

We, representatives of independent media organisations from Belarus, are sorry to learn about the decision by the Foreign Ministry of Denmark to stop its support to media in our country.

We are sincerely grateful to the government of the people of **Denmark** for their long-lasting and substantial support to independent media organisations and civil society of Belarus. That systematic work became one of the reasons for the potentially positive changes that we are now seeing in Belarus, both on political level and in public opinion.

Over the last years, we – **the Belarusian Journal, Media Polesye, ARU TV and Solidarity with Belarus Information Office** – have worked closely with **MYMEDIA**, implementing the Danish support for independent media in our country.

Thanks to the support of the **MYMEDIA** and thus the Danish government, independent media organisations of Belarus increased their operational capacity, sustainability and influence on the public opinion. The authorities of Belarus are still in tough control of the freedom of expression in the country, but – importantly - their propagandists are unable to compete with our increased professional level and new communication and story-telling technologies that help us to provide our audience with information that is based on the principles of the free speech and responsible journalism.

According to the latest research, the number of Belarusians who receive information from the internet is now almost at the same level as the audience of the state TV channels. And among the economically active population aged 14–55 the number of internet users is even bigger than those of TV viewers. More than 5 million Belarusians use the internet which remains the only domain of relatively free speech in Belarus. On the internet, quality and responsible journalism successfully beats not only the propaganda of the current authoritarian regime, but also withstands the dangerous lies and manipulations of the Kremlin.

In the current situation, Belarus is a vital frontier of opposition to the aggressive Russian propaganda that threatens the whole region.

The support from the government of Denmark contributed to survival of the independent press of Belarus in conditions of the economic discrimination, repressions and strict legislation limitations that are still the reality we have to work in. We managed to increase our audience significantly, to improve our professional level, and to start working on modern business models capable of sustaining the free quality journalism in our country. But to fulfill all these objectives **we need continuation of the support from the countries of the European Union, including Denmark** – otherwise all the positive changes we have reached together will not be secured, and all our – and your – efforts might be in vain.

This is especially important under the current political conditions, when **the authorities of Belarus are opening up to the West**, re-launching an active dialogue with the European Union.

Right now, democratic countries like Denmark have more real leverage against the authoritarian regime of President Lukashenka than ever.

From our side, we are ready to offer our expertise to create a road map of particular steps to reform the media field in Belarus and improve the freedom of expression situation in general.

Moreover, we believe now we have great windows of opportunity to further extend the influence of the independent media in our country. To do so there is a vital need for further support to independent media projects from the European Union, including Denmark.

We hope that our joint work will continue, and Belarus will still be on the list of countries whose independent media receive support from the government of Denmark.

We will be happy to answer any of your questions and provide any further information on our vision of the situation in Belarus.

Sincerely,

The Directors of

Belarusian Journal – Andrei Aliaksandrau

Media Polesye – Sviatlana Harda

ARU TV – Pavel Marozau

Solidarity with Belarus Information Office – Yuliya Slutskaya