

Leading Economists of the Belarusian Diaspora Meet in Minsk

Last week, the Belarusian Economic Research and Outreach Center (BEROC) held its second Annual International Economics Conference in Minsk.



BEROC is an admirable [initiative](#) of a group of Western-educated Belarusian economists who now continue their research and teaching at the world's top universities. Probably the best-known of them is Aleh Tsyvinski, Professor of Economics at Yale. The BEROC aims "to spread the modern economic science methods in Belarus and to generate new academic and policy relevant knowledge about the Belarusian economy", according to BEROC's [website](#).

Russian economist Konstantin Sonin, a guest speaker at the conference, wrote in his [blog](#) that

Economic science of Belarus should be happy to have such a well-organised diaspora. One could have imagined that there are many economic scholars of Belarusian descent in the world, but it must have been uneasy to gather these people in one place".

He also describes his impression of people viewing news of Belarus' president appointing a new government and of the police raiding the editorial offices of opposition newspapers.

Indeed, Belarus authoritarian regime caused a massive loss of

human capital. People organized in BEROC are only a top of the iceberg of the brain drain from Belarus. The exodus of professionals from Belarus involves not only scientists but also entrepreneurs who have been unable to do business in Belarus due to heavy regulatory pressure. The state apparatus has during these has been constantly cleansed from professionals not loyal to Mr Lukashenka.

It is essential for the Belarusian government to attract people like the BEROC economists as advisers to make reforms in the country. However, the government should also understand that many of them would probably find it difficult to assist the state if it continues human rights violations in the country. It is one thing to advise a growing eastern European country waiting to be explored by investors, and a different thing to advise a regime that persecutes independent media and puts presidential candidates in prison.

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