



A large-scale sociological survey *Belarus. Opinion on the Future* was conducted in the county

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Playing drums and breaking dishes: the most interesting New Year traditions around the world

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INTERNATIONAL

The Minsk Times

Socio-political Weekly

PUBLISHED SINCE FEBRUARY 2003 ● ● NO. 48 (910) ● THURSDAY, DECEMBER 23, 2021 ● WWW.SB.BY



As part of *Our Children* campaign, a ball for college and university students was held in Vitebsk, bringing together almost 90 representatives of talented youth from all over the region. Sofia Boltrushevich from Polotsk Cadet School.

Marathon of good deeds

The traditional Republican campaign *Our Children*, held under the patronage of the Head of State, was launched last week and has long been another kind and humane feature of Belarus. The action has been sweeping across the country for a quarter of a century, with more and more organisations and institutions joining it annually. On the eve of the winter holidays, heads of ministries and departments, representatives of local authorities, enterprises and organisations visit boarding schools, family-type homes, foster and adoptive families, as well as families raising disabled children, centres for correctional and developmental education and hospitals. Children and youth receive gifts and take part in festive events and New Year's balls.



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A person who unites nations

Aleksandr Lukashenko awarded cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky the Order of Friendship of Peoples



By Yevgeny Kononovich

“Finally, you’ve come down to this sinful earth,” the Head of State greeted the cosmonaut.

“Not to the sinful, but to the best!” answered Oleg Novitsky.

“You know better from above!” smiled Aleksandr Lukashenko.

The President thanked Oleg Novitsky’s mother Valentina Eduardovna for her son and talked warmly with other family members. He also said the words of gratitude to the pilot-cosmonaut.

“I look at your and our Oleg and think that he is a real Slav both externally and internally. He has something Belarusian, Russian (outwardly even) and partly, probably, even something Ukrainian. What he does for his homeland, he is doing the right thing. Sooner or later, one will come to this land, so there is no need to lose one’s own roots. He is a true person who unites nations. And we thought that it would be wrong if we did not hand this golden order to him, as to a real person who unites our peoples.

At the Palace of Independence, the President met with pilot-cosmonaut Oleg Novitsky and members of his family. Aleksandr Lukashenko warmly greeted his guests and presented the Order of Friendship of Peoples to the native of Belarus, Hero of Russia. By the decree of the Head of State, the cosmonaut was awarded in recognition of significant accomplishments in the area of space exploration and great personal contribution to the strengthening of international ties.

Actually, we have probably presented it to only a few heads of state...”

Aleksandr Lukashenko asked Oleg Novitsky to give this order to his mother to keep it.

“Let it be kept here, on the Belarusian land!” answered Oleg Novitsky. “This is indeed a very high honour. This is a very high assessment of my work. I really love Belarus very much. This is the land on which I was born, where I was raised by my parents, friends, secondary school. This hardening, probably, still helps me calmly go through life. I always know that this is my home, here I always receive a warm welcome. I want to work (even when my health won’t be enough for cosmonautics) for the benefit of Belarus and Russia. I cannot separate

these two countries in any way. This is our Slavic union, which should always be together. We must always lend a shoulder to each other. We must rejoice and grieve together, stand up for each other together and, if necessary, go on the attack together. Thank you very much for this high honour.”

The Head of State also noted that several people are currently preparing for space flights in Belarus. The corresponding agreement was reached between the presidents of Belarus and Russia. In this regard, Aleksandr Lukashenko asked Oleg Novitsky to join the search for a candidate.

Moreover, the President presented the family of Oleg Novitsky with Chinese tea, which was given to him by the President of the People’s Republic of China Xi Jinping.



Oleg Novitsky

Oleg Novitsky, born in Cherven, started his journey into space in winter 2007. After scrupulous selection and special training in 2009, the professional pilot was awarded the ‘test cosmonaut’ qualification by the decision of a special commission. In 2012, Oleg Novitsky was enlisted to

the main crew of the orbital station. As the commander of the Soyuz TMA-06M manned spacecraft, he made his debut flight to the International Space Station (ISS). The flight lasted 143 days.

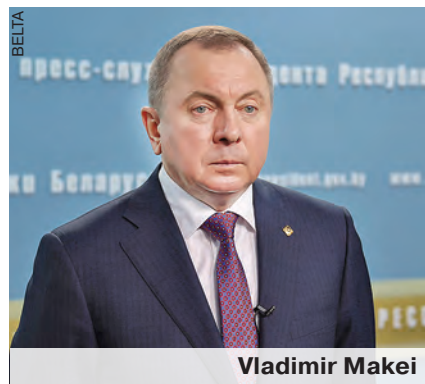
Oleg Novitsky completed his second space flight, lasting 196 days, from Novem-

ber 17th, 2016 to June 2nd, 2017 as the commander of the Soyuz MS-03 spacecraft and the ISS-50/51 flight engineer.

In April of this year, Oleg Novitsky went into orbit for the third time. During this mission, he performed three spacewalks and even took part in a cinematic project.

Loyalty to duty and the Fatherland

How the President sees the renewed Foreign Ministry



Vladimir Makei

By Dmitry Umpirovich,
Yevgeny Kononovich

Proposals to revise the structure and size of the Foreign Ministry and foreign missions were considered during the report to the Head of State by Foreign Minister Vladimir Makei. This was a planned issue. As Aleksandr Lukashenko stressed it is connected with the foreign policy situation around our country,

“We’ve agreed to bring the Foreign Ministry into proper form in accordance with our tasks... We all see and understand what is happening, especially on the western vector. From here, both our eastern and southern vectors change. Therefore, I gave instructions to revise the structure and number of embassies on these vectors.”

Focus on promising markets

As the situation on the external circuit shows, the pressure on our country is not

decreasing. The migration crisis provoked by the West is just a cause to intensify it. Another package of sanctions against our enterprises and citizens, cyber threats... Therefore, it is extremely important to understand with which countries we can productively co-operate. The emphasis is to be placed on promising markets where our products are needed and where they are ready for a constructive dialogue. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs, together with the Administration of the President and the Government, prepared a corresponding comprehensive plan for reforming the system by the department. The proposals were put on the President’s table a week ago. “I have studied them carefully. Actually, significant work has been done. But I would like to warn you about the inadmissibility of some ‘cosmetic changes’ of the Foreign Ministry in view of the situation that is developing on the external contour of our borders,” assessed the Head of State.

Vladimir Makei, speaking about the upcoming restructuring, noted: the department sees how, unfortunately, the level of interaction of our foreign missions with the ministries of foreign affairs of the countries of accreditation has decreased.

“This primarily applies to the Western Europe countries. At the same time, it has become necessary to strengthen our activities in other areas.

As a result, we are significantly reducing our diplomatic presence in European states. We are reducing the number of diplomatic personnel and transferring it to other areas of work, other directions where they will be in demand: these are the CIS states and the countries of the long-range arc.”

According to the Foreign Minister, Belarus’ diplomatic presence will be significantly strengthened in the countries that are strategically important partners for us, “For example, China, India and a number of other states. We are thinking about opening new embassies in Africa, countries that are both solvent and where our products enjoy popularity.”

Changes are also planned in the structure of the central apparatus of the Foreign Ministry, taking into account the strengthening of foreign economic activity, its information component.

“Due to the redistribution of resources, we are creating a department of China, which will purposefully deal with this country, which is a strategic trade-economic partner for us,” said Vladimir Makei.

Moreover, proposals were made to the President regarding some personnel appointments in the MFA system at the management level, on the appointment of heads of a number of foreign missions.

“On the whole, our proposals were supported,” added the Head of the Foreign Ministry. “The President instructed to finalise some areas and make specific decisions. The main task is to act as quickly as possible, because it takes time. Before the new year, we will adopt the appropriate order, on the basis of which all the reshuffles will be carried out.”

State approach

First of all, a diplomat must be a patriot. Vladimir Makei believes that without precisely this quality it is impossible to solve the issues set by the Head of State,

“The requirements for the activities of diplomats have always been and remain the same. These include professionalism, loyalty to duty, loyalty to the Fatherland and a state approach to business. In this current situation, which has revealed some of the strange phenomena in our lives, these principles are even more important. More important than ever!”

If you are not able to pursue the line that the state has developed, then you must find courage in yourself and honestly say that you must leave this post. Some people want to receive money from the state and at the same time throw mud at it. I think these approaches are absolutely unacceptable.”

Living and working in peace

Sanctions are not a pleasant issue, but still not fatal. In fact, through almost all its sovereign history, Belarus has lived in conditions of external economic pressure. Somehow it makes us stronger, sometimes more flexible, teaching us to respond quickly to challenges. This is not an easy path, but it works. Therefore, Aleksandr Lukashenko asserts, “Another set of measures has been introduced against us. Despite the fact that they will have a certain negative effect, we need to continue to live and work in peace, preserving the dynamics of the work of all sectors of the economy.”

By Dmitry Kryat, Polina Konoga

Taking a blow

Addressing the participants of the event, Aleksandr Lukashenko noted that the sanctions are not something new, “There are many countries in the world against which unreasonable and discriminatory measures are constantly applied. An example of this is our neighbouring Russia. Unfortunately, this has become the norm, and no one even looks at the violation of international law. One gets the impression that common sense has left those who make such decisions.”

The Head of State drew attention to the background and consequences of the economic aggression against Belarus,

“The collective West does not abandon its attempts to reduce the level of integration interaction in Eurasia. And when it comes to pressure on our economy, the blow is also aimed at the welfare of Belarusian citizens.”

The President emphasises that sanctions exist, and this should be perceived as a given. It turns out that now the task is to learn how to live and work in such realities. The Head of State pointed out that sanctions have already become a part of our life, “Therefore, I would like to hear not so much an assessment of the possible consequences, but proposals for minimising their impact and countermeasures.”

The country is going through a difficult time. In this regard, the President out-



Collective West against Eurasia. Sanctions and countersanctions. People should not suffer from external economic pressure. High responsibility of labour team leaders. What other topics were tackled by the President at the meeting on countering the sanctions measures taken against Belarus.

lined the task of the entire vertical structure of power,

“We are experiencing one of the most difficult stages in the life of our country: sanctions, COVID, attempts to undermine stability from inside in order to change the state system. However, in spite of these and other challenges, it is necessary to prevent deterioration of the main economic indicators and — most importantly — to protect people and to preserve their well-being, at least at the level of the current year.”

The President demands, first of all, that people do not suffer under the conditions of external economic pressure,

“Here the issue should be considered from at least two positions: saturation of the market with necessary goods and the inadmissibility of price rises. I strongly warn everyone present about the need to observe both conditions.”

Mobilising resources

Today is not a situation where our opponents will leave us alone and the President pays special attention to this,

“Nobody promised us a quiet life as we are fighting for our land and for the right to be masters on it. Therefore, now, more than ever, we need to mobilise all our resources: production, technological, financial

and intellectual, so that both the people and enemies can see that we are an established state.”

To achieve this, the Government, the National Bank, local authorities and parliamentarians will have to develop a set of measures to support and develop internal potential and expand the production of goods and services in demand. Moreover, Aleksandr Lukashenko notes that this doesn't refer to helping people with money or offering special benefits, “Often, it is enough to remove old barriers, obstacles, unnecessary approvals, and so on.”

Special attention will be paid to the domestic market and the players in it. There is also an equally important task here,

“If domestic manufacturers are ready to occupy the domestic market, where foreign competitors previously ruled, it is necessary to give the green light to such initiatives and to provide them with maximum assistance at all levels. Think about how to assist with such initiatives!”

The President clarified, “If you need additional powers, particularly for the governors, to make quick decisions locally — submit them immediately. Control will be over the final results.”

As far as the response measures that have already been taken and will still be developed are concerned, this is not an active position of our people. Aleksandr Lukashenko pointed out,

Simultaneously, a sensitive factor is the sanction imposed by the fifth package of US sanctions against the Belarusian state debt: this is a direct risk of the possibility of its refinancing, including on domestic foreign exchange government borrowings. The First Deputy Prime Minister said that, in 2022, Belarus has to pay off \$3.3bn, in 2023 — \$4.7bn of external debts, including servicing, “At the moment, the conclusion of a new stabilisation programme with the Eurasian Fund for Stabilisation and Development with the allocation of a state financial loan by the Russian Federation is under consideration. The total amount of the requested funds is \$3.5bn, which will compensate for the falling European money to refinance the debt.”

As for the state of affairs in the field of attracting investments, in the context of the refusal of most international financial organisations from co-operation with our country and other options for attracting investment funds, almost the only source of development and economic growth are internal resources and reserves.

“We do not have the spirit of war in our blood, and, by the way, we did not start it. Therefore, we are always open to constructive dialogue on an equal basis without conditions and ultimatums.”

I am glad that there are no signs of hysteria or nervousness in the Government and the National Bank. This business spirit must be maintained in the future.”

Rebuilding new Belarus

The President demanded to focus close attention on some of the department heads, “We need more solidity and diligence than ever! We have too many leaders who take an anti-state position.”

The President stressed that if a person leads a labour team, he is already a statesman, “It doesn't matter whether it is a private or a public company. Moreover, if you wear shoulder straps or work in the state apparatus, you should understand where you are. Otherwise, as I have already said many times, we will regard this as a betrayal.”

The attitude towards those who have crossed the line is unambiguous, “We must deal with those who broke the law, those who pushed people to violate the law (we also have a lot of them), but this must be done carefully.”

The Head of State summed up, “We must not allow distortion, we must not shy away, we must deal with specific cases, lead people and check people on specific cases. We must be tough: who is to blame, who is a traitor, who is simply not on our side. But I stress once again: this is a painstaking, calm work of special authorities that exist in the country. I ask you to bear this in mind.”

There should be a principled position: traitors can't be forgiven, “There will be no forgiveness for those who tried to turn the country upside down and hand it over ‘there’. We see them and identify them in dozens or even hundreds. Those organisations that were financed from abroad and organised the coup and rebellion were liquidated by us.”

According to Aleksandr Lukashenko, any funds can exist in the country, but these ‘should be engaged in a specific business for the good of the Motherland’, “Let them protect the sick, cure COVID, let them help the Chernobyl victims, the poor, the disadvantaged, people with disabilities, let them cure children and so on — you are welcome, the road is open. If someone wants to establish funds, please do it.”

In summary, the President concluded, **“This chaos must be ended today, a new Belarus must be rebuilt.”**

ADDITION

The government spoke about the impact of sanctions on the Belarusian economy

During the meeting on countering the sanctions measures taken against Belarus, the First Deputy Prime Minister Nikolai Snopkov spoke about the impact of sanctions on the Belarusian economy.

In particular, he stated that the simultaneous introduction of new sanctions packages by the EU, Great Britain, the USA and Canada testifies to the coordinated approaches and coordination of actions of key western players with regard to Belarus, “At the same time, a subjective factor is characteristic when choosing enterprises that are subject to sanctions, there are no explicit criteria; in fact, unscrupulousness is applied — ‘I include whoever I want’. Obviously, if the sanctions do not work, they will intensify, and their direction is problematic to predict.”

Nikolai Snopkov also named three main areas of the impact of sanctions on the economy: the financial sector,

product exports, and technology imports. As far as the financial sector is concerned, the key risks are concentrated in the ability to provide settlements for enterprises and in attracting external financing. The First Deputy Prime Minister gave the following figures,

“According to calculations, in just ten months of this year, funds in foreign banks were detained in the amount of up to \$10m in equivalent, which is 0.01 percent of the average monthly turnover in foreign economic transactions. More than \$200,000 has been blocked for the current date. That is, based on the proposed figures, the situation is far from critical.”

Tackling the issue of attracting external resources, Nikolai Snopkov said that as of December 1st, the total amount of non-residents' funds in all banks of our country amounted to Br17bn in equivalent, an increase over this year of Br1bn. The volume of funds from Russia and China is increasing, while the funds of the EU countries are expected to decline at the same time.

Figures and facts

On the eve of the Republican referendum, a large-scale sociological survey *Belarus. Opinion on the Future* was conducted. Its results indicate that our society has changed a lot over the past year. One of the key research questions concerned the level of trust in the authorities. According to the results of the sociological survey, 72.3 percent of citizens trust the President as a whole. This is almost 6 percent more than a year ago. At the same time, the level of support for the Head of State is high in all age groups.

This sociological poll was initially of a closed nature and was intended for the country's leadership. However, the President instructed to publish the received data. The results of the research *Belarus. Opinion on the Future*, conducted by the Analytical Centre EcooM and the Institute of Sociology of the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus, were presented at the National Press Centre.

DIRECT SPEECH

Natalya Eismont, Press Secretary of the President:

A large and very important study was carried out within the framework of the sociological survey published today [December 16th]. It is neither the first nor the last. Similar polls of various sizes and content appear in the media. Some are not for public view as this survey was initially. An analysis of trends that occur in our society was designed for the leadership of the country. But the President decided to publish it for the general public.

What interested us in the first place was, of course, the answers to the most pressing questions of today, e.g., to the question about the readiness of our society for a constitutional referendum, about the attitude towards the topic of refugees, etc. If we continue talking about the substantive part, we see (the Head of State has already spoken about this) that in 2021 Belarusian society has changed, fortunately, for the better. I think that we can say today that our people have realised what they have, and also realised what they could lose.

The facts are on the table. The numbers have been published. Everyone has the opportunity to watch, analyse and draw their own conclusions.

By Yevgeny Kononovich, Maksim Osipov,
Dmitry Umpirovich

Focus on an economically active population

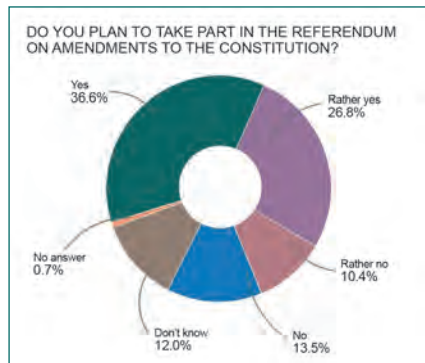
An important aspect: the basis of this study (its general population) was the economically employed population, that is, people who are established and with a steady income. The sample was multistage, organised by region of residence and type of settlement, with control of quotas by sex and age. The study covered all regions of the country, Minsk, 52 districts (including nine Minsk's districts), almost 350 organisations and enterprises of various spheres and forms of ownership. This means that all the requirements for representativeness were strictly observed.

The Head of the EcooM Analytical Centre, Sergei Musiyenko, also drew attention to the high interest of citizens in questioning.

“The majority positively perceived the interest of sociologists in their position and assessments. Moreover, the survey was perceived as an opportunity to convey their views on current processes, problems of concern to people and the future of the country. Citizens often expressed their wishes for more frequent conduct of such social studies.”

more than a year ago during our previous survey when it was 66.5 percent. In my opinion, this is both a good indicator of work and a reflection of what has been done this year. We also saw a very high growth of trust in the army and law enforcement agencies.”

The First Vice-Rector of the Belarusian State Academy of Arts, Doctor of Philosophy, Professor Svetlana Vinokurova believes that the figures given also speak of the unity of our society,



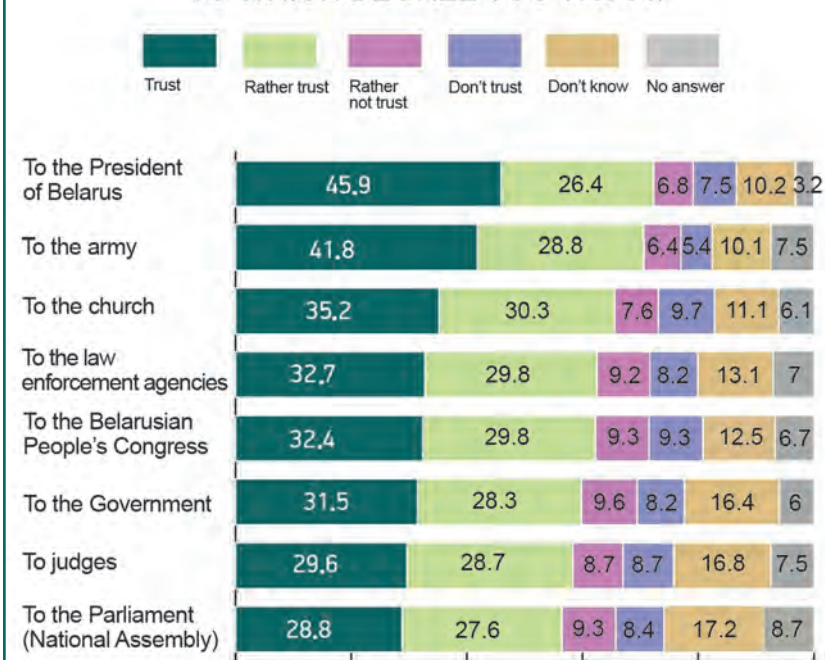
“The high level of trust, expressed in such a percentage ratio, indicates that our people, together with the state authorities and law enforcement agencies, strive to maintain stability, the existing stable vector of development at these high speeds.

We see what is happening with the ratings of the heads of state in neighbouring countries, which quite often change their leaders, while they are not yet a model of positive movement in the field of the economy, social guarantees, and so on. The President is the guarantor of the Constitution, the guarantor of the policy pursued by our state.”

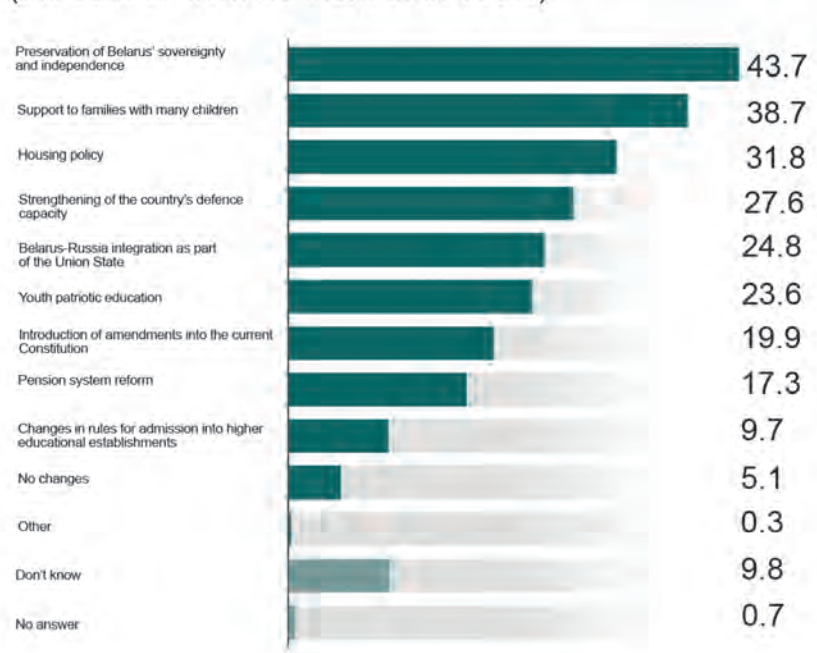
Ms. Vinokurova drew attention to the high level of support for the Head of State in all age groups. In the regional context, Aleksandr Lukashenko enjoys the greatest support (78.6 percent and more) in the Gomel, Vitebsk and Mogilev regions.

Attention is drawn to the high appraisal by society of such an institution as the Belarusian People's Congress. The level of trust in it in all age groups turned out to be one of the highest: 62.2 percent.

TO WHICH DEGREE YOU TRUST:



WHICH INITIATIVES OF THE COUNTRY'S PRESIDENT DO YOU CONSIDER MOST IMPORTANT? (the sum of answers more than 100%)



Strategic step

The majority of citizens associate the image of the future of Belarus with the renewal of the Constitution. About 60 percent of the respondents recognise the need for such a step even before the start of public discussion of the draft Basic Law. Moreover, more than two thirds are ready to take part in the referendum and come to the polling stations. According to experts, this suggests that there is a demand in society for improving the political system.

At the same time, almost 70 percent of citizens consider it necessary to preserve basic social guarantees, “This is what is the hallmark of our state policy. Its social orientation is supported by the population. The people do not consider it necessary to liberalise, introduce market relations or competition on a large scale, which bring to the fore completely different values in society,” explains Ms. Vinokurova.

“The preservation of social guarantees is our achievement and our future.”

On matters of concern

The survey made it possible to identify the hierarchy of problems that worry people. These include an attempt to strangle Belarus by sanctions by the collective West. The overwhelming majority of citizens — over 70 percent — have a negative attitude towards such policies.

At the same time, sociologists note another tendency. In comparison with a similar previous survey, people have become more relaxed about the sanctions packages, seeing the protection of the state from any possible negative consequences of the sanctions. In addition, more and more citizens perceive sanctions as an instrument of ‘anger’ of the people against the President of the country: the number of those who chose this answer increased from 7.4 to 19.1 percent.

On the issue of trust

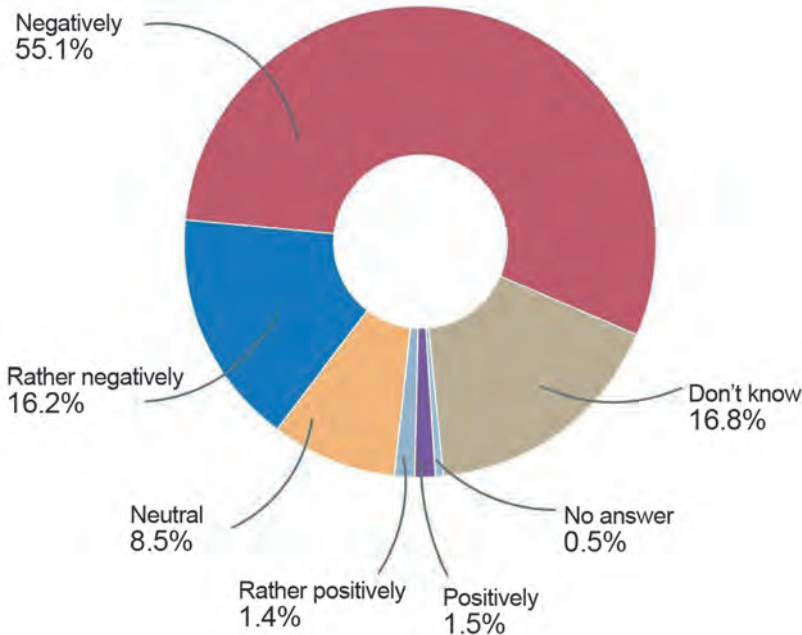
You can see the specific research results in the infographics, but here are the main points.

“In general, 72.3 percent of respondents trust the President,” noted Sergei Musiyenko. “This is 5.8 percent

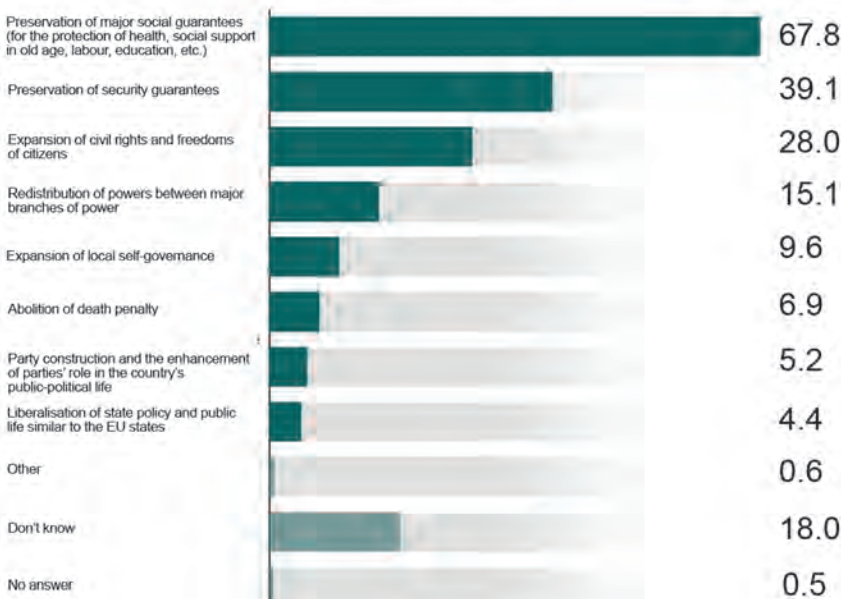
WHAT DO YOU THINK, SANCTIONS OF THE COLLECTIVE WEST AGAINST THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS ARE AIMED:



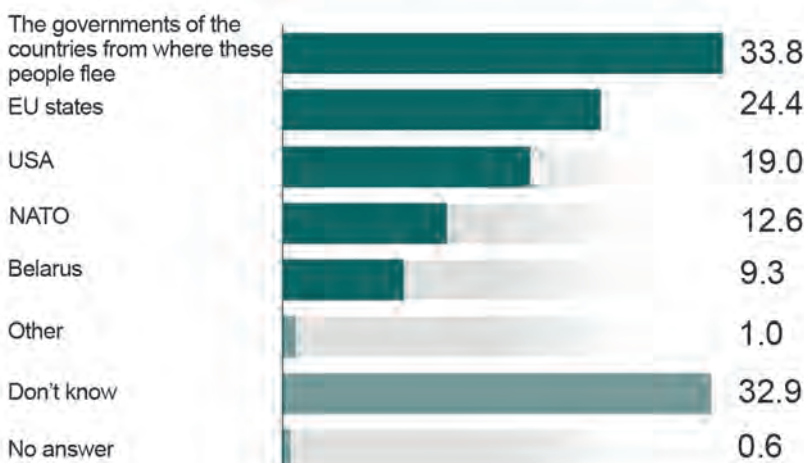
WHAT'S YOUR ATTITUDE TOWARDS SANCTIONS AGAINST BELARUS?



WHICH CHANGES TO THE CURRENT CONSTITUTION DO YOU CONSIDER NECESSARY?
(the sum of answers more than 100%)



IN YOUR OPINION, WHO BEARS THE RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE INFLOW OF MIGRANTS AT THE BORDER WITH BELARUS?
(the sum of answers more than 100%)



Belarus. Opinion on the Future sociological poll was conducted by the EcooM Analytical Centre and the Sociology Institute of the NAS of Belarus on the order of BelTA from November 15th to December 4th, 2021, interviewing 10,217 respondents

© Infographics



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NEWS IN BRIEF

IAEA notes Belarus' commitment to ensuring nuclear safety



"The mission went very smoothly. We worked very efficiently, in co-operation with all parties. Belarus has demonstrated its commitment to long-term support of the security system in this area," said the head of the International Atomic Energy Agency's Integrated Regulatory Review Service (IRRS) post-mission, a representative of the Swiss Federal Nuclear Safety Inspectorate (ENSI) Georg Schwarz.

"The results are very encouraging. Belarus has complied with 22 out of 25 initial recommendations and 18 out of 20 proposals. This is a demonstration of the state's strong commitment to safety principles," noted Anna Bradford, Director of the IAEA's Nuclear Installation Safety Department. Based on the results of the post-mission, a preliminary report was prepared.

First transit transaction between PRC residents completed at BUCE

The Chinese participants decided to use our trading platform solely to minimise the risk of default by the counterparty. A Hong Kong company



sold over \$350,000 of beef to a Chinese mainland firm. In fact, this is a new stage in the development of co-operation between Belarus and China in the field of exchange trading, when not goods, but a service, are supplied for export, to ensure the execution of a foreign trade contract. This is a sign of confidence in the Belarusian platform.

Sixty-four companies from China are accredited to Belarusian Universal Commodity Exchange (BUCE), which is twice as much as in 2020. Lumber, rapeseed oil and sugar, as well as steel pipes, sheet metal and other products made of ferrous metals are primarily supplied to China via the exchange.

Cultural diversity in the digital space: Belarus becomes a participant of UNESCO consultations

The Ministry of Culture took part in the UNESCO regional consultations on cultural policy for Europe and North America. The event was held online under the chairmanship of the Minister of Culture and Media of Croatia, Nina



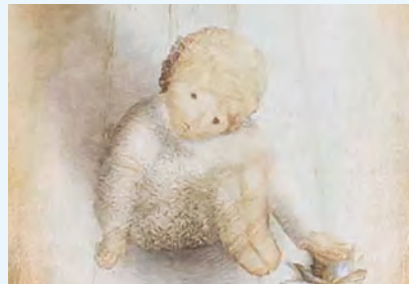
Koržinek. More than 100 people took part in the regional consultations.

The main issues that were discussed during the meeting included investments in culture and creativity. They tackled job creation, the promotion of cultural diversity in the digital space and raising the status of artists. The participants also discussed the preservation and promotion of cultural heritage in the interests of social inclusion, dialogue and peace, as well as strengthening the interaction between culture and education for the development and sustainability of society.

Belarusian animated film Krasnolyudki recognised best at the Chicago festival

The Krasnolyudki film, produced by the Belarusfilm National Studio, was recognised as the best animated film at the International Film Festival in Chicago.

The animation is part of the cycle, entitled *At Polesie at the Swamp*, which consists of four short films: *Tsmok* (directed by Ruslan Sinkevich), *Kryzhatik* (directed by Svetlana Kotlyarova), *Malimon* (directed by Margarita Gerashchenko) and *Krasnolyudki* (scriptwriter, director and production designer Roman Burmakov).



The plot of the cartoon tells the story of small and kind creatures, Krasnolyudki, who come at night to help those people who create beautiful things. One day, when they came to help a boy who had made a bird, a cat attacked them. It is not known how it would have ended if the boy had not woken up.

Legal precedent and signal for the UN



By Maksim Osipov

Government initiative

Proceedings in this case were initiated on the basis of a proposal received from the Council of Ministers to state the position of the Constitutional Court. The Government's proposal indicates that the European Union, as well as some states, including Great Britain, the USA, and Canada, have introduced restrictive measures against legal entities and individuals of Belarus, which affect the rights of individuals and legal entities, as well as sectors of the national economy (financial sector, insurance, the market for oil products and potash fertilisers, the production of tobacco products, Internet and telephone communications, the market for goods and technologies for military and dual-purpose, the air transportation market) and contradict the generally recognised principles and norms of international law.

The plenipotentiary representative of the Council of Ministers in the Constitutional Court, First Deputy Justice Minister, Natalya Filippova, stated, following the announcement of the Constitutional Court's decision, "In our opinion, the position of the Constitutional Court should be a guideline for all decision-makers among government agencies and

The Constitutional Court recognised the sanctions documents against Belarus as contradicting the generally recognised principles and norms of international law. The meaning of this recognition is global.

The sanctions imposed on Belarus in packages are immoral in their essence, destructive for the global legal architecture and simply illegal. This is the main meaning of the decision adopted by the Constitutional Court of our country on December 15th. A unique international precedent of legal confrontation has been created for those who use political and economic pressure as a tool to achieve their own goals.

officials without exception responsible for defending national interests, ensuring the protection of the rights and interests of all Belarusian citizens and legal entities. I believe that the conclusions of the Constitutional Court will enable us to reach out to foreign colleagues and present the unambiguous position of the Republic of Belarus and our understanding that the unilateral sanctions that have been imposed against the Republic of Belarus have been introduced contrary to all generally recognised norms and international law."

The essence of the conclusion

As follows from the decision voiced by the Chairman of the Constitutional Court Piotr Miklashevich, the Constitutional Court considers that the documents adopted by the European Union and some foreign states in relation to separate individuals and legal entities of Belarus create certain difficulties in the activities of business entities in various sectors of the economy. They also complicate the implementation of socio-economic and civil rights and freedoms of citizens which are enshrined in the Belarusian Constitution and fundamental international legal acts, which ultimately affects the national interests of our country.



The Constitutional Court notes that the documents of the EU and foreign states envisaging the introduction of restrictive measures against the Republic of Belarus contradict the provisions of Chapters 6 and 7 of the UN Charter, which establish a mechanism for the application of preventive and coercive measures against the state only by the decision of the UN Security Council in order to maintain international peace and security.

"The Constitutional Court considers that the application of restrictive measures against the Republic of Belarus in violation of the procedure established by the UN constituent document is interference in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of a sovereign state, which contradicts paragraphs 1 and 7 of Article 2 of the UN Charter," added Piotr Miklashevich.

Moreover, the restrictive measures of the EU and a number of states prevent citizens and organisations from free disposal of their property and trade in natural resources, which negatively affects the living standards of individuals and the economic activities of legal entities.

Therefore, the restrictive measures violate the provisions of paragraph 1 of Article 17 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and paragraph 2 of Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and Freedoms.

Verdict of the Constitutional Court

Documents adopted by the European Union, some foreign states, including Great Britain, the USA, Canada, and their bodies, envisaging the introduction of restrictive measures against the Republic of Belarus:

- do not correspond to the generally recognised principles of sovereign equality of states and non-interference in matters within the domestic jurisdiction of another state, co-operation of states with each other in accordance with the UN Charter, conscientious fulfilment of international obligations, equality and self-determination of peoples, respect for human rights and their fundamental freedoms;
- do not correspond to the

generally recognised principles and norms of international law in the field of human rights;

- do not correspond to the UN Charter, which provides for a mechanism for the application of preventive and coercive measures against the state only by the decision of the UN Security Council in order to maintain international peace and security.

Therefore, state bodies, officials, and heads of organisations should, within their competence, take the necessary measures to protect the national interests of Belarus, constitutional rights and freedoms of citizens based on the values and goals of the Belarusian Constitution, generally recognised principles and norms of international law.

SEQUENTIAL PROTECTION LOGIC

On December 14th, the President signed the Law 'On Amendments to the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus' which introduces criminal liability for calls for the application of sanctions against our country, its citizens and organisations.

Such actions will be punishable by imprisonment for up to:

- 6 years — if appeals are addressed to ordinary people;
- 10 years — if they are addressed to foreign states, international and foreign organisations;
- 12 years — if such calls are made by an official on duty or led to other heavy consequences, for example, restrictions in trade or inclusion of enterprises in the sanctions list.

The implementation of the measures envisaged by the law will act as an adequate response to attempts to harm national security by destructive forces, stresses the Press Service of the President.



Preserving memory and historical truth

The House of Representatives adopted in two readings the draft law 'On the Genocide of the Belarusian People'

Last week, those present in the Oval Hall of the House of Government put an end to the discussions on whether to consider what happened during the Great Patriotic War as genocide of the Belarusian people. Deputies of the House of Representatives adopted the relevant bill in two readings at once. Moreover, the document not only recognises the very fact of the genocide of Belarusians, but also introduces criminal liability for its denial.

By Yulia Demeshko

Our sovereignty and independence have always been based on a common historical memory, including about the events of the Great Patriotic War. To forget about it means to betray the people who gave us the peace. That is why the implementation of the provisions of the already adopted Law 'On the Genocide of the Belarusian People' is aimed at perpetuating the memory of the victims of the genocide and is designed to bring information and educational work to form an adequate moral and socio-political position of citizens to a new level.

Chairman of the House of Representatives, Vladimir Andreichenko, emphasises that this law also has an important political significance,

"By adopting this bill, we condemn the greatest crime of Nazi Germany and its accomplices, which was committed in the history of mankind. Indeed, during the years of the Great Patriotic War, 60 million people actually died. Of these, about 30 million are citizens of the Soviet Union. Every third inhabitant of Belarus died."

The law also envisages a number of necessary measures to recognise the

genocide of the Belarusian people at international level, since today there are constant attempts to erase WWII from memory and rewrite many different aspects of history.

"This is immoral and criminal," said Lyudmila Zdorikova, a member of the Permanent Commission on Human Rights, National Relations and Mass Media of the House of Representatives. "The General Prosecutor's Office, in accordance with the provisions of the law, will continue to work to establish new facts confirming the genocide of our people."

Lilia Ananich, Deputy Chairperson

of the same commission, voiced a solidarity position during the sixth session. According to her, Belarusians have the right and must give a fair assessment of the atrocities of the Nazis and their accomplices. Some of them, by the way, are still alive. As well as those who now allow themselves to blatantly lie about the feat of our grandfathers. However, now they face criminal liability under the new legislation, particularly for any denial of the fact of the genocide of Belarusians in a public speech, in a printed or publicly displayed work, in the media and even in information posted on the Internet.

Technology is power

Expanding the range and sales markets, increasing labour productivity 4-fold: a new digital printing line is being tested at the Dobrush Porcelain Factory



In an hour, 400 porcelain items are decorated on a digital printing line



Spanish digital printing machine has great possibilities



‘Digital’ dishes enjoy the greatest popularity in foreign markets



It is now possible to apply any pattern on plates

The Dobrush Porcelain Factory is actively testing new equipment. The Spanish digital printing machine was purchased for more than 300,000 Euros. It is planned to pay off the investment in two and a half years. Competition made the company dare to make such a purchase. Porcelain in Belarus is made only at the Dobrush factory, but imported dishes are also brought there. However, ‘digital’ dishes enjoy the greatest popularity in foreign markets. It was impossible to lose such a niche in fashionable tableware trends. Now, Dobrush dishes with digital printing are bought in Belarus, Russia and Ukraine, with an exclusive order for German buyers also being prepared.

By Arina Yanova

Drawings on the plates are produced at high temperatures, so dishes can be safely put in dishwashers and microwave ovens. This opens the door to the restaurant business. Moreover, the printing machine can apply any pattern to the plates. For comparison: it is impossible to decorate the entire surface of the dish with a decal — a technology for applying an image to ceramic or glass items. The image, known as the ‘decal’, is transferred to the ceramics from the paper base, and then is fixed by high-temperature firing. Customers previously had to wait for such goods. Now it is simple to add the necessary print to the system and beautiful plates are soon moving along the conveyor belt. In an hour, 400 porcelain items are decorated on a digital printing line. Just one plate can also be created — according to an individual order.

The company’s product catalogue contains 5,000 items. Due to the new Spanish equipment, the range will expand, which will also affect profits. Last year, the plant sold \$10m tableware while this year the figure will increase by another two million. The growth is also taking place thanks to the new digital printing technology.

Sales specialist Yekaterina Nester takes from the shelf the most interesting examples of such tableware, “This is the Sherwood collection. Look at the texture — if you touch it with your hand, it looks like the plate is made of wood.”

Up to 6,000 plates can be made per shift while the

required labour resources have halved. The result is simple arithmetic: labour productivity has quadrupled thanks to the digital printing line.

There are three ways to produce tableware at a factory: moulding, casting and pressing.

“These are the cups with a name that makes you think about travel: Express. They are made by moulding,” says the foreman of the production site, Sergei Levkov.

“We take the mass, cut it on a plastic cutter, put it in a mould, then dry it at a temperature of 170 degrees. Then the cup goes to the adapter machine, where the edges are smoothed and the handle is attached,” adds the specialist.

One person makes cuts for 4,000 of these handles per shift. Then the cups are sent to the first and second firing. There is also an isostatic pressing section. The dishes are made here under high pressure. It is impossible to make cups on such equipment, but plates can be created almost of any shape and diameter. The maximum diameter is 30cm, this is for Italian pasta. Up to 400 plates come out of the press in an hour.

“There is a minimum of scrap due to the automation of the process, which reduces the cost price,” says Anna Falaleeva, head of the foundry, moulding and firing department, leading us through the isostatic pressing section.

Two more presses are planned to be purchased here next year.

The factory produces more than two million units every month, with 80 percent going for export, mostly to the Russian Federation. As far as the non-CIS states

are concerned, these are Germany, France, and the Czech Republic. Applications come even from Switzerland and Finland.

New ideas that find their fans in different parts of the world are born in the artistic laboratory. All these are new samples of tableware. You won’t see them on store shelves yet.

The Dobrush Porcelain Factory is currently preparing for the New Year. Everywhere you look, there are tigers: figurines with pensive eyes, glasses with brutal animal images, Christmas tree decorations and even an ascetic black-and-white print on plates and cups.

Yelena Kolesnikova has been working at the plant for 33 years. She is one of the six painters in the company and the most experienced of them all. Millions of plates and cups that people have bought over the years retain the warmth of her hands.

“There is little time left until the New Year, that’s why it’s so hot here, as thousands of souvenirs need to be painted. I paint about twenty tigers a day. Each one takes half an hour.”

No matter how the porcelain industry develops, hand-painted tableware will always be appreciated. That’s why the tableware sets decorated by painters are the most expensive. This is the brand of the factory.

TIP
If you come to the store and do not know if the porcelain in front of you is real, shine a flashlight on the bottom of the plate or cup. If it shines through, it’s porcelain, if not — it’s like ceramics. You can also knock on the plate with a pencil: porcelain rings like crystal.





Mass protests continue

Compulsory vaccination and strict COVID-19 guidelines spark mass protests across several European countries

Tens of thousands of people rallied in Vienna in protest against restrictions introduced in Austria, including mandatory COVID-19 vaccines and home confinement orders for the unvaccinated. Around 1,400 police officers were on duty to oversee the protest, which attracted an estimated 44,000 people.

Nobody will be vaccinated by force, the government has said, but those who refuse the shot will have to pay an initial fine of 600 Euros, which can then increase to 3,600 Euros, if not settled.

Protesters carried banners saying ‘No to compulsory vaccination’ and chanted ‘We are the people’ and ‘Resistance’. The Spaniards, outraged by the authorities’ health policy, marched peacefully in Madrid. Some were holding posters that read ‘This is a false pandemic’, ‘I will not get vaccinated’.

A major protest against sanitary passports took place in Barcelona, the capital of Catalonia. In the autonomous community, a COVID certificate is required for access to bars, restaurants, gyms, nursing

homes and nightlife venues. The decision to introduce sanitary passports was taken by the authorities against the backdrop of an increase in the number of cases of coronavirus infection.

In Luxembourg, more than a thousand people protested against the tightening of restrictive measures and QR codes. The action began peacefully, but then escalated into clashes with law enforcement officers. A group of demonstrators started throwing stones at the police. In response, law enforcement officers used water cannons.

The last in Europe

The leader of the Batkivshchyna Party, Yulia Tymoshenko, said in the Ukrainian Parliament that for the first time Ukraine was the last in Europe in terms of gross domestic product per capita

According to Ms. Tymoshenko, the energy crisis in Ukraine has already caused a rise in prices and inflation. “You have no idea what is happening to businesses that cannot pay their bills for gas, neither for heating, nor for electricity, which is growing in price every day. We have colossal inflation in the country, which is hidden in figures, but people see it on store shelves. Prices are already unbearable not only for pensioners, but also for a part of the middle class,” emphasised Ms. Tymoshenko.

“I would like us to discuss this issue immediately, because it directly affects the income of every family. Against this background, there is no indexation of wages, pensions, or social benefits,” she said.

At the end of November, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky said that there was no talk of direct purchases of gas from Russia at the moment. Prior to that,



Tymoshenko said that Ukraine lacks 2.5m tonnes of coal and about 3bn cubic metres of gas in order to overcome the crisis.

‘I could not keep silence’



Emil Czecko's interview to Belteleradiocompany's journalist Ksenia Lebedeva

By Roman Rud

There was a lot of noise on the Polish border. A real information bomb exploded: a Polish soldier fled to Belarus, outraged by the inhuman attitude of official Poland towards refugees at the border. This is how the State Border Committee reported the incident:

“On December 16th, at 5.50pm, a Belarusian border patrol stopped a serviceman of the Polish Armed Forces, Emil Czecko, born 1996, near the Belarusian-Polish border at the Tushemlya border outpost of the Grodno border group, in the border security zone.

The man said that he was a serviceman of the 11th Masurian Artillery Regiment of the 16th Pomeranian Mechanised Division named after King Cazimir. Its units were deployed to ensure protection of the border with Belarus during the state of emergency on the border territories of Poland. In con-

nection with disagreement with the policy of Poland regarding the migration crisis and the practice of inhuman treatment of refugees, the soldier asked for political asylum in the Republic of Belarus.”

Watching Warsaw’s clumsy reaction was downright embarrassing. The first hours after the news spread in the Belarusian information space, the Polish media remained silent. Meanwhile, the command of the 16th Pomeranian Division spread a message that the soldier had ‘died while performing tasks’...

At the same time, for some reason, it was announced that a search was underway for the heroically deceased infantryman. Then the command said that ‘it does not confirm the information spread by the Belarusian media’. Finally, the last ‘gem’ from the Polish generals was the lightning news that the soldier had... disappeared! Where the soldier — previously buried by his command — could have disappeared,

Polish soldier asked for political asylum in Belarus

was not reported. The parade of absurd excuses was completed by Defence Minister Mariusz Błaszczak himself. It was pointless to deny further (as scans of Emil Czecko’s documents had already appeared on the Internet), so Błaszczak hastened to declare that the soldier who had asked for political asylum was at odds with the law, and indeed had already quit the army.

The Polish public was quick to respond to this ugly performance by demanding the disgraced generals resign.

What did Emil Czecko tell Belarus 1 TV Channel journalist Ksenia Lebedeva? We publish a fragment of the interview.

— **Emil, tell us how you ended up on the territory of Belarus and why did you want to leave the army?**

— *I deserted from the army through barbed wire, tore my trousers and hurt my hand. I ran across the no-man’s land and saw that a Polish patrol was driving. I took off my uniform and ran in a round-about way towards Belarus. I decided to leave the Polish army in this way because it is impossible to keep silent about what is happening in Poland.*

— **Now the Polish side says that you created a lot of problems, and in general they say that you ... died, that you don’t exist now.**

— *They just don’t want to admit that after everything they’ve done, they really want to hush up this case so that not a single soldier escapes. They couldn’t even admit that a soldier had escaped and told what had happened. Now, the only thing they are capable of is to make*

the worst person out of me, or even to say that I have died...

Czecko also spoke about the killings on the border, which he had witnessed.

— **Have you seen how volunteers from public organisations who entered the border area to help migrants are detained?**

— *I was in such a situation when a volunteer drove up and began to say: ‘Where are you taking them [refugees]?’ And the border guard just shot him in the forehead.*

— **Do I understand you correctly that they killed volunteers as well? Ordinary Poles? Did you see that?**

— *Yes, I myself have seen at least two such situations.*

In an interview on Belarus 1 TV Channel, Czecko admitted that he had to kill people. According to him, this happened for the first time in May, “It was at the end of May. It’s impossible to describe. It just feels like someone has torn your soul, and then you feel like you have no soul.”

The Polish soldier stressed that it is impossible to forget. “The faces of these people are always remembered. The faces of the first ones — those whom I was told to kill. And then you do not look at the face, only aim at the chest,” he added.

* * *

The Polish soldiers simply can’t live with their nerves. So, Emil Czecko asked for political asylum in Belarus because he does not want to participate in the lawlessness that the Polish authorities are pushing the army into.

Unusual New Year



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Playing ritual drums and breaking dishes: the most interesting New Year traditions around the world



yandex.ru



Ireland

The Irish are known for their hospitality, especially on the night of December 31st to January 1st, when the country celebrates the New Year. All inhabitants of the country open the doors of their houses wide. They do this in order to release the old and let the New Year in. However, along with the latter, guests come to the house, whom the family may not even know. Yes indeed, at this time, everyone who wishes can enter any house and be a welcome guest. They will be seated at a festive table, treated with wine and a national dish, and will be happily told about family traditions and various legends. After midnight, the Irish go out to the central square and continue to have fun, but together.



Fiji Islands

Due to the time difference, Fijians are among the first to celebrate the New Year. Moreover, they celebrate on a grand scale: New Year's holidays are considered the longest here, they even take place according to the national principle of 'Fiji time', which means: relax, there is nowhere to go. On New Year's Eve, they always organise large-scale light shows, launch a huge number of fireworks and the culmination of the holiday is a noisy open-air party. However, it's not at all like those that we are used to seeing on New Year's Eve. Partying in Fiji is accompanied by the beating of ritual drums, the noise of ukuleles and mandolins (four-stringed Italian instruments).



Bulgaria

Bulgaria has several interesting New Year traditions. According to one of them, on the festive night they put a loaf of bread on the table, in which they hide a coin. Before the celebration, the oldest member of the family breaks the bread. Those who find money will be lucky all year round. There is also a more romantic tradition, which especially pleases people without a partner. After the clock strikes 12, the lights in the room are turned off and everyone can kiss any of those present and the kiss must remain a secret.



Spain

If you decide to spend New Year in Spain, be prepared to be asked to eat grapes as quickly as possible. Eating 12 grapes before the clock finishes striking is a tradition that has existed in the country for almost a hundred years. You must eat a grape every three seconds after the clock strikes. Each berry symbolises one successful month of the coming year. In addition, it is necessary to have time to spit out the pips before the strikes end. This, by the way, is not as easy as it might seem: the grapes in Spain are quite large. Of course, one could cheat and buy small ones, but there is the fear that then the luck will not be as great as we would like.



Alaska

The long-awaited holiday in Alaska is considered a family celebration. On New Year's Eve, lights and fireworks are launched into the sky. Celebration of the New Year in Anchorage — the largest city in Alaska — where a folklore festival is held, is distinguished by its grand scale. It lasts a whole week; musicians, singers and dancers come to it from all over the country. Here you



foodlandmood.com.ua

can hear a variety of music: from folk to jazz. Every year there is no end to tourists who want to spend New Year's Eve gazing at the delightful forest landscapes, glaciers and the northern lights.



Panama

If you are tired of celebrating the New Year in frosty weather, you can safely go to Panama. On a festive night, it is always hot here: firstly, because of the climate, and secondly, the locals have one interesting incendiary tradition. In the New Year, it is customary to burn stuffed models of famous personalities: politicians, athletes, actors and many others. Moreover, this is not an insult at all, rather the opposite, as the inhabitants of Panama express their honour and respect for the one whose effigy is burned. Most often, this person is the current president, whose scarecrow symbolises the problems of the outgoing year.



Denmark

It is generally accepted that dishes are broken to bring happiness, and so the inhabitants of Denmark on New Year's Eve strive to make the life of their friends as happy as possible. All year long they collect dishes that they don't use in order to ruthlessly break them near the doors of their friends and relatives. It is believed that the more fragments there are at the doorstep, the more luck awaits you in the New Year. It is extremely sad when there isn't a single broken plate or mug near the door, which means that the owners have practically no friends. Another tradition in Denmark is to jump as high as possible to the chimes to catch your luck for the next year.



Philippines

There is no strict dress code for a New Year's party in the Philippines, but it would be better to wear a dress with polka dots, because the circle before the holidays becomes a symbol of financial well-being. It is better to stock up on round fruits for the New Year's table and fill your pockets with coins — so you will definitely not be left without money in the coming year.



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WORLD

The Minsk Times
Thursday
December 23
2021

9

Ten facts about Father Frost



1. Originally from legend

Moroz (Frost) himself was a deity of the ancient Slavs, responsible for the appearance in winter of a crackling, chilling cold to the bone. His other names were Studenets, Treskun and Morozko. Like any other pagan god, he also had a real family tree. His father was Veles, and his

mother was Mara — the goddess of death. Severe cold was considered his breath, icicles — his tears, frost — his frozen words. Snow clouds, according to the Slavs, are the hair of the deity of cold.

2. Tell us Snow Maiden, where is your mother?

It is known that Father Frost lives with his granddaughter Snow Maiden, which is why many often wondered who the girl's parents were. The answer is simple. Father Frost has a wife: Matushka Zima (Mother Winter). The couple had three daughters: Stuzha (Bitter Cold), Vyuga (Snowstorm) and Metelitsa (Blizzard). Metelitsa met the son of the Snow Queen — Buran, the young people fell in love and got married. The couple had a wonderful daughter: Snow Maiden. The girl grew up beautiful, quiet, intelligent and was very friendly with her grandfather, who took her to New Year's children's parties. Over time, the children enjoyed her greatly as well as Father Frost. And so it happened that Father Frost comes to the New Year with his granddaughter.



3. Evil incarnate

The tradition of celebrating the New Year, as you know, appeared much later: our ancestors had no time for that. At a time when Frost was considered a cruel and evil god who lived in the North, no one thought to give gifts to children or decorate a Christmas tree. Frost collected sacrifices, stealing children and carrying

them away in a sack, mercilessly freezing travellers who got lost in the winter thicket. However, over time, as it happens, everything has changed, and under the influence of Orthodox traditions, Father Frost has grown kinder and has already begun to give presents to children himself.

4. Tell us his patronymic

Did you know that Father Frost has a patronymic? The first time the wizard is mentioned is in 1840 in the book *Children's Tales of Grandfather Irenaeus*, in the publications of Vladimir Odoevsky. In this collection the name and patronymic of Father Frost became known: Moroz Ivanovich.



5. The Tsar commanded

The tradition of Father Frost coming to the house with gifts arose with the beginning of the New Year celebrations in the Russian Empire. In 1700, Peter I issued a decree on the mandatory celebration of this holiday. In those days, Father Frost brought gifts only to smart and obedient

children and he beat mischievous people and hooligans with his stick. Over time, the image of Father Frost softened, the stick was replaced with a magic staff, which, of course, did not beat anyone. But for a long time there were beliefs that naughty children receive a piece of coal instead of gifts.

Father Frost is the chief winter wizard. However, this wonderful person was not always the good-natured New Year's character we know him as — many centuries ago people didn't wait eagerly for his appearance but were afraid of him. Why? Find out below.

6. Saint Nicholas

Father Frost became who he is due to the existence of a very concrete and living prototype. In the 4th century in Asia Minor, Saint Nicholas the Wonderworker lived and performed godly deeds (in the Catholic and Lutheran versions — Saint Nicholas or Klaus). Before the New Year, he gave out nice gifts to obedient children and helped the poor. Over time, the image also underwent modification and turned into a more modern Western European Santa Claus.



7. Holiday in Soviet style

It is curious that Father Frost as an obligatory character of the New Year's festivities appeared during the Soviet era. It happened in the late 1930s — it was then that the New Year became a truly national holiday. In December 1935, a member of the Presidium of the USSR Central Executive Committee, Pavel Postyshev, published an article in the *Pravda* newspaper where he proposed organising a New Year celebration for children.



8. Honorary worker

According to rough estimates, the age of Father Frost is more than two thousand years. During this time, the fairy tale wizard gave more than a million gifts, listened to a huge number of poems and received a huge number of letters. Such work requires a well-deserved reward, so the Pension Fund of Russia awarded Father Frost the title of a fabulous labour veteran.



9. Snow in November

The birthday of the Russian Father Frost was not chosen by chance: according to long-term meteorological observations, on November 18th, a stable snow cover falls on most of Russia. Of course, the great Slavic gods do not and cannot have 'birthdays', and you rarely see snow on such a day. But the tradition has taken root, and the main New Year's wizard is congratulated in mid-November.



10. Frosty kindness

Unlike the Snow Queen, traditional in Northern Europe, Father Frost multiplies his magical power, not freezing people's hearts, but on the contrary, warming them with his love. In fairy tales, he always gives the opportunity to correct mistakes to other characters, while the Queen never helps the characters of fairy tales in anything. Equally powerful in freezing all life on earth, they differ completely in the temperature and kindness of their hearts. The heart of the Snow Queen is a piece of ice, while that of Father Frost brings us such kind warmth from his ancient Slavic soul that it can only be compared with the warmth of the sun.

Do you lack the nerve?

By Aleksandr Nesterov

In its 66 years of existence, the Guinness Book of World Records has evolved from a fun betting guide to an authoritative annual guide with information on record achievements from around the world. Our country, by the way, is also represented there: many of the achievements included in the Guinness Book of Records in different years are made by Belarusians.

Challenging a sand pit!

Belarus is, of course, a country of blue lakes and green forests, as well as the biggest vehicles. The BELAZ heavy-duty dump truck with a capacity of 4,600HP and weighing 810 tonnes was included in the Guinness Book of Records last year. Machinery from Zhodino has also previously appeared on the pages of the publication. Thus, in 2015, the manufacturer received certificates from the Guinness World Records Company for two achievements of the 450-tonne BELAZ-75710 at once: the vehicle was recognised as the world's largest two-axle dump truck and its body was the largest body of a heavy-duty dump truck.

All familiar faces

In 1995, Belarusian painter Aleksandr Kishchenko was registered in the Guinness Book of Records as the author of the world's largest tapestry. At that time, he completed work on the man-made *Tapestry of the Century*, which measures 19m high and 14m wide and has a total area of 266sq.m, weighing 286kg. The process of creating this masterpiece took five years, there are about a hundred figures on the canvas — almost all the great people of planet Earth for the entire 20th century. Unfortunately, this last work of Aleksandr Kishchenko was exhibited only a few times.

There is strength — there will be luck

The famous Belarusian weightlifter Vyacheslav Khoronko is a repeated hero of the Guinness Book of Records. Many of his records have not yet been broken. A couple of years ago, our hero admitted in an interview that the authors of the worldwide publication did not encourage their heroes for achievements alone; on the contrary, you also need to pay to get on the published pages. However, for the sake of prestige, you should try. For Vyacheslav himself, all these records are a way of self-expression: he likes to demonstrate the physical capabilities of a person and promote a healthy lifestyle. In early November 2021, 60-year-old Khoronko set a new world record: during the Belarus

Belarusians are not ashamed of the achievements reflected in the pages of the Guinness Book of Records



Kettlebell Lifting Championship, he exceeded his own achievement in the bench press with one arm, lifting a 24kg kettlebell 181 times in 170 seconds.

Other Belarusian athletes are also regularly marked in the Guinness Book of Records. For example, Sergei Zaslavsky, who boasts achievements in multi-repetitive push-ups from the floor on the fists and other disciplines. Or Sergei Kudaev, who performed 51 push-ups in a vertical handstand in one minute in 2018. Moreover, Maksim Trukhonovets also set several achievements for the Guinness Book of Records: in 2016 — in the maximum number

of pull-ups with additional weight (18kg) per minute, in 2018 — for most consecutive muscle ups, in May 2020, he wrote his name there for the third time while the most recent record dates back to July 3rd, 2021.

Master of balance

In 2012, Mogilev resident Aleksandr Bendikov, a multiple Guinness Book of Record holder, set a record for the maximum number of matches stacked on the neck of a bottle: 20,270. The tireless master of balance was also noted for other achievements, for example, he put 257 coins in a column on the edge of

a coin or set a record for balancing nails, holding 349 nails on the head of one fastener.

Walls help even on a visit

Our country is also related to some records, the authorship of which belongs to foreigners. For example, the Italian professional track and road cyclist Filippo Ganna set a new world record in the individual track pursuit (4km) in November 2019. This happened at the stage of the World Cup in Minsk. In the final race, Ganna showed a time of 4 minutes 02.647 seconds.

However, there is also a reverse example. The Gomel resident Dmitry Dudarev, who worked in the circus of China in 2017, specialising in power extreme, decided to hold his weight with his jaw as long as possible. As a result, he was suspended for 7 minutes and 15 seconds by his teeth at a height of 73 centimetres from the floor.

Trust but verify

The Guinness Book of Records cannot be called a comprehensive encyclopaedia of world achievements. Firstly, it is clear that not all record updates become known to publishers. Secondly, not all record holders have sponsors for the appropriate registration of this or that event or fact. Thirdly, there is no full guarantee that all the stated facts are 100 percent verified. Fourthly, and most importantly, only three percent of all records in the world are included in the printed version of the Guinness Book of Records.

Nevertheless, it is pleasant that in different years Belarus has appeared on the pages of the edition many times from various angles. For example, the website of the Guinness World Records lists it as the country with the highest female labour force participation at 53.3 percent (the year is not specified). Another curious fact is also reflected: in 2004, we had more cinemas per capita than any other country in the world: there was one cinema for every 2,734 people. However, the website says that 10,335,000 people lived in Belarus in 2004, while according to the data of the National Statistical Committee, the figure was 9,762,000...

Flipping through the pages

On the website of the Guinness Book of Records, such records from the Belarusian past are also mentioned:

- The oldest gold medallist at the World Championships in Athletics: Belarusian discus thrower Ellina Zvereva won the women's competition on August 11th, 2001, in Edmonton (Canada), when she was 40 years and 268 days old.
- Darya Domracheva has won the most gold medals in the women's biathlon at the Winter Olympics: four.
- In May 2017, multiple Guinness Book of Records holder Anatoly Yezhov kept the weight of 20kg on his outstretched arms for 2 minutes 39 seconds. The achievement was recorded in the Russian Arkhangelsk.
- Ihar Boki — a Belarusian Paralympic swimmer who competes among athletes with visual impairments, is the owner of a number of current world swimming records, including in 100m butterfly, 400m freestyle, 100m backstroke, etc.

RECORDS



The Minsk Times
Thursday
December 23
2021



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The Pervyi (First) merch store with catch phrases from the President opened in Minsk: it's very first day saw enthusiastic demand for the goods, with buyers purchasing T-shirts and sweatshirts in whole boxes

DATES. EVENTS. PEOPLE.



On December 23rd, 1891, Minai Shmyrev was born (partisan pseudonym Batka Minai) — one of the organisers and leaders of the partisan movement on the territory of the Vitebsk Region during the Great Patriotic War, Hero of the Soviet Union. He took part in WWI and Civil War, battles against the troops of Krasnov, Kornilov and Yudenich. In July 1941, he organised and led a partisan detachment in the Surazh District, which became part of the 1st Belarusian partisan brigade. After the war, he was at economic work in Vitebsk. He died in 1964.

On December 24th, 1976, the Gorodok Regional Museum of Local Lore was opened for visitors. Thematic sections of the exposition are devoted to history, ethnography, nature and folk crafts of the Gorodok District. On display are items from archaeological excavations of fortified settlements and burial mounds located on the territory of the area, as well as numismatic collections, traditional Belarusian household items, folk costumes and materials on the history of the Gorodok District. A separate hall presents information about the events of the Great Patriotic War on the territory of the district.



nuclear fission reaction of uranium, the first experimental uranium-graphite reactor F-1 was launched.

December 25th — Christmas for Western Christians — is one of the most important Christian holidays and a public holiday in more than 100 countries of the world. The bright holiday of Christmas is one of the most beautiful Christian traditions. Over the centuries, many traditions of its celebration have been formed: traditional Christmas trees, nativity scenes, divine services and feasts. However, local customs are added to the generally accepted rules in this or that country.



On December 26th, 1926, the first Belarusian feature film *Forest Story* directed by Yuri Tarich, based on the story by Mikhas Charot's *Swineherd* was released. It was first screened at the Kultura cinema house in Minsk.

On December 26th, 1976, Yanina Provalinskaya-Korolchik was born — a Belarusian athlete (athletics; discus throwing, since 1998 – shot putting), master of sports of Belarus, master of sports of Belarus of international class, Honoured Master of Sports of Belarus. She was awarded the Belarus Cup (1996) and was recognised as the best track-and-field athlete of Belarus in 1999 and the best athlete of Belarus in 2001. She is also a champion of the 27th Olympic Games (2000) and world champion (2001).



On December 27th, 1571, Johann Kepler was born (1571-1630) — a German astronomer, one of the founders of modern astronomy. He discovered the laws of planetary motion and laid the foundations for eclipses. He is the author of the *New Astronomy*.

On December 27th, 1761, Barclay de Tolly Mikhail Bogdanovich was born (1761-1818) — Russian military leader, Commander, Field Marshal General, prince, Hero of the Patriotic War of 1812. He carried out



major reforms in the army and the military organisation of the state. In 1813, he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Russian and Prussian armies. He inflicted a crushing defeat on Napoleon's troops in 1813-1814. In 1817, he accompanied Tsar Alexander on his journey across Belarus.

December 28th is International Film Day. On December 28th, 1895, the first public demonstration of the 'live moving photography — cinematography' invented by the Lumière brothers took place at the Le Grand Café on Boulevard des Capucines in Paris.



On December 31st, 1986, the Zaslavl Historical and Cultural Museum-Reserve was founded. The museum funds are collections of archaeological findings from excavations in the town and beyond its borders, as well as weaving, ceramics and glass, arts and crafts. The most interesting exhibits include a collection (130 pieces) of painted carpets, of which 30 were made by Yazep Drozdovich. The collection of paintings and graphics contains a collection of works of art by Viktor Markovets, Viktor Stashchenyuk, Gavriil Vashchenko. The central object of the ethnographic complex of the museum-reserve is the Mill Museum.