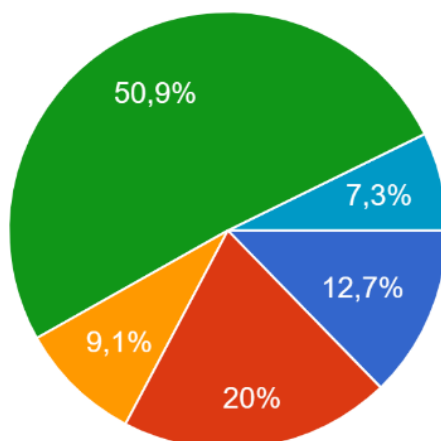
26 (47,3%) – No, we don't and we don't need exactly such employees.

12 (21,8%) – Yes, 1 person.

9 (16,4%) – No, we don't, but we need such employees.

8 (14,5%) – Yes, 2 or 3 persons.

Does your CSO plan to continue its activity in the interests of Belarus? ?



28 (50,9%) – Yes, more than five years.

11 (20%) – Yes, the nearest two or three years.

7 (12,7%) – Yes, the nearest year.

5 (9,1%) – Yes, the nearest four or five years.

4 (7,3%) – I am at a loss to answer.

³ Information on the labour and social guarantees in the Belarusian civil society organisations is provided in the Lawtrend materials available in *Access to Social and Labour Guarantees When Working for an NGO*. <https://www.lawtrend.org/freedom-of-association/dostup-k-sotsialnym-i-trudovym-garantiyam-pri-rabote-v-nko>, *Working in the NGO Sector at the Period of Drastic Ambient Environment Transformations*. An analytical note following the results of a research conducted by a Belarusian NGO consortium in 2022.

At the same time, a majority of the relocated CSOs are keen on cooperating with the Belarusian specialists and experts and, among other things, on attracting new Belarusian employees to their teams. A mere 21.8% of the CSOs covered by the survey have mentioned having among their staff 1 employee – a national of the relocation country (as a rule, such person is an accountant); 14.5% said they had 2 or 3 employees – relocation country nationals (that being said, none among the CSOs covered by the survey stated having more than three such staff members); 16.4% have declared their need for such personnel; and 47.3% of the CSOs do not have any and neither do they feel a need at the present time for such employees.

Despite all the challenges faced by the CSOs due to the internal situation in Belarus, as well as due to a forced relocation, most of the relocated CSOs conducting their activities abroad have plans to keep them on in the interests of Belarus.

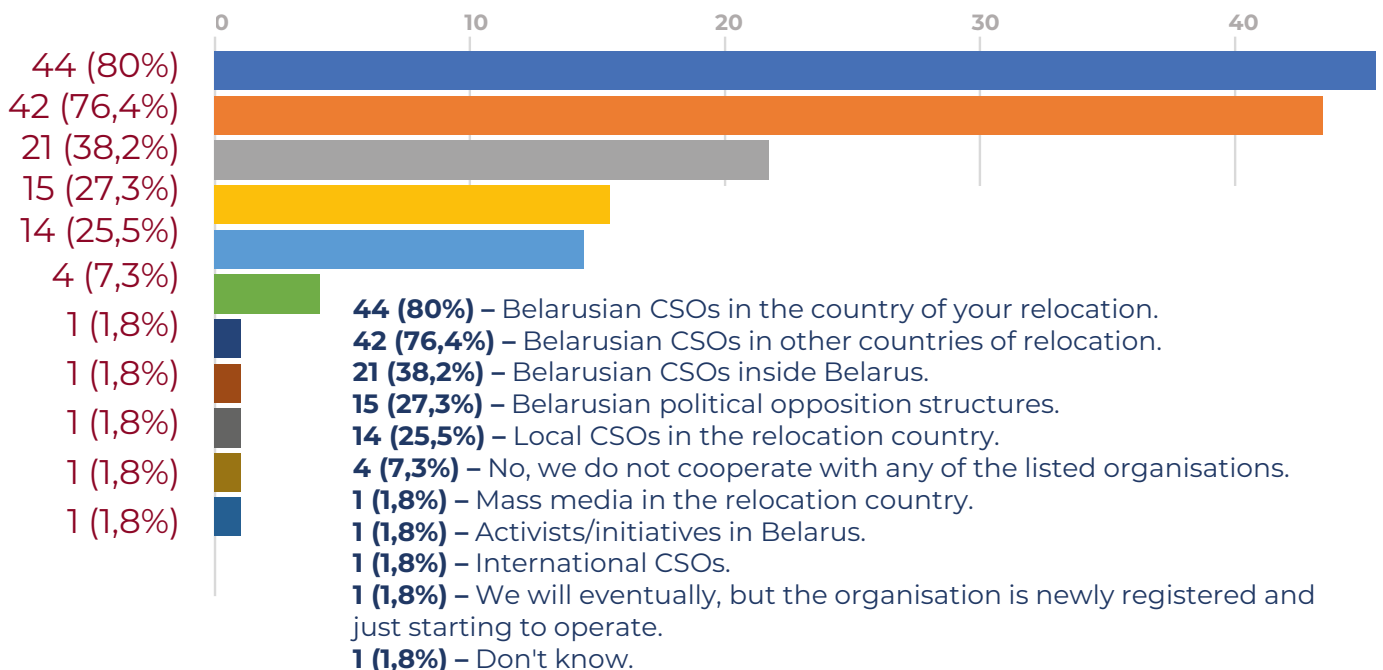
50.9% of the CSOs covered by the survey have declared planning to continue their activities in the interests of Belarus for more than 5 years; 9.1% in the nearest 4 to 5 years; 20% in the nearest 2 to 3; and 12.7% within the nearest year. A mere 7.3% of the CSOs were at a loss to answer the question.

COOPERATION AND INTERACTION

The coalition processes going on among the CSOs and aimed at addressing strategic tasks are in place; however, they are not widely spread among the Belarusian relocated organisations.¹ At the same time, partnerships among the Belarusian CSOs to address some *ad hoc* tasks, among other things, within the project framework, are gaining momentum. The most fruitful cooperation among the Belarusian CSOs is witnessed, if they stay in one relocation country. Far from all the Belarusian CSOs consider cooperating with the local relocation country CSOs as a must-do thing. At the same time, when such a cooperation becomes a fact of life, it predominantly is a success.

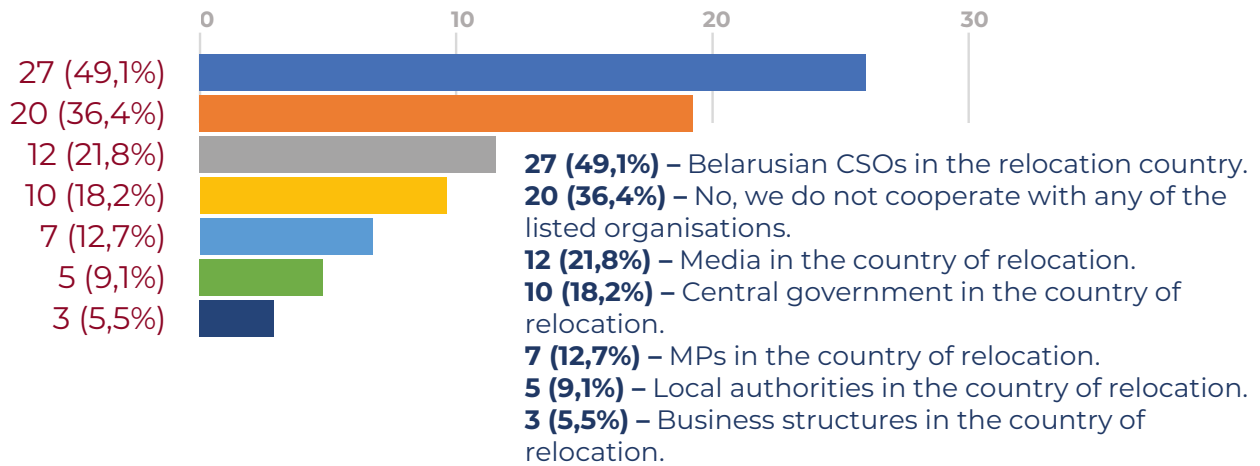
Among the CSOs covered by the survey, 76.4% have stated cooperating with the Belarusian CSOs in the relocation country; 80% with the Belarusian CSOs in other countries; 40% with the Belarusian CSOs inside Belarus (in spite of the fact that a mere 5.5% of the CSOs state feeling no rupture from the CSOs inside the country and 21.8% rather not feeling than feeling); 27.3% with the political opposition elements (at the same time, for quite a few CSOs such cooperation has an occasional nature); and 25.5% with the local CSOs in the relocation country. Some individual CSOs have declared cooperating additionally with the media inside Belarus and with the international organisations. Just 7.3% of the CSOs covered by the survey have noted engaging in no cooperation with any of the above entities.

Does your CSO interact (has contacts, holds consultations, etc.) with:



¹ The conclusion has been made in the research entitled *Prospects and Future Scenarios for the Belarusian Civil Society Organisations: Various 2027 Horizons* conducted by the Belarusian CSO experts in cooperation with the Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung with support from the Federal Foreign Office.

Does your CSO cooperate (engaging in joint projects, developing strategies, involving in a joint advocacy, etc.) **with :**



The local CSOs in the relocation countries are seen quite often by the Belarusian CSOs as a resource (information support, counselling, educational services, etc.), rather than as partners. Some of the Belarusian CSOs make attempts to establish interactions with the relocation country authorities, as well as with the mass media. Assumedly, such a collaboration seeks to achieve one of the two objectives: (1) promoting the Belarusian agenda in the relocation country and/or advocating the Belarusians' interests in the relocation country; and (2) reformatting the Belarusian CSOs' operations to match the agendas of the relocation country.

Answering the question on interaction (having contacts, holding consultations, etc.) with the relocation country entities, 49.1% of the CSOs covered by the survey have stated interacting with the CSOs in the relocation country; 21.8% – with the mass media; 18.2% – with the central authorities; 12.7% – with the MP corps; 9.1% – with the local authorities; and 5.5% – with the business entities in the relocation country. 36.4% of the CSOs covered by the survey have declared having no interactions with any of the parties stated.

THREATS, CHALLENGES AND NEEDS OF THE RELOCATED BELARUSIAN CSOS

Even the relocated Belarusian CSOs may not be named as free to the full extent of repressions from the Belarusian authorities. The authorities track in the information space publications by the foreign CSOs and activists or bloggers on social media. The year of 2022 saw repression threats addressed to the relocated activists gaining a regulatory framework dimension: a piece of legislation was adopted on special/absentee criminal proceedings *in absentia* of the defendant (by late August of 2023, the list of persons against whom special proceedings are conducted had included 22 persons), on citizenship revocation (among other things, the only one obtained by the right of birth) against those guilty of extremist crime and on confiscation of the property of persons who have abandoned the country.

A separate threat is represented by persecution inside Belarus of the persons who have been or were linked to the CSO activities or who continue their work outside Belarus, as well as of the relatives and friends of the publicly engaged activists. An extra factor for persecution is that some donors lack special security criteria with respect to the Belarusian CSO reports or lack protection of the personal data of the persons who stay in Belarus and keep on cooperating with the relocated Belarusian CSOs.

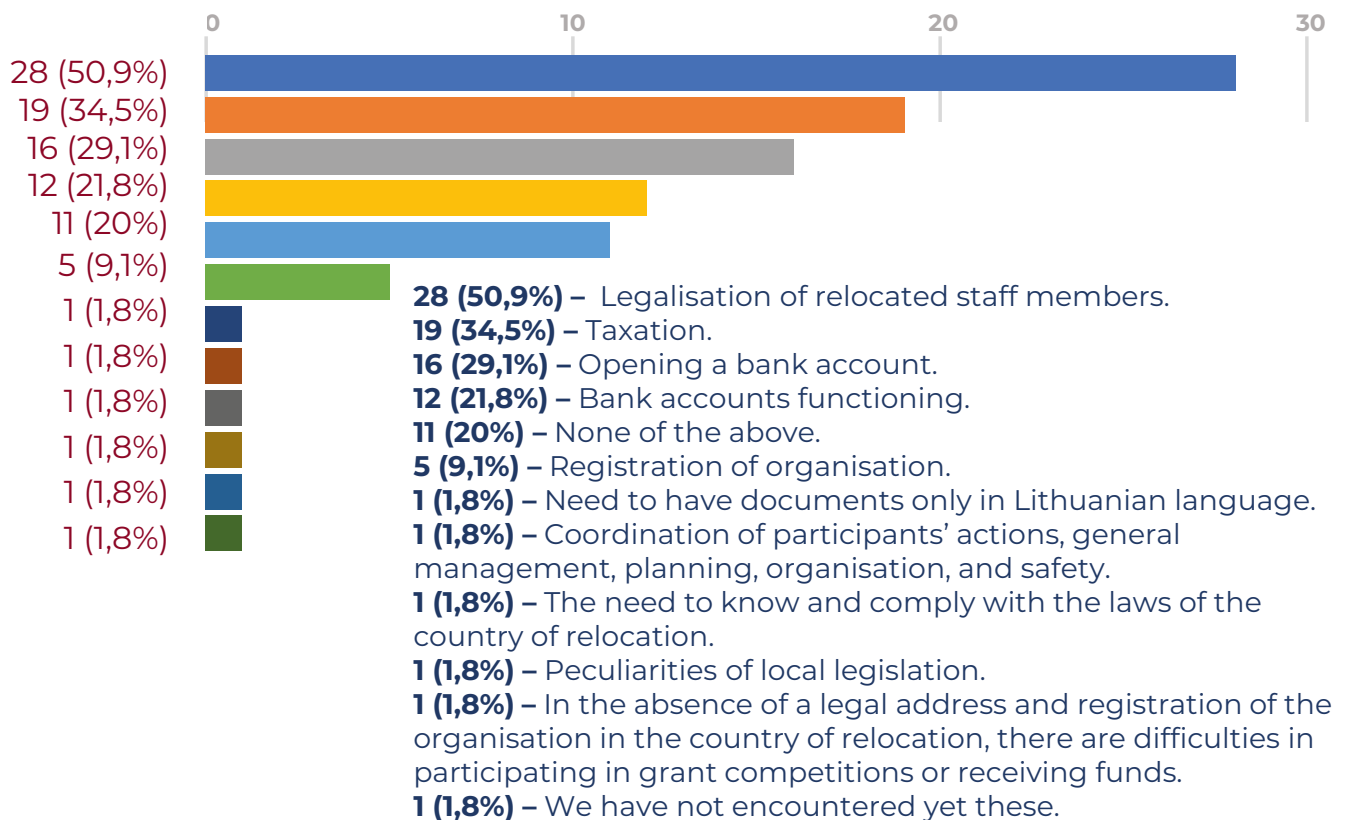
A mere 10 (8.2%) out of the 55 persons covered by the survey have stated feeling no threats due to their involvement in public activities under the relocation conditions. That being said, the feelings of threat/fear are known to the CSO representatives staying directly in a foreign jurisdiction (a part of the team remains without financing, faces survival problems, legalisation extension denials, non-admission to the residence country territory, deportation, physical unsafety, CSO operating condition tightening, lack of knowledge of the national laws and changing policies by the host country with regard to the Belarusians or relocation duration), as well as related to the situation inside Belarus (impossible return to the country, pressure exerted on friends and relatives, members and participants or target group representatives remaining in the country, threatened property confiscation and pronouncing an extremist formation).

The challenges, as well as the needs across the Belarusian relocated CSOs depend to a great extent on the jurisdictions they are in. In the meantime, despite any differences in the relocation countries, different activity areas, working records, etc., according to the survey findings, the relocated CSOs also share common needs: the need for legal consultations on the host country legislation (both for the personnel and for the organisations as such), access to banking and accounting services, institutional support, visa and legalisation support, learning the language or other aspects pertinent to integration with the local community, and advanced training for the CSO members and participants.

When staying in new jurisdictions, many of the Belarusian CSOs encounter a number of legal issues. That being said, such issues arise both because of the need to look into the new legal norms, CSO legislation in place that is not always specific or comprehensible, among other things, inadequately translated from the national language, high legal service costs or quite frequently a poor legal support quality, and because of the deteriorated practices applied vis-a-vis the CSOs set up by the Belarusian founders following the beginning of a full-scale war of

Russia against Ukraine; for example, rejections to open bank accounts (such a problem has been specified in the survey answers, first and foremost, by the organisations registered in Georgia, as well as the ones registered in Poland, Lithuania or Estonia). As can be seen from the above, the conditions for the Belarusian CSO operations often depend on the political support from a specific government or a political grouping, but also on the legal environment in the host country. For example, when a government is changed or when another party gains power, the operational conditions might undergo a radical change. Such a radical legal climate transformation was faced by the organisations following the beginning of the all-out Russian-Ukrainian war: the Belarusian CSOs in Ukraine had either to reduce their activities, or to relocate repeatedly to other countries (for example, because of the bank account blocking, immigration restraints and, by and large, a heavier monitoring over the Belarusian nationals as co-aggressor country representatives).

What legal issues you have encountered due to your CSO relocation?



Answering the question on legal issues arising due to the relocation conditions (given a possible choice of several answer options), 50.9% of the CSOs covered by the survey have indicated to their relocated staff legalisation as such an issue; and 34.5% of the CSOs experience difficulties in the taxation area; 29.1% – with bank account opening; 21.8% – with bank account function; and 9.1% – with setting up the organisations.

The Belarusian CSOs' needs for a legal assistance in their relocation countries (without taking into account the remaining needs for a legal assistance under the Belarusian laws in effect due to winding-ups, pressure mounted on their members, adjudging organisations and resources as extremist ones, etc.) are located in two planes: (1) legal consultations directly for the CSOs themselves – CSO registration in a relocation country, bank account opening and operation, taxation, entering into civil law contracts, labour legislation, reporting, etc.; (2) legal consultations for CSO members and participants – legalisation in the country of residence, taxation, power of attorney issuance, document legalisation, Belarusian passport replacement or extension, etc.

It should be noticed that the Belarusian CSOs abroad could encounter some grave challenges thanks to their habituation to ignore the legislative requirements, which was formed back in Belarus due to the absurdity and quite often even impossibility to comply with the domestic legal norms. For example, the Lawtrend experts, when engaging in their activities, have recorded non-compliance by a number of CSOs with the international standards or national regulations in the area of personal data protection.

The relocated Belarusian CSOs' needs, based on the survey conducted, may be tentatively divided into groups as below:

1. Physical resources

- 1.1 Organisations funding (institutional support) – 78.2% of the CSOs covered by the survey
- 1.2 Project activity funding – 63.6%
- 1.3 Taking into account the safety and security criteria, when allocating finances – 45.5%
- 1.4 Resources destined for relocation of CSO members and participants or their family members – 32.7%
- 1.5 Equipment for work – 30.9%
- 1.6 Resources for CSO registration – 14.5%
- 1.7 Resources to support repressed CSO members inside the country – 1.8%

2. Human resources (team)

- 2.1 Employees' visa support – 61.8%
- 2.2 New employees or volunteers – 49.1%
- 2.3 Advanced training for CSO members and participants – 38.2%

3. Needs for the organisations' safety, security, development and sustainability

- 3.1 Institutional development and strategic planning – 50.9%
- 3.2 Advocacy and improving the CSOs' operational environment at various levels – 41.8%
- 3.3 Partnerships and collaboration with other CSOs – 40%
- 3.4 Legal consultations for the CSOs or their members and participants – 34.5%
- 3.5 Training in the area of digital security and security measures, when interacting with partners in Belarus – 1,8%
- 3.6 Self-identification – 1,8%

The CSO needs closely correlate with the most substantial transformations, which, according to the Belarusian CSOs, have come about in their activity due to relocation. Such transformations, first and foremost, are concentrated in the spheres of their financial operations or resource access, situation inside teams, reinvention of objectives/areas of focus/strategies and the need for reformatting the CSO technical work.

Sphere	Substantial transformations occurring inside the CSOs (findings coming from an analysis into the answers provided by the CSOs covered by the survey to the grid-in question: "What are the most substantial changes occurring in your CSO activities due to relocation?")
Financial operations and resource access	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mounting costs, among other things, due to the team distribution across several countries or growing subsistence costs for the employees • Abrupt funding cuts, among other things, due to the war in Ukraine • Delays in funding reception • Reduced actual revenues, despite an essential rise in the amount of work • Financial (and other) operations are no more illegal, but became transparent
Human resources (team)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Changing CSO priorities – employees' safety and security • Distributed team work (team members working from different countries) • Need for and difficulties with recruiting new employees or their rapid departure from the CSOs • Personnel burnout and fatigue • Old members and participants abandoning the CSOs • Influx of new team members and participants • Maintaining the organisations' skeleton staff • Organisations' reduced staff • Lack of space for teambuilding • Lack of basic guarantees for the CSO personnel and the health-related issues
Objectives, mission and areas of focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forced suspensions in CSO operations for a certain period of time • Reformatting activities and changing methods or modalities of work. A change in the organisations' activity forms: the service-based replaces the membership-based one • Holding strategic sessions; and a constant revision of the operational strategies • Significantly upgraded need for institutional development (coaching and supervision) • Hardships linked to new ideas or creativity, when seeking to achieve long-term outcomes • Much effort is spent not to lose contact with the situation in Belarus, to engage with the target group or to build up a team inside the country • Transformed operational format: a limited access to/loss of communication with the target groups inside Belarus, reorientation towards the Belarusian emigre community or changing target groups • Changing areas of focus or embracing new lines of activity • CSO reorientation from the domestic Belarusian agenda to the international one • Departure "underground" and non-public operations • Terminating the advocacy activities inside Belarus and advocating challenges in the relocation country

<p>Administrative or technical provisions in the CSO operations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impossible operations under a previous format • CSO registration in a new jurisdiction • The need for structuring work under the new legal conditions; among other things, the need to grapple with the legal norms or taxation-related matters • Substantially higher administrative loads • “Branches” appearing in different countries • Transfer in part/in full to online operations and remote management • Website transfer from Belarus (hosting and domains)
<p>Interactions with other CSOs</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of informal communication with colleagues (from the organisations or from the sector at large).

As can be seen from the above, relocation for most CSOs is prevalently linked to negative changes: starting with an actual reduction in the employees’ incomes or increased costs for the organisations’ administrative and technical support, the need to reformat operations due to residing in (a) new jurisdiction(s), changing management system, wrapping up some long-standing activity areas or methods or abandoning the traditional target groups and ending with difficulties inside the teams or employee burnouts. In the meantime, a number of CSOs has pointed out also to some substantial positive changes coming about following their relocation: maintaining the teams, a new professional team springing up, institutional CSO development or possible legal and transparent operations.

MAJOR CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. The Belarusian civil society could be at the present time subdivided into the two large clusters: the CSOs conducting their activities from the Belarusian territory and the CSOs conducting their activities or the bulk of them from abroad. The CSOs that see themselves as fully relocated abroad ones (when their decision-making hub has been transferred abroad and the entire or core team relocated) are much less numerous than the partially relocated CSOs (when most of the team and/or key staff members remain in the country). Despite this fact or attempts towards cooperation and communication, the rupture between the relocated CSOs and the CSOs inside the country is steadily on an increase. That being said, the relocated Belarusian CSOs perform some important functions for the whole civil society, in particular, and for Belarus, as a whole.
2. The relocated Belarusian CSO cluster is rather heterogeneous. The relocated CSOs differ in terms of their connections to the Belarusian opposition elements, target groups, foundation period and other factors. The CSO features also differ depending on their main relocation countries (Lithuania, Poland or Georgia). The highest number among the relocated CSOs is concentrated in Lithuania. A large percentage of the Belarusian CSOs set up in Belarus prior to their management relocation has also settled in Poland. At the same time, Poland is likewise featured by generating new initiatives aimed, first and foremost, towards supporting the civic activity and quite often created by the persons with a long civil society work record, as well as by hosting on its territory some individual members and participants of the Belarusian CSOs. The lowest number of the “old” CSOs is concentrated in Georgia; notwithstanding, Georgia observes the highest growth in new initiatives, first and foremost, the grassroots ones, among other things, brought to life by persons who had not been engaged previously in the civil society environment.
3. Splitting the Belarusian CSOs by a number of experts typically into the old (set up prior to 2020) and new ones (set up following 2020) is at the present time rather a matter of convention. Persisting relocated activities by the Belarusian CSOs and their success depend quite often not on their foundation period (the CSOs set up before or after 2020), but on their ability to recruit new members and participants, on their leaders' managerial skills, drive for institutional development, partnerships or on the reputation of the CSO and/or its leaders among the donor community. It is of a particularly momentous importance under the conditions, when the relocated CSOs face a number of new challenges both due to the situation in Belarus and because of conducting their operations in new jurisdictions. It would be vital for the Belarusian CSOs to implement programmes in strategic planning, institutional development, management, use of information technologies, etc.
4. The majority of the relocated CSOs founded by the Belarusians and engaged abroad in pro-active operations since 2020 identify themselves as Belarusian relocated CSOs and deny their affiliation with the host country sector. The fact is to be taken into account, when planning any regional programmes, for example, within the Eastern Partnership framework, when the

Belarusian CSOs that stay abroad may participate in them exactly as the Belarusian CSOs, rather than as their host country's CSOs.

5. The following are the most widespread areas of focus for the Belarusian CSOs at the present time: (1) education and outreach; (2) human rights; and (3) support of the civil society organisations. It is of an extreme significance to maintain diverse areas of focus among the Belarusian CSOs and to transgress these activities to their target groups inside Belarus, among other things, by way of looking for new methods or channels to communicate with them.
6. The “external” challenges for the Belarusian relocated CSOs and, consequently, their needs for advocacy, largely depend on their host country. Thus, for instance, the greatest obstacle faced by the Georgia-registered CSOs is that related to opening a bank account, as well as the problems arising around the stay on the Georgian territory by their members and participants: difficulties related to obtaining visas, refusals to issue stay permits, refusals to review international protection application documents or delayed terms to do so or a possible non-admission to the Georgian territory. Issues around bank account opening or operation are also typical for other countries, such as Poland, Lithuania, etc. A major issue for the CSOs located in these countries is an uphill struggle with legalisation of their members and participants. When structuring work with the Belarusian civil society or advocating the Belarusian CSOs' interests, we should also take into consideration the specific features of the CSOs' host countries.
7. A major challenge for all the Belarusian relocated CSOs, irrespective of the host country, is information transparency on their founders, members or participants, financial operations, as well as a possible change of policies vis-a-vis the Belarusian CSOs and the Belarusians on the host country territory.
8. “The internal” Belarusian relocated CSOs' challenges refer, first and foremost, to the financial or human resource matters. In spite of increases in the Belarusian CSO support programmes, quite a few CSOs report an actual drop in their physical resources. Another vital challenge for the Belarusian CSOs under relocation is their team distribution across different countries, their employees leaving the CSOs, the need to look around for new skilled staff members or lack of medium- or high-level managers. A greater focus must be shifted to working with the staff and volunteers of the Belarusian relocated CSOs, including the programmes aimed at their advanced training, burnout mitigation or psychological and other support; and to embedding in the projects various inclusion components.
9. Alongside the challenges or problems experienced by the Belarusian relocated organisations on their host country territories, many of them also feel threats due to their past or present activity on the Belarusian territory, such as pressure mounted on their family members or CSO members and participants, who remain in Belarus, adjudging as an extremist formation or confiscations of their members and participants' property. A separate cluster of problems is represented by a lack of any established on purpose safety or security criteria with regard to reports within some donor elements, to the protection in Belarus of the persons who were at various period engaged in the CSO projects and to a possible toxicity of the relocated CSOs for the Belarusians remaining inside the country. We should develop and implement programmes on physical, digital or financial security for the Belarusian CSOs and experience or information sharing programmes with other countries' CSOs. The CSOs have to heed the availability of information and communication work strategies with their target groups, in case the organisations or its information materials are adjudged extremist.

10. A threat for many Belarusian relocated CSOs lies in their habit to operate outside “the legal boundaries,” since they were unable to implement in practice numerous norms entrenched in the Belarusian legislation, as well as in their lack of familiarity with the specific traits of legal regulation in a new host country. To alleviate the threat, the Belarusian relocated CSOs' legal culture must be upgraded, as well as legal hubs to support both registered and unregistered Belarusian relocated CSOs on the territories of the major host countries founded and/or maintained.
11. The cooperation among the Belarusian relocated CSOs, first and foremost, is reduced to their joint implementation of specific projects. In the meantime, neither the coalition processes going on inside the Belarusian civil society, nor the coalitions, networks or partnerships' structure, objectives or efficiency is not an explored area. It would be a meaningful exercise to carry out a separate study on the topic.
12. In spite of the fact that persecutions in Belarus and a forced transfer of their activities or decision-making hubs abroad in case of many Belarusian CSOs have signified a serious blow for the Belarusian civil society, the Belarusian CSOs keep on developing their operations in the interests of Belarus under relocation (like the CSOs remaining in Belarus). Legality and transparency of the financial operations, building new partnerships, among other things, with the organisations in the relocation countries, new initiatives popping up, creation of new professional teams and strengthening relations with the international bodies or organisations may well be referred to positive changes happening within the Belarusian civil sector following the relocation.