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National report submitted pursuant to Human Rights Council resolutions 5/1 and 16/21*

Belarus

* The present document is being issued without formal editing.



I. Methodology

1. The present report is submitted under the fourth cycle of the universal periodic review. It was drawn up by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the basis of contributions from the competent State authorities.
2. The report was prepared taking into account the implementation of the recommendations accepted by Belarus following the third cycle of the universal periodic review and the recommendations made to Belarus by the human rights treaty bodies between 2021 and 2024.
3. The recommendations made during the third cycle of the universal periodic review were implemented by Belarus in the context of continuing political pressure and under the influence of illegal unilateral sanctions imposed by certain States and international organizations on Belarus, which, besides being intended to inflict social and economic damage on the country and diminish the welfare of Belarusian citizens, have also had a negative impact on the world economy, including by aggravating the global food crisis.
4. On 12 June 2025, the draft report was considered by the Sustainable Development Council, under the leadership of the National Coordinator for achieving the Sustainable Development Goals, with the participation of representatives of the executive, legislative and judicial authorities, academia, civil society organizations and youth.

II. Normative and institutional framework for the promotion and protection of human rights

A. Human rights legislation, including international treaties (recommendations 138.2–138.5, 138.7, 138.9, 138.12, 138.19, 138.44–138.46, 138.48, 138.55, 138.56, 138.57, 138.78, 138.79, 138.81 and 138.83)

5. The Constitution of Belarus enshrines a wide range of human rights and freedoms; a significant portion of its provisions are directly aimed at safeguarding civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights and establishing guarantees for their realization.
6. In accordance with article 2 of the Constitution, the individual, his or her rights and freedoms and the guarantees for their realization are the highest value and purpose of society and the State. The constitutional amendments adopted by national referendum on 27 February 2022 introduced additional guarantees for the most vulnerable categories of citizen who need them owing to age, illness and other objective factors, including older persons, persons with disabilities, children, orphans and youth.
7. Article 7 of the Constitution establishes the principle of the rule of law in the country. Belarus recognizes the primacy of the generally recognized principles of international law and ensures that its legislation is in conformity with them. Belarus consistently fulfils its international human rights obligations at the national level. National legislation at all levels is compliant with the relevant provisions of international human rights law.
8. In addition to the Constitution, the issues of safeguarding and protecting human rights are comprehensively reflected in the country's sectoral legislation.
9. The constitutional amendments adopted in the 2022 national referendum marked the beginning of a major political modernization process in the country. The referendum was preceded by broad civic debate.
10. Based on the outcome of the 2022 referendum, the All-Belarusian People's Assembly was granted the constitutional status of supreme representative body of people's power. It determines the strategic directions of the development of society and the State and safeguards the inviolability of the constitutional order, intergenerational continuity and civil concord. The Assembly is vested with the right to approve the main lines of domestic and foreign policy, military doctrine, national security policy frameworks and the socioeconomic

development programmes. Of the total number of delegates (1,200), 400 were nominated by civil society organizations.

11. Belarus is a party to most of the core international human rights treaties and is considering the progressive expansion of its international obligations, taking into account analyses of its legislation and of the related financial implications. Since the third cycle of the universal periodic review, the following instruments have entered into force for Belarus:

- Marrakesh Treaty to Facilitate Access to Published Works for Persons Who Are Blind, Visually Impaired or Otherwise Print Disabled (22 October 2020)
- Protocol amending the Convention on Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) (12 December 2023), which launched the work of the CIS Human Rights Commission;
- Agreement on Cooperation among the States Members of the Commonwealth of Independent States on the Issuance to Persons Subjected to Forcible Removal of Certificates of Return (14 March 2024).

12. Belarus is continuing to consider the possibility of ratifying the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families. In the light of the analysis of Belarusian legislation conducted previously within the framework of the MIEUX initiative of the European Commission and the International Centre for Migration Policy Development, ratification of the Convention may be advisable following the adoption by Belarus of additional measures to refine its national legislation.

13. Work is ongoing on bills on accession to the 1954 Convention relating to the Status of Stateless Persons and the 1961 Convention on the Reduction of Statelessness.

B. Human rights institutions and mechanisms (recommendations 138.49, 138.50 and 138.52)

14. Belarus has a well-developed system of specialized bodies bringing together the State and civil society to protect and promote various categories of human rights, including: the National Commission on the Rights of the Child; the National Council on Gender Policy; the Inter-Ethnic Advisory Council; the Interfaith Advisory Council; the National Council on Labour and Social Affairs; the Public Coordinating Council on the Mass Media; and the Public Coordinating Council on the Environment.

15. In accordance with Act No. 183-Z of 30 June 2022 on the Rights and Social Integration of Persons with Disabilities, a standing joint body, the National Interdepartmental Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, works to promote, protect and monitor the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities.

16. The institutional foundation for national efforts to implement the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development is the structure established by the Head of State to steer work to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals, which is headed by the National Coordinator for achieving the Goals. The National Coordinator holds the rank of Deputy Speaker of the Council of the Republic, the upper house of the National Assembly (the parliament of Belarus). Under his leadership, the Sustainable Development Council is working effectively.

17. In accordance with the amendments made to the Constitution following the 2022 national referendum, the Constitutional Court must rule, under the procedure established by law, on complaints by citizens of violations of their constitutional rights and freedoms, verifying the constitutionality of the laws applied in the court cases in question, where all other judicial remedies have been exhausted. The introduction in the national legal system of a constitutional complaint procedure has ensured direct access for citizens to constitutional justice. The right to appeal to the courts against decisions and actions or omissions of State bodies and officials that infringe the rights and freedoms of citizens has also been incorporated into the Constitution; this right is being realized in practice in Belarus.

18. An important role in the protection of human rights is played by Act No. 300-Z of 18 July 2011 on Citizens' and Legal Entities' Appeals, which governs the procedure whereby

individuals and legal entities may petition State bodies and other organizations with a view to defending rights, freedoms and/or lawful interests.

C. Interaction with United Nations human rights mechanisms (recommendations 138.23, 138.27, 138.31, 138.37, 138.38 and 138.32–138.36)

19. Belarus fulfils its obligations under the international human rights instruments to which it is a party in good faith.

20. In February 2022, the seventh periodic report of Belarus was presented to the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

21. The country's combined twenty-fourth and twenty-fifth periodic reports were presented to the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination in August 2024.

22. Also in August 2024, Belarus presented its initial national report on the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities to the eponymous Committee. Certain recommendations will be taken into account in the development of the national plan of action to implement the Convention in Belarus for the period up to 2030.

23. In February 2025, the ninth periodic report of Belarus was presented to the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

24. The systematic deviation by the Human Rights Committee from its mandate and the Committee's exceeding of its powers forced Belarus, in 2022, to denounce the Optional Protocol to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

25. Belarus intends to submit its periodic report to the Human Rights Committee under the simplified reporting procedure; it has already been waiting to receive questions from the Committee for the preparation of its national report for more than two years.

26. Belarus interacts with the thematic special procedures of the Human Rights Council and responds to inquiries received.

27. In July 2022, the Special Rapporteur on the human rights of migrants, Felipe González Morales, conducted a visit to Belarus, during which he was granted access to all requested facilities and meetings were organized with relevant officials.

28. In 2023, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, Virginia Gamba, and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, Najat Maalla M'jid, were invited to visit Belarus.

29. Belarus actively participates in the work of the CIS Human Rights Commission, which was established in 2022.

D. Interaction with civil society (recommendations 138.58–138.62 and 138.64)

30. One of the positive steps taken to strengthen cooperation with civil society, establish a national dialogue and develop constructive interaction with civil society was the adoption of Act No. 250-Z of 14 February 2023 on the Foundations of Civil Society, which defined the legal framework for civil society and the organizational underpinnings for interaction between State bodies and civil society with a view to consolidating the efforts of the individual, society and the State to realize the national interests of Belarus.

31. According to the Act, the main forms of interaction between State bodies and civil society actors are: participation by such actors in the work of joint entities and public advisory councils and in the development and implementation of State policy; submission by civil society actors of proposals for the refinement of legislative acts and their participation in public debate on draft laws and regulations; and the conduct of public oversight and the development of State social-sector procurement. The updated legal mechanism takes full

account of modern requirements for interaction between society and the State to be effective and decisions taken in that context to yield results.

32. Belarus has a successfully functioning system of social partnership, under which government bodies interact with employers' associations and trade unions or their associations in the development and implementation of the State's socioeconomic policy.

33. Central and local authorities organize public advisory councils and/or expert councils involving representatives of businesses and business associations.

34. To ensure participation by the general public in work towards the Sustainable Development Goals, the Sustainable Development Council cooperates with a sustainable development partnership, which has representatives from civil society, business and academia. Regional sustainable development groups are organized in all oblasts (provinces).

35. The website "Legal Forum of Belarus" is defined as a platform for online public discussion (by civil society or professionals) of draft laws and regulations. Information about such discussion is available on the National Legal Internet Portal of Belarus, on the official websites of State bodies and in the media. As at 28 July 2025, 1,001 public discussions had been conducted, along with 58 legal monitoring procedures. In addition, since 2021, the website has been used to collect citizens' proposals for refining legislation and eliminating conflicts and legal uncertainty. During this time, more than 200 proposals have been received, of which 110 relevant ones have been sent for consideration to State bodies or organizations according to their areas of competence. One in five proposals has been endorsed.

III. Promotion and protection of human rights in practice

A. Right of the family to protection by society and the State (recommendations 138.216–138.218, 138.225 and 138.230)

36. Under the Constitution, marriage – understood as the union of a woman and a man – and family, motherhood, fatherhood and childhood are under the protection of the State. A woman and a man, upon reaching the age of marriage, have the right to enter voluntarily into marriage and found a family. Spouses have equal rights in marriage and the family.

37. At the global level, Belarus continues to coordinate the work of the Group of Friends of the Family as one of the co-chairs, organizing thematic events on issues related to the family and presenting joint statements by the Group.

38. At the national level, measures to reinforce family values and raise the profile of the family are included in the Family and Childhood subprogramme of the State Programme on Public Health and Demographic Security in Belarus for 2021–2025.

39. Support for the family is a national priority in Belarus. Social protection of the family is ensured through the provision of State benefits for the birth and upbringing of children, family capital upon the birth of a third or subsequent child, targeted social assistance and social services, as well as guarantees in the areas of labour, pensions, housing and credit, and other areas.

40. In 2025, 3.7 billion roubles have been allocated to the State benefits system, of which almost 2 billion roubles is earmarked for the payment of allowances for the care of children up to 3 years of age. Every fifth child in the country is covered by the benefits system, including 100 per cent of children up to 3 years of age.

41. Belarus remains one of the few countries where it is possible to take leave to care for a child until the child reaches 3 years of age and receive benefits for the entire period.

42. The family capital programme has been implemented since 2015 – it is a one-off non-cash payment (in an amount equivalent to US\$ 10,000) made upon the birth or adoption of a third or subsequent child. As at 1 May 2025, 146,000 large families had received such State support.

43. For low-income families and families in difficult situations, there is a system of State targeted social assistance, including monthly and lump-sum social benefits and the provision of free food for young children.
44. Local social service centres provide family support services, the aim of which is to offer comprehensive solutions to family problems and help families overcome difficult situations. In 2024, 3,700 families raising children used these services.
45. To help families raising children with disabilities, children's social care homes provide a social respite service; this service involves the provision of short-term round-the-clock care for children with disabilities so that parents can restore their strength and address the family's everyday problems. In 2024, the social respite service was provided to 154 families raising children with disabilities between the ages of 4 and 18.
46. Families raising twins or multiples up to the age of 3, families raising children up to the age of 18 with disabilities and families raising children up to the age of 6 in which one or both parents have a category I or II disability are provided with free babysitting services. On 1 July 2024, support for families raising two children up to the age of 18 with disabilities was stepped up by doubling their entitlement to babysitting services.
47. As part of State assistance in the area of housing and credit, 5,600 young families and 7,800 large families improved their housing conditions in 2024.
48. To allow parents to combine child-rearing and employment, labour legislation provides for the granting of an additional day off work each week, paid at the rate of average earnings, or a one-hour reduction of the working day as an alternative (introduced in 2024).
49. Presidential Decree No. 198 of 9 June 2022 established a new holiday in Belarus, Father's Day (21 October), aimed at promoting involved fatherhood.
50. To draw attention to family issues, boost the birth rate, reduce the number of abortions and foster a positive attitude among young people towards family values, healthcare institutions organize information and awareness-raising activities and run direct telephone lines providing advice on family planning and the protection of maternity.
51. Since 2021, it has been possible to undergo one free cycle of invitro fertilization (IVF), as provided for in Presidential Decree No. 171 of 18 May 2020 on social support for certain categories of citizen. In 2024, 1,522 complete cycles of infertility treatment using assisted reproductive technologies were carried out with funding from the State budget.

B. Right to social security and right to an adequate standard of living (recommendations 138.80, 138.82 and 138.220–138.225)

52. Belarus is a socially oriented country, where human welfare and decent living conditions lie at the heart of State policy. The Constitution guarantees the right to old-age, sickness, disability, work incapacity, survivor's and other benefits. The State takes special care of war and labour veterans and persons who have lost their health while defending State and public interests, as well as persons with disabilities and older persons.
53. A set of measures and objectives aimed at guaranteeing a high level of social protection is laid down in the Socioeconomic Development Programme of Belarus for 2021–2025 and the State Social Protection Programme for the same period.
54. A draft national strategy for the sustainable development of Belarus for the period up to 2040 has been prepared.
55. Programme documents are being implemented to create conditions for sustainable economic and social development in Belarus; key among them is the Socioeconomic Development Programme of Belarus for 2021–2025, the main goal of which is to ensure stability in society and increase the welfare of citizens by modernizing the economy, building social capital and creating comfortable conditions for life, work and personal fulfilment.
56. The provisions of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development correlate with the main objectives of State policy for social and workforce development. Belarus remains

committed to fulfilling its international commitments with regard to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals, ranking thirty-second in the global Sustainable Development Index.

57. Belarus is pursuing a consistent policy of raising the income level of the population and providing social guarantees for the most vulnerable categories.

58. In the period 2021–2024, real disposable income grew by almost 115 per cent. Nominal and real growth of the main types of monetary income amounted to, respectively 182.4 and 130.2 per cent for wages; 173.2 and 123.6 per cent for wages in State-funded organizations; and 166 and 118.5 per cent for the minimum wage; and 171.9 and 122.6 per cent for the average old-age pension of a non-working pensioner.

59. The poverty rate fell from 4.1 per cent in 2021 to 3.5 per cent in 2024.

60. The subsistence minimum income was calculated on a quarterly basis, taking into account prevailing price levels. From November 2020, the average per capita subsistence minimum income grew by 1.8 times.

61. Pensions are an important part of the social protection system. Employment or social pensions are received by all permanently resident older persons, persons with disabilities and children who have lost a breadwinner.

62. The country's progress towards Sustainable Development Goal indicator 1.3.1.1 is being tracked. In 2024, 99.4 per cent of all women aged 60 and over and men aged 65 and over received a pension.

63. The main priority in the area of pension provision is to ensure that pensions are sufficient and that they grow in real terms. Employment pensions are increased at least once a year, social pensions and pension supplements quarterly. Employment pensions have been recalculated 10 times since November 2020 (including in February 2025). From 2021 to 2024, the old-age pension experienced real growth of almost 123 per cent.

64. To supplement the State (solidarity) pension, a new voluntary contributory top-up pension scheme with State co-financing was introduced in 2022.

65. Act No. 318-Z of 13 December 2023 amending the laws on social services and social payments was adopted with a view to the development of social services and social support: a mechanism was introduced for assessing individual needs in terms of social services and long-term care; the obligation to provide transport for recipients of social services was consolidated; standards for budget planning with respect to social service expenditures were defined; and comprehensive regulation by licensing bodies of the activities of private organizations providing residential social services was provided for.

66. Since 1 July 2024, a new form of social services – remote social services, provided via public telecommunication networks and the Internet – has been introduced.

C. Right to work and right to favourable conditions of work (recommendations 127.84 and 127.85)

67. Citizens of Belarus are guaranteed the right to work as the most dignified means of self-affirmation. One of the most important tasks of the State is to promote full and effective employment.

68. The State Labour Market and Employment Promotion Programme for 2021–2025 is focused on achieving Sustainable Development Goal 8; the aims of the Programme are to promote full and effective employment and create conditions conducive to the employment of older persons, persons with disabilities and other vulnerable categories.

69. The State employment policy provides for equal employment opportunities, respect for the voluntary nature of work, free choice of employment and social protection in this area.

70. The State Employment Service was set up to implement employment policy and offer citizens appropriate guarantees; its services are provided free of charge to jobseekers and employers.

71. The information portal of the State Employment Service informs citizens and legal entities about the services provided and about rights and obligations.
72. The National Job Bank is updated in real time, allowing online job searches.
73. The measures taken by the State are in keeping with a proactive employment policy: help with finding work, payment of subsidies for starting one's own business, resettlement of citizens in new places of residence with jobs, organization of paid temporary work, training, provision of additional safeguards for vulnerable categories of citizen and engagement of young people in employment.
74. To achieve a balance between workforce supply and demand on the labour market, training is provided to persons who are unemployed. Between 2019 and 2024, 21,800 unemployed persons (including 7,700 women) and 193 women caring for children up to 3 years of age were given the opportunity to receive training.
75. As a result of the measures taken, the unemployment rate among working-age citizens according to the methodology used by the International Labour Organization (ILO) was 3.1 per cent in 2024, one of the lowest figures not only for the last previous years but since 2012 (i.e. since records began).
76. Belarus has established a comprehensive and interconnected system of occupational safety and health. There is legislation regulating the training of employees and managers in occupational safety and health, the conduct of employee medical examinations, the provision of personal and collective protective equipment and the investigation of accidents at work.
77. The system of compulsory insurance against occupational accidents and illnesses, which is funded from employers' contributions, provides social protection for employees who have suffered an occupational injury or illness. The State Labour Inspection Department of the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection carries out State supervision of compliance with legislation on occupational safety and health. Trade unions are empowered to protect employees' right to safe working conditions through public oversight.
78. Harmful working conditions are monitored through the conduct of workplace certification in organizations. Persons working in harmful conditions are afforded compensation: the right to higher wages, shorter working hours and additional leave. Certain categories of employee have the option of retiring early.
79. In the light of changing working conditions and improvements to technological processes, in 2022 the list of heavy work and work with harmful and/or hazardous conditions, in which women's employment is prohibited, was halved.

D. Right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health (recommendations 138.219, 138.226–138.228, 138.231 and 138.232)

80. The Constitution guarantees the right to healthcare, including free treatment at public expense, and all necessary conditions have been created for accessible healthcare for all citizens.
81. State social standards on healthcare are in place to ensure accessible and high quality medical services for every resident. A key standard relates to primary care physician and ambulance crew staffing.
82. The population undergoes periodic health checks; this entails the provision of a set of medical services for the purposes of preventing illness, identifying groups requiring medical observation, promoting healthy lifestyles and educating citizens to take responsibility for their own health.
83. Mobile paramedic and obstetric units are being used effectively to improve the availability of routine medical care for residents of rural areas, while inter-district centres are being proactively developed to provide specialized and high-tech medical care. There are 14 such centres in the country.

84. Attainment by Belarus of Sustainable Development Goal indicator 3.8.1, “Coverage of essential health services”, is measured at 87 per cent.
85. Foreign nationals and stateless persons residing permanently in Belarus have the right to affordable medical care on an equal footing with Belarusian citizens.
86. Specialized rapid response units of the emergency medical service and the State health and safety inspectorate have been set up, with dedicated staff, to monitor and respond promptly to public health emergencies. Lead laboratories for surveillance and control have been established at 30 institutions carrying out State health and safety inspections.
87. There are 58 adolescent-friendly centres working actively in Belarus to develop healthy lifestyles, prevent crises and suicidal behaviour in children and adolescents and promote responsible reproductive behaviour.
88. Suicide prevention efforts are carried out among young people in accordance with the Instructions on the procedures to be followed by employees of educational and healthcare institutions and internal affairs officers upon identifying risk factors for suicidal acts in minors, approved by Decision No. 7/5/13 of the Ministry of Health, the Ministry of Education and the Ministry of Internal Affairs of 15 January 2019.
89. A set of measures to improve the timely identification of risk factors for suicidal acts in minors and to provide them with appropriate psychological and/or psychiatric assistance, covering the period 2024–2025, was approved by the National Commission on the Rights of the Child in meeting record No. 1 of 17 January 2024.
90. Each regional centre has interdepartmental working groups to analyse the causes and conditions giving rise to suicide or parasuicide.
91. In 2024, the National Centre for Emergency Psychological Assistance was established. The healthcare system operates a telephone service providing emergency psychological assistance on a round-the-clock basis in all regional centres and in the city of Minsk (15 telephone lines reachable via a single short number, free of charge and anonymously, are available to the population, including minors).
92. The Ask Suicide-Screening Questions, a methodology for suicide risk screening of children aged 10 or over and adults undergoing health checks or presenting at inpatient facilities, was established pursuant to Ministry of Health Order No. 194 of 26 February 2025 on suicide risk assessment.
93. The HIV Prevention subprogramme of the State Programme on Public Health and Demographic Security in Belarus for 2021–2025 is aimed at ensuring universal access to HIV diagnosis, treatment, care and social support, preventing the spread of HIV among key population groups and averting mother-to-child transmission of HIV.
94. The HIV prevalence rate is 0.28 per cent. All people living with HIV, regardless of clinical stage, receive free treatment.
95. The country has an effective system for the prevention of mother-to-child transmission of HIV, as confirmed by the World Health Organization (WHO) certificate received in 2016.
96. In 2023, Belarus was certified by WHO to have achieved regional hepatitis B control targets thanks to high vaccination coverage among children.
97. Belarus is among the 10 countries with the lowest infant mortality rates. The proportion of births attended by skilled health personnel is 99.9 per cent. There is a multilevel system of maternal and child healthcare. Access to prenatal and postnatal health care is enjoyed by 100 per cent of women.
98. Belarus has one of the lowest maternal mortality rates in the world. In recent years, there have been isolated cases of women dying during pregnancy, childbirth and the postpartum period.
99. Women in Belarus have the right to decide for themselves whether to become mothers. The abortion rate has declined over the past 10 years to 6.8 per 1,000 women of reproductive

age in 2024 (compared with 12.0 in 2012). For adolescent girls, it fell to 0.5 per 1,000 (compared with 2.7 in 2012).

100. The Child Injury Prevention Plan for 2021–2025 is being implemented.

101. Measures have been taken to prevent cancer among women and girls. As of January 2024, cancer screening has been included in the adult health check programme.

102. Since 1 January 2025, the national preventive vaccination schedule has been supplemented with vaccination against human papillomavirus for girls aged 11 years.

103. Medical care and medicines for prisoners are provided free of charge by the medical units of correctional institutions. If medical care is not available in correctional facilities, it is provided in public healthcare establishments.

104. Modern science-based methods of rehabilitation, re-socialization and occupational therapy, which provide for an individual approach to persons with addictions, have been introduced in correctional colonies and labour treatment centres.

E. Right to education (Recommendations 138.219, 138.233, 138.234 and 138.235)

105. In Belarus, State education policy is based on: the principles of the primacy of universal human values, human rights and a humanistic approach to education; guaranteeing the constitutional right of everyone to education and spiritual, moral and physical development; educational inclusion that ensures equal access to education for all, taking into account the diversity of special individual educational needs and the capacities of each student; and compulsory general secondary education.

106. The right to education is established in the Constitution and the Education Code.

107. Accessible and free general secondary and vocational-technical education are guaranteed.

108. Specialized secondary education and higher education are accessible to all according to their individual abilities. Everyone can receive free education on a competitive basis in public educational establishments.

109. Foreign or stateless minors who apply for refugee status, subsidiary protection or asylum in Belarus also have the right to preschool, general secondary and specialized education, on an equal footing with Belarusian minors.

110. The Policy Framework for the Development of the Education System for the period up to 2030 was approved pursuant to Government Decision No. 683 of 30 November 2021; it defines the goals, objectives and areas for development of the education system.

111. In the 2024/25 school year, there were 2,661 general secondary education establishments in Belarus, of which 2,655 were public and 6 private.

112. The standard for the provision of places in early childhood and preschool education establishments is being met, with a rate of 103.1 per cent at the end of 2024, in excess of the 85 per cent requirement.

113. In order to identify children who are not attending school and take steps to ensure they are provided with an education, local authorities keep a register of children. This register covers all children up to the age of 18, including foreign and stateless children who are legally resident in Belarus on a permanent or temporary basis.

114. Roma children receive education on the same basis as others, in general or specialized secondary educational establishments. All requirements under the laws and regulations on general and vocational education apply to them.

115. Correctional institutions organize general secondary, vocational-technical, specialized secondary and supplementary education for persons sentenced to deprivation of liberty and create the necessary conditions for distance higher education.

F. Rights of the child (recommendations 138.253–138.256)

116. The legal status of the child is defined in Act No. 2570-XII of 19 November 1993 on the Rights of the Child, which is based on the provisions of the Convention on the Rights of the Child of 20 November 1989.

117. The Marriage and Family Code enshrines the rights of children to particular, preferential and priority care, from both their parents and the State, and provides for the protection of their rights regardless of origin, racial, ethnic or national affiliation, social or property status, sex, language, education, attitude to religion, place of residence, health or any other circumstances relating to children and their parents.

118. The family is recognized as the child's natural environment. The State protects, promotes and prioritizes the raising of children in the family and provides support to families with children, with special support, attention and care given to large families, families that have adopted orphans or children left without parental care and families raising children with disabilities.

119. The National Plan of Action to Improve the Situation of Children and Safeguard Their Rights for 2022–2026 was approved pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 490 of 25 July 2022; this policy document is aimed at creating conditions for the protection of the rights and legitimate interests of children and for the free and effective participation of children and young people in the political, social, economic and cultural development of the State and society.

120. The Strategy for the Development of State Youth Policy for the period up to 2030, approved pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 349 of 19 June 2021, is a comprehensive document that consolidates official views and approaches with respect to enhancing conditions for the effective participation of young people in the country's political, social, economic and cultural development.

121. The Action Plan on Legal and Civic Education for 2024–2029 was approved pursuant to Council of Ministers Decision No. 24 of 12 January 2024; it is aimed, inter alia, at increasing the effectiveness of the efforts of State bodies and other organizations to raise the level of legal awareness and legal literacy among minors and develop law-abiding and lawful behaviour.

122. All children have the right to protection of their person, honour and dignity from all forms of exploitation and abuse: economic, sexual, political, spiritual, moral, physical and psychological. The State must ensure the child's personal inviolability and protect him or her from all forms of exploitation and abuse, including by parents.

123. Regulations on the procedures for identifying children at social risk and in need of State protection were approved pursuant to Government Decision No. 1055 of 30 December 2024; they establish criteria and indicators with respect to social risk.

124. A number of government decisions have been adopted with a view to improving the material situation of children in State care. Pursuant to these decisions, the standards for expenditure on the upkeep of such children have been increased significantly and the amount of cash payments to guardians and foster parents has been raised.

125. The Plan of Action to Protect Children from Sexual Abuse and Prevent Recidivism was approved in 2023. In 2024, the procedures for imposing compulsory security and treatment measures on persons who commit crimes against sexual inviolability or sexual freedom and persons suffering from paedophilia were defined in law, and it was made mandatory to put in place preventive supervision of persons released from correctional institutions after being convicted of committing such crimes against minors.

126. Also in 2024, a national mechanism for the provision of assistance to minors who have suffered sexual violence, including medical, psychological, legal and social assistance and rehabilitation, was established, and Instructions on the procedures to be followed by educational staff in preventing and detecting abuse and exploitation of minors were approved.

127. Action to protect children from sexual exploitation is envisaged in – and being carried out under – plans for institutional, analytical, practical and other measures for the protection of minors from sexual abuse and exploitation (the 2025–2026 plan is currently being implemented).

128. A policy of minimizing the participation of minors in criminal proceedings is being implemented. In 2021, the requirement to use audio and video recording during questioning of minor victims or witnesses was made law. The recordings may be played back in court without the minors being summoned. In 2025, the authorities expanded the list of cases in which the participation of an educator or psychologist is compulsory when investigative actions involving minors are carried out.

129. The procedure for child-friendly questioning has been enshrined in law. Regulations on child-friendly interview rooms were approved pursuant to Government Decision No. 539 of 17 August 2023. There are 136 child-friendly rooms in various institutions for the purposes of criminal proceedings and for the work of educators and psychologists providing minors with psychological and educational support.

130. In 2021, the age at which a person who commits an offence may be subjected to the penalty of short-term rigorous imprisonment was raised by law from 14 to 16. The expungement period for the criminal record of a person convicted without sentence for an offence committed while under the age of 18 was reduced. The amount of bail payable in order for a minor who commits an offence to be placed under parental supervision was also reduced.

131. It has been established in law that a person who commits, while under the age of 18, a first offence that does not pose a great risk to the public or a less serious offence may not be sentenced to deprivation of liberty.

132. The principle underpinning the criminal responsibility of minors is that rehabilitative measures must take precedence over punitive measures. In 2024, 36 per cent of minors were sentenced to alternatives to deprivation of liberty, 15.8 per cent received deferred or suspended sentences and 22.6 per cent were sentenced to compulsory re-education measures.

G. Rights of persons with disabilities (recommendations 138.72 and 138.257–138.265)

133. Persons with disabilities are the focus of the State's constant attention. The Constitution, as revised in 2022, enshrines the principles of equality and non-discrimination with respect to persons with disabilities (art. 47). Persons with disabilities must be provided with equal opportunities to exercise human and civil rights and freedoms.

134. The National Action Plan for the Implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities for 2017–2025 continues to be carried out, with a view to developing inclusive education, promoting the employment of persons with disabilities and paving the way for their integration into all spheres of society.

135. The development of support for persons with disabilities was given new impetus when Act No. 183-Z of 30 June 2022 on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Their Social Integration, which defines guarantees for the realization of the rights of persons with disabilities, equality and non-discrimination on the basis of disability, came into effect.

136. New features of the Act are aimed at improving the quality and effectiveness of rehabilitation and habilitation measures. The Act enshrines the principle of educational inclusion, as well as the obligations of the State to train educational staff in special methods of teaching and personal development.

137. The Act defines means of communication for different categories of persons with disabilities. For persons with intellectual impairments, these include Easy Read and assistive devices and technologies. Sign language for persons with hearing impairments is recognized as a fully-fledged linguistic and cognitive system.

138. An innovation in the realization of the right to work of persons with disabilities is the introduction of a job quota mechanism aimed at incentivizing employers to hire such workers.

139. From 2025, an information system is being brought into operation to record the accessibility of social infrastructure facilities, information about which is posted on an online public registry map.

140. The National Interdepartmental Council on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, which is headed by the Deputy Prime Minister, coordinates the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and the related Act. The heads of four national voluntary associations of persons with disabilities representing the interests of all categories of persons with disabilities sit on the Council as equal members.

141. Persons with disabilities are guaranteed State social support in the form of cash payments (pensions, allowances, State targeted social assistance) and provision of social rehabilitation devices and social services. Since 2021, the contributory social insurance periods for persons with long-term disabilities of categories I and II have been reduced; since 2025, the survivors' benefits for children with disabilities and persons who have had disabilities since childhood have been increased substantially and the rules for granting early retirement benefits to fathers who have raised, without the involvement of the mother, persons who have had disabilities since childhood have been simplified.

142. Belarus ensures educational inclusion: children with disabilities have the same rights as all students. Educational establishments are being furnished with special equipment, free transportation is provided for students with disabilities who are in need and resource centres for special and inclusive education are being set up. Applicants with disabilities are given additional opportunities during admission to specialized secondary and higher education establishments. It is possible to receive distance education.

H. Rights of women (recommendations 138.236–138.241)

143. Gender policy in Belarus is conducted on the basis of respect for national interests, while taking into account the generally recognized principles of international law and human rights and supporting traditional values and the cultural foundations of Belarusian society.

144. The country is carrying out the sixth National Action Plan on Gender Equality, covering the period 2021–2025, the main objective of which is to mainstream gender into the implementation of State policy as an indispensable prerequisite for the equal development of the human capital of women and men. Various aspects of women's advancement, including issues relating to health, education and social protection, are the focus of a range of government programmes and plans.

145. A national mechanism for the development and implementation of gender policy is in place. The National Council on Gender Policy, which reports to the Council of Ministers and is headed by the Minister of Labour and Social Protection, is a standing body on State policy issues in the field of gender equality.

146. All the necessary conditions are in place in Belarus for women to fulfil their full potential. Belarus is among the countries with a very high level of human development, ranking sixty-fifth out of 193 countries in the human development index. In the gender inequality index, Belarus ranked twenty-seventh out of 172 countries.

147. According to the Global Gender Gap Index published in 2025 by the World Economic Forum, Belarus has achieved 73.6 per cent gender parity. This indicator is better than that of 94 other countries in the world.

148. The country has taken a comprehensive approach to enhancing the role of women in all spheres of life. The share of women in the Belarusian parliament, the National Assembly, is 32.7 per cent. The Speaker of the Council of the Republic, the upper house, where the country's regions are represented, is a woman. Thousands of women are elected to local government bodies, in which they hold 47.7 per cent of seats. Among top-level civil servants, the proportion of women is 54.6 per cent, and among judges, 66 per cent.

149. A distinctive trend of the modern labour market in Belarus is the high employment rate for working-age women – 84.8 per cent, which exceeds that for men (83.3 per cent). Furthermore, about 42 per cent of employed women have higher education.

150. Assistance to women in developing entrepreneurship, including in rural areas, is one of the priority areas of employment policy. Since 2016, 12,800 unemployed people have received grants to set up entrepreneurial activities, including 5,700 women (or 44.5 per cent of recipients).

151. In order to expand support for women's entrepreneurship projects and the development of women-owned businesses, a trilateral agreement was concluded in 2022 between the Ministry of Economic Affairs, Belinvestbank and the Belarusian Women's Union to stimulate women's entrepreneurial initiatives.

152. Equality of labour rights, including the right to equal remuneration for men and women for work of equal value, is legally regulated. The labour of any worker is appraised solely on the basis of quantitative and qualitative criteria. However, there remains a disparity between men's and women's wages. Women's nominal average monthly wage in December 2024 was 72.9 per cent that of men. The National Statistical Committee piloted the calculation of an adjusted gender pay gap, eliminating the influence of sector, occupational group, length of service and level of education on wages. Based on the results of the calculation, the adjusted gender pay gap was 6 percentage points.

153. In order to eliminate gender stereotypes and their negative manifestations with respect to women in the field of labour, measures have been taken to establish gender parity in law. The Labour Code has been amended to introduce paternity leave upon the birth of a child; the term "single mother" has been replaced with "single parent"; and guarantees concerning the granting of leave similar to those applicable to working mothers have been extended to men.

154. The feminization of poverty in old age is not currently an issue in Belarus. There is virtually no gender gap in the level of pensions. Almost all older women receive a State pension: in 2024, the share of women over working age (58 years and over) receiving a State pension was 98.8 per cent; for women aged 60 years and over, the figure was 99.5 per cent (Sustainable Development Goal indicator 1.3.1.1).

155. The pension system includes measures to compensate for women's work as caregivers and homemakers. The total number of years taken into account for calculating the amount of the pension includes periods spent by women taking care of small children (up to 3 years old). From 2021, the maximum length of such periods was increased from 9 to 12 years. For women with four children, the required number of contributory years has been significantly reduced: from 1 January 2025, it is five years.

156. Work is under way in Belarus to introduce mechanisms for gender analysis of legislation and gender budgeting when draft State plans and programmes are developed. A methodology for gender analysis of government programmes and subprogrammes in the context of gender-responsive budgeting has been prepared. A pilot model of the mechanism for analysing draft laws and regulations has been developed.

157. With the support of international organizations, a thematic information system has been developed to analyse the situation with respect to gender equality. The "Gender Statistics" web portal contains 179 gender statistics indicators, disaggregated by various characteristics, showing trends since 2000.

I. Combating domestic violence (recommendations 138.242–138.244, 138.246–138.252 and 138.20)

158. Specific measures are being taken in Belarus to prevent domestic violence. In 2022, important legislative amendments were made, with the term "family violence" being replaced with "domestic violence", which refers to violence not only against another family member, but also against a former spouse or a person with whom the perpetrator has a child in common or with whom he or she cohabits and maintains a common household.

159. The meaning of the term “actions of a psychological, sexual or physical nature” was elucidated; the lack of clarity in this regard had previously complicated the work of the law enforcement agencies.

160. A new crime prevention measure was introduced, comprising an intervention programme for perpetrators of domestic violence aimed at reforming their behaviour, developing non-violent communication skills and preventing repeat offences.

161. The grounds for placing citizens on the preventive register were optimized. The requirement that a citizen must previously have received an official warning before being placed on the register was eliminated.

162. The imposition of restraining orders on perpetrators of domestic violence was simplified, and the scope of such orders expanded. As a result of the measures taken, the number of restraining orders increased significantly, from 18,500 in 2022 to 32,800 in 2024.

163. The Domestic Violence Information Register was launched in 2024.

164. Comprehensive support is available for victims of domestic violence. Every year, about 17,000 citizens turn to local social service centres for help. A network of “crisis” rooms is being developed (there are currently 134 crisis rooms with 435 beds, including 132 for children). Temporary shelter is provided free of charge. There are no restrictions on the length of stay in a “crisis” room.

165. Since 2022, with support from the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), Orange Safe Spaces – specially organized places of support for vulnerable groups, including women, youth, older persons and persons with disabilities – have been established (a total of six safe spaces are in operation, and 8,300 people have been assisted there).

166. A sample household survey, based on the WHO multi-country study methodology, was conducted in 2024 to study women’s health, their status in the family, the prevalence of various forms of violence against women, the impact of the violence on women’s health, and the behavioural strategies that women use to obtain protection and support.

167. In 2020–2024, nearly 600 professionals received advanced training in helping survivors of domestic violence. With support from the International Organization for Migration (IOM), a series of training sessions on countering labour exploitation was conducted in all regions in 2022–2024.

168. Every year, a national preventive campaign entitled “A Home without Violence” and an information campaign entitled “16 Days of Activism against Violence” are organized.

J. Combating trafficking in persons and protecting refugees and migrants (recommendations 138.115–138.124 and 138.266)

169. Belarus is a party to all the universal United Nations conventions on combating trafficking in persons and to the Council of Europe Convention on Action against Trafficking in Human Beings.

170. In the international arena, Belarus remains a leader in mobilizing global efforts to counter trafficking in persons, as a sponsor of the General Assembly resolution on improving the coordination of efforts against trafficking in persons and as the initiator of resolutions of the Commission on Crime Prevention and Criminal Justice on taking action against trafficking in persons in business operations, public procurement and supply chains for goods and services (2023) and countering trafficking in persons in the context of rapid technological change (2024).

171. Belarus continues to coordinate the efforts of the Group of Friends United against Human Trafficking. The Group interacts with United Nations funds, programmes and specialized agencies within the framework of the Inter-Agency Coordination Group against Trafficking in Persons.

172. At the national level, comprehensive measures to prevent trafficking in persons and related offences have been incorporated into the Integrated Strategy for Combating Crime and Corruption for 2023–2025.

173. All aspects of the national referral mechanism for victims of trafficking are governed by Act No. 350-Z of 7 January 2012 on Combating Trafficking in Persons and by the regulations on the procedure for identifying victims of trafficking, the format of the questionnaire for citizens who may have been victims of trafficking or related offences and the procedures for the completion of the questionnaire and the submission of the information contained therein, approved by Government Decision No. 485 of 11 June 2015.

174. An electronic databank is maintained on victims of trafficking and citizens who may have been victims of trafficking or related offences, as well as an archive of questionnaires administered to trafficking victims.

175. At the regional level, interdisciplinary working groups responsible for the identification, reintegration and rehabilitation of trafficking victims met annually from 2020 to 2024, in collaboration with IOM.

176. The International Training Centre of the Academy of the Ministry of Internal Affairs provides training for law enforcement officers and staff of other State agencies on combating trafficking, identifying victims and providing assistance to them.

177. From 2020 to 2024, the number of cases of trafficking in persons and related offences registered in Belarus fell by 4.2 per cent, and the number of cases in which trafficking victims were removed from the country by 33.3 per cent. The number of cases of circulation of child pornography registered grew by 4.2 times, owing to the fact that the internal affairs agencies identified more such offences online.

178. In 2024, 225 victims of trafficking in persons were identified (compared with 381 in 2023 and 210 in 2022), including 155 children used in the production of pornography (compared with 260 in 2023 and 117 in 2022). There were 257 trafficking-related offences, including 189 cases of circulation of child pornography. From 2022 to 2024, no stand-alone cases of trafficking in persons were identified.

179. Most of the trafficking offences detected were committed against women. All victims in need of assistance were referred for rehabilitation.

180. In 2024, draft recommendations on the protection and social rehabilitation of victims of trafficking in persons in the CIS Member States were approved.

181. Victim rehabilitation services for persons aged over 18 and families with children are provided by local social service centres and by the municipal family and children's social service centres in Homiel and Minsk.

182. The temporary shelter service is provided round the clock to victims of trafficking in persons free of charge in "crisis rooms".

183. The system for granting refugee status, subsidiary protection or asylum in Belarus complies with the principles of the Convention relating to the Status of Refugees of 28 July 1951. Doubts arising in the course of the examination of applications for protection are interpreted in favour of the applicant.

184. The Migration Policy Framework for 2024–2028 is being implemented. In 2025–2026, it is planned to monitor the implementation of Act No. 354-Z of 23 June 2008 on the Granting of Refugee Status, Subsidiary Protection, Asylum and Temporary Protection to Foreign Nationals and Stateless Persons in Belarus in order to identify problems and make proposals for revisions to the law.

185. In 2022, an interdepartmental working group was set up to develop a standard operating procedure for State agencies working with unaccompanied foreign minors and stateless persons in Belarus. Regulations govern the agencies' activities in this regard, from the time an abandoned child is discovered and a guardian is appointed for him or her until the child is interviewed and a decision is taken regarding the granting of protection.

186. From 2020 to 2024, internal affairs officers processed more than 7,000 applications for protection and more than 8,000 applications for extension of protection in Belarus.

187. Applicants for protection and persons who have received a form of protection in Belarus are in most cases granted the rights to residence, monetary assistance, education, employment, medical care and judicial protection on an equal footing with Belarusian citizens.

188. Consideration is given to the application of non-refoulement provisions to applicants for protection. From 2020 to 2024, about 30 decisions on non-refoulement of foreign nationals denied protection in Belarus were adopted.

189. Applicants for protection in Belarus benefit from free accommodation with assistance from the Belarusian Red Cross, IOM and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR).

K. Equality and freedom from discrimination (recommendations 138.70, 138.71, 138.74, 138.68, 138.69 and 138.73)

190. Under article 22 of the Constitution, all persons are equal before the law and have the right to equal protection, without any discrimination, of their rights and legitimate interests.

191. Belarusian legislation is based on the principle of equal treatment and is neutral in terms of discrimination, since it does not assign privileges to any particular group based on the presence or absence of any characteristic that is not objectively justified.

192. General anti-discrimination provisions guarantee the principle of equality in national legislation and are reflected in sectoral legislative acts governing various aspects of social relations (labour, education and employment, for example). At the same time, anti-discrimination norms differ in terms of their content and, as a rule, are formulated because of the need to safeguard equality of rights or explicitly prohibit discrimination.

193. The principle of non-discrimination and equality of employment rights for women and men is enshrined at the constitutional level. State policy in the field of employment promotion is aimed at ensuring equal opportunities for all citizens. It is prohibited for employers to include in information on vacancies any discriminatory conditions, including in relation to sex. Guarantees are provided on a gender-neutral basis for unemployed persons who are in special need of social protection and unable to compete on equal terms on the labour market, among them parents of large families, single parents and parents raising children with disabilities.

194. Persons who believe that they have been subjected to discrimination in employment relations have the right to bring action before the courts to end the discrimination.

195. The Act on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and Their Social Integration, adopted in 2022, defines the concept of “discrimination on the grounds of disability” and prohibits discrimination in all its forms – direct and indirect discrimination, harassment and denial of reasonable accommodation.

196. Violation of the constitutional principle of equality is an offence under national legislation. The intentional direct or indirect violation or restriction of rights and freedoms or the conferment of direct or indirect advantages for citizens on the basis of sex, race, ethnicity, language, origin, property or professional status, place of residence, attitude to religion, beliefs or membership of voluntary associations, when this results in substantial harm to the rights, freedoms and legitimate interests of citizens or their relatives, is punishable under article 190 of the Criminal Code.

197. The commission of an offence motivated by racial, ethnic, religious, political or ideological hostility or enmity, or by hostility or enmity towards a social group, is considered an aggravating circumstance under article 64 (1) (9) of the Code.

L. Civil and political rights (recommendation 138.212)

198. The granting to the All-Belarusian People's Assembly in 2022 of the constitutional status of supreme representative body of people's power enabled citizens of Belarus to exercise the right to take part in the affairs of the State more broadly.

199. The All-Belarusian People's Assembly has the right to consider the legitimacy of elections. The Constitutional Court is vested with the right to give an opinion on the constitutionality of the election of the President of Belarus and of the election of deputies of the House of Representatives, the lower house of the National Assembly, and members of the Council of the Republic, the upper house.

200. The elections of deputies to the House of Representatives and to local councils of deputies in 2024 and the election of the President of Belarus in 2025 were held on a competitive basis, in full compliance with national legislation and the international obligations of Belarus and with the participation of a significant number of foreign observers (294 people from 23 countries were observers in 2024, and 486 people from 52 countries in 2025). The elections were unanimously recognized by the observers as free, fair, lawful and democratic.

201. For the 2025 presidential election, observers from the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) were invited but declined to participate.

202. About 330 foreign journalists from 70 foreign media outlets in 23 countries were accredited to cover the 2025 presidential election.

203. The National Security Policy Framework, approved by Decision No. 5 of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly of 25 April 2024, enshrined, for the first time, the concept of electoral sovereignty, which was defined as the inalienable and exclusive right of the State to organize and hold elections and referendums autonomously and independently in order to guarantee the realization of the people's absolute power and freedom of choice, subject to the primacy of the Constitution and national legislation, and to prevent interference in the electoral process.

204. Efforts to create conditions for persons with disabilities to take part in elections through the use of modern information and communication technologies and assistive devices have been scaled up.

M. Inter-ethnic and interfaith relations (recommendation 138.153)

205. The right to freedom of religion is guaranteed in article 31 of the Constitution. State policy in the area of interfaith relations is conducted in accordance with Act No. 2054-XII of 17 December 1992 on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations, which safeguards and guarantees the right of everyone to freedom of conscience and freedom of religion, to social justice, equality and protection of their rights and interests irrespective of their attitude to religion or religious affiliation, and to freedom of association in religious organizations.

206. Pursuant to Act No. 334-Z of 30 December 2023 amending the laws on the activities of religious organizations, the Act on Freedom of Conscience and Religious Organizations was enhanced through the incorporation of modern approaches to relations between the State and religious organizations. The law was developed in close collaboration with religious organizations and underwent public debate.

207. The legislation in force provides a legal framework within which religious organizations may freely operate and develop. The State does not interfere in the private observance of any religion.

208. Currently 3,426 religious organizations from 25 faiths and religious denominations, including 3,257 religious communities and 169 ecumenical organizations, are registered in Belarus.

209. Since 2008, the country has had an Interfaith Advisory Council comprising the heads of all faiths. A programme for the development of the religious sphere, ethnic relations and cooperation with Belarusians abroad for 2021–2025 is being implemented; the programme is aimed at maintaining interfaith and inter-ethnic peace and harmony in society.

210. On the initiative of the Head of State, it is planned to establish spiritual centres of the main religions in Belarus.

211. In Belarus, members of the Roma ethnicity enjoy all rights on an equal footing with members of other ethnicities. The chairperson of one voluntary association established by Roma is a member of the Inter-Ethnic Advisory Council reporting to the Office of the Commissioner for Religious and Ethnic Affairs.

N. Right to life, liberty and security of person (recommendations 138.86, 138.87, 138.89, 138.90, 138.93 and 138.96; and 138.97)

212. Article 24 of the Constitution provides for the temporary application of the death penalty pending its abolition, and State policy in the area of criminal proceedings is aimed at minimizing the use of this exceptional punishment.

213. The application of the death penalty in Belarus is sporadic (one case in 2021, none in 2022, one in 2023 and one in 2024), and the penalty is imposed for the commission of offences that are classified as especially serious and involve acts that present an exceptional degree of risk to the public.

214. In accordance with the criminal law of Belarus, the death penalty may not be imposed on persons who were under 18 years of age at the time of commission of an offence, on women or on men who were over 65 years of age at the time of sentencing. The law thus establishes broader restrictions on the use of the death penalty than are provided for in article 6 (5) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

O. Right to be treated with humanity and right to protection against torture (recommendations 138.102–138.104, 138.109, 138.111, 138.192, 138.197 and 138.203; and 138.110)

215. In accordance with the Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment of 10 December 1984, effective legislative, administrative, judicial and other measures are being taken in Belarus to prevent acts of torture.

216. Penalties enforcement legislation and its application in practice are based on strict observance of the requirement to protect citizens from cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment.

217. Criminal liability is provided for torture and acts of cruelty committed on account of the racial, national or ethnic origin, political beliefs or religion of the civilian population, as well as for coercion of a suspect, accused person, victim or witness to testify or of an expert to give an opinion by means of threats, blackmail or other unlawful acts by a person conducting an inquiry or pretrial investigation or administering justice when combined with the use of torture.

218. Custody procedures are based on the principles of legality, humanity, equality of all citizens before the law and respect for human dignity, in accordance with the Constitution and the generally recognized principles and standards of international law.

219. In order to ensure respect for the rights of convicted and remand prisoners, the procuratorial authorities carry out regular inspections of places of detention and correctional facilities, organize a telephone helpline and regularly receive convicted and remand prisoners in person. Official action is taken by the procuratorial authorities in their supervisory role if there are grounds to do so.

220. To ensure transparency in places of detention, the law provides for visits to institutions of the penal correction system by representatives of the media, who have the right to visit such institutions with the permission of the administration.

221. Voluntary associations, too, monitor the activities of bodies and institutions enforcing penalties.

222. Public monitoring commissions are formed from among representatives of more than 50 voluntary associations whose statutory purpose is to protect the rights of citizens. Public monitoring commissions are fully independent. The composition of the commissions is regularly refreshed, which provides an opportunity for different voluntary associations to take part in their work.

223. Public monitoring commissions conduct regular visits to penal institutions. Issues related to conditions of detention and medical care are studied as part of such visits, and interviews with inmates are held.

224. Whenever a complaint is received from a convicted or remand prisoner regarding conditions of detention, checks are carried out as required by law and appropriate measures are taken in response.

225. Information on visits by public monitoring commissions to bodies and institutions of the penal correction system is published on the websites of the State bodies that support the work of the public monitoring commissions and is freely accessible.

P. Right to a fair trial (recommendations 138.186–138.188)

226. Belarus has an independent, autonomous and unified system of courts of general jurisdiction for the whole country, with a clear division between courts at different levels and simple, comprehensible procedures for the consideration of cases and review of court decisions.

227. In accordance with the Constitution, the most important principles of the judicial system are the independence of judges in the administration of justice, their subordination only to the law and the inadmissibility of interference in the activities of judges. Everyone is guaranteed the protection of his or her rights and freedoms by a competent, independent and impartial tribunal.

228. The independence of judges is safeguarded by the legally established procedures for their appointment, suspension and removal from office, their personal inviolability, the procedures for the consideration of cases and matters, the confidentiality of their deliberations and the prohibition on requests to disclose the content of such deliberations, liability for contempt of court or interference in the court's activities and other guarantees with respect to judges' status and by the establishment of the requisite organizational and technical conditions for the work of the courts.

229. The legal institution regulating the appointment of judges plays a special role in ensuring the independence of judges and the judicial system as a whole. As a result of amendments made to the Constitution based on the outcome of the 2022 national referendum, powers with respect to the staffing of the judicial system have been redistributed between the Head of State and the All-Belarusian People's Assembly. The powers of the Assembly include the election of the Presidents of the Constitutional Court and the Supreme Court, their deputies and the judges of these courts and their dismissal from office on the proposal of the President of Belarus, as previously agreed with the Assembly's Presidium. The President retains the right to appoint judges of other courts of general jurisdiction and dismiss them from office on the grounds provided by law.

230. An important role in strengthening the judicial system and ensuring the independence of judges continues to be assigned to judges' own bodies, which carry out their activities in a collegial and transparent manner, with strict observance of the principle of the independence of judges.

231. The Legal Policy Framework of Belarus was approved pursuant to Presidential Decree No. 196 of 28 June 2023. Its objectives are to further improve the legal system in the interests of the Belarusian State, society and citizens.

232. In 2023, new provisions were added to the Code on the Judicial System and the Status of Judges establishing an appellate instance in the Supreme Court, which considers appeals or protests against rulings issued by the Supreme Court at first instance in civil and criminal matters, with the exception of rulings not subject to appeal or protest.

233. On 1 January 2026, a single Code of Civil Procedure (adopted on 11 March 2024) will come into effect in Belarus replacing the Code of Civil Procedure and the Code of Economic Procedure; the Code will streamline the rules of jurisdiction in civil matters, including cases concerning commercial disputes; establish uniform rules for preparing a case for trial; and introduce class action suits.

234. The Code of Civil Procedure will introduce a single type of in absentia proceedings as a way of optimizing the judicial process and allowing it to be completed in the absence of the defendant, as well as simplified proceedings allowing a case to be considered on the basis of written materials without holding a court hearing and summoning the parties. This will help to save time and financial costs for the participants in the judicial process and the court and to make justice more accessible and efficient.

235. The Code of Civil Procedure consolidates the existing forms of conciliation with a view to ensuring harmony in social relations and improves the means for achieving conciliation of the parties to lawsuits through the assistance of other persons.

236. In order to strengthen trust in the judicial system, the functions of the appellate instances of the commercial courts will be transferred to the newly established Commercial Court of Appeal, which will serve the whole country. Parties located in different parts of the country will be able to participate in appellate reviews using videoconferencing systems.

237. Provisions introduced in the Code of Criminal Procedure in 2021 allow for the settlement of a conflict arising in connection with the commission of a crime through the conclusion of a mediation agreement.

238. In 2023, changes were made to the procedure for appealing against judicial decisions in criminal cases that have become enforceable and the provisions on appellate proceedings were amended. An additional form of review – cassational proceedings – was introduced. Criminal procedure legislation now provides for the possibility of appealing against criminal court decisions that have become enforceable in cassational or supervisory proceedings.

239. The modernization of the automated information system of the courts of general jurisdiction was completed in 2020. On 1 January 2021, a case management subsystem became operational in courts at all levels, allowing for the automated registration of cases of all categories, rapid retrieval of information and monitoring of the timeliness of procedural actions.

240. An important achievement in the digitalization of the courts of general jurisdiction was the creation of a subsystem for audio and video recording, transcribing and videoconferencing, which improved the organization of court hearings and the speed of preparation of transcripts of court hearings and helped to reduce the number of violations of procedural deadlines.

241. The judicial system may be accessed online through the web portal of the courts of general jurisdiction, where a number of so-called e-court services are delivered, providing users with access to relevant information and allowing them to send procedural applications to courts hearing commercial cases.

Q. Right to freedom of expression, right to peaceful assembly and right to freedom of association (recommendations 138.141–138.148, 138.151, 138.157, 138.159, 138.160, 138.162, 138.165, 138.167, 138.172, 138.175, 138.181, 138.182, 138.184, 138.154, 138.176–138.179, 138.183 and 138.193)

242. In Belarus, citizens' right to receive and impart full, accurate and timely information is fully upheld.

243. In accordance with Act No. 427-Z of 17 July 2008 on the Media, monopolization of the media, as well as censorship, is not permitted. Freedom of opinion, belief and expression are guaranteed. Non-State-owned media outlets outnumber State-owned ones.

244. The principles underpinning media activity are reliability, legality, respect for human rights and freedoms, diversity of opinions, development of national culture, protection of morality and observance of the professional ethical standards of journalism and of generally accepted standards of morality.

245. As at 1 June 2025, there were 1,136 registered media outlets, including 907 print media (397 State and 510 non-State), 7 news agencies (2 State and 5 non-State), 74 online publications and 148 electronic media. Of the total number of television and radio broadcasters, 75 were State and 73 were non-State.

246. In 2024, about 600 foreign journalists were accredited in Belarus on a temporary basis and 60 on a permanent basis.

247. Since 1 January 2015, the Media Act has been applicable to websites and sections of websites that are used for the dissemination of media content, except for the requirement of State registration.

248. The Public Coordinating Council on the Mass Media, which brings together the heads of the leading State and non-State media outlets, has been in operation since 2008.

249. Free access to information for journalists facilitates the work of press centres, in particular the National Press Centre of Belarus and the Press House. These communication platforms hold press events, with the participation of the country's highest officials and the leaders of State agencies and major civil society organizations.

250. The law guarantees equal rights for journalists, irrespective of the ownership of the media outlet employing them, and it is a criminal offence to persecute citizens for engaging in criticism or to obstruct the lawful professional activities of journalists.

251. An innovation was the introduction in 2024 of legislative amendments aimed at ensuring the timely identification of publicly significant information and a prompt response thereto by State bodies and organizations. Under the law, an obligation was created for State bodies to: ensure that the public is objectively informed about measures taken to address issues contained in publicly significant information; to conduct daily monitoring of information sources for such information so that they can respond promptly to inaccurate information; and to ensure that measures are taken to address issues contained in publicly relevant information that have been identified in the course of monitoring.

252. Prohibited information is defined in law as information that is directed against State security or public order or is capable of harming public health or morals. The lists of grounds for issuing written warnings to editorial boards, media founders or website owners or requests to eliminate violations of the law and of grounds for taking decisions to limit access to websites or to terminate or suspend the publication of media outlets are exhaustive. These restrictions are aimed at achieving the purposes of article 19 (3) of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights.

253. The adoption of decisions to limit access to websites is not a restrictive measure insofar as the enjoyment of the right to freedom of expression is concerned, since the websites involved are being used to carry out illegal actions not connected with the exercise of the above-mentioned right. Decisions to limit access to websites that post material containing incitement to suicide, information on the sale of narcotic drugs, propaganda for violence and

cruelty or incitement to extremist or terrorist activities are a means of preventing offences and cannot be regarded as an encroachment on freedom of expression. Moreover, there is no concept of “permanent blocking” in Belarusian legislation. The owner of a website to which access has been restricted may apply for access to be restored at any time once the violations that served as the basis for the restriction have been eliminated.

254. Since 1994, not a single Belarusian journalist has died while carrying out his or her professional duties (covering armed conflicts, civil protests, riots or the coronavirus disease (COVID 19) pandemic), either in Belarus or abroad. By this measure, Belarus is one of the world leaders in protecting the journalistic community.

255. The Belarusian Union of Journalists is the key voluntary association that, in accordance with its statutory objectives, is engaged in practical activities to develop freedom of speech, protect journalists and independent media editorial policy and enhance the professional knowledge and competence of its members.

256. Since 2020, on the recommendation of the OSCE Special Representative on Freedom of the Media, a committee for the protection of journalists has been in operation, with the participation of the leadership of the Belarusian Union of Journalists, the Commissioner for the Protection of Journalists, deputies from various levels, members of the Union and the heads of the press services of the security, defence and interior departments and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

257. One of the most important freedoms of citizens in Belarus is freedom of association, which is guaranteed to everyone by the Constitution. Voluntary associations are one of the means by which citizens express their interests and manifest their public activism.

258. The procedure for establishing voluntary associations is governed by Act No. 3254-XII of 4 October 1994 on Voluntary Associations. The justice authorities do not interfere in the establishing of voluntary associations.

259. Pursuant to Act No. 251-Z of 14 February 2023 amending the laws on the activity of political parties and other voluntary associations, the procedures for the establishment and activities of political parties and voluntary associations were modified. The Act provides for a number of measures aimed at the development of civil society. The territorial restrictions on the work of local voluntary associations have been removed, and the requirements for obtaining legal addresses for such associations and their branches have been simplified. The establishment and activities of voluntary associations for the purpose of promoting ethnic, religious or racial enmity is prohibited.

260. As at 1 July 2025, there were 1,360 registered voluntary associations and 19 registered trade unions, along with 47,615 voluntary association branches and 27,819 trade union branches. In the course of 2025, 559 voluntary association branches and 334 trade union branches have been registered.

261. In accordance with article 19 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, the right to freedom of expression carries with it special duties and responsibilities and may therefore be subject to certain restrictions, which must be established by law and necessary for the respect of the rights or reputations of others or for the protection of national security, public order or public health or morals.

262. Under the Constitution, the freedom to hold assemblies, rallies, marches, demonstrations and pickets is guaranteed by the State provided that this does not disturb law and order or violate the rights of others. The procedure for holding such events is prescribed by law.

263. The courts alone are competent to impose the appropriate administrative penalties for violations of the law on the procedure for organizing or holding public events.

264. Legislative restrictions are adopted to ensure law and order and citizens’ safety, to preclude the use of potentially dangerous sites for extremist provocation and to prevent emergencies and human-caused disasters.

265. It is prohibited to hold public events if their purpose is to engage in war propaganda or extremist activities.

266. Criminal liability is provided for repeat violations of the established procedure for organizing or holding assemblies, rallies, marches, demonstrations, pickets or other public events; such violations may include public incitement to organize or hold an assembly, rally, march, demonstration, picket or other public event in breach of the established procedure for so doing.

267. Both administrative and criminal liability have been established in the country for unlawful obstruction of public events.
