

**// PRESIDENT //**

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14.07.2021

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### **Forced Resignations and Dismissals of Lecturers and Researchers at the NASB**

Excellency,

My name is Maike Finnern and I am the President of the German Education Union (Gewerkschaft Erziehung und Wissenschaft, GEW), which represents more than 280,000 teachers and employees in educational institutions in Germany.

We are deeply concerned about the forced resignations, dismissals respective the non-renewal of contracts of six lecturers and researchers in July 2021 because of their trade union affiliation. We protest in the strongest possible terms against the violation of trade union rights at the National Academy of Sciences of Belarus (NASB).

We urge you to reconsider the decision and to fully reinstate the six scientists and SPB members at the Institute of Genetics and Cytology of NASB with immediate effect:

- Elena Aksionova
- Dr. Marina Bogdanowa
- Alexandra Nosowa
- Ksenia Pantelei

- Ilona Sacharuta
- Dr. Marina Shapturenko

The SPB Board has proof that employees were forced to resign by mutual agreement or threatened with dismissals. It was communicated to the employees that their academic merits and qualifications do not matter - despite the scientists' long service of up to 24 years at the Institute of Genetics and Cytology. In the case of Elena Aksionova, she was informed of the non-renewal of her contract as of 13 September.

Earlier, three employees of the Institute of Genetics and Cytology who had taken part in protests after 9 August 2020 were dismissed. We are worried about the dismissals of employees at the NASB for making use of their rights of freedom of expression and association and that members of the independent trade unions are evidently targeted.

As GEW, we call on you to respect the fundamental rights of students, lecturers and scientists at the NASB. This includes the freedom of expression and assembly, the freedom of association and academic freedom. International standards must be adhered to, also in view of existing the cooperation between universities in Belarus and Germany.

We wish to express our full solidarity with our sister union, the Belarusian Free Trade Union (SPB) and its primary organisation at the NASB. The primary organisation has already applied twice for registration with the Savetsky District Executive Committee in Minsk, but both times the Executive Committee refused to consider the documents.

We expect from the university administration to eliminate all barriers for trade unions to exercise their rights - including access to a legal address and premises as a prerequisite for registration and the right to participate in collective bargaining - without any discrimination on the basis of trade union affiliation. During their annual General Meeting in June, the International Labour Organisation (ILO) noted once more the systematic violation of trade union rights in Belarus and called for compliance with international labour standards.

The GEW will continue to closely monitor the situation at the NASB and other higher education institutions in Belarus.

Sincerely,



Maike Finnern