

National Human Rights Index

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2022

Right to Education:

Expert Commentary

The score: 4.1

Including scores by component:

- Preschool and primary education 4.8
- Secondary education 3.9
- Technical and vocational education 5.0
- Higher education 4.6
- Educational opportunities and academic freedom 2.2

The main challenges in the field of the right to education are highlighted in the 2019-2020 comments. Assessing the state of the right to education in 2022, the Index experts gave lower scores than in 2021.

• **Preschool and primary education**

In 2022, there were problems with maintaining a sufficient number of existing educational institutions provided with professional teaching staff. Experts noted that the number of preschool education institutions decreased by 58.¹ Moreover, there remained only 14 privately owned institutions throughout the country. Experts attribute this reduction to the introduction of a licensing procedure for preschool and school education.² Based on the comments of state bodies on this change, its main goal is to establish increased control over educational activities as related to "the formation of a healthy, ideologically stable and diversely developed personality" as well as to protect "state and public interests, rights and legitimate interests of citizens."³ It is noteworthy that the Minister of Education, explaining the existence of only a small number of private institutions, noted their unwillingness to

¹ https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial_statistika/infografika-obrazovanie-22-23.pdf

² Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 213-3 "On Licensing":
<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12200213&p1=1>

³ <https://president.gov.by/ru/events/aleksandr-lukashenko-podpisal-zakon-o-licenzirovanii>;
<https://edu.gov.by/about-ministry/press-tsentr/mess/informatsiya-o-litsenzirovanii-obrazovatelnoy-deyatelnosti/index.php>



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undergo the licensing procedure and subordinate their activities to the established standards.⁴

The new edition of the Education Code allows for preschool education at home.⁵ Experts point out that from a formal point of view, this change is positive, aimed at ensuring preschool education for all. On the other hand, experts express concerns that the introduction of home-based education may be an attempt to get rid of the obligation to provide a sufficient number of institutions and a way to provide an alternative to preschool institutions in the face of a constant decrease in their number.

Amendments to the Education Code also optimized the types of preschool institutions: instead of the previous 6, there are 3 of them - a kindergarten, a sanatorium kindergarten, a preschool child development center.⁶

In 2022, there was a shortage of teachers in preschool institutions⁷, the reasons for which, according to experts, are the low level of wages, as well as repression and subsequent mass layoffs and the outflow of people from the country.

The reduction in the number of institutions, mainly due to the low number of classrooms, leads to the problem of unreasonable geographical distance. The issue of walking distance to preschool education was also noted by the Minister of Education, pointing out that the problem remains relevant, due to the dynamic development of certain districts of the city of Minsk, as well as the aging of other areas where the infrastructure is more developed.⁸ Moreover, experts note that this problem cannot be solved by access to modern technologies - online education, in accordance with the Education Code, does not apply to preschool and school education.

Experts note the deterioration in the provision of pre-school and primary education for all without discrimination, including the most vulnerable groups. Thus, despite the demand from society for the creation of institutions for national minorities, as well as for education in the Belarusian language, state bodies continue to ignore it.

In 2022, the Ministry of Education's Decree No. 228 of August 4, 2022 approved a new standard for preschool education, which made it even less flexible and unable to adapt to the needs of changing societies. In accordance with it, the main components of the process of education are: ideological, civil

⁴<https://www.belta.by/society/view/ivanets-o-reshenii-voprosa-shagovoj-dostupnosti-detskikh-sadov-484458-2022/>

⁵Law No. 154-3 On Amendments to the Education Code of the Republic of Belarus:
<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12200154&p1=1>

⁶Law No. 154-3 On Amendments to the Education Code of the Republic of Belarus:
<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12200154&p1=1>

⁷ <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/15289.html?c;>
https://www.tvr.by/news/obshchestvo/kak_v_minske_budut_reshat_problemu_nekhvatki_uchiteley_i_vospitateley/

⁸ <https://www.belta.by/society/view/ivanets-o-reshenii-voprosa-shagovoj-dostupnosti-detskikh-sadov-484458-2022/>



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and patriotic, spiritual, moral, aesthetic education; formation of healthy lifestyle skills; labor and vocational education; multicultural and economic education, etc. The standard also establishes a list of skills and knowledge that a child must master by the age of 7, and lists the requirements for the organization of the educational process to achieve the appropriate result.⁹

In 2022, the practice of ideological and patriotic education has also spread to preschool education institutions. Thus, ceremonial lines began to be held on a regular basis with mandatory listening to the national anthem, raising (carrying) the national flag on public holidays and holidays in Belarus (National Unity Day, Day of Defenders of the Fatherland and the Armed Forces, Constitution Day, Victory Day, Labor Day, Day of the State Emblem and the State Flag, Independence Day).¹⁰ The implementation of "patriotic education" takes unacceptable forms, as in the case of the play on the eve of May 9, where preschoolers in appropriate outfits played the roles of wounded soldiers or prisoners of concentration camps.¹¹ Moreover, in 2022, law enforcement agencies began to be involved in ideological and patriotic education. In different regions of the country, prosecutors gave lectures to children on patriotism, war and genocide.¹²

- **Secondary education**

Experts note a serious deterioration in the provision of general secondary education.

The number of operating educational institutions of general secondary education in 2022 decreased significantly. For example, in 2022, there was a mass closure of private schools.¹³ As a result, more than 90% of private school students have transferred to public educational institutions.¹⁴ In addition, at the beginning of 2022, lyceums No. 1 and No. 2 of the city of Minsk announced the cessation of enrolling new students and preparations for closure.¹⁵ According to official statistics, the number of secondary education institutions as a whole decreased by 67, including due to the closure of rural schools. Moreover, the law introducing the licensing of school education has only created additional obstacles to the opening of new educational institutions.¹⁶

⁹ Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 228 "On Approval of the Educational Standard of Preschool Education": <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22238596p&p1=1>

¹⁰ Order of the Minister of Education No. 368 "On Improving the Work on Patriotic Education"

¹¹ https://t.me/bobruisk_online/5575

¹² <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/25270.html?c>

¹³ <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/24247.html>

¹⁴ <https://t.me/MinobrofBelarus/17070>

¹⁵ <https://sputnik.by/20220203/ischem-novuyu-rabotu-pedagogi--o-zakrytii-litseev-v-minske-1060030641.html>

¹⁶ <https://president.gov.by/ru/events/aleksandr-lukashenko-podpisal-zakon-o-licenzirovanii>; Law No. 213-3 "On Licensing": <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12200213&p1=1>



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Low wages¹⁷, as well as incessant repressions¹⁸, according to experts, continue to have a negative impact on the provision of educational institutions with professional teaching staff.

In addition, military-patriotic lessons and lessons on family education, which have become an integral part of the educational process, are conducted by persons who do not have a pedagogical education: representatives of security and law enforcement agencies, civil servants and religious figures.

According to experts, the increase in ideologization in schools and the pressure exerted on teachers in this regard affects the level of their professionalism, forcing them to transmit ideas that have nothing to do with the principles of pedagogy.

Experts point to a number of positive developments in terms of access to secondary education for all, especially for the most vulnerable groups, without any discrimination and regardless of the student's abilities or abilities. Thus, in the new edition of the Code on Education, it became possible to combine education at home and in institutions of general secondary education in the presence of medical indications. Moreover, the principle of inclusion was enshrined in the Code as one of the basic principles of education.¹⁹ In 2022, a new list of medical indications was determined for which students are exempt from final exams after the 9th grade²⁰, as well as a list of diseases that are medical grounds for exempting students from studying certain subjects²¹.

At the same time, experts note that despite the formal consolidation of the principle of inclusion, practical tools for its implementation are not being created. For example, the provision that limited the number of students with special needs was excluded from the Education Code - previously they could

¹⁷ The salary of a teacher varies from school to school, but the minimum is 481 BYN. A salary of 1000 BYN or more is rare and often available to specialists with special skills: working with children with special needs of psychophysical development, knowledge of the Lithuanian language, etc.:

<https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/15289.html?c;>

https://www.tvr.by/news/obshchestvo/kak_v_minske_budut_reshat_problemu_nekhvatki_uchiteley_i_vospitateley/

¹⁸ For example, at the end of October 2022, the Honest Grodno [telegram channel reported](#), that the KGB had allegedly sent lists of teachers who had signed for alternative candidates in the elections in 2020 to the city school No. 18. Later it turned out that the teachers were being "prevented" - forced to sign memos of familiarization with administrative and criminal liability "for violation of legislation". They cite articles for which Belarusians have been arrested for political reasons since 2020: <https://ru.hrodna.life/2022/12/04/profilaktika-shkoly/>

¹⁹ Law No. 154-3 On Amendments to the Education Code of the Republic of Belarus:

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12200154&p1=1>

²⁰ Resolution of the Ministry of Health No. 51 "On Determining the List of Diseases That Are Medical Grounds for Exemption of Students from Final Tests":

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22238414&p1=1&p5=0>

²¹ Decision No. 76 of the Ministry of Health on the List of Diseases That Are Medical Grounds for Exempting Pupils from Studying Certain Academic Subjects:

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22238561&p1=1&p5=0>



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be no more than 20% of the total number of children, but they did not provide for the rate of an assistant teacher. As a result, the teacher, who is forced to provide assistance to children with special needs in addition to the learning process, cannot perform his professional duties qualitatively.

Obtaining general secondary education in the Belarusian language, as before, remained inaccessible. In 2022, experts say, attempts to defend a child's ability to study in Belarusian have become not only difficult, but also unsafe. In addition, experts note that the reduction in the number of institutions of general secondary education, mainly due to the closure of rural schools, which are predominantly Belarusian-speaking, forced students of such schools to move to the nearest city schools with Russian as the language of instruction.

In the context of repression, the number of children who were forced to leave the country with their parents and did not have the opportunity to graduate from school and receive a diploma remotely continued to grow.

Experts point out that despite the introduction of a norm on compulsory general secondary education in the Education Code, statistically the coverage of general secondary education has decreased.

In 2022, the Program for International Student Assessment (PISA), which is being developed taking into account the latest achievements in psychology and pedagogy, refused to cooperate with Belarus.²² The cancellation of PISA was another example of the exclusion of Belarus from international communication and led to the restriction of access of Belarusian teachers to world-class achievements and experts. The National Institute of Education, together with Russian specialists, has developed its own alternative assessment scale. Experts note that this scale is completely borrowed from Russia and has nothing to do with international standards.

At the same time, the form and content of secondary education, including curricula and teaching methods, continued to become less adequate and of poor quality.

Thus, the ideologization of school education has become even more intensive. Moreover, against the backdrop of the war in Ukraine, militarization has also been added to it. Teachers, school administrators, as well as visiting government officials, continued to persuade children that minors could not have an opinion, especially about politics.²³ For opinions about the president, the state and politics in general, contrary to the state ideology, and for their public expression, children faced insults and threats.

In 2022, special attention was paid to military-patriotic education.²⁴ The Order of the Minister of Education No. 368 "On Improving the Work on Patriotic Education", which introduces the need to hold solemn ceremonies on a permanent basis with the mandatory listening to the national anthem, raising (carrying) the national flag on public holidays and holidays in Belarus, affected not only preschool

²²<https://euroradio.fm/ru/ostayotsya-varitsya-v-svoyom-soku-pisa-otkazalas-ocenivat-uroven-obrazovaniya>

²³ Learn more: Analytical Report on Violations of Certain Rights of the Child, BHC: "Children's rights in Belarus"

²⁴ Learn more: Analytical Report on Violations of Certain Rights of the Child, BHC: "Children's rights in Belarus"



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institutions, but also institutions of general secondary education. In institutions of general secondary education, the performance of the national anthem, the raising (removal) of the national flag on the territory of the educational institution before the beginning and at the end of each quarter, during the ceremony of handing over educational documents. In addition, it was decided to re-format the sixth school day, intended for electives, in order to strengthen the patriotic education of young people.²⁵

In 2022, children were forced to participate in public events organized by the school administration, directly or indirectly demonstrating support for the policies pursued by the country's leadership, as well as for the Russian military aggression against Ukraine. Any such event was accompanied by photographs with the official state symbols: the flag, the coat of arms, the performance of the anthem and a "pro-government" speech. The activities were carried out to the detriment of the educational process during school hours without the knowledge and consent of the parents, and participation in them was not voluntary. Moreover, representatives of law enforcement and law enforcement agencies, as well as religious figures, were actively involved in the educational process. In 2022, activities to familiarize students with the specifics of the functioning of the criminal justice system became an integral part of the ideological education of schoolchildren. Schoolchildren were given "excursions" to departments of internal affairs, correctional institutions²⁶, as well as to the trials of their peers. The practice of public detention of teenagers continued.²⁷

In 2022, with the beginning of the Russian invasion of Ukraine, a militaristic narrative appeared in a large concentration in patriotic education. In addition to the special role of the memory of the Great Patriotic War, attention began to be paid to the narrative of the "Western world" as an enemy and a constant military threat, and "our world" (together with Russia) as the only possible counterweight. Military-patriotic camps were actively functioning, where children got acquainted with the life of soldiers, participated in military-sports events, learned drill training and handling weapons. During the year, excursions to military units, meetings with participants in the war in Afghanistan, screenings of films about the war, drill training, "lessons of courage" with military personnel, lessons of patriotism in the shooting range, etc., were held.

Based on the official materials for a single information hour dedicated to the events in Ukraine, which were published on the website of the National Educational Portal, schoolchildren were convinced of the peaceful nature of Belarus' actions, and also called Russia's attack on Ukraine a "special military operation", avoiding the concepts of "war" and "armed conflict". In order to understand where to get the right information, the students were advised to turn to the statements of the pro-government historian and political scientist V. Gigin, who suggests trusting the state newspaper "SB. Belarus Today" as a source with verified and accurate information, and not to trust "Western sources" conducting a

²⁵ <https://sputnik.by/20220408/shestoy-shkolnyy-den-pereformatiruyut--na-patrioticheskoe-vospitanie-1061928225.html>

²⁶ <https://brest.mvd.gov.by/ru/news/7978>

²⁷ https://vk.com/club149477314?w=wall-149477314_10818 ; <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/7867.html?tg>, <https://gomeL.mvd.gov.by/ru/news/6918>



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"disinformation campaign" and an "information and psychological operation".

Experts note that the new standard curricula for general secondary education institutions were coordinated with the security and law enforcement agencies: The Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Emergency Situations, the Investigative Committee, the State Border Committee and even the State Committee for Forensic Examinations, as well as the Ministry of Culture and the Ministry of Sports.²⁸

In 2022, the Ministry of Education decided to "tightly control and coordinate" the work on family education in schools. It was announced about the development of six electives on family values, which are "based on the traditional culture, traditional values of the Belarusian people" in order to prevent "alien European values from seeping into the minds of Belarusian youth."²⁹ On the basis of more than 90 schools and colleges, projects began to be implemented for the spiritual, moral and family education of students "using the potential of Orthodox traditions and values."³⁰ The strengthening of gender stereotypes (rather than the fight against them, as Belarus's international obligations imply) continued within the framework of the School of Active Citizen.³¹

Experts, drawing attention to the closure of lyceums that provide more advanced training programs, point to a trend towards a decrease in the quality of education.

Among the positive changes in the forms and methods of education, experts note the development of new methodological guidelines, according to which pre-profile training returns from the 8th grade, allowing students to make a more informed choice of profile.

According to experts, secondary education has become even less flexible, able to adapt to the needs of changing societies and communities and the corresponding needs of students within their different socio-cultural norms.

Thus, the closure of schools for national minorities continued, and in the remaining Lithuanian and Polish schools, instruction in national languages was canceled.³² Experts once again note the increasing

²⁸ Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 120 "On Standard Curricula of General Secondary Education":

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22238127p&p1=1&p5=0>

²⁹ <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/21324.html?c>

³⁰ <https://edu.gov.by/news/prioritetnaya-zadacha--obedinit-intellektualnye-i-dukhovnye-sily-v-voprosakh-vospitaniya-podrastayushch/>

³¹ At one of the events, the deputy said that "after the service, boys will become even better, more courageous, more purposeful, and those who do not go to serve will be weak, "with hands like pianists" and will not be able to protect their woman from "an Asian attacker." The MP spoke about the West, which "imposes its policy and same-sex marriages on us," and advised girls to "think about motherhood"
<https://news.zerkalo.io/life/25122.html>

³² <https://www.delfi.lt/ru/news/live/minsk-ukazal-vesti-obuchenie-v-litovskih-shkolah-tolko-na-russkom-i-beloruskom-yazykah-90049875>; <https://www.rp.pl/polityka/art36032201-bialorus-bedzie-rusyfikacja-polskich-szkol>



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discrimination on the basis of language against Belarusian-speaking children.

In 2022, the Ministry of Education required each school to choose its own "uniform piece of school clothing" for all students to wear.

- **Technical and vocational education**

Experts note that in September 2022, a unified system of colleges was introduced, which can provide both vocational and technical education (TVET) and secondary specialized education (SSE). At the same time, despite this harmonization, the total number of institutions has remained unchanged.

According to experts, in 2022, a number of positive measures were taken to ensure the general availability of TVET and SSE. The Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 497 "On Vocational Education" amended the procedure for admission and enrollment of persons for TVET.³³ From 2022, the following citizens have the right to receive TVET: citizens of Belarus, regardless of their place of residence; foreign citizens and stateless persons permanently residing in Belarus; foreign citizens and stateless persons who have been granted refugee status or asylum in Belarus.

For orphans and persons with special needs of psychophysical development who received TVET, employment was introduced at the expense of reservation, announced as a tool to support socially vulnerable groups of the population. Experts, at the same time, point out that practical conditions for the effective operation of such a norm are not created.

From 2022, TVET students who have become winners of professional skills competitions can receive higher education on preferential terms, and students of SSE educational institutions can receive higher education in a reduced time.

Experts point to the norm introduced into the Education Code, which contributes to the intra-state network form of education.³⁴ This norm provides for the creation of competence centers, on the basis of which students with similar specialties can acquire new skills, including the ability to use modern equipment. Experts note this change as positive from the point of view of the quality of TVET and SSE, since it is aimed at acquiring new knowledge and skills, and professional development.

In 2022, a new classifier of occupations was also adopted, which is said to be aligned with the "current classifier of economic activities". Experts note that in reality, this relevance is dictated by a distorted labor market, but not by global trends in the relevant area.

According to experts, reducing the period for obtaining TVET to 6-12 months instead of the previous 1-2 years is a way to increase the demand for such institutions, but also harms the quality of the sector as a whole.

Among the most negative changes affecting the quality of TVET, experts note the suspension of

³³ Resolution of the Council of Ministers No. 497 "On Vocational Education":

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=C22200497&p1=1&p5=0>

³⁴ Law No. 154-3 On Amendments to the Education Code of the Republic of Belarus:

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12200154&p1=1>



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Belarus' membership in WorldSkills International due to the support of the Belarusian government for Russian aggression against Ukraine. "WorldSkills", as a vocational competition, was an important indicator of quality, by which it was possible to determine the compliance of Belarusian TVET with international standards.

Experts point out that the scope of adult retraining has remained unchanged, despite the possibility of making appropriate changes to the Education Code.

- **Higher education**

Despite the fact that the number of operating higher education institutions has remained unchanged, experts note a deterioration in terms of providing such institutions with professional teaching staff. The relentless political repression is expressed, inter alia, in the forced dismissal of qualified personnel.³⁵ Often, as a result of pressures, including the creation of discriminatory conditions, qualified personnel are forced to make a decision to resign. Moreover, experts draw attention to the lack of an opportunity to assess the mass nature of this phenomenon, since teachers who have faced repression are not always ready to disclose information about it, fearing political persecution. Nevertheless, it is known that since 2020, at least 100 people have been dismissed for political reasons.

In 2022, conditions were created for the formalization of discrimination on the basis of political views in university admissions. Thus, the amendments to the Education Code provided for a new procedure for the admission campaign, according to which school graduates take two centralized exams, one internal exam at the university and provide a personal reference from the pedagogical council of the school.³⁶ According to the Minister of Education, such a characteristic is necessary for universities to better understand the profile of applicants, and will include information not only about a person's abilities, hobbies and interests, labor activity, but also about work in public associations and participation "in patriotic events."³⁷ Experts believe that such a characteristic will be taken into account during admission and will become the basis for discrimination against persons who are disloyal to the regime.

Despite the demand for higher education in Belarusian, there is still no opportunity for such education in Belarus. Moreover, Belarusian-speaking people face pressure in the education process.

The practice of compulsory distribution of state-funded students to the first job continued. However, in 2022, the issue of distributing students obtaining not only state-funded, but also self-paid education

³⁵ Aliaksandr Danilevich, a lecturer at the Faculty of International Relations of the Belarusian State University, was fired after he signed an anti-war statement. In court, representatives of the university justified their actions by the lack of demand for the subject taught: https://www.defenders.by/sud_alexander_danilevich

³⁶ Law No. 154-3 On Amendments to the Education Code of the Republic of Belarus: <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12200154&p1=1>

³⁷ <https://www.sb.by/articles/uvidet-cheloveka-i-ego-potentsial.html>;
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Nqn84EZy6bU>



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was repeatedly raised.³⁸ Experts also note that during the 2022 admission campaign, there were no fee-paying places at the Faculty of Journalism of the BSU in specialties related to television, print and web journalism. It is now possible to enroll in these specialties only on a state-funded basis, which entails mandatory distribution. The reason for such changes was the emphasis on the development of state media in the development of state information policy.³⁹

Since 2022, it has also become possible to enter some universities by winning the University Olympiad.⁴⁰ At the same time, privileges began to be provided for admission to higher education institutions to graduates of sports-pedagogical and military-patriotic classes, as well as children of military personnel, employees of internal affairs bodies.

In 2022, the scope of targeted training was also expanded. Previously, targeted training was provided for certain settlements, but from 2022, such an agreement can be concluded by the ordering organization of personnel, regardless of location.⁴¹

The form and content of higher education, including curricula and teaching methods, have also undergone a number of changes that directly affect their adequacy, flexibility, quality, as well as their ability to adapt to the needs of the modern world.

Thus, as a result of support for the Russian military aggression against Ukraine, the Bologna Process, which was an important tool for bringing higher education in line with international standards, suspended the participation of Belarus.

The Ministry of Education has adopted a new Resolution No. 412 "On Obtaining Higher Education in a Short Time". It contains an updated list of specialties in which you can enter a university for a shortened program after colleges and lyceums. These are SSE specialties that correspond to the specialties of a bachelor's degree program or a continuing higher education program. The list includes 139 specialties, graduates of which can get a university diploma faster than usual. Among them: preschool education; primary education; publishing; choreographic art; marketing; Law; geodesy; forestry; nursing; prevention and elimination of emergency situations; postal service; development of mineral deposits; architecture; veterinary medicine; pharmacy and others.⁴² According to experts, such innovations have a negative impact on the quality of higher education.

In 2022, a provision was added to the Education Code to charge students for repeated laboratory and

³⁸ <https://president.gov.by/ru/events/rassmotrenie-kadrovyyh-voprosov-1664789649:https://www.belta.by/society/view/ne-objazyvat-a-aktivno-predlagat-ministr-obrazovanija-rasskazal-o-raspredelenii-dlja-platnikov-536714-2022/>

³⁹ https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7kYDpM5ZdSA&ab_channel=%D0%94%D0%BE%D0%BC%D0%9F%D1%80%D0%B5%D1%81%D1%81%D1%8B ; <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/13003.html?tg>

⁴⁰ <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/25856.html?c>

⁴¹ <https://www.belta.by/roundtable/view/tselevaja-podgotovka-kadrov-v-belarusi-1440/>

⁴² <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/26229.html?tg>



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practical training sessions as a result of absenteeism without a valid reason. This form of discipline control has been in effect before, however, in 2022, when it was finally formalized.

From 2022, universities will introduce a mandatory block of social and humanitarian disciplines that have a clear ideological nature. In accordance with the new regulation "On the of Higher Education Institution ", which was adopted by the Ministry of Education, universities are obliged to instill "patriotism and citizenship" in students. In addition, in 2022, the creation of a department for educational work with youth in universities was initiated.⁴³ The Prosecutor General's Office and the Ministry of Education discussed the study of materials "on the investigation of the criminal case on the genocide of the Belarusian people" and decided to approve an optional course in schools and universities, within the framework of which students will receive knowledge about the "genocide of the Belarusian people".⁴⁴ Universities were also instructed to check textbooks for "distortion of historical memory and truth."⁴⁵

In order to cope with the shortage of workers, university students were offered to learn a working specialty. According to the second secretary of the Central Committee of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union (the largest youth GONGO) Alexander Prokhorov, such training includes free courses in free time from the main study and provides for the issuance of a certificate of qualification obtained. In 2022, university students have already received the first questionnaires asking about the working specialties that interest them.⁴⁶

While the authorities sought to adapt education to the ideological agenda of the state and the specific economy, in 2022 due attention was not paid to the revision of the forms and methods of education in connection with the COVID-19 pandemic, as recommended by international standards.

- **Educational Opportunities and Academic Freedom**

In the context of educational opportunities, experts once again draw attention to the mass closure of private schools, as well as the liquidation of some lyceums, which has a negative impact on the right of parents/guardians to freely choose educational institutions. Moreover, in 2022, a provision was added to the Education Code to assign a microdistrict to an educational institution, including gymnasiums, further limiting the possibility of choice.⁴⁷

The strengthening of spiritual, moral and military-patriotic education and the forms of its provision

⁴³ Decree of the Ministry of Education No. 311 "On the Institution of Higher Education":

<https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=W22238818&p1=1&p5=0>

⁴⁴ <http://www.ctv.by/s-1-sentyabrya-v-universitetah-i-shkolah-poyavitsya-novyy-fakultativ> ;
<https://news.zerkalo.io/life/16441.html?c>

⁴⁵ <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/16052.html?c>

⁴⁶ <https://www.belta.by/society/view/v-belarusi-studenty-vuza-smogut-besplatno-poluchit-rabochuju-spetsialnost-533726-2022/>

⁴⁷ Law of the Republic of Belarus No. 154-3 On Amendments to the Code of the Republic of Belarus on Education: <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12200154&p1=1>



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also affect the ability of parents to provide religious and moral education for their children in accordance with their own convictions.

Despite the fact that the freedom of individuals and institutions to establish and manage educational institutions is formally ensured, as a result of the closure of private schools, it is extremely difficult or impossible to register a new one, which is due, among other things, to the new licensing requirements introduced in 2022.

In 2022, political pressure on teachers and students, as well as the ideologization of education, became more intense and systematic, practically excluding academic freedom in educational institutions.

Higher education institutions, according to experts, have become even less independent, depending on the vice-rector for security in a number of issues, including personnel issues. Ideological pressure has also intensified against general secondary education institutions. In addition, there is control over the content of programs by law enforcement and law enforcement agencies.

Despite the amendments to the Education Code, an effective scholarship system, which aims, among other things, to increase access to education for members of disadvantaged groups, has not been established. Moreover, the cost of tuition at universities increased by 10% and in 2022 reached 5567 BYN in some specialties, while the student scholarship ranged from 104 to 176 BYN depending on academic performance.



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