Culture as a factor of national and regional security

Why this matters for Europe

Culture is becoming increasingly important in today's geopolitical context. The escalation of conflicts and crises in the region requires an innovative approach to security and foreign policy structures.

According to the European External Action Service (2021) and EU conclusions, Europe's diverse tangible and intangible cultural heritage is a strategic asset and contributes to the resilience of societies. Therefore, the protection of culture is included within the framework of security and peacebuilding measures.

These challenges have deeply affected Belarusian society in the country and in exile. In order to draw Belarusians into the geopolitical conflict on its side, Russia uses the tactics of destroying Belarusian culture and manipulating historical facts. At the same time, it is precisely the European Belarusian culture – art, tangible and intangible cultural heritage – that shapes the aspiration for independence, conflict prevention, security and sustainable peace.

What we record and what we talk about

Culture is not an addition, but a key element of national security and a guarantee of independence. A strong cultural field is a protection against propaganda, information manipulation and complete absorption by Russia. Without taking into account the cultural factor, it is impossible to understand the risks of destabilization of Belarus and find sustainable solutions to preserve its sovereignty.

Belarus now faces a choice between the authoritarian model of the "Russian world" and the European path of development. And it is through culture and language that this confrontation takes place every day.

In the country, cultural venues, bookstores and festivals often turn into channels of Russian propaganda. At the same time, independent Belarusian culture faces systemic pressure and censorship: in order to organize an event, permits, lists of participants, and approval of works by ideologists are required. Even if all requirements are met, there is no guarantee that the event will take place.

Outside Belarus, many Belarusian artists balance between uncreative work and attempts to maintain themselves in the profession. Many are forced to assimilate into other cultures or leave the profession altogether.

At the same time, the demand for Belarusian culture is consistently high. Long lines for tickets, full halls for performances, interest in Belarusian books, language, and traditions - all this indicates that the Belarusian cultural field is alive and has strong growth potential.

Key findings

- Independent culture is a form of resistance and an investment in the democratic future of Belarus.
- Repression affects not only creators, but also consumers of cultural products.
- Culture unites different groups in society and creates a space for solidarity and self-determination.
- There is a willingness and demand, but there is a lack of systemic support, resources and coordination between creators, initiatives and partners in Belarus and abroad.
- Belarusian creators abroad, who have experienced the pressure of an authoritarian state, are a valuable resource for both the European cultural space and Belarus, but they need visa support, opportunities for professional implementation and integration into local programmes.
- There is a risk that future generations of Belarusians will not speak Belarusian and will not feel part of the Belarusian nation.
- Creative industries and their development are not only a factor in preserving meanings, but also an economic driver that creates jobs and new opportunities for economic growth.

Why this matters for Belarusians

National and civic identity is formed through language and culture. This is the most reliable protection against the imperial and Soviet heritage, which is now actively being restored through the “Russian world”.

Culture is a peaceful way of fighting for one’s rights and future. It is a tool of resistance that does not require violence, but unites people through creativity, memory and solidarity.

Preservation of Belarusian culture and language is a political choice. Without culture, Belarus risks losing its independence and turning into a Russian province.

Culture is the responsibility not only of creators, but of every Belarusian. Whether the nation will live and develop depends on our attitude towards culture.

Investing in culture is investing in a sustainable society that thinks critically, supports diversity, and is capable of self-organization. This is the path to a strong economy and a future of prosperity for the next generations.

The preservation, existence, and development of modern Belarusian culture is proof that the nation is alive and has a chance for a free and dignified life in Europe.