

## **REFORUM: BELARUSIANS ARE IN FAVOR OF URGENT REFORM IN THE AREAS THAT MATTER**

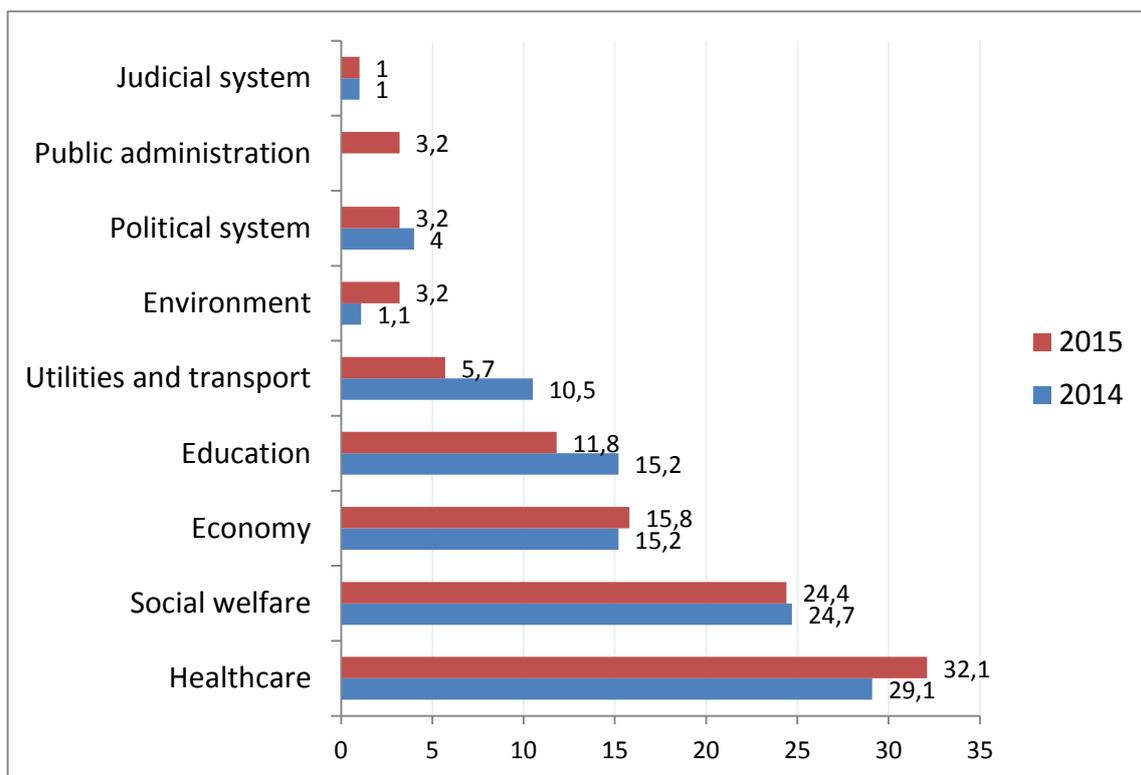
**Andrei Yelisseyeu**

**The priority areas for the population in terms of reforms have not changed since last year. However, compared to 2014, the share of Belarusians in favor of immediate reforms has grown.**

### **Personal interest in reforms: healthcare and social welfare come first**

The priorities of the Belarusians in terms of the most important sectors for reforms from the point of view of their personal interests have not changed since last year. Just as in 2014, the most relevant areas of public life that require reforms are **healthcare, social welfare, the economy as a whole, education, housing and utilities and transport**. However, compared with last year, more Belarusians choose healthcare as the most important area “for themselves” and “for their families.” At the same time, the areas of education, housing and utilities are not as significant as they used to be. Only 10 to 11 people out of 100 tend to choose priorities from the remaining options—the political system, environment, judicial system, and public administration.

**Diagram 1. Proportion of the respondents who choose a specific area of public life as a priority sector from the point of view of their personal interests and welfare**

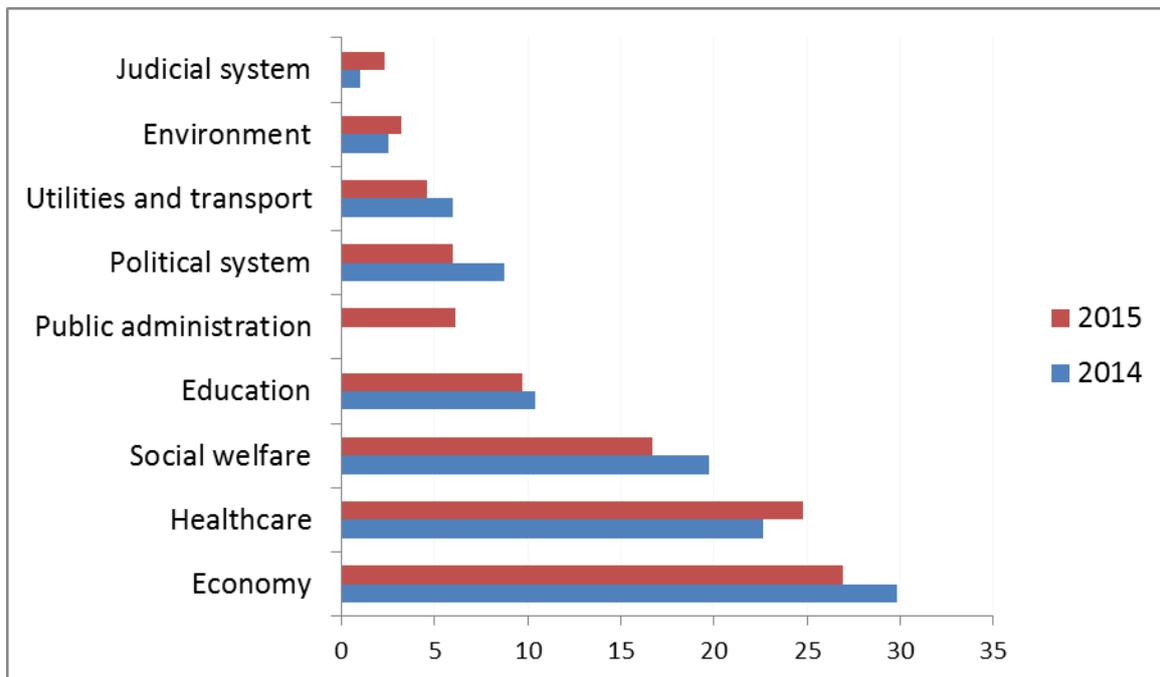


All population groups irrespective of their occupations — whether public sector employees, or entrepreneurs, or students, or pensioners — choose healthcare more often than any other sector as their priority area for reforms. At the same time, increasing numbers of qualified specialists, civil servants, and public sector employees started indicating the economy as a whole as the country's priority sector for reforms in 2015. It looks like the new trend has resulted from their affected living standards over the past 12 months.

### **Which reforms the country needs: the economy leaves healthcare behind**

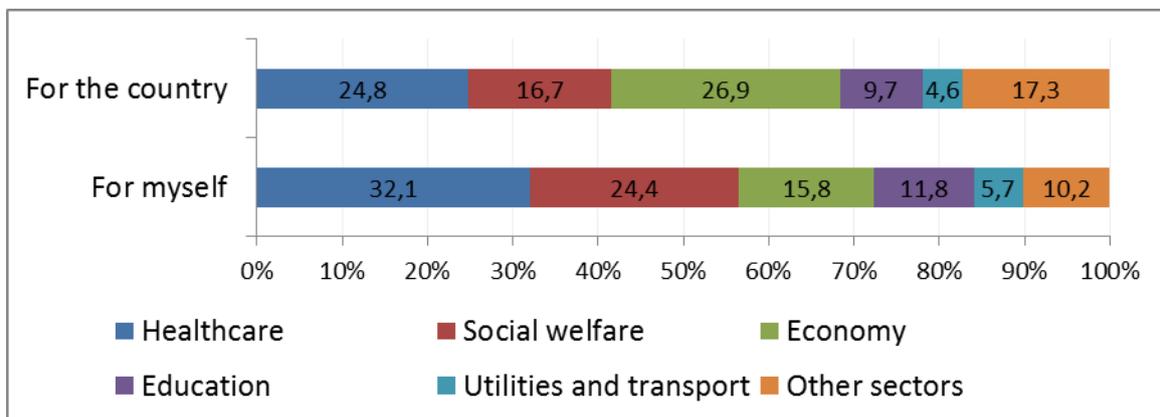
From the personal perspective, the Belarusians tend to choose healthcare as the priority sector for reforms, but when it comes to the interests of the country, the economy as a whole prevails. When the interests of the country are at stake, only pensioners and public sector employees regard healthcare as the priority area for reforms. Education is mostly mentioned as the country's top priority for reforms by students and public sector employees. Belarusian men tend to emphasize the economy markedly more often than women do and pay less attention to healthcare.

**Diagram 2. Proportion of the respondents who choose a specific area of public life as a priority sector from the point of view of the interests and prosperity of the country**



Therefore, the four most popular sectors for the population — whether personally for a respondent or for Belarus as a whole — remain the same: healthcare, social welfare, economy, and education. The only thing that changes is their priority depending on through which prism you look—personal interests, or the interests of society as a whole.

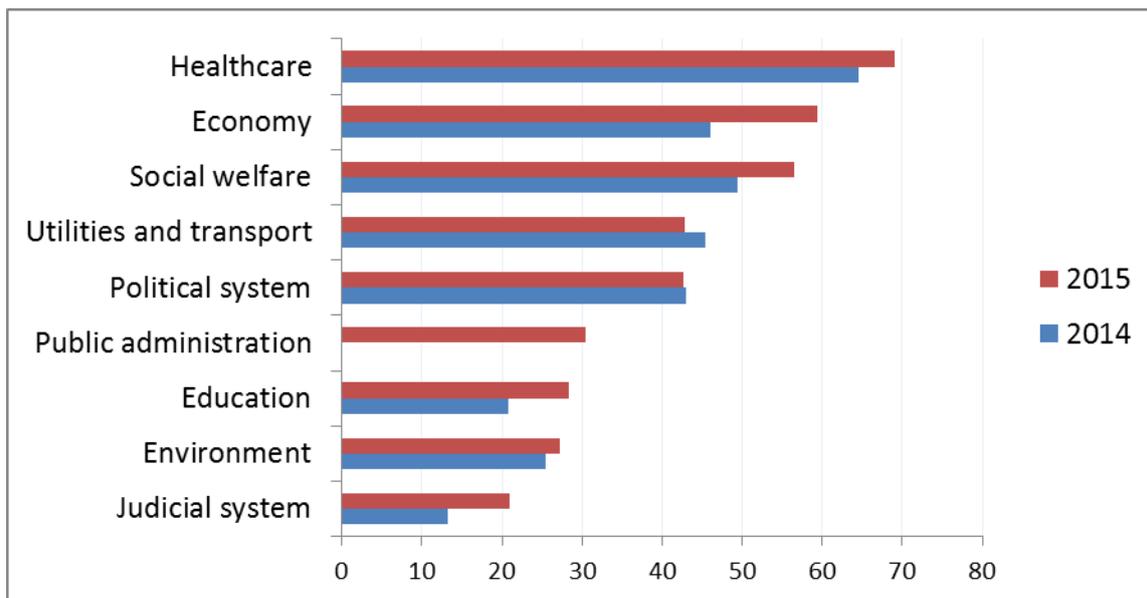
**Diagram 3. Priority areas for reforms from the point of view of personal interests and for the prosperity of the country as a whole in 2015**



**Belarusians call for urgent reforms in priority sectors**

The population’s interest in urgent reforms (to be introduced within 12–24 months) has markedly increased compared with the 2014 level. This trend can be observed in most of the areas of public life. When it comes to the economy as a whole, in 2015, the proportion of those calling for urgent reforms expanded by 13.4 points from 2014. Men support urgent reforms in the economy and the political system more often than women do while paying less attention to social welfare, education and healthcare.

**Diagram 4. Proportion of the Belarusians who support urgent reforms (next 12–24 months) in various areas**



Support from the population is a crucial component of the successful implementation of reforms by the government. The findings of the nationwide poll conducted as part of the REFORUM project demonstrate the considerable interests of the Belarusians in urgent reforms of the priority areas—economy as a whole, the social welfare system, healthcare, utilities and transport, and the system of public administration. The analysis of available data shows that sentiment is favorable in society for the commencement of reforms.

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On 28–29 May, Minsk will play host to the international conference “Minsk after Riga: a Forum on Reforms, or How Can Belarus Adapt and Develop in the New Regional Contexts?” The organizers of the conference are the BISS and the Embassy of the Latvian Republic in Belarus. The participants will discuss the regional economic crisis and threats to the Belarusian model; prospects of cooperation with the EU and international institutions, as well as the Eurasian Economic Union and Russia; development prospects of Belarus in the context of the conflict in Ukraine and new challenges to the country’s security; and prospects of reforms in Belarus, including the presentation of BISS’s study on reforms, as well as the findings of the expert groups of the REFORUM project.