



# ANNUAL REPORT

2017

Ostrogorski  
Centre

# ABOUT THE OSTROGORSKI CENTRE

The Ostrogorski Centre is a think-tank devoted to analysis of and policy advocacy for problems facing Belarus in its transition to a market economy and the rule of law.

The Centre was established by Western-educated Belarusians based in Belarus and abroad. Its analysts, who work in Minsk, London, Warsaw, Stockholm, and Berlin, understand the challenges of transition in the region because they have lived through it.

Educated at the world's leading universities, the Centre's analysts have cultivated the approaches and technical skills required for Western-style analysis. Our analysts regularly publish in Belarusian, Russian, English, German, Polish, and French.

The Centre's deep knowledge of life in Belarus is crucial for addressing complex analytical tasks and learning from the experience of other countries.

The Centre aims to promote reform and inspire the kind of thinking that will help the economy become more competitive and governance more efficient. The Centre also prioritises integrating Belarusian scholars and analysts into pan-European and global media and scholarly networks.

## Areas of work of the Ostrogorski Centre

- o Analytical articles and papers on the **Belarus Digest** website devoted to Belarusian domestic politics, education and foreign and security affairs, particularly relations with Russia and the EU.
- o Regular digests of developments in civil society, the state-controlled media, foreign policy, security, and the Belarusian economy.
- o The **Ostrogorski Academy**, a Belarusian 'online university', based on a series of lectures on important and engaging topics read by well-known Belarusian academics and experts.
- o Translations of Belarus Digest articles into Belarusian and Russian as well as publications on the Ostrogorski Centre's activities.
- o Maintenance of **BelarusProfile.com** and **BelarusPolicy.com** - searchable databases of biographies of the most influential individuals in Belarus and public research papers commissioned by Belarusian think tanks and analytical centres.
- o The **Journal of Belarusian Studies**, which publishes academic articles on Belarusian literature, linguistics, foreign relations, civil society, history and art, as well as book reviews.

# INTRODUCTION FROM THE DIRECTOR



2017 was a successful year for the Ostrogorski Centre. We strengthened our team as well as the reach and impact of our work, particularly in the field of online education.

We published analytical papers on distance education, the challenges of Belarus joining the European Higher Education Area, and reform of business education.

In June, we officially launched the Ostrogorski Academy – the first entirely online educational platform in Belarus featuring video lectures, transcripts and tests presented in an engaging format.

In December, we conducted a conference on the reform of legal education, in cooperation with the Belarusian State University and the Embassy of the United Kingdom to Belarus.

In 2017, the Ostrogorski Centre continued to provide daily analysis of events related to Belarus in English through the Belarus Digest website, and in the Russian/Belarusian languages on Ostro.by. We also kept the Belarus Policy and Belarus Profile databases up to date.

As in previous years, we held three major annual conferences – the Ostrogorski Forum in Minsk dedicated to foreign policy and security issues, the Annual London Conference on Belarusian Studies, and a conference on the reform of higher education in Minsk. The new 2017 issue of the Journal of Belarusian Studies features articles by researchers from Canada, the United States and Belarus, as well as several book reviews.

This year, Belarus Digest welcomed a new analyst on national security and defence – Dzmitry Mitskevich from the Belarus Security Blog. Peter Braga, a PhD candidate at University College London's School of Slavonic and East European Studies in London joined the editorial team of Belarus Digest. Siarhei Bohdan, a regular contributor to Belarus Digest, defended his PhD thesis at The Free University of Berlin.

# INTRODUCTION FROM THE DIRECTOR

## Plans for 2018



In 2018, the most recognisable project of the Ostrogorski Centre, Belarus Digest, will celebrate its 10th anniversary. We plan to mark this with special events.

The Centre will continue to strengthen its work in education, where, on the one hand, Belarus needs reform and input from Western-qualified Belarusians and, on the other, the authorities seem to be open to new initiatives. We will publish an analytical paper on the reform of legal education following a conference at the Belarusian State University, which we organised in December 2017.

We hope to expand the Ostrogorski Academy with new courses on issues related to human rights, corruption, education technologies and civil activism, bringing together instructors from Belarus and abroad.

The Annual London Conference on Belarusian Studies in March will mark the 100th anniversary of the proclamation of the Belarusian Democratic Republic, among other topics.

The 2018 Ostrogorski Forum in June will focus on technical cooperation between Belarus and other countries, covering foreign relations, security and education – the main areas of expertise of the Ostrogorski Centre analysts.

We plan to devote our annual conference on education to the development of critical thinking and reflections on the legacy of Lev Vygotski, a Belarus-born academic and a founder of cultural-historical psychology. While Vygotski is little-known in Belarus, he has become one of the most commonly cited education scholars in the world.

To implement these plans, we will continue our fundraising efforts to support the Centre's work in three main areas: 1) foreign policy of Belarus; 2) security and national defence; and 3) reform of higher education and informal education.

As a not-for-profit, our activities depend on the generosity of our supporters. The easiest way to support is to make a [donate online](#). We also look forward to hearing from new authors, partners and our readers.

# OUR PROJECTS

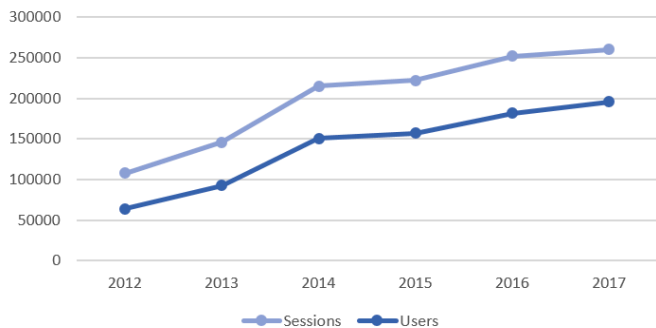
## BELARUS DIGEST

WWW.BELARUSDIGEST.COM



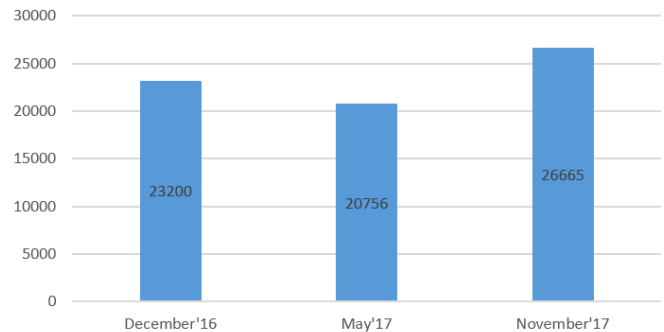
The [Belarus Digest](http://belarusdigest.com) website provides non-partisan analysis of Belarus-related events written by Belarusians specifically for an English-language readership. In addition to the daily analytical pieces published on Belarus Digest, we also offer monthly columns such as Belarus Foreign Policy Digest, State Press Digest, Digest of the Belarusian Economy, and updates on civil society activities and Belarusian analytics.

**Belarus Digest audience, 2012-2017**

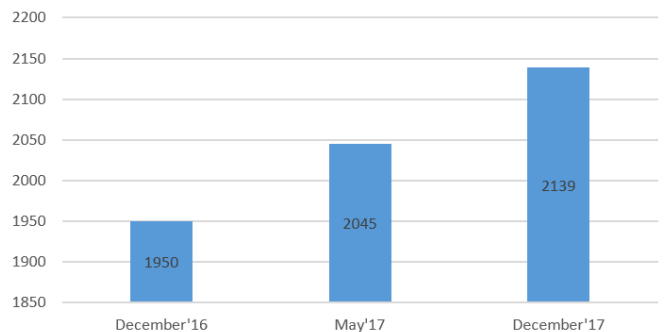


In recent years, Belarus Digest has become a reliable and popular source for understanding Belarus-related topics. This is evidenced by the growth of its audience. In 2017, Belarus Digest attracted a record number of reader, and the website has tripled its number of viewers and increased the number of user sessions 2.5 times since 2012. Its audience on social networks has also been growing steadily. In 2017, Belarus Digest published about 220 articles.

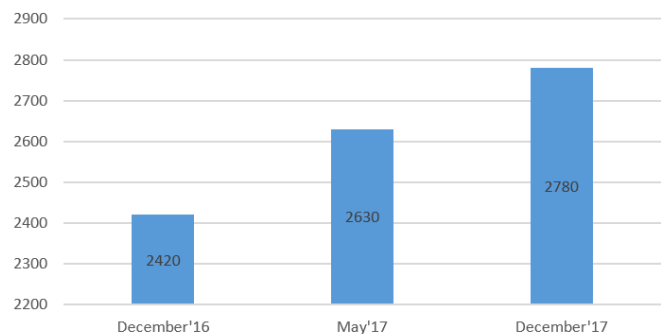
**Number of monthly sessions**



**Followers on Facebook**



**Followers on Twitter**



# OUR PROJECTS

The high-quality analysis provided by Belarus Digest is also evidenced by numerous references to its articles by the world's leading political institutions, think tanks and media sources:

## POLITICAL INSTITUTIONS AND THINK TANKS:

European Parliament

Atlantic Council

Centre for European Policy  
Analysis

European Council on Foreign  
Relations

Carnegie Endowment for  
International Peace

The Potomac Foundation  
Jamestown Foundation

Carnegie Moscow Centre

Belarus Economic Research  
and Outreach Centre

Centre for Strategic and  
Foreign Policy Studies

## MEDIA:

Foreign Policy

Washington Post

Atlantic Council

Centre for European Policy  
Analysis

The Guardian

Zeit Online

Aftenposten

National Geographic

Estonian Public Broadcasting

East European Politics

Eastbook.eu

Radio Free Europe/Radio  
Liberty

Cooperation and Conflict

Gazeta.pl

Polish Radio External Service

Defence One

Egypt Daily News

National Interest

New Eastern Europe

The Diplomat

udf.by

Il Post

East Journal

St Andrews Foreign Affairs  
Review

Transitions Online

Český rozhlas

belaruspartisan.org

Belarus in Focus

eurasianet.org

International Peace

Information Service

## OSTRO.BY

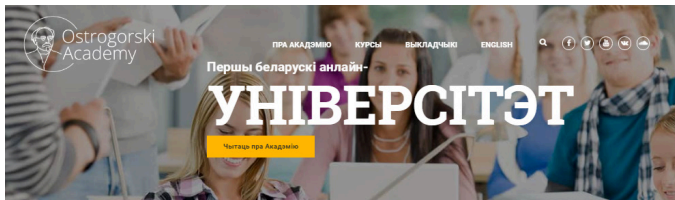


[The website](#) publishes translations of Belarus Digest articles into the Belarusian and Russian languages, as well as announcements of the Ostrogorski Centre's activities. In 2017, the Centre published 86 articles.

# OUR PROJECTS

## OSTROGORSKI ACADEMY

OSTROGORSKI.ACADEMY



НАШЫЯ КУРСЫ



On 19 June, the Ostrogorski Centre officially launched the [Ostrogorski Academy](http://Ostrogorski.Academy) – a nonprofit educational project dedicated to disseminating knowledge of the humanities within the Belarusian society. The academy is the first entirely online educational platform, based on a series of lectures on important and engaging topics.

Each lecture series is read by well-known Belarusian academics and analysts based both abroad and in Belarus. Courses also feature graphic illustrations, transcripts of lectures, e-books, podcasts, and links to additional sources of information.

The mission of the Ostrogorski Academy:

### o **Making quality education available**

Everyone should have the opportunity to study in their native language, wherever in the world they happen to be. Access to high-quality education will catalyse the development of Belarus as a whole.

### o **Connecting Belarus to the international academic community**

Education in Belarus remains woefully insular. We provide a platform for the best Belarusian scholars, working abroad and in Belarus, to bring much-needed innovation to Belarusian education.

### o **Promoting an open society based on the rule of law**

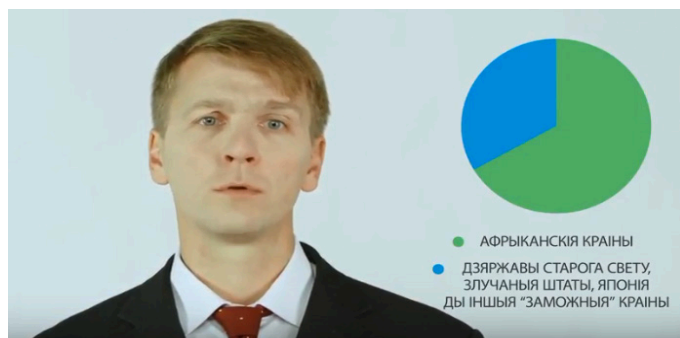
We aim to strengthen Belarusian civil society through education. The knowledge we confer will make the Belarusian economy more competitive and make governance more efficient and modern.

### o **Developing Belarusian culture and identity**

Most of the materials presented at the Ostrogorski Academy are in the Belarusian language. This follows from our belief that the success of Belarus is largely contingent on the development of its own national identity.

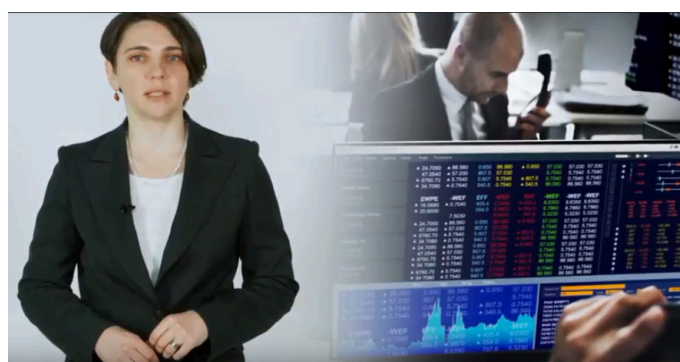
# OUR PROJECTS

## Ostrogorski Academy courses



### INTERNATIONAL FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

[The course](#) offers an introduction to the history of modern international financial institutions. Within the course, students can learn about the basic principles of functioning of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development.



### ECONOMIC CRISES

[The course](#) teaches the main types and causes of economic crises, the peculiarities of economic crises in Belarus, and the main patterns of behavior during crises. After completing the course, students will understand the nature of economic growth and crises, will be able to analyse the consequences of state policies, and will be able to make more effective economic and financial decisions in their own lives.



### MODERN DISTANCE AND BUSINESS EDUCATION

[The course](#) introduces the state of distance education and business education in Belarus and abroad, its trends and prospects for development in Belarus. By the end of the course, students will understand the principles, forms and methods of distance and business education, and the role of business education for opening and managing a business.



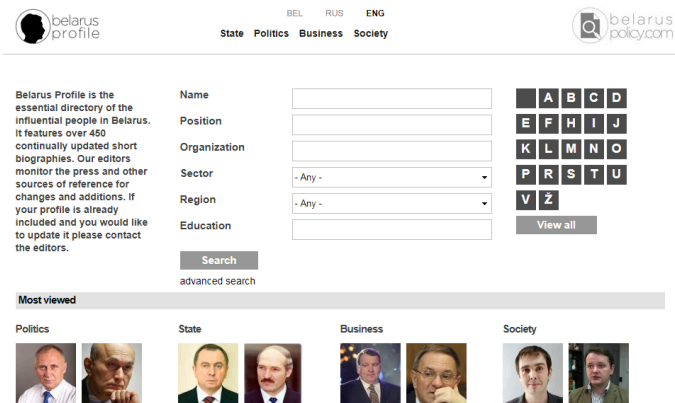
### GRAND DUCHY OF LITHUANIA IN THE EUROPEAN AND BELARUSIAN HISTORY

[The course](#) presents the role and significance of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL) in medieval and modern times in the general context of European and Belarusian history. It covers the genesis of the GDL in comparison with other countries of Central and Eastern Europe, the development of the state in a civilisational borderland and the activities of the GDL as an outpost of European civilisation.



# OUR PROJECTS

## BELARUS PROFILE BELARUSPROFILE.COM

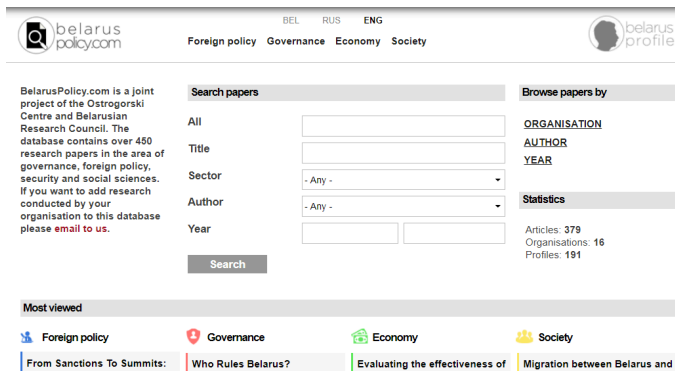


The [Belarus Profile](#) website provides up-to-date information on 520 influential people from all walks of life in Belarus.

Containing biographical listings of people who have an impact on life in Belarus, including politicians, opposition activists, civil servants, and notable figures from academia, business, civil society, and other areas, its ambition is to become the most respected reference source for biographical information.

Each listing is in Belarusian, Russian, and English and contains basic personal information, details of education and career, and relevant internet links. In 2017, 40 new profiles appeared on Belarus Profile and 60 were updated. Currently, Belarus Profile remains the most complete database of the Belarusian elite available online, with around 530 profiles.

## BELARUS POLICY BELARUSPOLICY.COM



[BelarusPolicy.com](#) is a joint project of the Ostrogorski Centre and the Belarusian Research Council. This platform gathers information on all Belarusian public research and analytical institutions.

Containing 360 research papers from 14 leading Belarusian think tanks in the fields of governance, foreign policy, security and social sciences, the database presents a unique online source of policy research on Belarus.

# OUR PROJECTS

## THE JOURNAL OF BELARUSIAN STUDIES

BELARUSJOURNAL.COM

The screenshot shows the website's header with a purple banner for the 'The Third Annual London Conference' on 'BELARUSIAN STUDIES IN THE 21ST CENTURY' from 23-24 March 2018, with a deadline of 15 December 2017. Below the banner is the journal's title and navigation menu. The main content area includes an 'About The Journal of Belarusian Studies' section, a search bar, and a subscription form.

### Contributors for to the 2017 issue

- o Tatsiana Kulakevich (United States)
- o Lizaveta Kasmach (Canada)
- o Uladzimir Kananovich (Belarus)
- o Raman Urbanowicz (Hungary)
- o Siarhei Bohdan (Germany)
- o Aliaksei Lastouski (Belarus)

[The Journal of Belarusian Studies](#) publishes academic articles on Belarusian literature, linguistics, foreign relations, civil society, history and art, as well as book reviews. Yarik Kryvoi is the Journal's editor.

The 2017 issues included articles on the Belarusian national mobilisation and the practical challenges encountered by national activists in eastern Belarus in 1917; American political interest in Belarus, ascertained from research of the Congressional Record, and the 16th century Belarusian publisher Francis Skaryna's sources of astrological knowledge.

The Journal's Advisory Board consists of Arnold McMillin (UK), Jim Dingley (UK), Andrej Kotljarchuk (Sweden), Curt Woolheiser (USA), David Marples (Canada), Iryna Dubianetskaya (Belarus), Alastair Rabagliati (Belgium), and Andrew Wilson (UK).

# OUR EVENTS

## OSTROGORSKI FORUM 2017



On 19 June 2017, the Ostrogorski Centre [held a conference](#) on crisis trends under the Belarusian political and economic model in the areas of foreign policy, security and identity. It included three panels on the normalisation of relations between Belarus and the EU after 2014, national

security and defence in Belarus in the context of economic crisis and rising international tensions, and official identity politics since 2014.

Each panel included experts from both pro-government and the independent expert community, with journalists from leading Belarusian mass media outlets as moderators. Belarusian politicians and foreign diplomats also attended the conference and took part in the discussions.

The annual conference promotes the development of professional and respectful dialogue between experts with different political views. The conference is broadcast live. [Videos of the panels](#) are available for stakeholders to watch.

## SECOND ANNUAL LONDON CONFERENCE ON BELARUSIAN STUDIES



On 25 February 2017, the Second Annual London Conference on Belarusian Studies was organised by the Ostrogorski Centre in

cooperation with University College London and the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum.

Speakers from Belarus, the United Kingdom, Japan, Germany, the United States, and other countries presented and discussed Belarus-related research. The conference panels covered Francis Skaryna's work and legacy, problems of Belarusian national identity, Belarusian foreign policy and comparative politics, social and political movements, and language and literature.

All conference presentations were uploaded online in [podcast](#) form and selected papers from the conference will be published in the 2018 issue of the Journal of Belarusian Studies.

# OUR EVENTS

## CONFERENCE ON 'REFORM OF LEGAL EDUCATION IN BELARUS AND THE UK: THE EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE'



On 28 December 2017, the Ostrogorski Centre in cooperation with the Faculty of Law of the Belarusian State University and with the support of the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Minsk conducted a conference on 'Reform of legal education in Belarus and the UK: the exchange of experience and vision for the future'.

The conference featured 16 speakers including representatives of the British Embassy, Ministry of Education of Belarus, Belarusian State University, Hrodna State University, Brest State University, legal academics and administrators, as well as practitioners from Belarus.

In addition, three speakers came from UK-based institutions: the British Institute of International and Comparative Law, London School of Economics and Political Science and the University of Liverpool. The conference became an opportunity not only to share the experience of Belarus-based and UK-based academics but also to help shape the debate on legal education reform in Belarus.

The conference was broadcast live on YouTube and Facebook, and videos of each panel are now available on the Ostrogorski Centre [YouTube channel](#). In 2018 the Centre will publish an analytical paper on legal education reform featuring original research and summarising the views and reform proposals from the conference.

# ANALYTICAL PAPERS

In January-February 2017, the Ostrogorski Centre released three analytical papers as a follow up to the [conference on](#) 'Education as a Human Right: Modernising Higher Education to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century' held on 13 December 2016 in Minsk.

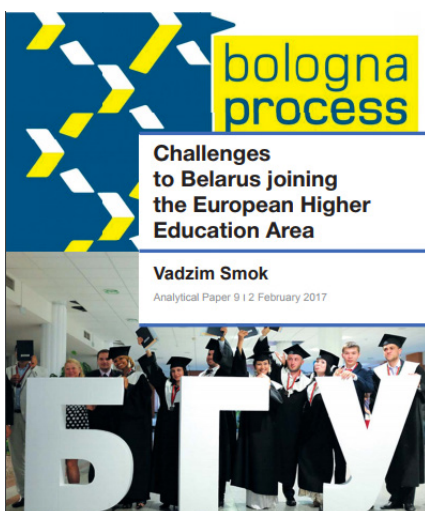
## BELARUSIAN BUSINESS EDUCATION – FROM A COMMAND ECONOMY TO THE MARKET



The Belarusian authorities have recently shown interest in developing business education, as evidenced by the Concept adopted by the Belarusian government in 2015. However, the Ministry of Education has not yet done much to adjust state regulations to match the situation on the ground.

Three key problems exist today: state regulations, poor integration into the international educational space and lack of affordable business education in the regions of Belarus. Representatives of the government, the international community, and business educators would do well to focus on them.

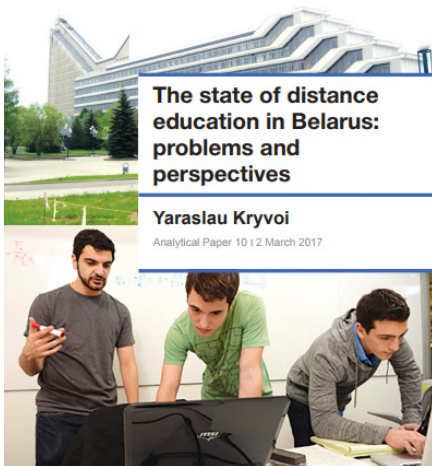
## CHALLENGES TO BELARUS JOINING THE EUROPEAN HIGHER EDUCATION AREA



In 2015 Belarus joined the European Higher Education Area (EHEA) and committed to putting a Roadmap for higher education reform into effect by 2018. The implementation of the Roadmap is running behind schedule, which threatens to jeopardise fulfilment of Belarus' obligations by the due date.

The paper analyses the main challenges to implementation of the Roadmap in Belarus. It also provides recommendations which could help to ensure it is implemented on time and that it benefits a wider range of stakeholders.

## THE STATE OF DISTANCE EDUCATION IN BELARUS: PROBLEMS AND PERSPECTIVES



Promoting distance education in Belarus would make education more accessible to broader circles of society, including those who are constrained by physical or economic factors.

The established history of extramural education, good technical equipment at universities, and the wide-spread use of high-speed internet mean that Belarus already possesses a good basis for the development of a high quality system of distance education.

In order to create a high-quality system of distance education in Belarus, it is necessary to create a corresponding legislative base, to organise additional training for specialists in the sphere of education, and to expand cooperation between universities and the companies that work in the tech sector.

# SELECTED ACTIVITIES IN 2017



Yaraslau Kryvoi speaks at the «Between East and West: What's next for Belarus?» public discussion in London



2nd Annual London Conference on Belarusian Studies



Ostrogorski Forum 2017



Conference on legal education reform in Minsk

**January-February 2017:** the Ostrogorski Centre released [three analytical papers](#) as a follow-up to the conference on ‘Education as a Human Right: Modernising Higher Education to Meet the Challenges of the 21st Century’ held on 13 December 2016 in Minsk.

**February 2017:** the Second Annual London Conference on Belarusian Studies [was organised](#) by the Ostrogorski Centre in cooperation with University College London and the Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum.

**April 2017:** Yaraslau Kryvoi spoke at the ‘Between East and West: What's next for Belarus?’ [discussion](#) organised by the King's College London (KCL) Eurasia Society, KCL Diplomacy Society and the Ostrogorski Centre.

**June 2017:** the Ostrogorski Centre held the [II Ostrogorski Forum](#), a conference on foreign policy and security, in Minsk. The conference gathered prominent Belarusian experts, both pro-government and independent, as well as diplomats, politicians and academics from state universities.

**June 2017:** the Ostrogorski Centre officially launched the [Ostrogorski Academy](#) – the first entirely online educational platform, dedicated to disseminating knowledge of the humanities.

**October 2017:** the Ostrogorski Centre team took part in the Seventh International Congress of Belarusian Studies (Kaunas, Lithuania), the largest annual conference on social sciences and humanities covering Belarus.

**December 2017:** the Ostrogorski Centre in cooperation with the Faculty of Law of the Belarusian State University with the support of the Embassy of the United Kingdom in Minsk conducted a [conference](#) on ‘Reform of legal education in Belarus and the UK: the exchange of experience and vision for the future’.

In 2017, Ostrogorski Centre analysts gave their comments to well-known foreign and local media outlets:



INDEPENDENT



Made for minds.



The Conflict Comment



# MEDIA ARCHIVE 2017

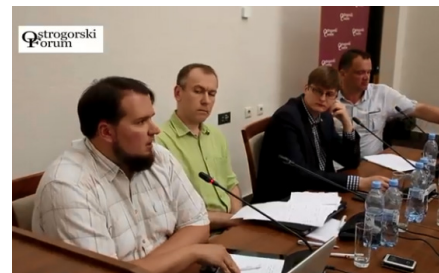
## OSTROGORSKI FORUM 2017



[Panel 1. Normalisation of relations between Belarus and the EU after 2014: results and problems](#)



[Panel 2. National security and defence of Belarus in the conditions of economic crisis and rising international tensions: achievements and failures](#)



[Panel 3. Official identity policy after 2014: has 'Soft Belarusisation' been implemented?](#)

## REFORM OF LEGAL EDUCATION IN BELARUS AND THE UK: THE EXCHANGE OF EXPERIENCE AND VISION FOR THE FUTURE



[Panel 1. Organisation of educational process](#)



[Panel 2. Legal education and professional skills](#)



[Panel 3. International cooperation in the field of legal education](#)

## [PODCASTS OF THE 2ND ANNUAL LONDON CONFERENCE ON BELARUSIAN STUDIES](#)





# OUR PARTNERS AND CONTRIBUTORS

## SUPPORTERS AND PARTNERS

- The Norwegian Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Embassy of the United Kingdom
- Law Faculty of the Belarusian State University
- Open Society Foundations
- Online Magazine Idea
- Polish Radio External Service
- Belarusian Research and Outreach Centre
- Francis Skaryna Belarusian Library and Museum
- Anglo-Belarusian Society
- School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL



## CONTRIBUTORS AND COLLABORATORS

- Aleh Mazol
- Alena Mikhalkovich
- Aliaksandr Filipau
- Arseni Sivitski
- Artyom Shraibman
- Dzmitry Mitskevich
- Jeremy Coppock
- Juljan Jachovic
- Lizaveta Kasmach
- Marta Kochetkova
- Maryja Kavalčuk
- Michael Murphy
- Paula Borowska
- Peter Braga
- Siarhei Leskiec
- Vadzim Bylina

# OUR TEAM



**Yarik Kryvoi** is the director at the Ostrogorski Centre. Areas of expertise: education, international public law, commercial dispute resolution, business climate.



**Vadzim Smok** is an analyst and Project Coordinator at the Ostrogorski Centre in Minsk. Areas of expertise: public policy, society, local government, national identity.



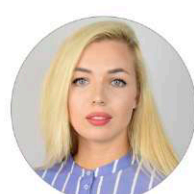
**Siarhei Bohdan** is a research director at the Ostrogorski Centre. Areas of expertise: security, Middle East, Central Asia, Belarus foreign policy.



**Igar Gubarevich** is a senior analyst at the Ostrogorski Centre based in Minsk. Areas of expertise: Belarus foreign policy, business climate in Belarus, Western Europe, United States, international organisations.



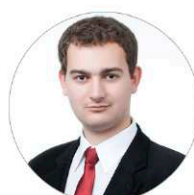
**Ryhor Astapenia** is development director at the Ostrogorski Centre. Areas of expertise: Belarusian foreign policy, security, Belarus' political system.



**Alesia Rudnik** is an analyst at the Ostrogorski Centre. Areas of expertise: civil society of Belarus and Eastern European countries, advocacy in non-democratic states, political system of Belarus.



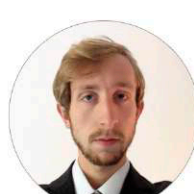
**Paula Borowska** is an analyst at the Ostrogorski Centre. Areas of expertise: national minorities, religious studies, Belarus-Poland relations.



**Artyom Shraibman** is an associate analyst at the Ostrogorski Centre. Areas of expertise: Belarus-EU relations, domestic policy of Belarus, Belarusian media.



**Alena Mikhalkovich** is an intern at the Ostrogorski Centre. Areas of expertise: Middle East, IT in Belarus.



**Jeremy Coppock** is an intern at the Ostrogorski Centre. Areas of expertise: Belarusian nation-building, identity, and Belarusian migration.