

# From calls to attack the protesters to national unity. State-run TV is getting ready to the All-Belarusian People's Assembly

## Monitoring of State TV Narratives in Belarus

(01/02/2021 – 07/02/2021)

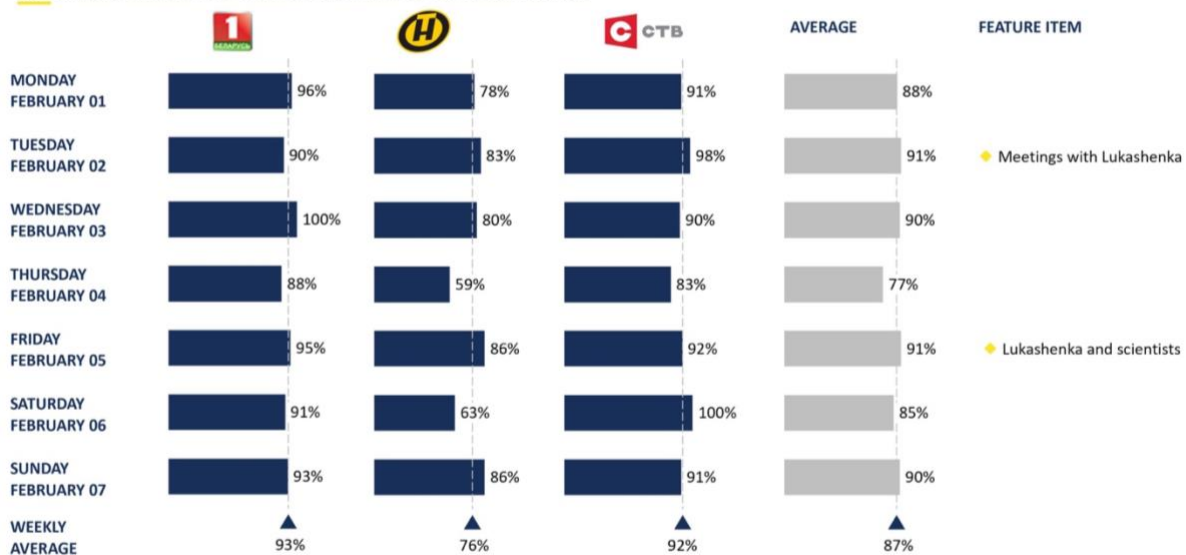
The purpose of this monitoring is to study how the Belarusian state conveys its ideological narrative. The most important mechanism for conveying its narrative is the evening broadcast. Then the informational function of media is complemented, and sometimes replaced by, the broadcasting of official ideological 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

Informational preparation for the All-Belarusian People's Assembly became the main topic for the state TV last week. National Unity being high on the agenda did not reduce the potential for conflict in broadcasting.

**WITH THE APPROACH OF THE ALL-BELARUSIAN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY, STATE CHANNELS HAVE STRENGTHENED INFORMATION PREPARATION. SPECIAL ATTENTION WAS DRAWN TO FATEFUL SIGNIFICANCE OF THE ASSEMBLY AND THE IMAGE OF A CONSOLIDATED COUNTRY**

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).

The usual criticism of the opponents and hate speech towards them have now reached a new low in calls for physical attacks (breaking windows of residents of the Novaya Borovaya neighborhood).

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

The conversation about the fateful significance of the Assembly further promoted the image of a consolidated country on the eve of the highest manifestation of democracy, which is hindered only by the intrigues of ill-wishers trying to disrupt the forum. In particular, state TV was outraged by the persecution of Assembly delegates and threats to include them in the sanctions lists.

**THERE WERE NO SIGNIFICANT CASES OF ALTERNATIVE INFORMATION DISPLAY OF DURING THE WEEK**

**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.

State-run TV channels devoted a lot of time to the issue of prices for medicines after the abolition of VAT benefits. They tried to make private businesses primarily responsible for the price hike while emphasizing the efforts of the state, including prices monitoring.

The Ukrainian topic has become one of the main vehicles for the state-run TV as the the TV channels "112 Ukraine", NewsOne and ZIK were taken off the air. State-run TV expressed full solidarity with the channels and talked about censorship and pressure on journalism. The emphasis was on the "external control" of Ukraine, its lack of independence and the growing crisis.

**■ BLOCKING OF UKRAINIAN MEDIA BECAME MAJOR TOPIC OF THE WEEK. NAVALNY'S SUPPORTERS WERE ACCUSED OF MANIPULATING YOUTH AND WORKING ON THE "MANUAL". ATTACKS ON PROTESTERS CONTINUED**

CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX\*

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

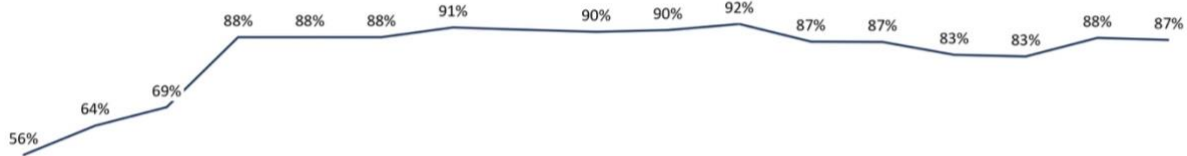


\*CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX - an indicator measuring the percentage of news stories that intensify political tension and conflicts (through accusations and threats towards opponents, equating protests to violence, and similar).

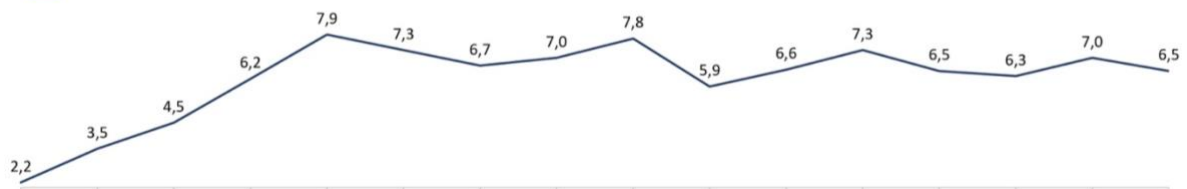
State-run TV has started laying the information groundwork for the upcoming court hearing of the Belgazprombank case. The emphasis was on the responsibility of Viktor Babariko, but unlike the previous exposing cycles by ATN and ONT, nothing was said about the involvement of high-ranking Russian officials.

**STATE-TV ACTIVELY STARTED LAYING THE INFORMATION GROUNDWORK FOR THE UPCOMING COURT HEARING OF THE BELGAZPROMBANK CASE. THE EMPHASIS WAS ON THE RESPONSIBILITY OF VIKTOR BABARIKO**

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



**AVERAGE CONFLICTOGENITY INDEX, by weeks**



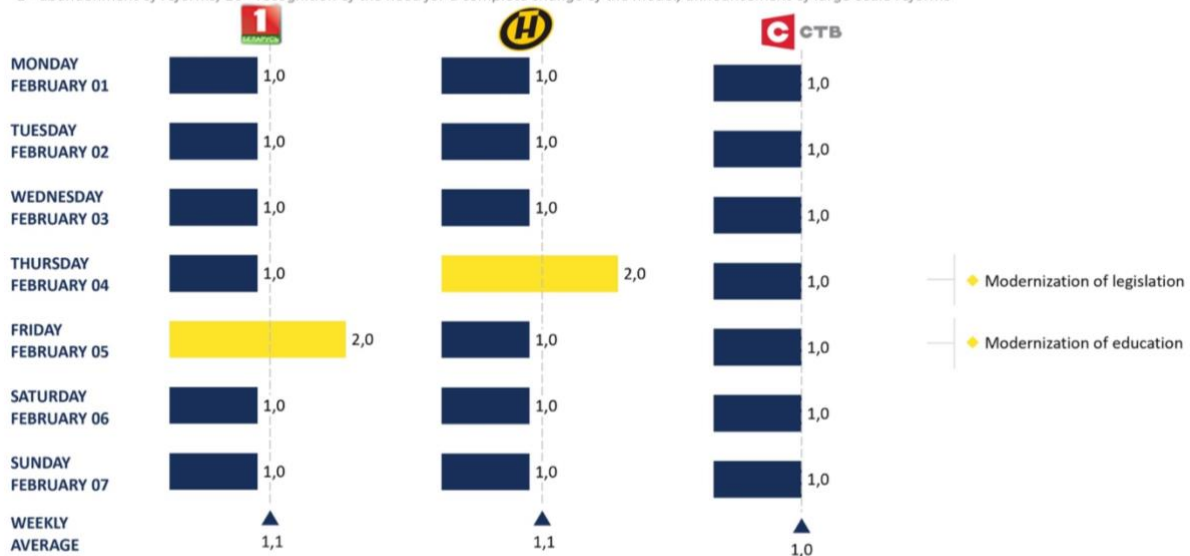
29.06 - 05.07 06.07 - 26.07 27.07 - 02.08 10.08 - 16.08 17.08 - 30.08 31.08 - 20.09 21.09 - 04.10 05.10 - 18.10 19.10 - 01.11 02.11 - 08.11 09.11 - 22.11 23.11 - 06.12 07.12 - 20.12 11.01 - 24.01 25.01 - 31.01 01.02 - 07.02

Reform attitudes were mainly reduced to a possible change in legislation at the spring session.

**REFORM ATTITUDES WERE MAINLY REDUCED TO A POSSIBLE CHANGE IN LEGISLATION AT THE SPRING SESSION**

**REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX\***

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

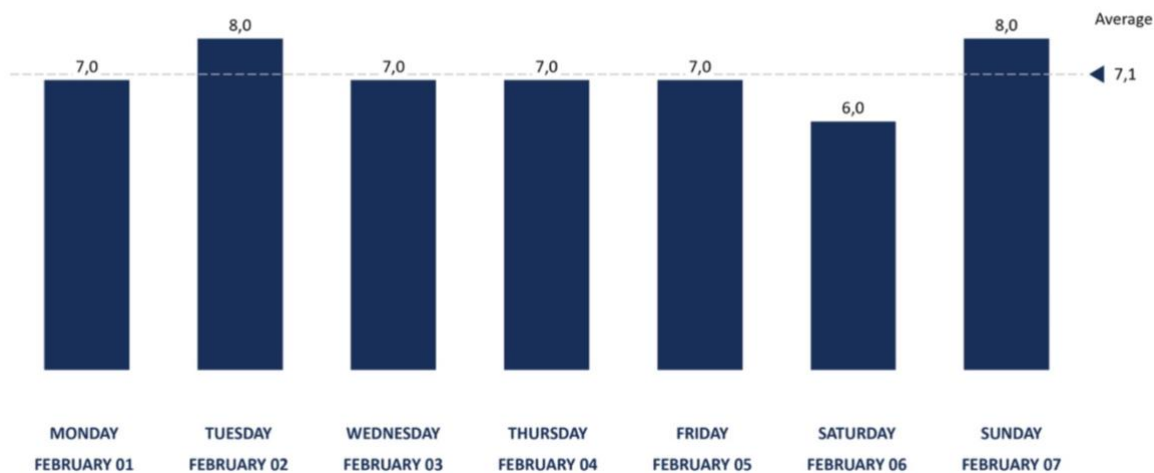


\*REFORM-ORIENTATION INDEX – an indicator evaluating the presence of news stories with reformatory proposals or decisions.

Except for the editorials, the content of the news broadcast remained predominantly uniform, some stories were repeated almost word for word.

■ **EXCEPT FOR THE EDITORIALS, THE CONTENT OF THE NEWS BROADCAST REMAINED PREDOMINANTLY UNIFORM, SOME STORIES WERE REPEATED ALMOST WORD FOR WORD**

**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.

*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

### **BELARUSIAN SCENARIO FOR RUSSIA**

- “The one bent on looking for palaces in Gelendzhik and calling the youth and schoolchildren to unauthorized rallies — opposition blogger Alexei Navalny — was brought to trial.”
- “Participants of unauthorized rallies in Russia will answer to the fullest extent of the law. They protested despite the authorities' warning about harsh punishment.”
- “Numerous provocations, uningenious slogans, coordination of the protesters through social media — there is evident similarity of these demonstrations with the Belarusian protests scenario.”
- “Why are street technologies so similar in Russia and Belarus? Pressure on the security forces, manipulation of the youth, fake news, slogans, provocations, search for a victim and support for celebrities. And also social media, coordinators and promises to pay all the fines.”
- “The Russian Foreign Ministry has recently declared the diplomats of the three countries who took part in street actions persona non grata. The proof was in the numerous videos of the foreigners filming the rallies, walking in the ranks and did not separating themselves from the protesters.”
- “Now, to the technologies of protests, which were used in Belarus, and are now being used in Russia. One of the organizers' tactics is to clash the public with the law enforcement. To make this happen, they deliberately incite ordinary citizens to get involved in the protest movement and are looking forward for the casualties.”

### **ANTI-PROTEST NARRATIVES, UNDERMINING THE OPPOSITION**

- “They ridicule the initiatives, criticize the format, and put pressure on the delegates. The alternatively-minded were unimaginative in their repertoire once again.”
- “I don't remember such an onslaught on democracy and people's will. Although there have always been attempts to undermine the significance of the event, this platform and the agenda. But there has probably never been such powerful pressure as there is now.”
- “But after a while the truth comes out. Either about the lies by the fugitives in Vilnius, who only want to get rich on protests, or about the puppeteers from Warsaw. This week Igor Tur has been telling how the neighborhood rallies in Brest were fully managed from Poland.”
- “I have one question for our Belarusian society: what else needs to be shown in order for rocks to be thrown into the pricey windows of the Novaya Borovaya residential buildings when the residents shout “Long live Belarus!”? I mean, each apartment there costs 200 thousand dollars.”

- “Perlin is such a disgusting, petty and repulsive character that he is not even worthy of the Order of Judas. Probably just a “Judas ribbon.”
- “It’s time, apparently, to do the spring-cleaning (or, as analysts groan, “total purge”) of the information space of our country.” “Let’s cleanse our land from the evil!”
- “So I was wondering what to call what these traitors fleeing the country are doing? It turned out to be simple: they are simply throwing their fellow countrymen under the bus. It seems, the “incredible” are just sitting abroad and thinking another mean thing they could do?”
- “The events of traitors, flying the white-red-white banner, killing their families and their neighbors in their own hands, collaborated with those who organized ethnic purges, will remain in our history forever. But for some it is now more beneficial to neglect it.”
- “The white-red-white banner returned as a symbol of rebellion and coup. It returned with the militants in the streets, together with the mothers taking their children to rallies, together with the psychos who blocked the roads, together with the LGBT people and foreign curators. Together with neighborhood fights and breakdown of families.”
- “A lot of money came from abroad for organizing rallies, paying fines and providing legal services for the protesters and the detained aggressors with criminal record. Investigators will identify all chains, find suspects, and the funds will go to the needs of the state.”
- “These days — the era of postmodernity — is the era of degradants. This is when it has become trendy to be stupid, a pervert, a person without ideas and ideals, when one is not ashamed to parade their stupidity. Look at the female trio. They are trying to convince us that they won the elections, that the majority voted for them.”
- “Explosions, arson, bullying of the family members, including even children — this is how the supporters of the bright Belarus intimidated the security forces, and not only them, after the August events.”

#### **PROMOTING THE ALL-BELARUSIAN PEOPLE'S ASSEMBLY**

- “Belarus is on the eve of the most important and, it will not be superfluous to use this grandiloquent word here, — a fateful event. The moment when we, Belarusians, without being prompted, without an imposed scenario, without intrigues and scandals, will figure out how we will live on.”
- “And this is the peculiarity of the sixth meeting. We have never started preparations so early in advance. Dialogue platforms (35 thousand people became their active participants), collecting proposals through deputies and officials. In general, whoever really wanted to convey something, managed to do so.”
- “Belarus is on the threshold of the All-Belarusian People's Assembly, four days are left before the fateful dialogue. And, perhaps, this is the most pressing topic today. As well as the slogan of the forum “Unity. Development. Independence.”. This leitmotif can become those three



whales that support and formulate the Belarusian national idea. This means that it will unite the society even more in the face of the challenges of today's geopolitics."

- "There are more than fifty people from the Minsk city committee of the Belarusian Republican Youth Union. Among the issues of concern are increasing the age limit for the young people, creating comfortable conditions for work and recreation in the regions, as well as popularizing national symbols."
- "One of the issues is the draft Education Code. It is based on the balance of interests of students, parents and teachers. The discussion will be as broad as possible. They will also consider a draft law on the civil service - new approaches to personnel training, strengthening discipline and responsibility. The development of a bill to prevent the glorification of Nazism was initiated."
- "It is Artem Shimanovich's first invitation to such an esteemed forum. He doesn't have 170 patents for his inventions, half a thousand publications or 40 higher education textbooks under his belt. He is wearing cadet shoulder straps. But he also stands for the creative development of Belarus."
- "The security measures will be unprecedented. Turnstiles around the perimeter of the Palace of the Republic and anti-covid packages for each participant. The government and legislators, the Presidential Administration and Administration, the Security Council and the Minsk mayor's office are responsible for organizing the forum — from transportation to the live show."

#### **CRIMINALIZED PERSECUTION OF BABARYKA**

- "Viktor Babaryka is charged with grand bribery by an organized group and laundering illegal income. While being the head of the bank, Babaryka created an organized criminal group out of six of his deputies."
- "A criminal case has been opened under the charge of grand bribery. In dollar terms, around 15 million. Viktor Babaryka, as a former bank manager (we note separately that he never owned Belgazprombank), together with his deputies, levied "tributes" from entrepreneurs whose business was vitally dependent on the loans extended. The criminal income was carefully hidden (not showing in the statements), and then laundered."
- "Former top managers of Belgazprombank pleaded guilty and agreed to cooperate with the investigation. Under the law, in this case, the defendants can count on a less severe punishment. The main person involved — the former chairman of the bank's board Viktor Babaryka — did not plea guilty. He was not present in court today."

#### **PERSONALISM**

- "Alyaksandr Lukashenka guaranteed all-round support to scientists, but the state expects from them not just ideas, but breakthrough innovative technologies".



- “According to the latest poll by the Kiev International Institute of Sociology, the most popular foreign president in Ukraine is Alyaksandr Lukashenka. Not Joe Biden, not Emmanuel Macron and not even their own politicians.”
- “The state will continue to pay serious attention to environmental protection — this was announced by the President today. Alyaksandr Lukashenka received a report from Andrei Khudyk, Minister of Natural Resources and Environmental Protection.”
- “Today Alyaksandr Lukashenka had a telephone conversation with Gennady Zyuganov, chairman of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Russia, head of the Communist Party faction in the State Duma.”
- “I think that Alyaksandr Lukashenka will demonstrate to everyone that he is the number 1 politician in this country, and he will remain so for a long time. Besides, he is a role model of a politician and national leader for all neighboring states.”

#### **PATERNALISM, DIRIGISME**

- “In 2020, almost 4,000 requests were considered in the upper house of parliament. The most exciting topics are utilities and transport. A significant part of the appeals concerns the social sphere: payments of benefits and pensions, targeted social assistance, employment.”
- “Government agencies urge manufacturers and suppliers not to shift the burden on consumers.”
- “Therefore, the first thing to do is to find “your pharmacy” where you have a cumulative or permanent discount, and not blame it solely on the state.”
- “The very fact that TV channels were turned off through the sanctions imposed on their own citizens is unacceptable.”
- “Despite the difficult period, work continued to improve the infrastructure of the border and the adjacent area. As part of the demarcation, about 80 kilometers of the border with Ukraine have been designated.”
- “Environmental protection and responsible consumption of natural resources is one of the development priorities of our country.”
- “In the Vitebsk region, they intend to solve the issue of lacking pre-school facilities in three years”.
- “Belarus has completed a large-scale program for the development of the sugar industry — from raw material zones to the modernization of production facilities. The cultivation of sugar beet has almost quadrupled this year, and the processing capacity has tripled.”

#### **HOCKEY CHAMPIONSHIP IN NAZI LATVIA**

- “In the meantime, in some countries, for example, in Latvia, Nazism is glorified and SS veterans are attending parades, which does not prevent the International Ice Hockey

Federation and European officials from making a decision that certainly does not correspond to the principles of sportsmanship and fair play. Thus, they decided to hold all the games of the Ice Hockey World Championship this year in Latvia.”

- “The traitors advocated the abolition of the championship, and it was not the authorities that suffered — it was the hotels and businessmen. Thousands of families lost their income, that is, each of you. If sanctions hit us — the officials will still get their pay from your taxes”.

### **EURASIAN VECTOR**

- “The Global Forum is also an opportunity for bilateral contacts. Today the head of the Belarusian government held talks with his counterpart from Kyrgyzstan. We noted an increase in trade turnover with this country last year. And Minsk counts on the implementation of new projects”.
- “Ahead is the solution of a very important issue: the achievement of social harmony and national unity. It is obvious that the republic itself must overcome the existing internal difficulties. The CSTO did not interfere and is not going to interfere in this process. Of course, our organization is ready to provide all kinds of assistance to the Belarusian side if necessary.”
- “Industrial synthesis, digital transformation and union expansion of export potential. The issues of Eurasian integration were discussed today at a meeting of the intergovernmental council.”

### **COVID-19 SECOND WAVE OVER IN BELARUS**

- “The vaccination of healthcare workers with Sputnik V is underway. For example, in the Vitebsk region, more than 2.5 thousand medical workers have already been vaccinated. In the next two days, they plan to complete the first round of vaccination.”
- “Hospitals across the country are gradually transitioning to their core business. The epidemic situation permits this. All medical facilities that provided care to patients with COVID-19 are being thoroughly disinfected.”
- “The epidemic situation in Belarus has stabilized. The incidence of COVID is lower in all regions, the Minister of Health said today.
- “In Belarus, meanwhile, there has long been no problems with protective equipment. Antiseptics and masks are available for every taste and budget.”

### **ANTI-WEST NARRATIVES**

- “I wonder if Ukrainians dreamed of such independence during the Euromaidan? For their president to report his decisions to the United States? Or for Ukraine to “stand begging” before the European Union? Incidentally, this is a quote from Zelensky himself.”

- “Replication of the alleged cruelty and injustice of the Putin regime in the information space. And behind all this hype, no one will remember the police brutality in the Netherlands, or what is happening in Germany.”
- “The corona crisis has pretty much ruined the facade of European well-being. And the Europeans themselves smash shop windows and riot in streets in the hope of reaching out to their rulers. Many people simply have nothing to lose.”
- “Political reprisals against the unwanted media in Ukraine. This is how journalists, politicians and the majority of Ukrainian viewers call the decision of President Volodymyr Zelensky to close three national TV channels at once.”
- “The new US president is losing popularity. Joe Biden's support rating has plummeted since his inauguration. Moreover, among the Republicans.
- “Well, the Polish authorities are going to control opinions. The draft of the submitted bill includes creation of a state council that will support freedom of speech on social media.”
- “Ukraine stall faces protests against high utilities tariffs.”

#### **SETTING THE PROTESTING YOUTH STRAIGHT**

- “How to get young Belarusians off social media and into a real dialogue — this was discussed today at the Academy of Management under the President of Belarus.”
- “The main thing is to instill in our children true values, to hear their interests and problems, to help implement their initiatives and projects. Special attention to patriotic education. According to managers, this is something to build since pre-school and in the family. This is how, in particular, we will be able to shield the adolescents from addiction, from fake news.”
- “Aleksandra Poznyak's pedagogical research is understandable to Alyaksandr Lukashenka not only from a scientific point of view (the head of state is a teacher by background), but also from the point of view of the country's leader. Especially in difficult times, it is important to educate the younger generation in the traditions of our society, to talk about the value and price of a free and independent Belarus.”
- “We see that young people are literally sucked into these information pockets, they perceive real life through unrealistic media, in a digital way. And therefore they live by their illusions. Probably, there is still a lot of work to be done here, to do everything possible to get young people out this informational brainwashing lockdown.”