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The Journalists for Tolerance civil initiative (Belarus) has monitored for the third time the LGBT coverage in Belarusian mass media (June 2013 — May 2014). The research allows learning the general approach of Belarusian media to the issue. The trend has remained the same within the recent years. In particular, both independent and state-owned media tend to ignore the topic. However, if anything at all is published, it's usually offensive materials in the state media, and neutral publications in independent media. These are mostly informative notes about events that can't be ignored.

THE OUTCOME OF ALL MONITORING ENDEAVORS HAS REVEALED THE FOLLOWING COMMON PROBLEMS:

- 1|** The absence of systematic publications on LGBT issues.
- 2|** Reference to the topic on specific dates, e.g., on the International Day of Tolerance
- 3|** Journalists (or editors) do not act as initiators of publications on the subject.
- 4|** The 'copy-paste' of 'copy-paste'. A lot of re-prints. For instance, an article from 34mag.net appeared in almost all analysed media.
- 5|** Violation of professional journalistic principles. For example, an opposition politician, who has nothing to do with the conflict sides, was asked to comment on the ban of a Gay-pride parade, issued by Minsk City Executive Committee.

PECULIARITIES OF LGBT COVERAGE IN BELARUSIAN MASS MEDIA: NEGATIVE TENDENCIES

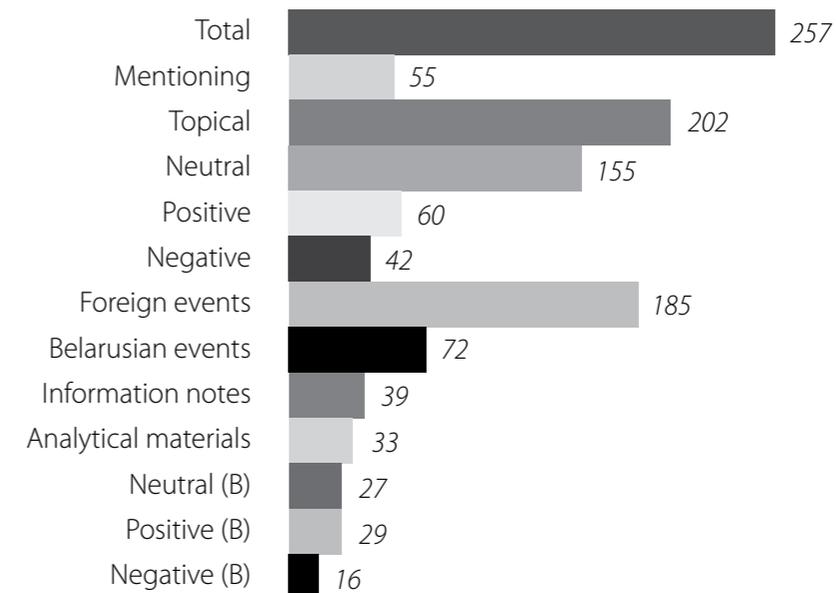
/based on media monitoring 2013-2014/

The latest monitoring was conducted in the period **since June 2013 till the end of May 2014**

11 WEB-SITES were analyzed, including NARODNAYA VOLIA, NASHA NIVA, NOVY CHAS, RADIO RACYJA, TUT.BY, SB-BELARUS TODAY, RADIO LIBERTY, ONT, BT, BELTA, and NARODNAYA GAZETA.

The monitored Web-resources mainly deal with the unspecified general topics.

Web-content analysis
LGBT Coverage in Belarusian Mass Media
06.2013 – 05.2014
General



The scope of monitored Web-publications included 267 materials. Only 28% of them covered Belarusian issues. As compared to the previous period, the number of materials on Belarusian problems decreased. 187 materials reported on events abroad. These were mainly reprints of publications about the events that 'couldn't be ignored'.

Radio Liberty created its own content, while **"SB-Belarus Today"** presented few original materials, but copied articles, mostly from Russian websites. Most of the monitored materials were neutral, i.e. the information was given, the news was provided, and no estimation was needed). 23% of reviewed publications could be regarded as "positive" and 16% of reviewed publications could be regarded as "negative".

The situation was quite different as for the materials on Belarus-related issues: 40% were positive, 37% — neutral and 22% were those of negative character. Independent mass media intended to avoid 'dealing with the subject'. The state media usually transmitted

negative messages. As compared to the previous monitoring period, the number of such materials decreased due to fewer information reasons for them.

It is worth mentioning that the most recent monitoring showed a dangerous tendency: homosexuals were identified as 'pedophiles'.

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RADIO RACYJA, NARODNAYA VOLIA, NOVY CHAS, NASHA NIVA

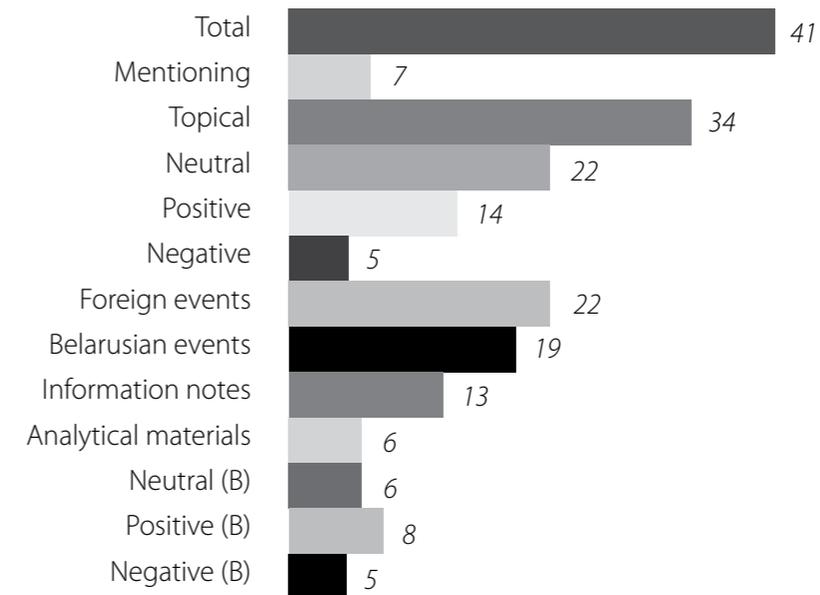
41 articles were found on the websites of 4 independent mass media. 34 articles dealt with LGBT-related issues, 7 materials were written on other topics, but LGBT were mentioned there.

19 articles concerned Belarusian issues, and among them 6 publications were positive, 8 — neutral and 6 — negative. Independent mass media preferred sticking to the policy of avoiding the issue. They mostly reprinted publications about the events that “couldn’t be ignored”. However, even compared to the previous year, the frequency of materials on LGBT issues decreased, since there were hardly any information reasons for them.

Still, some negative tendencies appeared. Thus, e.g., *NASHA NIVA* (p.12-13) manipulated facts to attract the readers’ attention. The eye-catching heading told us that ‘Tony Braxton says good-bye to music and wants to become a lesbian’ and the material itself dwelt upon the singer’s plans ‘to focus on cinema and in particular... to play a movie role of a lesbian’.

Web-content analysis
LGBT Coverage in Belarusian Mass Media
06.2013 — 05.2014

Independent mass media

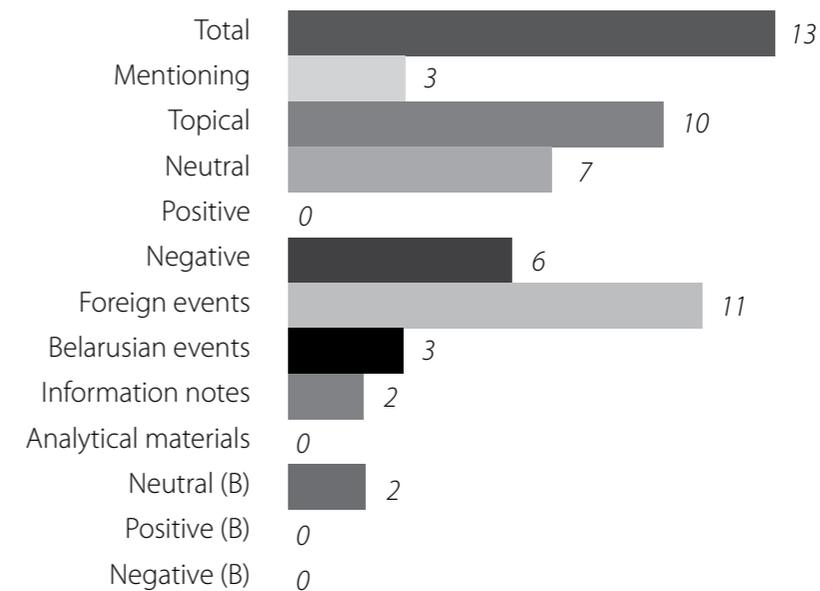


BT, ANT, BELTA, NARODNAYA GAZETA

The Belarusian state media generally tried to ignore the subject of LGBT people. Only 13 materials were found, 2 neutral among them, on Belarus-related issues. There's no information about life of LGBT people. There's only some information about foreign events: either neutral (like BelTA news) or extremely negative.

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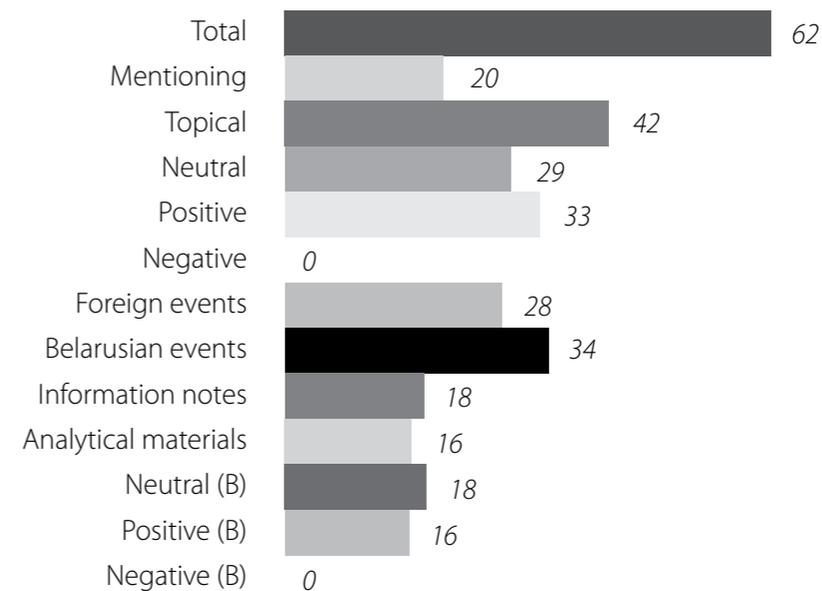
Web-content analysis
LGBT Coverage in Belarusian Mass Media
06.2013 — 05.2014
State-owned mass media



RADIO LIBERTY

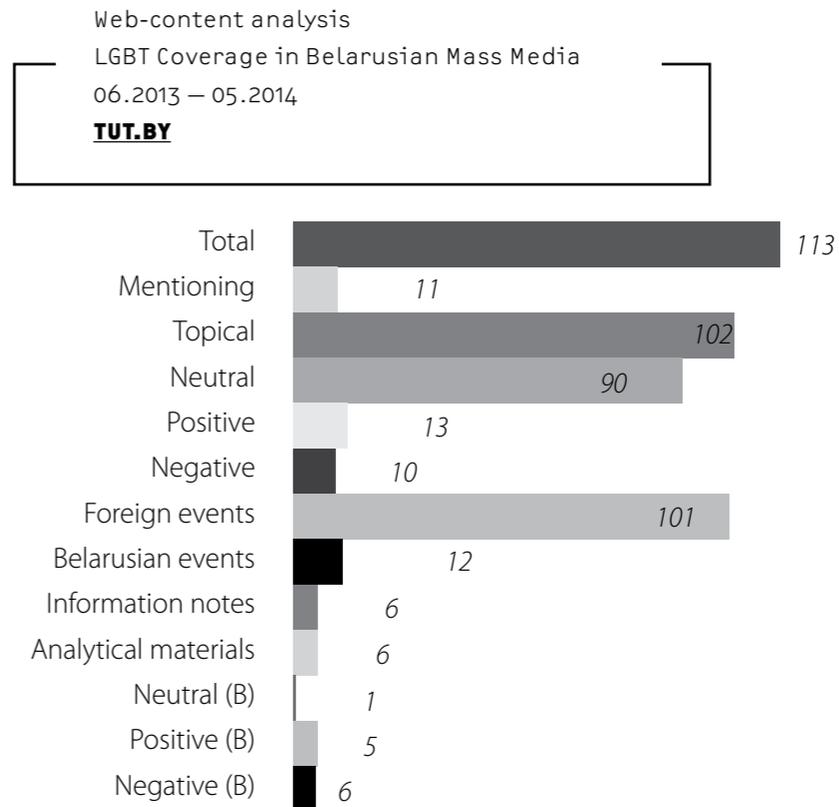
The media outlet mainly presents the original content. Also, they present foreign news due to being a part of the radio information network. Both Belarusian and foreign information materials mostly focused on the LGBT topic, if some violations of human rights occurred. The Web-site didn't present any homophobic materials within the monitoring period. The journalists intended to arrange a discussion and listen to different parties on the issue. It was on Radio Liberty that information and analytical materials on LGBT-community events could be found.

Web-content analysis
LGBT Coverage in Belarusian Mass Media
06.2013 – 05.2014
Radio Liberty



"TYT.BY"

"TYT.BY" — the major content of the website on the subject of LGBT contains a lot of re-prints from different sources, like BBC or Lenta.ru. They're informational and neutral. Thus, within the monitoring period 82 publications fell under the definition of 'subject-foreign-neutral'. At the same time, the Web-resource lacked the materials, related to Belarus. The approach was as follows: to re-print materials, but to avoid creating content of their own. As for the few original materials on the issue, the Web-resource presented nearly equal number of 'positive' and 'negative' publications on LGBT problematic. There were found some materials that mention LGBT-topic in the positive way (p. 20), or in the biased manner (p.21). And then the editors kept traditionally hiding behind the statement: "The opinion of the author may not reflect the opinion of the TUT.BY editorial".

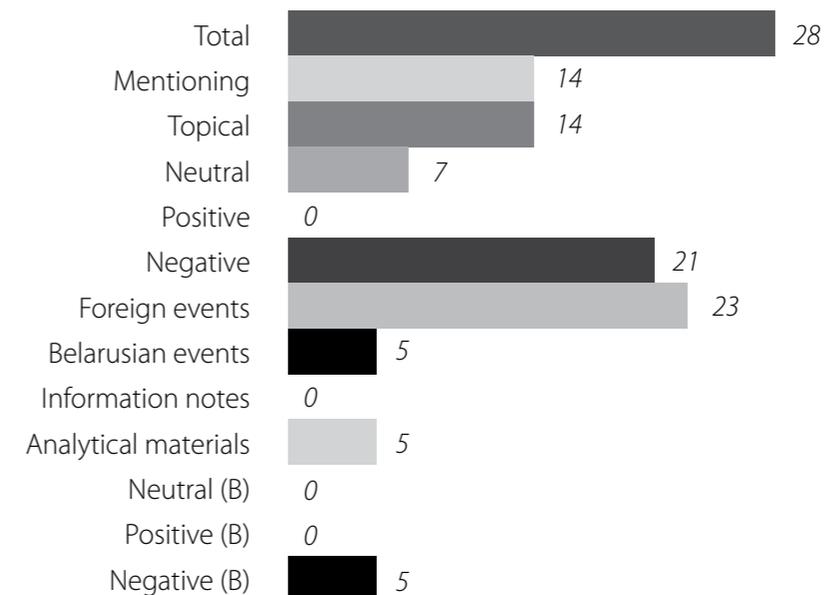


SB-BELARUS TODAY

SB-Belarus Today is a state-owned periodical edition, characterized by the widest use of reprints from other information websites, Russian first of all. It looks like the edition is led by certain logic, when picking up materials for their reprints: “it’s necessary to show that gay-Europe is dying”. [Inessa Pleskachevskaya](#), the SB correspondent in the EU works particularly hard to prove it (p.22).

“Democracy today is drug- and alcohol-addiction and gay-parades. It is intelligence service, money and propaganda. And we just want to live in a normal way”. This is a message of one [of SB materials](#) on the issue. It was an interview with **Raiko Baltich**, vice-president of the Serbian Wrestling Federation and President of “Partisan” wrestling club in Belgrade (p.24). And it seems to be characteristic of the materials that are picked up by the editors.

Web-content analysis
LGBT Coverage in Belarusian Mass Media
06.2013 – 05.2014
SB-Belarus Today



“Pedophile = homosexual.” Attention! This is the message, presented by SB-Belarus Today, too. One should pay attention to “The Personality Decay” publication by **Ludmila Gladkaya**. (*Soviet Byelorussia No.213 (24350)*), **Wednesday, November, 13, 2013**. (*p. 27-31*)

The article focused the readers’ attention on the problem of pedophilia in Belarus, but at the same time it stated that pedophiles, who have relationships with boys, were homosexuals as well, and that there was no place for them in our society. There weren’t too many articles of the kind in the edition, but this one gave a clear idea of the editorial attitude towards the issue. In close consideration it revealed almost all possible violations of journalism ethic standards: hate speech, manipulation of facts, the biased coverage, the selection of specifically negative facts, and biased emotional background, i.e. manipulations on the emotional level.

The first sentence of the article presented a very emotional coloring: “He pressed Dzima’s head into the sofa with such a force, that the child couldn’t cry — not even could he

breathe”. “Please, don’t... Don’t do it, Sir” — he begged in a hoarse voice into the pillow. “Just a single word to anybody — I’ll find you and you’re dead” — the pervert hissed at last.

The journalist Ludmila Gladkaya even didn’t made an attempt to convey the idea that **pedophilia** and **homosexuality** are not necessarily directly related. Homosexuality doesn’t equal pedophilia, but the SB journalist sought to convince the reader in the opposite, selecting the biased interlocutors and manipulating facts without presentation of any alternative point of view. The following quotes from the article prove it:

“It’s a difficult object for study, — Aliaksandr Shustouski, an expert psychologist of Forensic Examination State Committee said. — Pedophiles, contrary to homosexuals, for example, are still afraid to talk about their attraction to children and their sexual contacts with those under age, since to tell it means to confess committing a crime”.

“The issues of homosexuality and pedophilia have become more pronounced, — Aliaksandr Shustouski added. — The relationships that used to be considered a deviation are legalized

in the society. Nowadays they are being popularized via the Internet and mass media”.

The author of the article imposes her opinion on the reader, which is unacceptable according to the ethical principles of journalism. The following quote is vivid evidence to the fact:

“I could never understand people protecting such perverts [pedophiles — ed.], as well as the wish to legalize gay or lesbian relationships”.

The message of SB-Belarus Today and its journalist Ludmila Gladkaya is pretty clear: “LGBT is the evil that has no right to exit.”

No doubt, journalist can have personal opinions on what they’re writing about, but they DON’T HAVE THE RIGHT **to impose their opinion** on their audience. They have the resource, i.e. ‘access to newspaper pages’. However, thousands of readers don’t have such a privilege. Therefore, such misuse of information channels for wide-spreading the biased personal opinions can be definitely regarded as the lack of respect for the readers.

ABOUT US

The Belarusian LGBT Journalists’ Group (further — LGBTBJG) is a non-partisan and non-profit initiative that unites the journalists, who represent the LGBT community and the LGBT-friendly media workers. The LGBTBJG is based on the principles of equal rights and freedom of speech.

The mainstream aim of LGBT BJK is to broaden tolerant attitude and general understanding of equal rights to be enjoyed by LGBT community representatives as well as to defend the LGBT journalists’ rights in connection with their belonging to LGBT community.

The LGBT BJK is keeping to the policy of making the Belarusian society more tolerant towards LGBT through the unbiased and supportive presentation of LGBT-issues by Belarusian journalists in the media.

The LGBTBJG runs a Web-resource at www.gaypress.eu.

