

EHU Fights Allegations of Financial Misconduct, Needs New Leadership

On May 20, Acting Chair of the European Humanities University (EHU) Anne Lonsdale announced that the current EHU rector Prof. Garry Pollick will soon be concluding his term.

The announcement put EHU in the Belarusian headlines. The unexpected news followed a scandal caused by the leak of a confidential audit report prepared by international auditing company Deloitte for EHU donors.

The report exposed alleged violations of tax law and internal financial regulations, purported to be at the hands of a group of American EHU governing board members and Professor Garry David Pollick, a [controversial EHU rector](#).

According to the official announcement, Dr Pollick 'has graciously agreed' to serve EHU until late summer 2016 and "it has always been clear to us on the [EHU Governing] Board that Prof. Pollick had intended to be with us for two years only". However, it has been just about one year since David Pollick took up the rector position. What's going on?

Leak of confidential EHU materials on administrative misconduct

The announcement of Pollick's resignation appeared a few days after an undisclosed group of members of the current EHU staff [leaked a report](#) on EHU conducted by Deloitte at the request of

the Nordic Council, an inter-parliamentary forum and one of EHU's main donors.

Soon after the leak, two major online media outlets from Belarus, kyky.org and bel.biz, almost simultaneously published extensive analysis of the alleged misconduct by those who run the university. This resulted in a public outcry and calls for the current EHU leadership to be removed immediately.

A few days later, it became known that the Nordic Council discontinued its financial support to the university. Nordic Council insiders privately confirmed that the funding was halted due to the allegations exposed in the leaked Deloitte report.

On 25 May, the EHU Senate, the university's body of academic self-governance, issued a statement calling for immediate action to restore the reputation of the university. The statement also called for the reconstruction of institutional stability that it claims has been let down by EHU executives in the past two years.

The Senate also urged to remove the university's top executives, including the rector. It further called for broader engagement of the academic community in decision-making and budgeting as well as the launch of internal crisis management procedures.

This is the second time that the Senate has openly opposed the EHU administration in the last five years. The last time, the Senate [was subsequently dissolved](#). EHU alumni also produced a video calling for reform of management of the European Human University and including Belarusians into decision-making at the university.

We reached out to Anne Lonsdale, asking her to explain why people allegedly responsible for financial misconduct and the violation of EHU internal rules (and, potentially, tax laws of two countries) have not been removed from their positions and

are instead being praised through public announcements.

Lonsdale's responded that she had little to add and claimed that these were '*damaging statements which are untrue and for which one has no proof*'.

[Andrej Laŭruchin](#) was removed from the EHU in 2013 during the [administration's crackdown](#) on 'unqualified' dissident staff members. He is currently an Associate Professor at the Higher School of Economics in Russia (a top 100 university in the QS University Ranking) and was willing to share his view:

Dismissal of those responsible would mean accepting the facts. Hence, the accused shall instead be awarded. Then the suspicion will remain 'suspended in the air'. It's an old political trick that some political opponents of authoritarian regimes call 'Byzantine cunning'. The questions are rather: a) whether there's proof of guilt and b) whether anybody will deal with the case. As my experience of legal disputes in academia shows, this is a very tricky and fraught business that involves huge moral costs since the violators inevitably have influential friends in academic and semi-academic (political) circles.

Protection of donor's interest: revision of EHU ownership structure

The alleged misconduct exposed by Deloitte, if true, would only have become possible as a result of a lack of effective accountability mechanisms. EHU must introduce a new governance model that reflects the existing ownership structure. Such a move requires fundamental revision of the nominal ownership of the EHU – the General Assembly of Part-Owners (GAPO).

The EHU is a non-profit liberal arts university founded in Minsk in 1992. In 2004 it was forcibly shut down by the Belarusian authorities and relocated to neighbouring Vilnius (Lithuania) where it exists as a Belarusian university in exile, supported by a wide range of European and North American governments and philanthropists.

In 2013, the university entered a period of turbulence and since then its management has been widely criticised for authoritarian governance, even resulting in a [call for the creation of an alternative institution](#).

When the EHU was re-established in Vilnius a decade ago, three organisations (the Institute for International Education, the Open Society Foundation (OSF), and the Eurasia Foundation) formed the GAP0 and became the supreme decision-making body of the university.

EHU alumni recently produced a video calling for reform of the current EHU governance system and letting Belarusians run the Belarusian University in exile.

As of 2016, no GAP0 member organisation (except for OSF) provides significant funding to the EHU, but they are in charge of all internal decisions on EHU spending. Meanwhile, the largest EHU donors have no control over the funds they allocate to the EHU.

The university ownership structure has changed, and it must be reviewed to correspond with actual ownership, with primary focus on the protection of donors' and stakeholders' rights. EHU alumni recently produced a video calling for reform of the current EHU governance system and letting Belarusians run the Belarusian university in exile.

Protection of the public interest

Under Lithuanian law the university is a "public institution". Legally speaking, the EHU is a not-for-profit organisation that enjoys certain tax and regulatory benefits because it pursues a public good. But in reality the EHU has been taken over by a group of top managers under the leadership of current EHU President [Anatol Michajlaŭ](#), who as a matter of fact 'owns' the university.

As of June 2016, the university urgently needs to revise the GAPO membership, and conduct an all-encompassing, comprehensive reassessment of its corporate governance policies and disclosure standards.

In May 2016, Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) replaced the Nordic Council in oversight of the EHU Trust Fund, and is expected to make changes to remove the deadlock of the existing crisis.

SIDA should request full compensation for losses incurred by the university as a result of managerial misconduct and introduce a governance model that reflects the existing ownership structure – one that provides administrative representation based on current ownership.

This means that the university must immediately review its corporate governance policies in the light of the existing ownership structure that has changed significantly since 2005. EHU shall let major donors have control over spending and must prevent nominal owners from decision-making outside the 'actual' representation quota weighted on the 'ownership' stake.

EHU remains a public academic organisation. It is not a private institution, but a public university run in the public

interest, and it must remain as such. This means that the 'part-owners' and the 'board' , its rector and president are not EHU's masters, but its servants. All members of the EHU community must remind the EHU administration about it.

Serge Kharytonau

Serge is the former President of EHU Alumni Association (2014-15).

Successful Crowdfunding, Protestants Allowed to Gather For Prayer – Belarus Civil Society Digest

Mova Nanova website has reached 100,000 views per month. First success of Belarusian crowdfunding at Talaka.by – animated Peppa Pig collects 164% of the needed amount. Stakeholders continue discussion on establishment of the National University for Belarus.

First Mahiliou city picnic gathers more than 1,000 people. Minsk authorities for the first time allow the Protestants to gather for a mass prayer. Regional volunteers collect and deliver aid assistance for the wounded in the conflict zone in Ukraine.

Civil Society Initiatives

[Mova Nanova website reaches 100,000 views per month.](#) The

traffic of an updated website of Mova Nanova, free Belarusian language courses, has reached 100,000 views in a month. The most popular section is Mediateka, where one can find several thousands of Belarusian videos, audio materials and books. Mova Nanova/ Language Anew was founded in early 2014 and work in 10 Belarusian cities; weekly the courses are attended by 650 people.

Discussion on establishing the National University goes on. EuroBelarus Information Service continues a series of interviews with different stakeholders on the initiative of establishing the National University. In her interview Dr. Tatsiana Sshytsova, the EHU professor, reasons whether Belarus needs such university and why: "Belarus strongly needs powerful constructive social initiatives. Retrograde Europe's import is a mistake. Belarus is European to a degree it develops institutes in common-European context, reflexively identifying its experience in plural field of European cultures."□

First success of Belarusian crowdfunding at Talaka.by. On 1 June the first successful crowdfunding campaign at Talakosht crowdfunding platform has finished. Project Peppa Peg that aimed at making a Belarusian language audio version of a known cartoon, has collected 61,85 million rubles (about \$4,300); that is 164% of the sum needed. For two months of the campaign, the project was financially supported by 135 people.

First Mahiliou city picnic collects more than 1,000 people. Dranik Fest is next! On 30 May the first ever city picnic was held in Mahiliou. The organisers – City Initiatives Centre – tried to make it as different as possible: people could play Frisbee, twister, chess laser tag. The aim of the picnic was to inspire Mahiliou residents on collaborative actions. Now the City Initiatives Centre has an ambition to hold the second **Dranik Fest** that last year got a very positive feedback.

Regional Social Weekends identify winners. On May 22, Vitsebsk

hosted finals of a regional Social Weekend, which brought together social ideas and business to support them. The competition presented eight projects of various topics; Grand Prix went to the Paralympic Fencing project. On May 30, the finals for regional projects is to be held in [Brest](#). The Social Weekend is organised by MaeSens charity platform together with the Office for European Expertise and Communications (OEEC).

[Humanitarian route Initiative Belarus-ATO helps Ukrainians in need](#). Homel volunteers collect and deliver aid assistance for the wounded in the conflict zone in Ukraine and Ukrainian refugees. The money collected were enough to purchase a car for the medical service. The key principle of the initiative is not to arm any of the parties, but to help people who are left without protection – the wounded, the bereaved families, refugees.

[Competition of public art objects at Brest](#). Agency of regional development *Dzedzich* opens a competition for creation of city installations and small architectural forms in Brest. The aim of the competition is forming of progressive cultural field in Brest and development steps in new forms of actual art. Everyone is welcome take part and make Brest more attractive.

Interaction between state and civil society

[Minsk authorities for the first time allowed the Protestants to gather for a collective prayer](#). The day before Saint Easter evangelic Christians gathered to pray in the walls of Chyzouka Arena Ice place. As organisers explained, the place was supposed by Minsk city council. The collective pray was attended by about 800 people and the Christians are perceived that first ever approved mass-pray (after several rejections) is caused by their community social work.

[Political prisoner Yury Rubtsou sentenced to two years in penal colony](#). On May 28, the Pružany District Court has sentenced a political prisoner Yury Rubtsou to two years of imprisonment in a minimum security penal colony on charges of evasion of serving his initial sentence. In the autumn of 2014, the Gomel activist Yury Rubtsou was sentenced to 1.5 years of special settlement on charges of insulting the judge. During the Charnobylski Shlyakh rally, Rubtsou was wearing a [T-shirt with the inscription](#) "Lukashenka, go away."

[Easier terms for setting up trade unions in Belarus](#). The procedure of setting up trade unions has been simplified in Belarus in accordance with ordinance No.4 signed by Alexander Lukashenka on 2 June. The related amendments will create more favorable conditions for the operation of trade unions, enforcement and protection of social and labor rights and interests of employees.

[In 2015 Belarusian journalists fined for more than \\$5,000](#). Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) tracks a chart of fines to journalists for violating article 22.9 of the Administrative Code (unlawful production and distribution of mass media products). In 2015, the whole amount of fines is 85 million rubles, or about \$5,600.

Other

[Delegation of European Parliament announces a 2-day visit to Belarus in June](#). Delegation of European Parliament headed by the chief of delegation on Belarus Bogdan Zdrojewski will have a two-day visit to Minsk on 18-19 June. The delegation plans to meet families of political prisoners, opposition and civil leaders and Belarus officials.

[Top 30 websites in Belarus in April](#). Marketing.by presents the top 30 resources that have the largest coverage in Belarus in April 2015. Now Bynet has 5 million followers. In April, the Belarusian portal [TUT.BY](#) beat [youtube.com](#) service and takes 5th

place in the ranking. As before, the top 30 primarily consists of search services (Google.com – 1st place), social networks (Vkontakte – 2nd place), shopping sites, and entertainment services.

Belarus Digest prepared this overview on the basis of materials provided by Pact. This digest attempts to give a richer picture of the recent political and civil society events in Belarus. It often goes beyond the hot stories already available in English-language media.