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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 where you can find all issues of the Asvieta digest in Belarusian, Russian and English languages.

DEAR READERS!

This is the latest release of the digest in 2022. We created it in order to inform regularly the Belarusian audience about key news related to the field of education and science, as well as about the possibilities of international support for students, teachers and scientists who were expelled and dismissed due to political reasons.

In 2022, the authorities made a number of new decisions that will have negative consequences for the education sector at all levels: some lyceums and most private schools were closed; measures have been taken to strengthen ideological and propaganda work in schools and universities; a large number of scientists and teachers who did not support the regime's policy were fired. The attitude towards the militarization and securitization of the education sector and, accordingly, towards isolation from the international academic community and further rapprochement with the Russian education system has become entrenched. Such rapprochement is inevitably associated with a distorted teaching of Belarusian history and literature, and a reduction in the opportunities for teaching in the Belarusian language.

What can we do under such difficult conditions? In order not to lose touch with the civilized world and to improve the quality of education (for you and your children), you can use a variety of online learning resources and programs. In order to preserve and develop the national culture, one can communicate more in the Belarusian language, read the most interesting works of Belarusian authors to children, and study the history of Belarus independently. In order to change the education system in our country, it is necessary to start preparing for future reforms right now.

We know that the digest is read both in Belarus and in the diaspora, and we are very pleased that more and more people are interested in new independent

educational initiatives and realise the importance of reforming the education system in Belarus. We will continue to publish the digest in 2023. We will be very happy to receive feedback: share with us your information, ideas and suggestions - both regarding the digest and regarding the situation in the field of education and science in our country.

The Asveta team wishes you all the best in the New Year! Let 2023 be the year of the war end in Ukraine and the end of repressions in our country.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

The representative of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya Office for Education and Science, Tatsiana Shchytsova, posted a [video](#) in which she gives a report on the activities of her team. According to the report, the work was carried out in two directions: support for repressed students, teachers and scientists and preparation for the reform of the education system in Belarus. Shchytsova also says that the European Commission has allocated two large grants to support education and science: “one for supporting the school direction, the other for supporting the academic direction.”

EHU hosted an expert [discussion](#) “Knowledge Economy and Society Development: Prospects for Lithuania and Democratic Belarus”, within the framework of which, “an exchange of experience and ideas regarding the current state of affairs and prospects for the development of the knowledge economy in Lithuania and Belarus” took place. The discussion was attended by Member of the European Parliament Andrius Kubilius, Advisor to the Prime Minister of Lithuania Rimantas Zhilyus, Belarusian economist Pavel Daneika, Professor of the Department of Social Sciences of YSU Almira Usmanova. Apart from EHU, the discussion was also organized by the Office of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya and the platform of the Belarusian expert community “Bank of Ideas”.

Belarusian education experts [summed up](#) the main changes in the Belarusian education system over the past year. Ex-Associate Professor of the Department of International Relations of the Belarusian State University Roza Turarbekova notes the emphasized ideologization of education, a sign of which she considers the introduction into the educational program, for example, of such a discipline as the “History of Belarusian statehood”, which, according to the expert, substantiates the expediency and significance of Lukashenka’s power. Andrei Laurukhin, senior

analyst at the Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies, notes that education “more and more resembles an army or a prison” and notes that the freedom of students has become severely limited due to an increase in the share of targeted admission to universities, because graduates at the end of their studies will have to work for 5 years on a mandatory distribution. Former director of the Belarusian State University Lyceum Ihar Varaksa draws attention to the problem of access to quality education for different social groups in Belarus.

Ihar Varaksa (consultant of the Office of Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya on school education, former director of the of the Belarusian State University Lyceum) in a detailed interview [spoke](#) about the reasons for his dismissal and emigration, compared Belarusian school education with Ukrainian and Lithuanian, named the main mistake of Belarusian teachers and talked about what the actual level of education in Belarus is: “When they say that Belarus has the best education, I strongly disagree. This is a myth, as well as a product of the lack of objective external evaluation and systemic misinformation at all levels.”

“[The Belarusian Solidarity Movement](#)” organized a large-scale conference in Warsaw dedicated to an alternative education system for Belarusians. The event was attended by about 350 people. Prominent experts in the field of education and representatives of democratic forces spoke at the conference: historian Pavel Tserashkovich, head of the Belarusian school in Warsaw Ales Lozka, representative for the national revival of the United Transitional Cabinet Alina Koushyk, political scientist Andrei Kazakevich, representative of the Coordinating Council Andrei Yahorau, politician and initiator of the curriculum Kalinouski for repressed students Aliaksandr Milinkevich and others. At the conference, representatives of numerous educational initiatives of civil society spoke about their activities. As a result of the conference, the organizers [released](#) an navigator of independent educational initiatives.

The “People’s Poll” [learned](#) from democratic Belarusians the opinion about the quality of education in Belarus: the majority of respondents (69%) were dissatisfied with the quality of education. Also, 58% believe that the school is not a place for “patriotic education”, and the same number of respondents are in favor of increasing the number of Belarusian schools. More results about the opinion of Belarusians about education can be found in the visualized [report](#) of the People’s Poll.

Education experts Roza Turarbekova, Tatsiana Shchytsova and Volha Pavuk [identified](#) the main pain points of the modern education system in Belarus: ideologization, militarization, closure from the influence of parents and civil society,

centralization. “School-barracks” — this is how Turarbekova defined the ideal that the state strives for when reforming education. Shchytsova stressed that the introduction of licensing private schools was introduced precisely with the aim of closing many of them. She noted that there were more opportunities in private schools to protect children from. Pavuk noted that ideological events that used to concern high school students are now held for students of different ages, and their goal is to formally meet the requirements of ideologues (for example, so that all children know the words of the national anthem by heart).

The independent media “Media IQ” released [a video](#) in which, using the example of Nazi Germany, the goal of ideologization of education in Belarus and its possible consequences are explained: “Germans who grew up under the Nazi regime were much more anti-Semitic than those who grew up before or after that period”.

REPRESSION

On December 28, the well-known teacher Yauheni Liviant, an expert in the field of education, the founder of the tutoring center “100 Points”, [was detained](#). In a video that appeared on the pro-government Telegram channel, he is accused of blocking roads during protests in 2020 and also trying to seize power by joining the Coordinating Council. Later, it became known about the detention of Liviant’s wife and daughter, as well as Alexei Ivanou, co-founder of the 100 points center. On January 3, it became known that each of the detainees [was sentenced](#) to administrative arrest for a period of 14 to 15 days.

Tatsiana Yakelchyk, a student of Mechanics and Mathematics Faculty of the Belarusian State University, [was released](#) after more than two years of imprisonment. She was arrested in November 2020 in the “case of students” and convicted along with eleven other students under “protest” articles. All other defendants in the case [were released](#) earlier.

Tour guide Aksana Mankevich [was sentenced](#) to 3 years of “home chemistry” for “active participation in actions that grossly violate public order” (part 1 of article 342 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus). The verdict was passed by Judge Victoria Shabunya. Mankevich spent 3 months in jail, and after the announcement of the verdict, she was released in the courtroom. According to changes in legislation adopted in December last year, Mankiewicz, after being found guilty under the “protest” article, will no longer be able to work as a tour guide.

On December 14, Vitali Mohuchau, a history teacher at the Minsk State College of Architecture and Civil Engineering, [was detained](#). The reasons for the detention and the whereabouts of Mohuchau remain unknown.

A political prisoner, a teacher from the city of Khoyniki, Irina Abdukeryna, [was sentenced](#) to 4 years in prison in a general regime colony for filming the movement of Russian military equipment and sending the video to the Belarusian Hayun channel. The regional court of Gomel found the woman guilty of “assisting extremist activities”, “discrediting the Republic of Belarus” and “inciting hatred”, the verdict was announced by Judge Ruslan Tsaruk. In addition to the term in the colony, Abdukerina was also sentenced to a fine of 100 basic units. The woman has been in custody since the moment of detention — from April 5, 2022.

On November 25, student Uladzimir Zapolskikh [was sentenced](#) to 2 years in prison in a penal colony and a fine of 200 basic units. Judge S.A. Bandarenka, during a closed court session, found Zapolski guilty under the “protest” articles of the Criminal Code: 342 part 1 (“organization and preparation of actions grossly violating public order”), 369 part 1 (“discrediting the Republic of Belarus”) and 130 (“inciting hatred”).

On November 30, during mass detentions in the city of Miory, Vitebsk region, an outstanding Belarusian historian-researcher, local historian, head of the museum association “Heritage of the Miory Region”, teacher of the highest category Vitold Yermalionak [was detained](#). It is known that his son Anton was detained with him.

On November 29, GUBOPiK officers detained a sociologist, candidate of science Oksana Shelest. On December 1, she [was sentenced](#) to 15 days of administrative arrest under Article 24.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses (“disobedience to police officers”). On December 14, Shelest [was released](#).

Maryna Kazlouskaya, a well-known teacher of Belarusian literature at the Belarusian State University Lyceum, [has left](#) Belarus. According to her colleagues, the reason for leaving was the persecution of Kazlouskaya for political reasons. Kazlouskaya herself has not yet commented to the media, but left a farewell message on her Facebook [page](#).

With a teacher of the highest category, a well-known teacher in the city of Bereza, Brest region, Mikalai Zhukovich, after the expiration of the contract, they [didn't sign](#) a new contract. According to unofficial information, the reason for the reluctance of

the state institution to continue cooperation with an experienced teacher was his actions in August 2020: being the headmaster of the school at that time, Zhukovich refused to organize the trip of his colleagues to the pro-government rally.

REGIME POLITICS

Alexander Lukashenko [signed](#) a decree “On the activities of special funds of the President of the Republic of Belarus”, according to which scholarship holders of funds to support talented youth will be deprived of scholarships if they were convicted under the “protest” articles of the Criminal or Administrative Codes. Scholarships that were paid earlier to young people convicted of protest activities will need to be returned to the state.

The Pskov region of Russia [will host](#) an “International military-patriotic camp”, which is planned to host one hundred children from Belarus. The organizer of the camp is the administration of the Pskov region. The selection of teenagers will be carried out “according to the criteria of activity and participation in public projects”, the privilege in the selection will be given to children studying the historical heritage of Russia.

In Hantsavichy, students who were registered with law enforcement agencies [were taken](#) to an excursion to SIZO No. 6. With the help of such an event, according to representatives of the Ministry of Internal Affairs, they wanted to “impress and warn minors who have already stained their lives with bad deeds.”

In 2023, taxes that teachers involved in tutoring must pay to the state budget [will be doubled](#) by the authorities.

Details [have become known](#) about the characteristic that the authorities plan to introduce for school graduates: it will need to be submitted to the university upon admission; it will have a form approved jointly by the Ministry of Education and the school’s teachers’ council; it will include 11 items, including information about participation in the events of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union, about the child’s family and detentions by law enforcement agencies. If the scores of applicants are equal in the entrance exams, this characteristic will be taken into account.

According to the “Our Money” [channel](#), in 2022 the Belarusian authorities will spend only 0.9% (425.8 million rubles) of the consolidated budget on the develop-

ment of science, and only 19.3 million rubles on updating the material and technical base. In addition, Our Groshy drew attention to the too respectable average age of Belarusian scientists: half of the doctors of sciences are over 70 years old, and about a third of candidates of sciences are in the age category of 40–50 years. The lack of young personnel and funding are the causes of the disastrous state of domestic science - this is the conclusion made by the authors of the channel.

Questioning of students on the topic of their value orientations [is being carried out](#) at the universities of the Hrodna region. It is noteworthy that the questionnaire contains a question about trust in independent media, the vast majority of which are recognized by the authorities as “extremist” and subscription to the channels of which in many cases is punishable by administrative arrest. Students are also asked if they are ready to protest against the authorities and how worried they are about the possibility of starting hostilities on the territory of Belarus.

A 17-year-old schoolboy of gymnasium No. 2 in Baranovichi was demonstratively [taken](#) into custody in the assembly hall of the educational institution in the presence of employees of the prosecutor’s office, students of the gymnasium and schools of the city. According to preliminary information, the reason for the detention was the participation of a teenager in a fight.