



NON-FORMAL HUMAN RIGHTS EDUCATION

Provided by the Belarusian
Civil Society:

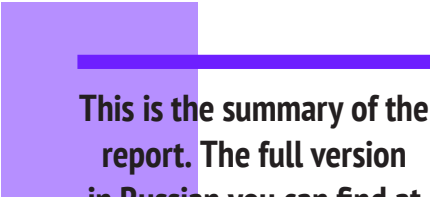
CURRENT STATE,
PROBLEMS,
AND CHALLENGES

THE RESEARCH REPORT

We would like to thank all those who assisted with the data collection, our colleagues who agreed to be interviewed for the research, and all the current and potential participants of educational programs of Belarusian civil society organisations or initiatives who shared their opinions in our survey.

The research was conducted by Ekaterina Deikalo, Anastasiya Dziubanava, and two more of our esteemed colleagues, whose names are withheld for security reasons.

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**This is the summary of the
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INTRODUCTION: rationale behind conducting this research

Human rights education (HRE) is fundamental to enabling individuals to effectively realise their rights. Establishing conditions for such education is part of a state's human rights commitments, which is confirmed by the 2011 UN Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training. The Declaration outlines the well-known triad that forms the HRE: education **about** human rights¹, **through** human rights² and **for** human rights³. While there are various normative and academic definitions of HRE, it is certain that HRE integrates both normative elements and cultural and value-based aspects. At the same time, beyond imparting knowledge and skills, HRE aims not just to convey certain values, but also to motivate individuals to transform their lives and society in alignment with these values.⁴

In Belarus, due to the existing governmental system and authoritarian regime, it is nearly impossible to ensure adequate opportunities for human rights education within the formal education framework. The options that would correspond to the goals and objectives of such education both substantively and methodologically are lacking. Although some fragmented successful practices existed at different levels of formal education, they were insufficient to constitute systematic,

¹ providing knowledge and understanding of human rights norms and principles, the values that underpin them and the mechanisms for their protection

² learning and teaching in a way that respects the rights of both educators and learners

³ empowering persons to enjoy and exercise their rights and to respect and uphold the rights of others

⁴ Tibbitts, Felisa and Fernekes, William (2011). Human Rights Education / In Totten, S. and Pederson, J.E. (eds.) Teaching and Studying Social Issues: Major Programs and Approaches. Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, pp. 87-117: https://www.researchgate.net/publication/290605420_Human_Rights_Education

quality processes. This is especially evident in legal education, which, over the past 29 years, has been deliberately hollowed out alongside the legal system. Consequently, this has led to the emergence of several generations of Belarusian lawyers whose thinking is not aligned with human rights principles and values.

It could be said that civil society organisations (CSOs) that have provided non-formal education, have, to a certain extent and within their capabilities, performed the function of the state in this respect. However, they have traditionally pursued their own specific objectives in organising education-

al activities and programs in the field of human rights, such as extending the human capacity of civil society, targeted training of human rights defenders, educating and training activists and volunteers, and broadly raising awareness among Belarusians as a part of civic education.

After 2020, there has been a significant shift for both CSO providers and their target audiences. The political and human rights crisis, coupled with unprecedented repression targeting, among others, CSOs, compelled most major providers to relocate abroad and adapt their operations to this new reality. In this context, the activities of CSOs in the non-formal education sphere have notably expanded. Many CSOs also began to identify themselves as human rights organisations, considering human rights their main focus.

The Declaration outlines the well-known triad that forms the core of HRE: education about human rights, through human rights and for human rights.

Research on the impact of the regional socio-political situation on Belarusian CSOs conducted in 2023 by Belarusian NGOs OEEC and Lawtrend⁵ demonstrates that 70.9% of Belarusian CSOs name education and awareness-raising as their main activity. This type of activity is in the 1st place in the survey results. Human rights and their protection is the main type of activity for 58.2% of organisations (3rd place among all). At the same time, the authors of the research note that this trend has been observed since 2021⁶. 81.8 % of CSOs consider educational and awareness-raising activities to be the main methods of their work. The survey of the state of Belarusian CSOs conducted by The Center for New Ideas in 2023⁷ demonstrates approximately the same results. Education and awareness-raising as the main activity also ranks 1st among the responses with 37% of all respondents, including 33% of CSOs still functioning in Belarus.

On the one hand, such results can be partly explained by the fact that in the existing conditions education is one of the few spheres that Belarusian NGOs can engage in (and get some funding) in the present situation. Education as well is one of the few spheres that allows to work for the audience located in Belarus (including through extensive online opportunities). On the other hand, is it possible to say that such a surge of interest in this sphere goes hand in hand with an increase in relevant expertise, as well as the variety of services and educational products offered? Does this surge correlate with a focus on sustainable results?

At the same time, a number of providers actively engaged in educational activities until 2020 have curtailed them due to persecution, relocation and/or legal liquidation in Belarus, and therefore fell off the education segment within the Belarusian CSOs. Some of them – together with their best practices and materials that were available online.

⁵ The CSOs Acting under Relocation / Lawtrend, OEEC, 2023, <https://eng.oeec.ngo/the-csos-acting-under-relocation/>

⁶ Ibid, p. 11

⁷ Civil Society Organizations in Belarus at the Beginning of 2023: Their Condition, Relationships, and Needs / The Center for New Ideas, 2023, https://newideas.center/wp-content/uploads/2023/07/Civil-society-organizations-in-Belarus-at-the-beginning-of-2023_their-condition_-relationships_and-needs.pdf

Due to the forced emigration of a large part of Belarusians, the target audiences of providers are, firstly, “dispersed” within different countries. Secondly, despite this, it can be assumed⁸ that a huge part (the majority) of the target audience remains in Belarus.

On the one hand, due to the ongoing repressions and security considerations, it has become much more difficult to participate in educational events and programmes (both in Belarus and abroad). On the other hand, since 2020, a considerable increase in civic engagement has taken place, which, as a rule, entails an increased interest in human rights education.

One of the human rights organisations interviewed for this research noted that the total number of applications after 2020 has increased (the ratio of those who left Belarus/people staying in Belarus is about 50/50). In the last years when the courses were conducted in Belarus, the competition was about 2-3 individuals per place, while currently it is 5 persons per place. At the same time, providers dealing with general civic education that include a human rights component in their programmes noted that it is almost impossible to attract participants for the programme containing an explicit human rights wording.

Education and awareness-raising as the main activity also ranks 1st among the responses with 37% of all respondents, including 33% of CSOs still functioning in Belarus.

The overwhelming majority of providers considers young people to be their main target audience. According to the results of the study of the situation of Belarusian youth in 2019-2022, conducted by Belarusian NGO RADA⁹, acquisition of additional knowledge and skills, taking educational courses has ranked first among the spheres of interest for young people both in 2020 and 2022.

⁸ This partly follows from expert interviews with some providers conducted for this study (see the Methodology section below).

⁹ Analysis of the situation of Belarusian youth 2019-2022 / RADA, 2022, <https://en.rada.fm/2023/05/11/ha-ha-i-live-here/>

At the same time, in 2022, only 18% of young Belarusians wished to use educational programmes of civil society for these purposes (in 2020 – 23%). At the same time, the number of young people who believe that non-formal education is an empowering tool for problem-solving and the way to and amplify their voice has halved since 2020 (with 24% in 2020, and 12% in 2022). Notably, however, 29% of young people would nevertheless like to use non-formal education for this purpose. And this figure has increased in 2022 compared to 2020 (25%).

In addition, after 2020, due to repressions in academia, many competent professors who worked in universities have been dismissed (or severely censored). Therefore, educational programmes/courses by non-formal education providers or materials created by them and freely available online have become practically the only source of adequate educational information (including on human rights) for people living in Belarus.

At the same time, due to the inability to carry out virtually any activities related to democratic change within the country, education and awareness-raising become one of the main spheres that have long-term and sustainable impacts.

Given the above, the role of human rights education is increasing. In order to make this

area more sustainable and effective, it seems important to make an inventory of the segment of CSOs engaged in such activities in its current state. Therefore, in this research, we have focused on analysing the activities of those Belarusian CSOs that currently have human rights education activities in their portfolio.

It is important to note that no such research has been conducted in the Belarusian civil society so far.

The objective of the present research is to identify the current state of the segment of Belarusian CSOs-providers of non-formal human rights education, problems and challenges in this sphere from the point of view of both providers of educational services and learners¹⁰.

The results of the research will be offered to providers for further discussion and search for ways to improve the quality of human rights education provided by Belarusian CSOs.

Due to the inability to carry out virtually any activities related to democratic change within the country, education and awareness-raising become one of the main spheres that have long-term and sustainable impacts

¹⁰ Hereinafter, we will use the term “learners” to refer to both real and potential participants in educational programs/schools/courses of Belarusian CSOs.

METHODOLOGY

The research was conducted from November 2022 to October 2023.

The data collection involved:

- monitoring publicly available information on the online resources of Belarusian CSOs engaged in non-formal human rights education;
- conducting expert interviews with representatives of these CSOs by an expert from the Belarusian Helsinki Committee;
- conducting a survey of learners through a Google Form, using questionnaires developed by the Belarusian Helsinki Committee.

Based on publicly available information, we identified 25 Belarusian CSOs/initiatives that currently have human rights education as one of their primary or sole activities¹¹. We categorised them into specialised¹² and non-specialised providers¹³. Of these, 9 are specialised providers, and 16 are non-specialised. This distinction, while being conditional, is crucial for understanding the differing objectives and content of their educational activities.

We selected 11 of the 25 CSOs for expert interviews, resulting in a total of 11 interviews (5 with specialised providers and 6 with non-specialised providers). This selection included a

¹¹ Our objective was to map out initiatives with an educational component (as opposed to just awareness rising) for sampling in our expert interviews. We focused on initiatives that conduct educational activities as a structured, methodologically organised process aimed at imparting specific knowledge, skills, and values to learners.

¹² These include organisations or educational initiatives where human rights (including human rights protection) are the central or sole thematic focus. Their educational programs or courses are dedicated entirely to human rights, either broadly or with a focus on specific rights, groups, or aspects of human rights topics.

¹³ These include organisations or educational initiatives with a primary focus outside human rights (such as research, civil society support, advocacy for specific groups, environmental issues, education, etc.). These organisations engage in general civic education in various fields and incorporate human rights as a component in their programs or courses.

mix of experienced and newer initiatives, organisations focusing on human rights broadly or on specific issues (like non-discrimination, inclusion, gender, etc.), and those targeting a general audience versus specific groups (such as youth, women, vulnerable groups, human rights defenders, attorneys, civil society activists). The gender breakdown of the interviewees was 4 men and 7 women.

The learner survey yielded 148 responses. We prepared two distinct questionnaires: one for individuals with a legal education¹⁴ and working in the legal field, and another for those with different professional backgrounds¹⁵. The reason for focusing on lawyers as a separate target audience is explained in this research (Section 3.3). In addition, lawyers are one of Belarusian Helsinki Committee's target audiences.

Both questionnaires contained mostly identical questions, with a few additional ones specifically for lawyers. They included both closed and open-ended questions, enabling us to gather not only statistical data but also detailed information.

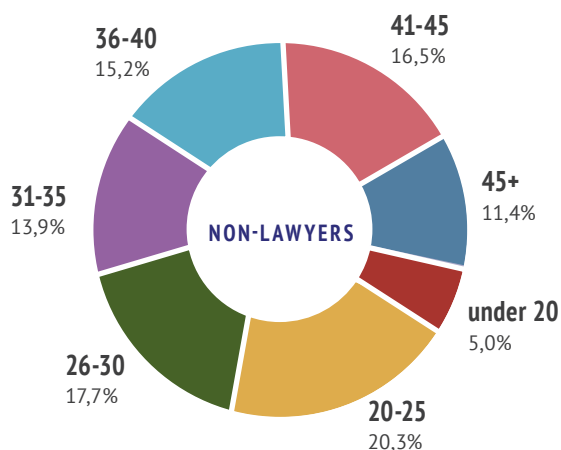
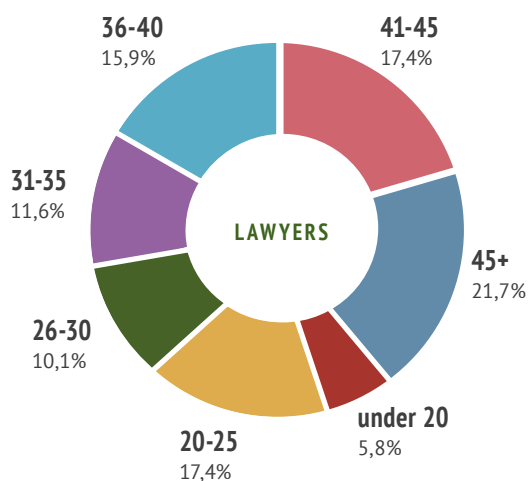
We focused the survey not only on people who have already had experience of participating in educational programmes of Belarusian CSOs, but also on their potential participants. Additionally, we asked about the experience of participation in educational programmes of Belarusian CSOs and asked them to name such programmes in order to understand to what extent the respondents' experience correlates with the surveyed providers. 115 people out of 148 participated in programmes of the providers whose work is being analysed and interviewed.

¹⁴ Participants were required to have at least a bachelor's degree in Law in formal education.

¹⁵ For the purposes of this study, we refer to this group of respondents as 'non-lawyers' throughout the text, as a more suitable short form was not identified.

| | Lawyers | Non-lawyers |
|---|---------|-------------|
| Number of respondents | 69 | 79 |
| Men | 33,3 % | 29,6 % |
| Women | 63,8 % | 69,6 % |
| Permanently residing in Belarus | 44,9 % | 30,4% |
| Residing abroad | 55, 1% | 69,6 % |
| Have not yet participated in the educational programs of Belarusian CSOs (potential participants) | 20,3 % | 33,3 % |

The **age representation** of the respondents is quite wide in both groups.



It is important to note the difference in age between the two groups of respondents who responded to this survey: among **lawyers**, the top 3 groups are 45+, 41-45, and 20-25; among **non-lawyers**, the top 3 groups are 20-25, 26-30, and 41-45.

Professional representation among **non-lawyers**.

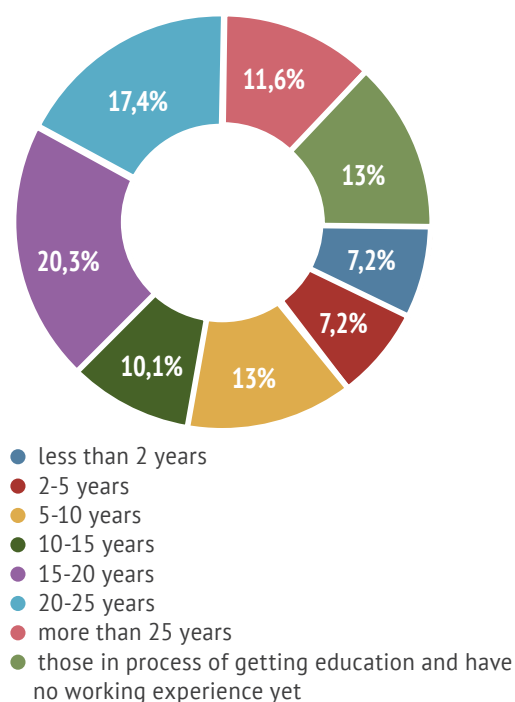
The most represented sectors are:

CSOs – 54.4 % , business – 22.8 % . Among the rest: analytical centres, think-tanks, state bodies and organisations, structures of the Belarusian democratic forces – 2,5 % each, educational institutions of the formal education system (universities, schools) – 3,8 % . Also among the respondents are the unemployed, pensioners, bloggers, and students.

We also asked the respondents to indicate a **specific field of activity**. The most represented are: human rights – 24.1%, education/science – 10.1%, culture/creativity – 8.9%, IT – 7.6%, communications and PR – 7.6%, trade – 6.3%. Among the rest: economics, medicine, journalism, political analysis, etc.

Lawyers were additionally asked to indicate the length of **their legal experience**:

69 answers



We also asked them to clarify the **field of their practice**. The most represented are: human rights – 18.8%, legal counsel in a private company – 18.8%, a lawyer who was disbarred – 13%, law student – 10.1%, other (non-human rights CSOs) – 8.7%, a lawyer-licensee/commercial lawyer/legal business – 7.2%, academia (teaching at a university) – 5.8%. There were also former employees of state bodies, and notaries.

It is crucial to emphasise that the results of the learners survey presented in the research are not the results of a full-fledged sociological research and make no claim to representativeness as to the provision of accurate data reflecting the situation in Belarus or for all the relocated Belarusian CSOs. Nevertheless, they comprise quite illustrative material for understanding the current state of the sector in the analysed segment study, identifying existing problems and challenges, and allowing us to see a cross-section of them.

SUMMARY

OVERALL FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

- providers demonstrate varied understandings and definitions of their motivation in conducting human rights education activities. This variation exists both between **specialised** and **non-specialised** providers and within these groups. **Non-specialised** providers often describe human rights as a cross-cutting value (which sounds like a dominant motive in their educational activities), and generally, their motivation appears more uniform. In contrast, **specialised** providers display a broader range of articulated motivations (some aim to change the world, while others focus on preparing resources for civil society).
- the educational goals in the field of human rights also differ. **Specialised** providers typically emphasise imparting knowledge about human rights, developing advocacy and defence skills, and instilling human rights values. **Non-specialised** providers, on the other hand, often focus on “shifting paradigms”, providing individuals with tools to change their lives, regain subjectivity, recognize problems, and be able to solve them.
- summarising the motivations and educational objectives of both groups in relation to their target audiences, we can identify **three main directions of human rights education in Belarusian civil society**:
 - educating individuals working or aspiring to work in the human rights sector (human rights defenders) to strengthen its capacity.
 - providing education for motivated and active individuals, including activists from CSOs/initiatives outside the human rights sector, to enhance their ability to realise their activism, influence change, and act according to human rights values and principles.
 - offering human rights education to all Belarusians to increase their civic consciousness and help them realise their subjectivity.
- regarding the age demographics of the target audience, both groups of providers have a pronounced focus on young people, primarily defined as individuals aged between 18 and 35 years. Only one out of eleven providers indicated that their average target audience consists of individuals over 36 years old. Another provider has made efforts to engage with the 35+ age group, particularly those who began volunteering in the sector following the 2020 events. Both providers and learners respondents have identified challenges with integrating older individuals transitioning from ‘just activists’ to human rights defenders. Providers cite a lack of foundational knowledge and skills in this demographic, while learners point to insufficient opportunities for these individuals to effectively integrate into the sector.
- both groups of providers in terms of their target audiences have practically no orientation on specific professional groups, except for human rights defenders and CSOs staff (1 out of 11 providers names attorneys as their target audience). Some providers plan to expand their target groups to include such professional groups as teachers, tutors, journalists.
- **lawyers** represent a particularly noteworthy target group for human rights education. On one hand, significant deviations within Belarusian formal legal education have resulted in a scenario where both lawyers (theorists and practitioners) and non-lawyers possess a roughly equivalent understanding of human rights.¹⁶ In some cases, non-lawyers who have undergone non-formal education programs may even surpass lawyers in their level

¹⁶ In such a statement there is a certain generalization to emphasize the systemic nature of the problem.

of understanding and knowledge in this area. On the other hand, considering the strategic goals and the potential impact on changes in Belarus, lawyers as a professional group play a uniquely crucial role, both during the transitional period and within the broader scope of transitional justice. This necessitates specific needs in human rights education in terms of its content, focus, and depth.

Human rights education plays a key role in this sense, as a human rights-based approach becomes crucial in establishing governance processes during the state's reformation. The 2020 events were directly mentioned by only about a quarter of the legal respondents as a reason for their heightened interest in human rights, however, it is evident that the legal community, traditionally quite indifferent to human rights issues, is now more open to engaging with and learning about this field. This is supported by our research findings, including the high number of lawyer respondents – 69 individuals. This figure is only 10 less than respondents from other professional backgrounds, who are traditionally more inclined towards non-formal human rights education. Notably, it was experienced practising lawyers who showed interest in our survey: nearly 40 % of respondents reported having 15 to 20 years, or more, of legal experience.

In our view, one of the current challenges for non-formal human rights education providers is to meet this increasing demand from lawyers, not just in terms of strengthening the human rights sector's capacity, but also in enhancing the competences of the lawyers themselves.

When educating lawyers, it's particularly important to emphasise human rights values and doctrine rather than merely focusing on mechanisms, as is often the case. The framework in which they received their legal education tends to foster an excessively positivist understanding of the law, including its perception solely as a tool for resolving specific tasks. Even with a transition to a different framework based on democratic values, there's a risk that the understanding of law (including human rights) will remain purely instrumental.

■ both specialised and non-specialised providers are **actively engaging with individuals living in Belarus and intend to continue this work.** Most

providers deliver their programs online, with a few organising travel for participants from Belarus to join their programs, and some conducting activities within the country itself. 2 out of 11 providers emphasised that individuals living in Belarus are prioritised. Additionally, three providers mentioned plans to broaden their target audience within Belarus to include various groups, such as young people, teachers, and actively engaged community members – adults in particular.

■ specialised and non-specialised providers have **differing perspectives on the demand for human rights courses.** Specialised providers have observed a significant increase in demand post-2020, with some noting a doubling in the number of applicants per available spot. In contrast, non-specialised providers report difficulties in enrolling sufficient participants for programs explicitly focused on human rights. They often need to incorporate these courses within broader topic areas.

■ among specialised providers, **the most common general topics** include an overview of key human rights instruments and protection mechanisms. **Specific rights** frequently addressed are freedom of expression, the right to peaceful assembly, and, to a lesser extent, freedom of association, prohibition of torture, and non-discrimination. In terms of comprehensive or more focused thematic areas, gender equality tops the list, followed by inclusion, rights of the LGBTQ+ community, and hate speech. Non-specialised providers, especially those working with narrower topics (mainly issues concerning vulnerable groups), tailor the human rights content of their programs to the specific rights of these groups (e.g., women, LGBTQ+ community) or particular social groups, in particular, young people. Non-specialised providers with a broader range of expertise typically offer basic general knowledge about human rights and specific information relevant to their audiences for immediate application in their daily lives.

■ providers, both within and between the two groups, demonstrate varied methods **in defining the complexity levels of their programs** and distinguishing between basic and advanced levels. Some base this distinction on teaching formats,

others on content, and yet others on both. This leads to a certain lack of clarity regarding the progression of opportunities for learners and a general lack of synchronisation across programs.

- providers and learners perceive the issue of differing participant backgrounds in educational programs differently. Providers generally do not see it as a problem; in fact, they consider it beneficial for educational purposes, seeing it as a resource and potential to enhance process effectiveness (partly because it encourages participants to step out of their bubbles). They address this challenge with non-formal education methods, specific task formats, program flexibility, and trainer professionalism. However, among learners (primarily lawyers), there's a perception that these background differences reduce the effectiveness of training.
- specialised and non-specialised providers diverge in their criteria for selecting program topics. Specialised providers often consider factors beyond target audiences or program objectives, such as the prevailing socio-political context, and technical and time constraints. When it comes to choosing formats and methods of training, non-specialised providers tend to impose more framework requirements on experts, including clear expectations and session 'run-throughs.' Overall, non-specialised providers voice some concerns regarding the methods of presenting human rights topics by specialised providers and the perceived lack of a values component in the teaching process.
- in some instances, the approach of specialised providers to determining program content appears overly instrumental, focusing on what can be immediately implemented or easily addressed in the classroom, rather than being strategic or sustainable. A notable example is the absence of programs addressing the right to a fair trial as a standalone right, despite its frequent violation in the Belarusian legal system. Some specialised providers currently deem this irrelevant, arguing that effectively addressing human rights in Belarusian courts is not feasible. At the same time, freedom of association is widely covered in programs despite the same problems with its realisation in Belarus. Other specialised providers acknow-

ledge the importance of the right to a fair trial but view it as too 'legal' and complex for a session format.

- overall, there is a noticeable lack in the methodological aspect of human rights education. This includes both the preparation of human resources for teaching (Training of Trainers aspect) and the development of high-quality educational materials created by Belarusians and tailored to the Belarusian context.
- respondents from both groups, lawyers and non-lawyers, show similarities in their perspectives as to the following:
 - a significant majority (86.1% of non-lawyers and 88.4% of lawyers) believe it is essential to acquire new or deepen their existing human rights knowledge. Also, most respondents from both groups rate their human rights knowledge as 'Average. I have basic knowledge in this area'. Over half of the respondents in both groups view human rights education as a tool for better comprehension of social and political processes. Only about a quarter of both groups point to the events of 2020 as a catalyst for increased interest in human rights education;
 - both groups identify the same top three channels for seeking information on human rights for self-education: internet searches, NGO/educational initiative websites, and Telegram;
 - in both groups, just over half of the respondents are generally satisfied with the quality of educational opportunities provided by Belarusian CSOs: 55.7% among non-lawyers and 50.7% among lawyers (this figure represents the combined totals of the responses 'yes, completely [satisfied]' and 'rather no than yes');
 - both groups indicate knowledge gaps in areas such as: a) the specifics of international human rights obligations of states, particularly in understanding when and how human rights are violated; b) international protection mechanisms; and c) a human rights-based approach, or 'human rights optics', in conducting any activity;

- both groups agree that the most noticeably absent form of human rights materials in the public domain is short videos (5-10 minutes in length) that explain specific aspects of human rights.

■ However, the **differences between these groups** identified by this research are as follows:

- 10% more **lawyers** than **non-lawyers** consistently seek opportunities to acquire new and deepen existing knowledge (as opposed to doing so occasionally);
- the most popular method for **lawyers** (72.3%) to obtain such knowledge is through self-education and independent search for necessary content. For non-lawyers (66.2%), it is educational opportunities provided by Belarusian CSOs;
- regarding overall satisfaction with the quality of HRE provided by Belarusian CSOs, there are no responses of 'no, not satisfied at all' among **lawyers**. This could suggest, in our view, that the lawyer audience is less demanding in this respect. They have had fewer experiences and opportunities compared to the other group (partly due to acknowledging the need), to see what are the standard practices and expectations in this area are;
- **non-lawyers** tend to be more demanding regarding the formats and methods of teaching, while **lawyers** place greater emphasis on the depth and complexity of the content;
- in the responses from **lawyers** about areas where they lack knowledge, discrimination and the rights and protection of vulnerable groups are notably absent from the top three concerns. This contrasts with **non-lawyers**, who rank discrimination first and the rights and protection of vulnerable groups second. This difference may partly stem from the complete lack of discrimination in Belarusian professional legal discourse, inclu-

ding court proceedings, and the absence of anti-discrimination legislation;

- regarding preferred formats for consuming human rights content, **lawyers** favour longreads, brief texts of up to two pages, and video discussions on the subject. **Non-lawyers**, on the other hand, prefer short videos (5-10 minutes), concise texts of up to two pages, and explanatory cards;
- among **non-lawyers**, 46.8% of respondents express a desire for more human rights educational content in Belarusian, whereas only 26.1% of **lawyers** share this preference.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FROM THE LEARNERS' PERSPECTIVE

- "Human rights education tourism" – frequent participation in programs by **specialised** providers involving the same individuals repeatedly. This issue has also been noted by some of the providers;
- the repetition of identical content across different schools, encompassing the same topics and rights. There's a noticeable absence of more focused, specialised courses that delve deeply into specific rights, aspects, or topics;
- there's a general lack of in-depth knowledge; the material offered often remains at a superficial level. Both lawyers and non-lawyers have observed that even schools and programs claiming to be advanced tend to cover, in their view, rather basic issues. Both groups express a desire for more profound knowledge in human rights;
- the shortage of skilled trainers, including those proficient in teaching methods and new specialists;
- a leading critique from both groups regarding teaching formats and methods is the lack of practical examples. Some respondents seek more case studies during the class, others de-

sire generally more examples of successful human rights protection from international experiences, and still others note the scarcity of diverse case studies on human rights violations in Belarus;

- there were suggestions about the need for (and usefulness of) creating an aggregator site with information and materials on human rights, as well as educational opportunities in the field. The same opinions were expressed by providers.

PROBLEMS AND CHALLENGES FROM THE PROVIDERS' PERSPECTIVE

- **non-specialised** providers observe that within the programs of **specialised** providers, the deeper the content delves, the more legalistic and dry the teaching methods become. There's an overwhelming focus on documents, and interactivity tends to diminish;
- there's a lack of clear understanding regarding how different programs, schools, and courses relate to each other in terms of complexity and content. This confusion makes it **challenging to construct a coherent educational trajectory**;
- regarding cross-cutting values, human rights per se and a human rights-based approach, **there's a lack of interest among civil activists and non-human rights CSOs/initiatives** due to two main perceptions:

A) Within the sector, those not involved in human rights often view this knowledge as only necessary for 'drafting complaints.' If they aren't drafting complaints or working with government agencies, they don't see the value in spending time on human rights. Some **non-specialised** providers consider it possible to attribute this to **specialised** providers' overly instrumental approach to human rights education, which often focuses on legal norms and protection mechanisms with little emphasis on the values component.

B) During times of crisis, cross-cutting values, including human rights, are often seen as non-essential for survival. They are perceived more as a burden or a 'stone around the neck', not worthy of spending time and resources on.

- **the general audience is apprehensive about the term 'human rights.'** Human rights and cross-cutting values remain elusive concepts, and people are hesitant to engage with such content until their basic security needs are met. Therefore, it becomes important to present human rights topics in a way that resonates with the general audience's interests;
- there is little promotion of the idea that human rights comprise an essential and an integral part of everyday human life;
- different understandings of democracy, along with **the radicalization and militarization of youth** that can lead them towards radical groups (as well as presence of political figures trying to exploit such conditions) present a challenge. Human rights education should address these issues by focusing more on reconciliation, conflict resolution, culture of peace, etc;
- a shift in the way people perceive information. Today's participants in such programs are different, necessitating a more adaptive system of non-formal education. It's important to use the tools that help identify what interests different people. Some long-standing providers in the sector might not fully recognize this change;
- stereotypes influence course and topic selection: for example, most women opt for management programs, while most men choose programs related to analytical research;
- nearly half of the providers assert a clear **lack of qualified experts and trainers in human rights education**, in terms of both teaching methodology and content quality. The growth in organisations identifying as human rights or educational entities hasn't corresponded with increased expertise. Relocation has negative-

ly impacted the availability of experts, with many refusing or unable to continue their involvement due to logistical challenges or a shift away from the field. Geographical factors also significantly influence expert selection. Existing schools are more focused on creating slightly more informed individuals rather than training trainers. A specific issue raised by non-specialised providers is the challenge of finding human rights professionals who can speak about human rights more as a value and an approach, rather than merely in terms of legal norms and mechanisms.

- access to existing experts is problematic, as many are 'invisible', it's challenging to find out about them;
- a significant part of providers acknowledge **a lack of quality Belarusian (made by Belarusians for Belarusians) educational materials on human rights**. While there may be sufficient materials, often the high-quality ones

are simply "invisible" to learners or other providers, making them difficult to discover. Additionally, some program content is outdated;

- despite varying opinions on the need for closer collaboration, all providers agree on the necessity for synchronisation. This involves clarifying 'who does what' within the sector, establishing a common framework for the levels of complexity of the programmes, possibly creating a unified database of informational/educational materials and trainers, and agreeing on unified funding prioritisation recommendations for donors;
- several **negative factors may hinder effective cooperation** among providers, including unhealthy competition, conflicts and gossip within the sector, widespread burnout, diverse corporate cultures among Belarusian CSOs, varying levels of professionalism and competence among those engaging in education, and concerns about the establishment of hierarchy within the sector.