

# Resilient Civil Society: Belarusian NGOs' Adaptation and Support for Civic Engagement Under Adverse Conditions

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**Abstract:** In Eastern Europe today, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) face significant challenges in cooperating with government institutions to advance their missions. Belarus represents a unique case, where an extensive crackdown on independent civil organizations has nearly halted their activities within the country. Yet, many Belarusian NGOs continue to operate from abroad, supporting civil initiatives and promoting citizens' rights in interactions with government agencies. This study investigates how exiled Belarusian NGOs have organized resources and communication channels to inform and empower local citizens on their rights, especially in influencing local agendas like public budgeting.

The research design focuses on a case study of a consortium of Belarusian NGOs based abroad, analyzing their methods for engaging the local Belarusian population in civil matters. The study addresses the following questions: (1) What strategies do Belarusian NGOs employ to maintain civic engagement from abroad? (2) How do they secure communication with citizens under restrictive conditions? (3) How effective are their initiatives in influencing local decision-making?

Data sources include interviews with NGO representatives, document analysis of NGO reports and public communication materials, and social media analysis to assess reach and engagement. Data collection procedures involve qualitative interviews with NGO staff and thematic analysis of digital outreach materials. The analytic approach combines case study methodology with thematic coding to identify patterns in NGO strategies and challenges.

Preliminary findings suggest that despite severe constraints, Belarusian NGOs have effectively created accessible resources that have proven useful to citizens. Key success factors include maintaining secure communication channels, leveraging social media for information dissemination, and building safe digital infrastructures. These findings illustrate the enduring importance of NGOs in advocating for citizens' interests, regardless of operating under a full domestic ban. This case study offers insights into the resilience and adaptability of civil society actors and highlights the strategic use of digital tools for sustaining civic engagement in highly restrictive environments.