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November 23, 2011

To: Ministers of Education, government officials and education specialists of the countries-signers of the Bologna process

Letter about including alternative report into the agenda of the Summit of Ministers of Education of the countries-signers of the Bologna process in April 2012

Dear Sir\Madam,

Against the background of the campaign of students' exclusion and teachers' dismissal from institutes of higher education for taking part in opposition political activities, Belarusian authorities have stepped up the efforts of Belarus in joining the Bologna process. Integration of Belarus into the European higher education space would be a unique opportunity to reform the national education system, its internationalization and liberalization. But the strategy of the Belarusian Ministry of Education is that, without changing the repressive nature of higher education, to use the Bologna process for legitimizing the Belarusian regime bypassing the EU conditions as to start a critical dialogue with Belarus.

The Belarusian authorities are looking forward to present at a Summit of Ministers of Education of the countries-signers of the Bologna process, in April 2012, a report on the status of the Belarusian higher education. This report should be able to distract the ministers' attention from academic repressions taking place in our country.

A number of Belarusian students', human rights' and other public organizations, consolidated in the Belarusian Bologna Committee acting on the basis of Belarusian National Platform of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum would like to use the authorities' interest in joining the Bologna process in order to force the regime to start reforming the Belarusian higher education. To this end, the Bologna Committee intends to prepare an alternative report to present it at the Ministerial Summit in 2012 and to develop a project roadmap reforming Belarusian high school.

On behalf of the EaP CSF National platform I appeal to you to assist inclusion in the agenda of the Summit the alternative report issue. I hope that this decision can be done during the BFUG meeting on November 30, 2011.

We express hope that in your face we will find support for such a policy towards Belarus, that will allow to determine the decision of the Summit of Ministers of Education as on Belarusian accession to the Bologna process with a number of conditions that would exclude using of high schools in the future with aims of political repressions.

We consider the restoration of legal guarantees of university autonomy and academic freedom to be the conditions for a positive decision of the Summit as on the Belarusian issue.

We believe that the elaboration of the roadmap for the Belarusian Ministry of Education and transferring of a final decision on accession of Belarus to the Bologna process on the next Summit will promote the improvement of Belarusian higher education and reduce the risk of political instrumentalization of higher education. At a time when rectors of Belarusian universities are included in the list of people banned to entry the EU due to ongoing political and academic repressions, implemented by them, as well, unconditional accession of Belarus into the Bologna process will be an obvious challenge to fundamental academic and democratic values and principles. We hope for your support of the Belarusian Bologna Committee's efforts in requiring the reform of higher education in Belarus.



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