



Нацыянальная платформа

Форум грамадзянскай супольнасці
УСХОДНЯГА ПАРТНЁРСТВА

TO:

European Commission

EU Delegation in Minsk

Ministries of Foreign Affairs of the EU countries and Norway

The Nordic Council

Donor organizations, funding EHU

Democratic platform "For New EHU"

EHU Senate

EHU Rector

17.02.2014

**Appeal of the Coordinating Committee of the National Platform of the Eastern partnership
Civil Society Forum**

"On the conflict situation in the European Humanities University"

Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum expresses its deep concern over the development of the crisis in the European Humanities University. In the eyes of Belarusian society and international partners EHU is not only independent institution of higher education, but also a significant phenomenon of intellectual, cultural, and social life of Belarus. Due to the lack of appropriate conditions in Belarus for the development of free education EHU was forced to settle in Lithuania, thus becoming the "university in exile".

Independent part of Belarusian society would like to consider EHU as a place of cultivating free and democratic forms of communication, critical thinking, preparing future democratic elites, the preservation and development of research and academic potential. Existence of an independent Belarusian university is a necessary element for the future restoration of democracy. It should be noted that, despite these expectations, European Humanities University during the entire period of its existence could hardly fully comply with these requirements.

Increase of the crisis in the European Humanities University further alienates him from the realization of this mission. Over recent years, EHU increasingly loses links with the Belarusian

society, becomes non-transparent, turns into a purely commercial educational enterprise, limits the space of academic self-government, loses scientific and research component of the University. This state of affairs at EHU is obvious to external observers and confirmed by independent expert assessments of the European University Association.

EHU withdrawal from the university's principles and its mission is not the first time leads to an aggravation of contradictions between the academic community and the university administration, this time these contradictions have reached a critical limit. Academic community, represented by the platform "For New EHU" and EHU Senate (the main body of academic self-government), criticize the current situation and offer their program of reforms for the university. In particular, the academic community notices undemocratic style of management, inefficiency of financial policy, lack of transparency and discriminatory character of human resources' policies, deteriorating image of the university in Belarus. In turn, the administration carries out its own reform agenda, without entering into dialogue with lecturers and academic community of the university. To date, opposition of the administration and the academic community has moved beyond internal corporate procedures: the administration uses various forms of pressure on lecturers (including dismissal of supporters of the platform "For New EHU"), when they are forced to go to court and the media. All this has a negative effect on the overall image of EHU and aggravates internal crisis.

Under these circumstances, considering the EHU as a specific element of civil society of Belarus, the Coordinating Committee of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum calls on all participating parties, related to the destiny of EHU.

We call for:

1. EHU administration, Platform "For New EHU", EHU Senate and the academic community of students and lecturers:

- To refrain from any actions that lead to the escalation of the internal conflict, in particular to stop dismissals and pressure on lecturers;
- To make every effort to resume the internal dialogue in EHU and restoration of internal democratic procedures at the university;
- To make efforts to return EHU ability to realize its mission: to contribute to the future of Belarus and its integration into European and world community.

2. Donors and other stakeholders involved in financing EHU (in particular , the European Commission , the Government and the Foreign Ministries of the EU Member States, the Government of Norway, USAID, "Open Society Institute", etc.) :

- To share responsibility for the future of the project funded by them and be pro-actively involved in the process of searching a way out of the conflict situation as mediators, as well as clearly call to reconciliation and avoiding pressure on lecturers;
- To organize broad consultations with all stakeholders inside and outside Belarus on the state of affairs and future direction of development for EHU.

3. Civil society organizations in Belarus:

- To pay attention to the crisis situation in EHU and provide maximum assistance to resolve it.

Leaving this situation without attention and fast re-action to resolve the crisis in EHU, in our view, will lead to dramatic consequences for the university, and will have a negative impact on the future state of science, education, civil society and democratic governance in Belarus.

Signatures:

Ulad Vialichka, Chairman of the Coordination Committee of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, International Consortium "EuroBelarus"

Andrei Yahorau, National Coordinator of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, member of the Coordination Committee of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Centre for European Transformation

Yaraslau Bekish, member of the Coordination Committee of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Green Alliance

Piotr Kuzniatsou, member of the Coordination Committee of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Gomel Democratic Forum

Siarhei Mackievic, member of the Coordination Committee of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Assembly of Pro-Democratic NGOs of Belarus

Oksana Shelest, member of the Coordination Committee of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Humanitarian Techniques Agency

Alexander Volchanin, member of the Coordination Committee of the National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum, Union Chernobyl-Belarus