

September 2022

Now we have a website, www.asvetaby.org, where you may find all issues of the Asveta digest in Belarusian, Russian and English.

REPRESSIONS

Following the [incident](#) near the private *Smart School*, with a schoolboy shooting into his classmate's face from a pneumatic gun, Aleksandr Lukashenko [claimed](#) that, as far as he knew, the school authorities "can't stand the Belarusian state". The director of the school Natalya Bazanova is reported to have been made, after the incident, [subject to](#) criminal proceedings under part 2 of Article 424 of the Criminal Code (abuse of authority) which provides for two to six years of imprisonment. One of the teachers, the famous children's poet and actor Dmitry Yurtaev was also [detained](#). A "repentance" video of him confessing to having participated in the 2020 protests was published by a pro-government Telegram channel whose authors accuse the man of "taking part in riots, insulting officials and inciting hatred".

On 21 September, Matvey Grankevich, aged 21, a fourth-year student of the History Faculty of the Belarusian State Pedagogical University, was [sentenced](#) to 2 years and 2 months of imprisonment. The sentence was pronounced at the Minsk City Court by the judge Nataliya Buguk on charges under part 1 of Article 342 (engaging in actions causing serious harm to social stability) and part 1 of Article 130 (incitement to other social hostility). Shortly before the sentence was pronounced, the KGB had put the young man on the list of persons "involved in terrorist activities". Pending the trial, he spent 11 months in custody. The young man is known to have been detained in 2020 for participation in protest acts, and in autumn 2021, before the criminal case was initiated, he was arrested in the dean's office being identified from a photo taken during the protest act.

On 5 September, Aleksandr Kondrayuk, a junior research assistant at the Genetics and Cytology Institute of the Belarusian National Academy of Sciences was [detained](#). The Court of Pervomaysky District of the city of Minsk had sentenced him to an administrative arrest of 13 days, but even before the term of the arrest expired, he faced new charges under Article 130 of the Criminal Code (incitement

to racial, national or religious hatred or hostility). The alleged reason for Aleksandr's detention was his involvement in the activities of an independent trade union.

On 14 September, two employees of the Genetics and Cytology Institute of the Belarusian National Academy of Sciences were [detained](#). One of them, Yevgeny Sysolyatin, is reported to be still kept in custody; the second employee (whose name is unknown) was cautioned against further activities, upon which a video with him was recorded and published by a pro-government Telegram channel. The alleged reason for the detention of the employees was their involvement in the activities of an independent trade union.

Ales Bernatsky, academic secretary of the Centre for System Analysis and Strategic Research of the Belarusian National Academy of Sciences and a member of the Council of Young Scientists who was engaged in research on green energy, was [detained](#) presumably at the end of September. The alleged reason for his detention was his participation in the solidarity action which took place at the main building of the Academy of Sciences in August 2020. According to the pro-government mass media, the man has had criminal proceedings initiated against him.

Presumably at the end of September, Arina Senyuta, a 19-year-old student of the Economics Faculty of the Belarusian State University, was [detained](#) for participation in 2020 protests. The girl who studies management is known to have a high level of achievement; she has taken an active part in students' contests and competitions.

On the eve of 13 September, Evgeny Gurinov, a graduate of the Belarusian State University, a Ph.D. in History, was [detained](#). According to the videorecord published by a pro-government Telegram channel, the man was accused of participation in peaceful protests and, as a result, faced criminal charges.

The sentence imposed on political prisoner Emma Stepulyonok, a former Belarusian language teacher from the town of Miory, was [changed](#) for house arrest. A year ago, the woman was detained within the "[Zeltser Case](#)" for comments posted in social networks and faced charges under Articles 369 (insult of a representative of authority) and 130 (incitement to social hatred). During the imprisonment, her health deteriorated seriously.

18-year-old political prisoner Maksim Shatokhin sentenced, on 12 August 2021, by the judge Svyatoslav Kalina to 3 years of imprisonment in the case on mass disorders in Brest, has had the penalty imposed on him [changed](#); the young man,

who, being underage at the time of the sentence pronouncement, was sent to correctional facility No. 2, starting from 20 September was made subject to home detention.

REGIME POLICY

On 17 September, Belarusian schoolchildren were [made](#) to do a dictation about the 1939 “liberation campaign” of the Red Army including a quote from A. Lukashenko who was purely positive in assessing that historic event.

The school curriculum of the History of Belarus for the 11th grade is now [proposed](#) to place greater focus on the policy of the Polish authorities in relation to the Belarusians of Western Belarus which was part of Poland in 1921–1939. Moreover, education officials suggest that “public figures from the regions who may still remember those events” be invited to visit lessons dedicated to the National Unity Day.

Repressions against the Polish Education Society (“Polska Macierz Szkolna”) and the Polish school in Grodno based on it may result in the [liquidation](#) of the organization, its case being considered by the Supreme Court. In 2021, Belarusian authorities already declared the Society guilty of “illegal activity in education sector” and tax evasion imposing penalties equal, in aggregate, to 800,000 roubles.

Having analyzed the state of teacher staffing in the Belarusian state-run schools, the [Naszy Hroszy/Our Money](#) Telegram channel has concluded that, over the recent two years, the number of those employed in public education sector has [dropped](#) significantly and that mandatory work assignment of the graduates holding a degree in Pedagogics or other disciplines, which was historically used by the state as a way to solve the staffing problem, may no longer ensure that educational institutions have the required number of specialists, with the average difference between the quantity of those dismissed and those hired in the recent two years across the Republic being 8833 persons.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

A Belarusian school of non-formal education has [opened](#) in Vilnius. Children from Belarusian families aged 3 to 16 may visit it free of charge on weekends.

The founders are planning to teach children Belarusian, Lithuanian and English, graphic design and theater arts. The schedule also includes classes in fine arts, robotics, vocal technique, as well as field trips and themed courses. In addition, there will be a group for children with special needs, a parents' club, language courses for adults and psychologist advisory support.

[“De Facto. Belaruskaya Navuka/Belarus Science”](#), a new information Telegram channel, has been launched. According to the authors of the channel, it will be dealing with “research, community news <...> in and outside the country with a focus on the humanities and social sciences”. The channel publishes information about grants and internships for scientists, announcements of scientific conferences and workshops, expert opinions, and notices of new scientific papers.

[Supolka.By](#), a channel for Belarusian students' community, has published an [interview](#) with Tatyiana Shitzova, the education and science representative of the Office of Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, in which she describes the activity areas of her team, including support to the repressed students, professors and teachers, preparation for the reform of the Belarusian education system and cooperation with the youth in pursuance of this objective. The interview also highlights the key problems of the Belarusian education system and the ways to solve them.

The administrative director of the [Beroc](#) Belarusian Economic Research Centre Pavel Daneyko [shares](#) his opinion on the importance of reforms, creativity in the education sector and the interactive approach to be applied in the modern-day teaching process: “machine industry needs a machine operator acting strictly under instructions <...> . The information-oriented society <...> gives priority to the ability to generate innovations, which, to a great extent, becomes possible within horizontal interaction”.