

# The European Student's Union (ESU) strongly condemns the imprisonment of students in Belarus



*To the Ministry of Education of Republic of Belarus, the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Republic of Belarus, and the Higher Education institutions in Belarus*

**The European Student's Union (ESU) strongly condemns the imprisonment of students and other citizens of Belarus, for participating in peaceful protests. We call upon their immediate release.**

ESU stands in solidarity with the Students Bloc and supports the protests taking place on 25th of March. Freedom of assembly and freedom of speech are human rights that are universal, and we do not accept any breaches of these.

Higher education institutions have rescheduled their classes - that are all obligatory in Belarus - to hours that bar students' participation in the public demonstrations. Academia and higher education should be arenas for critical thinking and democratic participation. We cannot accept these actions and demand:

1. That no student using the right to protest and freedom of speech be punished with expulsion, lower grades or other repressive measures.
2. All missed classes due to participation in protests to be excused.
3. The immediate release of imprisoned protesters.

ESU places the final responsibility for meeting these demands with the government of Belarus, but also expects full commitment from the higher education institutions. Besides, ESU calls upon the international higher education stakeholders, intergovernmental bodies and community, including Bologna Follow Up Group, to place the same demands.

Violations of student rights and academic freedom are severe violations of the fundamental values of the European Higher Education Area (EHEA). These principles that are laid down in [Magna Charta Universitatum of 1988](#) and [Council of Europe Recommendation \(CM/Rec\(2012\)7\) on the responsibility of public authorities for academic freedom and institutional autonomy](#), are integral part of the Bologna Process.

While Belarus entered EHEA in May 2015, students still experience crackdowns on their rights to organise and to protest peacefully.

ESU is closely following the process and any kind of violations will be brought to the attention of the Bologna Follow Up Group and other intergovernmental bodies.

