



Belarus – Researched and compiled by the Refugee Documentation Centre of Ireland on 27 November 2012

Is there any information to show that people who attended anti-government demonstrations in Belarus in 2002 and 2003 had problems obtaining employment in the years following this?

Is there any information to show that people who worked abroad (in Europe) had problems obtaining employment upon their return to Belarus due to the fact they had worked abroad?

A Danish Immigration Service report on a fact-finding mission to Belarus in 2001, in a section titled “Penalties for political and human rights activism” (section 4.2), refers to the risk of dismissal for political activists as follows:

“Charter 97 reported that the authorities can come up with all kinds of ways of harassing political activists, who may, for instance, risk dismissal or be pressured into resigning. Dismissal does not affect a dismissed employee's other social entitlements such as access to health care but, as many businesses have their own clinics, a dismissed employee will be unable to use them. Lumila Gryaznova, a member of Charter 97 and of the former Supreme Council, explained that she was dismissed from her post as a university lecturer, while all other members of the former Supreme Council also lost their jobs. She had taken part in the peace march in 2000, but was accused of being its organiser and fined such a large sum that she had no chance of being able to pay it. This meant that her home was confiscated and she thus ceased to be registered as resident in Minsk. She avoided arrest because, under Belarusian law, women with children below the age of 15 cannot be detained. Lumila Gryaznova explained that unemployment benefit stands at USD 2 a month, as compared with average monthly income of USD 40 and a pension rate of USD 15-20.” (Danish Immigration Service (1 March 2001) *Fact-finding mission to Belarus 30/1-7/2 2001*)

This section of the report also states:

“The leader of the Party of Communists of Belarus, Sergey I. Kalyakin, explained that the authorities exert social pressure on members and their families dependent upon income from employment. The party, which has few full-time staff, has therefore sometimes had to take on people as employees in order to protect them from social reprisals. From 1996 to 1998 the party lost 5 000 members after they found themselves under social and/or administrative pressure. A deputy leader was warned not to continue with his political activities or else he would be dismissed from his everyday job. He is now unemployed and, although his skills (as an engineer) are in great demand, no employer would dare take him on, as he is a known political activist.” (ibid)

A Belapan News Agency report on the dismissal of opposition activists states:

"The Spring human rights centre has reported new dismissals of opposition activists who took part in the presidential election campaign last year. Nina Smirnova, who had been employed for 10 years in the Slutsk state farm in Slutski District, Minsk Region, was fired for organizing a campaign event that was banned by the farm management, the Spring centre says with reference to the Belarusian Organization of Working Women (BOWW). Mrs Smirnova's husband had reportedly been sacked from his job in the state farm earlier, for his participation in the unofficial presidential election campaign conducted by the opposition in 1999. The couple, who have two underage children, have thus been deprived of their means of living, the Spring centre says. Lyubow Kaverka, chairwoman of the BOWW's city chapter in Shklow, Mahilyow Region, reportedly lost her job at a public catering enterprise. During last year's presidential campaign, she organized an educational seminar for independent observers. Ms Kaverka, who raises two underage children as a single parent, has vainly attempted to find a new job since her dismissal. Lyudmila Danilchyk, who was an independent observation coordinator for the Klichawski District, Mahilyow Region, has been exsessed this year. These are just some of the many instances of authorities' reprisal against opposition activists, the Spring centre says." (Belapan News Agency (17 January 2002) *Belarusian opposition reports reprisal dismissals of activists*)

See also Belapan News Agency report which states:

"The Belarusian People's Front (BPF) BPF-Revival Party has accused the authorities of harassing its activists in the run-up to October's parliamentary elections. According to the party, two of its nominees have been dismissed from their jobs at schools in Maladzechna and Vileyka District Minsk Region, while Mikalay Pratasevich, a technician with a recreation centre in Ushachy District Vitsebsk Region, has been sacked ostensibly for collecting voter signatures to put BPF nominee Dzmitryy Salawyow on the ballot." (Belapan News Agency (13 September 2004) *Belarus opposition party accuses authorities of harassing activists*)

The US Department of State country report on Belarus for the events of 2004, in a section titled "Workers Rights" (section 6), states:

"The Government forced government employees and employees of state-owned businesses, who together were a majority of the workforce, to move to a short term contract system from a lifetime contract system of employment during the year. A September 2 order by Vice Premier Andrey Kobyakov threatened ministers and governors that failure to transfer government officials to fixed term contracts before October 6 would be 'called into account.' Credible reports indicate that the Government used the fixed term contract system to dismiss independent union members and opposition political activists." (US Department of State (28 February 2005) *Country Report on Human Rights Practices 2004 – Belarus*)

See also report from Freedom House which states:

"The switch from a permanent employment system in public companies and institutions to a contract system was finalized in 2004. As nearly all employees have to renew their contracts each year, political disloyalty is easily punished. Moreover, presidential directive number one, On

Strengthening Discipline and Order, proclaimed on March 11, 2004, provided a wide range of pretexts for firing anyone from a public job, including for poorly concealed political reasons.” (Freedom House (15 June 2005) *Nations in Transit - Belarus (2005)*)

An Agence France Presse report on a protest against the contracts system states:

“Opposition supporters in Belarus staged a May Day protest Monday against a system of work contracts in state-run firms designed, they said, to kill off any thoughts of dissent. ‘No to the contracts system’ proclaimed placards carried by some 2,000 demonstrators, most of them young, in the capital Minsk. ‘As the (main) employer here is the state, the contracts system makes it possible to establish a total dependency to keep people scared and stamp on any protest action,’ said opposition leader Yury Khadyka, one of the leaders of the Belarussian Popular Front.” (Agence France Presse (1 May 2006) *Belarus demo against short term job contracts*)

A report from the pro-human rights news site Charter 97 states:

“The leader of the Brest regional branch of the Young Social Democrats [YSD] organization, Hanna Kanyus, has lost job because of her active participation in opposition political activities, the press service of the YSD Brest regional branch reported. The YSD Brest regional leader was working as a geography teacher at Brest secondary school No 10 after graduation from a university. The formal reason for Kanyus's dismissal was the expiration of her labour contract. However, despite her dismissal, a vacancy remained in the school, which testifies to political reasons for the dismissal.” (Charter 97 (14 June 2005) *Belarusian opposition activist loses job because of political activities*)

A Belapan News Agency report states:

“A banner protesting politically-motivated dismissals of opposition activists from their jobs was hung up by unidentified people near Francisak Skaryna Homyel State University on Friday evening. The five-meter-wide banner, which was attached to the fence, read, ‘The KGB is kicking [us] out of the jobs. Will the constitution protect [us]?’ The banner had been removed by Saturday morning. Activists of the Malady Front youth group and the Belarusian Christian Democracy party staged a street protest in Homyel this past February, displaying a banner with the same text. Three of the protesters were arrested and fined. Many government critics have lost their job for what they describe as their political views in the last few years.” (Belapan News Agency (11 April 2009) *Banner protesting sackings of opposition activists displayed in Homyel*)

Information on Belarusians experiencing difficulties in obtaining employment as a result of having worked abroad was not found among sources available to the Research and Information Unit.

The 2012 US Department of State country report on Belarus, in a section titled “Freedom of Movement, Internally Displaced Persons, Protection of Refugees, and Stateless Persons”, states:

“Under a presidential decree, any student who wishes to study abroad must obtain permission from the Minister of Education. The decree, ostensibly intended to counter trafficking in persons, also requires the Ministry of Internal Affairs to track citizens working abroad and obliges employment agencies to report individuals who do not return from abroad as scheduled.” (US Department of State (24 May 2012) *2011 Country Reports on Human Rights Practices – Belarus*)

This response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research and Information Unit within time constraints. This response is not and does not purport to be conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim to refugee status or asylum. Please read in full all documents referred to.

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