

State-run TV glorifies the victors in “war against protests” and considers the possible creation of political militia

Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(22/02/2021 – 28/02/2021)

The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological messages. We monitor the outputs of the Agency of the Television News (ATN), which prepares the news broadcasts for the **Belarus-1** channel (“Panorama” and Sunday’s “Main Airtime”), the channel **ONT** (“Our News”, “Saturday’s Edition” and “Contours”), and the channel **STV** (“24 Hour News” and “The Week”).

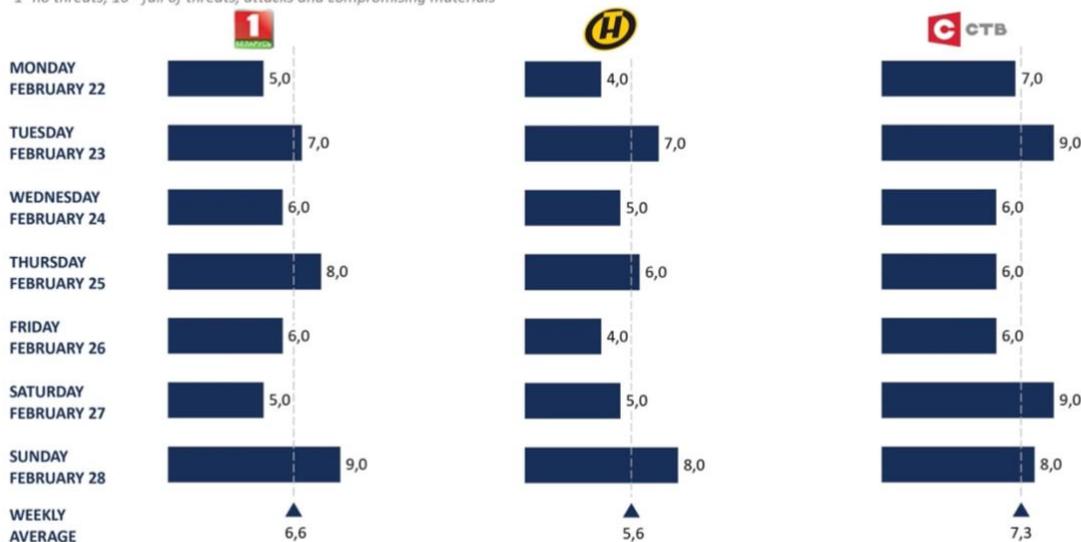
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The theme of the National Troops Day was the occasion to celebrate the victory over the opponents and suppress the protest. State channels were actively praising the law enforcement for their steadfastness, lamented all the hardships they experienced.

FEBRUARY 23 WAS THE OCCASION TO CELEBRATE THE VICTORY OVER THE OPPOSITION. STATE CHANNELS WERE ACTIVELY PRAISING THE LAW ENFORCEMENT, THEY WERE COMPARED TO THE WAR HEROES

CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX*

1 - no threats; 10 - full of threats, attacks and compromising materials



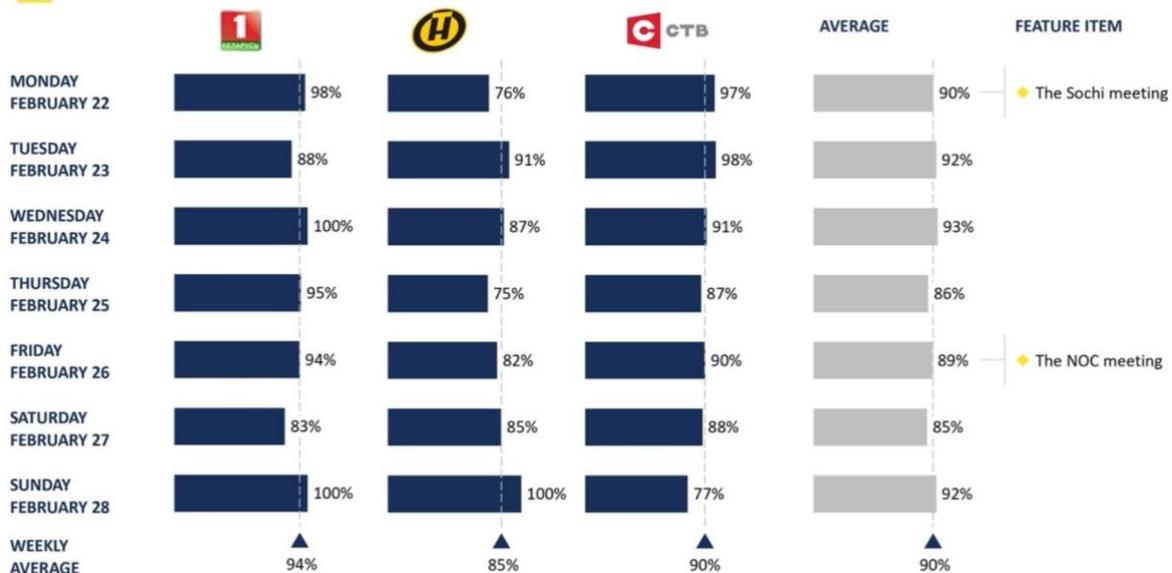
*CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX - an indicator measuring the percentage of news stories that intensify political tension and conflicts (through accusations and threats towards opponents, equating protests to violence, and similar).

In fact, the actions of the law enforcement officers were elevated to the rank of a feat comparable to the heroics of previous wars.

The Sochi meeting between Putin and Lukashenka did not provide the state TV with an abundance of materials, which the anchors themselves had to admit. Because of this, state channels formed narratives from the broader context of relations between the two countries — common threats and projects. State-run TV contradicted other media outlets (and opponents in general), arguing that it was not about seeking loans and growing dependence on Moscow.

■ THE SOCHI MEETING BETWEEN PUTIN AND LUKASHENKA RESULTED IN A NARRATIVE OF EQUAL BELARUSIAN-RUSSIAN COOPERATION

THE SHARE OF STORIES WITH STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE*



*STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE - one or more key ideas that define the content of a news story (e.g., the inadmissibility of destabilizing the political situation).

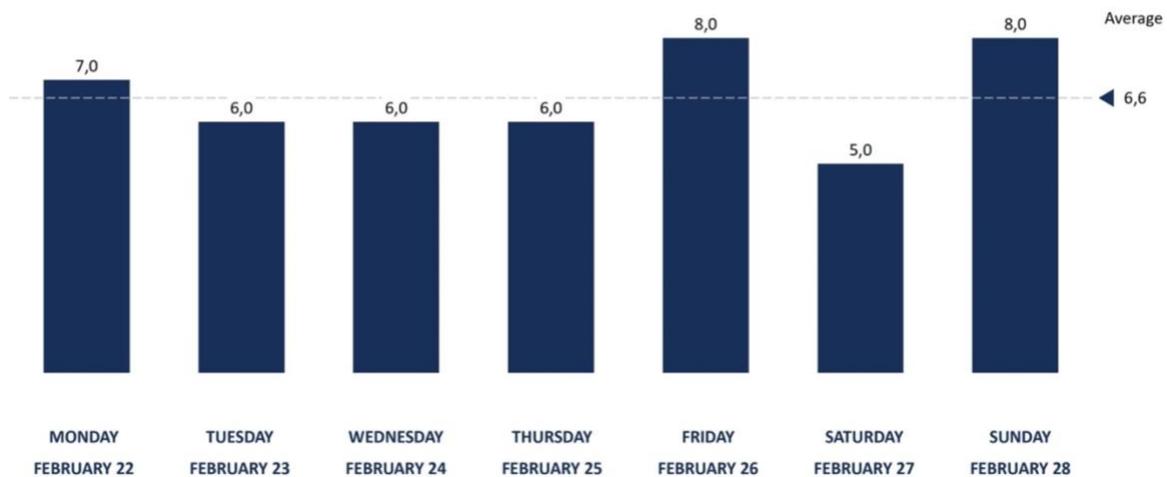
Price control became a significant topic. The state channels tried to prove that there was no threat of deficit and called on business to understand what is important at the moment. The state, as a wise controller, eliminates the imbalances caused by the irresponsibility of individual actors and the complicated conjuncture — this is how the need to introduce regulatory measures was justified.

Key narratives can be found in [APPENDIX 1](#).

The topic of state support for sports, opposition to pressure in this area arose against the background of Lukashenka's attendance at the NOC meeting and the election of Viktor Lukashenka as the new president of the committee. The image of "Athletic Belarus" is of particular importance for state TV, and is traditionally used to promote the ideology of unity, patriotism, and glorify the achievements of the state.

☰ **THE MAIN PLOTS WERE BROADCAST ON ALL CHANNELS, BUT WERE SUPPLEMENTED BY EDITORIALS**

THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION POLICY COORDINATION*

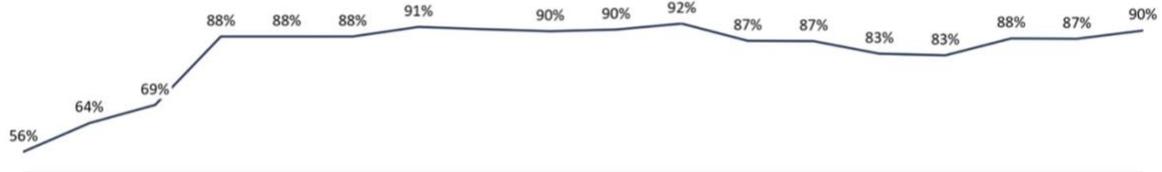


*THE LEVEL OF INFORMATION POLICY COORDINATION – an indicator evaluating coordination across the air. This is inferred from news stories having similar structures, as well as the duplication of opinions, positions and ideologemes among state TV channels.

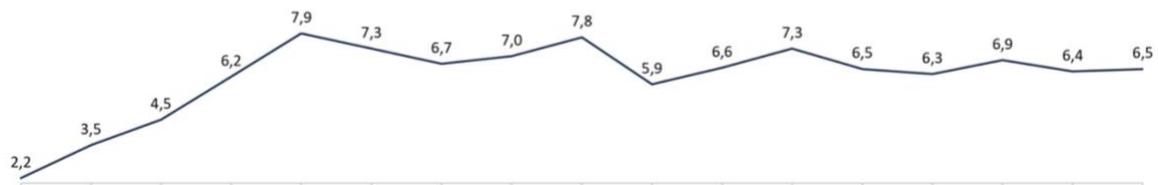
Narrative of the need for strict order sometimes went as far as direct references to German military practices, including executions and the gallows. STV also called for the creation of a structure like the "Order of the Sword Bearers" and the political militia to confront the enemies.

IN THE CONTEXT OF THE NARRATIVE OF THE MILITARY THREAT STATE CHANNELS CALLED FOR THE CREATION OF A STRUCTURE LIKE THE "ORDER OF THE SWORD BEARERS" AND THE POLITICAL MILITIA

AVERAGE SHARE OF STORIES WITH STRONGLY ARTICULATED IDEOLOGICAL NARRATIVE, by weeks



AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks



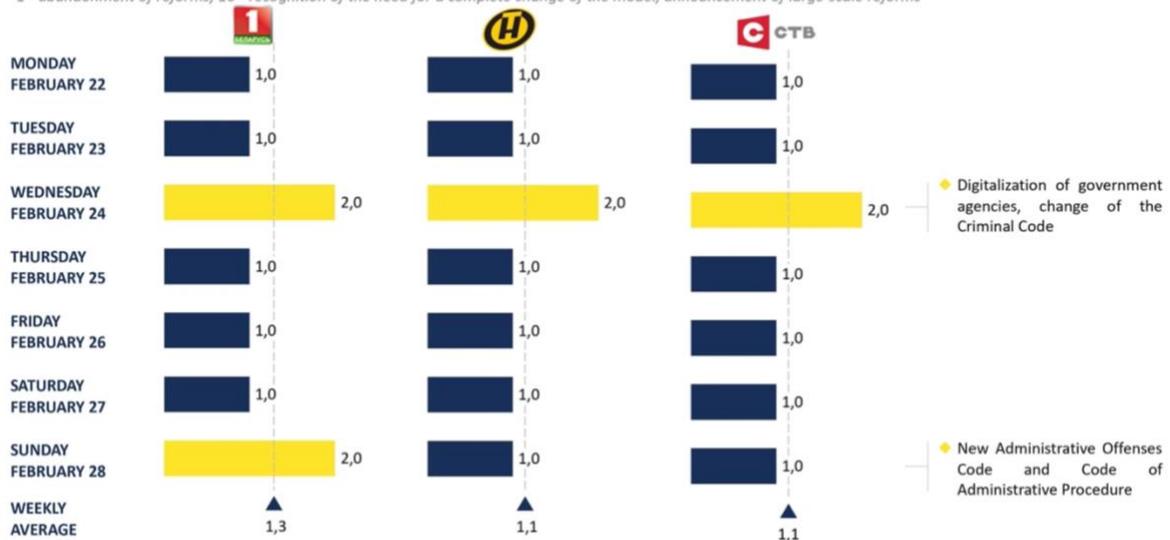
29.06 – 05.07 06.07 – 26.07 27.07 – 02.08 10.08 – 16.08 17.08 – 30.08 31.08 – 20.09 21.09 – 04.10 05.10 – 18.10 19.10 – 01.11 02.11 – 08.11 09.11 – 22.11 23.11 – 06.12 07.12 – 20.12 11.01 – 24.01 25.01 – 07.02 08.02 – 21.02 22.02 – 28.02

The topics of changes in criminal legislation, new Administrative Offenses Code and Code of Administrative Procedure, as well as the importance of digitalization were the main content of the reform messages.

CHANGES IN ADMINISTRATIVE OFFENSES CODE AND CODE OF ADMINISTRATIVE PROCEDURE, INCREASED PENALTIES AND DIGITALIZATION – WERE THE MAIN CONTENT OF THE REFORM MESSAGES

REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX*

1 - abandonment of reforms; 10 - recognition of the need for a complete change of the model, announcement of large-scale reforms



*REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX – an indicator evaluating the presence of news stories with reformatory proposals or decisions.

The range of the presenters’ opinions did not go beyond the official guidelines. At the same time, the inputs from individual guests of the state-run TV (Gaidukevich, Voskresensky) were aimed at a certain strengthening of political activity.

THE RANGE OF THE PRESENTERS’ OPINIONS DID NOT GO BEYOND THE OFFICIAL GUIDELINES. GAIDUKEVICH AND VOSKRESENSKY SPOKE IN FAVOR OF STRENGTHENING OF POLITICAL ACTIVITY

PLURALISM INDEX*

1 - absence of alternative viewpoints; 10 - diversity of opinions, journalistic and expert approaches



*PLURALISM INDEX - an indicator evaluating the share of critical reports and news stories citing opposing, critical, and other opinions alternative to the official rhetoric.

The project “Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus” is implemented by Sense Analytics in partnership with Press Club Belarus. The author of the weekly reports is Maxim Stefanovich, the editor and coordinator of the project is Artyom Shraibman.

To see the full version of the report in Russian [click here](#).

APPENDIX 1 KEY NARRATIVES

RUSSIAN VECTOR

- “Due to their geopolitical and historical unity, Belarus and Russia are successfully passing the test of strength. And today there are many challenges — from a pandemic and economic turbulence to information attacks. This opinion was expressed in an interview with our TV channel by a well-known journalist, general director of the radio station “Moscow speaking” Vladimir Mamontov.”
- “Usually the meetings between Lukashenka and Putin are about specific issues, but not this time. The leaders dispensed with press statements, but they were clearly meeting for more than skiing.”
- “However, you also need to understand: the stronger the pressure on Belarus and Russia, the stronger this bond. Of course, countries also have problematic issues, but the common threat stipulates specific priorities.”
- “Well, the main event of the week was the meeting of the leaders of Belarus and Russia. Format — no ties, but serious issues. As always, the focus is on politics, economics, and military interaction. Well, the 2021 is making its own adjustments. New items on the agenda of the high-level talks — vaccination and information security.”
- “Controversial moments happen every now and then still. But, it's like in a family: the closer people are to each other, the tougher, at times, are the conversations at the dinner table.”
- “We noted that the meeting was the of peers. And not as some oppositionists imagined this meeting — an audience between the beggar and the lord. Lukashenka would cut in front of Putin on skis, overtake him on a snowmobile. And then he gave his Russian colleague a basket of Belarusian-made meats and cheeses.”
- “Together we will also fight for the health of our people. Russia has transferred technologies for the production of its vaccine. Already in March, one of the Belarusian state-owned companies will start production.”

ANTI-WEST NARRATIVES

- “The Armenians paid too much for the velvet revolution — political scientist Khachik Galstyan shared his opinion in a conversation with the TV News Agency.”
- “How important it is to have a reliable system of national security and maintain internal political stability — a case in point are the events unfolding in the Transcaucasian region.”
- “There is no European freedom in Ukraine, which the voices of the “orange tribunes” heralded at the time: they would say, if we are in power, you will live like Europe does. But there was only a collapse in the economy, industry, and yes, wild energy tariffs both for the population and for companies.”

- "The police are acting as usual — dozens of people detained. The Georgian authorities categorically refuse to negotiate with the opposition on the topic of holding early parliamentary elections in the country. "
- "Protest rallies were held in several cities at once, which were brutally suppressed by the police. The guards of the order, without no punches pulled, used tear gas, rubber bullets and even automatic weapons. The civil confrontation in Myanmar has been going on for almost a month."
- "If you see Biden's speech at the Munich conference, there is only one takeaway: it's a corpse talking. Dead eyes. Dead voice. Dead intonation. The diplomatic gibberish basically translates into him saying that he is ready to start a war."
- "It has finally become clear to Lithuania: you pay dearly for blackmail. The ports in Klaipeda alone lost a third of their transshipment in a day."
- "The overthrow of Donald Trump was the result of a treaty. It turns out that his loss was coordinated by the deep state and did not depend on the mood of citizens in any way."

SUCCESSFUL STATE ANTI-COVID STRATEGY

- "Today, probably, all of Europe and not only them know that we have chosen our own way of fighting the pandemic, which the opponents of the authorities immediately grabbed onto. We all remember these crazy recommendations, the conclusions of pseudo-experts, the hysteria of the pseudo-independent media, the lies of the Western media that they decided not to treat people in Belarus."
- "The path followed by Belarus, saving the economy, without bringing the production to a halt in the fight against the pandemic, has justified itself. More and more countries recognize this."
- "The comprehensive plan, developed in February 2020, allowed the healthcare system to respond quickly to the global challenge. The number of PCR laboratories has increased, over 4 million diagnostic tests have been performed. The problems of providing PPE and diagnostic equipment were also resolved."
- "Our country started vaccinating the healthcare workers with "Sputnik V" back in January. Recently, they finished the vaccination of this population group. Everyone feels fine."
- "Belarus launched Sputnik V. The first trial, or validation bathe of the coronavirus vaccine was bottled at Belmedpreparaty."
- "Since April, according to the Ministry of Health, everyone will be able to get vaccinated. And there is a choice of drugs too. In addition, very soon we will use the locally-produced vaccine."

PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME

- "It is done so that the goods are available and affordable for everyone. The main goal, the government notes, is to guarantee fair prices for buyers."

- “Social responsibility should be borne by all market participants, especially in difficult times associated with a pandemic.”
- “The anti-trust regulator constantly monitors the situation on the market. Distortions on the part of manufacturers or trade are suppressed.”
- “Digitalization of the economy, government agencies and organizations is a topical issue in recent years. When switching to digital, special attention is paid to information security. Not only introduce new tools, but also protect data from leaks and hacker attacks.”
- “Gross domestic product in the first quarter may grow by 3-5 tenths of a percent. This is the forecast of the Ministry of Economy.”
- “Thanks to advanced methods, Belarus not only extracts oil, but also increases production volumes.”
- “Despite the widespread lockdown, our athletes (unlike many others) had the opportunity to train safely at the best bases and not lose shape. The payment of personalized presidential scholarships to athletes and their coaches has been extended. Belarusians should go to Japan for to win.”
- “The Presidential Sports Club also contributes to children's sports. The organization has been holding children's and youth biathlon, football, hockey competitions for more than 15 years.”
- “Since the new code also includes a chapter on minors, it is also distinguished by its educational, preventive orientation.”

TRIUMPHANT PRESIDENT'S ASSEMBLY

- “The Sixth All-Belarusian People's Assembly has already become a fait accompli in history. It put on the rails a locomotive of ideas that gave impetus to the development of absolutely all areas of our life. From education and medicine to economics and industrial sector. And now the echoes of the national assembly are heard.”
- “An effective algorithm for combating coronavirus in particular, and the development of medicine in general, was also discussed at the All-Belarusian People's Assembly. Honored doctors and novice specialists discussed the quality of services in the regions, the development of primary health care facilities.”
- “The expert community and the public continue to actively discuss the dialogue platform of the Sixth All-Belarusian People's Assembly and the Program of the country's socio-economic development for the next 5 years. To ensure social stability and well-being of citizens, the emphasis will be placed on improving the quality of life of people and improving the social environment.”
- “During the preparation for the All-Belarusian People's Assembly, the format of dialogue platforms has become popular. Such meetings on the basis of universities will become a tradition.”

ALL STAKES ON LAW ENFORCEMENT, MILITARY HEROICS

- “The post-election days for them have become a real struggle for independence. And it was not just a victory over someone. It was a victory over oneself and over one’s fears. After all, many of them called their relatives at home to say goodbye. Nobody knew what would happen next. And they survived.”
- “You stood on the wall, you shielded Belarus, our people, our real history from dirt smearing and the hellish breath of collective evil.”
- “On this day, the defenders of the Fatherland, as always, are on duty. In this profession they have almost no days off, which was once again proved by the events of last year.”
- “On Thursday, the President heard a report by the State Secretary of the Security Council. It is this body that must develop a plan of action in the event of an exacerbation of the internal political situation heated externally.”
- "In a word, the end of February 2021 marked the transition to a new stage in the global development, when the war in Europe is spoken of not as an unlikely option, but as something inevitable."
- “We need political militia that will save its people and its leader from internal and external enemies.”
- “The most courageous, strong and courageous representatives of humanity in anticipation of the National Troops Day. On the eve of the holiday, according to tradition, there is a solemn meeting for the Belarusian officers and a show.”
- “Strength, valor and honor! A solemn meeting and a show dedicated to the National Troops Day were held in Minsk.”
- “You know, every day when my husband comes home alive back to our children, I mentally thank each of you. I understand that if there was a traitor standing shoulder to shoulder with him, he would not have returned home. You should also know that my husband's hand will not flinch in defending the Motherland and his comrades!”
- “There is no fooling a child, since they are unbiased. And the way they look at the police officers is the ultimate test, to a certain extent, of how the society looks at us, how people look at us.”

ANTI-PROTEST NARRATIVES

- “They want to prolong their geopolitical global dominance at the expense of our death. For this, they raised here the golems that we showed at the beginning. They hate us as darkness hates light.”
- “Well, we will continue to talk about those who defend their beliefs outside the framework of the law. Thus, interfering with the life of others and yourself. These are the bright faces.”

- “What difference does the contents of the ballot boxes actually make? The decision was still made by the pillars of the state system: business and trade unions. Actually, we have long been living in an era of triumphant postmodernity: there is no reality that exists objectively and independently of our ideas about it.”
- "Undoubtedly, a person is an individual with a sense of one’s own dignity and personal pride, but the people who form the protest crowd lose their human appearance and personal dignity."
- “Just don't try and blame me again for inciting some kind of hatred in the Year of National Unity. I repeat: all those who have committed violations and crimes will be found and punished. It doesn't matter if in Russia, Poland or other countries — it's a matter of time. Punishment is inevitable and unavoidable.”
- “The court passed a verdict in the case of the ex-head of the Mogilev branch of Belgazprombank. Sergei Karmizov was found guilty and sentenced to 3 years in prison.”
- “Now they are reporting on kissing girls. I will deliberately not show this photo. Some of you just might feel sick. They call themselves a rainbow crowd. These revolutionaries of consciousness have even vulgarized the rainbow.”
- “A few words about the incredible depravity of those who call themselves guardians of the people. Fugitive oppositionists organized a campaign of pressure on Yara — the Norwegian potash fertilizer vendor.”

FORCE-FEEDING PATRIOTISM, PRO-STATE ACTIVISM

- “Values that are beyond question come to the fore. There can be no other unifying idea for Belarus except patriotism.”
- "Voting on the date of the National Unity Day was launched on the website of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly."
- “Veronika Basinskaya, a student of the Kupalovsky University and the chairman of the student council, talks about the civil-patriotic marathon “Together for a strong and prosperous Belarus” to be held by the university students.”
- “Upbringing, but this time of the students, was discussed today at the dialogue platform at the Grodno Medical University.”
- "For a united Belarus!" A rally of cars carrying the participants of the patriotic action drove through the streets of Minsk today.
- “The events of August showed people what we can lose: peace on the streets of Minsk and other cities, where they tried to stir real chaos. The most important thing is a peaceful sky above our heads. We all need to preserve peace and order together.”