

The information is aggregated from open online resources and our own practice. Today's newsletter dedicated to Academic freedoms in Belarus, we will shortly update you on human rights violations in numbers and facts.

Summary Tuesday, September 1:

Traditionally, September 1st is the start of the new academic year in Belarus. Festive events usually take place at schools on this day throughout the country.

Some facts: Belarus belongs to the group of countries with an index of academic freedom of 0.225 on a scale of 0 to 1.¹ Institutionally, the Belarusian state system of university education subordinated to Lukashenko. Rectors of state universities appointed and allegedly dismissed by the president, opening the door to replacement of academic criteria by political criteria in such decisions. Critics allege that presidential selection of rectors has made political loyalty a consideration in selection of academic leaders, undermining the independence of state universities.²

Belarus is the only country to have been conditionally admitted to the Bologna Process, a Eurasian standard-setting club for higher education. It must follow a reform plan, signed off at a Paris meeting in 2018, that covers changes to its national qualifications system, student and staff mobility, academic freedom and institutional autonomy.

The required reforms also include the creation of an independent quality assurance agency for higher education, which the Belarusian government has said will be funded using some of the loans. Academics in the country state that there has been little if any progress on the reforms. According to the member of the Independent Bologna Committee Vladimir Dounaev "In two years, nothing has been done".³

The World Bank in the beginning of COVID19 panademia supported the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus to implement a higher education modernization project with the total financing of 109.01 million US dollars.

The goal of the project is "to improve the teaching and learning environment and information on the labor market relevance of higher education". Representatives of civil society wrote an appeal to the World Bank, expressing concerns regarding repressions against the independent academic community, asking to impose additional oversight on the Belarusian

¹ <https://www.gppi.net/2020/03/26/free-universities>

² <https://www.refworld.org/docid/45cafdc92.html>

³ <https://www.researchprofessionalnews.com/rr-news-europe-other-nations-2020-8-education-reform-in-belarus-will-be-long-road-says-world-bank/>

government, since the project looks like “supporting the Government without any obligations on its part”.⁴

Students & Peaceful protests

Between 3,000 to 5,000 students from Belarusian National Technical University, Minsk National Linguistic University, Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts, Belarusian State University, Belarusian State University of Informatics and radioelectronics participated in the peaceful protests in Minsk.⁵

Students of the Minsk National Linguistic University signed the petition against the falsification of the recent elections and violence against peaceful protesters. They say, “Remember: Belarus is all of us”. More than 50 students performed next to the Academy of Arts in Minsk. The participants’ mouths are sealed with black tape. Their posters read: “Violence cannot strangle the truth”, “Silence means consent?” Many of the participants are wearing black clothes because “this day is blackened”.⁶ Graduates and employees of the Belarusian Academy of Arts issued an open letter: “Today, people have a pain in their souls due to the events of the recent weeks, and we cannot stand aside and fail to react to the acute political crisis in our country,” the letter says.

During the peaceful student march riot police were attacking and forcibly arresting young people.⁷ Riot police and officers in plain clothes tried to get the students to disperse.⁸ According to Belarusian Human Rights defenders around 70 students, including minors were detained.⁹ Belarusian police confirmed that “a number of people” were detained as they marched towards the Education Ministry building in the capital Minsk.

Good news

To make it easier to follow up on the situation in Belarus, [summary information on Belarusian election and facts of Human Right violation](#) have been collected.

⁴ <http://npbelarus.info/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/05.11-world-bank.pdf>

⁵ <https://belsat.eu/en/news/offbeat-knowledge-day-students-march-omon-detain-protesters-photos-vid/>

⁶ https://news.tut.by/society/698952.html#ua:main_news~3

⁷ <https://www.euronews.com/2020/09/01/scores-detained-as-students-in-belarus-protest-against-president-lukashenko-the-cube>

⁸ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-53984815>

⁹ <http://spring96.org/ru/news/99330>