

January 2023

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.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND EDUCATION

On January 12, Vilnius [hosted](#) a presentation of the educational project “Octopus: Education for Belarusian Children Today and Tomorrow”. The project is aimed at supporting and developing pro-Belarusian online and offline educational initiatives for school-age children both in Belarus and in the diaspora. The project will provide an opportunity for professional self-realization for Belarusian teachers who have lost their jobs for political reasons. The Octopus project will also provide conceptual and methodological preparation for the future reform of school education in Belarus.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s adviser on education and science, Tatsiana Shchytsova, [explained](#) in an interview the essence of the main changes in the education system of Belarus during the reaction period: “Today all priorities and privileges are given to police officers.” In addition, the expert is sure that the main challenges of Belarusian education at this historical stage are: isolation from international cooperation and convergence of the education systems of Belarus and Russia, the consistent destruction of the Belarusian national cultural component in education – everything related to the national language and culture.

Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya’s adviser on education and science, Tatsiana Shchytsova, [commented](#) on the latest [changes](#) in the rules for entering Belarusian universities, which were announced at the end of 2022: “In fact, when you start to analyze more carefully, it is clear that each step solves a specific pragmatic task in order to somehow support this regime, representatives of law and security forces, and the falling economy”.

REPRESSIONS

Teacher Jauhen Liviant, a prominent expert in the field of education, the founder of the “100 points” tutoring center, as well as his wife, daughter and colleague [were](#)

[detained](#) at the end of December and then [punished](#) with lengthy administrative arrests. In January of 2023 all of them were transferred to a pre-trial detention center. They [are accused](#) under the “protest 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”).

On January 13, during a bus out-of-town excursion, a tourist group (about 80 people) and its guides [were detained](#). The guides are a teacher of history, an assistant at the Department of Economic History of the Belarusian State Economic University, a member of the Commission for Naming and Renaming the Streets of the City of Minsk under the Minsk City Executive Committee, the largest researcher of the history of Minsk Ivan Satsukevich, a well-known person in tourism, founder of the Land of Castles Foundation Ales Varykish, and a well-qualified tour-guide Natallia Zhdanok. The tour route involved visiting the folk rite called “Kaliadnyjaa Tsary” (“Christmas Kings”) in the village of Semezhava. The folk rite is included in the UNESCO Intangible Heritage List. According to preliminary information, the tourists were released five hours after they were detained and their phones were checked, and the guides were arrested for 72 hours.

On January 12, professor, doctor of sociological sciences Yury Bubnou [was detained](#) in Mahiliou. The scientist was detained right at the university department. Yury Bubnou is Head of the Department of Humanitarian Disciplines, PhD of Sociology. It became [known](#) about the detention of a history teacher at a secondary school No. 30 in Minsk, Siarhei Kozel. The teacher is in the remand center-1. It is noteworthy that according to human rights activists, the detention took place a month and a half ago, but information about this remained non-public for a long time.

On January 18, Mikalai Bankou, a former teacher at the Communications Department of the Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics, [was detained](#). The reasons for the detention remain unknown, but it is noteworthy that this department trains regular officers and reserve officers for various law enforcement agencies, including the Armed Forces of the Republic of Belarus.

GUBOPIK [detained](#) a graduate student of Mahiliou State University Vitali Plavinsky for commenting on the war against Ukraine. The “repentant” video with Plavinsky was published on one of the pro-government Telegram channels. Plavinsky’s comment was provoked by a provocateur later [identified](#) by independent media.

On January 5 and 6, two first-year students of the Faculty of History, one of whom is a minor, [were detained](#) in the dormitory of the Belarusian State University. One of the detainees, Aliaksei Ramanovich, is accused of participating in a strike at Lida gymnasium, which took place in 2020. On December 9, the students were convicted and sentenced to a fine. On the same day, another student of this faculty was detained at the exam, but released on the same day.

GUBOPiK officers [detained](#) a fourth-year student of the Belarusian State Medical University Yana Ziabko. She is accused of being involved in the creation and administration of the Telegram-chat of the Free Trade Union (currently no longer functioning) of the Belarusian State Medical University. Yana is threatened with eight years of imprisonment.

GUBOPiK [detained](#) an 18-year-old student of the Business Institute of the Belarusian State University Daniil Homan for commenting in one of the chats, where the young man claims that his grandfather allegedly participated in the burning of Khatyn. He was provoked to comment by a provocateur later [identified](#) by independent media.

REGIME POLITICS

The first secretary of the Central Committee of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union, Aliaksandr Lukyanau, [claimed](#) that in case of mobilization, teenagers and young people should be involved in the “security architecture”. “It is necessary to conduct initial training so that at least young people can know what a Kalashnikov assault rifle is, a Makarov pistol, throwing grenades”, – the head of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union believes. In his opinion, the training of young people as “reinforcement” for the mobilized should take place within the framework of the “Ready for Labor and Defense” complex of physical exercises and tests developed in Soviet times.

The annual award “for spiritual revival”, which was usually received by cultural activists, this time [was presented](#) by Aliaksandr Lukashenka to the teenage military-patriotic club “Lynx”, created in 2021 under military unit No. 3214 on the initiative of Lukashenka himself. It is noteworthy that this military unit was one of the main bases of the security forces involved in the suppression of peaceful protests. And the children participating in the club starred in a propaganda video in which they shouted pro-government slogans.

According to new amendments to the Education Code of Belarus, published on January 17, the ban on the activities of public organizations with political goals in schools [is lifted](#).

A museum of Belarusian statehood [was opened](#) at school No. 52 in Minsk. Its exposition covers the period that begins in 1772, i.e. with the beginning of the annexation of the Belarusian lands of the local Commonwealth by the Russian Empire. Chronologically, the exposition ends with information about the new version of the Constitution, adopted in February 2022 as a result of a referendum accompanied by mass repressions against civil society, and against the backdrop of a threat to the independence of Belarus in connection with the provision of the territory of the country by the regime to the Russian troops to carry out aggression against Ukraine. It is noteworthy that the exposition lacks a section dedicated to the earlier Belarusian state formations – the Polatsk and Turau principalities and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania.

On January 9, the court of the Central District of Minsk [recognized](#) 12 books on Belarusian history as “extremist materials”. Those are mostly books on the period of the Great Patriotic War by well-known researchers.

Members of the children’s military-patriotic club “The Eaglets. Heirs of the Victory”, opened in Minsk in March 2022 on the basis of the OMON of the Main Internal Affairs Directorate of the Minsk City Executive Committee, [visited](#) Yaroslavl for a meeting and joint events with the Russian youth militaristic pro-government organizations “YoungArmy”, “Young Friend of the Police and Law and Order”. Cooperation agreements were signed during the meetings. One of the organizers of the event was the Department of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Russia for the Yaroslavl Region.

The “Russian Center for Culture and Science” in Homel [held](#) an action where children wrote letters of support to the soldiers of the Russian aggressor army fighting against Ukraine and collected parcels with sweets and board games for them. 35 children selected at the drawing [competition](#) held by the Russian Embassy went to Moscow as a prize for 1 day, where, together with their peers from the occupied Lugansk and Donetsk regions of Ukraine, they [visited](#) the theatrical New Year’s performance in the Kremlin and the “Victory MuZeum” exposition, which hosts the exhibition about the dead soldiers of the Russian army who fought against Ukraine.