

Monitoring, Issue No 1

RESPECT FOR HUMAN RIGHTS IN BELARUS

(1 April – 1 July 2011)

Summary

Freedom of the Media

- Journalists sentenced for participation in post-elections protest on 19 December 2010
- Grodno journalist Andrei Pochobut goes on trial for allegedly libeling and insulting the President
- Ministry of Information applied for closure of the newspapers “Narodnaya Volya” and “Nasha Niva”
- Harassment of journalists and the media for coverage of the economic crisis and the terrorist attack on 11 April 2011
- Strengthening of control over the Internet (blocking web-sites, pressure on members of Internet communities in social networks)

Freedom of association

- Draft Law “On non-commercial organizations” was not submitted to the Parliament
- Ministry of Justice continued its practices of selective registration of NGOs
- Special services tried to recruit representatives of NGOs; border officials intensified inspections of civil society representatives
- Tax authorities put pressure on human rights organizations
- Warnings issued under Article 193¹ of the Criminal Code
- BPF faces eviction from its premises
- Government interferes with activities of NGOs

Freedom of assembly

- Traditional procession “Charnobylski Shliakh” [Chernobyl Path] (26 April 2011)
- Mass protest of drivers against increased petrol prices, “Stop: Petrol” (7 June 2011)
- A so-called “Revolution via Social Networks” (8 June 2011)
- Spontaneous rally of car drivers at the border crossing Bruzgi in Grodno region (12 June 2011)
- Protest action “Silent Revolution” (22 June 2011)

Administration of justice

- Accusatory nature of criminal procedure
- Violation of the principle of the independence of the judiciary
- Violation of the principle of universal, comprehensive and objective examination of the merits of a case
- Violation of the territorial jurisdiction principle

- Violation of the principle of adversarial nature of proceedings and equality of arms
- Pressure on attorneys

Right to work

- Underreporting of official unemployment data
- Forced labor migration
- Hidden unemployment.

Summary

The main purpose of this monitoring is to identify medium-term trends regarding the human rights situation in Belarus. The monitoring is a result of cooperation between Belarusian human rights organizations: Belarusian Helsinki Committee (BHC), Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ), Assembly of Democratic NGOs of Belarus, Centre for Legal Transformation (CLT), “Viasna”, Committee for the Protection of the Repressed “Solidarnost”, Belarusian Confederation of Democratic Trade Unions, BISS.

The following trends in the field of human rights in Belarus represent aftermath of the latest Presidential elections of 19 December 2011 against the background of unfolding economic crisis in the country.

Compared with the period April - June 2010 the human rights situation in Belarus has deteriorated significantly, affecting practically all spheres of life in Belarus.

The situation with Freedom of the Media is critical. Journalists face criminal proceedings for performing their professional duties. The threat of closure is pending over the last two remaining independent newspapers. Independent print media is almost forced out of the market into being published in the Internet only. The government makes attempts to impose strict control over electronic media and blogosphere, including social networks, in order to prevent dissemination of information conflicting with the official information policy.

Compared with the first three months of 2011 the number of searches in the offices of NGOs, arrests of activists and other forms of pressure applied to NGOs has decreased. By this period the government has already completed the clean-up of the environment in the post-election period. With reference to the explosion in the Minsk metro the authorities interrogated a number of opposition leaders and arrested a few young leaders, however massive repressions did not follow. In the meanwhile the authorities constantly interfere with the activities of independent organizations. The authorities continue denying registration to NGOs and issue written warnings, which indicates that they have not changed the policy of restriction of the freedom of association and on the rights of citizens in this regard.

In contrast to the low activity and quiescence following the events of 19 December 2010, the period from April to June 2011 brought out numerous protest actions by the population, mainly motivated by the national currency devaluation, rising prices and falling real incomes. The population expressed its discontent and perturbation with the governmental economic and financial policies via peaceful marches, rallies and pickets, exercising their constitutional right to freedom of assembly. The authorities' response to the protests tends to toughening. The clamp down on protests on 22 June was more aggressive compared with 7 June, implying that any attempts of citizens to express their disagreement with the policies of the regime will be suppressed with the use of force.

In the sphere of the administration of justice there is a steady trend towards disregarding the principles of the criminal process and clear dependence of the judiciary on the executive. In

April and May 2011 the district courts of Minsk held trials against defendants in criminal cases initiated under Art. 293 and 342 of the Criminal Code (group activities that violate public order and “mass disorder” correspondingly), following the events of 19 December 2010 in the Independence Square. Human rights defenders noted the courts handled these trials *pro forma*, rather than trying to judge on the merits.

On principle, in lieu of economic liberalization, the government extensively used administrative tools to stabilize the economic situation in the country in April - June 2011. The government has no intention to implement economic reforms and has no coherent bail-out plan. Therefore the economic situation is deteriorating, resulting in gradual growth of public discontent and crippling unemployment. The degrading situation with the right to work is particularly worrying given its potential crucial impact on the growth of discontent moods among the population of Belarus. It is important to mention that during the monitoring period the level of hidden unemployment reached 20% according to some estimates.

All in all, in April – June 2011 the human rights situation in Belarus makes human rights defenders particularly concerned and they forecast it will not improve in the near future.

Freedom of the Media

The situation with Freedom of the Media continued to deteriorate and became critical. The most serious violations of the rights of journalists and independent media are as follows:

- journalists sentenced for participation in post-elections protest on 19 December 2010;
- Grodno journalist Andrei Pochobut goes on trial for allegedly libeling and insulting the President;
- Ministry of Information applied for closure of the newspapers “Narodnaya Volya” and “Nasha Niva”;
- harassment of journalists and the media for coverage of the economic crisis and the terrorist attack on 11 April 2011;
- strengthening of control over the Internet (blocking web-sites, pressure on members of Internet communities in social networks).

In April and May six journalists and members of the Belarusian Association of Journalists were charged and sentenced for the participation in the “mass disorder” or for taking part in activities that violate public order. Alexander Atroshchankau was sentenced to 4 years of medium security prison, Dmitry Bondarenko to 2 years of minimum security prison (while his appeal is pending he is kept under custody). Pavel Sevyarynets was sentenced to three years of restricted freedom in an open institution. Irina Khalip was sentenced to two years of imprisonment with suspension of sentence for two years (she has a written cognizance not to leave). Sergey Vozniak and Alexander Feduta were sentenced to two-year suspended prison term each. One more journalist under investigation following the events of 19 December, Natalia Radina, has secretly left the country in late March.

A criminal trial against Grodno-based journalist Andrey Pochobut commenced in Grodno. He is charged with insulting the President of the Republic of Belarus (Article 368 of the Criminal Code) and slandering the President of the Republic of Belarus (Article 367 of the Criminal Code). Mr. Pochobut was arrested in April and remained under custody to the date. Charges brought against him are based on critical materials published during 2010-2011 in Warsaw-based "Gazeta Wyborcza", on the web-site www.belaruspartisan.org and in his LJ blog www.poczobut.livejournal.com. The trial against Poczobut started on 14 June and following a request of the public prosecutor is held behind the closed doors.

On 27 April the Ministry of Information appealed to the Supreme Economic Court with a request to close two leading independent newspapers: "Narodnaya Volya" and "Nasha Niva" (these two newspapers were returned to the state subscription and retail distribution networks as a sign of willingness of Minsk to resume a dialogue with the European institutions in 2009). The Ministry of Information quoted Article 5 of the Law on the Media as formal grounds for closing the newspapers, which authorizes the Ministry to initiate a suit of closure against a newspaper in case the latter has two or more written warnings issued in the course of a year, regardless of the "gravity" of violations. "Nasha Niva" and "Narodnaya Volya" previously received three and four warnings respectively, the latest of them were issued on 14 and 15 April 2011. The newspapers appealed these warnings therefore the closure suits against them are pending until the court rendered decisions on appeals. On 30 May the Highest Economic Court of Belarus upheld the warning issued to the newspaper "Nasha Niva". The newspaper plans to continue appealing the court's decision.

Recently in disputes between the media and the Ministry of Information the courts took the side of the Ministry in 100% of cases (regardless whether the claims of the Ministry vis-à-vis media were properly justified). The only exception from this rule, i.e. in favour of the media (overruling the decision of the Ministry of Information concerning stripping of the broadcasting license of a popular FM-radio station "Autoradio"), was a decision issued by the Highest Economic Court earlier this year, however subsequently it was revoked on appeal.

Information Minister Oleg Proleskovsky linked the closure suits against two newspapers "Narodnaya Volya" and "Nasha Niva" with their coverage of the terrorist attack in the Minsk metro on 11 April (regardless of the fact that a warning to the "Narodnaya Volya" was issued quoting other reasons). The terrorist attack in the Minsk metro brought increased pressure by the government on the employees of independent media in Belarus. *Inter alia*, during a week from 12 to 19 April the Prosecutor's Office, Ministry of Information and the KGB issued 10 warnings to journalists and editorial offices. The government officials continued voicing threats against journalists regarding prosecution for "dancing on the graves". Apparently they referred to any media reports, comments or leads which did not satisfy officials for some reason.

The authorities also had a negative reaction with regard to the media and Internet resources coverage of the economic crisis in the country. On 27 May President Alexander Lukashenko demanded to close down the media that encouraged the consumer buying and foreign currency fevers and called the Russian media as "the most unbridled" on this regard: <http://www.interfax.by/news/belarus/93170>.

Information Minister Proleskovsky said it was time to “finish with irresponsibility in blogs, social networks and other Internet sites”. Reports coming from different regions of the country say that the KGB intimidated users of social networks, members of communities “Revolution via Social Networks”, “For the Great Belarus”, etc. Prosecutor General of Belarus issued a regulation restricting access to the Belarusian websites: www.charter97.org and www.belarusianpartisan.org, with reference to the violation of the Law “On Mass Events in the Republic of Belarus”. Also Prosecutor General's Office has restricted access to the website www.prokopovi.ch. Prosecutor General's Office Representative Pavel Rodionov said it was “advocating for illegal activity concerning currency exchange”. As a result, Internet providers were ordered to block access to these websites for governmental agencies, educational institutions and cultural establishments.

Freedom of association

During the monitoring period, the number of searches in the offices of NGOs, arrests of activists and other forms of pressure put on NGOs has decreased. The authorities continued denying registration to NGOs and issuing written warnings, indicating that they had not changed the policy of restriction of the freedom of association and of the rights of citizens in this regard. With reference to the explosion in the Minsk metro the authorities interrogated a number of opposition leaders and arrested a few young leaders (*inter alia*, ex-leader of the youth wing of the BPF Ales Kalita), however massive repressions did not follow.

In the field of activities of non-governmental organizations the most significant trends were as follows:

- Draft Law “On non-commercial organizations” was not submitted to the Parliament;
- Ministry of Justice continued its practices of selective registration of NGOs;
- special services tried to recruit representatives of NGOs; border officials intensified inspections of civil society representatives;
- tax authorities put pressure on human rights organizations;
- warnings issued under Article 193¹ of the Criminal Code;
- BPF faces eviction from its premises;
- Government interferes with activities of NGOs.

During the monitoring period human rights organizations expected the Parliament to review the Draft Law “On non-commercial organizations”, which envisaged improvement of control over activities of non-governmental organizations. However this Draft Law, assessed by the representatives of civil society with a number of reservations and comments, has not been submitted to the Parliament during the spring Session. Deputy Justice Minister Igor Tushynskiy in response to a collective appeal by non-commercial organizations concerning the Draft Law “On non-commercial organizations” reported that while continuing working on the concept of the Draft Law the Ministry will take into account proposals from the non-profit organizations submitted to the Ministry.

On principle the Belarusian legislation on NGOs, which does not create favorable conditions for their registration and activities did not suffer from significant changes. Minor amendments were introduced to the Law of the Republic of Belarus “On Trade Unions”. Namely, “funds” were included to the list of organizations that could apply reduced rate of 0.1 in lease agreements of immovable property. The list of such organizations was expanded with 20 organizations and currently it includes 445 public associations, political parties, associations and foundations.

The Ministry of Justice has registered a number of non-governmental organizations *inter alia*, Republican Public Association “White Stork of Hope”, Local Charity Foundation “The Harmony of Life”. The largest number of registered organizations was in the field of sports in the period from April to June 2011 (13 of 20). Moratorium on the application principle of registration of institutions in this period was somewhat weakened.

However, the problem of arbitrary denials of registration of NGOs is still crucial. Many NGOs are forced to implement their activities without having proper registration. In the first half of 2011 youth public association “Young Democrats” failed to register, as well as the Belarusian Association of Litvins, Association of Ukrainians of Baranovichi “Kabzar”, Cultural and Educational NGO “Golden Lion”, NGO Center of strategic development of Mogilev “Impulse” and others. Appeal attempts by the Belarusian Association of Litvins and Cultural and Educational NGO “Golden Lion” against registration refusals were not successful.

A particular concern of human rights defenders is raised by an attempt of blackmail by the security services of the founder of an International Public Association “Center for Volunteerism”, Nikolay Kvantaliani. In the process of registration of his organization he was approached by KGB agents and on a condition of granting registration he was invited to cooperate with the intelligence informants and to act as a pseudo-public organization, controlled by the secret services, *inter alia* while obtaining financing from foreign funds. His refusal to cooperate on the set conditions resulted in the denial of registration by the Ministry of Justice. The official reason for non-registration of his NGO read as “having a number of violations of the legislation that could not be corrected”. While considering the appeal against the refusal of registration of the International Public Association “Centre for the Development of Volunteering”, the Supreme Court has not investigated the incident with KGB and upheld the decision of the Ministry of Justice.

Following this incident Nikolay Kvantaliani became a subject to frequent searches while crossing the Belarusian border. Customs officials at border crossing points also paid raised attention to other prominent representatives of public associations: to the Leader of Independent Trade Unions Alexander Yaroshuk, Secretary of Administrative Board of BPF Sergei Semeniuk, coordinator of the consortium “EuroBelarus” Vlad Velichko and others.

The issue with registration is particularly significant in the context of Article 193¹ of the Criminal Code, which envisages punishment for activities of not registered associations. This article is actively used as a means of intimidation of non-governmental organizations in 2011, *inter alia* with regard to unregistered religious communities. During the monitoring period written warnings of notice of criminal liability were issued for activities of unregistered organizations and were upheld by courts as justified against the Head of the Human Rights

Centre “Viasna” Ales Byalyatsky and a member of the non-registered Belarusian Christian Democracy party Tatiana Shambalava.

As compared with the persecution and threats against members of non-registered organizations, registered organizations face different kinds of pressure. For instance, a human rights organization Republican Public Association “Belarusian Helsinki Committee” has received a written warning issued by the Ministry of Justice, quoting failure to pay taxes on funds received within the frameworks of Programme of international support of the European Union for implementation of a human rights project related to monitoring of elections. Tax authorities continued their efforts to attempt confiscation of property of the Belarusian Helsinki Committee to repay the debt. Also in June there were cases reported when tax authorities put forward claims against individual human rights defenders.

In December 2010 Minsk authorities initiated a process of termination of the lease agreement with the BPF party concerning premises they occupied for nearly 20 years. On 10 May Minsk Economic Court ruled eviction of the Belarusian Popular Front party from their premises located in the centre of the city on 8 Masherov ave. In June the decision was unsuccessfully appealed and the eviction procedure was initiated. According to the BPF, owners of other premises willing to provide office space for the opposition party, faced with threats from the executive authorities and security forces. Potential loss of legal address threatens the BPF Party with closure.

In Minsk and in other Belarusian cities NGOs suffered from the authorities’ interferences with activities implemented by NGOs. The government sought to disrupt a presentation of the book by Vladimir Matskevich in Minsk, a workshop of NGOs in Zhodino, a roundtable on reform of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Minsk, concerts of “unwanted” performers and rock bands, presentations, human rights monitoring, etc.

Freedom of assembly

The period between April and June 2011 was notable for active public protests mainly caused by currency devaluation, rising prices and falling real incomes. The population expressed its discontent and perturbation with the governmental economic and financial policies via peaceful marches, rallies and pickets, exercising their constitutional right to freedom of assembly.

The most significant events during this period were as follows:

- traditional procession “Charnobylski Shliakh” [Chernobyl Path] (26 April 2011);
- mass protest of drivers against increased petrol prices, “Stop: Petrol” (7 June 2011);
- a so-called “Revolution via Social Networks” (8 June 2011);
- spontaneous rally of car drivers at the border crossing Bruzgi in Grodno region (12 June 2011);
- protest action “Silent Revolution” (22 June 2011).

A memorable tragic day in the history of the Belarusian people, the anniversary of the Chernobyl disaster, is traditionally commemorated by the Belarusian community on 26 April with a

procession “Charnobylski Shliakh”. In 2011 the Minsk city authorities have authorized a rally at the Park of Friendship between 18:00 and 20:00 only, without giving any permission to hold a street procession or gathering near the building of the Academy of Sciences. In many cities of Belarus local authorities denied permission to hold pickets to commemorate the Chernobyl tragedy. The main reason behind refusals was that the authorities planned sportive and other activities at sites sought to hold pickets. Also, the government refused requests to hold May Day pickets in defense of workers’ rights. For instance, Gomel authorities refused pickets on the grounds of holding heating pipes maintenance at the site.

On 7 June Minsk witnessed a mass protest of car drivers “Stop: Petrol” initiated by an organization “For Auto”. The protest was attended by hundreds of drivers; some of them were detained and charged under the Administrative Code. The overall amount of issued fines exceeded 3 million Belarusian rubles. Harassment of the protesters is still ongoing.

On 8 June a so-called “Revolution via Social Networks” started all over the country, organized by users of a popular Internet resource www.vkontakte.ru. The main feature of this initiative was that the “revolution” did not imply its participants to carry any kind of posters, flags or other attributes: it was supposed to be a silent protest. Its proponents invited the Belarusian population to come to the main square of their city at 19:00 and stay there until 19:30. The event was planned to be held on a weekly basis. In Minsk the “Revolution via Social Networks” attracted about 400 participants who gathered on the October Square and around it. Their silent protest was accompanied with simultaneous stamping and clapping. For some time the police observed the event and then without the use of special means and force started pushing the participants off the Square. In Salihorsk several protesters were detained and taken to a local police station and released without charges after their IDs verification. In Mozyr the rally was prevented by the police, which detained young people walking towards the city centre and charged them with violation of public order and use of obscene language. All in all 12 protesters were brought to the local police department and released on the same day, an hour and a half later after a “preventive” conversation. In Gomel, where the action was attended by over a hundred people, there were no arrests reported.

On 12 June a spontaneous rally of drivers took place at the border crossing point Bruzgi in Grodno region, which was attended by 200 to 300 people. The reason behind the rally was introduction of new rules of border-crossing by car: if an individual was traveling outside Belarus more than once in 5 days the driver was obliged to pay the customs duty on fuel exported in the tank of a car, as well as for transported goods of daily use. As a result, many people had to abandon their plans to go to Poland. Riot police was summoned to the place of rally and using tear gas it dispersed the protesters. The police reported, 22 people were detained, 15 of them were sentenced to substantial fines, and some faced temporary travel ban outside Belarus.

On 22 June the so-called “Revolution via Social Networks” continued with a protest action named “Silent Revolution”, when people across the country gathered at central squares of their cities at 19:00 and protested with long-lasting clapping. Minsk authorities applied harsh measures, aiming to prevent the protesters from gathering in the October Square. Nevertheless,

the action took place with its participants occupying entire centre of Minsk from the Victory Square to the GUM and from the National Art Museum to the Nemiga street. It was attended by several thousand people. Regardless of the peaceful nature of the action, it resulted in mass detentions across the country. All in all, over 460 people were detained, including about 220 of them in Minsk. Many of the detainees were severely beaten up. More than 20 detainees were charged with disorderly conduct under the Administrative Code and sentenced to fines from 20 to 30 basic units. Overall, the clamp down on protests on 22 June was more aggressive compared with 7 June, implying that any attempts by citizens to express their disagreement with the policies of the regime will be suppressed with the use of force. While comparing the “silent revolution” with the rallies traditionally organized in Belarus by the leaders of conventional opposition, who were always accused by the regime of being de-touched from the people, one should keep in mind that “silent” protests were organized by the protesting community *per se*, which was able to consolidate via social networks.

Administration of justice

In April and May 2011 the district courts of Minsk held trials against defendants in criminal cases initiated under Art. 293 and 342 of the Criminal Code (group activities that violate public order and “mass disorder” correspondingly), following the events of 19 December 2010 on the Independence Square. All in all, 31 person was found guilty under the charges of violation of public order (Article 293 of the Criminal Code) and 10 persons under charges of “mass disorder” (Article 342 of the Criminal Code). The overall number of persons sentenced to various prison terms reached 28.

The trials were open however the court rooms could not accommodate all those wishing to attend them. Representatives of human rights organizations monitored the trials. Representatives of the OSCE also monitored trials with the consent of the authorities.

As a result of trials monitoring human rights activists came to a conclusion that the results of the trials were pre-decided and accusatory by nature.

Particular attention should be noted to the following violations of the rules of criminal procedures:

- accusatory nature of criminal procedure;
- violation of the principle of the independence of the judiciary;
- violation of the principle of universal, comprehensive and objective examination of the merits of a case;
- violation of the territorial jurisdiction principle;
- violation of the principle of adversarial nature of proceedings and equality of arms;
- pressure on attorneys

The principle of full and objective examination of the merits of a case was severely violated by artificial splitting of the criminal case in the aftermath of the events of 19 December 2010 into

more than 10 separate criminal cases and their investigation and hearings held by different courts.

Defendant's attorneys did not have the opportunity to meet with their clients in private in the course of several weeks. Some of the defendants claimed during the trial that torture and inhuman treatment and punishment were applied to them however their statements were not properly examined.

In most cases arguments of the defense were disregarded by judges, their motions were ignored. While rejecting defense motions filed in order to exercise a defendant's procedural right to present evidence in his/her defense, the courts have grossly violated the principle of adversarial nature of proceedings and equality of arms.

The courts were not provided with sufficient evidence for the "guilty" verdicts. In particular, the courts generally did not assess whether the events of 19 December 2010 in the Independence Square could be regarded as "mass disorder". In the majority of trials "Guilty" verdicts pronounced by courts for committing of offenses as they read in the sentences, were not supported by the evidence examined during the trial.

Defense attorneys faced serious pressure from the Ministry of Justice. During the monitoring period two of the six defense attorneys previously stripped off their licenses, unsuccessfully appealed against the decision of the Ministry of Justice.

July started with an extraordinary re-certification of all lawyers in the country, organized by the Ministry of Justice. This initiative by the Ministry of Justice is in violation of the Law on the legal profession and substantially violates the rights of lawyers, thereby placing the legal professionals in a greater dependence on the executive authority. Experts say, re-certification could be aiming at expulsion of the most active and independent lawyers from the Bar.

Right to work

On principle, in lieu of economic liberalization, the government extensively used administrative tools to stabilize the economic situation in the country in April - June 2011. The government has no intention to implement economic reforms, and has neither coherent bail-out plan, nor the professional managers that would be prepared to take responsibility. Therefore the economic situation is deteriorating, resulting in gradual growth of public discontent and hidden unemployment.

Due to the difficult economic situation, the following trends raise particular concerns:

- underreporting of official unemployment data;
- forced labor migration;
- hidden unemployment.

According to the Ministry of Labour and Social Welfare of Belarus, as of 1 May 2011 the number of employees in the country reached 4.66 million people. There were only 32,000 unemployed registered (0.7%).

In Belarus, only those who have registered with the employment centre are regarded as unemployed. However, in most cases, job seekers prefer to avoid registering with the employment centers. Firstly, it is due to the negligible low unemployment benefits (before the devaluation the unemployment benefit amounted to USD 16 and after the devaluation it dropped to USD 10). Secondly, a person registered with the employment center must perform public duty works several days a month (cleaning of streets, yards, etc.). Therefore Belarusian citizens prefer solving their employment problems on their own.

Most countries calculate unemployment rate according to the International Labour Organization (ILO) standards. It is based on a study and household owners' inquiry. According to independent experts, as well as experts of the Belarusian Congress of Democratic Trade Unions, if the Belarusian authorities were to follow the generally accepted international standards while calculating the unemployment rate, it could reach 7-8 %.

Labour migrants is another category of Belarusian citizens who failed in solving their employment problems inside the country and emigrated to find jobs abroad, they should be taken into account while talking about unemployment. Russia, which accounts for the majority of the migrant workers, accommodates Belarusian job seekers and their number is estimated between 300,000 and 1,000,000. The BCDTU assesses their number as somewhere in between 600 and 700 thousand (13-17% of total employment). Unfortunately, the Belarusian authorities prefer to keep silent about this issue and this data is not reflected in the official statistics. Nevertheless, there are reasonable grounds to add this group of people to *de facto* unemployed.

The phenomenon of hidden unemployment is also not reflected by the official statistics. Today, with the unfolding economic crisis the number of employees released on forced leave or working part-time, etc., according to various estimates, is from 600 000 (13% of total employment) up to 1 million 200 thousand (26% of all employed). The BCDTU estimates the most realistic figure is closer to 1 million people (about 20% of all employees).

Therefore the labor market in today's Belarus is experiencing a very difficult period. It is very likely that employment issues due to unpredictability of the economic crisis and its development in the future will deteriorate.