

CHARLES UNIVERSITY IN PRAGUE
Faculty of Social Sciences
Institute of International Studies

PROTOCOL ON DIPLOMA THESIS ASSESSMENT
(Supervisor)

Name of the student: Olha Kotielnikova

Title: The EU response to the development in Belarus in 2021: the human rights scope

Supervisor:

Daniela Kolenovská

1. TOPIC AND OBJECTIVE (short information on the thesis, research objective):

The work focuses on the EU's response to human and political rights abuses in Belarus since August 2020. In the historical context of the joint European strategy towards Belarusian authoritarianism, the author analyses its current instruments to support democracy and the dynamics of their implementation. She questions the effectiveness of the sanctions imposed. In conclusion, the author evaluates the effectiveness of the overall EU Strategy and points to further potential improvements.

2. CONTENT (complexity, original approach, argument, structure, theoretical and methodological backing, work with sources, appropriateness of annexes etc.):

In general, the author turns to the research field that follows post-communist transformations. She tries to describe the possibilities of the core of democratization to effectively influence the political system of a post-communist country if the achieved democratic changes are reversed.

Primarily, she focuses on the strategy of the EU institutions, the European Council, the Commission and the European Parliament, which was not limited to the sanctions imposed in relation to Belarus, but also debated other activities in the period. According to the author, pragmatic approach prevailed maintaining positive relations until 2020.

The author points out that the EU initially responded to events in Belarus in a mechanical way with standard criticism and the traditional granting of asylum to refugees. Only after the internal political conflict crossed borders and endangered the security of member states, the EU began to create new tools. Nevertheless, the EU's complicated internal structure and openness to lobbying limited the new tools implementation and consistency.

3. FORMAL ASPECTS AND LANGUAGE (quality of language, citation style, graphics, formal aspects etc.):

Except for minor errors and typos, the language of the text meets formal requirements. Unfortunately, this is not the case of the working with sources. The initial search identified many various sources and authors; institutional, political, legislative, and scientific. However, it was not convincingly sorted in the thesis and caused a certain confusion in the argumentation and structure of the work. For example, even the widely referenced Y. Miadzvetskaya's position within the scientific debate was not identified. The work therefore did compile expert opinions but remained at the beginning of its own ambitious goal.

4. STATEMENT ON THE ORIGINALITY OF THE THESIS

The thesis was checked by the Turnitin/URKUND/Theses anti-plagiarism software and

Turnitin 27%

The relatively high percentage of similarity is due to extensive quotations and paraphrases, which are properly referenced in the text.

5. SHORT COMMENTS BY THE REVIEWER (overall impression, strengths and weaknesses, originality of ideas, achievement of the research objective etc.):

The unprecedented European response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine opened completely new perspectives on the EU's options towards Belarus. The political, professional, and even Belarusian public discussion on the chosen topic escalated sharply after February 2022. Many of the original views suddenly became obsolete. The work therefore seems little original in its conclusions. However, the author could only partially reflect such a sharp change in the already advanced project.

6. COOPERATION WITH THE SUPERVISOR (communication with the supervisor, ability to reflect comments, shift from the original intention, etc.)

Cooperation was standard at the beginning, it diminished during the summer semester because of the student's efforts to reorient the topic and goals in the changing international situation. We could therefore discuss the final text only briefly.

7. QUESTIONS AND COMMENTS THAT SHOULD BE ADDRESSED DURING THE DEFENCE:

1. What specific theoretical debates in which research fields does your thesis challenge?
2. Which EU body is crucial to the human and political rights protection and why?
3. How are the advocates of sanctions opposed in the EU and why?

8. (NON-)RECOMMENDATION AND SUGGESTED GRADE:

I recommend the thesis to the defence.

YES – C (on A-F scale)

Date:

Signature: