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Please send your information about education in Belarus to our safe and anonymous chat-bot @eduOST\_bot. Tell us the news from your educational institution or state department about the repressions or any forms of pressure from the administration. Write the facts of corruption and new directions which seem ungrounded or irrational. We also ask you to share your ideas and suggestions about education system reforms.

We created the site [www.asvetaby.org](http://www.asvetaby.org) where you can find all issues of the Asvieta digest in Belarusian, Russian and English languages.

A prominent scientist in the field of literary criticism, lecturer, Research Fellow of the Academy of Sciences, the author of numerous monographs Mikhas Tychyna passed away on November 7. Our editors express condolences to his colleagues, relatives and friends.

## THE REPRESSIONS

At the end of October, mass arrests and searches [took place](#) at the Academy of Sciences of Belarus. In total, more than 40 employees were detained, including member of the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences. Afterwards, most of the detainees were released without trial, three employees remain in custody.

At the end of October, Alieh Davydzienka, a 71-year-old Corresponding Member of the Academy of Sciences, Doctor of Biology, was detained at the Academy of Sciences during mass detentions. A criminal case was opened against him under Article 342 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (“Organization and preparation of actions grossly violating public order, or participation in them”). It is known that after the 2020 elections, Davydzienka signed a letter against violence and left the pro-government trade union. He was detained along with his wife, a criminal case was opened against her as well. Davydzienka is a competent researcher at the Institute of Genetics and Cytology of the Academy of Sciences, the author of about 300 scientific papers.

At the end of October, during mass detentions at the Academy of Sciences, the deputy director for scientific work of the Institute of Linguistics named after Jakub Kolas (structural unit of the Academy of Sciences) Siarhieï Haranin was detained. He

spent 10 days in prison. Later it became known that he was fired from the Academy of Sciences. Also, [according to him](#), the directors of the institutes received an order from the Presidium of the Academy of Sciences to dismiss those employees who were sentenced to administrative arrests during mass [detentions](#) at the end of October. On his Facebook page, Haranin also [shared](#) shocking information about the conditions of detention for politically motivated detainees.

On October 26, Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronic postgraduate student Viktorija Zhdanovich was [sentenced](#) to 1 year in prison under general regime conditions. The basis of the accusation was Zhdanovich's participation in several street protests — the judge Siarhiei Shatsila found her guilty of violating Article 342 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus (“Organization and preparation of actions grossly violating public order, or active participation in them”). The woman was detained on August 27, 2022 and has been in custody ever since.

On November 10, the political prisoner and the tour guide Ihar Khmara was [sentenced](#) to 2.5 years of the “home chemistry”\*. The judge Tatsiana Pirozhnikava found him guilty of violating Part 1 of Article 342 of the Criminal Code (“Active participation in group actions that grossly violate public order”). The charges were based on photographs from the 2020 protests found on his social media pages. Khmara was [detained](#) on August 2 on the street, immediately after the end of the city tour, which he conducted in the Belarusian language, which, according to him, was the reason for the detention. The location of the man before the trial remained unknown for more than 20 days.

\*“*home chemistry*” – type of imprisonment, when a person isn't imprisoned but has restrictions for movement and obligation for some kinds of work.

An employee of the Ministry of Education Siarhiei Navumchyk was [detained](#) with violence in Minsk. In a video published on one of the pro-government Telegram channels, he is accused of transferring the personal information of judges to the [Black Book of Belarus](#) chat bot, leaving comments in chats calling for forceful resistance to the lawlessness of the authorities.

On November 2, at least three European Humanities University employees (names remain unknown) were [detained](#) in Belarus on charges of tax evasion. Subsequently, it became known that they were released, but their means of communication were confiscated and investigative actions in their case are underway.

On October 8, Ihar Baranouski, a local historian, the editor of the cultural and educational newspaper of the Greek Catholic Church *Tsarkva*, who was detained in Brest, was [sentenced](#) to 15 days of administrative arrest. He was found guilty of violating Article 19.11 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (“Distribution of extremist materials”) for posting a video of the Belsat TV channel on his Facebook page in May 2021. Belsat TV was recognized by the authorities as an extremist resource only in November 2021. In 2020, Baranouski was [detained](#) for participating in protests, then he spent one month in detention.

Alieh Nahorny, a major Belarusian destructive sects researcher, was [detained](#). After the arrest of Nahorny, a video with him appeared in one of the pro-government Telegram channels. On this video, it is claimed that a criminal case against him could be opened for “inciting hatred towards Russians”. It is known that Nahorny publicly spoke out against Russian aggression in Ukraine.

Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor of Hrodna State University Sviatlana Silova, who was detained for several days and fined in October of this year, was [fired](#) from the university “for being absent from the working place for more than 3 hours.” Silova is the largest Belarusian researcher in the field of confessional history of Belarus.

Two teenagers aged 14 and 15 were [detained](#) in Hrodna. One of them extinguished the eternal fire on the mass grave of Soviet soldiers and partisans, and the second filmed it on the phone and then published it on the Internet. The detention took place in the presence of students of the Hrodna State Professional Lyceum of Builders No. 1 and the School No. 39. The teenagers were charged under Part 2 of Art. 339 of the Criminal Code (malicious hooliganism), they face imprisonment for up to 6 years.

The engineer of the Belarusian National Technical University, political prisoner Tsikhan Vosipau, was [transferred](#) to the correctional colony No. 20 in the Mazyr region at the end of October. In 2021, Vosipau was sentenced to 11 years in a high-security colony. While in colony, he was retried for allegedly disobeying the requirements of the colony administration. As a result, the term of imprisonment was increased by 7 months, and the enhanced regime of the conditions of his imprisonment was replaced with a strict one.

Former Belarusian State University teacher Sviatlana Volchak was [sentenced](#) to 13 days of administrative arrest. It is known that Volchak was repeatedly detained

for participating in protests in 2020 and that she was fired from the university in September 2021. The woman is serving her arrest in the Ivanava TDF.

A 19-year-old student of Brest State University named after Pushkin Aliaksiej Harokh was [detained](#) in Brest. Based on the video published in one of the pro-government channels, the young man is accused of supporting Ukraine in the war with Russia, forwarding messages about the movement of Russian troops and insulting Aliaksandr Lukashenka.

In Minsk, a teacher of one of the capital's schools (name remains unknown), who is a citizen of Lithuania, was [detained](#). In a video posted on a pro-government channel, she claims to have taken part in street protests in August 2020.

During the mass detentions and searches of political prisoners in open correctional institutions, which took place at the end of October, Uladzimir Khomichkau, a student of the Aviation Academy, was [detained](#) to the phone check. According to the detainees testimonies, the convicts were placed in a closed room at night, they were not given water, they were summoned for interrogations. In 2021, Khomichkau was [sentenced](#) to 4 years of *chemistry*\* for participating in street protests.

\*“*chemistry*” (bel) – the restriction of freedom with referral to an open correctional facility (OCF).

Pro-government channels published a video in which classmates of the previously [detained](#) student of the Hrodna State Medical University Artur Khlus [claim](#) that they danced with Artur against the background of the white-red-white flag. This video was allegedly found on Artur's phone.

Andrei Maslau, a first-year student at one of the Brest universities, was [included](#) in the list of “extremists” of the Ministry of Internal Affairs. Earlier, Maslau was [sentenced](#) to 2.5 years in prison for his intention to help Ukraine in the war with Russia.

The *Viartannie* Charitable Foundation, which for many years has contributed to major events in the field of culture, science and education, was [liquidated](#) on October 25 by the decision of the Minsk City Court.

Former Belarusian language teacher, political prisoner Ema Stsiepulionak was [sentenced](#) to 2 years in prison. Judge Iryna Yaskievich of the Mijory District Court found her guilty of violating Art. 368 (insulting the president) and art. 369 (insulting a representative of authority). Stsiepulionak was taken into custody in the courtroom. It is known that the convict has several chronic diseases, which worsened during

her previous detention period. In connection with being under arrest pending trial for a year, Sciepulionak's imprisonment after the verdict will last about 4 months.

Maksim Hujdo, a student of the Belarusian State Medical College, was [detained](#) during his classes on November 21. It is known that he previously worked in the police, from which he resigned in 2020.

The co-founder of the scientific and educational project *Smart Minsk* Siarhiei Saukin was [detained](#). According to information in a video posted on the pro-government Telegram channel, Saukin is accused of having the phrase "Old Santa Claus is tired, so it's time to choose a new one" in the script for the Smart Minsk New Year's program for children. Also in the video Saukin claims that he participated in the protests, blocked the traffic and subscribed to Telegram channels recognized by the authorities as "extremist".

Two teachers from rural schools in the Homiel region (presumably in the Buda-Kashaliou district) were [detained](#) and fined for subscribing to information resources recognized by the authorities as "extremist". A video with them appeared in one of the Homiel pro-government Telegram channels.

The Viasna human rights organization [published](#) stories of the children who were sentenced to prison terms for participating in protests or anti-war activities while still underage. The publication tells how physical violence was used against them, how they were tried, and how they are now serving their sentences.

On November 23, the Mahiliou Regional Court reconsidered the case of a 20-year-old student of the Mahiliou State University named after A. Kuliashou, political prisoner Danuta Peradnia. The Court did so because the Kirau District Court, which had previously sentenced the girl, had no right to consider this case. As a result of a new review, the same sentence was handed down: 6.5 years in a penal colony for reposting a publication that condemned the actions of Putin and Lukashenko to unleash a war against Ukraine.

## REGIME POLITICS

According to the Ministry of Education, the average salary of teachers in the country has [fallen](#), despite the fact that the Minister of Education Andrei Ivaniets announced the intention of the state to increase it two months ago.

Aliaksandr Lukashenka [instructed](#) the Interior Minister Ivan Kubrakou to open lyceums of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in all regions of Belarus (at the moment there is only one in Minsk). They aim to become a preparatory stage for the formation of personnel for the police.

The Ministry of Education has [approved](#) a new sample of school certificates. Now they have a column for assessing the behavior of pupils.

The Ministry of Education [proposes](#) to introduce a mandatory formal characteristic of a student after graduation, which will include information about their participation in public life and be important when they enter a university.

The House of Representatives is [preparing](#) to adopt the draft law “On Amendments to Laws on Education” in the first reading. Among other things, it regulates the organization of education in the national minorities’ languages. The new law will indicate that in kindergartens and schools, education can be organized in a foreign language in agreement with the Ministry of Education and “subject to conditions.” The previous normative act stated that, at the request of students and parents, in agreement with the Ministry of Education and according to the decision of local authorities, education can be organized in the languages of national minorities.

Starting from the new academic year, Belarusian State University students [will not](#) be trained in the specialty “international journalism”. There are only two specialties left at the Faculty of Journalism: there are only “journalism” and “information and communication”.

Propagandist Ihar Tur [became](#) a part-time teacher at the Department of Television and Radio Broadcasting of the Faculty of Journalism of the Belarusian State University. He teaches an elective program “Television Reporter” for 2nd year students.

Telegram channel *Volny BDU\** [announced](#) that mass layoffs of the objectionable people began at the Belarusian State University due to non-renewal of their contracts. According to the received information, it is planned to reduce the staff of each faculty by 10-12 working positions.

“*Volny BDU*” – Free Belarusian State University.

The National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, in cooperation with Russian partners, will [hold](#) two ideological events on the theme of the common history of Belarus and

Russia in December. The first one will be the scientific and educational festival “Unity of the peoples of Belarus and Russia: the centuries-old history” and the second one will be the expert and educational forum “Unification of the peoples of Belarus and Russia: from common past to a common future”.

On November 16-17 Minsk hosted the [Belarusian-Russian forum](#) “Youth and Elections”. The forum was organized by the CEC of Belarus and the Ministry of Education of Belarus. The central event of the forum was a meeting of young people with the chairman of the CEC of Belarus Ihar Karpjenka, and the chairman of the CEC of Russia Ella Pamfilova.

At the initiative of the head of the Belarusian Society of Hunters and Fishermen, ex-Minister of Internal Affairs Ihar Shunievich, a draft president decree has been [submitted](#) for public discussion. It provides admission to the Belarusian Society of Hunters and Fishermen of children from the age of 8.

The capital’s gymnasium No. 50 [announced](#) a competition for students in grades 2-5 called “Kremlin Christmas Tree”. Among the competition tasks are: a drawing on the topic “Belarusian pupils on the Kremlin Christmas tree” and an essay on the topic “New Year’s adventures of Belarusians in Moscow”. The winners will attend the New Year’s celebration in the Kremlin. The trip will be sponsored by the Russian Embassy in Belarus.

In the Brest region kindergartens, employees of the prosecutor’s office [conduct](#) “educational and patriotic” events for children, in which employees of the prosecutor’s office participate. In the information service of the prosecutor’s office of the Brest region it is said that the purpose of holding such events, among other things, was in “covering the results of the investigation of the criminal case on the genocide of the inhabitants of the BSSR during the *Great Patriotic War*.”

A patriotic concert was organized for children in kindergarten No. 25 in Navapolatsk. A special guest, who was [invited](#) there, was an employee of the Navapolack prosecutor’s office Aliaksandra Nikifarava. At the concert, the children were introduced to the *Patriotik\** doll, which, according to the deputy head of the kindergarten Natallia Kuzniatsova, is a symbol of the author’s educational program aimed at fostering patriotism in children.

\*“*Patriotik*” – little patriot.

Students of Jelsk secondary school No. 2 were [taken](#) on an excursion to the correctional colony No. 20 in the Mazyr region “in order to prevent juveniles from committing crimes and offenses.”

The administration of Lielchycy kindergarten No. 5 [organized](#) a children performance for the deputy prosecutor of the Lielchycy district as part of an “educational and patriotic” event. The children sang the national anthem of the Republic of Belarus for the guest.

In the Urech secondary school No. 2 (Liuban district of the Minsk region) for pupils of grades 2-3 was [held](#) a lesson, at which the military instructor demonstrated military weapons to the children and provided information materials “Weapons of Victory” and “Genocide of the Belarusian people during the *Great Patriotic War*” for familiarization. In the same school, there is a district resource center for pre-prescription training, which is visited by younger students on the excursions. After classes at this center, two seventh-graders of the Urech secondary school No. 2 visited the Urech kindergarten No. 35 and demonstrated weapons to five-year-old children at the direction of the military instructor.

## CIVIL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

The European Humanities University (EHU) has [launched](#) the [Women in Tech](#) project for women who want to start or develop their career in IT. For those who are just starting, or even just intending to start working in IT, the project will help to understand the variety of IT professions, evaluate their skills and work experience and choose the right industry. There is also a mentoring program for those who already work in IT but are experiencing a professional crisis. In addition, at the beginning of 2023 it is planned to open free IT courses, and the planned offline meetings will help to exchange the experience and increase motivation.

The Goethe Institute in Warsaw, with the support of the European Union, has [launched](#) an educational project *Social Camp*, which offers Belarusians a course of ten disciplines in the humanities, made specifically for the Belarusian audience. The training is designed to develop students’ critical thinking and argumentation skills. After completing the training, participants will have the opportunity to apply for financial support for their social projects.



The deputy director for scientific work of the Institute of Linguistics named after Jakub Kolas (structural division of the Academy of Sciences) Siarhieï Haranin, after his dismissal from the Academy of Sciences, published the text of his historical and linguistic scientific research on the peculiarities of the political elite of the Polack Principality representatives names.

In the Republican Scientific and Practical Center of Oncology and Medical Radiology, was [defended](#) a dissertation for the degree of Candidate of Medical Sciences, written in Belarusian. Speeches at the meeting of the scientific council were also held in Belarusian.

The Belarusian independent media “Malanka Medyja” has [launched](#) a YouTube channel for children “Malanka for Kids”, which will among other things publish educational videos created by professional teachers.

An educational online seminar in Belarusian will be [held](#) on the *Belarusian Interdisciplinary Seminar* platform on December 4. Its topic will be “Work communication in English: important points, tips, cultural features”. *Belarusian Interdisciplinary Seminar* is a free platform for the presentation and discussion of Belarusian scientific research in order to develop interdisciplinary relations in Belarusian science and consolidate the Belarusian academic community.

The Candidate of Historical Sciences, Associate Professor, former lecturer at the Faculty of International Relations of Belarusian State University Roza Turarbekava [spoke](#) about the changes in the sphere of state higher education in Belarus: “re-Sovietization”, “fraud” and “profanity”, “an attempt to create a convenient for the authorities picture of the world for students”. The expert is sure that in these conditions, parents will have to take care of their children at home more, “integrate them into the system of non-formal education so that they do not lose touch with the world.”

The representative of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya for education and science Tatsiana Shchytsova [commented](#) on the [appearance](#) of a column for assessing behavior in the school certificates: “The regime needs that at the end, after graduating from school, we had citizens whose main virtue is loyalty to authority and power.”