

# Russia: Violations of academic freedom in 2023

## The socio-political context and persecution of scientists and teachers

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### I. **Monitoring methodology: violation of the rights of students and teachers vs violation of academic rights and freedoms**

Our selection method is based on the [Scholars at Risk](#) methodology for identifying violations of the academic rights and freedoms of teachers and students. Major violations include murder, unlawful prosecution by the state, imprisonment on falsified charges, restrictions on movement, expulsion or dismissal from a university or institute, and a number of other serious infringements of academic freedom.

Violations of the rights and freedoms of students as citizens should be distinguished from violations of academic freedom. The latter involves the participation of the university, its administration or authorized representatives in the action or inaction that caused the violation, as well as violations committed on territory generally understood as academic space (an auditorium, a laboratory, the student campus).

For example, the unlawful detention of a student or teacher for a peaceful protest would be a *violation of civil rights* to peaceful marches and demonstrations. We regard dismissal or expulsion for the same “right violation” by the management of a university or scientific institute as a *violation of academic freedom*.

In other words, we consider a violation of civil rights committed without the participation of university employees or administration to be a violation of human rights. Direct or indirect participation of the leadership of a scientific or research institution will be considered a violation of academic freedom.

#### **1.1. Verification by two sources.**

In our monitoring report, every violation was verified by at least two independent sources. Instances where the violation cannot be confirmed (there is only one source, or it is a retelling of an event whose authenticity cannot be verified) were not included in the report.

A special category of violations in our methodology are events that are not yet gross violations of academic freedom but characterize the atmosphere in an educational or research institution and also help to understand possible subsequent violations of academic freedom. For example,

repeated verbal “warnings” that an employee receives for “unenthusiastic thinking” may later be the key to understanding why that employee’s contract was not renewed at the employer’s initiative.

Our methodology also distinguishes **a special category of violations** for cases that are not yet gross violations of academic freedom but set the atmosphere in an educational or research environment and also help to contextualize possible subsequent violations of academic freedom. For example, repeated verbal “warnings” that an employee receives for “unenthusiastic thinking” may later be the key to understanding why that employee’s contract was not renewed at the employer’s initiative.

### **1.2. Using monitoring results**

Data from this monitoring report have been used, first and foremost, in a joint publication with the Russian scientific emigre newspaper, *Troitsky Invariant*, as well as a publication with the international monitoring body for violations of academic rights and freedoms *Scholars at Risk*. Materials were also sent in early February to the Special Rapporteur UN on the right to education.

## **II. Institutional climate**

These violations of academic freedom in Russia come amid serious pressure on the higher education system due to the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine. First of all, the process of militarization of higher education is intensifying, new military training centers are popping up, where “veterans of the special military operation” are starting to teach. A course in basic military training is being made mandatory.

At the same time, the ideological pressure is increasing. The courses “*Fundamentals of Russian Statehood*,” “*History of Russia*,” “*Traditional Religions of Russia*,” and “*Traditional Russian Values*” have appeared as mandatory courses in all university curriculums.

The content of all these courses is intended to “scientifically” substantiate and promote the idea of a “special Russian path”—Russia as a “special civilization” based on the principles of imperialism, “traditional values” and the sacralization of state power.

Military registration and enlistment offices have redoubled efforts to put pressure on students and graduates affected by the mobilization. Students who resist or protest the war are subject to pressure from university authorities and expelled, usually on flimsy grounds. As [Paper](#) reports, while corresponding with the head of the independent student trade union concerning activities that the university found extremely dissatisfying, St. Petersburg State University admin threatened “problems in exams” and “sending [students] to the front line.”

One story that stands out is the [attempt to forcibly conscript](#) Nigerian students at the Southern Federal University in Rostov-on-Don. According to the students, they were not only promised high salaries but also intimidated by threats of increased tuition costs and withdrawn scholarships.

The persecution of students and teachers by university authorities for their anti-war stances is a general trend (*see the list of cases submitted to SAR for publication in the international academic freedom monitoring report below*).

### **2.1.Laws on “undesirable organizations” and “foreign agents”**

[Since they were first adopted, laws on “undesirable organizations” and “foreign agents”](#) have caused continuous academic freedom violations. A number of research organizations have been forced to either severely cut back on their research plans or shut down entirely (e.g. CISR, Levada Center). In 2022-2023, a number of organizations that carried out human rights and research projects were recognized as foreign agents and forced to close.

Thus, at the very beginning of the war, [Memorial](#), the oldest human rights, charity, research and education organization in the country, was finally liquidated. As an example of the persecution faced by Memorial and associated entities, take the Center for Historical Memory, which utilized the Memorial branch in Perm. The organization was [fined](#) 300,000 rubles (about 30,000 euros) for “discrediting the Russian army,” and its chairman was placed under arrest for [charges](#) of “attempted export of cultural property,” by which investigators meant the Memorial archives themselves.

In 2016, the SOVA Center for Information and Analysis, which followed cases concerning freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, and anti-extremist legislation, was recognized as a foreign agent. In April 2023, the decision was made to liquidate it on grounds that are difficult to interpret as anything but illegal: holding events outside the Moscow region where the organization is registered.

In March 2023, the Prosecutor General's Office [declared the conduct of the Free University](#)—a project created by a number of instructors teaching online courses in a wide range of disciplines, from literature to higher mathematics—to be “undesirable.” The reason given was the alleged “anti-Russian nature” of the courses taught, as well as the imposition of an “ultra-liberal model of democracy” on students. After this decision, teaching courses in Russia became almost impossible, since Russian law provides penalties for “collaborating with an undesirable organization” ranging from fines to imprisonment.

The justification for including the Central European University in Vienna (CEU) on the “undesirable” list was similar. In particular, [a statement](#) from the Prosecutor General’s Office referred to the “anti-Russian orientation” of the courses taught at the university: they allegedly “...deliberately devalued and distorted the history of the Russian state; downplayed the merits of prominent Russian scientists, writers, and cultural figures; and promoted false statements about Russia’s guilt in all global cataclysms.”

For a number of research or scientific organizations recognized as “undesirable” in 2023, no justification was provided at all. Thus, in October, the Center for European Policy Studies (CEPA) was given “undesirable” status, and in November, AKNO—the European Academic Assistance Network, which was involved in helping Belarusian, Ukrainian and Russian scientists and students find a place to work or study in Germany, as well as The Center for East European and International Studies (ZOIS)—a German research organization that studies issues of history, culture and politics within the Russian Federation, were both deemed “undesirable.” In stark contrast with their attitude towards other institutions, the Prosecutor General’s Office [spoke out](#) in detail about ZOIS, asserting, among other things, that through their “pseudo-experts” and “pseudo-analysts,” the Center advances the goal of “spurning anti-Russian sentiment,” as well as “discrediting the authority of Russia in the international arena, destabilizing the political situation...and proliferating propaganda that distorts the history of the Russian state.”

Our search for “hostile influences” on Russian students in 2022-2023 also revealed the destruction of two liberal arts faculties—one at St. Petersburg State University, and the other on the Moscow RANEPa campus.

The Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences at St. Petersburg was created in collaboration with Bard College, which was also declared an undesirable institution in 2021. After this, St. Petersburg State University conducted an examination of the courses taught at the faculty and found “*ideologized disciplines consistent with the worst Western stereotypes,*” “*ignoring the views, positions and conclusions of Russian researchers*” and a lack of discussion about the “*spiritual and moral origins of modern Russia.*”

The result of this “reorganization” was a complete overhaul of the curriculum and the creation of a new program in which no trace of the liberal arts can be found. [The dismissal of Sociology and Anthropology teachers](#) Viktor Kaplun and Zhanna Chernova, as well as the departure of political scientist Pavel Kononenko, became a catalyst for the decline. It is significant that this department was where the first open political dismissal occurred when teacher Denis Skopin, who was fired for an “immoral act” when he participated in an anti-war protest (*see below, in the section “Persecution of teachers and scientists”*). The acting dean of the faculty, A. Astvatsaturov, currently denies that it was shut down. Nevertheless, it is obvious that by the fall of 2023, the department, as it was in its original form, had virtually ceased to exist.

The situation with the RANEPa liberal arts faculty developed in a similar way. After the serious political pressure placed on the university as a whole and the crisis associated with the arrest of Rector Sergei Zuev, the department [was renamed](#) a “general baccalaureate.” Some teachers who had played an active role in creating the program quit and left. The structure and general direction remained unchanged, although a number of courses, primarily *History of Russia*, began to use ideology to justify war and aggression.

Thus, in Russian higher education, the teaching model suspected of having a “pernicious influence” on Russian youth has been largely dismantled. The only educational institution that continues to work formally according to this model and is not subject to political pressure is the School of Advanced Studies at Tyumen University. A significant part of the teachers quit following the start of the war. Perhaps the reason that this program has been retained is that the current Minister of Education and Science Valery Falkov was a recent rector of the university and has actively supported the project since its inception.

The same issues are apparent at another non-standard Russian higher educational institution—the European University in St. Petersburg. In 2023, after losing the building it had occupied since it first opened, was subject to inspection by a number of authorities, including the prosecutor’s office, and in December was fined for having books in a closed section of the library published by the currently “undesirable” Open Society Institute (Soros Foundation).

### **III. Persecution of teachers and scientists**

The current witch-hunt in Russian science and higher education is centered around hunting out various “enemies of the state.” The targets can be divided into five categories, depending on the pretext:

- **“foreign agents”** – receiving this status leads to a direct ban on teaching
- **anti-war activists** – public speech and comments lead to dismissals, or even administrative and criminal cases for “discrediting the Russian army”
- **scientists or teachers penalized for public statements or criticism of leadership (unrelated to the war)**
- **LGBT and transgender people, both students and staff**, whose rights were actively violated after the introduction of a de-facto ban on everything related to homosexuality and on what the Russian authorities call “sex change propaganda”
- various fabricated cases against **scientists working in military tech**, who, as a rule, followed the requirements of the law on state secrets in good faith

#### **3.1. Persecution of teachers as foreign agents**

On December 1, 2022, amendments tightening the rules regarding individual foreign agents. In particular, foreign agents were prohibited from teaching in the public higher education system. As a result, a number of people who had previously been recognized as foreign agents lost their jobs.

Thus, Vitaly Kovin, a teacher at the Perm Pedagogical University, who was one of the first to be recognized as a foreign agent, [was fired](#), officially due to a lack of teaching load. The political scientist himself notes that the university rector tried to defend him to the last, but could not handle the pressure “from above.”

Political scientists Ekaterina Shulman, Sergei Medvedev, Valery Solovey, Boris Kagarlitsky and Kirill Martynov, sociologists Iskander Yasaveev, Ella Rossman and Viktor Vakhshain, historian Andrei Zubov, mathematician Mikhail Lobanov, anthropologist Alexandra Arkhipova, philologist Yulia Galyamina, economist Vladislav Inozemtsev, as well as the author of this report, were all also previously recognized as “foreign agents” and lost the formal right to teach in Russia. Foreign agent journalists who taught journalism, such as Daria Apokhonchich, Pyotr Manyakhin, also lost their teaching privileges. All of the listed so-called “foreign agents” had many years of teaching experience at leading Russian universities.

It is worth noting that when adding the Vozrozhdenie (Renaissance) School, created by a number of leading political scientists in exile, to the list of foreign agents, the Ministry of Justice detailed everyone who was involved in teaching there, which may be a threat to anyone connected to the school in one way or another, even if they are not “foreign agents.”

At the end of 2022-beginning of 2023, several people previously declared “foreign agents” lost their jobs.

- The [dismissal of Yulia Galyamina](#) at the end of 2022 was due to her refusal to switch to “non-teaching and non-research rates” after being recognized as a foreign agent (the law prohibits persons recognized as foreign agents from teaching in government institutions, but does not officially prohibit offering them research rates; in reality, not one university has dared to do this).
- [Moscow State University teacher and mathematician Mikhail Lobanov](#), who is a left-wing politician and civil activist and was recognized as a foreign agent, was fired in July 2023. His dismissal is justified as being: “due to circumstances beyond the will of all parties.”
- [The dismissal of Perm Pedagogical University teacher Vitaly Kovin](#) came after many years of struggle. He was first named a foreign agent in 2021. In 2022, he was removed from the list, and a month later his name was placed back on it. Despite support from the university rector, Vitaly was forced to leave the university.

In one case, the Psychology Department at Moscow State University forced associate professor Stanislav Kozlovsky to resign, based on the statement by department admin that he, as the head of Wikimedia.Ru, would soon be declared a foreign agent. This did not happen, but he was dismissed “of his own volition.”

It is also telling that after various recommendations not to communicate with or give comments to “foreign agent” media, universities now have direct bans on giving comments to these publications. In July 2023, St. Petersburg State University issued an [order](#) prohibiting university employees from giving comments to media outlets recognized as “undesirable” or “foreign agents.” The Higher School of Economics has issued instructions to [remove](#) all materials published by foreign agents from the library, and not to invite people recognized as foreign agents to university events.

After the law on foreign agents, which previously mainly affected independent research teams, was amended to include individuals and prohibit them from teaching, it became a direct analogue of the notorious [Berufsverbot](#).

In November, the Institute of Law and Public Policy, recognized as a “foreign agent” back in 2021, [filed a complaint](#) with the Constitutional Court, pointing out that the application of the law on “foreign agents” does not distinguish between political and scientific activities, which leads to the derogation of the rights of organizations supporting freedom of scientific creativity.

### **3.2. Persecution of LGBTQ teachers and staff of Russian universities**

The situation faced by LGBT students and teachers has significantly worsened after the adoption of laws effectively outlawing any representative of the LGBT community as an “extremist,” as well as prohibiting trans people from transitioning. In most cases, monitoring bodies cannot even name real names, since revealing them could lead to criminal prosecution “for LGBT propaganda” or “promoting gender reassignment.” One such situation was described by *Groza*, when a [history student](#) at Penza University transitioned, and in the process faced serious harassment from the assistant dean of the department. One of the arguments that was used to try to force the student to leave the university was that he allegedly “promoted gender reassignment” and “could not teach children.”

At the very end of the year, HSE masters student Ilya Andreyev [wrote a letter explaining why he was dropping out](#) as a sign of protest against homophobic legislation; in particular, he indicated that as an openly gay man, he finds it impossible to continue studying at a state university, which is controlled and funded by the Russian government, which incites “medieval xenophobia” towards representatives of the LGBT community.

After these laws, the Higher School of Economics [demanded](#) that all LGBT-related materials be removed from the library.

### **3.3. Persecution related to anti-war activities**

After the outbreak of hostilities in Russia, laws were passed that criminalized public anti-war statements as “discrediting the Russian army” through administrative prosecution. Stories about the death of civilians as a result of the actions of the Russian Armed Forces are interpreted as a criminal offense, “dissemination of fakes,” entailing criminal prosecution and imprisonment for up to 15 years.

Despite these threats, Russian scientists and teachers actively participate in the anti-war movement, even while being subject to criminal or administrative prosecution. As a rule, the result of these cases opened by the state are illegal actions on the part of the administration of Russian universities. They often view this prosecution as a reaction to a “violation of the code of ethics” or an “immoral act” leading to dismissal. Sometimes, they employ far-fetched reasons to justify this behavior.

- The grounds for the dismissal of St. Petersburg State University teacher Denis Skopin was an “immoral act,” regarding his participation and subsequent detention at an anti-war rally.
- Ilya Inishev, a teacher at the Higher School of Economics in Moscow, was fired for an “immoral act,” in this case, obscene language on his Facebook page (in a post about the war).
- A teacher from the Urals, Artem Izgagin, was [fined](#) for a photograph and anti-war posts he published in a private Telegram channel; this fine became the basis for subsequent dismissal.
- The same rationale was used to persecute Mikhail Belousov, a St. Petersburg State University teacher who spoke out against the war.
- In the spring, MIPT employee Viktor Moskalev, who had been sent on compulsory leave in the summer, was [arrested](#) for “fake news” (that is, for posts about the genocide committed by the Russian army in Bucha and Mariupol). According to sources, MIPT administration strongly recommended that eyewitnesses to the arrest keep quiet and not try to intercede for Moskalev. The Memorial Human Rights Center [recognized](#) him as a political prisoner.

The fact that the contract of Elena Lukovitskaya, a teacher at Novgorod State University, was not renewed also occurred, as she suggests, due to her anti-war posts. Notably, her position was filled by a former graduate student who had already distinguished himself by working



adamantly to protect the “Russian cultural code” against the alleged propaganda promoting “hatred of Russia and Russians.”

Any anti-war statement or action itself is used as a pretext to paint a teacher or student as a violator of academic ethics. Ethical commissions are frequently used for this purpose, the conclusions of which become grounds for dismissal.

- This was the case for [Mikhail Belousov](#), a historian from St. Petersburg State University, who was fired for “inappropriate irony” regarding a university student killed in the war.
- A similar conclusion from the ethical commission was the basis for Ilya Inishev’s dismissal.
- In the case of Denis Skopin, his detention was considered a violation of the university charter, and he was fired for “immoral misconduct.”
- [Alexandra Zaitseva](#), at the time chief editor of the student publication *Student’* was accused of having a disrespectful attitude towards teachers and students, as well as “posting a publication online...the content of which can be considered a violation of the current legislation of the Russian Federation.”

The [dismissal](#) of Svetlana Drugoveyko-Dolzhanskaya, a philologist from St. Petersburg State University, can be considered “persecution by association.” She wrote a scathing critique of the investigation of anti-war activist Skochilenko, prepared by “specialists” from St. Petersburg State University. The ethics committee considered this review, as well as her speech in court, “incompatible” with university values.

Another stand-out case is Mikhail Belousov. It began with a [denunciation by pro-war activists](#). As a result, the teacher was not only fired—a criminal case was opened against him. Students who supported him were also persecuted.

Following [accusations](#) from her own students, a RANEPa teacher from Nizhny Novgorod, Irina Sedelnikova, was charged and received three years probation under the article on “dissemination of knowingly false information” about the “special military operation” at a seminar lecture. According to media reports, the students filmed her answers about the military operations on their phones, which later became evidence in court. In addition to her sentence, she is also banned from teaching for two years.

In this case, as well as a slew of others, the activity of pro-war activists in academia plays a noteworthy role. Pro-Russian propagandist and Dean of the Faculty of Media Communications and Audiovisual Arts of the Moscow State University of Culture Y. Kot published information about the existence of an “anti-Russian group” (allegedly created by Mikhail Belousov) at the Institute of History at St. Petersburg State University on his Dzen page. He also brazenly [published a list](#) of “unpatriotic” students with an appeal to deal with them.

Another example of pro-war vigilantism is Vitaly Palukhin from the Belgorod State Technical University, who was fined for posts he made on a private Telegram channel, which was later made public by an unknown source.

Yet another is the detention of Dmitry Tolstenko, a teacher at the Crimean Federal University\*, who was detained and then fined following accusations by a pro-government Telegram channel for publishing videos in support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The accuser, [a journalist](#), was sure that “he will no longer be working at CFU.”

*\* Since it is located on annexed Ukrainian territory, we cannot classify this educational institution as a regular Russian university.*

University security officers also play an important role in the persecution of anti-war activists. Accusations made by the head of the MIET security department concerning “unpatriotic” statements made by student Daniil Voitovich played a key role in his prosecution. The main evidence used in the dismissal of Ural Technological College teacher Ivan Zolotov was an accusation made by the head of the college’s security department, Evgeniy Oleinikov-Mandrukh, and Natalia Zerkaliy, a teacher at the same college. The interrogation report lists, in particular, claims that “the essence of [Alexander Galich’s song](#) entitled ‘March of Marauders’ is that the current government, who are referred to as ‘marauders,’ stole victory from the real winners of the Great Patriotic War, and is now praised for it”; such an employee, according to Oleinikov-Mendrukh, is not worthy of bearing the title of “teacher.”

Often, state accusations of “extremism” become grounds for dismissal of a teacher or student. An employee of the non-state Siberian Institute of Business, Management and Psychology fired Natalya Podolyak from the position of head of the university’s sports club on the basis of the “law on countering extremist activities,” as well as alleged “repeated violation of professional obligations.”

Corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences Sergei Abramov, who is apparently suspected of financing Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation, which is recognized as an extremist organization in Russia, has been detained and is under house arrest on charges of collaborating with an extremist organization. It is telling that attempts by a number of academics to raise the issue of supporting the persecuted were suppressed by the head of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

Students may even be persecuted for expressing discontentment with the administration’s pro-war stances. In [Yaroslavl](#), several students of the local State Theater Institute were ordered to perform at a “patriotic concert,” and after expressing their complaints, were declared “unsuitable for work” and transferred to another city. Students who publicly supported them have been declared “traitors” by the administration.

A criminal case was opened against Northern Federal University student Olesya Krivtsova for “discrediting the army” and “justifying terrorism.” NArFU expelled the student, judging that “house arrest interferes with education.” Olesya escaped house arrest and is currently residing in Vilnius.

[Seven students who supported Mikhail Belousov](#) were expelled from St. Petersburg State University based on their “insincere” answers.

Another common violation of student rights is expulsion due to leaving the country or refusal to grant academic leave. Many students who left Russia, fleeing war and mobilization, hoped to complete their studies remotely. In most cases they were denied this for official reasons; Presumably, the real reason was their anti-war stance and decision to leave the country.

### **Dismissals or non-renewal of work contracts for other reasons**

One particularly prevalent violation of academic freedom was the non-renewal of a contract on an arbitrary basis—an alleged ban on remote forms of work, including teaching. The arbitrariness of this act is especially obvious given the fact that some teachers were granted an extension to their contracts while living outside the Russian Federation, while others, on the contrary, were denied this right. One example is Larisa Muravyova, a teacher at the Smolny Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, who tried to switch to remote instruction after leaving the country, but the management of St. Petersburg State University ignored all her requests and forced her to write a letter of resignation. Former dean of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, Alexander Pogrebnyak, was fired in the same way.

Igor Lipsits, a tenured professor and one of the founders of the HSE, refused to renew his contract after the National Research University Higher School of Economics refused to permit him to work remotely, even after they had granted permission before. Lipsits, a well-known economist and holder of the HSE Founder diploma, was offered alternative positions as an accountant or dishwasher.

Ungrounded dismissals continue based on criticism that the management finds issue with, In Khakassia, researcher at the Khakass Research Institute of Language, Literature, and History Alexey Nilogov was officially fired for truancy (that is, for being absent from work). He cites the reason as a conflict with the director of the institute, in particular, her reaction to criticism of numerous errors in the Encyclopedia of Khakassia published by the institute. This was not the first attempt to fire him; the previous one was overturned by the court.

Vice Dean of the Faculty of International Journalism Yuri Kobaladze was fired for failure to comply with administration policy about “permissible” guests. According to the general belief, Kobaladze was fired for inviting the anti-war journalist Ivan Urgant to speak to students.

For his entirely [scientific criticism](#) of the course of foreign policy in modern Russia, Valery Garbuzov, corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, [was fired](#) from his post as Director of the Institute in the USA and Canada. The dismissal took place “at the initiative of the founding institution” (that is, the Ministry of Higher Education and Science).

### **3.4. “Espionage” cases**

In 2023, one espionage case was filed.

This is a [continuation of the case](#) initiated in the summer of 2022 against three physicists from the Institute of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics of the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences—Anatoly Maslov, Dmitry Kolker and Alexander Shipliyuk. During this time, Kolker died in custody because he was seriously ill with stage 4 cancer. A. Maslov and A. Shipliyuk remain in custody. In May 2023, their colleague, physicist Valery Zvegintsev, was arrested.

The exact grounds for the charges is still unknown, but according to a letter of support in defense of scientists, the case concerns “...a necessary component of conscientious and qualitative scientific activity: giving presentations at international seminars and conferences, publishing articles in highly reputable journals and participating in international scientific projects.”

The peculiarity of these cases is the absolute lack of transparency, the practical impossibility of exercising the right to a defense, and the arbitrariness of the prosecution, backed by the support of the Federal Security Service.

List of cases submitted to SAR for publication in the [international monitoring of academic freedom](#):

**Ilya Inishev**

**Date of incident: December 27, 2022**

**Violation: unfounded dismissal**

**Institution: HSE, Moscow**

On December 27, 2022, the Higher School of Economics (HSE) in Moscow fired Ilya Inishev, who had been a HSE professor since 2010 and headed the master's program in Cultural Studies. The pretext for dismissal was the use of obscene language on social networks. In November 2022, the chairman of the HSE Academic Ethics Committee informed Ilya Inishev that the use of obscene words could cause him to be charged under the code of ethics.

The dismissal of a professor for “obscene language” on social networks is a disproportionate reaction to an officially confirmed violation of the provisions of the HSE Employee Code of Ethics. The context of the dismissal points to persecution for a faculty member's anti-war stance, which is a violation of academic freedom of expression.

[Source](#)

**Ekaterina Sergeenko**

**Date: January 26, 2023**

**Violation: threats of expulsion**

**Institution: St. Petersburg State Agrarian University Tourism College**

College students from St. Petersburg State University were summoned to the dean's office because they subscribed to the Smart Voting project's mailing list. They were threatened with expulsion. Management claimed that the reason was poor academic performance, although the existing recording of the conversation does not confirm this. Ekaterina claims that she signed up for the newsletter before the summer of 2021, that is, before the Smart Voting project was recognized as an extremist organization.

Pressure on female students for registering with Smart Voting, including through the use of threats, is a violation of academic freedom.

[Source](#)

### **Free University**

**Date: March 31, 2023**

**Violation: persecution**

**Institution: Free University**

Free University is an independent online education organization founded by former HSE teachers. In 2021, the organizers registered the NGO "Free University" (biedrība Brīvā Universitāte) in Latvia.

On March 31, 2023, the prosecutor's office declared the activities of the educational project "undesirable." Russian laws allow citizens to be held administratively and then criminally liable for any "participation in the activities" of such organizations. The authorities can use this to persecute teachers and students who attend independent seminars and participate in free scientific discussion as violators of the law.

On April 2, the Academic Council of the Free University decided to suspend its activities in the Russian Federation.

We consider the law on undesirable organizations itself contrary to international legal norms and the Constitution of the Russian Federation, and the inclusion of the Free University on this list a gross violation of the principle of academic freedom and academic autonomy.

Sources: [1\)](#) [2\)](#) [3\)](#)

### **SOVA Center**

**Date: March 10, 2023**

**Violation: shutting down organization**

**Institution: SOVA Information and Analytical Center**

On March 10, the Ministry of Justice filed a lawsuit to liquidate the SOVA Information and Analytical Center, citing "violations" committed when events were held outside of Moscow (a reason with no serious legal basis).

[Source](#)

## **Novosibirsk Novocollege**

**Date: May 10, 2023**

**Violation: violation of the autonomy of a private educational institution, declaring a college director a “foreign agent”**

**Institution: Novosibirsk Novocollege**

According to the director of the college, Sergei Chernyshov, the private educational institution was accused of administrative offenses after a denunciation by Novosibirsk resident Dmitry Demin. Cases were opened under three articles:

- violation of the requirements for conducting educational activities and organizing the educational process (Article 19.30 Part 1 of the Code of Administrative Offenses)
- carrying out activities not related to profit-making without special permission (Article 19.20 Part 1 of the Code of Administrative Offenses) and violation of the requirements for anti-terrorist protection of assets (Article 20.35 Part 1 of the Code of Administrative Offenses)
- the "absence" of a safety data sheet that was actually fully accessible

Director Chernyshev was recognized as a foreign agent and [left his post](#) in June.

[Source](#)

## **Olesya Krivtsova**

**Date: December 2022**

**Violation: persecution, expulsion**

**Institution: Northern Arctic Federal University**

In December 2022, Northern Arctic University student Olesya Krivtsova was placed under house arrest after she spoke out on social media against Russia’s invasion of Ukraine. Krivtsova faced a sentence of up to seven years for “discrediting the army” and “justifying terrorism.”

Immediately after being placed under arrest, she was added to the list of extremists and terrorists, which seriously limited her civil rights even before her trial. NArFU ruled that being under house arrest was not grounds for academic leave and expelled her.

She escaped from house arrest and is now residing in Vilnius.

[Source](#)

### **Denis Skopin**

**Date: December 26, 2022**

**Violation: dismissal**

**Institution: St. Petersburg State University**

St. Petersburg State University philosophy professor Denis Skopin was detained at a protest against forced conscription. Three weeks later, he received a call from the university's human resources department informing him that the university administration had fired him for an "immoral act" involving participation in an "unauthorized protest."

[Source](#)

### **Artem Izgagin**

**Date: January 11, 2023**

**Violation: dismissal**

**Institution: Pervouralsk College**

On January 11, 2023, Artem Izgagin, a mathematics teacher at Pervouralsk College, was convicted of "discrediting the Russian army." According to sources, after the start of the special operation, he published several social media posts criticizing the actions of the Russian army. State Duma deputy Alexander Khinshtein demanded that the teacher be fired for these posts.

[Source](#)

### **Daniil Voitovich**

**Date: October 28, 2023**

**Violation: arrest and fine**

**Institution: Moscow Institute of Electronic Technology (MIET)**

On September 15, 2023, in the presence of 10 students and a teacher, student Daniil Voitovich expressed his opinion about the Russian government and stood in support for Ukraine. On October 28, 2023, the Zelenogradsky District Court of Moscow arrested Voitovich under Part 1 of Article 20.3 of the Code of Administrative Offenses for five days for using a student card with a cover depicting a white-red-white flag (the flag of the Belarusian unit of the Armed Forces of Ukraine). The court considered this to be a symbol of an armed group associated with an extremist organization, and according to them, the student "displayed" this symbol when purchasing a train ticket, as well as when entering the university. In addition to five days of administrative arrest, the court ordered the card with the "extremist symbol" be confiscated.



On the same day, Voitovich was fined 35,000 rubles under the article for discrediting the Russian army, since “in the MIET auditorium he shouted slogans against the special military operation and in support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine.” A statement against Voitovich was written by MIET employee Farid Abdullin, head of the University’s security department, responsible for mobilization preparations.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

### **Vitaly Palukhin**

**Date: October 16, 2023**

**Violation: Drafting interrogation reports for discrediting the army and disorderly conduct**

**Institution: Belgorod State Technical University (BSTU named after V. G. Shukhov)**

In 2022, Vitaly Palukhin posted videos to a private Telegram channel in which he criticized military actions in Ukraine. On October 16, 2023, unknown persons published these videos in the public domain. After the publication, Palukhin was removed from his studies at BSTU and taken to the police station. The police intimidated him and drew up reports against him under articles of discrediting the army (Article 20.3.3 of the Administrative Code) and disorderly conduct (Article 20.1 of the Administrative Code).

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

[Source 3](#)

### **Elena Lukovitskaya**

**Date: November 3**

**Violation: dismissal**

**Institution: Novgorod State University (NovSU)**

Elena Lukovitskaya, an employee of the Department of Philosophy, Cultural Studies and Sociology at NovSU, expressed an anti-war position through famous quotes on social media. After this, NovSU did not renew the employment contract with Lukovitskaya, which is believed to be due to her anti-war stance. It is worth noting that she taught classes for two weeks, after which she was informed that her contract had not been renewed. She did not receive any compensation for the classes taught.

It is important to note that a recent graduate student was immediately appointed in her place—one who conducts active “patriotic work” with the goal of “protecting the cultural code” from “hatred against Russians.”

Source: published and deleted (?) 7x7; awaiting verification

[Source 1](#)

### **Irina Sedelnikova**

Irina Mikhailovna Sedelnikova, a teacher of economics at RANEPa, held a seminar lecture with students. In it, she mentioned Russia's full-scale invasion of Ukraine, which the court found to be the dissemination of "deliberately false" information. Sedelnikova was found guilty under Article 208.3, part 2 (paragraphs a,e) and sentenced to 3 years of suspended imprisonment with a two-year probationary period. She is also prohibited from teaching.

**EU SPb**

**Date: May-November 2023**

**Violation: violation of university autonomy**

**Institution: European University in St. Petersburg**

In May 2023, the prosecutor's office and Federal Service for Supervision in Education and Science conducted an inspection of the European University in St. Petersburg based on accusations of extremism. Then prosecutors discovered books in the university library published with the support of the Open Society Institute and the Kennan Institute, both considered undesirable organizations.

(The books covered such topics as ancient Chinese philosophy, museums in St. Petersburg, and globalization). The European University stated that the books were published and added to the library before the introduction of the law on undesirable organizations and that afterward they were kept in a special closed area from where they were not issued to readers. On November 11, two interrogation reports were drawn up against the university, and it was fined 70,000 rubles.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

[Source 3](#)

**Alexey Nilogov**

**Date: November 6, 2023**

**Violation: dismissal**

**Institution: Khakass Research Institute of Language, Literature and History (HAKNII)**

Alexey Nilogov, a specialist in the field of Russian and Khakass genealogy, found and revealed errors in the volume of the Encyclopedia Khakassia. On November 6, 2023, the director of the institute, Nina Mainagasheva, fired Nilogov. The official reason for the dismissal was several absences from the office during working hours. Nilogov believes that the dismissal was illegal and caused by the director's personal hostility and his critical position towards the encyclopedia. He plans to create a public commission to counter the falsification of regional history. Nilogov's colleagues wrote a letter in support of him to the head of the Republic of Khakassia, the chairman of the local Supreme Council and the chairman of the Council of Elders of the Khakassian clans.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

[Source 3](#)

### **Yuri Kobaladze**

**Date: November 14, 2023**

**Violation: dismissal**

**Institution: Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO)**

Yuri Kobaladze, vice-dean and professor of the Department of International Journalism at MGIMO, invited TV presenter Ivan Urgant to give a lecture on the subject of social networking. The management of MGIMO claimed that it had nothing to do with the lecture series and was shocked by it. They began to demand that Kobaladze invite “military correspondents” (bloggers covering the special military operation) to lectures and forbade him from holding a meeting with journalist Alena Doletskaya. On November 14, Kobaladze informed students of his dismissal. Students and sources familiar with the situation believe his dismissal was forced.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

### **Svetlana Drugoveyko-Dolzhanskaya**

**Date: October 11, 2023**

**Violation: dismissal**

**Institution: St. Petersburg State University**

Philologist Svetlana Drugoveyko-Dolzhanskaya was dismissed on the recommendation of the St. Petersburg State University Ethics Committee for allegedly committing an “immoral act,” which is that she wrote a critical review of the unprofessional examination of other St. Petersburg State University employees. Writing a professional review cannot in principle be regarded as an “immoral act,” and we note another example of an ethics committee being wielded as an instrument of repression.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

### **Academic Network Eastern Europe (AKNO)**

**Date: November 14, 2023**

**Violation: recognition as an undesirable organization**

The Academic Network of Eastern Europe (AKNO – Akademisches Netzwerk Osteuropa) was created to help scientists and students from Belarus, Ukraine and Russia find work or enroll in German research or educational institutions.

### **Center for European Policy Research (CEPA)**

**Date: October 23**

**Violation: recognition as an undesirable organization**

The Center for European Policy Analyses (CEPA) is an American non-governmental organization—a think tank that studies various problems of European politics.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

### **Natalia Podolyak**

**Date: May 11, 2023**

**Violation: dismissal**

**Institution: Siberian Institute of Business, Management and Psychology**

The head of the sports club at this private university was fired on grounds of “violation of the law on combating extremist activities” and “violation of professional duties.” From an image of the order posted on Podolyak’s Facebook page, it can be surmised that the dismissal occurred on the recommendation of university HR. The teacher is an anti-war activist who was previously fined “for discrediting the army.”

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

**Boris Kagarlitsky**

**Date: July 26 - December 12, 2023**

**Violation: arrest, fine**

**Institution: Moscow Higher School of Social and Economic Sciences (Shaninka)**

At the end of July, left-wing philosopher and political scientist Boris Kagarlitsky, who had previously been declared a “foreign agent,” was detained on suspicion of “justifying terrorism.” In September, while already in prison, he was fined 40,000 rubles for not identifying himself as a “foreign agent” in his publications. On December 12, he was fined 600,000 rubles (about 6,000 euros) for “justifying terrorism.” At the time of his arrest, his page disappeared from the MHSEN (Shaninka) website and has not been brought back online since. Kagarlitsky’s dismissal was not officially announced.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

**Central European University**

**Date: October 16, 2023**

**Violation: recognition as an undesirable organization**

According to official information from the Prosecutor General’s Office, the addition of the Central European University in Vienna to the list of undesirable organizations was due to “inappropriate” course content, as well as the fact that those affiliated with Russian state organizations or who supported the SVO are prohibited from working at CEU.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

**Dmitry Tolstenko**

**Date: November 8, 2023**

**Violation: dismissal**

**Institution: Crimean Federal University**

The organic chemistry teacher in the CFU Winemaking Department was written up for “discrediting the army” and for “displaying extremist symbols”—posting videos in support of the Armed Forces of Ukraine. The arrest took place right in the university auditorium. Tolstenko is not currently employed by CFU.

[Source 1](#)

## [Source 2](#)

### **Igor Lipsits**

**Date: September 1, 2023**

**Violation: forced resignation**

**Institution: National Research University Higher School of Economics (Moscow)**

HSE administration unilaterally changed the terms of the contract with professor Igor Lipsits. As a result, he was forced to refuse the other positions offered to him—as an accountant or a dishwasher. Formally, the university complied with the requirement of the law—it offered the professor “other options.”

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

### **Ivan Zolotov**

**Date: November 10, 2023**

**Violation: fine, dismissal**

**Institution: Ural Technological College (MEPhI branch in Zarechnoye)**

College teacher Ivan Zolotov published poems expressing an anti-war stance on his VKontakte page and was fined for “discrediting the army.” Zolotov’s colleagues, primarily the head of the college’s security department, reported the poems to the administration. After this, he was fired. A teacher had previously been fined for displaying an anti-war poster on a local church building.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

### **Sergey Abramov**

**Date: April 12, 2023**

**Violation: arrest**

**Institution: The A. K. Ailamazyan Program Systems Institute of RAS**

Corresponding Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences Sergei Abramov was arrested on charges of Part 1 of Art. 283 on “financing an extremist organization” (up to 5 years in prison), then released under house arrest. The details of the accusation are unknown, but perhaps it is about a donation to Alexei Navalny’s Anti-Corruption Foundation. In November, he was scheduled for a psychiatric examination. Observers have suggested that the nature of his work with supercomputers may be the real reason for the persecution. An attempt by some academicians to publicly support the persecuted scientist was not supported by the Presidium of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

### **Center for East European and International Studies (ZOiS, Berlin)**

**Date: October 13, 2023**

**Violation: recognition as an undesirable organization**

The German research organization Zentrum für Osteuropa- und Internationale Studium (ZOiS) has been declared undesirable based on its research and publications, which, according to the Prosecutor General's Office, “promotes hatred towards Russia and its leadership,” in particular, through sending its materials to German state agencies and the media.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

### **Valery Garbuzov**

**Date: September 2, 2023**

**Violation: dismissal**

**Institution: RAS Institute for US and Canadian Studies**

Garbuzov, director of the RAS Institute for US and Canadian Studies and corresponding member of the Russian Academy of Sciences, published an article in Nezavisimaya Gazeta in which he criticized Russian foreign policy. After this, he was fired under the “initiative of the founding institution” article (that is, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education). Dismissal due to the expression of views that diverge from the official viewpoint is a gross violation of the principles of academic freedom.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

[Source 3](#)

### **Stanislav Kozlovsky**

**Date: December 19, 2023**

**Violation: forced resignation**

**Institution: Moscow State University named after M.V. Lomonosov**

The Faculty of Psychology of Moscow State University forced associate professor Stanislav Kozlovsky to resign on the grounds that he would allegedly soon be recognized as a “foreign agent.” At the same time, the alternative was either to resign yourself, or to be fired “for absenteeism.” The probable reason for the dismissal is the management of the Wikimedia.Ru project, which has recently been under pressure due to the publication of “fake stories” about the actions of the Russian army in Ukraine. It is significant that until now Kozlovsky has not been recognized as a foreign agent.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

[Source 3](#)

### **Kirill Kaverin**

**Date: October 5, 2023**

**Violation: expulsion**

**Institution: St. Petersburg State University (SPBGU)**

Kirill Kaverin, an activist and second-year student in the Political Science Department at St. Petersburg State University, took part in a protest against the demolition of the Basevich House in May 2023. He and other activists were detained by the police, and the Petrogradsky District Court of St. Petersburg arrested them for disorderly conduct. Kaverin spent 12 days under administrative arrest. In October 2023, First Vice-Rector of St. Petersburg State University for Youth Policy Alexander Babich signed an order to expel Kaverin. The evidence for the expulsion was a letter from the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs informing that Kaverin had been brought to administrative responsibility for participating in the spring protest.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

### **Dmitry Kuzmin**

**Date: September 26, 2023**

**Violation: expulsion**

**Institution: Russian State Pedagogical University in the name of A. I. Herzen**

Previously, Dmitry Kuzmin was expelled from St. Petersburg State University (SPbSU) for making anti-war statements and support for fired associate professor Mikhail Belousov. After that, he enrolled at the Herzen Russian State Pedagogical University. On September 26, Kuzmin held a solo anti-war picket demonstration. After the protest, according to Kuzmin, the disciplinary commission of the Russian State Pedagogical University decided to expel him. Over the past three months, Kuzmin has been detained at least five times while solo picketing in support of political prisoners.

[Source 1](#)

### **Alexander Chizhenok**

**Date: November 15, 2023**

**Violation: dismissal**

**Institution: St. Petersburg State University (SPbSU)**

Alexander Chizhenok, a famous journalist and teacher at the Higher School of Journalism and Mass Communications at St. Petersburg State University, put together a video with students expressing support for teacher Svetlana Drugoveyko-Dolzhanskaya, who was fired from St. Petersburg State University. The university fired Drugoveyko-Dolzhanskaya after she conducted an alternative examination in the case of artist Alexandra Skochilenko, who was sentenced to 7 years in prison. The students tried and were unable to get a comment from the university ethics committee. As a result, the story was not published and the teacher was fired. He described the situation as a "peaceful resolution," citing financial benefits from the dismissal and plans to devote more time to journalism. Chizhenok also continues to meet with students outside of St. Petersburg State University.

[Source 1](#)

### **Vladislav Galkin**

**Date: April 7, December 5, 2023**

**Violation: arrest**

**Institution: Tomsk Polytechnic University, Institute of Theoretical and Applied Mechanics named after. S.A. Khristianovich, Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Sciences**

Vladislav Galkin, PhD of physical and mathematical sciences and associate professor at Tomsk Polytechnic University, worked in the field of hypersonic technologies and was a regular co-author of colleague Valery Zvegintsev. On April 7, the Soviet court sent V.M. to Pre-Trial Detention Center No. 1 of the Federal Penitentiary Service for the Novosibirsk region. Galkin was accused under Art. 275 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation (treason), and on December 5, Galkin's arrest was extended until February 7, 2024. Galkin is accused of treason in the context of his work on hypersonic topics. Previously, Valery Zvegintsev was also accused of treason. Galkin and Zvegintsev published a number of materials in public sources, including studies of air intakes for supersonic aircraft.

[Source 1](#)

[Source 2](#)

[Source 3](#)

**Previous violations of academic freedom (from Fall 2022)**



### **Iskender Yasaveev**

**Date: December 10, 2022**

**Institution: St. Petersburg Higher School of Economics**

On October 10, 2022, the Higher School of Economics in St. Petersburg dismissed Iskender Yasaveev, a senior researcher at the Center for Youth Research. Yasaveev had worked at HSE since 2012.

**Notes:** The HSE administration decided not to renew the contract for part-time professor and research supervisor Iskender Yasaveev after a search of his apartment was conducted in August in connection with accusations of “justifying terrorism.” Yasaveev was not allowed to complete his current contract. It was terminated three days after Yasaveev was recognized as a foreign agent. The dismissal was motivated by Yasaveev’s refusal to continue working due to a change in the terms of his employment contract. The dismissal was in violation of the Labor Code. Yasaveev was not notified of the changes in the employment contract, and the dismissal order was sent to him by mail.

[Source](#)

### **Larisa Muravyova**

**Date: October 2022**

**Violation: forced resignation**

**Institution: St. Petersburg State University**

St. Petersburg State University forced Larisa Muravyova, a senior lecturer at the Department of Interdisciplinary Studies in Languages and Literature of the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, to write a letter of resignation of her own volition after she left Russia. The university did not agree on a remote working format for Muravyova.

**Notes:** In October 2022, Muravyova, a senior lecturer in the Liberal Arts and Sciences Department, was forced to leave Russia with her husband after the mobilization was announced. She submitted a memo to the management of St. Petersburg State University about changing the format of classes, which, like the note about granting leave at her own expense, was ignored. After unsuccessful attempts to legally negotiate with the administration, she wrote a letter of resignation.

[Source](#)

**Nikita Klyuev (verification required)**

**Date: November 2022 and Spring 2023**

**Violation: forced resignation and non-renewal of employment relationship**

**Institution: Higher School of Economics in Perm**

In the spring of 2023, the Higher School of Economics in Perm refused to renew the employment relationship with Associate Professor of the Humanities Department Nikita Klyuev.

**Notes:** In November 2022, Nikita Klyuev decided to resign of his own volition from the position of head of the marketing and communications center at the Higher School of Economics in Perm as a sign of his disagreement with the dismissal of Dinara Gagarina. HSE administration also forced Klyuev to write a letter of resignation from another side position as a part-time employee in the Humanities Department, citing the fact that it was impossible to hold a side position without having a main position. Klyuev had planned to apply for the summer teaching staff pool, but in the process, it turned out that the corresponding memo about the teacher's class load had not been prepared. The head of the department admitted that the decision not to admit Klyuev to the staff was political, spurred by his public anti-war stance. At the same time, the university still expressed a willingness to continue working with Klyuev through a civilian contract.

**Alexander Pogrebnyak**

**Date: October 2022**

**Violation: forced resignation**

**Institution: St. Petersburg State University**

St. Petersburg State University forced Alexander Pogrebnyak, associate professor of the Department of Interdisciplinary Synthesis in the Field of Social and Human Sciences of the Liberal Arts and Sciences Department, to write a letter of resignation "of his own volition" after he left Russia. The remote work format was not agreed upon with Pogrebnyak.

[Source](#)

**Elena Kabakova (verification required)**

**Date: March 2, 2023**

**Violation: dismissal, persecution**

**Institution: Pyatigorsk State University**

Associate Professor of Mathematics at Pyatigorsk State University Elena Kabakova was fired and fined 30,000 rubles for expressing anti-war views during class.

[Source](#)

**Zhanna Chernova**

**Date: August 2022**

**Violation: non-renewal of contract**

**Institution: St. Petersburg State University**

In August 2022, St. Petersburg State University did not approve the candidacy of Zhanna Chernova, a teacher at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, for the position of external part-time teacher for the next academic year. She directed the department's sociology and anthropology program.

**Notes:** In the spring of 2022, the rector's office began to complain that Zhanna Chernova was engaged in gender studies. Chernova was the supervisor of a student writing a thesis on gender. Following the prosecutor's audit, the student's thesis topic was changed, and in August Chernova was denied approval for her contract for the following academic year. The formal reason was that the university gives preference to teachers whose main place of work is St. Petersburg State University.

In the summer of 2022, St. Petersburg State University decided to make radical updates to the teaching staff of the Liberal Sciences and Arts Department. Zhanna Chernova became a casualty of the university's new personnel policy after a prosecutor's audit in 2021.

Sources: [1](#)), [2](#)

**Victor Kaplun**

**Date: August 30, 2022**

**Violation: non-renewal of contract**

**Institution: St. Petersburg State University**

In August 2022, St. Petersburg State University did not approve the candidacy of Viktor Kaplun, a lecturer at the Faculty of Liberal Arts and Sciences, for an external part-time position for the next academic year. He has taught at the faculty since 2006.

**Notes:** In August 2022, the candidacy of Viktor Kaplun for the position of external part-time employee was approved. On August 30, he was invited to sign an agreement at the HR department, but two hours later he was notified of a refusal to sign an agreement without explanation. Apparently, Kaplun was a victim of the overturn of the teaching staff following a prosecutor's audit in 2021.

Sources: [1\)](#) [2\)](#) [3\)](#)

*Photo by [Pavel Neznanov](#) on [Unsplash](#)*