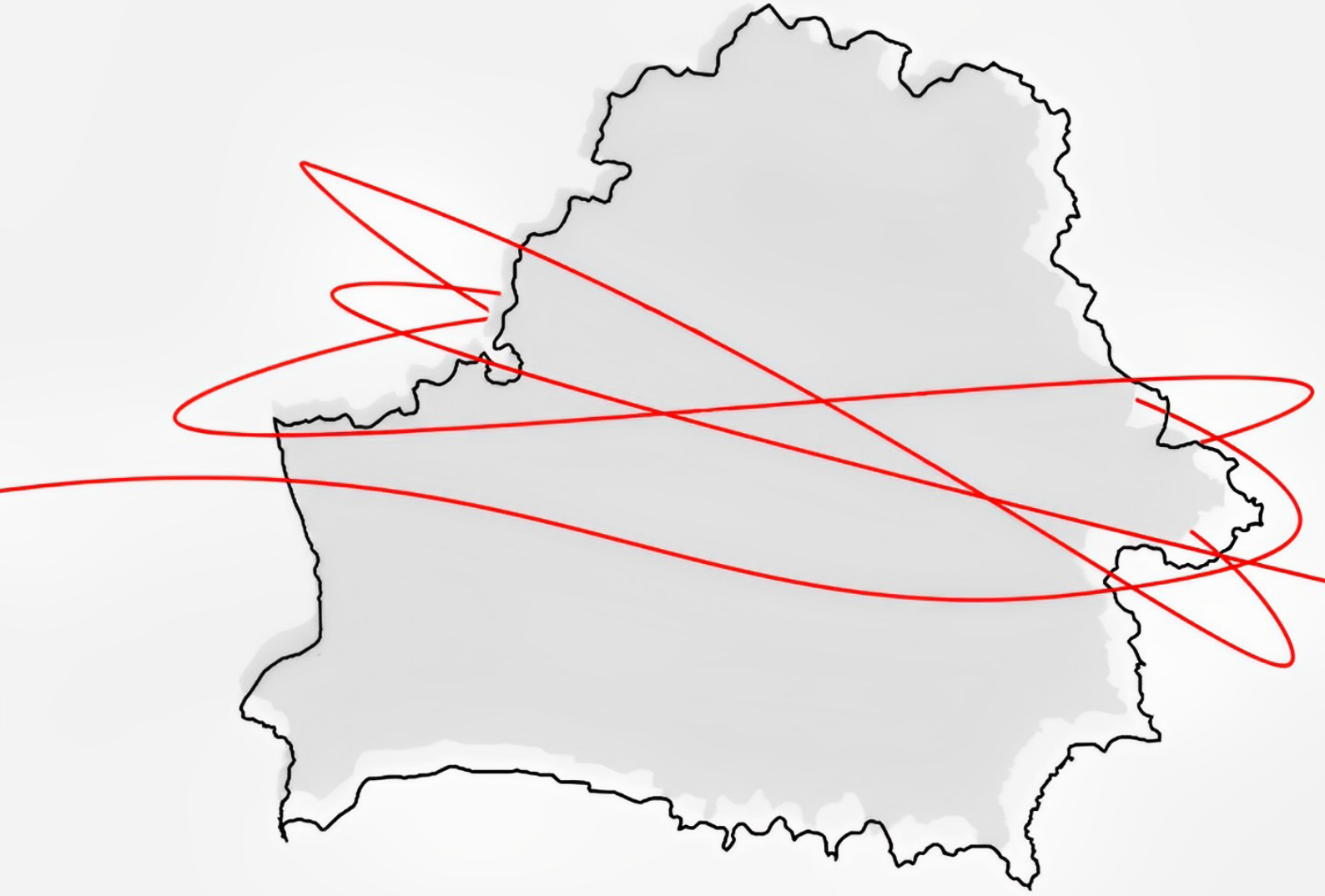
Belarusian Students' Association

STATE
OF BELARUSIAN ACADEMIA



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PRELUDE

This report is prepared by Belarusian Students' Association (hereinafter referred to as the – Association, BSA) for informing parties concerned about the state of Belarusian academia in the year 2022.

Due to the ongoing political repression against Belarusian academia and the new waves of violations of students' and teachers' rights since the beginning of the Russia's aggression in Ukraine, the Association documented the evidence of persecution of Belarusian academia in three large parts: repression of students and teachers because of their disagreement with the state policy, repression for supporting Ukraine in the military conflict, sanctions against Belarusian students from European universities and other international actors. This report does not describe all cases of reprisals against Belarusian students for security reasons and at the request of those subjected to political pressure.

This document is not a comprehensive source of evidence of persecution. It was created to facilitate an understanding of the depth of the repression and to raise awareness of the continuing violations of the rights of the academic community in Belarus and beyond in 2022. All materials used were borrowed directly from the independent students' associations that are part of BSA as well as from open internet sources of information.

In addition, the report contains recommendations for European actors to work on the violations mentioned in the document.

This document is the result of the intellectual work of the authors and the use of data from the report is only permitted if the original source is cited.

SECTION 1

POLITICAL REPRESSION OF THE BELARUSIAN GOVERNMENT AGAINST ACADEMIA

In 2022, two years after the rigged presidential election and the protests, the authorities continue to repress anyone who has in any way expressed disagreement with the authorities. This applies to students as well as teachers, professors and scholars. Known cases of political persecution of participants in higher and secondary specialized education processes are described below.

SECTION 1.1
REPRESSION AGAINST STUDENTS

Students and pupils were repeatedly subjected to criminal and administrative political harassment during the year. For instance, on January 19, BSU student Uladzislau Bandaryk was detained together with his friends when they were shooting a video for their YouTube blog Nick&Bon on Niamiha. AMAP officers checked the boys' phones and there they found photos and videos of the August 16, 2020 protest march, where Vladislav was just walking in the crowd. The boys were first detained for three days, during which they were continuously beaten, and then arrested for 15 days for "disobedience" and held at «Valadarka»[1]. On April 19, they were each sentenced to 2.5 years of «chemistry»[2]. Uladzislau was a first year student of Belarusian State University - the order for his expulsion appeared a month after the arrest. 24-year-old Uladzislau Bandaryk left Belarus after the trial.

On January 31st, BSPU student Anastasia Kukharava was detained in Minsk under Art. 342 of the Criminal Code[3] for "blocking roads" during the protests in August 2020. Anastasia was found guilty and sentenced to three years of «home chemistry»[4]. The girl was released in the courtroom. She is now outside of Belarus.

In the middle of February fourth-year student of the Faculty of Information Technologies and Control of BSUIR with specialization in "Artificial Intelligence" Jaŭhen Maliaŭka was detained right in the dormitory under Art. 342 of the Criminal Code. The court sentenced him to three years of «home chemistry».

On February 18, BIP student Kanstantsin Zimnitski was detained at home. According to AMAP officers, he was allegedly detained for "hooliganism, extremism and drugs". Nothing is known about Kanstantsin since then.

On March 15, Nastasia Vaitovich, student of the Faculty of History of BSU, was sentenced to three years of imprisonment with assignment to a correctional facility under Art. 342 of the Criminal Code for participation in a "human chain" (people holding each other's hands in the form of a chain – translator's notes) at one of the protests in 2020. She spent almost four

1 Detention Centre No.1 of Minsk.
2 «Chemistry» – imprisonment with assignment to a correctional facility.
3 Article 342 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Organization of group actions that grossly violate public order, or active participation in such actions».
4 «Home chemistry» – imprisonment without assignment to a correctional facility

months in pre-trial detention and was declared a political prisoner on December 14, 2021. Anastasia fled the country.

On March 21st, Aliaksandr Builitski, fourth-year student of the School of Business of BSU with specialization in “business administration”, an active member of university’s pro-government student union, was detained. He was sentenced under Art. 342 of the Criminal Code to three years of «home chemistry».

On March 23rd, 20-year-old Ryta Zotava, third-year student of F. Skaryna GSU, was sentenced to two years of penal colony under Art. 341[5] of the Criminal Code for posting protest stickers near the Chachersk school.

On April 7, the verdict was pronounced to 20-year-old student of PSU Leanid Shamau. The case was tried at a closed court session. Leanid was found guilty under Pt. 3 of Art. 293[6] of the Criminal Code and sentenced to 2.5 years of imprisonment in a penal colony. According to the case materials, on August 10th and 11th, 2020 Leonid "intentionally and illegally" collected and disseminated information intended for conducting mass riots.

On April 12, Anastasia Navasadskaia, a student of the Faculty of Biology of BSU, was detained in Minsk. In a forcibly filmed video of the law enforcers the girl testifies against herself, claiming that she took part in a student demonstration and blocked the traffic. She was charged under Art. 342 of the Criminal Code.

On April 28, 2022 student of the Faculty of Computer Systems and Networks of BSU Ivan Ibragimau was detained in the case under Art. 342 of the Criminal Code. He is from Russia and studied in a group of foreign students.

A female student, an employee of one of the IT-companies dealing with advertisements in social media, was detained on May 4 for "insulting the administrators of pro-government Telegram channels". According to a video forcibly filmed by law enforcers, the insult consisted of her "ignoring correspondence with administrators of channels that hold a government point of view" and sending promotional offers to channels deemed "extremist" – Real Belarus and Deutsche Welle.

On May 6, Sofia Sapega, student of EHU, was sentenced to six years of imprisonment on two paragraphs: Art. 130[7] of the Criminal Code and Art. 179[8] of the Criminal Code (at the beginning of the trial there were seven articles). In addition, the girl was charged with compensation of moral damage in favor of the victims in the total amount of 167,500 rubles (appx. 63,000 Euros) and a fee of 7,500 rubles (appx. 2800 Euros) for civil cases.

5 Article 341 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Desecration of buildings and damage to property».

6 Article 293 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Training or other preparation of individuals to take part in mass riots accompanied by violence against the person, pogroms, arson, destruction of property or armed resistance to the authorities, as well as financing or other material support of such activities».

7 Article 130 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Incitement of racial, national, religious or other social hatred or discord».

8 Article 179 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Illegal collection or dissemination of information about private life».

On May 6, 18-year-old student Kiryl Keturka was found guilty for violation of Pt. 1 of Art. 342 of the Criminal Code and sentenced to 2.5 years of "home chemistry".

On May 10, it became known that Dzmitry Niachajeu, third-year student of the Faculty of History of BSU, was detained in Minsk for a post on Instagram.

On June 1st, two sisters – Yana and Tatsiana Barysevich – were sentenced to 2.5 and 3 years of "chemistry" respectively under Pt. 1 of Art. 342 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus for participation in protests in 2020. Yana is a student of the Faculty of Biology of BSU, Tatsiana is a student of the music college.

On June 21st, Pavel Pagoski, a student of BSTU, was detained for allegedly posting an "obscene" video on the Internet. The student was sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest and expelled from the university on June 21st . Pavel was a fourth-year student of the Chemical Technology and Engineering Faculty and was to defend his PhD thesis on the 22nd of June.

Allegedly on July 5, third-year student of the Faculty of Psychology of A. Kuliashou MSU Yury Shyroki was detained. He is accused of participating in peaceful protests in 2020 and "distributing extremist materials".

On July 12, third-year student Artur Vishniavetski was sentenced to three months of imprisonment for "insulting state symbols" (Art. 370 of the Criminal Code), namely the red-green flag of Belarus. According to his indictment, on May 20, 2022 at 2 a.m. Vishniavetski, while intoxicated, approached one of the bank branches, grabbed the flag hanging there and pulled it down, "as a result of which the flagpole fell out of the metal holder and fell to the ground". The student then took the flag in his hands and walked around the building waving it, then threw the flag to the ground. Such actions of the student were considered by the prosecution as an open display of "insulting, blasphemous and disrespectful" behavior.

On July 15, Kanstantsin Rudnitski, a 23-year-old software engineer, student of BrSTU and a political prisoner, was sentenced to 6 years in a strict regime colony and received a fine of 3,200 rubles.

Kanstantsin's development of one of the functional elements of the «Black Book of Belarus»[9] was interpreted by the prosecution as "aiding and inciting hatred" (Art. 130 of the Criminal Code) and "assisting in the perpetration of unlawful acts with personal data". (Art. 230-1 of the Criminal Code). It is known that Kanstantsin has the title of master of sports and that while he was in jail he was expelled from the university.

At the end of July pro-government Telegram channels published a forcibly filmed video with a second-year BIP student. In it, the guy says that he took part in post-election protests, blocking traffic and participating in a “human chain”.

On August 22, it became known about the detention of BSU student Aliaksandra

9 A resource that collects personal data of individuals responsible for repression.

Kondratsenka, who was the administrator of the project "One step closer", which connects applicants with students of the faculty.

On August 23rd, first-year student of BSU and a political prisoner Raman Karpuk was sentenced to three years of imprisonment under Pt. 2 of Art. 191[10] of the Criminal Code for sending letters to other members of election commissions appointed for the February 27 referendum, urging them not to falsify the voting results. The guy has been in jail since February 8. During this time he was expelled from the university.

On September 6, EHU students, activists of the human rights organization "Viasna" Marfa Rabkova and Akihira Haeuski-Khanada were sentenced to 15 and 16 years of imprisonment in a strict regime colony and a fine of 22,400 rubles (appx. 8300 Euros) each. After the verdict was pronounced, relatives, friends and acquaintances of the accused, including a representative of the diplomatic corps, the Charge d'affaires of the EU in Belarus Evelina Schulz, were detained at the exit of the building.

On September 7, fifth-year student of the Faculty of General Medicine of BSMU Aliaksei Zhyburtovich was detained. A video of a forced confession involving him was later published in one of the pro-government Telegram channels.

On September 21, fourth-year student of the Faculty of History of BSPU Matsvei Hrankevich was sentenced to two years and two months of imprisonment in a strict regime colony under Pt. 1 of Art. 342 and Pt. 1 of Art. 130 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus. The student was put on the "list of terrorists".

At the end of September Aryna Sianiuta, 19-year-old student of the Faculty of Economics of BSU, was detained for participation in protests.

On October 17, a pro-government Telegram channel published a video of a first-year student [11]of BSU Faculty of Chemistry, in which the law enforcers claim that in 2020 the detainee allegedly "walked the streets and reposted extremist materials, and was also noticed to express interest in substances from which explosives are made".

On October 23, Artur Khlus, a student of GrSMU, was forcibly detained in Hrodna. In a video published in one of the pro-government channels, the guy addresses the representative of the United Transitional Cabinet of Belarus responsible for Restoration of Law and Order Aliaksandr Azarau and claims that he was detained for taking part in the plan "Victory". A few days later a video of Khlus's companions appeared in pro-government Telegram channels. In it, three girls and a guy say that Artur invited them to his parties, where they danced in the background of a white-red-white flag on the wall.

In early November, forcibly filmed videos of students of Belarusian universities appeared

10 Article 191 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Obstruction of the exercise of electoral rights, the right to participate in a referendum, or the exercise of the right of legislative initiative of citizens, or the work of the Central Commission of the Republic of Belarus for elections and holding republican referendums, election commissions, referendum commissions».

11 Name and surname are unknown.

in several pro-government Telegram channels, allegedly repenting for joining the Telegram chat rooms "Belarusian Students for Freedom" (BSF) and attending their informal education lectures. In addition, one of the girls explained on camera why she had a Polish Card (Karta Polaka) and promised to destroy it when the relevant law came into being.

On November 25, at a closed court session student Uladzimir Zapolski was sentenced to 2 years of imprisonment in a penal colony and received a fine of 200 basic units (1 b.u. = 32 rubles (appx. 12 Euros) – translator's notes) on three articles: Pt. 1 of Art. 342, Art. 369-1[12] and Art. 130 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.

During mass detentions and searches of political prisoners in open prisons, which took place at the end of October, BSAA student Uladzimir Khamichkou was detained in order to look through his phone. According to the testimonies of the detainees and convicts, they were placed in a closed room overnight, given no water and summoned for interrogation. In 2021, Khamichkov was sentenced to four years of «chemistry» for his participation in street protests.

In addition to repression by the authorities and the state, pressure is being exerted directly on the universities. On February 7, BSU students were summoned to the rector's office for a "preventive interview" on the eve of the referendum. In the conversation the representatives of the administration mentioned the students who had already been expelled for protests, so that the current students "would not be promoted". Some students were forced to sign a document which said that those who signed were warned of administrative and criminal responsibility for participation in mass events.

SECTION 1.2
REPRESSION AGAINST EMPLOYEES

Many university teachers are denied the opportunity to work in the sphere of education: their contracts are not renewed or they are openly fired. At the end of January, Daugarukou Kiril Andreevich, previously sentenced to 13 days in jail for "mentally supporting the protesters", was forced to quit his job as a physical training teacher at BSU.

On February 2, it became known that political firings were taking place at the Faculty of Law of BSU: aside from doctor of law and professor Julia Gauyilchanka, "according to the lists" doctor of law and professor Kiryl Tamasheuski, senior lecturer and associate professor Tatsiana Audzeeva, candidate of law sciences and associate professor Siarhei Pratasavitski were also fired.

On March 23, it became known that Albina Semianchuk, candidate of historical sciences

12 Article 369-1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Discreditation of the Republic of Belarus».

and associate professor of the Department of Belarusian Culture, was fired from GrSU for political reasons. Her contract was not renewed.

On February 18, a search was conducted in the house of a former lecturer of A. Kuliashou MSU, candidate of historical sciences Aliaksandr Aheieu, who had been previously fired for his civil position.

It is also known about repeated administrative or criminal detentions. Natalia Dulina, a lecturer at MSLU, has been detained four times. The most recent arrest became the subject of criminal charges. In addition to activism against state policy, in 2022 Dulina recorded a video in support of Ukraine, after which she received 15 days of administrative detention on March 2.

On April 27, Zmitser Zhuk, a lecturer in the Department of Economic Theory and Marketing at BSTU, was detained on his way to work.

On August 3rd, Halina Pataeva, former associate professor of the Faculty of Geography and Geoinformatics of BSU, was detained and on August 6, the same happened to an employee of BSUIR Viktoria Zhdanovich.

On October 28, an employee of the Ministry of Education Siarhei Navumchyk was forcibly detained in Minsk. In a video published in one of the pro-government Telegram channels he is accused of passing personal information about judges to the chat-bot of the "Black Book of Belarus" and leaving comments in chats calling for forceful resistance to the lawlessness of the authorities.

A number of teachers were convicted on political grounds. On March 25, another trial of a political prisoner, teacher of BNTU Tikhan Osipau, previously sentenced to 11 years of imprisonment, took place. He was tried right on the territory of Mahilioŭ colony No. 15, where Tikhan is serving his sentence. The political prisoner was accused of "malicious disobedience to demands of the administration of the penitentiary" (Pt. 2 of Art. 411[1] of the Criminal Code) and sentenced to another seven months in jail.

On June 7, sociologist Tatsiana Vadalazhskaia, coordinator of the "Flying University", was sentenced to 2.5 years of «chemistry» under Pt. 1 of Art. 342 of the Criminal Code and was released in the courtroom before the verdict came into force.

On October 27, former lecturer at BSU Sviatlana Vouchak was sentenced to 13 days of administrative arrest. It is known that Vouchak was repeatedly detained for participation in the 2020 protests and was fired from the university in September 2021.

1 Article 411 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Malicious disobedience to the requirements of the administration of a penal institution executing a sentence of imprisonment».

SECTION 1.3
OTHER CASES

Social media of independent student associations and their information products are recognised as 'extremist'. This means that distributing, producing, publishing, possessing and transporting any material posted in channels and chat rooms deemed "extremist" is considered an administrative offense.

On February 4, Telegram channels "Rupar BSMU" and "Shining to Others BSMU Chat" were declared extremist by the Prosecutor's Office of Maskouski District of Minsk.

On March 11, a Telegram channel "Solidarity BSTU" and the chat room "Football and volleyball in BSTU 97%" were declared extremist.

As of April 4, a Telegram channel of the independent student association BSEU|INITIATIVE was declared extremist.

SECTION 2

REPRESSION OF THE BELARUSIAN GOVERNMENT AGAINST ACADEMIA DUE TO RUSSIA'S MILITARY AGGRESSION

After Russia's full-scale invasion in Ukraine, students and teachers actively resisted military aggression and were subjected to various degrees of reprisals, from detention and administrative arrest to criminal prosecution and lengthy sentences.

On February 27, Pavel[1] went to the polling station to vote in the referendum with a Ukrainian flag on his shoulders. In the center of the polling station three police officers, one in uniform and two in plain clothes, stood at the entrance. The guy was not allowed into the polling station where he wanted to vote. In March, an administrative trial was held against Pavel for "unauthorized picketing" under Art. 24.23[2] of the Code of Administrative Offences. The court demanded information from the automated system "Passenger Traffic" about the student's departure from the country in order to conduct a trial over him in absentia. As a result, the guy was fined 80 basic units (2,650 rubles (appx. 990 Euros)). Later it became known that Pavel was expelled from the last year at the university.

During the protests against Russia's military aggression on February 27, Maria Sedyshova from Physico-Technical Faculty of GrSU, Artur Baran from BSEU (born in 2001), Daria Tsalkavikova from MSLU (born in 2001), Aliaksei Charkasau from BSU (born in 2000), Nelli Bagamolava from GrSU and Anna Sauchanka, fourth-year student of the Faculty of Interpreting and Translation of MSLU, were detained.

On February 27, Iryna Kuchalskaia, candidate of sciences and a lecturer at F. Skaryna GSU, was detained in Homiel for an anti-war picket. She received 15 days of arrest.

One of the pro-government Telegram channels published a video of Nikita Kardash, a student from Bierașcie. In the video he reads a text apologizing: "among his classmates" he said that Russian tanks "enter Ukraine from the side of Belarus" and that he himself was not ready to fight on Russia's side .

The daughters of the writer and teacher Anna Seviarynets, previously fired for her civil position, Yauhenia and Liubou Subat were expelled from the Faculty of Philology of BSU at the end of March for political reasons. The girls were detained on February 28 during an anti-war demonstration near Minsk railway station and sentenced to 15 days in jail each.

Student Danuta Piaredniaia was sentenced again to 6.5 years of imprisonment after her case was reviewed. In June she was put on the list of "individuals involved in terrorist activities".

On February 28, Piarednia was detained for making a repost in one of the Mahilioŭ chats

1 Pavel's last name is unknown.

2 Article 24.23 of the Code of Administrative Offences of the Republic of Belarus — «Violation of the procedure for organizing or holding mass events».

with a sharp critique of the actions of Vladimir Putin and Aliaksandr Lukashenka with regard to the war in Ukraine.

On March 3, BNTU student Nikita Antanievich was detained and sentenced to 15 days of administrative arrest by Minsk Central District Court for having photographed a woman with a poster "Stop the war" on October 1 on Kastrychnitskaia Square.

A student from Minsk was detained on October 13 on a criminal case for filming military equipment. The boy is going to be tried under Pt. 3 of Art. 361-1[3] and Pt. 1 of Art. 361-4[4] of the Criminal Code for sending to a Telegram channel a video of military equipment which was recognized as "extremist" by the Belarusian authorities.

On April 26, officers of GUBAZiK detained three girls, two of them students of MGASK. Pro-government channels claim it was for a TikTok video quoting Lukashenka about "where an attack on Belarus was being prepared from", as well as a video from a protest demonstration.

On August 26, Bierascie Regional Court sentenced Andrei Maslau, a freshman at a university in Minsk, who had been detained while attempting to cross the Belarusian-Ukrainian border to help Ukraine in its war with Russia. The young man was sentenced to 2.5 years of imprisonment in a penal colony under Pt. 1 of Art. 13[5] and Pt. 1 of Art. 361-3[6] of the Criminal Code, despite the fact that, according to him, he was not going to "take up arms". Maslau is included in the "list of extremists".

On August 31st, Aliaksandr Zahdai, 22-year-old student of BSAA and a political prisoner, was sentenced to 2.5 years of imprisonment for giving information to "unidentified individuals" about the movement of planes in Baranavičy. Bierascie Regional Court Judge Valiantsina Kunitskaia found him guilty of violating Pt. 1 of Art. 361-4 of the Criminal Code.

On October 26, 19-year-old student of BrSU Aliaksei Harokh was detained for drawing an explosion on the Crimean bridge [1] and insulting Lukashenka. As a result, the young man received a fine of 10 basic units (320 rubles (appx. 120 Euros)) and had his phone confiscated. However, he was convicted of distributing and possessing extremist materials and forwarding a photo with the logo of NEXTA (recognized as "extremist materials" and an "extremist formation").

3 Article 361-1 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Creation of an extremist formation or participation in it».
4 Article 361-4 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Facilitation of extremist activities».
5 Article 13 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Preparation for crime».
6 Article 361-3 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus – «Participation on the territory of a foreign state in an armed formation or armed conflict, military operations, recruitment or training of persons for such participation».

SECTION 3

OTHER CHARACTERISTICS OF THE STATE OF BELARUSIAN ACADEMIA

SECTION 3.1
NEGATIVE CASES

In the context of the coronavirus pandemic, the state massively recruited medical students from BSMU to fill the staff shortage. Interns of all specialties were invited to work in polyclinics, except for students of the 5th-6th year of medical faculty, future dentists and pharmacists of some courses. The Ministry of Health reported that students and interns were recruited to help doctors. So, more than 700 boys and girls help doctors in Minsk. Some students were offered to volunteer in polyclinics instead of classes, which then had to be repeated. Sixth-year students who have been recruited to work in dispensaries and polyclinics because of the growth of the coronavirus have been allowed to issue sick leaves. The respective order was signed by the head of the Ministry of Health, Dzmitry Pinevich.

To create a "crowd" at the polling stations during the referendum on amendments to the Constitution in February 2022, the administration of some Belarusian universities offered students some days off in exchange for participating in the early voting.

At VSMU female students complained en masse against one of the teachers. According to them, the man showed ambiguous signs of attention both in class and outside the classroom, which made the girls feel uncomfortable and even unsafe. During classes the teacher made intimate jokes "about the body, sexuality", compliments, hugs, phone calls outside school, asking about their personal life and invitations to meetings in cafes, home and to his cottage. The teacher has been fired.

The teachers fired "according to the list" described layoffs in higher education institutions and the effect they have on the quality of education. Teachers are forced to resign ‘at their own volition’ and in some cases they are called back to work, but already under contract.

From 2024, MIU will be closed [2]. In 2019, it became known that the university failed to pass accreditation in five specialties ("Law", "Economics and Business Management", "Information Technology Software", "Transport Logistics" and "Psychology"). There were more than 1,500 people studying in them, most of them students of other universities. The students then went on strike. Representatives of the Ministry of Education came to meet them. In March 2020, the university was re-inspected and again rejected "in some specialties". Meanwhile, this is not the first case of closure of a private university in Belarus. In 2012, the women's institute "Envila" was closed down.

The BSU will not provide education for students in “International Journalism” as of the academic year 2022/2023. There are only two specialties left at the Faculty of Journalism: "Journalism" and "Information and Communication", moreover, these specialties can only

be applied for on the budget basis. Siarhiei Kaspiarovich, head of the Main Department of Professional Education of the Ministry of Education, explained it by the fact that the state information policy now focuses on the development of state media. All applicants have the right to participate in the competition and enter on the state-paid form of study and, consequently, be assigned to any organization of the information sphere, first of all, a personnel commissioner. This means that students in these programmes will not be able to be assigned to non-state media.

On September 1st, tuition fees at BSUIR and BSEU rose by 10%, despite the fact that in April the head of the Main Department of Professional Education of the Ministry of Education Siarhiei Kaspiarovich claimed that information about the increase in tuition fees at universities "will be communicated to applicants with a certain time reserve before the admission campaign starts". Information has also appeared about an increase in tuition fees at BSMU. Following BSU, BSMU, BSUIR, MSLU and other universities, tuition fees were raised by the largest university in Belarus – BSU. On average, it will be 10% higher than the previous tuition fees at the faculty.

In addition to closing some specialties and raising tuition fees, the admission plan for Belarusian universities in 2022 will be reduced by 1.5% compared to the previous year.

Changes in a number of laws and documents significantly limit the rights and opportunities of students and sometimes directly violate them. In 2022, this has affected the right to postponement of military service, the recognition of diplomas from other countries and the conditions for expulsion.

On October 3rd, Lukashenka issued an order to "mobilize everyone" for agricultural work, including schoolchildren and students. In his opinion, the involvement of children and youth in such work has an important educational value.

On October 25, Belarus suspended the intergovernmental agreement with Poland on mutual recognition of equivalence of higher education diplomas, academic degrees and degrees in art. The corresponding decree was signed by Prime Minister Raman Halouchanka. The agreement had been in force since 2005. Nevertheless, a representative of the Polish government assured that Poland would continue recognizing Belarusian diplomas.

On October 12, the first reading of the draft law, which, among other things, reduces the grounds for postponing conscription of students into the army, was adopted. In particular, after the law enters into force, conscription postponement will be granted to "citizens who study abroad on a full-time basis only upon referral from republican state administration bodies or state organizations", Deputy Interior Minister Hennadii Kazakevich said. According to him, the purpose of such innovation is, among other things, "to increase the competitiveness of the national education". It is worth recalling that on August 11, 2019, a law "On changing the legislation on the effective functioning of the state military organization" was passed in the Republic of Belarus, which already significantly limits the rights of college students and graduates to continue their education. According to this law, it is possible to obtain a postponement from serving in the army in connection with

secondary special or higher education only once. At the same time, the Telegram channel "BNTU 97%" reports that students in their final years of at least two faculties (the Faculty of Marketing, Management, Entrepreneurship and the Sports and Technical Faculty) receive subpoenas to military recruitment centers after exams or in the process of assignment. If they refuse to accept subpoenas, they are threatened with an act of administrative offense.

In the latest version of the Education Code of the Republic of Belarus (from January, 14, 2022) in Art. 68, § 5.18.1 "Early termination of educational relations (expulsion) on the initiative of the educational institution" is written: "In case of failure to attend classes due to an administrative penalty in the form of administrative detention". Thus, a person receiving education can be expelled from the educational institution for the very fact of committing an administrative offense resulting in administrative detention.

SECTION 3.2
PROPAGANDA IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS

Having conducted an "in-depth study", the Prosecutor General's Office and the Ministry of Education discussed the possibility of introducing a new subject in universities, dedicated to the genocide of the Belarusian people during the Great Patriotic War.

On October 6, the Ministry of Education published a regulation “On Higher Education Institutions”, according to which the ideological education of the youth will henceforth be mandatory, a priority for higher education institutions. This task is set not only to the administrators of universities and faculties, but also to the university departments. At the same time, the implementation of this provision involves the creation of special "departments" in educational institutions that will perform the function of ideological education.

In addition to cases of planting propaganda in the educational process, representatives of state structures were also involved in the spreading of false information. On March 25, a meeting with propagandist Aliaksandr Shpakouski took place at BNTU. According to the students, Shpakovsky spoke about the advantages of the current Lukashenka regime, and also touched on the topic of Russia's war with Ukraine, saying that Ukraine was the first to start the aggression.

On September 1, Aliaksandr Lukashenka held an open history lesson for high school students and students at the Palace of Independence, which lasted four hours. During this time, the speaker, distorting facts, expressed his opinion about multiple events in Belarusian history, such as, the "real", in his opinion, causes of the war in Ukraine and the coronavirus pandemic. Lukashenka also made threats to one of the students who asked a question related to the 2020 protests. Denis Znak, first-year student of the Faculty of Biology at BSU, asked Lukashenka:

“After the events of 2020, the majority of the people in Belarus refuse, so to say, to listen to any pro-government information, pro-government, patriotic, and so on. In this regard, I have a question: what actions can we take to eliminate these circumstances?”

After the phrase “the majority of the people in Belarus”, his microphone was turned off. Nevertheless, Lukashenka heard the question and replied that 6.5 million people voted for him and “this cannot be falsified.” He called the student an oppositionist and, addressing him later, added:

“Keep in mind that the state is strong in its order. Do not break the law, as this will entail strict liability. Have you entered the Faculty of Biology? I will ask the rector how he was approving the exams”.

SECTION 4

REACTION OF THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNITY TO THE POLICY OF THE BELARUSIAN AUTHORITIES

SECTION 4.1
NEGATIVE PRACTICES

Tallinn University refused to accept students from Belarus in the new academic year, except for those who already have a residence permit in one of the EU countries, a long-term visa or refugee status. In addition to Tallinn University, three other Estonian higher education institutions made a similar decision concerning the admission of students: University of Tartu, Estonian Academy of Music and Theater, and Tallinn Technical University.

The Ministry of Education of the Czech Republic made a decision according to which several hundred Belarusian students studying technical specialties at Czech universities were forced to discontinue their studies or change their major. In their decision, Czech authorities refer to the sanctions of the European Union in response to Russia's war against Ukraine.

According to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic, now only those citizens of Belarus who have family members in the Czech Republic can enter the country (the country can also issue humanitarian visas to Belarusians). At the end of the summer, the Czech authorities decided to extend the ban on issuing visas to citizens of Belarus. Although the Czech Republic is ready to accept Belarusian students who have European scholarships, the problem of visa ban and the admission issues of Belarusian students have not been resolved.

Belarusian students faced difficulties in entering Czech universities, such as Czech Agricultural Technical University (ČZU) and Czech Technical University (ČVUT). There, the students were asked to sign documents stating that they do not recognize the administration of the occupied territories of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions (the so-called DPR and LPR, respectively) and oppose the joining of Belarus to Russia's aggression. It is known that such measures apply only to Belarusian and Russian students, students of other nationalities do not sign such documents. Applicants may be denied even after successfully completing all stages of admission. ČZU explains their refusal to Belarusian applicants as follows: "Students with citizenship of the Russian Federation and the Republic of Belarus cannot study in tactical fields due to sanctions based on EU Council resolutions (No. 833/2014, No. 692/2014, No. 2022/263 and No. 765/2006)".

ČZU blocked the student cards of those Belarusians and Russians who were already studying at the university, so that they could not get into the university building. Before that, there were cases, when students came to the university to inquire about the sanctions, but the doors were locked and they were not allowed in.

Students who entered other (non-prohibited) majors were forced to sign a paper promising not to attend classes on "tactical" (prohibited) subjects. However, there are also positive cases when universities expressed support for Belarusian students and allocated special scholarships for them.

BSA also recorded a case when a student with a Belarusian passport, who is already studying in another EU country, could not go to the Czech Republic under the ERASMUS+ student exchange program due to visa restrictions. This means that the bans apply even to Belarusians who are European Union residents.

SECTION 4.2
POSITIVE PRACTICES

The rector of the University of Vaasa (Vaasa, Finland) said that, according to the recommendation of the Ministry of Education and Culture of Finland, his educational institution has suspended cooperation and joint projects with Belarusian universities and scientific institutions, which should not affect the opportunities of students and scientists from Belarus to study and work at the university.

The University of Gdańsk and Adam Mickiewicz University have suspended cooperation with Belarusian universities and research centers. The official websites of both universities published news about the suspension of cooperation with Belarusian universities and research centers until the end of hostilities and the withdrawal of Russian troops from the territory of Ukraine. At the same time, universities provide support and assistance to those scientists and representatives of the Belarusian academic community who oppose the military aggression.

The World Bank, known for its participation in programs to modernize the education system, has decided not to continue its aid programs in Belarus due to the situation in Ukraine. However, the funding went on for some time and was completely suspended only in October.

The USA introduced visa restrictions for 17 Belarusians who are involved in the repression against workers and students. The names of the people who have been sanctioned have not been released. However, the press release states that the list includes representatives of the administrations of state-owned enterprises who "threatened, persecuted and participated in repression against striking workers," as well as university employees who "expelled students from universities for their participation in protests."

At the BFUG LXXX meeting held in Strasbourg on April 11 and 12, 2022, members of the BFUG decided to suspend the representation rights of Belarus in the European Higher Education Area due to Belarus's support of Russia’s military aggression against Ukraine. The suspension of representation rights actually means the exclusion of representatives from all processes (participation in meetings and conferences, work in working groups) while

maintaining a purely formal membership status. However, this decision should not affect the opportunities of Belarusian students to participate in academic exchange programs. The Minister of Education of Belarus stated that this decision did not affect higher education at all, because in this way Belarus managed to preserve its national education system, which meets the interests of the economy. In addition, according to his words, this will not affect the recognition of Belarusian students, because Belarusian diplomas are respected all over the world.

Nevertheless, it should be noted that even before the start of the full-scale war in Ukraine, participation in academic exchange programs was problematic. Belarusian universities set very complicated selection processes and created bureaucratic difficulties. If few students still managed to participate in the exchange, it was almost impossible for teachers. Cases of nepotism happened very often, when children of representatives of university administrations could go to European universities without much difficulty and obstacles.

At the 82nd Board Meeting of the European Students' Union, a Resolution on the inadmissibility of discrimination against students from Belarus was adopted. The document lists a number of appeals to European universities and institutions against existing restrictions and cases of discrimination against Belarusian students.

The European Commission adopted a new aid program for Belarus in the amount of 25 million euros. The new program is called "EU4Belarus: support for social sustainability and development of human capital" and is aimed at supporting the democratic aspirations of Belarus by helping its civil society, students, academic teachers and specialists. A significant part of the funds is allocated for students and teachers so that they can have access to quality education, apply for professional exchanges, research scholarships and grants.

SECTION 4.3
PROBLEMS OF EXISTING SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAMS

The situation with scholarship programs to support repressed Belarusian students deserves special attention. BSA expresses its gratitude for the solidarity with the Belarusian students, but we consider it necessary to outline the difficulties and problems associated with these programs, which affect students directly.

The economic crisis caused by COVID-19 and Russia's invasion of Ukraine have negatively affected the citizens of Europe. Students forced to leave their country due to criminal prosecution are in an even worse situation. Delays in the scholarship payments are unacceptable, because for many students these scholarships are the only source of income and means of survival. The critical financial situation of students affects their ability to cover their basic needs, which hinders them from fulfilling their potential and negatively affects motivation in studies.

In 2022, the second recruitment for the EU4Belarus scholarship was announced. It should

be noted that the problems with the scholarship payments, which took place in the recruitment campaign of 2021, have not been resolved. Most students received scholarships with a several months' delay, in December. Some students of the second recruitment in Poland have not received scholarships until now (February 13, 2023), because the contract between CPMA and NAWA has not yet been signed. These delays take place due to changes in the contract on the side of CPMA with the Executive Committees regarding the GDPR.

Payment delays are also present in the Kalinowski Program framework. In addition, students who were accepted to the program in 2022 received a letter [3] informing them that they are not guaranteed a scholarship after completing language courses due to a lack of funding. In addition, there are no guarantees that studying at Polish universities will be free of charge for students of the program.

Applicants to the German program Students at Risk Hilde Domin were rejected due to being in Europe (not in a "country of risk"). Given that the selection process takes a long time, students are subjecting themselves to danger by staying in the country longer. Sometimes students are forced to leave the country spontaneously for security reasons, when securing education opportunities is not a priority. Although staying in the European Union provides physical security, there are only few support programs for such repressed students. The option to continue education at a European university through obtaining refugee status takes a long time due to long administrative processes and becomes available only after two years. Therefore, the problem of obtaining higher education in any EU country is there and has not been solved at the moment.

CONCLUSIONS

The state authorities of Belarus continue avenging the people for actively showing their opposition to the regime in 2020. Students as well as teachers receive verdicts in administrative and criminal cases for events that took place two years ago. Forcibly filmed videos, when the detainee appears to confess to the committed offenses (so-called "repentance videos") have become very popular among GUBAZiK structures. BSA has noticed a trend of tougher punishments: the Belarusian court initiates more criminal cases than before.
In addition to politically motivated arrests and sentences for the events of 2020, there were also recorded cases of repression in connection with the referendum held on February 27, 2022. Preventive talks, coercion to early voting - Belarusian students faced more pressure than in previous years.

The Russian Federation's military aggression against Ukraine directly affected the Belarusian community. An active and sympathetic society within the country came under pressure from the state and security forces for pickets and informational support for Ukraine. Belarusian students were not left out of the military conflict between the two neighboring countries, which led to repression, ranging from fines to criminal prosecutions.

The Belarusian authorities, led by Aliaksandr Lukashenka, have supported Vladimir Putin and Russia's aggression against Ukraine since the beginning of the war. This contributed to the increase of sanctions against Belarus. In the context of the Belarusian academic community, some international actors and stakeholders have started to see the Belarusian state structures and the Belarusian people as one, which led to a certain discrimination of Belarusian students and applicants abroad.

A number of foreign universities and institutes have unilaterally suspended support or cooperation with Belarusian state structures, scientific and educational institutions. Cooperation with the universities of Western countries has also decreased due to the termination of the representation of Belarus in the Bologna process.

As a result of two years of state repression, carried out by security forces and university administrations, of the degradation of the structure and system of education and the termination of external relations, there is a shortage of applicants for many majors in Belarusian universities. Chiefly, there are not enough applications to military specialties (Military Academy), to some specialties at the faculties of physics, political science, theology and Belarusian philology (BSU). Also, many specialties at BSUIR, BNTU and BSATU remained unpopular among the applicants. In 2022, the "Public order police" specialty at the faculty of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (AMIA) was especially undemanded: 56 applications for 145 places.

In 2022, around 27,700 people were planned to be accepted to Belarusian higher education institutions on the budget basis, nevertheless, less than 27,000 applicants became students. As for fee-based places, it was planned to accept more than 25,000 students, but in the end there were fewer than 21,000. The Ministry of Education believes the university enrollment

campaign this year to be more successful than in 2021, i.e. the admission numbers for both budget- and fee-based places are higher.

According to the Ministry of Education, Belarusian universities lacked 6,000 students in 2021: they planned to recruit 55,000 freshmen, but were able to admit only 48,000. In 2020, 58,300 students entered universities and the shortage was 192 people, in 2019 - 86.

In 2022, more than 500 budget-based places in universities remained free. The main reason is the mass migration of young people abroad, their unwillingness to study in Belarusian universities and tie their future with Belarus. For comparison, 11,000 Belarusian students study in Poland alone. At EHU in 2022, 90% of all applicants were Belarusians.

To summarize the general state of the Belarusian academic community for 2022, it is noticeable that the situation with academic freedoms in Belarusian universities is deteriorating. The Ministry of Education strives to deepen the ideological education of the youth through relevant laws and regulations, in order to cultivate the "correct" set of state ideas in the minds of young people.

RECOMMENDATIONS

BSA would like to thank the European Commission, the Central Project Management Agency, the Education Office for New Belarus, the Educational Exchanges Support Foundation of the Republic of Lithuania, Latvian State Education Development Agency, the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange, the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research, the Norwegian Program Students at Risk and the German Hilde Domin program and European Universities for scholarship support for repressed students in exile, as well as the European Student Union, national student unions and other partners for expressing solidarity with Belarusian students and support in cases of discrimination against Belarusian students.

However, taking into account all the facts of persecution in higher education, facts of discrimination against Belarusian students, as well as the problems of existing scholarship programs to support Belarusian students, BSA:

- calls upon national student unions to continue to monitor the situation with discrimination of Belarusian students in the respective countries and to advocate for the student rights of Belarusian students together with the relevant universities;

- reiterates that all stakeholders, including the European Commission, the Central Project Management Agency, the Education Office for New Belarus, the Educational Exchanges Support Foundation of the Republic of Lithuania, Latvian State Education Development Agency, the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange, the Czech National Agency for International Education and Research, should immediately take action to make the promised payments in the shortest possible time and take measures to prevent delays in the payment of scholarships in the future, namely, make changes and conclude contracts before the beginning of the academic year so that students could receive the scholarships with the first month of studies;

- calls upon the German program Students at Risk Hilde Domin to review the conditions for accepting repressed students into the program;

- calls upon the higher education institutions of the Czech Republic and Estonia to provide Belarusian students with the right to education without discrimination, that is, to allow them to enter universities and continue their studies in safe countries;

- calls upon the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Czech Republic not to interfere with the process of issuing visas for Belarusians and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Czech Republic and Estonia to resume issuing visas for Belarusians;

- considers all contacts of international actors with the representatives of Belarusian authorities inacceptable, as it was done by of the Ambassador of Switzerland to Belarus, Christina Honegger-Zalatukhin, when she held a meeting to discuss cooperation

opportunities and community projects with the administration of MSLU, which actively repressed students;

- calls upon the European Commission to increase funding of support systems for students fleeing persecution, including funding of existing national support programs (Kalinowski Program in Poland);

- calls upon the European Commission to consider the possibility of creating the Students at Risk program on the EU level;

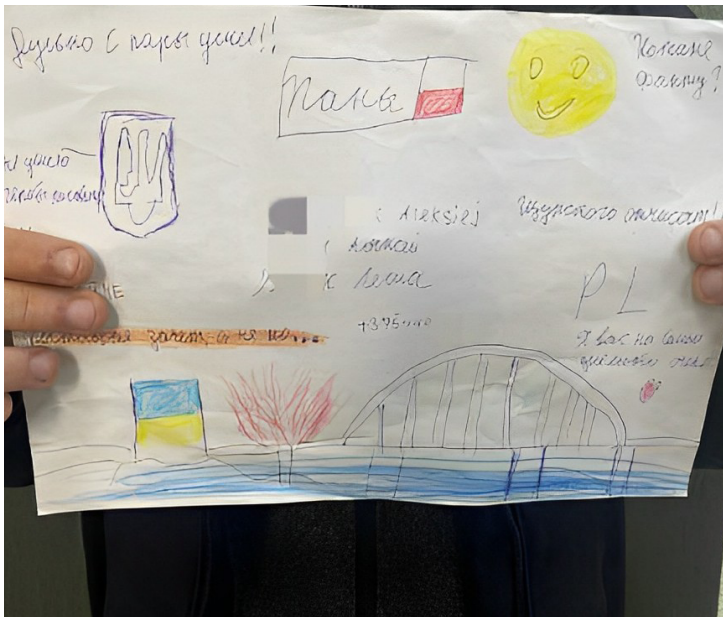
- calls upon the European Union member states to consider facilitating the process of obtaining fast humanitarian visas for repressed Belarusians, including fast visas for former political prisoners and members of their families.

ABBREVIATIONS

AMAP – Special Purpose Police Detachment
BSAA – Belarusian State Academy of Aviation
BSATU – Belarusian State Agrarian Technical University
BSMU – Belarusian State Medical University
BSPU – Belarusian State Pedagogical University
BSTU – Belarusian State Technological University
BSUIR – Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radioelectronics
BSU – Belarusian State University
BSEU – Belarusian State Economic University
BIP – University of Law and Social Information Technologies
BNTU – Belarusian National Technical University
BrSTU – Brest State Technical University
BrSU – Brest State University
VSMU – Vitebsk State Medical University
F. Skaryna GSU – Homiel State University named after Francisk Skaryna
GrSMU – Hrodna State Medical University
GrSU – Hrodna State University
GUBAZiK – The Main Directorate for Combating Organized Crime and Corruption of the Ministry of Internal Affairs (MVD) of the Republic of Belarus
EHU – European Humanities University
MGASK – Minsk State College of Architecture and Civil Engineering
MSLU – Minsk State Linguistic University
A.A. Kuliashou MSU – Mahilioŭ State University named after Arkadzii Kuliashou
PSU – Polotsk State University
MIU – Minsk Innovation University
BFUG (Bologna Follow-up Group) – Bologna audit group
CPMA – Central Project Management Agency
GDPR (General Data Protection Regulation) – General Data Protection Regulation
NAWA (Polish: Narodowa Agencja Wymiany Akademickiej) – the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange

APPENDICES

1. The picture that served as the basis for the detention of Aliaksei Harokh



2. Notification letter about the termination of work of MIU from 2024

«МІНСКІ ІНАВАЦЫЙНЫ УНІВЕРСІТЭТ»
вул. Сергея Лазо, д. 12, 220102, г. Мінск
тэл. +375 (17) 351 26 27, факс +375 (17) 373 69 98
miu@miu.by, www.miu.by
Р/р BY30ALFA30152185750060270000
у ЗАТ «Альфа-Банк», БІК ALFABY2X

«МИНСКИЙ ИННОВАЦИОННЫЙ УНИВЕРСИТЕТ»
ул. Сергея Лазо, д. 12, 220102, г. Минск
тел. +375 (17) 35126 27, факс +375 (17) 373 69 98
miu@miu.by, www.miu.by
Р/с BY30ALFA30152185750060270000
в ЗАО «Альфа-Банк», БИК ALFABY2X

2022 № _____
На № _____ ад _____

СПРАВКА

Настоящая выдана в том, что в соответствии с приказом ректора от _____ года рождения, представлен академический отпуск с _____ для прохождения военной службы.

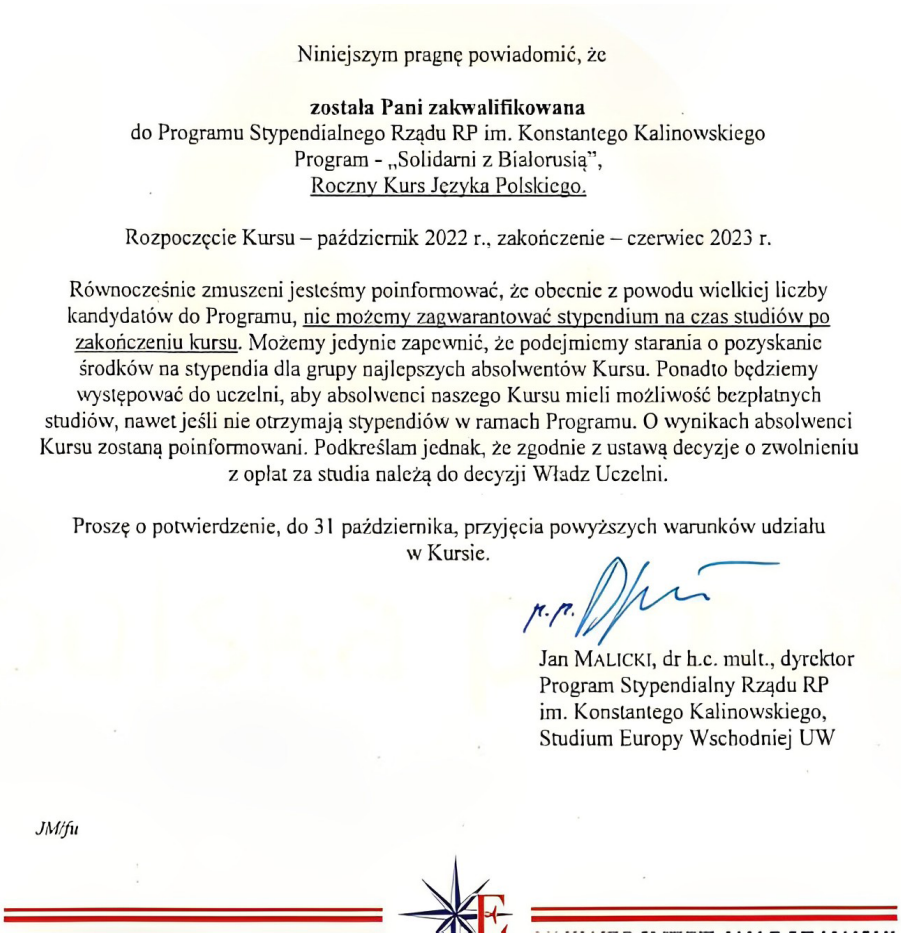
В связи с планируемым в 2024 году прекращением образовательной деятельности, руководство университета просит рассмотреть возможность о выходе из академического отпуска _____ с целью его участия в весенней лабораторно-экзаменационной сессии, которая состоится в период с 06.06.2022г. по 18.06.2022г. по адресу г.Минск, ул. Лазо 12.

Участие _____ в сессии и прохождение им текущей аттестации позволит УО «Минский инновационный университет» организовать перевод студента в другое высшее учебное заведение Республики Беларусь для продолжения обучения по избранной специальности.

Справка дана для представления в войсковую часть _____ отдельный полк _____

Проректор по учебной работе и
декан факультета коммуникаций,
экономики и права В.А.Хмельницкий

3. Letter, notifying that there is no guarantee of a scholarships in the Kalinowski Program



Niniejszym pragnę powiadomić, że

została Pani zakwalifikowana
do Programu Stypendialnego Rządu RP im. Konstantego Kalinowskiego
Program - „Solidarni z Białorusią",
Roczny Kurs Języka Polskiego.

Rozpoczęcie Kursu – październik 2022 r., zakończenie – czerwiec 2023 r.

Równocześnie zmuszeni jesteśmy poinformować, że obecnie z powodu wielkiej liczby kandydatów do Programu, nie możemy zagwarantować stypendium na czas studiów po zakończeniu kursu. Możemy jedynie zapewnić, że podejmiemy starania o pozyskanie środków na stypendia dla grupy najlepszych absolwentów Kursu. Ponadto będziemy występować do uczelni, aby absolwenci naszego Kursu mieli możliwość bezpłatnych studiów, nawet jeśli nie otrzymają stypendiów w ramach Programu. O wynikach absolwenci Kursu zostaną poinformowani. Podkreślam jednak, że zgodnie z ustawą decyzje o zwolnieniu z opłat za studia należą do decyzji Władz Uczelni.

Proszę o potwierdzenie, do 31 października, przyjęcia powyższych warunków udziału w Kursie.

p.p.

Jan MALICKI, dr h.c. mult., dyrektor
Program Stypendialny Rządu RP
im. Konstantego Kalinowskiego,
Studium Europy Wschodniej UW

JM/fu

Translation: «I would like to inform you that you have been accepted to the Konstantin Kalinowski Scholarship Program of the Government of the Republic of Poland for a one-year Polish language course. Course start – October 2022, end – June 2023.

At the same time, I have to inform you that due to the large number of candidates for the Program, we cannot guarantee a scholarship for further studies after completing the course. We can only assure you that we will try to find funds for a group of the best graduates of the course. Moreover, we will negotiate with educational institutions so that the graduates of the course have the opportunity to study for free, even if they do not receive a scholarship within the Program. Graduates will be informed about the results. I emphasize that, in accordance with the law, decisions on exemption from tuition fees are made by university administrations.

Please confirm by October 31 that you accept the conditions for participation in the course».