

Ewelina Panas\*  
Marcin Gołębiowski\*\*

# Educational and scientific programmes for the citizens of Belarus as an example of science diplomacy – a political and legal analysis

**Programy edukacyjne i naukowe dla obywateli Białorusi jako przykład dyplomacji naukowej. Analiza politologiczno-prawna**

**Abstract:** Owing to current events in Belarus (political and social, including the economic crisis and the ongoing activities that are having a negative impact on the functioning of opposition movements), the country is becoming an arena of competition for influence. In the context of the subject of this analysis, rivalry, especially in terms of the influence of other states on Belarusian society, is of key importance. Science diplomacy may be a tool of competition for influence. The fact that science diplomacy can be both a tool with which to cooperate with other countries in the region and a tool of competition for influence is of key importance in analysing this problem. The scientific potential of the Belarusian community is also of interest to other countries, including Ukraine, Lithuania, and Germany. The effective and efficient implementation of science diplomacy activities towards Belarus is undoubtedly in line with the well-understood Polish national interest. The aim of the article was to conduct a political and legal analysis of the process by which Poland is using science diplomacy as a tool for influencing the scientific community of Belarus. Another research goal was to analyse the activities undertaken by two other countries in the region – Ukraine and Lithuania – with respect to science diplomacy. The article also aimed to analyse the formal and legal conditions related to the normative solutions used in the countries under analysis, enabling the undertaking and implementation of education by Belarusian citizens. The educational and scientific programmes offered to students and scientists from Belarus in Poland were also subject to legal analyses. The

\* Dr Ewelina Panas – Faculty of Political Science and Journalism, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6497-8214>, e-mail: [ewelina.panas@mail.umcs.pl](mailto:ewelina.panas@mail.umcs.pl).

\*\* Dr Marcin Gołębiowski – Faculty of Law and Administration, Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland, ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6699-0612>, e-mail: [marcin.golebiowski@mail.umcs.pl](mailto:marcin.golebiowski@mail.umcs.pl).

whole analysis is supplemented and concluded by an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities carried out so far.

**Keywords:** science diplomacy, Belarus, higher education

**Streszczenie:** Specyfika aktualnych wydarzeń na Białorusi (kryzys polityczny, społeczny, ekonomiczny oraz prowadzenie działań wywierających negatywny wpływ na funkcjonowanie ruchów opozycyjnych) powoduje, że państwo to staje się areną rywalizacji o wpływy. W kontekście przedmiotu niniejszej analizy kluczowe znaczenie ma rywalizacja zwłaszcza w zakresie oddziaływania innych państw na społeczeństwo białoruskie. Narzędzie rywalizacji o wpływy może stanowić dyplomacja naukowa. Istotne znaczenie w analizie tego problemu ma fakt, że ten rodzaj działań może być zarówno instrumentem współpracy z innymi państwami regionu, jak i narzędziem rywalizacji o wpływy. Potencjał w postaci naukowej społeczności Białorusi stanowi przedmiot zainteresowania takich państw, jak: Polska, Ukraina, Litwa i Niemcy. Bez wątpienia efektywność i skuteczność realizacji działań z zakresu dyplomacji naukowej wobec Białorusi wpisuje się w dobrze pojęty polski interes narodowy. Celem artykułu było przeprowadzenie analizy politologiczno-prawnej procesu wykorzystywania przez Polskę dyplomacji naukowej jako narzędzia oddziaływania na naukową społeczność Białorusi. Kolejnym celem badawczym było przeprowadzenie analizy działań podejmowanych przez inne państwa w regionie – Ukrainę i Litwę. W artykule przeprowadzono również analizę uwarunkowań formalnoprawnych, dotyczących rozwiązań normatywnych stosowanych w wymienionych państwach umożliwiających podejmowanie i realizację kształcenia przez obywateli Białorusi. Analizie poddano również programy edukacyjne oraz naukowe oferowane studentom i naukowcom z Białorusi w Polsce. Całość rozważań uzupełnia i zamyka próba oceny skuteczności działań dotychczas realizowanych.

**Słowa kluczowe:** dyplomacja naukowa, Białoruś, szkolnictwo wyższe

## Introduction

Current events in Belarus, including social protests that have continued uninterrupted since the presidential election in 2020, are a legitimate subject of interest not only for politicians but also for researchers in Poland and around the world. This is because of the key – even strategic – importance of this region of Europe. Belarus is a direct neighbour of Poland, and at the same time a direct neighbour of the European Union. The stability of the EU's easternmost neighbour is a guarantee of security in the territory of the Member States. Destabilisation in the region may potentially threaten the interests and security of not only the countries directly adjacent to Belarus, including Poland, but more broadly the EU as a community of countries with similar goals, values, and democratic political and legal systems.

Another dimension (and the effect) of the current events in Belarus is however no less important. Namely, because of the uninterrupted political, social, and economic crises and the ongoing activities that

are having a negative impact on the functioning of opposition movements, Belarus is becoming an arena of competition for influence. In the context of the subject of this analysis, rivalry, especially in terms of the influence of other states on Belarusian society, is of key importance. Science diplomacy, i.e., the use of scientific cooperation to build and develop relations between societies, especially in those areas that cannot have other mechanisms of involvement at the official level, may be a tool of competition for influence. The fact that science diplomacy can be both a tool with which to cooperate with other countries in the region and a tool of competition for influence is of key importance in analysing this problem. The scientific potential of the Belarusian community is also of interest to other countries, including Ukraine, Lithuania, and Germany. The effective and efficient implementation of science diplomacy activities towards Belarus is undoubtedly in line with the well-understood Polish national interest. Science diplomacy seems to be an effective tool, especially in the context of Poland's official foreign policy towards Belarus, the re-evaluation of the concept of 'critical dialogue' activities and the general state of official Polish-Belarusian relations.

The specificity of the events in Belarus lies in the fact that it is impossible to clearly predict and categorically state in which direction the situation will develop. However, there are clear bottom-up tendencies aimed at a greater Europeanisation of Belarusian society with respect to scientific cooperation and education. A preliminary analysis for the purpose of preparing the article and interviews with students and scientists from Belarus suggests that the bottom-up processes will not subside but will continue. Hence, the issue of activities in the field of science diplomacy undertaken by Poland, Lithuania, and Ukraine – an analysis of their specificity and comparing such activities are interesting cognitive topics.

The aim of the article is to conduct a political and legal analysis of the process of using science diplomacy by Poland as a tool for influencing the scientific community of Belarus. Another research goal is to analyse the activities undertaken by two other countries in the region – Ukraine and Lithuania – with respect to science diplomacy. The countries subjected to the comparative analysis were selected on the basis of a geographical criterion – like Poland they border Belarus directly. The aim of the article is also to analyse the formal and le-

gal conditions related to the normative solutions used in the analysed countries enabling the undertaking and implementation of education by Belarusian citizens. The educational and scientific programmes offered to students and scientists from Belarus in Poland were also subject to a legal analysis (including the existence or absence of bilateral inter-state agreements, the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange programmes (hereinafter referred to as NAWA), the Lane Kirkland Scholarship Programme, the Konstanty Kalinowski Programme, and internal regulations of selected institutions with respect to higher education). A case study is an element of this part of the analysis and, at the same time, it is the specific goal of the project, which concerns the system of internal legal, systemic, and organisational solutions at the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, Poland. The whole analysis is supplemented and concluded by an attempt to evaluate the effectiveness of the activities carried out so far.

The research assumption of the authors concerns the understanding and the semantic horizon of the notion of science diplomacy. The definition of science diplomacy proposed in the literature on the subject is a point of reference and sets the general framework for the analysis. For the purposes of this article, an original approach to this phenomenon was adopted as an activity undertaken by governmental institutions and institutions of higher education towards the scientific community of Belarus. The activities carried out are related to higher education.

## **1 Science diplomacy**

1. Science diplomacy is a phenomenon that reflects the observable regularities occurring in contemporary international relations regarding the evolution in the traditionally, classically understood diplomatic practice.<sup>1</sup> While public diplomacy and the so-called new diplomacy are not new phenomena, science diplomacy is a relatively new concept, and only recently has the general name of this phenomenon been created. It has become a reference point for constructing an original research concept. Science diplomacy is a concept that is

1 See more: B. Surmacz, *Ewolucja współczesnej dyplomacji*, Lublin 2015.

now used, first, to identify specific activities within diplomatic practice, and second, as a category to describe and explain specific political activities undertaken at the scientific level.<sup>2</sup> The significance of science diplomacy is beginning to be noticed and appreciated both by administrations of individual countries and by non-state actors and the scientific community.<sup>3</sup> According to D. Copeland, science diplomacy covers cooperation between representatives of the world of science and the world of politics in the field of diplomacy, foreign policy, and international politics.<sup>4</sup> What makes it possible to distinguish science diplomacy from the broader concept of international scientific cooperation is the fact that in relation to the former, the state is always present either as an initiator of activities or as a participant in undertaken activities. Science diplomacy may or may not be part of international science collaboration. What is more, international scientific cooperation may take place without the participation of states; it may be initiated and conducted only by entities focused on profit, and its purpose is to make scientific discoveries, research, and development activities (Turekian et al., 2015, p. 6).<sup>5</sup> It should be emphasised that even though the term 'science diplomacy' is undoubtedly gaining popularity among both researchers and practitioners, the concept upon which it is based is not yet fully formed and complete. Therefore, the definitions and ways of understanding science diplomacy proposed in the literature on the subject, being the most important point of reference, constitute an inspiration and a starting point for the author's approach proposed in this study.

- 2 M. Łuszczuk, *Dyplomacja naukowa jako forma współpracy i rywalizacji w Arktyce*, "Teki Komisji Politologii i Stosunków Międzynarodowych", 2017, 12/2, p. 195.
- 3 T. Flink, U. Schreiterer, *Science diplomacy at the intersection of S&T policies and foreign affairs: Toward a typology of national approaches*, "Science and Public Policy", 2010, 37(9), pp. 665-677; quoted after: M. Szkarłat, *Pojęcie dyplomacji dla nauki*, "Athenaeum. Polskie Studia Politologiczne", 2020, vol. 65(1), p. 140.
- 4 D. Copeland, *Science Diplomacy*, [in:] C. M. Constantinou, P. Kerr, P. Sharp (eds.), *The SAGE Handbook of Diplomacy*, London 2016; quoted after: M. Łuszczuk, op. cit., p. 194.
- 5 V. Turekian, S. Macindoe, D. Copeland, L. S. Davis, R. G. Patman, M. Pozza, *The Emergence of Science Diplomacy*, [in:] L. S. Davis, R. G. Patman (eds.), *Science Diplomacy. New Day or False Dawn*, World Scientific Publishing 2015; quoted after: M. Szkarłat, op. cit., p. 143.

## **2. Legal conditions for the implementation of educational and scientific programmes in force in the Republic of Poland**

The basic normative act regulating the principles upon which foreigners are admitted and can pursue their studies is the Act of 20 July 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science.<sup>6</sup> In Section VIII of the Act, entitled 'Foreigners in the higher education and science system', the legislator set out the grounds upon which foreigners may undertake various forms of education and enumerated the reasons that universities could refrain from charging students fees or make them exempt from paying fees. Belarusian citizens may pursue university education, education in doctoral schools, at postgraduate studies, specialist training and other forms of education, and participate in conducting scientific activity or in conducting education on the basis of one of the conditions set out in Art. art. 323 par. 1 of the Act, including international agreements, agreements concluded with foreign entities by universities, ministers' decisions, decisions of the NAWA director in relation to its scholarship holders, decisions of the NCN director, administrative rectors' decisions, decisions of the director of the PAN institute, the director of a research institute or the director of an international institute.

According to Statistics Poland<sup>7</sup> in the academic year 2019/2020, a total of 8,373 students from Belarus studied at Polish universities, including 8,362 students who completed the full cycle of education. Among the people with Belarusian citizenship, 3,084 people were of Polish origin. 7,186 Belarusian citizens studying at Polish universities obtained a secondary school-leaving examination certificate or its equivalent outside Poland. Foreigners with Belarusian citizenship constitute, following students from Ukraine, the second largest group of students undertaking and carrying out education in Poland. The number of students from Belarus increases cyclically every year. In individual academic years, the number of students from Belarus was as follows: academic year 2013/2014 – 3,743 students,<sup>8</sup>

6 Act of 20 July 2018, Law on Higher Education and Science (Journal of Laws of 2018, item 1668).

7 Higher education and its finances in 2019, Statistics Poland, Gdańsk 2020.

8 Study in Poland, Studenci zagraniczni w Polsce. Raport, Warszawa 2014.

2014/2015 – 4,118 students,<sup>9</sup> 2015/2016 – 4,615 students,<sup>10</sup> 2016/2017 – 5,119 students,<sup>11</sup> 2017/2018 – 6,044 students,<sup>12</sup> 2018/2019 – 7,314 students.<sup>13</sup> It is estimated that this number will increase in the coming years. For comparison, the number of Belarusian students studying at universities in the Russian Federation over roughly the same period was approx. 21,000 students in 2010/2011, approx. 7,300 students in 2016/2017, approx. 7,300 students in 2017/2018, approx. 6,700 students in 2018/2019, and approx. 6,700 students in 2019/2020.<sup>14</sup> Therefore, a downward trend is noticeable in the number of Belarusian students undertaking education in Russia. It can therefore be assumed that Polish higher education is more attractive to candidates from Belarus than that of Russian universities.

One of the priority tasks of Polish science diplomacy was to create a legal and organisational framework enabling the implementation of an aid programme for Belarusian citizens who, for social or political reasons, planned to study abroad. Upon the initiative of the Ministry of Science and Higher Education (now the Ministry of Education and Science), a programme entitled ‘Solidarni z Białorusią’ (Solidarity with Belarus) aimed at students, scientists, and teachers from Belarus was established.

Art. 2 par. 5 of the Act of 7 July 2017 on the National Agency for Academic Exchange<sup>15</sup> (NAWA), is the legal basis for launching aid schemes according to which ministers managing government administration departments may commission the NAWA to perform tasks related to internationalising higher education or science, falling within their competence, ensuring funds for implementing them. NAWA is responsible for the formal and legal service of the aid programme. The entity supporting the aid programme is the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland, a representative institution of the higher education community within the meaning of the Law on Higher

9 Study in Poland, *Studenci zagraniczni w Polsce. Raport*, Warszawa 2015.

10 Study in Poland, *Studenci zagraniczni w Polsce. Raport*, Warszawa 2016.

11 Study in Poland, *Studenci zagraniczni w Polsce. Raport*, Warszawa 2017.

12 Study in Poland, *Studenci zagraniczni w Polsce. Raport*, Warszawa 2018.

13 Study in Poland, *Studenci zagraniczni w Polsce. Raport*, Warszawa 2019.

14 Russian Statistical Yearbook, Moscow 2020, p. 206.

15 Act of 7 July 2017 on the Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange (*Journal of Laws* 2017, item 1530).

Education and Science. The principles of the implementation of the Solidarity with Belarus programme will be determined by the Guidelines and Rules for the Implementation of the Solidarity with Students programme, adopted by NAWA on 10 December 2020.<sup>16</sup> Pursuant to the guidelines, a foreigner (programme beneficiary) shall, on the basis of a decision of the NAWA director, undertake and pursue studies or carry out a preparatory course to study in Polish. Scholarship holders receive a scholarship for a maximum of 10 months in the 2020/2021 academic year in the amount of PLN 1,250 (students starting first-cycle studies and uniform master's studies) to PLN 1,500 (students starting second-cycle studies). Those who complete a preparatory course receive PLN 1,450 per month. Students receiving the NAWA scholarship cannot receive other forms of support, including that offered under the Solidarity with Belarus programme, nor from other entities. Therefore, it should be assumed that such students cannot receive scholarships specified in Art. 86 of the Law on Higher Education and Science. Foreigners are obliged to sign an agreement with NAWA for the financing of a scholarship under the Solidarity with Students programme. In the guidelines, NAWA defined the obligations of the beneficiaries, and the principles in regard to reporting on the implementation of the scholarship programme.

An analysis of the NAWA Guidelines, on the other hand, raises doubts as to the application of the correct legal basis for a foreigner and beneficiary of the scholarship programme to study in Poland. In accordance with point 2 of the NAWA Guidelines, scholarship holders undertake and continue studies or carry out a preparatory course to study on the basis of a decision of the NAWA director. On the other hand, in accordance with the rules of recruitment to the scholarship programme, universities can register students admitted by the rector's decision, in accordance with internal recruitment procedures.<sup>17</sup> In such a case, the legal basis upon which a foreigner may take up studies is therefore not a decision of the NAWA director but an administrative decision of the rector, issued pursuant to Art. 323 par. 1 point

16 Guidelines and Rules for Implementing the Project Solidarity with Students, adopted on 10 December 2020.

17 Communication available on The Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange website: <https://nawa.gov.pl/solidarni-z-bialorusia/informacje-dla-studentow/znajdz-uczelnie> [04.08.2021].

6 of the Law on Higher Education and Science. A beneficiary of the NAWA scholarship programme, pursuant to Art. 324 par. 1 point 2 of the Law on Higher Education and Science, is exempt from fees related to education at a given university. However, it should be assumed that the exemption referred to in Art. 324 par. 1 point 2 applies during the period a NAWA scholarship holder benefits from the scholarship. After the end of the scholarship period and with a failure to meet the conditions specified in par. 2 Art. 324 of the Law on Higher Education and Science, the university may charge the fees indicated in Art. 79 par. 1 of the Law on Higher Education and Science. No precisely defined legal basis for taking over a given student by the beneficiary of the NAWA scholarship programme for studies may cause justified legal doubts regarding the status of a foreign student.

The authors estimate that the initiative Solidarity with Belarus implemented by the National Agency for Academic Exchange in cooperation with the Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland was very well received by candidates from Belarus. In the 2020/2021 academic year, the programme helped almost 900 students from Belarus who started education at 73 Polish universities.<sup>18</sup>

As part of Polish science diplomacy, institutions from the area of Polish higher education expressed support for the Belarusian academic community and called for the implementation of aid programmes by Polish universities dedicated to employees, doctoral students and students from Belarusian universities. A position on the repressions against the Belarusian people was expressed, inter alia, by the Presidium of the Conference of Rectors of Polish Academic Schools, the Presidium of the Central Council of Science and Higher Education, and the Executive Council of the Students' Parliament of the Republic of Poland.<sup>19</sup> A position on repressions of students in Belarus was expressed, inter alia, by the KRASP Presidium, encouraging affiliated

18 The Polish National Agency for Academic Exchange website: <https://nawa.gov.pl/nawa/aktualnosci/solidarni-ze-studentami-inauguracja-wspolnego-dzialania-nawa-i-krasp> [04.08.2021].

19 Position of The Conference of Rectors of Academic Schools in Poland, Presidium of the Central Council of Science and Higher Education and the Executive Council of the Students' Parliament of the Republic of Poland of 11 September 2020, on the repression against the Belarusian nation, [https://www.krasp.org.pl/resources/upload/dokumenty/stanowisko\\_KRASP-RGniSW-PSRP\\_represje\\_wobec\\_narodu\\_bialoruskiego.pdf](https://www.krasp.org.pl/resources/upload/dokumenty/stanowisko_KRASP-RGniSW-PSRP_represje_wobec_narodu_bialoruskiego.pdf) [04.08.2021].

universities to expand their support offer for students expelled from Belarusian universities.<sup>20</sup>

The “Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme of the Government of the Republic of Poland under the patronage of the Prime Minister of the Republic of Poland” is one of the basic scholarship programmes addressed exclusively to the citizens of Belarus.<sup>21</sup> In response to increased repressions against Belarusian students and scientists since August 2020, an additional, third scholarship programme, the “Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme of the Government of the Republic of Poland III – Solidary with Belarus – help for Belarusian students and scientists in 2020” was launched<sup>22</sup>, providing scholarship support for people – citizens of Belarus, against whom one of the following conditions occurred: 1) they were detained, arrested, beaten, tortured; 2) they were dismissed from work; 3) they were subjected to economic or psychological pressure that made it impossible to continue their studies or work in Belarus. As part of the scholarship programme, a beneficiary receives financial support during his/her studies in the amount of PLN 1,250 month (1st-cycle studies or 1st-3rd year of uniform studies), PLN 1,500 (2nd-cycle studies or 4th and 5th year of uniform studies). According to the guidelines,<sup>23</sup> the scholarship programme is implemented in cooperation with the Ministry of Education and Science and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and its main goal is to create an opportunity for students from Belarus, expelled from universities for political reasons, to complete their studies in Poland or to complete part of their studies until their return to Belarus. An analysis of the available scholarships for Belaru-

20 Position of the Presidium of KRASP of 23 June 2021, on the repression of students in Belarus, <https://www.krasp.org.pl/resources/upload/dokumenty/Uchwały/Dokument%20nr%2020-VIII.pdf> [04.08.2021].

21 The principles of the Programme implementation are defined by the Regulations specifying the conditions and procedure for granting and paying scholarships under the “Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme of the Government of the Republic of Poland” – Programme I and the “Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme of the Government of the Republic of Poland” – Programme II, <https://studium.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Regulamin-Programu.pdf> [04.08.2021].

22 The Centre for East European Studies University of Warsaw website: <https://studium.uw.edu.pl/program-kk-iii/> [04.08.2021].

23 Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme of the Government of the Republic of Poland, [https://studium.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Kalinowski\\_2021\\_1.pdf](https://studium.uw.edu.pl/wp-content/uploads/2021/03/Kalinowski_2021_1.pdf) [04.08.2021].

sian citizens in Poland and in Central and Eastern Europe shows that the Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme is the largest aid programme offered to Belarusians who want to pursue education at the level of higher education or conduct scientific research.<sup>24</sup>

The authors of the study, on the basis of the available materials published by public universities in Poland, analysed scholarship programmes dedicated to Belarusian citizens and financed from the universities' own funds. Legal solutions used at the University of Adam Mickiewicz in Poznan (AMU) and the Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin (UMCS) were also analysed.

At the University of Adam Mickiewicz, as part of their recruitment programme for the academic year 2020/2021, Belarusian citizens expelled from Belarusian universities for social or political reasons were allowed to start and continue their studies at AMU after applying to the Rector of AMU along with a document confirming their expulsion from their home university. A good example of cooperation between the academic community and local government units was the award of grants by the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship, the City of Poznan and Poznan County for a scholarship programme for students from Belarus. The transferred funds ensured the payment of scholarships in the amount of PLN 1,000 to 55 students from Belarus (including 37 students at AMU) for a period of nine months.<sup>25</sup> Beneficiaries of the scholarship programme may not receive other scholarship benefits, including rectors' scholarships, Konstanty Kalinowski scholarships or scholarships awarded under the Solidarity with Belarus Programme.

At Maria Curie-Skłodowska University in Lublin, as a public scholarship unit at the forefront of universities educating the largest number of foreign students, a special edition of a competition addressed to foreign applicants who want to study at UMCS without payment and without scholarships has been launched; it is dedicated to candidates from Belarus who were deprived of the possibility of second-cycle studies in Belarus or were removed from the list of students for

24 In the years 2006-2020, 1,762 scholarship holders took part in the programme, they started education at 79 universities in Poland, <https://studium.uw.edu.pl/program-im-kalinowskiego> [4.08.2021].

25 Poznan City Hall website: <https://www.poznan.pl/mim/info/news/dzien-wolnosci-bialorusi,161376.html> [6.08.2021].

political reasons. The university has awarded 10 free places for second-cycle studies candidates with Belarusian citizenship.

The analysis of the scholarship offer addressed to foreign students at public universities in Poland, being among the top three universities educating the largest number of students from Belarus, leads to the conclusion that only UMCS in Lublin prepared and implemented a special, dedicated scholarship programme addressed to Belarusian citizens. The University of Warsaw, in accordance with the regulations specifying the conditions and procedure for granting and paying scholarships under the “Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme of the Government of the Republic of Poland – Programme I” and the “Konstanty Kalinowski Scholarship Programme of the Government of the Republic of Poland – Programme II”, is a university implementing a scholarship programme financed by the Ministry of Higher Education and Science. The Warsaw School of Economics has not implemented a dedicated scholarship programme for Belarusian citizens.

### **3. Republic of Lithuania**

The basic normative act regulating the principles of operation of the higher education area in Lithuania is the Act of 30 April 2009 on Education and Research<sup>26</sup>, with amendments of 29 June 2016. Provisions of the Act define the principles by which foreigners may take up studies in the country. Foreigners, except for the catalogue of persons indicated in Art. 80 par. 2 point 4 of the Act on Education and Research, can undertake education at Lithuanian universities on a fee-paying basis – without the right to be granted a place within the state limit of places or tuition reimbursement. The Lithuanian legislator has made exceptions to the principle of payment for education by foreigners in Art. 82 par. 7 and 8. According to these exceptions, studies for foreigners may be financed from the state budget in the case of foreigners of Lithuanian origin<sup>27</sup> or in the manner specified by the

<sup>26</sup> Lietuvos Respublikos Mokslo ir studijų įstatymas, 2009 m. balandžio 30 d. No. XI-242 (Act on Education and Research of the Republic of Lithuania, 2009, 30 April No. XI-242).

<sup>27</sup> In accordance with the glossary assumed in Art. 4 of the Act on Education and Research, foreigners of Lithuanian origin are citizens of the Republic of Lithuania who have stayed abroad for at least three years, as well as foreigners of Lithuanian origin, their children, grandchildren, and

minister responsible for education and science. On the basis of the statutory delegation referred to in par. 8 Art. 82 of the Act, the minister responsible for education and science obtained executive powers to regulate a special procedure for admitting foreigners to studies financed from the state budget. On this basis, the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania issued the Ordinance of 28 September 2020, on supporting Belarusian citizens in the implementation of studies.<sup>28</sup> This regulation was the normative basis for the implementation of an aid programme for foreign students who are citizens of Belarus with respect to implementing studies financed from the state budget. Pursuant to the Regulation, foreigners who are Belarusian citizens and who meet the requirements for entering 1st or 2nd degree studies may receive funding for tuition fees from the state budget for the full period of their studies under the competition procedure. The programme financed 100 students who are citizens of Belarus. Pursuant to the Regulation of the Minister of Education, Science and Sports of the Republic of Lithuania of 23 October 2020, the number of scholarships has been increased to 110. The amount of funding from the state budget corresponds to the amount of tuition fees for a given field of study and may be awarded to a student who is a citizen of Belarus and has the best results during the recruitment procedure. The procedure includes three stages: first, students wishing to participate in the programme are put forward by individual Lithuanian universities, then the applications are analysed by the ministry, and finally an agreement is concluded with the students who are beneficiaries of the programme.

Systemic solutions of support for Belarusian citizens in the form of tuition fee payment for studies from the state budget have been strengthened by the offer of aid programmes dedicated to Belarusian citizens by individual universities operating in Lithuanian higher education. The aim of the launched programmes is to provide free edu-

great-grandchildren. A foreigner of Lithuanian origin is a foreigner whose parents or grand-parents or one of the parents or grandparents is or was Lithuanian, confirming their belonging to the Lithuanian nation in the form of a written declaration before a decision-making body.

28 Įsakymas dėl paramos teikimo Baltarusijos Respublikos piliečių studijoms, 2020 m. rugsėjo 28 d. No. V-1462 [Ordinance of the Minister of Education, Science and Sport of the Republic of Lithuania on support for studies of citizens of the Republic of Belarus, 2020 September 28 No. V-1462].

cation through a competition for the best candidates from Belarus. Lithuanian universities have adopted various support programmes, both in terms of the recruitment process and the form of support offered.

Vilnius University, the largest university in Lithuania, launched a special scholarship programme entitled “The Grand Duchy of Lithuania Scholarship”<sup>29</sup> in 2020. It is aimed at candidates with Belarusian citizenship. The purpose of the scholarship programme is not only to provide financial support in the form of free studies for candidates from Belarus, but it is also for students expelled from Belarusian universities for civil and political reasons who want to continue their education at a Lithuanian university. As part of a dedicated scholarship programme, the university offered free study places and the possibility of obtaining an additional scholarship for the first year of study (10 months) in the amount of EUR 200 for students with the best achievements. The Grand Duchy of Lithuania Scholarship was extended to include citizens of Ukraine. According to the rules of the scholarship programme, a person who has been admitted to study at Vilnius University, has Ukrainian or Belarusian citizenship and does not have the status of a university student operating in a country other than the Republic of Belarus or the Republic of Ukraine may apply for support.<sup>30</sup> The university continues a dedicated scholarship programme for citizens of Belarus and Ukraine in the 2021/2022 academic year.

The Vilnius Gediminas Technical University is another university that has implemented an aid programme for students with Belarusian citizenship. The university offered a support programme for Belarusian candidates in the form of a competition for free places for 1st and 2nd degree studies. Beneficiaries of the competition receive a scholarship for the full cycle of education.<sup>31</sup> In the application procedure, candidates were required to submit documents entitling them to start

29 *Vilnius University to Offer Free Studies and Scholarships to Belarusian Students*, <https://www.vu.lt/en/news-events/news/8203-vilnius-university-to-offer-free-studies-and-scholarships-to-belarusian-students> [06.08.2021].

30 Vilnius University website: <https://www.vu.lt/en/studies/the-grand-duchy-of-lithuania-scholarship> [06.08.2021].

31 Vilnius Gediminas Technical University website: <https://vilniustech.lt/fundamental-sciences/about-faculty/latest-news/in-support-to-belarusian-people-vilnius-tech-offers-scholarships/54608?nid=322672> [06.08.2021].

studies, in accordance with the Act on Education and Research, as well as cover letters with an indication of the benefits that the Vilnius Gediminas Technical University would have if the candidate were admitted to study there. Only candidates who obtained at least 70% in state examinations (entitling them to start first-cycle studies) or whose grade average for undergraduate studies was at least 70% could participate in the qualification procedures.

A support fund for students expelled from Belarusian universities was also developed and implemented at the Vytautas Magnus University in Kaunas. The fund aims at supporting university students expelled from Belarusian universities or persecuted due to their civic attitude or political views in Belarus, which prevents them from continuing their education at university. In accordance with the assumed rules, the scholarship has been awarded to 50 people and includes not only exemption from tuition fees for the full course of studies, but it also covers the costs of accommodation in university student dormitories. As part of the scholarship, beneficiaries are also provided with free, intensive Lithuanian language and culture or English language courses. The university offered a one-time allowance in the amount of EUR 160 for people in a particularly difficult financial or social situation.<sup>32</sup> The university is continuing its dedicated scholarship programme for Belarusian citizens in the 2021/2022 academic year.

The attractiveness of the Lithuanian higher education market among Belarusian students is also evidenced by the operation of the only private Belarusian university, established in 1992 in Minsk, and operating in Lithuania since 2005 – the European Humanities University. Currently, the university functions as a private institution of higher education and has the status of a university.<sup>33</sup> Due to the specificity of its operation, the university educates mainly students of Belarusian origin and offers a wide catalogue of scholarship programmes addressed to students of the university every year.

32 Vilnius Gediminas Technical University website: <https://vilniustech.lt/fundamental-sciences/about-faculty/latest-news/in-support-to-belarusian-people-vilnius-tech-offers-scholarships/54608?nid=322672> [07.08.2021].

33 Statute of the European University of the Humanities adopted on 25 July 2019 [https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EeJfDlJvmmCaxUwDrXrVI\\_G\\_Y29vQsf/view](https://drive.google.com/file/d/1EeJfDlJvmmCaxUwDrXrVI_G_Y29vQsf/view) [07.08.2021].

Summing up, it should be assumed that the solutions applied in the Republic of Lithuania and addressed to students who are citizens of Belarus were systemic solutions ensuring access for Belarusian citizens to start or continue education at Lithuanian universities. Certain differences in relation to the solutions applied in the Republic of Poland should be noted. First, institutional solutions are based on a normative basis in the Act on Education and Research, and the detailed principles of programme implementation have been defined in the form of an ordinance of the minister responsible for education and science. Second, rules for supporting foreign students who are citizens of Belarus guarantee that qualified students do not cover the costs of full-cycle first or second-cycle studies. Third, individual universities operating in Lithuania have implemented their own support programmes for students who are citizens of Belarus. Fourth, there is a higher education institution in the Republic of Lithuania which specialises in educating citizens of Belarus and which was also the first private university in Belarus. The functioning of a specialised unit educating Belarusian youth in Lithuania proves its great educational potential and recognition among potential candidates planning to study outside Belarus.

## 4. Ukraine

Ukrainian legislation allows foreigners to study and pursue studies at Ukrainian universities. Pursuant to Art. 4 par. 2 of the Act of 1 July 2014 on higher education,<sup>34</sup> foreigners and stateless persons, including persons recognised as refugees and persons requiring special protection, may obtain higher education based on the same rules as apply to citizens of Ukraine. The provisions of the Act allow foreigners to be educated at the expense of the state budget or local self-government.

Cooperation between Ukraine and Belarus with respect to education and science was one of the pillars of the Treaty on friendship, cooperation and good neighbourliness between the Russian Federation

<sup>34</sup> Zakon Ukrainy pro vyshchu osvitu, Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady (BBP – ukr.) 2014, no. 37-38, item 2716.

and the Republic of Belarus of 17 July 1995<sup>35</sup> (hereinafter referred to as the Treaty). The act was the basis for the implementation of bilateral cooperation between the two countries.<sup>36</sup> Pursuant to Art. 15 of the Treaty, the parties undertook to initiate cooperation between institutions with respect to education and higher education, exchange of employees, students, and doctoral students. The treaty was also the normative basis for the recognition of diplomas awarded by universities in both countries. The conclusion of an intergovernmental agreement between the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and the Ministry of Education of the Republic of Belarus of 18 June 2001 on cooperation in the field of education, detailed the provisions of the Treaty with respect to cooperation at the educational level.<sup>37</sup> The agreement defined bilateral relations with respect to scientific and educational cooperation. The agreement created a formal normative framework for inter-state exchanges of employees, doctoral students, and students, providing social and living support on the terms set out in the national legal orders of the signatory states.

The creation of a formal framework for cooperation in higher education did not increase the number of Belarusian students in Ukraine. An analysis of statistics<sup>38</sup> on the number of foreigners studying in Ukraine in 2020 leads to the conclusion that students from Belarus are not among the 10 most popular nationalities undertaking studies at Ukrainian universities. In the 2020/2021 academic year, a total of 360 Belarusian citizens studied at Ukrainian universities (as of 1 October 2020).<sup>39</sup> The response of the Ukrainian public authorities to the complicated legal and political situation of Belarusian students, related to the presentation of civic attitudes during the wave of protests in Belarus, was the launch by the Ukrainian Ministry of Education and Sci-

35 Zakon Ukrainy pro ratyfikatsiyu Dohoviru pro druzhbu, dobrosusidstvo i spivrobotnytstvo mizh Ukrayinoyu i Respublikoyu Bilorus, Vidomosti Verkhovnoi Rady (BBP – ukr.) 1997, no. 26, item 175.

36 M. Prokop, P. Brin, *Stosunki bialorusko-ukraińskie w kontekście Partnerstwa Wschodniego*, "Historia i Polityka", 2019, no. 27(34), p. 118.

37 Uhoda mizh Ministerstvom osvity i nauky Ukrayiny ta Ministerstvom osvity Respubliki Bilorus' pro spivrobotnytstvo v haluzi osvity, Oficiyni visnyk Ukrainy, 2003, no. 31, act code 25973/200.

38 List of statistical data available on: <https://studyinukraine.gov.ua/en/life-in-ukraine/international-students-in-ukraine> [06.08.2021].

39 Data collected from the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine (letter: Ministerstvo Osvity i Nauky Ukrainy, No. 1/11-7459 vid 07.10.2021) [07.08.2021].

ence of an aid programme for Belarusian citizens.<sup>40</sup> According to the announcement of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine, Belarusian students could apply to Ukrainian universities without the requirement to receive an invitation from the university and without the certification of the university issued by Belarusian institutions in education or higher education (a so-called apostille).

The National University “Kyiv-Mohyla Academy” should be mentioned as an example of good practice related to university support offered to students from Belarus. The university offered students expelled from Belarus the possibility of continuing their studies at the academy from the second year of studies, along with the possibility of applying for free places in individual fields of study at the university.<sup>41</sup> As part of the aid offer, the university proposed intensive Ukrainian language courses enabling students to take up education in the language and the application of preferential rates for living in student dormitories at the academy.

An analysis of the applied solutions aimed at supporting Belarusian students in undertaking or continuing education in Ukraine leads to the conclusion that Ukrainian science diplomacy has not implemented systemic support tools encouraging Belarusian youth to study in Ukraine which could compete with the solutions applied in the Republic of Poland and the Republic of Lithuania. It should be noted, however, that the advantage of Ukrainian universities is their competitive price offered for fee-based education for foreigners, combined with the close historical and cultural ties between the Ukrainian and Belarusian people.

## Conclusions

The authors’ intention was to confront the theoretical findings on the issue of science diplomacy and the operational dimension – specific initiatives and actions implemented in individual countries: Poland,

40 Announcement of the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine of 11 November 2020, <https://mon.gov.ua/ua/news/zakladi-vishoyi-osviti-gotovi-prijmati-na-navchannya-gromadyan-respubliki-bilorus-mon> [07.08.2021].

41 National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy website: <https://dfc.ukma.edu.ua/coming-to-naukma/international-students/degree-programs/programs-belarus> [06.08.2021].

Ukraine, and Lithuania. Due to the breadth of the issue, the approach to this topic proposed in the article is a stimulus for reflection and a voice in the discussion on aid programmes for Belarusians as one of the dimensions of science diplomacy. The conducted analysis results in the formulation of several conclusions as part of the summary.

Undoubtedly, activities in the implementation of educational and scientific programmes aimed at the scientific community of Belarus constitute an important element of the state's activity in the dimension of science diplomacy, or more broadly: international scientific cooperation. The efficient and effective management of this process (conceptualisation and development of assumptions of individual programmes and then implementing them) requires knowledge not only about the benefits and advantages that result from it, but also the awareness of several challenges and difficulties that accompany the process.

In principle, characteristic risks and challenges can be identified at each implementation stage of the above-mentioned process. The analysis shows that one of the priority tasks for the efficient implementation of activities in the field of science diplomacy is to create a legal and organisational framework enabling the implementation of an aid programme for Belarusian citizens who, for social or political reasons, planned to study abroad.

Involving local government structures in this process is significant for the success of the assistance programmes addressed to citizens of Belarus – especially in the context of the long-term effects of their impact. Subsidies granted by the Wielkopolskie Voivodeship, the City of Poznan and Poznan County for the scholarship programme for students from Belarus, as discussed in the article, is an example of good practices in the field of such cooperation of the academic community with local government units. The transferred funds ensured the payment of scholarships in the amount of 55 students from Belarus for a period of nine months. This formula of multi-level management of aid programmes for Belarusians and the support systems built by various entities interested in this process guarantees not only the effectiveness of currently implemented activities but may constitute an excellent example that can be duplicated and continued in the future in relation to the scientific community, not only in Belarus.

It should be noted that the implementation of educational and scientific programmes dedicated to Belarusian citizens is an excellent

channel through which activities can be carried out in the field of promoting the culture and language of the country authorising such aid programmes. Activities implemented in Lithuania constitute an example of good practice in this area. Based on the analysis, it was found that scholarships granted to Belarusians include not only exemption from tuition fees and the covering of the costs of accommodation in university student dormitories. It is an additional value that, as part of the scholarship, beneficiaries also receive a free, intensive Lithuanian language and culture or English language course.

Regarding the activities carried out in Poland, it should be considered that foreigners with Belarusian citizenship constitute, after students from Ukraine, the second largest group of students undertaking and carrying out education in Poland. As indicated in the article – the number of students from Belarus increases every year. This means that Poland, along with the offer of aid programmes, is an attractive destination for the scientific community of Belarus. Activities in this area – apart from the fact that they are part of a wider and more complex effort by the state to stabilise this region of Europe – undoubtedly contribute to the development of universities and the entire process of internationalisation of higher education in Poland. Considering additionally the fact that other countries in the region continue their efforts to implement programmes for Belarusians – lack of development of Poland in this area would mean not only stagnation, but even regression in such circumstances.

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