

Education event in Minsk, call for London conference, Belsat, Astraviec NPP – Ostrogorski Centre digest

In December, analysts of the Ostrogorski Centre discussed Belarus' vote at the UN General Assembly, ongoing tension between Belarus and Lithuania over the Astraviec NPP, and the situation of Belsat TV.

On 13 December the Ostrogorski Centre and the Embassies of the Netherlands and Poland organised a conference on education as a human right in Minsk.

The Ostrogorski Centre, the UCL School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES), and the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum announced a Call for Papers for the conference 'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century'.

The 4th Annual Dutch- Belarusian-Polish Conference: Education As A Human Right

On 13 December 2016 Minsk hosted the 4th Annual Dutch-Belarusian-Polish Conference. This year, the topic was: 'Education as a Human Right: Modernising Higher Education to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century'. The conference was organised by the Ostrogorski Centre in cooperation with the Embassies of the Netherlands and Poland.

As with other conferences co-organised by the Ostrogorski

Centre, it brought together people with different views and backgrounds to engage in respectful dialogue. The speakers included representatives of educational institutions from the Netherlands, Poland, and Belarus, as well as Belarusian government agencies and NGOs.

The event focused on three key topics: the challenges of Belarus's accession to the European Higher Education Area, improving business education, and making education more accessible through distance education.

- [Download the conference brochure](#)
- [Conference photos on Facebook](#)

Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century: a Call for Papers

The Ostrogorski Centre, the University College London  School of Slavonic and East European Studies (UCL SSEES), and the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum is calling for proposals from established academics and doctoral researchers for individual papers and panel discussions on various aspects of contemporary Belarusian studies.

The conference will take place on 25 February 2017, at UCL SSEES. On 27 February, a special event will be hosted by the British Library organised in cooperation with the National Library of Belarus and the Belarusian Embassy in London to celebrate the anniversary of Skaryna's Bible.

The 2017 conference will coincide with the 500th anniversary of the first Bible written in old Belarusian. Francis Skaryna's translation of the Bible, published in Prague in 1517-1519, was the first printed book in the whole of Eastern

and Southern Europe and carries immense significance for Belarusian identity. Submissions devoted to Skaryna's legacy are particularly welcome this year.

Submissions are requested by 10 January 2017, more information can be found [here](#).

Analytics

A Belarus Digest editorial argues that [supporting Belsat is in the real interest of Warsaw and Minsk](#). The Polish Foreign Ministry has recently announced that it is considering closing down Belsat, the only Belarusian language channel available online and via satellite across central Europe. Without the active pro-democracy and pro-independence minority in Belarus, which is sustained partially by Belsat, the prospect of Belarus being entirely swallowed up by the Russian world could become even more real.

[Ryhor Astapienia](#) discusses whether [Belarus can punish Lithuania for its position on the Astraviec NPP](#). Belarusian officials have hinted several times that Lithuania benefits significantly from the transit of Belarusian goods, so the Lithuanian government should soften its position on Astraviec. Nevertheless, it seems that Belarus will continue to use Lithuania as a transit country – this remains an economically expedient option. Nevertheless, it will also try to diversify supplies.

[Igar Gubarevich](#) analyses [Belarus's vote at the UN General Assembly](#). It shows that Minsk pursues a much more independent foreign policy than most observers believe. The positions of Minsk and Moscow differ in almost a quarter of all issues. At the same time, the Belarusian government does not cross certain red lines defined by the Kremlin. The Belarusian delegation would never vote for a resolution condemning the Russian government.

Comments in the media

Igar Gubarevich analyses [the three main obstacles to Belarusian-Polish relations improving](#) on Polish radio: delay of local border traffic, the schism of the Polish minority in Belarus, and the Card of the Pole.

Also on Polish radio, Ryhor Astapenia comments on the [revival of Polish-Belarusian relations](#). According to Ryhor, a dominant view in Belarus, Russia, and Poland is that through rapprochement with Poland, Minsk is trying to strengthen its western flank in foreign policy. In doing so, Belarus wants to demonstrate independence in decision-making.

✘ On Polish radio, Igar Gubarevich analyses the [visit of a high-level EU delegation to Minsk](#). According to Igar, the two sides currently maintain a comprehensive institutional dialogue, but true normalisation of relations has yet to occur, as evidenced by the lack of highest-level visits. At the moment, Belarus and the EU are seeking points of contact, putting aside issues of human rights and democracy.

Siarhei Bohdan discusses Belarus's [border policy](#) on Polish radio. The situation on the southern border of Belarus remains at risk of arms penetration and crime, but in two or three years the entire southern border will be closed with the help of EU funds. Meanwhile, Russia closed its border with Belarus for citizens of third countries for purely political reasons, as a punishment for Belarus, Siarhei argues.

Belarus Profile

The BelarusProfile.com database now includes the following people: [Valier Malaška](#), [Natalia Nikandrava](#), [Dzmitry Krupski](#), [Aliaksandr Makajeŭ](#), [Uładzimir Karahin](#), [Vasił Hierasimaŭ](#), [Anatol Isačenka](#), [Andrej Žyškievič](#), [Andrej Dzierach](#), [Volha](#)

[Ščerbina](#),

We have also updated the profiles of [Ihar Karpienka](#), [Aliena Kupčyna](#), [Aliaksandr Kosinieć](#), [Vadzim Hihin](#), [Aliaksandr Milinkievič](#), [Aliaksandr Lahviniec](#), [Anatoł Husaraŭ](#), [Lieanid Šenieć](#), [Eduard Pałčys](#), [Ivan Liemiašeŭski](#), [Viktar Ščaćko](#), [Natalia Kačanava](#), [Maksim Ryžankou](#), [Kanstancin Martyniecki](#), [Juryj Čyž](#).

Belarus policy

□The Ostrogorski Centre continues to update the database of policy papers on BelarusPolicy.com. The papers of partner institutions added this month include:

Andrei Yahorau, Aliona Zuikova. [The role and place of civil society in the system of donor aid for Belarus \(2006-2014\)](#). CET, 2016.

Aliaksandr Chubryk. [KEF-2016 "Reforms for engaging growth": key findings and recommendations](#). IPM Research Centre, 2016.

Dzmitry Kruk, Katsiaryna Barnukova. [The anatomy of recession in Belarus](#). BEROC, 2016.

Alena Artsiomenka. [Factors of reproductive choice of Belarusians](#). BISS, 2016.

Uladzimir Akulich, Yulia Yafimnenka, Viktoryia Smalenskaya, Uladzislau Ramaniuk, Alieś Aliachnovič, Sierž Naŭrodski, Katsiaryna Alieksiatovich, Yaraslau Mialhui. [The seventh issue of the Macroeconomic Review of Belarus \(January-September 2016\)](#). CASE Belarus, 2016.

Think tanks in Belarus are encouraged to submit their research for inclusion into the database by completing this [form](#).

The Ostrogorski Centre is a private, non-profit organisation dedicated to analysis and policy advocacy on problems which

Belarus faces in its transition to market economy and the rule of law. Its projects include Belarus Digest, [the Journal of Belarusian Studies](#), [BelarusPolicy.com](#), [BelarusProfile.com](#) and [Ostro.by](#).