

Research Contest Winners, EBRD, Conference on Belarusian Studies – Ostrogorski Centre Digest

In March Ostrogorski Centre (OC) analysts discussed a variety of issues in the fields of foreign policy, religion and migration. As the economic crisis unfolds in Belarus and Russia, many Belarusians will seek refuge in the west, where Poland is providing increasingly attractive conditions for migrants from the former USSR.

Sweden is changing its approach towards cooperation with Belarus, shifting from only supporting civil society and the opposition to engaging the government.

Meanwhile, inside Belarus the authorities continue to search for an identity that could save them from the “Russian World”. They may try to reanimate the independent Greek Catholic Church.

Vadzim Smok [analyses](#) the **Card of the Pole** – the Polish authorities’ instrument to attract a young labour force from former USSR countries. As the negative demographic trend in Poland increases and the economic crisis across the post-Soviet space continues, an increase in the migration flow of Belarusians to Poland seems very likely. Many Belarusians see it as an opportunity to work and study in Poland with the prospect of getting EU citizenship. The Belarusian authorities definitely dislike the initiative, but have proved unable to counter it so far.

Ryhor Astapenia [highlights](#) the Belarusian authorities’ seeming change in attitude towards the **Greek-Catholic Church in**

Belarus, which has long been on the margins of public life. The situation is difficult because it has been criticised by the Orthodox Church, which commands the largest following in the country, and shunned by the Catholic Church, which is concerned that the Greek Catholics could undermine its already fragile relationship with the Orthodox Church.



Igar Gubarevich [discusses](#) the recent visit and talks of a delegation of the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA) with Belarus officials. SIDA used to have democratic activists and NGOs as its preferred partners in Belarus, but the situation seems to be changing. The Belarusian government has been stressing its greater openness to cooperation with Europe, and **Sweden** may try to see whether greater involvement of government actors in cooperation can be a more effective means of triggering policy change in Belarus.

Director of the Ostrogorski Centre Yaraslau Kryvoi takes part in consultations in Minsk on the political climate in Belarus with Acting Vice President of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (**EBRD**) Alain Pilloux and the head of EBRD Belarus office Francis Delaey (pictured).

Winners of research contest announced

On 15 March in Minsk the Ostrogorski Centre delivered a training session on writing up research for winners of a competition organised in cooperation with the Pontis Foundation and the Mott Foundation (pictured).

The selection panel approved five research projects on

Belarusian foreign policy and education:

- Belarusian Analytical Workroom, **'Geopolitical orientations of Belarusians: sociological analysis and survey'**
- Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies, **'Belarusian soft power in the region: evaluation of its potential and impact'**
- Belarusian State University, School of Business and Management of Technology, **'Conditioning factors of entrepreneurial activities of Belarusian students'**
- Centre for European Studies, **'The problem of modernisation of higher education in Belarus: social sciences and humanities'**
- Political Sphere Institute, **'Challenges for Belarusian foreign policy and the post-Soviet space after 2008'**.

'Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century' Conference

Organisers released the programme for the Belarusian Studies in the 21st Century conference and Annual London Lecture on Belarusian Studies which will take place on 23-24 March 2016 in London. The conference will serve as a multidisciplinary forum of Belarusian studies in the West and offer a rare networking opportunity for researchers of Belarus.

It is organised by University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies (SSEES) and the Ostrogorski Centre in partnership with Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum, the Anglo-Belarusian Society and the Journal of Belarusian Studies. For those who complete the registration form before 22 March 2016, attendance is free. The programme is available [here](#). The registration form is [here](#).

Comments in the media

- Ryhor Astapenia, analyst of the Ostrogorski Centre, explains to [Polish Television 24](#) why **Belarus detained major oligarch Jury Čyž**. According to Astapenia, Čyž's arrest is part of a struggle between different factions of the Belarusian regime and an attempt by the authorities to find money inside the country.
- Siarhei Bohdan discusses with the Belarusian Programme of [Polish Radio](#) **the current situation in and around Syria**. Bohdan sees the breakup of Syria as a likely scenario, as Kurds are receiving support from all over the world and Assad's army has made no major breakthrough, even with Russian support. He thinks that Iran's relations with the west will play a key role in determining the fate of Syria.
- Igar Gubarevich gives [Polish Radio](#) a foreign policy forecast for 2016. He predicts that **relations with the EU and US will get better**, but will not lead to high-level mutual visits. Belarus will continue its old brotherhood game with Russia while at the same time trying to reduce dependence on it, and will make efforts to enhance cooperation with China.
- Siarhei Bohdan discusses with the Belarusian Programme of [Polish Radio](#) **the current situation around Iran** and sanctions against this country. Influential groups in all countries are interested in rapprochement with Iran, yet many hindrances still remain.
- Ryhor Astapenia in a comment to [Polish Radio](#) opines that **the role of the opposition and civil society** in the dialogue between Belarus and the West will decrease as a result of EU sanctions being lifted. In contrast, contact between officials and business will grow. However, this step will not bring more democracy to domestic politics in Belarus, as the authorities will continue to carry out occasional repression.

Belarus Profile

The BelarusProfile.com database now includes the following personalities: [Jaŭhien Šastakoŭ](#), [Paviel Vinahradaŭ](#), [Aliaksiej Šein](#), [Arciom Šrajbman](#), [Voĺha Šparaha](#), [Paviel Šaramiet](#), [Aliaksandr Smaliančuk](#), [Iryna Vidanova](#), [Siarhiej Nikaliuk](#), [Alieś Suša](#).

We have also updated the profiles of [Natallia Ejsmant](#), [Mikałaj Jafimčyk](#), [Andrej Jahoraŭ](#), [Andrej Švied](#), [Siarhiej Kaliečyc](#), [Uladzimir Makiej](#), [Mikałaj Samasiejka](#), [Hienadź Svidzierski](#), [Paviel Sieviaryniec](#), [Anatol Sivak](#), [Siarhiej Sidorski](#), [Halina Skarachod](#), [Alieh Sližeŭski](#), [Viktar Sniażycki](#), [Valiancin Čakanaŭ](#).

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:

- Aliaksandr Autuška-Sikorski. [Improving the country competitiveness of Belarus: what the state development programs miss](#). BISS, 2016.
- Uladzimir Akulič, Uladzimir Valietka, Darja Suškievič, Sierž Naŭrodski, Alieś Aliachnovič. [CASE Belarus Macroeconomic Review of Belarus \(Is. 4, February 2016\)](#). CASE Belarus, 2016.
- Maryja Akulava. [Foreign investment: a focus on borrowing](#). BEROC, 2014.
- Voĺha Biełskaja, Darja Urucina. [Belarusian business associations: problems and potential for development](#). BEROC, 2012.
- Ihar Pielipaś. [Is inflation in Belarus inertial?](#) BEROC, 2012.

Any partner organisation of BelarusPolicy.com can submit its research for inclusion onto 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](#).

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