



Report on Results of the Monitoring
of Academic Freedoms' Violations in Belarusian Higher Education
Institutions for the period of September – December 2012

**Independent Bologna Committee
Committee "Solidarnasc"
"Center for Development of Students' Initiatives"**

Minsk, 2012

Introduction

The monitoring of academic freedoms violations (further – the Monitoring) is aimed at retrieving the actual information about the situation on academic freedoms in Belarusian Higher Education Institutions (further – HEIs). Monitoring is organized by the “Center for Development of Students’ Initiatives” (www.cdsi.by) and the Committee “Solidarnasc” (www.solidarnasc.org) within the Independent Bologna Committee activity. The Monitoring is implemented by students and teachers in all regional centers of Belarus as well as the other cities, in which HEIs are present. Being adapted especially for Belarus, methodology of the international network “ScholarsatRisk” (<http://scholarsatrisk.nyu.edu/>) is used in the Monitoring.

The subjects of the Monitoring are: (1) academic rights and freedoms violations, civil and political rights and freedoms violations, educational rights and other rights connected to educational legislation violations, including education institutions’ regulations, any kind of discriminations (racial, political, religious, gender) (2) violations in regard to academic community members (students, teachers, administration) (3) violations from the side of other teachers, HEIs’ administration’s and governmental bodies’ representatives. Therefore not only academic freedoms, but also other rights and freedoms of academic community members are observed within the Monitoring.

The process of collecting information about violations is being held by the observers (students, teachers, HEIs administration’s members) in their HEIs as well as by collecting information from mass media or direct messages to the e-mail of the Monitoring. After the information about an academic freedom violation is being received, it is verified and specified by the Monitoring organizers and then transmitted to an expert group, which consists of lawyers and other experts in the field of education, for further investigation and classification.

More detailed information about the Monitoring Methodology can be found on the Independent Bologna Committee website <http://bolognaby.org/> in the “Violations Monitoring” section.

The Monitoring Results

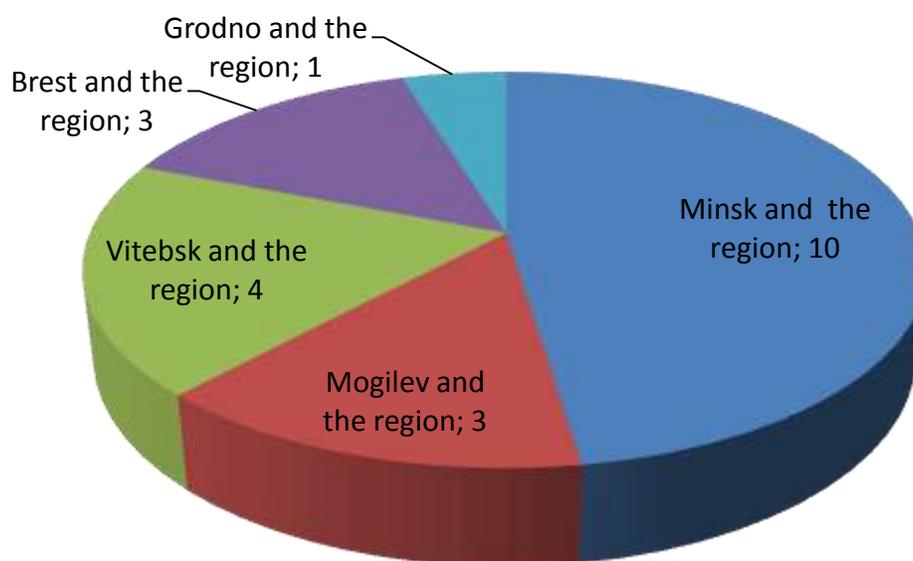
For the period of September – December 2012 observers and organizers of the academic freedoms violations monitoring mainly paid attention to the research of violations towards early voting, forced labor and also problems connected to pressure on teachers from the side of state bodies and administration.

Coercion to early voting

As the practice of elections procedure in Belarus demonstrates, students are one of the most vulnerable social groups in the situation of coercion to early voting. Elections of the deputies to the National Assembly's House of Representatives 2012 also haven't been done without certain violations.

Observers and organizers of the Monitoring have received 21 messages about violations for the period of early voting. Despite that the number of messages is not high, each of the messages indicates to mass coercion of students to early voting, which allows to speak about systematic violations.

Diagram 1 – Number of messages on coercion of students to early voting



Below there are conclusions, which have been made by the Monitoring Expert group on the grounds of examination of the messages on violations as well as decisions towards these violations.

In order to learn the full version of violations messages as well as the experts' comments, please see Appendix 1.

On the basis of the information, being received by expert group within the Monitoring, there can be pointed out several types of academic freedoms' violations of students and, in some cases, teachers:

- 1) Violation of the right for free participation in elections, guaranteed by art. 38 of the Constitution and art. 5 of the Electoral Code, which, depending on certain circumstances, can be classified as administrative offense (according to art. 9.10. of the Administrative Violations Code), or as criminal offense (according to art. 185 of the Criminal Code – coercion, or according to art. 191 - hindering a citizen from exercising his/her electoral rights).
- 2) Violation by the HEI of the responsibility to provide quality of education (pp. 4.1 p.4 of the Education Code). Education quality means correspondence of the education to the academic standards requirements, courseware of the corresponding academic program. Voluntary liberation from studies can cause late performance of the academic program and, as the result, reduction of holidays duration (not less than 2 weeks during the academic year and not less than 4 weeks during summer holidays – p.2. art. 178 of the Education Code)
- 3) Violation of the prohibition of use of academic and educational processes for political reasons, established by the p.3. art. 53 of the Education Code. Any kinds of calls for voting this or that candidate violate this law.

Coercion to forced labor

The year of 2012 is marked by an unprecedented growth of retention of students to different kinds of works. The Monitoring allowed unraveling and claiming the following law violations:

1. Item 2 of the article 89 of the Education Code, which prohibits retention of students for implementing works (services), not being foreseen by the academic documentation, educational plans of the HEI.

For the state, students today are cheap manpower, which is due to the lack of profession, experience and qualification, are attracted to hard works. In the majority of cases these are works in the fields of construction and agriculture. Only for the period of January – September 2012 (there is no statistics for autumn and winter yet) there have been attracted to works 35 500 students in Belarus.

2. Regulation on internship of students, cadets, trainees №860, established by the Council of Ministers of the Republic of Belarus d.d. 03.06.2010, which includes requirements of corresponding of internship works to the academic program, being attended by student.

Therefore in Gorki (Mogilev region), engagement of students in such kinds of works as “tile paving” has been registered as internship. Moreover students were forced to work under the threat of loss of housing, being provided for the period of studies, as well as threatening by the further difficulties in passing examinations.

3. Item 16 of the Instruction on organizing students teams’ activity, established by the Decree of the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus d.d 07.06.2012, №60.

In agreements, concluded according to the requirements of sub item 1.8, item 8 of the Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus d.d. 16.04.2012 №181 “On organization of student teams’ activity within the Republic of Belarus”, obligations of receiving side concerning guarantying conditions of labor compensation, housing and nutrition have not been defined.

4. The Decree of the President of the Republic of Belarus d.d. 26.07.1999 №29 “On additional measures concerning improvement labor relations, enforcement of labor and executive discipline”, the Labor Code of the Republic of Belarus regarding the requirement of concluding labor agreements with employees.

Data of the Monitoring testify the facts of not concluding labor agreements at all, or concluding with violations of the minimum terms of labor agreement (contract).

5. Article 275 of the Labor Code – students are hired for job without preliminary medical observation (according to the materials of Mogilev region Prosecution Office examination).

6. Salary is more than in two times less than the minimum official wage.

In Vitebsk region, students, having worked from 9 am till 6 pm, earned 20 000 Belarusian rubles (\$2.3) a day for the agricultural works.

7. In national regulatory acts of the Republic of Belarus it is positioned that students labor is possible if it doesn't interfere with health. At the same time injury rate of young persons is rather high. Data about injury rate is accurately concealed. Nowadays there are numerous facts about injuries of students in 2011: "...during removing of construction waste in a dangerous zone, a 17 years old young person got fatal injuries by a bucket with adhesive solution, fallen on her/his head"; "...a serious injury has been made to a 16 years old young person by a metal element of a peeling machine during works in a wood-working shop".

Cases of pressure on academic staff by governmental bodies and HEI administration

The monitoring observers obtained facts from the mass media about academic freedoms violations towards academic staff of Grodno State University n.a. Y.Kupala.

Professor of the History department of Grodno State University n.a. Y.Kupala, teacher of history, co-author of the textbook "Grodno studies" became the first victim of the violation and was dismissed after numerous conversations with the HEI administration and KGB officers. The subject of conversation was the content of the named textbook about Grodno history, which caused lots of questions from the side of the officials, mentioned above.

State security officers were particularly interested in such questions as: why the book's contents end on the 90ies, why there is only white-red-white flag and the coat-of-arms "Pogonia" and how is it come, that Belarusian academicians allowed to publish their works abroad. In several weeks professor has been dismissed for so-called "systematic violations of the labor discipline".

According to testimonials of The Monitoring observers, which have been students of the named professor before his dismissal, victim was late for the lesson only once for 5 minutes from the beginning of the academic year, and has been dismissed after that case in short time.

In this case there was a law violation, because professor was dismissed from his position for “systematic nonfulfillment of position obligations, foreseen by the labor agreement”, but this doesn’t correspond to reality. The real reason for his dismissal was the fact of authorship of the textbook, which has been treated by the official authorities as unsecure for certain ideological reasons.

Victim of the second violation was the teacher of Law faculty of Grodno State University n.a. Y.Kupala, which was demoted in his position. The reason was the following events: in September 2012 the organization “The Third sector” celebrated its 15 years anniversary. Congratulations, which the professor addressed to the organization, have been published on its website. After that, professor was called for a conversation to the university administration, which was conducted by KGB officers. University’s administration asked him to write a letter of resignation as his public stance wasn’t acceptable. After that, there have been some more calls to administration, where the teacher faced KGB officers again.

According to the presented information, there has been the fact of violation of the teacher’s right for freedom of self-expression as well as his privacy right. There is no connection between teacher’s professional activity and his congratulations towards public organization, but nevertheless there has been a violation of teacher’s rights in the form of his demoting.

Conclusions

The practice of students' coercion to early voting continues to exist, violating the norms of administrative, criminal, electoral laws as well as the law in the field of education. Such actions of HEIs' administration as well as governmental bodies are aimed at using the system of higher education as an instrument for political goals, which indicates at politicizing of the high school on the whole. In this situation the main principles of university education, which are academic freedoms and university autonomy, are defied. These principles are the main values, on which European (Bologna) University education system is based. Such situation of numerous laws' violations exists along with the applications of the Ministry Of Education of the Republic of Belarus to join European community of high education.

On the grounds of the cases of forcing students to labor research there can be concluded that forced labor of students is used in Belarus. Prohibition of forced labor usage, which presents in conventions of the International Labor Organization, sub-item "a" item 3 art. 8 of the International pact of civil and political rights, item 1 art.41 of the Constitution, norms of labor and education laws, is violated.

Messages about putting pressure on teachers of the Grodno State University n.a. Y.Kupala confirm the fact of academic freedoms violations, in particular freedom for publications and freedom for academic staff' opinion expression. Existence of such facts testifies the inability of academicians in Belarus to implement their academic, scientific and research activities independently from the state ideology.

Recommendations to the academic community

In cases of coercion of students into early voting it is recommended:

- 1) To fix the facts in any kind of forms (audio, video records);
- 2) To inform about such cases to mass media, human rights defenders and other organizations of civil society;
- 3) To address a letter to Prosecution Office, Investigation Committee, Ministry of Education. Here it is important to remember that anonymous applications will not be considered if they don't include information about possible crime. That

means that the letters about the most severe facts of students' electoral rights violations can be taken into consideration anonymously. But in this case some evidence, proving these facts should be attached.

In case of coercion of students to forced labor it is recommended:

- 1) To collect as many as possible confirmations of forced labor (photo, audio, video materials);
- 2) To inform about such facts the Monitoring observers, Independent Bologna Committee website (<http://bolognaby.org>), mass media, human rights defending organizations, independent labor unions;
- 3) With the help of human rights defending organizations and labor unions to address a letter to Prosecution Office, Investigation Committee, courts.

In case of putting pressure on teachers from the side of governmental bodies and HEI administration it is recommended:

- 1) To defend his/her reputation and the violated right in court. It is necessary to go to the law not later than for the period of month after the dismissal. The reason "systematic violation of labor discipline" requires documental evidence from the side of employer, which can be demanded by the dismissed party in the legal claim.
- 2) After having passed all stages of the trial and worked out all the national mechanisms of violated rights rehabilitation, an individual can defend his/her rights by using international instruments, one of which is a petition to the UN Human Rights Committee. This case should be accompanied by publications in mass media, mainly internet ones.

Recommendations to HEI administrations and governmental bodies

To cease the practice of coercion of students and academicians to early voting in any forms.

To give up the practice of students' coercion to any kind of labor by means of threats, repressions and pressure, to exclude from the internship educational plans such

works, which are not connected to the academic program and also to cease coercion of students to agricultural works without students' right of choice and low salaries, that break the labor law.

Do not interfere with academic, scientific and other activities of professors, provide them with conditions for independent actualization of academic and scientific activities, do not violate freedom of associations and other fundamental human rights.

Appendix 1 – Messages about students' coercion to early voting in HEIs of Belarus (with comments of experts)

Belarusian State Agricultural Technical University (BSATU)

According to the message of one of the BSATU student, all students of this university are forced to vote preliminary and they are alerted not to participate in boycott campaign by all means.

“Today at the curatorial hour the topic of current elections has been raised. According to our curator's proposal all students are to vote before the election date 23th of September and go home after that”, - a student said.

These examples are the most often in violating students' rights. Forcing students to vote is, as it has been already mentioned, violating students' right for free participation in elections (art. 5 of the Electoral Code). Moreover putting pressure on students influences negatively on their physiological state and does not help the improvement of education quality in HEIs, which is the main priority of the HEI according to subit.4.1 it. 4 art.20 of The Education Code.

Such actions of the pedagogical staff are the violation of the prohibition, presupposed by the it.3 art. 53 of the Education Code, which claims, that it is forbidden for pedagogical staff to use academic and pedagogical processes for political reasons.

For such actions it is foreseen an administrative responsibility according to art. 9 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (violation of the law about

elections, referendum, recall of a deputy and realization of citizens' right for legislative initiative), which presupposes responsibility in the form of penalty up to 15 basic amounts.

Apart of that, within certain circumstances (in case of threats of expel, problems with exams, loss of housing in dormitory or other threats of students' rights and freedoms violation) these actions can be qualified as a criminal offence (according to art.185 of the Criminal Code – coercion, or according to art. 191 of the Criminal Code – interfering with citizens' electoral rights realization).

An order from “above” has come to the university. Rector of BSATU is Nikolai Kazarovec, which is also a deputy candidate. He presses teachers and the whole academic staff to make them forcing students to participate in elections. They collect signatures because of that and then will transfer this information to the dean's office or somewhere “higher”, - mentioned the young man.

On the one hand, this fact testifies rector's violation of the electoral law requirements, an art.5 of the Electoral Code in particular, according to which the elector is free to decide whether to participate in elections or not, as well as part 2 of the art. 73 of the Electoral Code, which prohibits the usage of official capacity advantages within the interest of choosing certain candidate. On the other hand, these actions violate academic rights and freedoms of academic staff, which have their right for professional honor and dignity defense (it. 1.1 art. 52 of the Education Code of the Republic of Belarus), providing conditions for realization of professional activity (sub it. 2 it. 1 art. 52 of the Education Code). Herewith realization and guaranteeing the indicated rights is a direct responsibility of the HEI and its rector as the head of the institution, according to it. 4 art. 20 of the Education Code. Assignment functions of guaranteeing students' presence at elections to teachers goes beyond of their rights and responsibilities and can be qualified as exceeding the official capacity (art. 426 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus).

To vote before the elections' date is demanded by the dormitory administration, by means of intimidation.

In this case the violations similar to those mentioned above take place (violation of the right for free participation in election – art.5 of the Electoral Code, it. 3 art. 53 of

the Education Code, which prohibits usage of academic and educational processes in political aims).

Belarusian National Technical University (BNTU)

A student of BNTU, which lives in dormitory №6 informs: “a commandant attended dormitory’s rooms and told everybody to vote before the Election Day. The same thing happened at the university: curator and deputy dean came to remind about early voting and offered to make Friday and Saturday free of studies for those students, who would vote in advance, in return”.

“In BNTU they offer a day of rest for the participation in early voting”, - Victor confirms.

From this example it can be noticed, that the dean’s office offer in return to voting in advance a day of rest, which should be a part of academic program. According to item 4.1 of the Education Code, the responsibility of HEI is to guarantee the quality of education, but these actions interfere with this norm.

Another student from BNTU informs: “in BNTU they drove students to ballot stations, persuade by different means: intimidate with loss of housing, problems during exams, even it came to a point where Minsk students are forced to come to students’ ballot stations at the same time they have their own municipal ones according to their Minsk registration. Moreover they promise to make Friday a day-off, anything to make students to come.”

Also the following fact has been fixed in BNTU. “Firstly, the dean of the faculty of information technologies and robotics asked to vote in advance, came to dormitory rooms and ordered to attend ballot station before the Election Day. Students were threatened with possible loss of place in dormitory in the next semester”, - informs the source.

Actions, connected to threats, in case students take them like real ones, can be also qualified like coercion, which has been mentioned above and, for which a criminal offence is foreseen according to art. 185 or 191 of the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus.

International State Ecological University n.a. A.D. Sakharov (ISEU n.a. A.D. Sakharov)

According to the message of ISEU student Inna, at one of the university's dean's offices students "were offered" to vote in advance. So, for example a group of students attended ballot station during Physical Education lesson. Those, who voted in advance, were promised to get a room in dormitory and, vice versa, "unfaithful" were promised to lose their place in dormitory.

In this example the violation of the administration's responsibility for guaranteeing the education quality (item 4.1 art 20 of the Education Code) can be traced, as well as the attributes of an administrative offence, which is presupposed by the art. 9.10 of the Administrative Code of the Republic of Belarus (violation of the law on elections, referendum, recall of a deputy and law initiative). Within certain circumstances these actions can be qualified as coercion (art. 185 of the Criminal Code) or as interfering with citizens' electoral rights (art 191 of the Criminal Code).

Minsk Institute of Management

Student of the Minsk Institute of Management informs, that "deans' deputies visit academic groups to force them to vote in advance. And everything is run under the control of the institute's rector Nikolai Susha. If anyone doesn't vote, and this fact is revealed, certain measures are to be taken. But which measures there was not specified".

This example is similar to the one mentioned above.

Belarusian State University of Culture and Arts (BSUCA)

Student of last courses informs about coercion of BSUCA students to early voting on Friday, 21th of September. "Today they were seeking for all the student of last courses, which haven't voted yet. There was a message on the university radio, that everyone, who hasn't voted yet, should appear at the dean's office at 15.30. Especially they were interested in those, who live in student dormitories. And then one by one students of last courses were all informed about they should visit deans' office urgently from 4 pm till 9 pm".

Also a student named Alexander informs that in BSUCA students are forced to vote in advance and promised to get a day-off on Monday in return.

These actions testify the violation of students' right for free elections, as well as the violation of administration's responsibility to guarantee the education quality.

Belarusian State University of Informatics and Radio Electronics (BSUIR)

A former pro-rector of the university, candidate to Parliament, Professor Vitali Busko made a speech for BSUIR students. He mentioned that he is a graduate from this university himself and called students for participation in Parliament Elections. After him, the speech was continued by the moderators (last courses students), which called for “supporting our graduate”.

In this case it can be noticed a violation of electoral campaign's norms and rules of by Parliament candidate Vitali Busko. Such actions can be qualified as violation p.2 art.45 of the Electoral Code, which regulates possible forms of agitation.

Polotsk State University (PSU)

On the 18th of September inhabitants of the Dormitory № 5 of PSU were asked to vote on the Parliament Elections in advance, before Friday. According to Dormitory's Student Council's message, an unknown authority came and ordered to make 99% of presence at the elections. Also there will be everyday count of electors on ballot stations. Although Dormitory's Student Council reported, that a lot of students said, they would vote only on the Election Day.

Baranovichi State University (BarSU)

1. Students of the faculty of Economics and Law were ordered to vote in advance, on Thursday.

“Everyone was said to come before Friday. Threats of expulsion from dormitory and loss of scholarship were used. It was order to all faculty's students to come on Thursday at ballot stations with student IDs and passports”, - claims one of the BarSU students.

It has been mentioned above how to qualify such threats. This case, like many others, can be called an example of the violation of students' right for free elections, as well as prohibition of academic and educational processes usage in political aims.

2. As Sergey Govsha reported, 3 days before elections there were already 181 persons voted at the Ballot station №21 of the Eastern Baranovichi region №6 1, which is 31.6% of total number of voters. This ballot station is provided for students, which are registered at the university dormitories.

“We spoke with students and they approve the fact of coercion to vote in advance by the side of curators and they have a record on the dictaphone, where the names of these curators can be heard”, - transmits Sergey.

In this case it can be seen, that students could make an audio record, which can be used as supporting evidence for initiating an administrative proceeding against HEI administration (curators in particular) according to art. 9.10 of the Administrative Code (violation of the electoral law), although video and audio records should be used in addition to other evidence like witnesses' attribution and others. In this case it is necessary to write a petition to Procurator Office for taking curators and the other administrative staff to court according to the art 9.10 of the Administrative Code, to specify all the facts, which testify electoral rights' violation, and to attach audio record on a digital device (CD, USB devices), which support facts described in petition. Potentially it can be necessary to provide also the recording device in order to make an expertise.

A 3-year BarSU student wrote a letter to edition of local newspaper Intex-Press (<http://intex-press.by/>) with the following message: “students are directly ordered to participate in early voting”.

"In Student union there is an informational group, which was ordered to visit all academic groups and spread the information, that participation in early voting is obligatory for all students. Otherwise students from other towns and cities were threatened by expel from dormitories, students, which receive scholarship – by the loss of scholarship. Leaders of academic groups were charged to provide lists of those, who hasn't voted, before lunch on Friday”, - said the young man.

These facts are examples of violation of the right for free elections, as well as can be qualified as administrative or criminal offence, depending on state of the case.

In BarSU administration the fact of such a pressure on students is neglected. “Of course we are explaining to students, that participation in election is their civil duty. But we are not telling for whom to vote or whether to participate in elections at all. I can

assure you, that there was no pressure from the university's side", - commented the head of BarSU educational department Pavel Popko for Intex-Press.

Even if to believe Pavel Popko's words, the fact of persuasion from the side of administration violates the right for freedom of choice, which is vested by art.5 of the Electoral Code. Students should decide by themselves not only for which candidate to vote, but whether to vote at all. This right is protected by the law and cannot be limited by any means.

3. According to Victor Meziaka, an observer on the ballot station №19, the biggest part of electors, which prefer to vote in advance, consists of BarSU students. "Moreover lots of students come to elections compulsorily", - adds the observer.

"One guy shared the information about the fact, that preliminary "educational" conversations took place before the elections, during which students were persuaded to come to elections in advance, being threatened by possible expel from the dormitory", - an observed said.

This fact is an example of violation of the right for free elections, as well as can be qualified as administrative or criminal offence, depending on state of the case.

Mogilev State University n.a. A.A. Kuleshov (MSU n.a. A.A. Kuleshov)

Students of History Faculty reported, that on the 21th of September the dean of the History faculty Vladimir Vasilyevich Borisenko entered the class and said, that all students are to come to ballot stations and "implement their civil duty". Special attention was paid to those, who live in dormitories and asked them to raise their hands. Then he asked those, who has already voted, to raise their hands. One girl raised her hand. The the dean asked to raise hands those, who is going to leave for home on weekend. Nobody raised a hand. "So, come to vote on the 23rd, from 11 a.m. till 1 p.m", - the dean said. When one student interested why only till 1 p.m., he said: "OK, till 2 p.m.". He explained that he doesn't want to stay there till 8 p.m. and count how many students have come to vote. Students asked him, how is he going to count students. He said that it is very easy, and that there is a list of those, who have already voted. He implied threats. He laughed. He didn't say that voting is a right of students. He said: "You have to".

Voting took place at the ballot station №72 within the Central Mogilev Electoral region №85.

Here we deal with examples of violation of students' right for free participation in elections.

Mogilev branch of the Belarusian Institute of Jurisprudence

According to the message of Anna and Inna, which on the 21st of September together with the informational agency “BelaPan” journalist, interviewed people on the exit from the ballot station № 41 “Mogilev branch of the Belarusian Institute of Jurisprudence”, dean and the administrative staff of the faculty persuasively asked students to vote in advance. In addition, students had to sign 2 lists at the ballot station – the list of their academic group’s students and the list of voters.

In this situation the violation of students' rights for free elections take place.

Vitebsk State medical University

Students of the university report that the HEI administration promises to liberate all academic groups from studies in case they would go to vote instead of studies. Educators of the dormitory remind its inhabitance about the early voting and have the list of non-voters in their hands. Curators call the academic groups’ representatives by phone in order to ask them to provide the majority of students, being voted before the Election Day. Beginning with 19th of September, students of 1-3 years were liberated from lectures one group by another and voted at the university’s territory. In Vitebsk October Electoral Region №20 there was registered a fact of early voting during lectures.

In this case the HEI administration liberates students from attendance of lectures without an official reason, which doesn't correspond to its responsibility of guaranteeing education quality. Moreover there could be raised the question of labor compensation for those teachers, whose lectures were denied because of the necessity of early voting.

Vitebsk State University n.a. Masherov

Groups of students, directed to communal farms for collecting harvest, are liberated earlier for one day in case all students in group vote in advance.

Here special attention should be paid to the fact of attracting students to works (such as collecting harvest), which are not presupposed by academic and educational

programs and documentation, and are prohibited according to item 2 art. 89 of the Education Code. Moreover, such actions violate students' right for free election (art. 5 of the Electoral Code).

Vitebsk Academy of Veterinarian Medicine (VAVM)

The Educational unit of the HEI organized an event for each course in assembly hall in order to inform everyone about importance of coming elections and early voting. In dormitories it is reminded every day about necessity of early voting and BRSM representatives visit each room in the dormitory with personal invitations to ballot stations. During 4 days of early voting, 56.6% of VAVM students, registered at the ballot station №47 of Vitebsk October Electoral region, have already voted.

Vitebsk State Technological University

During early voting at the dormitories' receptions there were always the educators, which constantly reminded students about necessity of early voting. Judging from the fact that, they reminded only certain students to vote, it can be concluded, that they had list of whose, who haven't voted yet. Moreover students were promised to cancel studies on Saturdays if they would vote in advance. Students of the first years were liberated from lectures and were offered to come to ballot stations instead.

Two facts mentioned above are examples of the violation of students' right for free participation in elections, as well as the violation by the of the HEI administration's obligation to guarantee the education quality.

Grodno State University n.a. Yanka Kupala

Students of the History Faculty, which come from another town, were taken away from lessons and were forced to vote in advance instead. Students of the Law Faculty were threatened by the possible problems with their attendance statistics in case they won't go voting in advance.

Here the liberation from studies without a good reason takes place, which is the violation of the item 4.1. art 20 of the Education Code, that obligates HEIs to guarantee the education quality.



Belarusian State Agricultural Academy, the town of Gorki

According to students' words, one of the reasons for coercion to early voting is the coming celebration of "Dazhinki", which is to take place from 21st till 23rd of September. There will be lots of guests in town. They have to stay somewhere. That's why students were told to vote in advance and vacate the dormitories. Students were given 4 extra day-offs in return for that. Curators and the academy's administration were responsible for these actions.

Besides the violation of students' right for free participation in elections, special attention should be paid to the following aspect. Opportunistic liberation from studies may influence students' implementation of the academic program in a negative way, which may lead to extending of the academic year and shortage of holidays, which, in its turn, is considered to be a violation according to the item 2, article 178 of the Education Code, which establishes the length of holidays for students not less than 2 weeks during the academic year.