

MASS MEDIA

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Mass Media Results



THE BELARUSIAN
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Mass Media Annual Results 2016 in Figures

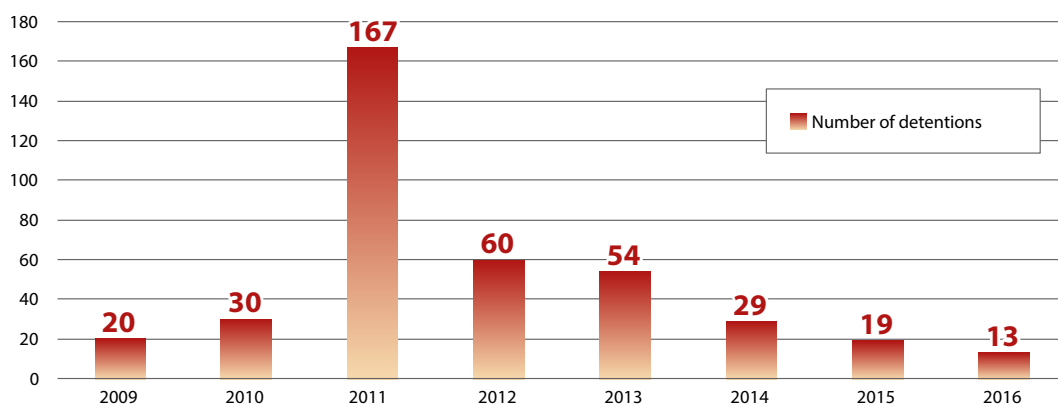
13 – the number of detained journalists in 2016.

10 – the number of fines, imposed on freelance journalists for their cooperation with foreign mass media without the press credentials in 2016.

7 – the number of fines, imposed on a freelance journalist Kanstantsin Zhukouski (Homieli) for cooperation with foreign mass media in 2016.

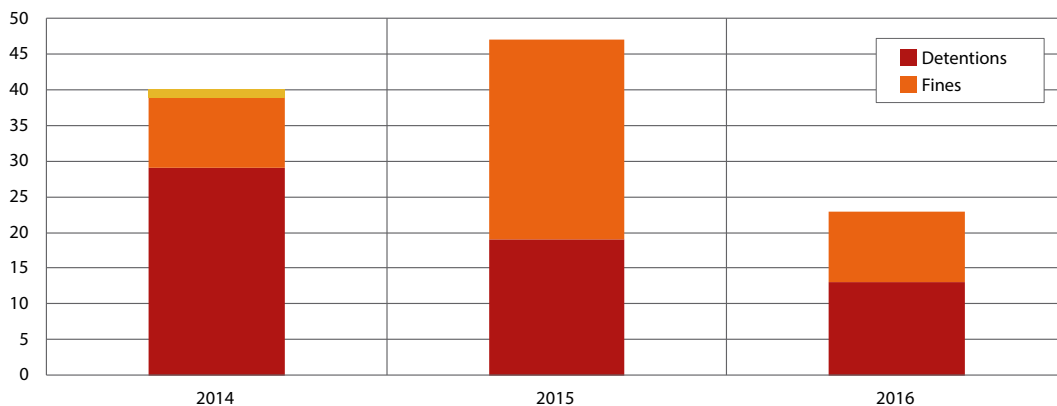
**3500
EUR** – the total sum of fines, imposed on freelance journalists for their cooperation with foreign mass media in 2016.

Detentions of journalists



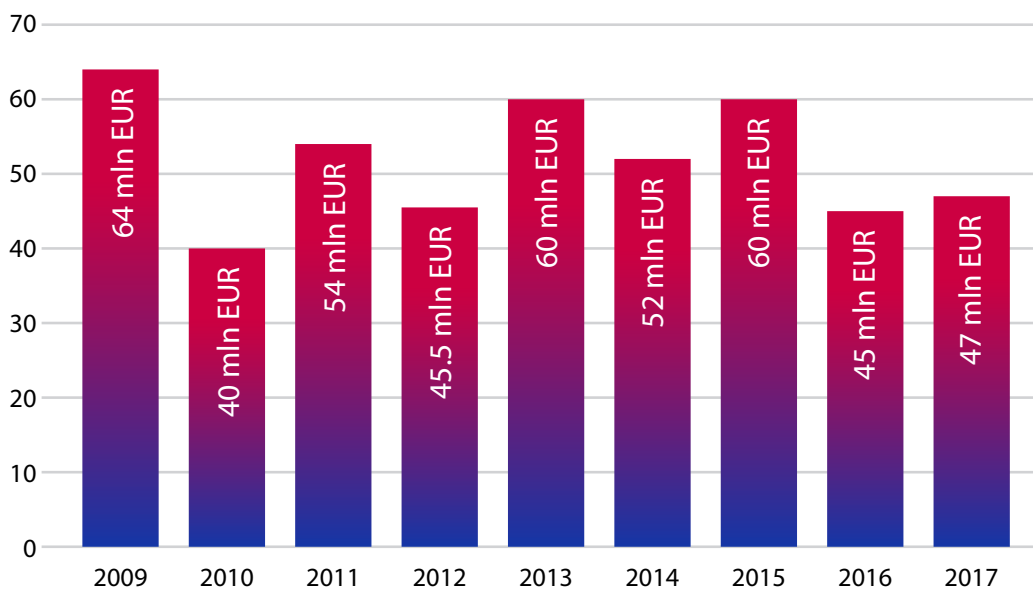


Detentions of journalists and fines on article 22.9 of Belarus Administrative Code



47 mln EUR – the sum of subsidies to the state-owned mass media from the state budget in 2017.

State budget support to mass media in Belarus (approx. sum in euro)





- 16** – the number of official warnings to mass media (8) and Web-resources (8), issued by the Ministry of Information of Belarus in 2016.
- 47** – the number of Web-resources, which were blocked by the Ministry of Information of Belarus (21 – for distributing information, aimed at selling drugs, 13 – for disseminating the extremist publications, 11 – for the faulty advertising, 2 – for propaganda of pornography, violence and cruelty) in 2016.
- 1** – the number of Web-resources, which were unlocked for public access by the Ministry of Information of Belarus in 2016.
- 88** – the number of **decisions on restricting access to Web-resources**, taken by the Ministry of Information of Belarus since 2015, when the Ministry was entitled with the corresponding authority.
- 500** – the number of examinations of media products, conducted by the National Expert Committee on Evaluation of Mass Media Production on the Presence / Absence of Signs of Extremism since the Committee creation in 2015.
- 120** – the number of informational materials, where manifestations of extremism have been discovered by the National Expert Committee on Evaluation of Mass Media Production on the **Presence / Absence of Signs of Extremism**.
- 4** – the number of people, imprisoned on charges of inciting ethnic or other social hatred or discord



in 2016 (see below – *Main Events in Mass Media Field in October – December 2016*).

48 – the position of Belarus in the **'Freedom of the Net 2016'** rating list, composed by the Freedom House (the 48th position among 65 monitored countries of the world). Belarus received 62 scores of 'non-freedom'. The result is two positions higher in comparison with the year of 2015. However, despite the slight progressive change, the FH still referred to Belarus as a 'not free' country as far as the Web freedom was concerned.

Main Events in Mass Media Field in October-December 2016

The Case of Eduard Palchys

On October 28, 2016, Minsk City Court completed its consideration of a criminal case against a blogger Eduard Palchys, the founder of 1863x.com Web-site. The judge found him guilty of inciting national hostility or discord on the grounds of racial, ethnic, religious, linguistic or other social identity (part 1, article 130 of the Criminal Code of Belarus). Also, the blogger was accused of disseminating porn materials (article 343 of the Criminal Code of Belarus). **Consequently, E. Palchys was sentenced to 1 year and 9 months of restriction of liberty without sending him to a correctional facility. He was released from custody in the courtroom.** Taking into account the spent time in a pre-trial jail and a medical facility for forensic examinations, the blogger's term of punishment after the trial amounted to two months only.



The Web-site 1863x.com was created around two years ago. Its owner was running the Web-resource anonymously under a secret identity, as Jhon Silver. He sharply criticized the so-called 'Russian world' and the Russian authorities. The criminal case against E.Palchys was brought in 2015. Consequently, the blogger left Belarus.

In January 2016, he was detained in Russia, **extradited** to Belarus, and imprisoned in a pre-trial detention facility in Minsk.

On August 25, 2016, the Central City District Court of Minsk found nine publications from the 1863x.com Web-site to be extremist ones. The verdict was announced during the closed session of the court. In particular, the blogger was accused of distributing the articles on the Web. On October 5, 2016, several Belarusian human rights organizations **recognized him as a political prisoner**.

Criminal prosecution of 'Regnum' authors on charges of inciting ethnic or other social hatred or discord

The Investigative Committee of Belarus reported on the detention of three citizens of the Republic of Belarus – Siarhei Shyptenka, Yury Paulavets, and Dzmitry Alimkin – at the beginning of December 2016. All of them contributed publications to the 'Regnum' news agency (Russia) and other Russian Web-resources. **Criminal proceedings were instituted against the bloggers on charges of incitement of racial, national, religious or any other social hostility or discord (article 130 of Belarus Criminal Code).**

Initially, it was reported that the case had been filed on part 3 of article 130 (committing crime by a group of people), punishable by imprisonment for the period of 5-12 years.

Subsequently, the charge was changed to the first part of the same article 130 of the Criminal Code, which allows for alternative forms of punishment (a fine, arrest, restriction of liberty for up to five years



or imprisonment for the same period of time). The institution of criminal proceedings was grounded on the claim, submitted by the Ministry of Information of Belarus. **The ministerial officials accused the bloggers of inciting extremism in their on-line publications,** following their examination by the National Expert Committee on Evaluation of Mass Media Production on the Presence / Absence of Signs of Extremism at the Ministry of Information of Belarus.



The Belarusian public opinion was divided in consideration of the fact of detention of ‘Regnum’ authors. Quite a few people considered the investigative procedures as actions in defense of national sovereignty. Others noted that the repressive actions threatened the freedom of expression in the country.

The ‘Regnum’ editorial considered the actions of investigative authorities to be **‘provocative and treacherous in relation to Byelorussia and Russia’.**

Reporters Without Borders (RSF) called for the immediate release of the detained bloggers. “The posts of these three bloggers are controversial but that does not justify their imprisonment,” said Johann Bihl, the head of RSF’s Eastern Europe and Central Asia desk. “According to international standards, their provisional detention is neither necessary nor proportionate.”



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Kamsamolskaya Str., 7-32, 220030 Minsk,
BELARUS

Phone: +375 17 203-63-66, 226-70-98.
Fax: +375 17 203-63-66, 226-70-98
E-mail: press@baj.by
Web: www.baj.by

Contact:
Mr. Andrei Bastunets,
BAJ Chairperson

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