

Nr.05-09 2023-07-11

Dear Oleksandr Pavlichenko,

Your letter has been delivered to the European Humanity University's email address.

The EHU is a Belarusian University in exile that has operated in Lithuania (Vilnius) since 2004. The university's mission is to promote civil society development through the Humanities and Liberal Arts for students from Belarus and the region by bringing them together, and offering international experience in study quality. Nowadays, we advance our mission of building civil society in Belarus and in the region. Moreover, we are cooperating with the CoE, Lithuanian, and Belarusian in exile institutions in supporting the Belarusian civil society in exile¹.

In your letter, you address the issue of the Project "Lawyers for the Rule of Law. Education and Professional Training." This Project promotes constitutionalism, the rule of law, human rights, and democratic legal standards in the Eastern European Partnership region through the expansion and strengthening of the network of professional lawyers and legal advisors in the region. The educational project is oriented at "human rights lawyers—practicing lawyers and those who lost their practice due to authoritative regimes' bans, legal advisors, and law students—who are eager and able to defend human rights in the Eastern European Partnership region and Russia".

With our regret, we see that there appeared to be a miscommunication, which has brought so much anger about the international component of the Project. The EHU as an education institution as well as its units, like the Center for Constitutionalism and Human Rights, condemned the Russian army invasion of Ukraine within the first 24 hours after it happened via [online statements](#). Our deepest condolences go to the Ukrainian people who suffer from the war and from humanitarian and ecological catastrophes. From our side, we also support Ukrainian students and researchers who are invited to continue their studies at EHU. Our academic staff includes colleagues from Ukraine and Russia, as well as other countries in the region. The University has four official languages, which we see as a means of communication and not a reason for any discrimination or suppression.

The University adheres to academic freedom and may not restrict the participation of lawyers from any country mentioned by organisers in submitting their applications. Actually, as you know, nobody can prohibit educational activities for people only because of their nationality or country of origin. This principle is valid for our university and means that within the regular programs as well as within the professional training, like the Project "Lawyers for the Rule of Law", participants shall be treated as equals. The project you mentioned is open for enrolment by Ukrainian as well as Russian, Belarusian, and Moldavian lawyers. The first circle (2021–2022) of the Project has been carried out for students from all five countries. Ukrainian lawyers have expressed their gratitude since they could

¹The Parliamentary Assembly of the CoE in its new resolution on 20 June 2023 recalls Resolution 2433 (2022) "Consequences of the Russian Federation's continued aggression against Ukraine: role and response of the Council of Europe" in which it expressed its resolve "to intensify its engagement with Belarusian ... civil society, human rights defenders, independent journalists, academia and democratic forces respecting the values and principles of the Organisation". <https://pace.coe.int/en/files/31822/compendium>

immediately apply the knowledge gained in the course on international criminal law. Other courses are tailored for human rights lawyers who, in spite of their disbarment by authoritarian regimes or because of forced displacement, may continue their activities by establishing an independent Bar Associations of Human Rights Lawyers.

When it comes to the international partnership ILIA (not the ILIA Program), as we were given explanations, it is not a formal entity but a group of alumni and experts, including EHU teachers and alumni, who affiliate themselves with the idea of disseminating international standards among practicing lawyers. As it was in 2008–2012, when EHU shared its know-how and even platform for the first education cycle of ILIA/EHREL on distance training for lawyers launched by the HRHF, we still remain open for further open collaboration and exchange with civil society organizations.

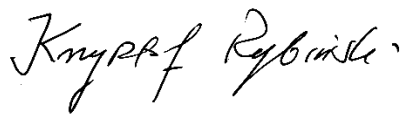
As far as we were informed the title ILIA became already kind of a public domain and it is difficult to image that alumni may be permitted or restricted in its usage. The ilia.club.google group is an example of such public use.

The statement you sent us as signed by the respected lawyers is a proof that there are challenges and disputes over human rights education and its inclusiveness in wartime. The University will be happy to host a conference devoted to the issues of "Universality and inclusiveness in human rights education: critical challenges in war and peacetime". Moreover, we invite you to a meeting in the nearest future to have a conversation for improving mutual understanding.

To conclude, we appreciate your letter addressed to the University and will continue our efforts to clarify the issues raised by Ukrainian lawyers.

May we use the opportunity to express our respect to the Ukrainian people.

Rector of the European Humanities University



Prof. Krzysztof Rybinski

11 July 2023