

## **Necessary measures or discrimination? How the attitude to Belarus has changed in Europe since the start of the war and what it has to do with academy**

More than a month ago Russia started the war in Ukraine. Belarusian government allowed its territory to be used by Russia, so Belarus can be considered a country that committed an act of aggression according to [international law](#). Given this, I'm not surprised that Europe has responded with restrictive measures against the country.

But I'd like to elaborate on some measures taken. For example, suspension of visas for Belarusian citizens by [Czech Republic](#) and [Estonia](#) (with some exceptions such as humanitarian reasons). Or the [decision](#) of the University of Tartu, Estonia that citizens of Belarus can submit applications for first and second level programmes this year only if they hold a residence permit or long-term visa of the EU or are currently studying in Estonia.

I believe that the idea of such measures is to create discomfort for as many citizens of the country as possible to push them to influence the government and stop the war. But it's not as simple as that if we're talking about an authoritarian regime like Belarus. Right now around 1100 people are officially [considered](#) political prisoners being arrested for participation in anti-government protests. More than 50 of them are [students](#). Protests were suppressed, but that doesn't mean that people support the regime and its actions during the conflict in Ukraine. For example, this [survey](#) made by Chatham house shows that only 13% of Belarus urban population think that Belarus should support Russia and send troops to Ukraine and 56% agree that Belarus should be neutral.

To sum up, it's important to divide Belarusian people and their government. We're not the same just because of the color of our passports. It's not just black and white. I have friends who are struggling for democracy in Belarus and doing their best to support Ukraine. At the same time they're potential students of European universities. Is it fair to deprive them of such an opportunity?

I think that even during the war we should be fair and not make generalizations. Many Belarusian people fight for democratic values which the countries of the EU agreed to support all over the world. And they don't need the restrictions

which may be considered a discrimination based on nationality. They need support.