

## National Human Rights Index

<https://index.belhelcom.org>

2024

### Right to Education

Expert Commentary

<b>The score:</b>	<b>3,9</b>	<b>-0,1</b>
<i>Including scores by component:</i>		
• Preschool and primary education	4,6	-0,2
• Secondary education	3,6	-0,2
• Technical and vocational education	4,9	-0,1
• Higher education	4,3	-0,1
• Educational opportunities and academic freedom	2	-0,1

Assessing the situation in the field of the right to education in 2024, the Index experts gave lower scores than in 2023. **Among the main reasons:**

- continued outflow of qualified personnel, leading to a decline in the overall quality of education at all levels;
- a systematic campaign against privately owned educational institutions (closure of kindergartens and universities).

#### • Preschool and primary education

In 2024, there were no significant legislative changes in the field of preschool and primary education. At the end of 2024, amendments<sup>1</sup> were made to the Education Code<sup>2</sup>, supplementing Part 1, Paragraph 1 of Article 50, "Teaching Staff," to include foster parents and parents who are educators among teaching staff. This measure is presumably related to the continuing outflow of qualified teaching staff noted earlier. Experts noted that there is still a shortage of staff and low wages in the education sector against the backdrop of wage growth in other sectors of the economy.

Experts also note a decline in funding in 2024, which affects the sanitary and hygienic conditions of educational institutions, and part of the responsibility for maintaining these conditions is shifted to parents ("school cash grab"). Financial accessibility is also affected by the introduction of compulsory

<sup>1</sup> <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400046>

<sup>2</sup> <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=3871&p0=hk1100243>



#human rights

#business and human rights

#discrimination

#human rights based approach

#international human rights enforcement mechanisms



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elements (attributes) of school uniforms (parents don't have a choice of styles and models, e.g., of waistcoats).

According to official statistics (which are still not available in a machine-readable and comparable form)<sup>3</sup>, in 2024, the number of preschool education institutions continues to decline<sup>4</sup> (so-called “optimization”), which is more severe in rural areas, negatively affecting the physical accessibility of schools.

Changes to the Licensing Law<sup>5</sup> have led to a reduction in the number of privately owned educational institutions – in March 2024, the Minister of Education said in an official interview that there was only one private kindergarten operating in Belarus (responding to claims that licensing conditions could not be met, A. Ivanets noted the lack of qualified teaching staff in private institutions, violations of sanitary standards, and the lack of adequate sleeping and eating conditions)<sup>6</sup>; in June, it was reported that there was not a single private kindergarten in Minsk<sup>7</sup>.

In 2024, preschool and primary education institutions continued to carry out activities aimed at militarizing childhood, which the authorities refer to as “patriotic education”<sup>8</sup>. For example, a “civic and patriotic” group was opened at the preschool development center in Zhitkovichi, where preschoolers are dressed in red and green uniforms and a military commissar is present at the event.<sup>9</sup> Natalia Kochanova, who visited one of these patriotic centers in a kindergarten in Fanipol, said that it is “not too early” for 3-4-year-old children to receive such “patriotic education.”<sup>10</sup>

The right to education in the Belarusian language is virtually impossible to exercise: the proportion of primary school classes taught in Belarusian has continued to decline. According to independent monitoring, by 2024 there will be virtually no primary school classes in Minsk teaching in Belarusian – the overwhelming majority have switched to Russian<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>3</sup> [https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.belstat.gov.by%2Fupload-belstat%2Fupload-belstat-excel%2FOficial\\_statistika%2F2024%2Feducation-annual-indicators-2024.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK](https://view.officeapps.live.com/op/view.aspx?src=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.belstat.gov.by%2Fupload-belstat%2Fupload-belstat-excel%2FOficial_statistika%2F2024%2Feducation-annual-indicators-2024.xlsx&wdOrigin=BROWSELINK)

<sup>4</sup> 3,750 institutions as of early 2023, [https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial\\_statistika/2024/infografika-obrazovanie-2024.pdf](https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial_statistika/2024/infografika-obrazovanie-2024.pdf) and 3,721 at the beginning of the 2024-25 academic year <https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload/iblock/8df/ab87a3hqzwbuewhugb7s0intg5s9m6nb.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12200213&p1=1>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.sb.by/articles/znaniya-novogo-pokoleniya.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://minsknews.by/v-stolicze-bolee-470-gosudarstvennyh-detskih-sadikov-chastnye-prekratili-svoyu-devatelnost/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://sad1.stolbtsy-edu.gov.by/растим-маленького-патриота/тематические-дни;> <https://sad5.beshroo.gov.by/законным-представителям/гражданско-патриотическое-воспитание>

<sup>9</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/81765.html>

<sup>10</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/37727.html>

<sup>11</sup> On October 30, 2024, it became known that more than 22,000 first-graders enrolled in first grade in Minsk this year. 860 classes were created for them. However, only in 17 classes first-graders are taught in Belarusian, which is 1.97%. <https://penbelarus.org/2025/01/30/aglyad-parushennya-mounyh-pravou-u-belarusi-z-1-lipenya-pa-31-snezhnya-2024-goda.html>

In 2024, amendments were made to the Ministry of Education's resolution approving the regulation "On children's homes, children's villages, and children's towns": such institutions may be opened at monasteries; N. Kachanova directly acknowledged that this practice was borrowed from Russia<sup>12</sup>.

Due to changes in the criteria (parent unemployed for three months), in 2024, the practice of using the institution of "socially dangerous situation" of a child for political purposes (pressure on dissident families)<sup>13</sup> intensified, with schools playing a key role in its implementation.

### ● Secondary education

The number of general secondary education institutions in operation in the 2024/25 academic year decreased by 24<sup>14</sup> compared to the previous academic year<sup>15</sup>. There has also been a significant outflow of teachers, with their number falling by 1,000. This reduction may be partly due to the demographic situation, although schools are trying to "lure" specialists back with a 20% salary increase<sup>16</sup>. However, ongoing repression<sup>17</sup> and politically motivated dismissals<sup>18</sup> hardly motivate people to take up the teaching profession.

In August 2024, a new textbook on Belarusian history for 10th grade was introduced as part of a new integrated discipline called "Belarusian History in the Context of World History"<sup>19</sup>. The textbook presents the events of 2020 as an attempted coup d'état; such an unambiguous interpretation puts pressure on children and their parents, depriving them of the opportunity to express a different point of view on political events and ensuring (self-)censorship of any protest sentiments<sup>20</sup>. According to the Ministry of Education, the textbook is intended to "provide a complete picture of the historical process" and spark interest among schoolchildren. A total of 24 school textbooks were reissued in 2024<sup>21</sup> with the authorities emphasizing that the programs would not be simplified, but that the material would become "more accessible" for students.

At the same time, the Ministry of Education issued a letter prohibiting the use of textbooks without the approval of the Belarusian Ministry of Education in the educational process. Also, according to experts, in practice, it was not recommended to use foreign electronic tools and resources (including Russian ones) in the educational process.

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<sup>12</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/68000.html>

<sup>13</sup> [https://humanconstant.org/priznanie-detej-nahodyashhimisya-v-soczialno-opasnom-polozhenii-eshhe-odin-instrument-davleniya-na-dissident\\_ok-i-ih-semi/](https://humanconstant.org/priznanie-detej-nahodyashhimisya-v-soczialno-opasnom-polozhenii-eshhe-odin-instrument-davleniya-na-dissident_ok-i-ih-semi/)

<sup>14</sup> [https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial\\_statistika/2024/infografika-obrazovanie-2024.pdf](https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial_statistika/2024/infografika-obrazovanie-2024.pdf)

<sup>15</sup> [https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial\\_statistika/2023/infografika-obrazovanie-2023.pdf](https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial_statistika/2023/infografika-obrazovanie-2023.pdf)

<sup>16</sup> <https://belta.by/society/view/pedagogam-povysyat-zarplatu-komu-i-na-skolko-rasskazali-v-minobrazovanija-686226-2024/>

<sup>17</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/82595.html> ; <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/89908.html>

<sup>18</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/65881.html>

<sup>19</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/70933.html>

<sup>20</sup> <https://trends.belhelcom.org/storage/reviews/February2025/0RniSzTA2HuMfxM5W7Eo.pdf>

<sup>21</sup> <https://edsh.by/statia/minobr-rasskazal-kakie-novye-predmety-poyavyatsya-v-belorusskih-shkolah>



At the same time, the online project “Adukavanka” which provides methodological assistance to teachers, has been recognized as an “extremist formation.”<sup>22</sup>

Experts note a decline in adaptability and flexibility in secondary schools: all extracurricular programs and clubs must be approved by the Ministry of Education, which creates additional obstacles to the introduction of innovations in the educational process. The expansion of specialization in high school (agricultural, military-patriotic, pedagogical classes) is not accompanied by a choice.

In the upper grades, the militarization of childhood is becoming increasingly intense through the strengthening of the so-called “military-patriotic component of education.” Its methodological development continues: in 2024, a new manual on the basics of pre-conscription training and medical training was developed for students in grades 10-11.<sup>23</sup> In 2024, a republican competition for instructors in “military-patriotic education”<sup>24</sup> was launched for secondary education institutions. One of the objectives of the competition is to raise the prestige of this position and identify “best practices” in the field of “military-patriotic education.” One of the forms of such work that military instructors must demonstrate at the competition is the formation of “aspirations to serve in military formations and paramilitary organizations” among schoolchildren.

There is a complex dynamic at play with Russification in the field of education<sup>25</sup>. On the one hand, in 2024, a demonstrative course towards the unification of educational programs with Russia continues<sup>26</sup>: Minister of Education A. Ivanets announced that Belarus and Russia had agreed to create unified textbooks for schools on key subjects. However, recent changes to the Education Code also make it clear that the state is unable to cope with the outflow of students and is trying to keep them in the state education system by any means available. Thus, paragraph 15 of Article 2 of the Law “On Amendments to the Codes on Education” adds a new obligation for parents to “ensure conditions for the education and development of students, including for their minor children residing in the Republic of Belarus to receive general secondary education in educational institutions of the Republic of Belarus.”<sup>27</sup> This amendment blocks the possibility of obtaining secondary education remotely. In particular, distance learning in Russian schools (with the possibility of obtaining a certificate), which is now widespread in Belarus, will become impossible.

The changes will also affect foreign schoolchildren and anyone who needs a certificate of general basic and secondary education in English. Currently, certificates can be issued in Belarusian or Russian (at the choice of the holder) or in English, but after the changes come into force, they will be issued exclusively in Russian or Belarusian.<sup>28</sup>

<sup>22</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/78658.html>

<sup>23</sup> <https://edsh.by/statia/minobr-rasskazal-kakie-novye-predmety-poyavyatsya-v-belorusskikh-shkolah>

<sup>24</sup> <https://rcek.by/respublikanskij-konkurs-rukovoditel-po-voenno-patrioticheskomu-vospitaniyu/>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.dw.com/ru/kak-russkij-mir-vliaet-na-rb-i-podderzivaet-li-ego-belorusy/a-69861739>

<sup>26</sup> <https://novgazeta.by/news/oficialno/belarus-i-rossiya-sozdatut-edinye-uchebniki-dlya-shkol>

<sup>27</sup> <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400046>

<sup>28</sup> <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400046>



In 2024, the list of children with priority for admission to sanatorium boarding schools was supplemented with the category “children with disabilities” under the age of 18 for their social support<sup>29</sup>. The possibility of exempting students from final exams upon completion of the third stage of general secondary education on medical grounds was also established. Paragraph 78 of Article 2 of the Law specified that the list of diseases for which students may be exempted from final exams in core subjects is compiled by the Ministry of Health. All other reasons (not related to health) are determined by the Ministry of Education.<sup>30</sup> These measures are aimed at protecting the interests of vulnerable groups of the population.

Steps are also being taken to provide material incentives for teaching assistants working with children in vulnerable social situations. Social educators and educational psychologists have received a pay rise of up to 35 percent, which is 20 percent higher than before.<sup>31</sup> However, practical tools for implementing the principle of inclusive education are still not being developed.

Secondary education has become even less inclusive and adapted to national minorities. The standard curriculum provides information that the time allocated to the study of national minority languages and literature in general secondary education institutions where these subjects are taught is, at best, one lesson per week, regardless of the class.<sup>32</sup> Against the backdrop of ongoing language changes, this figure paints a clear picture of the failure to respect the rights of children from national minorities.

#### ● Technical and vocational education

In line with the strengthening of integration with Russia in the field of education<sup>33</sup>, the reform of admission to educational institutions continued in 2024: for the first time, applicants from Russia were given the right to enter Belarusian secondary vocational and higher education institutions based on the results of the Russian Unified State Examination<sup>34</sup>. At the same time, Russian universities allocated 1,300 quotas (budget places) for Belarusian students and began to provide educational grants. Such mutual openness formally expands the opportunities for applicants, but in fact further strengthens the ties between the education systems of the two countries.

At the national level, the “link” between education and production was strengthened: the Ministry of Education issued a number of regulatory acts to encourage targeted training: enrollment in specialties for the agro-industrial complex and industry was increased, and new specialized classes were introduced at colleges. Although this is presented as a concern for the employment of graduates, independent experts note another side to this – ensuring a guaranteed workforce through the institution of mandatory job placement of young specialists. Unlike all other educational institutions,

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<sup>29</sup> <https://pravo.by/novosti/novosti-pravo-by/2024/december/79942/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400046>

<sup>31</sup> <https://illex.by/news/povyshenie-oplaty-truda-pedrabotnikam-s-01-01-2025/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://adu.by/images/2024/05/post-mo-rb-47-2024.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> <https://novgazeta.by/news/oficialno/belarus-i-rossiya-sozdatut-edinye-uchebniki-dlya-shkol>

<sup>34</sup> <https://www.pnp.ru/social/rossiyane-smogut-postupit-na-byudzhet-v-vuzy-belorussii-po-rezultatam-ege.html>



the number of students in vocational education institutions has not decreased compared to the previous academic year, but has increased by a significant 4,000 persons<sup>35</sup>. At the same time, the number of institutions has remained the same, which may mean an increase in the number of students in classrooms and the load on the infrastructure of vocational education and secondary vocational education institutions as a whole.

The practice of intimidation through the use of on-site court hearings is becoming normalised. In November 2024, on-site court session was held in Brest, directly in a college classroom, where the verdict in the “flag burning case” was announced in the presence of college students<sup>36</sup>, with such on-site court hearings most often held in institutions of technical and vocational education.

In 2024, the practice of forced participation in political events continued, especially in the context of elections\* (both parliamentary and presidential)<sup>37</sup>.

Experts noted a further reduction in opportunities to receive education at this level in the Belarusian language.

There has been a gradual expansion of specializations in Belarusian colleges: “software and technical support for digital devices”, “sound environment design”, “technical operation of multimedia systems” and “automatic ceramic production line operator”.<sup>38</sup> The state is trying to modernize professions in the field of vocational education and training and continuing education to adapt them to modern realities, taking into account the demands of employers<sup>39</sup>.

Experts have noted the impact of increased demand for military products: the use of advanced training and retraining has expanded, leading to an improvement in the quality of workers in skilled occupations.

### • Higher education

By the 2024/25 academic year, according to official statistics, two private higher education institutions had been closed<sup>40</sup>, bringing the total number of higher education institutions to 47<sup>41</sup>. Unlike in previous years, including the 2023/24 academic year, public statistics for 2024/25 do not include figures for teaching staff.

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<sup>35</sup> [https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial\\_statistika/2023/infografika-obrazovanie-2023.pdf](https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial_statistika/2023/infografika-obrazovanie-2023.pdf) and [https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial\\_statistika/2024/infografika-obrazovanie-2024.pdf](https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial_statistika/2024/infografika-obrazovanie-2024.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> <https://spring96.org/ru/news/116864>

<sup>37</sup> For example, in Gorki (Mogilev region), students from an agricultural academy and college students were herded to a pre-election rally in support of the elections—young people were handed flags and leaflets and forced to pose for propaganda photos. (<https://elections2024.spring96.org/ru/news/114513>)

<sup>38</sup> <https://adukar.com/by/news/abiturientu/novye-specialnosti-v-kolledzhah-belarusi-2025>

<sup>39</sup> <https://belta.by/society/view/obnovlenie-uchebnyh-programm-i-novye-spetsialnosti-kak-zakazchiki-vlijajut-na-podgotovku-kadrov-695475-2025/>

<sup>40</sup> [https://nashaniva.com/be\\_latn/345906](https://nashaniva.com/be_latn/345906)

<sup>41</sup> [https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial\\_statistika/2024/infografika-obrazovanie-2024.pdf](https://www.belstat.gov.by/upload-belstat/upload-belstat-pdf/oficial_statistika/2024/infografika-obrazovanie-2024.pdf)



In 2024, according to experts, some universities, particularly the largest one, BSU, saw one of the largest politically motivated dismissal campaigns (including those who signed up in 2020 to nominate alternative candidates).

A. Lukashenko announced the state policy in the field of higher education in February 2024, demanding to “shake up universities” so that students receive education directly in the country and “do not flee” abroad, and the institutions themselves prepare graduates in specialties that are in demand. “First and foremost, they should meet the needs of the domestic real sector.”<sup>42</sup>

In 2024, the cost of education varies from 4,000 to 6,300 rubles<sup>43</sup>, while scholarships do not exceed 143-229 rubles (depending on academic performance).<sup>44</sup>

Belarusian universities continue to decline in the rankings of the world's best universities<sup>45</sup>, as well as self-isolate from cooperation with specialists from “unfriendly” developed democratic countries. At the same time, cooperation with Russia is intensifying, including the conclusion of a number of agreements in the field of higher education<sup>46</sup>.

Against the backdrop of repression within the country, more students are leaving for both the West and the East (mainly to Russia), but the authorities continue to informally obstruct the issuance of documents necessary for admission to foreign universities and to put pressure on families. In addition, changes<sup>47</sup> to advertising legislation have introduced a ban on advertising study abroad.

In 2024, the conditions<sup>48</sup> for mandatory job placement of graduates and their reassignment were tightened (see the comment on the right to work for more details), which indirectly affected the accessibility of education.

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<sup>42</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/economics/60956.html>

<sup>43</sup> <https://neg.by/novosti/otkrytijseny-vyrosli-skolko-v-2024-godu-stoit-pervyy-kurs-v-universitetakh/>

<sup>44</sup> <https://adukar.com/by/news/abiturientu-na-kakuyu-stipendiyu-mozhet-rasschityvat-belorusskij-student>

<sup>45</sup> <https://news.zerkalo.io/life/81563.html>

<sup>46</sup> <https://eurasia.expert/rossiya-i-belarus-idut-k-formirovaniyu-edinoy-obrazovatelnoy-sistemy/>

<sup>47</sup> <https://pravo.by/document/?guid=12551&p0=H12400353>

<sup>48</sup> <https://trends.belhelcom.org/storage/reviews/September2024/rpwVwnlIRve9WtJzxTzo.pdf>