

On Violations of the Rights of Russian Citizens and Fellow Citizens in Foreign Countries

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Countries are listed in accordance with the alphabet of the Russian language

This Report is a continuation of the efforts made by the Ministry to attract attention to the problems related to violation of the rights of Russian citizens and fellow citizens in foreign countries. The MFA of Russia keeps these issues in the focus of its close attention during its work.

As demonstrated by the analysis conducted, since the issuing of the previous report, not only did no perceptible improvement of the situation take place in this sphere, but the state of affairs has worsened in multiple occasions. The specific problems faced by our fellow citizens in a number of countries that had prevailed in the previous year were augmented by overwhelming discrimination of Russians, including diplomats, in connection with the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine conducted by the Russian Federation; this discrimination was shocking by its absurdity.

Violations of Russians' rights in the "collective West" states were conducted on a mass scale. Among the most frequent violations, there may be named refusals to provide a wide range of services (educational, healthcare, banking, etc.), introduction of measures targeting the Russian business, attachment of Russian citizens' property, coercion to public repentance acts and to condemnation of the Russian government's actions, banning from sports competitions, music festivals and competitions as well as other cultural events, attacks, threats, insults, intentionally causing damage to property and, lastly, everyday discrimination: dismissal from work, eviction of Russian families from apartments notwithstanding residential lease agreements.

Russian history and art fell victims to the "cancel culture" trend. Calls to exclude the Russian ballet, literature, music from the global cultural heritage are pronounced on the highest level. Such endeavours often take quite unexpected and absurd forms, like, for example, renaming of pictures in the most known picture galleries of the world.

What gives rise to special concern is the widely spread discrimination of the most vulnerable part of the fellow citizens – children who have Russian

citizenship or just Russian origin. Humiliation and insults of pupils by their classmates, with indifferent and detached attitude, and even acquiescence of teachers, psychological pressure, purposeful creation of conditions impeding full-scale educational process – all these evidence the depth and extent of spreading of Russophobic attitudes in the Western community.

An outbreak of attacks on Russian diplomatic missions took place all over the world. Notably, such actions happened solely in those states that wage the sanctions war against our country. Their mass-scale and organized nature allows to conclude that these attacks are a planned action.

The most violent representatives of the "civilized Europe" did not shun even physical assaults at diplomats, as it happened in Vilnius in March 2022. And two months after that, in Warsaw, during the ceremony of laying flowers at the memorial cemetery of the Soviet soldiers, the Ambassador of the Russian Federation Sergey Andreev was doused with red liquid. On the same day, attempts to upset the memorial event were made when the Consul-General of the Russian Federation in Gdańsk Sergey Semenov was putting a wreath on the Soviet memorial. There should be added countless threats received by our diplomats and unprecedented psychological pressure. All these remain beyond any significant attention on the part of the official governments of the Western countries, who once assumed, on the international level, the obligation to protect diplomatic consular missions and their employees in their territories.

The anti-Russian campaign gave a powerful impetus to the efforts of Poland, Ukraine and the Baltic States aimed at fighting monuments and memorials in honour of the Red Army soldiers who had been killed in the battles for liberation of Europe from Nazism. Efforts, including those taken at the legislative level, to rewrite history and erase the "national memory" of the Russian communities of these states, grew in their intensity. The local authorities started mechanically producing legislative and administrative measures creating prerequisites for establishing, in various social life areas,

artificial restrictions for Russian-speaking residents, including for the latter's criminal prosecution for their preservation of their culture and support rendered to Russia.

Significant efforts are undertaken in order to conceal from the international community the Nazi nature of the Kyiv government's policy. It went as far as open vindication of Neo-Nazism supporters represented by the servicemen of the radical nationalist "Azov" Battalion and other similar Ukrainian extremist formations. Any mentioning of the numerous violent crimes committed by their members in the Donbas is meticulously excluded from the media landscape.

However, the problems that had existed before February 2022 remain relevant. During the reporting period, incidents of arrest and politically motivated prosecution of Russians, including based on third countries' inquiries, continued to be recorded. The "hunt" for our fellow citizens all around the world, unleashed by the American government, is going on. Against this background, a landmark event was the return of Konstantin Yaroshenko (who had been convicted under a falsified case and had spent more than ten years of his life in American prisons) to his Motherland.

Harassment of our fellow citizens living abroad continues. In a number of countries (first of all, in the Baltic states, the USA, Canada and in Ukraine) the governments are dissatisfied both by the position of the Russian-speaking community in favour of building up meaningful and pragmatic relations with our country and by the championing of the historical truth about the events of the Great Patriotic War and the Second World War (that is often not in compliance with the official interpretation of history in these states), as well as by the work for promotion of the Russian language, dissemination of knowledge about our country, participation in cultural and educational projects. Additionally, the governments of Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, and Ukraine make perceptible efforts for expulsion of the Russian language from all educational

institutions thereby placing restrictions on the right to be educated in their native language.

No less acute is the issue of observance the rights of Russians in detention facilities. There, our citizens still quite often face pressure, inadequate treatment by prison staff, refusal to provide the necessary medical assistance and to provide access to a lawyer, consular access of officials from the Russian institutions abroad to them is either impeded or totally prohibited. The situation remains most complicated in the penal institutions of the USA, Lithuania, and Ukraine.

On its part, the MFA of Russia continues to take all possible diplomatic steps for protection of the rights of those Russian citizens who have been imprisoned abroad. These cases are under the control of the Russian diplomatic missions and where necessary are brought up for discussion at the highest level. Diplomats provide to Russians consular support within their respective powers, seek unconditional observation of their lawful rights and interests, work on variants for changing their measures of restraint and transfer of the citizens to their home country for [further] serving of their punishment.

We also continue recording incidents concerning foreign countries authorities' impeding the activities of Russian journalists or persons representing the Russian media. The trend for preparation of information campaigns against foreign politicians and public persons cooperating with the Russian media persists and is developing in the foreign media sphere. All such actions evidence the West's aspiration to destroy any alternative point of view and prevent exercising one of the fundamental rights of its citizens – the right to free expression of their will that includes the freedom to search for, receive and disseminate various information and ideas, not depending on state borders. The biggest problems in this area are still recorded in France, the UK, Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, as well as in the United States and Ukraine.

This research has been prepared based on information and analytic materials received from the Russian diplomatic missions, using data from Russian and foreign media and other public sources. It records and systematizes communications of hundreds of fellow citizens regarding interference with their rights abroad, including communications that have been received by the hotlines established by the diplomatic missions.

We also proceed with information exchange with the relevant Russian non-government organizations that conduct their own respective monitoring. In this connection, we take note of the recent report and regular reviews prepared by the Moscow Human Rights Bureau. We believe that the analysis made by its experts is deep and deserves support. We hope for continuation of this work.

A number of country-specific situations is provided below.

Australia

The legal situation of Russian immigrants in Australia is basically satisfactory. Within the framework of the official multicultural policy, the country has created favourable conditions for preservation and promotion by the ethnic groups of their native culture, history, and traditions. During the almost age-long history of the Russian expatriate community in the "green continent" Russian language schools, Orthodox parishes, Russian homes, Cossack associations, charity institutions, veterans' associations, printed and Internet media, business communities, theatres, sports, folk, dancing, and other creative teams have been created. Our fellow citizens have the image of decent and law-abiding part of the Australian society and generally do not face discrimination on ethnic, language or religious grounds.

At the same time, Russian expatriate community activists' activities in the "green continent" are in the focus of close attention of local competent authorities. In particular, the Ataman of the Embassy Australian Division of the Union of Cossack Warriors of Russia and Abroad, S. Boykov, was interrogated concerning contacts with members of armed groups in Donbas.

Biased attitude to the [Russian] expatriate community is demonstrated on a regular basis by the Australian media, given their overall slanted highlighting of topics related to Russia. In August 2020, the Inside Story media website published an article by the intelligence ex-serviceman, now employee of the Australian National University K. Wilson, a specialist on Russia, where those our fellow citizens openly supporting the Russian policy were named "V. Putin's fifth column in Australia". In January 2021, the central TV channel ABC, in the same manner, demonstrated the film (termed as a documentary one) "Putin's Patriots: Russian Money and Influence in Australia", where several associations of our fellow citizens (including the local branches of the Union of Cossack Warriors of Russia and Abroad, motorcycle club "Night Wolves", etc.) were depicted as proxies of the allegedly malevolent Russian

influence on the "green continent".

Russian-speaking lawyers asked for advice by our fellow citizens are of the opinion that the Australian competent authorities generally have an unbiased approach to examination of situations related to foreigners, including those from Russia. This is confirmed by the monitoring conducted by the Russian diplomatic missions in Canberra and Sydney. Some particular violations of Russian compatriots' rights may be rather related to the remaining imperfections of the law enforcement system, e.g., to insufficient attention paid to applications of domestic violence victims (as the result thereof, a tragedy with the Russian citizen O. Edwards and her children happened in 2018).

There were incidents with arrests of fellow citizens. In April 2020, the police used brutal force when arresting the Sydney resident D. Moskovich at the beach for violation of epidemic-prevention rules. The case received wide public attention. Later on, the unlawfulness of the actions of the Australian law enforcement authorities was recognized, and all the charges against our fellow citizen were dismissed.

After the beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by the Russian Federation the hysteria whipped up by the Australian government and the Ukrainian community (including the Australian Federation of Ukrainian Organizations) affected the situation of the Russian citizens and fellow citizens living in the country. It is worth mentioning that the Russian service of the state radio station SBS and the NGO "Svoboda Alliance" joined the Russophobic campaign.

As the result of such aggressive brainwashing using intimidation and psychological pressure methods the Russian community began feeling fear. Some of its well-known representatives who had always been active participants of the work for preservation of the Russian language and culture even started "condemning" Russia in a spectacular manner.

Only some patriotic-minded fellow citizens proved to be ready to openly

express their views, thereby also creating a threat for them. Thus, on March 13, 2022, near the building of the Russian Consulate-General in Sydney, activists held a meeting in support of Russia and the Russians where representatives of friendly expatriate communities and some critically minded Australians were also present. TASS correspondent A.B. Arakayeva who was highlighting this event received threats from pro-Ukrainian associations.

In Australia, people of Russian origin face demonstration of hostile attitude in various spheres of social life. That is evidenced by numerous applications of our fellow citizens to the Russian Embassy. Among other things, they point to unfriendliness towards them in everyday life and creation of the atmosphere of intolerance for Russian pupils in schools.

There should be also mentioned the fact that the Australian authorities take efforts not to allow any possible conflicts in public places. Thus, it is known that the police take preventive measures to protect the Russian Orthodox churches in Sydney and Melbourne against possible deliberately manufactured incidents.

Austria

The overall peaceful situation with Russian citizens in Austria drastically changed after the beginning of Russia's special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine. As the result of the strengthening manifestations of the "cancel culture", all that is Russian or associated with Russia is subjected to stigmatization and discrimination.

The Austrian Government adopts strongly pronounced anti-Russian positions. On February 25, 2022, the Federal Chancellor K. Nehammer in his speech before the media following the meeting of the National Security Council of Austria mentioned the need for restrictions on the freedom of movement and private property of Russian businessmen.

Our fellow citizens in Austria are subjected to pressure, threats and bullying for their pro-Russian statements.

Massive attacks on websites of the Russian fellow citizens' organizations websites were recorded. Thus, the "Russian-speaking Vienna" group in Facebook (the largest fellow citizens' groups in the social media, with over 30,000 subscribers), after its refusal to publish fake Ukrainian videos was subjected to a large-scale attack of «trolls» and further blocked. Along with that, calls began for blocking another large virtual community – "Russian Austria – Russisches Österreich". The formal reason therefor was the fact that the community administrator published with regard to the events in Ukraine nothing but neutral communications about organization of gathering aid for Ukrainian refugees. On March 2, 2022, there was a DDoS-attack on the largest Russian-language website in Austria, Austria Today.RU. After receiving threats, the web portal chief editor A. Kuzin stopped publishing updates on the website.

Discrimination of Russian citizens and fellow citizens in Austria went beyond the Internet. The Russian Embassy received communications about incidents related to biased attitude towards Russian children in schools and kindergartens. Our fellow citizens also reported that educational institutions presented materials about Russia and the events in Ukraine in a biased manner.

There were also recorded acts of vandalism in respect of cars with Russian license plates.

Austrian banks, including such large banking institutions as Erste Bank and Raiffeisenbank, block accounts of Russians residing in the country without any warning whatsoever and refuse them in opening accounts. Thus, Erste Bank orally refused to open an account for a Trade Mission employee who had stayed in Austria less than half a year, referring to "internal instructions". As the result, our fellow citizens are devoid of opportunity to pay for their basic needs including housing and rental payments, healthcare services, etc.

Austrian cultural and educational institutions joined the campaign "to cancel" Russia. Thus, in February 2022 Brucknerhaus Linz Concert Hall terminated its agreements with the Saint Petersburg Music House and cancelled

the musical "Russian Tuesdays" for the current season and for 2022/23. On March 1, 2022, the Salzburg Festival stated that they did not see any grounds for creative cooperation with institutes and individuals from Russia. Also, in the beginning of March 2022, the director of the Vienna concert house (Konzerthaus) M. Naske announced his intention to stop the cooperation with persons who were not supporting Ukraine in the Russian-Ukrainian conflict. The communication posted on the concert hall's website says that the concert hall management, as previously, in particular cases will consider whether the views of particular artists were in correlation with those adopted in the Konzerthaus. On March 16, 2022, the presidentship of the Universities of Innsbruck and Salzburg, in their communications published on their websites, informed about termination of the agreements with Russkiy Mir Foundation and about their intention to restate and amend the contents of the work concepts of the Russian centres functioning at the aforementioned Universities.

The Austrian side refused to the Ambassador of Russia and diplomats of the Embassy participation in the memorial actions dedicated to the 77th anniversary of the end of the Second World War in Europe (May 8 – solemn ceremony at the Office of the Federal Chancellor, May 15 – commemorative event at the memorial complex located at the place of the former Mauthausen concentration camp).

Albania

After the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation began the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine and protection of the Donbas civilians, the Albanian government expressed their full solidarity with the collective West in evaluation of Russia's actions.

The government of the country joined the anti-Russian sanctions however refraining from adoption of any law or regulation aimed at restriction of rights of Russian or Russian-speaking residents of the country and Russian citizens.

At the same time, the Albanian authorities demonstrate full support for

the activities of the Ukrainian Embassy that organized a number of anti-Russian actions and meetings in front of the Russian diplomatic mission offices, with participation of representatives of the Ukrainian community. Students at the Tirana State University also took part in such events, and it is known that the respective campaigning among them was conducted (apart from other persons) by teachers of Ukrainian origin. All these actions were largely highlighted in the Albanian media.

Belgium

In Belgium, the situation of Russian citizens was satisfactory. However, after the beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, growth of unfriendly attitudes towards Russian citizens and persons of Russian origin is observed in the country. In some cases, this concerns "local initiatives", when certain Belgians, being under the influence of the pro-Ukrainian propaganda dominating in the Western Europe, proactively introduce their own anti-Russian restrictions.

Thus, some private entrepreneurs, without explaining the reasons thereof, refuse from cooperation with Russian legal entities or from servicing Russian individuals. For example, the Russian Embassy in Brussels had to search for replacement for a few firms who had been providing to it goods and services for a prolonged period. There are recorded cases when enterprises establish self-restrictions for contacts with Russians fearing to fall within the scope of the already active or potential new sanctions.

On the national and EC level, there are calls to stop issuing visas to Russians. The Migration Issues Secretary S. Mahdi particularly stated this. Simultaneously, the Belgian authorities demonstrate their readiness to increase the number of the accepted refugees. This leads to the worsening of the situation in the migration sphere, including due to the fact that the unlawful business for illegal transfer of immigrants from the countries of the Middle East and North

Africa to Europe establishes transit channels via the territory of Ukraine. This was pointed out, in particular, by the representative of the extreme right-wing "Flemish Interest" Party D. van Longenhoven, who noted that, of all asylum seekers stating that they were of Ukrainian origin, every third person had no relation to Ukraine whatsoever.

Governments of certain Belgian regions undertake discriminatory actions against Russian citizens. In particular, such a decision was taken by the Flanders Government who had closed the opportunity for Russians to take part in the Mastermind student exchange programme. However young people who are already in the Flanders may continue their education. But the respective bodies will not consider new scholarship applications "until the end of the armed hostilities in Ukraine". The Minister of Education of the Flanders B. Veits announced this in his account in Twitter.

Bulgaria

In 2021, no mass-scale violations of the rights of Russian citizens and fellow citizens in Bulgaria were recorded.

But there were two headline-making incidents with the arrest of our citizens. Thus, a Russian citizen was arrested in March 2021 as a member of the group of Bulgarian citizens accused of intelligence activity in favour of the Russian Federation (she also has Bulgarian citizenship). On March 22, 2022, the Sofia Military Court of Appeal released her on bail of EUR 1,000. In October 2021, a Russian citizen was apprehended and detained at the Kulata border control point while crossing the Bulgaria and Greece border. Arsenal Company (a large manufacturer and exporter of firearms and ammunition), where the Russian had been previously employed, accused him of industrial espionage and theft. Later on, accusations of transportation and attempted smuggling of explosives were added. In December 2021, the Plovdiv Court of Appeal took the decision to change the measure of restraint, so the Russian was released on a EUR 9,000 bail.

Russian diplomatic missions in Bulgaria stay connected with the apprehended citizens and their lawyers. The Embassy Consular Division diplomats repeatedly visited them in pre-trial detention facilities, took part in court hearings, and sent the respective appeals to the Bulgarian prosecutors' offices concerning the conditions of their detention and medical support.

After the beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the Bulgarian government adopted a definite anti-Russian position.

On March 1, 2022, the Council for Electronic Media of Bulgaria took the decision on temporary restriction of broadcasting of "Russia Today" TV channel, "Sputnik" news agency and their related media in the territory of the country (<https://www.cem.bg/displaybg/795>). Their technical blocking was performed on the same day. Other information resources intended for the Russian audience, in particular "Rusia dnes – Russia today", continue their work.

Users of electronic apps of Russian banks (e.g., Sberbank Online) face practical difficulties with their use. The Russian Embassy received applications from our citizens who note that Internet providers block the activities of the respective Russian resources.

The management of the Bulgarian bank UniCredit Bulbank (a subsidiary of the Italian UniCredit) informed the Embassy representatives about the beginning of checks in respect of Russian individuals and legal entities that increased the time period for performance of banking operations.

At the same time, no open demonstrations of discrimination of Russians and Russian-speaking residents were observed on the part of the Bulgarian population. According to the recent surveys, over 46 per cent of Bulgarian nationals maintain a positive attitude to Russia in general.

UK

There was no evidence of mass-scale violations of the Russian citizens'

rights in the UK, including in detention facilities, before the beginning of the special operation of Russia for demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine. Russian citizens applied to the Consular Division of the Embassy mainly on issues of family dispute concerning parental rights division, in particular determining the procedure for children's residence with one or the other parent. Such situations occur both in Russian and mixed couples. Such cases are controlled by Russian diplomatic missions in London and Edinburgh, our fellow citizens are provided advice, and where necessary the Russian representatives take part in court sessions.

On the whole, Russian citizens are deeply integrated into the local society, and for this reason they had neither faced any interference with their rights based on national, ethnic, or religious grounds, nor any other harassment before 2022. During the year 2021, the Russian Embassy received some sporadic information from our fellow citizens regarding biased attitude of the other population in connection to publications in the local media about the alleged close ties of the Russian community with intelligence services.

No facts of the British authorities' impeding the activities of organizations of Russian fellow citizens and their "hobby" clubs were recorded. In particular, the Association for Assistance to Fellow Citizens in the UK created in March 2020, whose main task is increasing legal literacy of representatives of the Russian expatriate community and assistance in resolving social and domestic issues.

The situation drastically changed against the background of the events in Ukraine in February 2022, when incidents of stigmatization of Russians and Russian-speaking citizens started being recorded everywhere. The respective application still regularly comes to the Embassy's e-mail. Owners of public places of resort began widely using leaflets with the slogan "GOOD Russian = DEAD Russian". Social media were filled with Russophobic comments containing threats both addressed to the Russian leadership and

targeting ordinary ethnic Russians and event people indirectly related to Russia or the former USSR territory.

The building of the Embassy Consular Division was attacked; the "activists" threw eggs at it and broke the windows of the reception hall for individuals. Contrary to the international legal obligations of the UK, the Russian diplomats were subjected to restrictions on their right to work and fair and favourable work conditions, to access to any type of service meant for public uses and to personal security and protection by the state. In particular, it concerns the restriction of access to the Embassy's bank account and the refusal of the official BMW dealer from servicing the Embassy's car fleet, disconnecting the so-called "alarm button" in the buildings of the Embassy and the Residential Quarters of the Ambassador of the Russian Federation in Great Britain, as well as in the country residential quarters, penetration to the territory of the country residential quarters and damaging of its property.

Anti-Russian hysteria did not spare the spheres of culture and sports. Thus, the British auctioneers Christie's, Sotheby's and Bonhams refused to hold auctions in Russian art objects.¹ The Royal Birmingham Conservatoire banned its Russian graduate from participation in a music competition in Dubai.² The Cardiff Philharmonic Orchestra, in its turn, refused to hold a concert dedicated to the legacy of P. Tchaikovsky. The official statement on the cultural institution's website said that the presentation of the programme including the 1812 Overture would "be inappropriate at this time".³ The Royal Opera House

1 Sotheby's, Christie's and Bonhams call off Russian art auctions in response to war in Ukraine. The Art Newspaper. March 16, 2022

<https://www.theartnewspaper.com/2022/03/15/sothebys-christies-call-off-russian-art-auctions-ukraine-war>

2 Controversy as young Russian pianists banned from international music competitions. Classic FM. March 10, 2022.

<https://www.classicfm.com/discover-music/instruments/piano/young-russians-banned-international-competitions/>

3 Cardiff Philharmonic removes Tchaikovsky performance over Ukraine conflict. The Guardian. March 9, 2022. <https://www.theguardian.com/uk-news/2022/mar/09/cardiff-philharmonic-orchestra-removes-tchaikovsky-over-ukraine-conflict>

cancelled a planned residency by the Moscow's Bolshoi Ballet in London.⁴ The London National Gallery took the decision to rename the painting by E. Degas "Russian Dancers" as "Ukrainian Dancers", at the request of the Ukrainian artist M. Nayem.⁵

Russian teams and racers were banned from participation in any car racing competitions in the territory of the UK. In particular, the Russian Formula 1 pilot N. Mazepin was banned from the Grand Prix of the UK.⁶ Russian tennis players also faced the threats of being banned from tournaments. Thus, D. Medvedev was asked to publicly renounce the Russian special operation, this being the condition for his participation in Wimbledon.⁷

In Oxford, marauders looted the church of St Nicholas the Wonderworker. The altar was ravaged; the holy relics, altar vessels and crucifix were stolen. There church's bookshop and donation box (for the donations that the parishioners collected for refugees from Ukraine) were looted. The police were informed about the incident and are investigating it.⁸

In Warrington, the local authorities tried to close a Russian school where children from Latvia, Lithuania and Ukraine studied, among others. The educational space for them was preserved by preparation of a respective petition⁹.

In order to cut off access to British banks for wealthy Russians, it is

4 Bolshoi Ballet run cancelled by Royal Opera House. The Times. February 26, 2022

<https://www.thetimes.co.uk/article/bolshoi-ballet-run-cancelled-by-royal-opera-house-mk5vsftqh>

5 The London National Gallery renamed the "Russian Dancers". Rossiyskaya Gazeta. April 5, 2022

https://rg.ru/2022/04/05/londonskaia-nacionalnaia-galereia-pereimenovala-russkih-tancovshchic.html?utm_source=yxnews&utm_medium=desktop

6 Motorsport UK announces actions in response to the situation in Ukraine. Motorsport UK. March 2, 2022

<https://www.motorsportuk.org/news/motorsport-uk-announces-actions-in-response-to-the-situation-in-ukraine/>

7 Daniil Medvedev could be banned from Wimbledon unless he denounces Vladimir Putin. Independent. August 16, 2022

<https://www.independent.co.uk/sport/tennis/daniil-medvedev-putin-russia-wimbledon-b2037376.html>

8 <https://www.facebook.com/StNOrthodox/posts/4911983808877140>

9 https://www.change.org/p/stop-closing-schools-for-teaching-russian-to-children?recruiter=870918672&recruited_by_id=d00a7980-40f6-11e8-b3e5-a7d7d17dbdf4&utm_source=share_petition&utm_campaign=share_petition&utm_term=psf_combo_share_initia&utm_medium=copylink&utm_content=cl_sharecopy_32672193_en-GB%3A6

planned to establish a limit for accounts in the amount of 50,000 pounds.¹⁰

And lastly, the Soviet War Memorial Trust Fund refused to hold in 2022 the memorial events dedicated to the Victory Day, which it had been organizing in the previous years.

As far as Russian journalists and media sphere workers are concerned, they have been facing serious harassment for several years.

In July 2015, due to the personal sanctions introduced by the EC in respect of Director General of IMG Rossiya Segodnya D. Kiselev, the British Barclays Bank froze the account of the London office of RIA Novosti. The explanations (including those provided by lawyers) that D. Kiselev was not the owner of this media were ignored. At the present moment, representatives of RIA Novosti in the UK are still unable to use their corporate bank account, and this impedes normal work of the news office.

Starting from February 2016, the Channel One correspondent T. Siraziyevev, who had come to the UK, has not been able to open an account with NatWest Bank, nor in any other bank. The reasons for the refusal are not explained to him. This issue has not been resolved as of today, significantly complicating the correspondent's work in the territory of the country.

In February 2016, HSBC bank closed the corporate account of the British office of Russia-1 channel, and the personal account of the Chief reporter A. Khabarov, without explaining the reasons thereof.

Starting from December 2018, RT TV channel is the subject of the proceedings initiated by the British media regulator, Ofcom, under the pretext of violation of the "impartiality" principle of the Broadcasting Code. It concerns seven news releases that went on the air from March 17 to April 26, 2018 (two of them were dedicated to the topic of the incident in Salisbury and the others to the situation of glorification of Nazism in Ukraine and military action in Syria).

¹⁰ Foreign Secretary imposes UK's most punishing sanctions to inflict maximum and lasting pain on Russia.
<https://www.gov.uk/government/nes/foreign-secretary-imposes-uks-most-punishing-sanctions-to-inflict-maximum-and-lasting-pain-on-russia>

Not waiting for the decision of the High Court of London, Ofcom published the results of its investigation in respect of the aforementioned RT materials and awarded a demonstrative fine of 200,000 pounds. In its appeal against the media regulator's actions, prepared with the aid of British lawyers, RT submitted exhaustive arguments defeating Ofcom's accusations. The main provision of RT's appeal consisted in the allegation that the British media regulator had not performed its obligations provided for by paragraph 3 of the British 1998 Human Rights Act, pursuant to which Ofcom shall interpret and apply the "due impartiality" principle in full conformity with Article 10 of the European Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, in particular ensure the freedom of individual citizens and the media "to receive and impart information and ideas without interference by public authority and regardless of frontiers." Additionally, RT pointed out that Ofcom did not take into consideration the fact that in highlighting the incident in Salisbury the British media acted within the framework of the dominating attitudes that the poisoning of Sergey and Yulia Skripal was realized "on the instruction of the Kremlin". In this connection, RT did not consider it necessary, within the framework of its news releases, to additionally explain the position of the British government concerning the incident in Salisbury and put emphasis on explanation of the Russian party's position in this case.

After considering the appeal in June 2019, the High Court of London acknowledged that the RT lawyers have submitted a provable set of arguments that must be fully analysed and allowed RT to challenge the media regulator's decision in further judicial proceedings. However, in the end of March 2020 the same court dismissed RT's claims to declare unlawful the fine of 200,000 pounds imposed by Ofcom. Judge D. Dingemans termed as vague the argument of RT regarding the dominating attitudes for the media. The references of the TV channel representatives to the fact that the requirement for ensuring impartiality contradicted the principle of freedom to hold opinions

were rejected. The court decision stated that the only requirements was to ensure in RT news releases the balance of opinions guaranteeing due impartiality.

In April 2020, RT repeatedly lodged an appeal with the High Court of London regarding this case, providing additional explanations of its position. The appeal was dismissed in the end of 2021. RT management is planning to continue the proceedings and is preparing an appeal for lodging with the European Court of Human Rights.

Sputnik information agency also faces restrictions in the UK. In 2019, together with RT TV channel correspondents, it was refused accreditation for highlighting the Global Conference for Media Freedom. The British Foreign Office, referring to Ofcom's accusations, explained the refusal by the "active role of RT and Sputnik in spreading disinformation. J. Hunt, who was then holding the office of the Secretary of State for Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, officially supported banning from the event the representatives of RT TV channel and Sputnik agency, saying that they were not free media but voices of the Russian Government.

A comparable situation was repeated in December 2019 when a RT employee was firstly accredited but later not allowed to the NATO summit. After arrival at the media centre, the representative of RT was apprehended by the local security service. After that, police officers searched the journalist, checked his documents and equipment, and announced the cancellation of his accreditation. The police justified their actions by the provisions of the Terrorism Act. RT's inquiries sent to the NATO summit organizing committee and to this organization were left without explanations.

The conditions in which Russian media representatives have to work in Britain remain complicated even now. First of all, this is connected to the constant pressure exerted by the country's government. Our correspondents face difficulties with obtaining information as well as with establishing contacts.

There are examples where Russian journalists have to wait for a long time for the British authorities' decision to prolong their business visas, that actually "tying" them to a certain place and impeding full-fledged journalistic activity. Moreover, all these are worsened also by the extremely complicated situation of initial issuing British visas to representatives of the Russian media.

Against this background, no surprising that, in the British media regulator's opinion, highlighting of the Russian military operation for demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine should be realized solely from a pro-Western point of view. Due to RT's refusal to characterize the situation there as "invasion of the territory of a sovereign state", RT lost its broadcast license in the UK. In substantiation of its decision, Ofcom referred to the twenty-nine ongoing investigations in respect of this media for the purpose of checking into the "due impartiality" of its coverage of the news and affairs in Ukraine.¹¹

Hungary

In Hungary, the situation of the Russian citizens residing in the country does not cause any concern, as no incidents of their biased prosecution have been recorded.

At the same time, starting from mid-2019, there are observed increasing incidents of refusals to extend residence permits for a number of Russian citizens and their further deportation under the pretext of threat to the country's national security. The Russian Embassy in Hungary has available information about more than ten instances of deportation of Russians and banning them from entry to the Schengen countries for a period from 5 years and more. Following all court sessions, the extradition decisions have been upheld. Our citizens' lawyers cannot fully familiarize themselves with the casefiles as the initiator of extradition is the Constitution Protection Authority of Hungary,

¹¹ Ofcom revokes RT's broadcast license. Ofcom. March 18, 2022
<https://www.ofcom.org.uk/news-centre/2022/ofcom-revokes-rt-broadcast-licence>

therefore the investigation materials are confidential. Many decisions are challenged with the European Court of Human Rights.

In connection with the beginning of the special military operation in Ukraine some Hungarian institutions began refusing provision of some types of services to Russians. Thus, CBI bank refused to open a bank account for transferring scholarship to Alexander and Vladimir, students of the Óbuda University in Budapest.¹²

Greece

After Russia's recognizing the independence of the DPR and the LPR and beginning of the special military operation in Ukraine, the Greek government actively supported the restrictive measures against our country, introduced by the European Union, and declared its course for scaling down bilateral cooperation in all spheres including the cultural and humanitarian one. On March 1, 2022, the Minister of Culture and Sports of Greece informed about the decision "to postpone all events with participation of all Russian cultural organizations, cooperation therewith and discussion of any joint plans." In the end of March, a number of cultural events, including the concerts of the "Moscow Soloists" chamber ensemble directed by Yu.A. Bashmet, were cancelled in Athens and Thessaloniki.

Athens joins the European Commission's decision of March 2, 2022, to ban broadcasting of the TV channel Russia Today and work of Sputnik agency and their subsidiaries in the EU. Access to Sputnik Greece website and Russia 24 TV channel was terminated in the country. The Greek media unfolded an unprecedented campaign for discrediting Russia, warmed up by the anti-Russian statements of officials. Access for the Greek public to objective information about the events in Ukraine and the Russian approaches was significantly impeded; extreme anti-Russian highlighting of materials dominates

¹² Violations of the rights of Russian citizens and fellow citizens abroad in the period of the events in Ukraine in March – April 2022. Monitoring review by the Moscow Human Rights Bureau.

in the media landscape. Information and explanatory work conducted by the Russian Embassy in Athens and by the Consulate-General in Thessaloniki is subjected to defamation.

There were acts of vandalism in respect of monuments related to our country. On March 19, 2022, unknown persons painted the name and symbols of the Ukrainian Azov nationalist battalion on the Monument to the Soviet soldiers who died for the freedom and independence of Greece in 1941-1944.¹³ On March 25, 2022, the monument to Admiral F.F. Ushakov on the isle of Corfu was splashed with paint and the Russian flag was torn off from the composition. The local law enforcement authorities began investigating these incidents, but no results have been achieved as of the present moment. The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation initiated criminal proceedings based on the facts of these offences.

Russian and Russian-speaking individuals face demonstration of aggression and bullying, mostly on the part of nationalistically minded persons of Ukrainian origin. On April 3, 2022, a group of Ukrainians attacked the participants of the motor rally "For Peace! For Russia! For Greece!" in the Greek capital. Due to this, a seven-year-old girl, a Russian citizen, suffered, she received bodily injuries as the result thereof. The Investigative Committee of the Russian Federation initiated criminal proceedings based on the facts of the offence. On April 24, 2022, a Russian citizen was beaten by Ukrainians on a beach in Athens. In one of the Greek schools, a six-form pupil from a mixed Russian-Greek family was beaten by her classmates and had to be taken to a hospital after the injuries.¹⁴

There are instances of discrimination of Russians residing in Greece by the local banks. Our fellow citizens' accounts are blocked without explanation

13 Violations of the rights of Russian citizens and fellow citizens abroad in the period of the events in Ukraine in March – April 2022. Monitoring review by the Moscow Human Rights Bureau.

14 Violations of the rights of Russian citizens and fellow citizens abroad in the period of the events in Ukraine in March – April 2022. Monitoring review by the Moscow Human Rights Bureau.

of the reasons.

The Russians accused of transportation of illegal immigrants from the Middle East and North Africa countries are detained in Greek prison facilities. Taking into consideration that offences of this type are qualified in Greece as especially serious, most of them have been convicted to long-term imprisonment. Our citizens did not lodge any complaints with the Russian diplomatic missions regarding their detention conditions, health state or inadequate treatment by the prison authorities. They are provided necessary assistance via the consulates. Where necessary, humanitarian aid in the form of clothes, footwear, essential household items, books are provided.

Denmark

In Denmark, the legal situation of our fellow citizens is generally satisfactory; no demonstrations of discrimination on the basis of their ethnic origin have been recorded.

At the same time, there are instances of the Danish authorities' late informing of the Russian Embassy about incidents with arrests of our citizens and failure to provide them with timely medical assistance. In some cases, private clinics refused to provide medical assistance. Though the law enforcement authorities of the Kingdom formally provide consular access to the detained Russians, however the periods for approval of such visits are dragged on by them from time to time.

After the beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by Russia, the Danish government adopted a definite anti-Russian position in line with the Western approaches. Thus, there were reports in the media about using the Kingdom's territory for cyber-attacks on Russian institutions. However, the participants of these attacks have not been brought to liability.

The Danish authorities do not impede open recruitment by the Ukrainian Embassy in the Kingdom of Denmark of nationals and citizens of other

countries for participation in the military hostilities in Ukraine.

The aggressive activities of the Ukrainian Embassy, violating the provisions of the Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations is not limited to recruitment of mercenaries. The information resources of this diplomatic mission are also used to disseminate photo and video materials about tortures, humiliations, and violent killings of Russian military servicemen in Ukraine. The Ukrainian Embassy also stirs up interethnic hatred disseminating in the Internet insults aimed at Russians and calls to kill Russians.

Though the government of Denmark has not taken any legislative steps confirming discrimination of Russians and representatives of the Russian-speaking community, people originating from our country face interference with their rights. Our fellow citizens' associations receive feedback from our compatriots who complain of "unfavourable information background and psychological discomfort". Some Russian citizens confirm that they regularly fall victims to the all-national policy of "cleaning out" all that is Russian, including mentioning this word in names of non-commercial organizations. Thus, two fellow citizens organizations had to change their names because of the warnings they had been receiving about possible consequences in the form of refusal to provide premises or termination of funding by the local community.

Ireland

The analysis of the legal situation of the Russian fellow citizens in Ireland in 2021 showed no serious violations of their rights and freedoms. Only similar signals of demonstration of some elements of "everyday" nationalism by the local population, affecting – apart from persons of Russian origin – representatives of other ethnic communities residing in the country, were recorded.

After the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation had begun the special military operation in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, many Russian-speaking

persons, including Russian citizens, faced bullying at work, in schools, in civic organizations, as well as the stirred up anti-Russian campaign in the Irish media. (Among other measures, there can be mentioned the decision of the Raidió Teilifís Éireann (RTE) TV and radio broadcasting corporation to rename the popular weekly Russian-language programme about Russian culture "Russian Hour" at Dublin City 103.2 FM radio station as "Kaleidoscope"). In this connection, the Coordination Council of the Russian Fellow Citizens Organizations in Ireland organized the work for recording such cases, informing the Embassy thereof, and also assisted the affected persons in drawing up applications to the local law enforcement authorities or to deputies of the Irish representative authority. The Coordination council also prepared a petition to the Irish Parliament requesting to take measures to protect the Russian expatriate community and Russian language against discrimination. Special attention was paid in the document to prevention of mistreatment of Russian-speaking schoolchildren and students.

Russophobic attitudes also affected the Russian diplomatic mission in Ireland. On March 7, 2022, an unknown person in a lorry ran through the gate of the Russian Embassy in Dublin. The police were looking at that but did not take any measures to prevent it.

Spain

The overall peaceful situation with the Russians living in Spain drastically changed after the beginning of the special military operation in Ukraine by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

Against the atmosphere of intolerance towards all that is Russian, whipped up, among others, by the Spanish authorities, as well as the wide-scale anti-Russian campaign unfolded in the media, instances of discrimination of Russians residing in Spain began to be recorded. Thus, drastic growth of negative attitudes to compatriots in everyday life is noted. Besides, there is increased spreading of anti-Russian speech in social media. Messages regarding

fighting with "Russian World promoters" come to Russian-language chats in Spain. These messages contain calls to collect information and personal data of Russians on a specially designated website. They promise to publish the collected materials in the media and send them to the Spanish authorities (the Foreigners' Bureau in Madrid). This "database" of Russians by its nature is similar to the notorious Ukrainian website Myrotvorets.

Our fellow citizens informed the Russian diplomatic missions about instances of discrimination of children of the Russian citizens residing in Spain as well as of their regular bullying in Spanish schools.

Spanish banks impeded up to mass-scale blocking of accounts both for the fellow citizens permanently residing in Spain and for the Russian diplomats. All our citizens, notwithstanding whether residents of the country or not, experienced problems with opening, servicing and replenishment of accounts and cards. As the result of such restrictions our citizens could not pay for the basic services including healthcare services, rent of housing, insurance services, etc. Thus, for example, in the end of March 2022, a Russian family informed that the bank Sabadell refused to replace them a card with expired validity period with a new one, nor did they give out cash from the account. The reason given was that they were Russian.

The Madrid restaurant Nordin from time to time receives telephone calls with threats. Though its owner is from Morocco, his wife is of Russian origin. Some clients refused to visit this place, and its profits decreased twice.¹⁵

The unfolding anti-Russian hysteria also affected the honorary consuls of Russia (all of them Spanish citizens), who were subjected to aggressive rebukes and threats.

There were recorded cases where the Ministry of Transport of Spain temporarily seized the movable property (yachts) of the Russian citizens.

¹⁵ Violations of the rights of Russian citizens and fellow citizens abroad in the period of the events in Ukraine in March – April 2022. Monitoring review by the Moscow Human Rights Bureau.

According to the authorities, these actions are aimed at checking the ownership rights and establishing the possible appurtenance of the property to individuals and legal entities included in the EU sanctions lists.

Italy

No cases of politically motivated prosecution of Russian citizens have been recorded before 2022. Applications from our citizens who are in detention facilities or prisons, received by the Russian diplomatic missions, are as a rule reviewed together with the administrations of the respective facilities and, where necessary, with participation of lawyers.

At the same time, the restrictions imposed by Italian courts on Russian citizens' parental rights in respect of their minor children remain quite an acute problem. Concerns are raised by, in particular, issues related to the actions of judicial authorities who, referring to the "good" intentions of the social services, may place restrictions on parental rights of Russian citizens even in respect of those children who have no Italian citizenship, not even informing the Russian consular missions thereof. The Italian guardianship and custodianship agencies use restrictive measures in respect of children and their Russian parents: separation with mother, coercible transfer to an orphanage, ban on speaking with their parents in Russian or total ban on meetings. At that, any objections of the Russian citizens against actions by the guardianship and custodianship agencies immediately result in toughening of such measures.

The beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine and protection of civilians in Donbas by the Russian Federation had a rather considerable influence on the situation of the Russian citizens and fellow citizens residing in the country. Antagonism and even aggression towards representatives of Russia and the Russian-speaking expatriate community comes mostly from the members of the large Ukrainian community. In particular, on March 2, 2022, the fence of the Russian Consulate-General in Genova was covered by anti-Russian slogans. On

April 11, 2022, a Ukrainian citizen splashed red paint on the entrance door of the Russian Embassy in Rome.

Russian diplomatic missions in Italy receive on a regular basis information from our fellow citizens concerning the threats made against them. The biggest public outcry was connected to the incident with a 19-year-old Russian student at the Bologna University who contacted a doctor to obtain a certificate about her hearing disability. The medical worker not only referred the girl to a more profound examination (notwithstanding the fact that such examination was not required in the previous years) but also refused to take off her medical mask in order to make it possible for the patient to lip-read and initiated a squabble. Finally, the Italian woman ousted the girl from her office justifying it by the fact that she "did not like" the President of Russia.

The large-scale campaign against the Russian culture and its representatives lead to a number of unpleasant incidents. Thus, on February 28, 2022, the Mayor of Milan D. Sala, who simultaneously heads the La Scala Theatre, demanded from the world-known band director V. Gergiev to publicly renounce the actions of Russia in Ukraine, under the threat of termination of the cooperation and in particular dismissing him from participation in the presentation of P. Tchaikovsky's opera "Queen of Spades".¹⁶ When the Milan authorities did not receive a reply to their ultimatum they informed that the theatre "refused to further cooperate with the Russian director".

On April 9, 2022, the Lonigo municipal theatre in Vicenza, on request of the Ministry of Culture of Ukraine, cancelled the "Swan Lake" ballet to be performed by a Ukrainian dancing group. The reason thereof was also the ethnic origin of P. Tchaikovsky. On the same day, "Swan Lake" was cancelled at

¹⁶ La Scala Removed Valery Gergiev from Queen of Spades. Classical music News.ru. March 1, 2022 <https://www.classicalmusicnews.ru/news/la-scala-removed-valery-gergiev-from-queen-of-spades/>

Bellini Theatre in Naples.¹⁷

We are also aware of refusals to provide services to Russian citizens, including employees of Russian diplomatic missions, on the part of particular Italian banks. Thus, there were recorded incidents when Russian clients were informed about the intention to close a bank account and requested to withdraw the balance cash amount in one of the bank's offices. There are also recorded refusals to open accounts or issue debit cards when documents evidencing Russian citizenship are presented. Bank employees do not substantiate such decisions in writing referring to their internal instructions in respect of citizens of Russia and Belarus. In particular, refusals to work with Russian citizens were recorded in the banks UNICREDIT, Posta Banca, BNL, Intesa Sanpaolo. In a number of cases, the problems with the banking services were resolved with involvement of local lawyers.

The employees of the Permanent Mission of Russia at FAO and other international organizations in Rome faced the refusal of the mobile operator Vodafone to connect a new telephone number to the valid service provision agreement or to issue a new individual service agreement. In substantiation of their actions, Vodafone employees pointed to the fact that the diplomatic ID issued by the MFA of Italy was not a residence permit and did not confirm the fact of permanent registration in the country.

Our fellow citizens are concerned by restriction of access to the Russian media in Italy and, as the consequence, by the absence of objective information about the policy conducted by Russia and the actions within the framework of the special military operation, which has especial importance in the conditions of propaganda pressure of the collective West and undisguised anti-Russian campaign in the Italian media. The information about the events taking place in the world is solely presented on the basis of the Western or Ukrainian sources.

¹⁷ "Because the composer is Russian" – "Swan Lake" cancelled in Italy. Regnum. April 9, 2022 <https://regnum.ru/news/cultural/3559845.html>

This politically motivated approach has the key influence on the Italians' attitude towards the Russian citizens residing in their country and on the Russian-speaking persons originating from the former USSR. The growth of Russophobic attitudes in the society is also influenced by the decisions of the regional Italian organizations to stop or suspend cooperation with their Russian partner associations, as well as the threats addressed to such Russian associations and their particular members.

Cyprus

In the first days after the beginning by Russia of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine, there were recorded demonstrations of discrimination of Russian citizens in Cyprus, both in everyday life and on websites.

The nationalistic-minded representatives of the Ukrainian expatriate community and Ukrainian refugees predominantly display Aggression towards Russians. We are aware of incidents of moral and physical pressure on some of our fellow citizens in order to force them to publicly condemn the Russian government's actions and support Ukraine, as well as about tracking personal data of participants of pro-Russian actions, with further placement of such information in social media with calls for violence.

There were anti-Russian protest actions with participation of deputies of the House of Representatives (Parliament) of Cyprus. The information background on the island is characterized by one-sided biased presentation of information about the events in Ukraine, based on Western information agencies' materials. The Russian Embassy in Nicosia makes efforts to inform the wide public about the Russian approaches.

Some particular examples: On March 1, 2022, the state flag of the Russian Federation was torn off the flagpole in front of the office of the honorary consul of Russia in Limassol.

Instances of Russophobia in educational institutions were established.

There were also recorded incidents with bullying of Russian-speaking children, including those from mixed families, by their classmates.

After the Russian Embassy in Cyprus applied to the government of the country, the necessary measures were taken to ensure safety of the Russian and Russian-speaking residents of the island. Statements made by individuals regarding threats and aggression are investigated by the local police and procedural response measures are taken in the presence of sufficient grounds. Special instructions were prepared for the management of the Cyprus schools and universities, aimed to prevent unlawful actions. Events in support of Russia are held on a regular basis as agreed with the authorities: e.g., an impressive "Immortal Regiment" memorial march was conducted, with Cyprus law enforcement bodies ensuring proper security for such events.

Difficulties in the financial sphere are also observed, due to Nicosia's joining the unlawful anti-Russian restrictive measures adopted by the European Union. Instances of unauthorized blocking of transfers from non-designated Russian banks were recorded.

Latvia

In Latvia, the nationally oriented policy of the government is accompanied by numerous violations of the rights of ethnic minorities. This affects in the first turn the Russian-speaking population that is still viewed by the government as an alien and de-stabilizing element. The main remaining problematic aspect is the issue of absence of [Latvian] citizenship for this significant part of the Latvian population. The "non-citizens" are devoid of a full range of social, economic, and electoral rights in the country. Human rights activists presently distinguish about eighty differences between citizens and "non-citizens".

As of today, "non-citizens" constitute about 200,000 residents of the country (11 per cent of the population), 65 per cent of them being ethnic Russians. The Latvian authorities do not recognize "non-citizens" as belonging

to the ethnic minorities and, consequently, have excluded them from the sphere of application of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, ratified by Latvia in 2005 with significant reservations.

The pace of naturalization is persistently decreased: in 2016-2021 this index demonstrated the record low level and constituted 987 persons, 915 persons, 930 persons, 808 persons, 725 persons and 368 persons per year accordingly (for comparison, 19,169 persons naturalized in 2005).

In connection to this fundamental problem international universal and regional human rights protection mechanisms published over fifty recommendations, including those concerning simplification of the naturalization procedure, providing to "non-citizens" electoral rights and the whole package of the ethnic minorities' language rights.

On November 5, 2019, Latvia adopted the law on automatic assignment of citizenship to children born in families of "non-citizens". However, it concerns only a few dozens of new-born babies per year (in 2020, the "non-citizen" status was assigned to thirty-one babies in Latvia).

In the context of the compulsory derussification policy, the approach for narrowing the sphere of application of non-official languages, actively implemented by the authorities, becomes even more conspicuous. The Latvian language is the only language permitted for communication with the authorities, using in symbol books and in other inscriptions, as well as in identification documents. The actual liquidation of the Russian-language educational environment is realized via comprehensive education reform (transfer of schools and kindergartens to teaching in the Latvian language, development and implementation of the new educational content, optimization of the school network, ban on teaching in Russian in private universities).

As the result of such odious measures, on September 1, 2021, the transit period of the school reform was completed, and starting from the 2021/2022 academic year teaching in all middle and secondary school educational

institutions is realized fully in the Latvian language.

It is impossible to obtain university education in Russian in the Latvian state universities. Exception is made only for some Slavonic studies subjects (Russian, Belarussian, Polish languages).

The Latvianization of the education also affected private educational and pre-school institutions. On May 14, 2020, the Saeima of Latvia adopted amendments to the law On Education, according to which all municipal pre-school educational institutions were obligated to provide educational programmes in Latvian.

The trend for ousting non-official languages (in the first turn, the Russian language) becomes increasingly conspicuous in other social life spheres in Latvia. From July 1, 2020, pursuant to the new law on administrative punishments for offences in the sphere of management, public order and use of the official language, liability was introduced for demonstration of "serious disrespect to the official language", concluding labour contracts with employees without knowledge of Latvian and unwillingness to provide for its use at work. Printed advertising products disseminated among Latvian citizens should be in Latvian only. Exception is possible if a person has expressed consent to receive materials in other languages, too.

This restriction seriously influenced the mass-scale vaccination in the country in 2021, notwithstanding the critical situation in healthcare system and significant problems with the organization of the vaccination campaign, especially among elderly people (this age group constitutes a significant part of Latvia's Russian-speaking population). The authorities did not agree to suspend the operation of the law even temporarily, thereby limiting for our fellow citizens access to vital data.

The Latvian authorities are consistent in their course for prosecution of Russian-speaking activists, bringing constant pressure on them and conducting demonstrational "punitive actions". As a rule, our fellow citizens are accused of

"anti-state activities", "assistance to a foreign state in its activities against Latvia", "organization of mass disorders", "espionage".

On December 17, 2020 the Latvian court found A. Gaponenko, a well-known human rights activist and public person, Co-Chairman of the United Congress of Russian Communities and the head of the civic organization Non-Citizens' Congress, guilty of "stirring up enmity and hatred based on racial, ethnic and national origin", and sentenced him to a punishment in the form of one year of suspended deprivation of liberty, for his statement that in the 30s-40s of the past century many Latvian residents voluntarily agreed to cooperation with the Fascist Germany. On February 8, 2022, A. Gaponenko was convicted to one and a half years of suspended deprivation of liberty. Criminal proceedings against the member of the Board of the "Russian Union of Latvia" and the permanent author of the Russian analytical portal Rubaltic.ru A. Filey (for glorification of the "Soviet occupation") and against a number of other fellow citizens were initiated. The well-known human rights activist, Euro-MP T. Ždanoka is also subjected to serious pressure by the government (the proceedings initiated in August 2020 against her and a number of other activists of the Russian community in connection with the organization in 2018 of the All-Latvian Parents' Meeting were terminated; later on, the proceedings were resumed against the well-known public person of the country V. Linderman). The case against O. Burak is in the second stage of appeal.

On October 29, 2021, the Latvian publicist and public person Yu. Alekseev was sentenced to 14 months of deprivation of liberty based on falsified charges of stirring up interethnic discord. In connection to this biased verdict, the Russian community of Latvia published a statement noting that this sentence, as well as the decision of the Constitutional Court of Latvia justifying the liquidation of education in Russian, historically traditional for Latvia, the whipped up hysteria regarding the "Russian spies" and criminal prosecution of Russian-language journalists, pointed to the Latvian government's intention to

effect political punishment of the Russian-speaking community. It was stated that the Latvian judicial system has long ago lost the trust of Russian-speaking Latvian residents.

The largest organization of the country's retired military servicemen, the Republican Association of Veterans in Latvia, was subjected to significant pressure by the authorities; it was closed based on a court decision under a formal pretext (the reason named was violations of the rules for keeping accounts). On October 6, 2020, the chairman of this organization, the 76-year-old Russian retired military serviceman V. Norvind, was separated from his family and forcibly expelled from Latvia, notwithstanding a heart attack. The Latvian authorities cancelled his residence permit.

Under the contrived pretext of fighting "Russian propaganda", the "clearance" of the Latvian information area from any "dissent" is going on; as the result serious pressure is systematically brought on representatives of Russian-language media.

In 2020, the Latvian authorities took a number of clearly unfriendly steps in respect of Russian journalists. On February 24, 2020, the journalist of MIC (Multimedia Information Centre) Izvestiya A. Zakharov, who had arrived by a flight from St. Petersburg, was apprehended in the Riga airport, and his three-year visa was cancelled based on the Estonian party's inquiry. On June 10, 2020, based on a "recommendation" of the local state security bodies, the MFA of Latvia refused in accreditation to employees of the Riga VGRK news office D. Grigorova and A. Chagaev. On February 18, 2021, the TV anchor of the Russian channel Rossiya 1 V. Solovyev was declared "persona non grata".

The Latvian media broadcasting in Russian also get under severe pressure. In July 2021, the amendment (adopted in June 2020) to the law On Electronic Media came into force. It significantly limits the dissemination of Russian-language content in the main packages of the Latvian cable TV

channels – its volume shall not exceed 20 per cent of the total broadcasting volume.

On February 4, 2020, on suspicion of violation of international sanctions, searches were conducted in the Riga offices of Baltijas Mediju Alianse media holding that, along with other Russian-language media, includes "The First Baltic Channel" ("FBC"; rebroadcasts the programs of the Russian Channel One). As the result thereof, in March 2020 FBC had to stop broadcasting its own news and author programs. Besides, penalties are still applied in respect of the FBC and some other Russian-language media, including in the context of "unlawful" rebroadcasting of the Russian content, as well as for publishing interviews with prominent Russian political figures that are "inconvenient" for the local authorities.

On December 3, 2020, the State Security Service of Latvia conducted searches and interrogations of a number of prominent Russian-language journalists, charges were brought against them under Article 84 of the Criminal Code of Latvia "for violation of the EU sanctions", in the context of their cooperation with IMG Rossiya Segodnya. Overall, ten persons were subjected to prosecution under this Article of the Criminal Code, including the editor-in-chief of Baltnews information agency A. Starikov, they are at risk of 4 to 8 years of imprisonment.

Starting from February 1, 2021, the cable operator Tet stopped rebroadcasting of the TV channels FBC, NTV Mir, Ren TV Baltiya", "Kinokomediya" and "Kinomix" in Latvia.

Starting from February 10, 2021 the National Council for Electronic Media (NEPLP) banned rebroadcasting of 16 TV channels including NTV Mir Baltic, Ren TV Baltic, etc., and starting from February 15, 2021 for one year, in connection to "stirring hatred and calls to war" against Ukraine (according to NEPLP, this is the case with the programs "60 Minutes" of July 10, 2020, September 17, 2020, October 21, 2020, as well as in the program "Sunday Night

with Vladimir Solovyev" of December 6, 2020) – rebroadcasting of Russia-RTR TV channel.

Additionally, starting from October 26, 2021, the broadcasting license of the "First Baltic Channel" (rebroadcasting programs of the Russian Channel One), popular among the Latvian Russian-speaking population, was revoked.

The international human rights protection organizations and agencies (the UN Human Rights Council, the Council of Europe (CE), OSCE, Parliament Assemblies of the CE and OSCE) repeatedly brought the Latvian government's attention to the issues related to the human rights protection situation in the country, especially in the part concerning the ethnic minorities' situation. Latvia continues to ignore their numerous recommendations, including those in respect of the issues of simplifying the naturalization procedure, providing to the "non-citizens" the right to vote at municipal elections, complying with the whole package of language and educational rights, etc.

The report of the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe D. Mijatović, published in October 2019, contains sharp criticism of Riga's policy in the language sphere. It is recommended to Latvia to protect the rights of minorities and decrease tension in the society where the rights of individuals speaking the languages of minorities are not taken into consideration and laws are often enforced by coercive means.

The educational reform was also criticized by L. Zanier who at that time held the position of the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities; in his opinion, full transfer of national minorities' schools to teaching in Latvian brought Latvia away from the two-language education model formed in the country, which was well performing its functions and was based on the Hague recommendations regarding national minorities' right to education.

In February 2021, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media T. Ribeiro gave a public assessment to Russia's concerns in connection with the interference with the rights of Russian and Russian-language media in Latvia.

At a meeting with Latvia's permanent representative at the OSCE she urged to respect the rights of all journalists to freely highlight any issues of public interest, and she also pointed out to the need to comply with the international obligations in this sphere.

On March 3, 2021, the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe adopted a resolution on Latvia's implementation of the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities, where it pointed out that Riga would need to ensure continuous availability of education in the minorities languages everywhere it is in demand. As noted, wide application of the language requirements has a negative impact on the opportunities of those for whom Latvian is not a native language. However, it is emphasized that attempts to create a uniting civic identity have not gone any far during the recent years. Prohibitive political measures and other pressure are most acutely manifested in the education system, media and in respect of use of ethnic minorities' languages in many areas of social life. The resolution says that the situation with the possibility to use minority languages in topographic names and in transcription of personal names in Latvian and their use in personal documents remains unchanged.

The opinion of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights on Latvia, published on March 8, 2021, gave to Riga recommendations on improving the discriminatory situation based on language, national and ethnic origin.

In November 2021, the issue of the situation of the Russian-language media in Latvia was criticized by the OSCE High Commissioner on National Minorities K. Abdrakhmanov, who urged the government of this country to ensure equal access to the media in native languages.

During the UN Security Council meeting held according to the "Arria formula" in New York on December 22, 2021, the Latvian human rights activists V. Guschin, N. Yolkina and A. Gaponenko presented their detailed

accounts of the issue with the situation of the national minorities in Latvia.

The situation in Latvia degraded even more after beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Under the influence of these events the Latvian authorities launched "a conveyer of anti-Russian sanctions" and introduced sanctions against Russia.

Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia E. Rinkēvičs announced adoption of a resolution to stop issuing entry visas to Russians (Lithuania did the same). And Minister of Culture N. Puntulis stated that not a single artist who has supported Russia's position on Ukraine would be allowed on a tour to Latvia. In addition to these measures, the official Riga began applying personal sanctions and on March 23, 2022, banned 25 Russian citizens from entering the country. The reason named was "support of war propaganda and aggression against Ukraine".

On March 16, 2022, the Ministry of Justice of Latvia began elaborating the issue of restrictions in respect of the four buildings of the "Amber Coast" sanatorium in Jūrmala (branch of the enterprise of the Office of the President of the Russian Federation).

A number of Latvian Parliament members and state officials made Russophobic statements. Thus, the deputy of the Saeima of Latvia J. Dombrava (member of the ultra-right National Block) said that he "did not see any reasons for which any Russian citizen, with the exception of refugees, should stay in Latvia. All residence permits and visas issued to Russian citizens must be cancelled, except for refugee status." Thus, he actually called to deport from Latvia the Russian citizens living therein. According to the most recent data, there are about 55,000 Russian citizens in the country; this category includes the persons to whom the Latvian authorities refused to provide citizenship in the beginning of the 1990s or Russians who came to Latvia under the program "residence permit in exchange for investments". The member of the Latvian

Parliament from the National Block A. Kiršteins suggested creating a "concentration camp" near the Monument to the Liberators of Riga, detaining there those persons who came to lay flowers on May 9 and 10, 2022. He also demanded to expel from Latvia the people supporting Russia, saying: "The results of the 30 years of integration at their best. Further on, only assimilation, and those who do not like it should be kicked on the ass and thrown away! First of all, the fifth column should be cleaned out of schools and universities!"

More than one hundred cultural workers of the Russian Federation, including N.S. Mikhalkov, V.A. Gergiev, D.L. Matsuev, V.L. Mashkov and others were declared undesirable persons in Latvia and banned from entering the country for an indefinite period. The reasons for this decision were their support of the special military operation in Ukraine.

On March 17, 2022, J. Bordāns (representing the New Conservative Party) called on the Latvian self-government authorities not to issue permits for holding on May 9 any public events related to this holiday. According to J. Bordāns's logic, such actions justify Russia's "invasion" of Ukraine.

The Latvian government adopted a set of legislative measures aimed at criminalization of any form of support of Russia and of the special operation conducted by it in Ukraine. Thus, the criminal law of Latvia has an article providing for liability "for justification and glorification of the crimes" of Russia in the territory of Ukraine. As of April 1, 2022, the State Security Service of Latvia has initiated total fourteen cases in respect of "support of the Russian aggression". All these investigations were begun in connection to publications on the Internet. Also, several cases were initiated under the already existing Article 74 of the Criminal Law, providing for liability for public justification and praising crimes against the world and war crimes.

In mid-March 2022, deputies from the Union of "the greens" and peasants introduced to the Saeima of Latvia a draft law on amendments to the criminal legislation, criminalizing the use of the letters Z and V in public space, effected

"with the aim to support the aggressor". The St. George ribbon, also banned in Latvia, is deemed such symbol, too. The punishments established for all similar actions imply up to 5 years of imprisonment. This law was adopted on March 31, 2022.

On March 10, 2022, the Saeima of Latvia adopted the amendments vesting the National Council on Electronic Media with the authority to restrict access to websites containing "information that poses or may pose a threat to national security or public order".

Latvia, as a country where attempts are taken at the top level to falsify history and varnish the reputation of the Nazi accomplices, makes serious efforts to prevent celebrating the Victory Day on May 9, in whichever form. Numerous incidents of desecration of memorials and monuments in honour of the Red Army soldiers who died in the fight against fascism had been recorded in the country before. A ban on Red Army symbols was introduced. However, after the beginning of the Russian special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine an aggressive campaign against the Russian symbols and the Victory Day holiday was unfolded in Latvia. On March 22, 2022, President E. Levits spoke against celebration of the 9th of May, pointing out that it meant support for international crime. On March 25, 2022, the Latvian police chief A. Ruks also equated assembling of people on this day to support of the "aggressor". As the result, on April 7, 2022, the Saeima of Latvia urgently adopted a draft law banning celebration of Victory Day. According to the document adopted, the 9th of May was declared a mourning day on which holding mass-scale entertainment and festive events was prohibited. Also, fireworks were banned in the territory of the whole country on May 8 and 9. This decision cannot be interpreted in any other way except as an attempt to humiliate the Russian-speaking community living in Latvia, which enshrines the memory about the feats of anti-fascist heroes.

Russian residents of Latvia faced mass-scale intimidations, insults, and

threats in everyday life. Actually, bullying of "politically unreliable" citizens (those who, in whichever form, stated their support for Russia) is conducted on the social media.

Since autumn 2021, <https://myrotvorets.team>, a website similar to the notorious Ukrainian Myrotvorets website, is active in the country. The website publishes personal data of people who have supported Russia's special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine. This media has published the personal data of the Latvian Russian-speaking journalists, including those who were prosecuted by the Latvian intelligence services for "cooperation" with the Russian media, as well as data of the activists of the Russian-speaking community, including the members of the Russian Union of Latvia.

Notably, the Latvian government did not consider the functioning of this website unlawful. The State Data Inspection of Latvia did not find any violations there and made a cynical remark that the data presented on the website had been processed taking into consideration the right to freedom of expression.

The anti-Russian measures taken by the Latvian government had an extremely negative impact on the situation of the country's Russian-speaking residents. Tension and conflicts in the society increased.

According to the local residents, earlier a significant, if not larger, part of the Latvian population used the Russian language for communication with each other without impediment and this never caused any problems. From the end of February 2022, the issues related to language use started being exploited for provocative acts to organize clashes with Russian-speaking residents of Latvia. Thus, the local activist O. Makeev was beaten during a meeting near the building of the Consulate-General of Russia. The pretext for this was the misunderstanding caused by using the Latvian language. The police opened only administrative investigation of this incident.

Aggressive attitudes to Russians are stirred up by the Latvian media who act with the consent of the authorities. In particular, the website Jauns.lv published an article in which it called on the "conscientious public" to inform the Latvian police and State Security Service of any publications and comments on the social media expressing support to Russia's actions in Ukraine. The publication contained a detailed instruction how to identify the personalities of authors of such publications and comments, how to make screenshots and where to send them. We are aware of similar calls on citizens of Latvia to uncover "non-loyal persons", made by the State Security Service.

The state security service and state police actually began "hunting" people with dissenting opinions. There was an outbreak of summoning activists for "preventive conversations" to these agencies all over the country. In particular, the journalist Yu. Alekseev whom the Latvian intelligence services threatened with new criminal proceedings for his active civic position, informed about such summoning on his social media page. There is available information that the Latvian intelligence services summoned to such "conversations" representatives of practically all Russian-language media of the country, including such large ones as Segodnya (Today) newspaper, Telegraph magazine, Latvian News weekly, Saturday, Seven Super Secrets, Baltcom radio as well as the websites mixnews.lv, pross.lv, bb.lv.

Simultaneously with this, from the end of February 2022 rebroadcasting of all Russian channels was gradually banned in Latvia. On February 24, 2022, broadcasting of the channels Russia RTR, Russia 24 and TVC International was terminated. Starting from March 2, 2022, broadcasting of RBC TV channel was banned, the program Belarus 24 was suspended, and rebroadcasting licenses of the First Baltic Channel Estonia and First Baltic Channel Lithuania were withdrawn. On March 7, 2022 the Latvian National Council on Electronic Media took the decision to switch off 18 more Russian channels in the country: THT – Comedy, THT 4, THT 4 International, THT, THT Music, ПЯТНИЦА

(FRIDAY) International, KHL TV, Kinopremiera, Kinosvidanie, Men's Cinema, A-Minor TV, Auto Plus – Auto-Plus TV Channel, Nostalgie, Live!, Who is Who, Baby TV, Russian Night, Zee TV.

When it became clear that the ban failed to affect the popularity of the Russian channels and the residents of Latvia still watch them using "illegal decoders" and satellite dishes, the Latvian Parliament, within the framework of the work for enhancing the media landscape of the country adopted the amendments establishing administrative liability for unlawful watching of the banned Russian channels content. A fine in the amount of up to EUR 700 may be imposed for such offence.

Making use of the unfolding Russophobia, the Latvian government decided to finally "clean up" the sphere of education from using the Russian language. The Ministry of Education and Culture A. Muižniece, under the pretext of strengthening the positions of the official language, spoke about the need to introduce the "equally high-quality education in the sole official language" for all children, notwithstanding what language they speak in their family.

Russophobia began demonstrating itself in schools where children were insulted because their native language was Russian. The headmaster of the 80th Riga secondary school and local self-government authority deputy A. Vladova in her speech before her colleagues called this situation utterly inadmissible.

A. Ilyin, resident of the Latvian city of Daugavpils, told to Izvestiya newspaper that in the local children's musical school, instead of the city's official flag, a Ukrainian flag was raised on the initiative of the school headmaster. The residents requested to return the official city flag, but that has not been done till now. After the application, A. Ilyin and a number of other activists faced bullying and threats in social media. He also noted that the Latvian residents found themselves in an unequal situation as compared to the refugees arriving from Ukraine. In particular, the latter may be employed

without knowledge of the language on an equal basis with Latvians. Moreover, they are not obliged to have a QR code confirming vaccination, while citizens of Latvia were dismissed from work for not having the code. This mostly affects the Russian-speaking residents of the country.

From the very beginning of the special military operation by Russia, Russophobia in Latvia was expressed in blasphemous acts of vandalism in respect of monuments to the Russian Army soldiers who liberated the country from Nazism during World War II. On February 24, 2022, in Riga, vandals splashed paint on the monument to the Liberators of Riga from German Fascist Invaders. Every year, tens of thousands of persons gather near this monument on May 9 to honour the Victory Day. Later on, a hooligan tried to break the monument using a hammer. The police apprehended the offender. At the same time, the appeal to demount the monument was made by the Minister of Justice of Latvia J. Bordāns, who called the monument to the Liberators a threat to national security and urged the Latvian government to find loopholes in the law to circumvent the provisions of the treaty with Russia on preservation, taking care of and improvement of memorial structures.

On February 26, 2022, the monument to the Red Army soldiers of the 245th rifle division in Brīvības Prospekt in Riga was desecrated in a comparable manner, and on February 28, 2022, the vandals attacked the granite stela in Dreiliņi district.

On February 24, 2021, the monument in the military burial ground of the Great Patriotic War in Jēkabpils was destroyed – the 76-mm weapon system was dismantled. On September 10, 2021, unknown persons dismantled and stole a memorial plate from the memorial stone erected on the place of the beginning of the operation for Ķīšezers lake assault crossing in October 1944. On December 1, 2021, unidentified persons committed an act of vandalism in respect of the memorial to the soldiers-liberators of Riga and Latvia from German Nazi occupants (the inscription "occupants" was made in black paint).

On February 25, 2022, an act of vandalism was committed in respect of the memorial to the soldiers-liberators of Riga and Latvia from German Nazi occupants, the monument base was splashed with paint in the colours of the Ukrainian flag, and the inscription "Glory to Ukraine" was made. On February 26, 2022, the monument to the 245th rifle division of the Soviet Army (in Brīvības Prospekt in Riga) was splashed with blue and yellow paint, the bowls with flowers were scattered about the territory of the common military burial ground. On February 28, 2022, the monument in Riga with the inscription "Glory to the Liberators of the city of Riga!" was splashed with paint in the colours of the Ukrainian flag. In March 2022, in the village of Vidriži vandals covered with paint the monument to the ninety-nine soldiers who died during the Second World War and also left insulting words on it. On April 21, 2022, unknown offenders attempted to set on fire the memorial at the mass military burial ground in the town of Valmiera, preliminarily putting tires around it and splashing it with flammable liquid. On April 26, 2022, in the village of Madliena of the Ogres Region the local authorities arbitrarily, using heavy special machinery, dismantled the memorial stone in the honour of the soldiers who liberated this community from the Nazi during the Great Patriotic War. On May 9, 2022, in the Jelgava district, the memorial (a five-ton stone with a memorial plate) erected to mark the beginning of the battles for liberation of Jelgava in 1944, was dismantled.

The Russian diplomatic mission is also subjected to aggression of the Russophobic persons. Starting from the end of February 2022, protest actions are organized on a daily basis around the building of the Russian Embassy in Riga, the aim of such actions is bringing psychological pressure on the Russian diplomatic representatives. In the course of such actions, music and slogans of insulting nature are broadcast using sound amplification devices. Similar inscriptions "decorate" posters and banners placed around the Russian Embassy and in the adjacent streets. Latvian police do not make any efforts aimed against

such actions and banners.

Lithuania

Serious and clearly politically motivated prosecutions of Russian citizens by the authorities do not cease in Lithuania. Within the framework of the efforts for propagation of a distorted interpretation of the period of the 1990s (first of all, of the events on January 13, 1991 near the Vilnius TV centre,¹⁸ as well as the killing of the officers at the arbitrarily erected Lithuanian Medininkai control point on the border with the Byelorussian SSR on July 31, 1991)¹⁹ and the clearing up of the public space of the points of view differing from the official one, the government employ various methods of pressure on the civil society activists, human rights campaigners and journalists who state their views with regard to the historical and present situation that differ from the official position.

Retroactive application of law, violation of the principle of presumption of innocence and of the right to fair judicial proceedings have become the standard judicial practice in this country, in particular in the continuing long-time judicial proceedings based on the criminal case (falsified based on political grounds) with regard to the well-known events in Vilnius in January 1991.

On March 31, 2021, the Court of Appeal of Lithuania satisfied, by applying a stricter punishment, the prosecutor's protest in respect of the decision of the Vilnius District Court of March 27, 2019, by which 67 former Soviet [Communist] party and state leaders, special operation troops servicemen and military servicemen, most of whom are Russian citizens, were sentenced to long-term imprisonment for committing "war crimes and crimes against humanity". As the result, the term of deprivation of liberty for the Russian

18 The Lithuanian government interpret the "attempted assault on" the Vilnius TV center by the Soviet forces and special operations troops, including the Alpha group, as "Soviet aggression".

19 Like the version with the events near the Vilnius TV center on January 13, 1991, the Lithuanian government's version of the incident in Medininkai has turned into an ideological dogma not to be questioned and is presently regarded not as deliberate murder but as a "crime against humanity".

citizen, the Russian Army officer Yu. Mel, who has been in custody since March 2014, was increased by 3 years, the total term constituting up to 10 years. For G. Ivanov, for whom earlier a measure of restriction in the form of an undertaking not to leave his place of residence was chosen, a punishment in the form of 5 years of imprisonment was imposed.

The Russian citizen, retired colonel Yu. Mel, was apprehended on the suspicion of committing "crimes against humanity and war crimes" in the period of his service in the Soviet Army in the territory of the Lithuanian SSR, as provided by the Criminal Code of the Lithuanian Republic (the CC); he was charged with taking part in the events near the Vilnius television centre on January 13, 1991. During the 5 years from the moment of his apprehension and until pronouncing his sentence he was detained in Lithuanian prisons. The court extended the time period of his arrest and repeatedly dismissed the lawyer's motions for changing the measure of restraint, ignoring the fact of the Russian citizen's unsatisfactory state of health.

In 2015 and 2019, representatives of Yu. Mel lodged applications to the European Court of Human Rights with regard to the lengthy detention in prison without a sentence.

The verdict of the Vilnius district court was reached on March 27, 2019. This verdict was based on the results of the criminal proceedings in the "case regarding the events on January 13, 1991, by which Yu. Mel was sentenced to seven years of deprivation of liberty. In April 2019, the Russian citizen was transferred from the Vilnius Lukiškės remand prison to the Šiauliai remand prison where his detention conditions were seriously worsened. As the result of the measures taken by the Russian Embassy in Vilnius, in May 2019 Yu. Mel was delivered to the Vilnius prison.

In September 2021, he was transferred from the Kybartai prison to the Marijampolė prison where he faced problems with receiving vital essential medicines for diabetes. It became possible to resolve this issue only due to the

prompt interference of the Embassy. Apart from that, the Russian citizen had the possibility to apply to the prison administration (at the latter's initiative) with a motion for release on parole, what he did. However, in December 2021, the prison commission took a negative decision with respect of parole for our fellow citizen, under the contrived pretext, stating that he was not working at the colony and not paying compensations to the victims.

Vivid evidence of demonstration of discrimination of Russian citizens by the Lithuanian authorities are contained in the case of the former member of Riga special operation troops (OMON) of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the USSR K. Nikulin, who, since February 2019, has been detained in Pravieniškės colony of the Kaunas District (transferred there from the Lukiškės prison in the capital where he had been detained since November 2007). According to the sentence of the Vilnius District Court of May 11, 2011, he was found guilty of commission of premeditated murder of seven persons and attempted murder of one person at the Medininkai control point in July 1991. He was initially charged with "murder of two and more persons" (the limitation period established in respect of such crimes had expired by the date of the trial). No clear evidence was produced concerning K. Nikulin's involvement in the crime ascribed to him, however the Russian was sentenced to life imprisonment with serving his sentence in prison. He was also obligated to pay EUR 650,000 in favour of Lithuania.

In connection with the fact that the Main Medical and Social Expert Examinations Bureau for the Leningrad Region stated that K. Nikulin was a disabled person of the third disability group, in 2021 the Russian citizen twice applied to the prison administration seeking his transfer from a detachment with strict detention conditions to a detachment with less severe detention conditions. However, the administration of the Pravieniškės closed-type correctional colony where K. Nikulin was detained dismissed these requests. As the result of the Embassy's efforts, several medical examinations of K. Nikulin were conducted.

Following these examinations, the decision on implantation of a cardiac pacemaker was taken. At the same time, notwithstanding the Embassy's repeated motions, the Russian citizen was denied medical diagnostics procedures which he has requested during several years because of the intensified pains in his stomach.

Nor does the ECHR hasten to proceed with examination of the application of the Russian citizen, lodged as early as in 2017, and the decision whether this case would be examined has not been taken as of today. It is worth mentioning that K. Nikulin's lawyer sent the respective application to the Court in July 2017. In October 2020, the Russian side informed the ECHR about its intention to take part in the proceedings on this application as a third party.

In December 2018, K. Nikulin applied to the Russian Prosecutor General's Office with a petition seeking his transfer to Russia pursuant to the Russian-Lithuanian Agreement dated June 25, 2001, on transfer of persons sentenced to imprisonment for [further] serving punishment. However, in March 2020 the Ministry of Justice of Lithuania informed "that the transfer of the convict does not appear possible".

Apart from criminal prosecution of Russian citizens in Lithuania, similarly to the other Baltic States, the local authorities and security services practice various methods of pressure on civic society activists, human rights activists and journalists expressing alternative opinions about their domestic and foreign policy as well as history. In the opinion of a number of human rights activists, Lithuania has built up an entire system of measures and methods of putting pressures on those who disagree. A significant place within this system is occupied by the component elements of the crime introduced by Article 170-2 of the Lithuanian Criminal Code.

It is worth mentioning that similar oppressive measures had been taken even before adoption of these amendments to the Criminal Code. Thus, in 1994 the Russian national, historian V. Ivanov was convicted by the Supreme Court

of Lithuania under Article 70 of the Criminal Code "for creation of an anti-state organization and anti-state activity" for 2.5 years of imprisonment, as he had created the pro-Soviet Yedinstvo (Unity) organization in the period of the Lithuanian "struggle for independence". In 1997, he was convicted for 1 year, this time under the article regarding slander, as in his book he denied the official version of the events on January 13, 1991, and Soviet soldiers' involvement in the killings of civilians. In June 2020, the circuit court of Vilnius delivered a statement of conviction in respect of V. Ivanov "for illegal possession of firearms" (a non-functioning starter gun), he was given a punishment in the form of two years of prohibition to leave Vilnius and an undertaking to stay at the place of his residence at night-time.

In 2020, a search was conducted, and personal belongings were seized from T. Afanasyeva-Kolomiets, organizer of the "Immortal Regiment" march in Vilnius and Russian citizen.

Another Russian citizen, the head of the "Forgotten Soldiers" Military History Association, was subjected to search. The Lithuanian police accused him of illegal storage of firearms that have not been found. During the search, a computer, tablet, telephone, and notebook were seized from V. Orlov.

The Russian citizen connects this attack on him with the activities of the scouts headed by him; during the years that have passed since the restoration of Lithuania's independence he found and re-buried the remains of over 130 Soviet soldiers who died when liberating Lithuania from the Nazi.

A substantial number of Lithuanian civic activists, politicians, and journalists, who also oppose glorification of the "forest brothers" and propagation of Russophobia, are subjected to prosecution by the Lithuanian authorities on charges of committing crimes provided for by the said article of the CC of the LR.

In November 2021, the Klaipėda District Court convicted to four years of imprisonment the head of Juvenis Baltic Youth Association, coordinator of the

"Immortal Regiment" action in Klaipėda A. Greičius, on the charges of "espionage" for Russia (he was arrested in March 2020). According to the materials of the court, our fellow citizen collected "information" and transferred it, for a certain payment, to the official of the border control department of the FSB of Russia in the Kaliningrad Region. The court deemed that the photos and video recording of the open events held by A. Greičius himself constituted this "information". While noting that these data did not constitute state secret, the judges stated that they belonged to the data constituting state secret as they were of interest for "foreign intelligence".

In October 2020, the Main Electoral Commission of the LR did not allow for elections to the Seimas an opposition politician V. Titov, discarding part of the signatures collected by him that were required for registration. He accused the government of "bureaucratically blocking" a non-system politician. In 2019, V. Titov was fined for EUR 10,000 for his criticism of perpetuation of the memory of one the "forest brothers" commanders, A. Ramanauskas-Vanagas.

Due to prosecution by the Lithuanian authorities, the chair of the Socialist People's Front, anti-fascist G. Grabauskas, also opposing glorification of the "forest brothers" and propagation of Russophobia, was forced to leave the country.

There is continued criminal prosecution of the well-known Lithuanian politician A. Paleckis who had visited the Russian Crimea and has its own point of view (different from that of the official government) on the events in Vilnius in January 1991. It is alleged that A. Paleckis was recruited by the Russian intelligence and received instructions to collect information about the judges and prosecutors who had dealt with "the 13th of January case". From October 2018 to April 2020 A. Paleckis was held in custody, after that the Court of Appeal of Lithuania replaced his arrest by the measure of restraint in the form of intensive supervision with payment of a bail of EUR 50,000 and seizure of personal documents. In July 2021, he was sentenced to 6 years of

imprisonment. On May 6, 2022, the Court of Appeal of Lithuania dismissed the appeal of the lawyers of A. Paleckis, his sentence remained in force. On May 11, he was delivered to a prison in Vilnius for serving the rest term of his punishment (4.5 years).

Attempts to restrict the activities of the Russian media continued. In July 2020, the Lithuanian Radio, and Television Commission, controlling activities of radio stations and TV broadcasters, prohibited broadcasting of the Russian RT TV channel in the territory of this Baltic state. The Commission justified its decision by the fact that the TV channel is allegedly connected to the Director General of IMG Rossiya Segodnya D. Kiselev who is on the "blacklist" of the European Union.

In October 2020, the same Commission threatened to take off from the air the Russian TV channel RTR-Planeta for the allegedly found violations of the local law, in the part concerning dissemination of "false, slanderous information giving rise to hatred". Earlier The First Baltic Channel of Lithuania, NTV Mir Lithuania, REN TV Baltic and TVC also fell under the sanctions imposed by the Lithuanian regulator, the work of the news portal Sputnik. Lithuania was temporarily blocked.

In January 2020, Zvezda TV channel correspondent Yu. Shatilova was deported from the country (her Schengen visa was cancelled by Latvia), she planned to make a program about the "war" of the Lithuanian authorities against monuments to Soviet liberators soldiers and about the authorities' impeding re-burial of the remains of the Red Army soldiers.

In January 2021, Lithuania refused entry to the pop singer F. Kirkorov, justifying it by the requirements of the law On Legal Situation of Foreign Citizens that prohibit entry for persons putting under threat national security. In May 2021, the Lithuanian MPs achieved making amendments to this law. Now, persons supporting or taking part in "aggressive" policy of a foreign state and "encouraging diverse types of occupations" are banned from entering Lithuania.

Notwithstanding the amended wording, the amendments in the first turn target the Russian citizens – popular media persons openly expressing their support of the Russian government's actions.

As a result, in January 2022 the MFA of Lithuania included in the stop list for 5 years the Russian singers Khabib (Sharipov) and N. Koroleva whose tours in Lithuania were planned for the end of January and March 2022.

After the beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, the number of demonstrations of Russophobia and discrimination of Russian citizens and persons of Russian origin has drastically increased in the country. The media activity sphere was the first one to be subjected to restrictions. On February 25, 2022, broadcasting of 6 Russian-language channels was temporarily suspended. RTR Planeta, Russia-24, NTV Mir and Belarus-24 (their activities were restricted for 5 years) as well as The First Baltic Channel (FBC) and TVCi (for 3 years). On February 28, this list was supplemented by two more channels – MIR 24 and RBC-TV (suspended for 5 years), and on March 9 – by MIR TV channel (broadcasting suspended for 5 years). On March 10, the ban on broadcasting of all Russian and Belarussian TV channels and radio stations was introduced in Lithuania, with the exception of those broadcasted from the EU Member States or the states that ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. Simultaneously, the Lithuanian government introduced blocking of the news websites Sputnik Lithuania, Rubaltic.ru and Baltnews.lt.

The Lithuanian government took legislative measures aimed to impede spreading support of the Russian operation in Ukraine among the country residents. On March 17, the Seimas of Lithuania approved the amendments to the Criminal Code of Lithuania which, under the guise of war propaganda criminalization provide for criminal liability for its public support. At the same time, in mid-March, the Lithuanian Parliament approved legislative

amendments regulating state procurement allowing excluding hostile states (meaning Russia and Belarus) from tender campaigns and cancelling contracts that have been already concluded therewith.

On April 19, 2022, the Seimas of Lithuania adopted amendments to the laws on administrative offences and on meetings providing for ban on public demonstration of St. George ribbon and other symbols of "totalitarian and authoritarian regimes" used "for the aims of propaganda of the aggression effected by them, the committed crimes against humanity and war crimes" (including the letters Z and V).

Individuals shall be punished for such actions by fines from 300 to 700 euro (up to nine hundred euro for repeated violation), legal entities – by fines of up to 1,200 euro (and up to 1,500 euro for repeated violation).

On April 11, 2022, the Vilnius Mayor's Office published on its website the statement saying that "the self-government of Vilnius consults lawyers with regard to the legal grounds for dismissal of [school] employees demonstrating support to the Russian regime, as well as regarding the mechanism under which they, after voluntarily quitting their job, would not be able to find employment with other educational institutions." This initiative is aimed at eradication of the positive attitude to the policy pursued by the Russian government, ban on discussion of this topic "from a wrong standpoint" by teachers in class and even on their personal pages on the social media.²⁰

Prosecutions of Russian enterprises and citizens began in Lithuania. The government seized a total about EUR 4.5 million in the accounts of five Russian individuals and eleven Russian legal entities. The accounts of Lifosa phosphorous fertilizers manufacturing plant (belonging to the Russian Eurokhim Group) were frozen. In furtherance of this situation, the Lithuanian Solidarity trade union called on Vilnius to nationalize the enterprise. The

²⁰ Vilnius netoleruoja Rusijos agresiją Ukrainoje palaikančių mokytojų.
<https://vilnius.lt/lt/2022/04/11/vilnius-netoleruoja-rusijos-agresija-ukrainoje-palaikanciu-mokytoju/>

accounts of the electric energy supplier Inter RAO Lithuania (subsidiary of Inter RAO Company) were frozen.

The level of anti-Russian rhetoric has drastically increased in the country, and such attitudes are actively encouraged in the society by the efforts made "on top". In March 2022, a plan for organization of mass-scale telephone calls to put psychological pressure on the Russian population was launched. For these purposes, huge billboards "Call Russia" were installed in Lithuanian cities and towns, they propose to "all those who are not indifferent" to make calls via the technological platform callrussia.org to Russian numbers and convince people to act against the special operation conducted by Russia. The organizers assert that this resource has at its disposal a database containing forty million Russian private telephone numbers. Volunteers will be assisted in organization of such calls by specialists in the field of technology, advertising and communications who will be instructing how to build the conversation. Moreover, the project organizers suggest that its participants call their friends and acquaintances in Russia for the same purposes.

Given all the efforts made by the Lithuanian government for smearing and discrimination of everything that is connected to Russia, the manifestations of hatred and discrimination faced by Russian citizens are not surprising.

On March 5, 2022, unknown persons attacked a Russian diplomat in Lithuania and beat him. On March 18, 2022, it became known that the Russian citizen O. Demina was refused – based on her citizenship – to lecture as a representative of the Lithuanian Assay Chamber at an international jewellery exhibition in Vilnius. She had to take a holiday and lecture as a private individual.

The Lithuanian equal opportunities controller service records many calls from Russian-speaking residents of Lithuania who inform about attacks on and bullying of Russian children in Lithuanian schools as well as of manifestations of aggression, insults, threats of physical violence in respect of Russians at

work, in transport and in other public places. Calls are voiced not to provide services in the services sector companies to persons who are Russian citizens.

Canada

Notwithstanding the Russophobia that has rooted in the Canadian Establishment and the foreign policy course projected by them in this connection, the tendency for consolidation and uniting of many Russian compatriots' groups (who are descendants of various migration "waves") is manifested even more clearly in the recent period. It is visible, among other things, in the strong wish of the Russian community to attract (in any available means) attention to the solemn events in honour of the Victory Day and other memorable dates of the Great Patriotic War events. Thus, for instance, in 2020, against the restrictive measures in connection to spreading of coronavirus, the activists from Ottawa, Toronto, Montreal, and Vancouver held online concerts and presentations on the YouTube channels of creative groups, using their own resources, in honour of celebration of the 9th of May.

On May 8, 2021, the Ottawa activists organized a patriotic motor rally from the military history museum to the Embassy of Russia and further on, and on May 9, 2021, a mini-reception for Soviet veterans and Russian-language expatriate community was held in the territory of the Embassy near the monument to the heroes and victims of the Great Patriotic War (with observation of all coronavirus restrictions).

Despite the fact that since 2018 the Canadian War Museum has banned celebrations on the occasion of Victory Day in its premises concerned citizens on their own bring flowers to the T-34 tank exhibited there. In the face of threats from radical nationalists, on May 8, 2022, activists of the Russian community in Calgary organized a car rally, a concert and the "Immortal Regiment" memorial march, posting a record of the celebrations on YouTube.

Private schools actively worked in many large cities of Canada (including Winnipeg, Vancouver, Halifax, Calgary, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto and

Edmonton). In such schools, along with the mandatory subjects provided for by the Canadian education system, the history of Russia, Russian language, literature, and geography were taught, our fellow citizens worked there as teachers, Russian textbooks were used. However, the measures taken by the Canadian authorities to prevent spreading of COVID-19 in the educational sector, including reducing the number of pupils in classes and complying with the social distance measures, forced a number of Canadian educational institutions to unilaterally terminate existing lease agreements with Russian schools located on their premises.

Recently, the Canadian government started demonstrating some elements of its negative attitude towards the patriotic activities of the Russian-speaking expatriate community. There were dismissals of Canadian citizens of Russian origin, administrative checks and interrogations of them by Canadian law enforcement officers. Members of the Coordinating Council of Russian Fellow Citizens Organizations (CCRFCO), who participated in the regular World Congress of Compatriots in October 2021, upon their return from Moscow, fell within the scope of attention of the Canadian intelligence services. They were also visited by officers from the respective agencies who were interested in the reasons for taking part in this event as well as in their "plans for the future". Infringement of the right to work against a representative of the Russian-speaking community in Canada occurs. A Russian citizen from Calgary informed about repeated refusals by various IT companies to employ him because of his national appurtenance and his Russian citizenship.

The migration services of Canada continue discriminatory actions against Crimea residents who are Russian citizens. The Russians, who were already in the country, were suggested – under the threat of cancellation of their visas and deportation – to urgently exchange at the Embassy their traveller passports issued by divisions of the Ministry of Internal Affairs in Crimea. The Russian diplomatic missions, on their part, promptly accepted documents submitted by

them for changing their passports.

With the beginning of the special military operation for demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, Canada is facing real Russophobic hysteria. One of the reasons is the large Ukrainian community consisting, among others, from descendants of followers of S. Bandera and R. Shukhevich.

Russian diplomatic missions in Canada regularly receive complaints from compatriots of insults and threats from the Ukrainian expatriate community, face damage to property. The situation in the areas of compact residence of immigrants from Russia and Ukraine (Toronto, Edmonton, Calgary, Vancouver) is most difficult. Citizens of Russian origin receive e-mail and in-person regular threats of murder and physical violence for their active position or due to existing ties with Russia. Russian' children are bullied in Canadian schools.

There is serious administrative and public pressure on Russian-related businesses. Aggression against "all that is Russian" forces business owners to remove all information pointing to Russia and Russians. Thus, on March 10, 2022, due to the threats received, the Russian Spoon bakery in Vancouver had to exclude the word "Russian" from its name.

The sphere of culture fell under the restrictions. The Canadian side cancelled the concerts of the young Russian virtuoso pianist A.D. Malofeev in Vancouver and Montreal. The Canada Council for the Arts refuses to fund creative projects with participation of Russian or Belarussian cultural workers until "the Russian military leave the territory of Ukraine".

On March 16, 2022, in connection with the application of the Federal government, the Canadian media regulator took the official decision to ban RT and RT France channels in the territory of the country. At the same time, local cable TV providers announced the exclusion of the Russian TV channels from their networks. By this, the Canadian authorities continued infringing on the norms of democracy and the principles of freedom of media, to clean up the

information field in the country and deprive their own citizens and Russian compatriots living in Canada of access to alternative information.

Moldova

In Moldova, no incidents with arrests of Russian citizens and their politically motivated prosecutions, extradition (including on third countries' requests) were recorded.

The practice of unjustified refusals to cross the state border and deportation of the citizens of the Russian Federation arriving at Moldova (including those having an invitation from the Moldovan party) was resumed. Thus, on December 10-11, 2021 there were unfriendly steps of the Moldavian party for unjustified ban from entering Moldova in respect of our nine citizens – scientists, public persons, political scientists and experts, including N. Narochnitskaya, a member of the Commission on Countering Attempts to Rewrite History for the Disadvantage of Russia's Interests at the President of the Russian Federation, A. Brod, member of the Council for Development of Civil Society and Human Rights at the President of the Russian Federation, representatives of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation A. Kholodov, P. Pozhigaylo and V. Zhuravlev, head of the Russian National and Cultural Community E. Baklanov, Deputy Director of the CIS Countries Institute V. Egorov.

It has to be acknowledged with regret that Russian fellow citizens residing in Moldova (and Russian-speaking persons in general) often experience difficulties with ensuring the guarantees of their right to access to civil service, to choose the language for upbringing and education, to freely obtain information in their native language. Experts are concerned with the government's actions aimed to review the language legislation and decrease the use of the Russian language, restrict Russian-language broadcasting. At the same time, as per expert assessments, more than one million people in the republic constantly use the Russian language in their everyday life.

Applications from Russian-speaking residents of the republic, received by lawyers of compatriot organizations, most often contained complaints about violations of the rights to use the Russian language when applying to the authorities, including judicial instances, about frequent sales of medicines without instructions in Russian, absence of information in Russian in medical institutions.

No improvement of the situation in the law enforcement sphere was brought by such legislative innovations and decisions as amendment of the law on documents of the national passport system (2012), introducing the new Education Code (2014) and recognition by the Constitutional Court of the Republic as obsolete the 1989 Law on Functioning of Languages. The latter confirmed the status of the Russian language as the inter-ethnic communication language, and the Law on Functioning of Languages in the Territory of the Republic of Moldova, also approved by the country's Parliament in December 2020, was aimed to return it. However, in January 2021, a decision was taken on recognizing this act non-constitutional, too.

In 2012, on the initiative of the Government of Moldova, the Parliament changed the 1994 law On Identifying Documents of the National Passport System, excluding the provision that this document shall be filled in in three languages including Russian, and that a patronymic of a person belonging to national minorities shall be indicated if such person wished so. Starting from that period, an ID shall be filled in only in the official language without indicating the holder's patronymic. A number of human rights activists are of the opinion that such interference with the law constitutes violation of a person's right to his own name and of the right of representatives of ethnic minorities to use a patronymic in official documents (Article 11 of the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of National Minorities), and may also evidence a tendency to forced ethnocultural assimilation of a significant part of the Republic's population.

In the updated Education Code adopted in 2014 the Russian language is not even mentioned as a language of education and is actually qualified as a language of one of the national minorities of Moldova. Such transformation of the educational legislation even more "spurs" the somehow objective process of decreasing of the number of students in schools with teaching in Russian (and, as a consequence, gradual decreasing of the share of such schools in line with the course for "optimization" of educational institutions that receive insufficient funding from the state, determined based on the "per capita approach"). This trend entails serious infringement of the lawful interests of the country's Russian-speaking population.

The National Statistics Bureau of Moldova gradually refuses from publishing data separately on the number of "Russian" schools in the country, providing the general statistics for secondary educational institutions. This approach diverts attention from de-Russification of education.

In 2021, twenty years passed from the day of adoption of the law On the Rights of Persons Belonging to National Minorities, and on the Legal Status of their Organization in the RM. The analysis of practical implementation of the provisions of this law, conducted by the local expert legal scholars provides the grounds for acknowledging the following: "The twenty-year validity period of this regulation demonstrates that many provisions enshrining the national minorities' rights are not implemented in practice. Thus, every year, representation of national minorities in the executive authorities, in judicial instances, prosecutor's offices, police is decreasing. The right to one's own name is violated, from the point of view of law, as Russian is not the language of education. Individuals are often refused application to authorities in Russian. The Moldovan-Russian bilingualism is not observed in names (descriptions) and information." It is also noted that the Russian compatriots do not take part in decision making on the state level as they are in fact not represented in the public management bodies.

The Moldovan authorities' ban on broadcasting of Russia-24 TV channel, introduced in July 2014, is still in force. No other facts of the government's open impeding the activities of Russian journalists or persons representing the Russian media have been observed so far. At the same time, the situation is exaggerated around the work of Russian media in Moldova, under the pretext of countering Russian propaganda. Calls to close monitoring are uttered by representatives of the governing "Action and Solidarity" party (with focus on the news rebroadcasted in the TV channels Moldova 1, NTV Moldova and The First in Moldova).

At that, attention is turned to the numerous projects of the USA, a number of European countries and pro-Western NGOs for support of freedom of expression in Moldova and countering "disinformation".

The results can be well seen. At the beginning of December 2021, a report of NGO "Independent Journalism Centre" (receives Western funding) was published, concluding that broadcasting of the three Russian TV channels The First in Moldova, NTV Moldova and RTR Moldova "does not favour forming the right opinions" and "threatens information security of the country". A few days later, on December 8, the Chairman of the Parliament of Moldova I. Grosu said that the propaganda from outside "comes from Russia".

According to the data of the Moldovan MP B. Țîrdea, there are 105 media with outside funding in the country.

After beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by Russia, changes for the worse for Russian citizens and Russian-speaking residents in Moldova were noted.

Due to the events in Ukraine, there are significant inflows of refugees to the country. The collective West, making use of this complicated moment, continues its persistent attempts to draw Moldova into a coalition of fervent Russophobes. Along with condemnation of the Russian special operation and call to stop the combat actions, the Moldovan authorities express their

commitment to European integration and Constitutional neutrality.

On February 24, 2022, the Moldovan Parliament introduced the state of emergency for a period of 60 days (extended for another 60 days from April 25, 2022), accompanied by a number of restrictions including the ban on holding mass-scale social and political events of any nature. However, it does not impede holding, for more than one month (from March 24, 2022) daily protests near the Embassy of Russia in Chisinau, obstructing normal functioning of the Russian diplomatic mission.

Within the framework of the state of emergency, the government regularly issues official warnings for all persons to refrain from dissemination of information aimed at justifying combat action or facilitating the stirring of intolerance and discrimination in the society.

Notwithstanding the balanced position demonstrated by Chisinau, in practice an "imbalance" towards Western media is observed. This was accompanied by attack on the Russian and Russian-language press in the country. In particular, the information agency Sputnik Moldova was closed, and the Russian-language websites (the Gagauz media GagauzNews and analytical resource Region trend analytics) were blocked. RTR-Moldavia and NTV-Moldavia TV channels were fined. The government suspended broadcasting from the countries that have not ratified the European Convention on Transfrontier Television. Because of that, access of TV operators to some channels (including Zvezda, Mir, Our cinema and some others) is blocked, and fines are imposed on rebroadcasters of the Russian TV Channels NTV, First and RTR.

On April 7, 2022 the Parliament of Moldova approved in the first reading a draft law on amendments to a number of legislative acts, including the Law on the Information and Security Service, the Law on the Freedom of Expression and the Audiovisual Media Services Code: the authority of the Information and Security Service is expended, a wide definition is introduced for the terms "false

information" and "disinformation", as well as a ban on broadcasting of the content (including films produced outside the member countries of the European Convention on Transfrontier Television, including Russia).

On April 14, 2022, the Moldovan MPs approved amendments to the Code on Offences that introduce fines or compulsory labour for use of attributes and symbols of "military aggression" that include a "black and orange two-coloured ribbon", i.e., St. George ribbon.

Pressure is put on all civic organizations maintaining contacts with Russia or related thereto. Information about threats to Russian-language journalists in Moldova was received. Among such journalists, the editor of the Russkoe Slovo (Russian word) newspaper of the fellow citizens' movement received threats. Instances of putting pressure on and intimidation of pro-Russian activists are recorded.

Ties between Russian and Moldovan organizations are broken under the threat of sanctions. In particular, the Moldovan Writers' Union refused to cooperate with its Russian colleagues.

Attempts of pro-Ukrainian propaganda in Russian-language schools are recorded.

There are also known facts of pressure put on The Metropolis of Chişinău and All Moldova under the Russian Orthodox Church: its parishes were deprived of subsidies and its head, the Metropolitan of Chisinau, and all Moldova Vladimir, is subjected to bullying.

The Netherlands

Though no conspicuous violations of the rights of Russian citizens and fellow citizens have been noted in the Netherlands, after the beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by Russia Russophobic attitudes appeared in the country. The Coordination Council of the Russian Fellow Citizens Organizations (CCRFCO) in the Netherlands records on its websites various instances of anti-Russian speech

and publications. Information about certain "lists with addresses of Russians in the Netherlands" is spread over social media, it is generally accompanied with threats. As noted, these activities were conducted, by, among others, by representatives of the Ukrainian community.

Employees of the Russian Embassy in the Netherlands regularly receive letters with threats, including in respect of their family members.

There were also threats to the Russian-speaking families living in the country, including children, both from representatives of the Ukrainian community and from Netherlands. As the result, several teachers voluntarily quit the Russian-language Sunday schools. On the whole, the education sphere was affected by aggression towards Russia and Russians.

In Rijswijk, a six-year-old boy was beaten because of his Russian origin. His attackers were crying "For Ukraine!" The child's mother informed that eggs and stones were thrown at Russian children.²¹

On March 2, 2022, the Rotterdam philharmonic orchestra, and the directorate of the Rotterdam philharmonic festival (the organizer of the Gergiev festival), after the German, Italian and American cultural institutions, announced termination of relations with the world-known Russian orchestra director V. Gergiev in connection to his refusal to publicly renounce the policy conducted by the President of Russia.²²

Attempts of physical assaults on the buildings of the Russian diplomatic mission were taken. On February 28, 2022, several persons threw pyrotechnical devices at the building of the Russian Embassy in the Netherlands. The offenders also damaged the diplomatic mission car. On March 5, 2022, an explosive device was planted in the territory of the Consular Division. Fortunately, it did not work.

Diplomatic corps representatives working in the Netherlands engage in

²¹ https://t.me/shot_shot/36903

²² Rotterdam Orchestra cuts its relations with Valery Gergiev, IA Krasnaya Vesna March 2, 2022
<https://rossaprimavera.ru/news/02ce6f5f>

the stigmatization of Russians. One example that may be given is the call of the Polish Ambassador to the Kingdom to boycott Russian goods and services in the country, accompanied with a reservation that it did not apply to those Russians who had denounced the Russian government's operation in Ukraine. This, however, does not lift the direct parallels with prosecution of Jews in the Nazi Germany in 1930s-1940s.

Stirring up of anti-Russian hysteria is also favoured by the policy implemented by the Netherlands government both at the international level and in the information field within the country. The aggressive rhetoric regarding the need to bring Russia to liability for the crashed down Malaysian Boeing MH 17 and regarding the liability for the events in Ukraine is supplemented by the attempts of the Netherlands journalists to rehabilitate the Ukrainian Nazis. At the same time, their crimes committed against the civilian population of Donbas and people who just do not support the belligerent Ukrainization are blatantly hushed up. Thus, for example, the Nieuwsuur showed a story about the "Azov" Nazi battalion, where the authors of the story had to acknowledge that this organization promotes the Nazi ideology and uses the Nazi symbols, however the reasoning about the ideological element were put aside in many ways. The journalist from Bellingcat (that was mentioned in the investigation regarding MH 17 flight) also could not divert attention from the nationalist nature of "Azov", but he justified the radicals saying that Ukraine allegedly had no other choice.

New Zealand

Aggressive demonstrations of Russophobia, after the beginning of the Russian Armed Forces' special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine, became noticeable even in such countries as New Zealand, which are far from time-serving relations. In late March 2022, an unknown person tried to set on fire the Russian Embassy in Wellington. Several days before the incident, the Russian diplomatic mission received calls with

threats.

Norway

Notwithstanding the absence of target-driven discrimination of our compatriots in Norway, the government and law enforcement authorities of the Kingdom continue to maintain the atmosphere of alertness and biased attitude to persons of Russian origin. The Norwegian intelligence services urge their fellow citizens to show "vigilance" in their contacts with Russians, to inform the competent authorities of all suspicious circumstances concerning their colleagues at work and neighbours. Recently, the Russian Embassy began receiving complaints again in connection to insulting attitude at the airport of the capital and groundless apprehensions.

Norwegian guardianship and custodianship agencies' taking away children from the Russian citizens residing in Norway remains a burning issue. Many minors have also Norwegian citizenship that poses additional difficulty for involvement of the Russian diplomatic mission in order to resolve the problem.

Notably, starting from 2015 the European Court of Human Rights has registered thirty-nine claims against Norway lodged by the parents of the children taken away from their families. In ten of the fourteen cases already considered, Norway was recognized responsible for "interruption of family ties" between the parents and children in violation of Article 8 of the Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms.

After beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by Russia, Norway adopted a definite anti-Russian course. Oslo gradually joins the EU restrictive measures, with a number of exceptions. In particular, the Norwegians, referring to "especially strong protection of the freedom of speech in the Constitution", refused to block RT and Sputnik, even though "these state-controlled media are used for dissemination of disinformation and fake news, deal in propaganda."

There were recorded refusals to provide services to Russian citizens in Norway. For example, Vesterland recreation park (Songdal commune, Western Norway) having at its disposal 107 cottages and a small hotel, from February 25, 2022, refused to accommodate tourists from Russia in connection with the events in Ukraine. Starting from March 9, 2022, the Enter Tromsø hotel network (comprising five small hotels and apartments in the centre of Tromsø town) refused to accommodate tourists from Russia for the same reasons.

In practice, Russophobic incidents were also recorded, including attacks in public places, and putting pressure at work. March 14, 2022, in the settlement of Hundorp (Sør-Fron community), a 12-year-old Maria F., of Latvian origin, was subjected to an attack by an unknown person because of her telephone conversation in Russian with her mother. As the result, she was badly bruised. The attacker, while running away, was shouting in Norwegian "bloody Russian". The Russian citizen Ekaterina Yu., residing in Aure commune and employed as a teacher in a kindergarten, was invited for a conversation with representatives of municipal authorities in connection to her publications on her private webpage in Facebook social media about the conflict in Ukraine (the "signal" to the authorities was given by her colleague). The meeting was held on March 15, 2022, in the community administration in the presence of a lawyer invited by the Russian. The conversation was recorded to a voice recording device.

There was recorded a high-profile incident of refusal in medical services to people of Russian origin. T. Kvamsdal, doctor of Jeloy Fysioterapi clinic in the town of Moss, refused to book for an appointment the Russian citizen Elena K., who resides in Norway and needs regular injections of a medicine to relieve pains in her spinal column. Knowing that Elena K. had moved to Norway from Russia, the physical medicine and rehabilitation physician called her and inquired about her attitude towards the events in Ukraine and to the President of the Russian Federation V.V. Putin, stating that he "will not provide

services to a patient who does not condemn the war in Ukraine." Failing to obtain clear-cut answers, the doctor recommended our citizen "to watch the news on TV" and call him back later.

At the same time, the official Oslo emphasizes that its reaction is aimed at the Russian government and not at Russian citizens who should not be held liable, in any way whatsoever, for the Russian government's action. Against the background of the growing Russophobia, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Norway in Twitter urged to take care of Russians in the Norwegian society and combat stirring of hatred. The government's statements are confirmed in practice. After discovering instances of discrimination of Russian students, employees of universities and scientific centres, the Ministry on Knowledge Issues sent instruction letters to the educational institutions. They requested the educational institution to the need to pay the closest attention to this problem.

Poland

On the whole, the Polish government complies with their assumed obligations in the sphere of protection of Russian citizens' rights in the territory of the country. A system of prompt information about incidents of apprehension and incidents with lethal outcome has been set up. No systemic discrimination measures are taken in respect of Russian compatriots, and particular incidents are related to the general political course of the official Warsaw for confrontation with Moscow.

At the same time, Russians and compatriots in Poland are not protected against campaigns of fear of espionage, unjustified expelling, bans on pursuing social, scientific, and journalistic activity. In the recent years, there have been cases of prosecution of Russian journalists, scientists, and public persons for political motives. Thus, in December 2015, RIA Novosti correspondent L. Sviridov had to leave the country as the Polish authorities accused him of unlawful activities (without specifying its nature and providing evidence thereof), withdrawing his journalist accreditation and residence permit for

residing in Poland. He was banned from entering Poland and the Schengen territory for a period of 5 years. In December 2020, this decision was extended for another 5 years without notifying the victim.

In October 2017, the Russian historian D. Karnaukhov, accused of "activities contrary to Polish interests", was expelled from Poland. In this case, no explanations were given, and no evidence presented either. Apart from that, on the initiative of the Polish authorities, the Russian political scientists O. Bondarenko and A. Martynov were banned from entering the Schengen countries in the end of 2017 – beginning of 2018.

In May 2018, the Russian citizens E. Tsivilskaya and A. Smirnova were apprehended in Poland and expelled from the country on the charges of taking part in the "hybrid war against Poland" and activities of some two "network organizations". Both Russian citizens were activists who opposed liquidation of the Soviet / Russian military and memorial heritage in Poland. In October 2018, it became known that two more Russian citizens, I. Stolyarchik and O. Rothstein, were expelled from Poland for similar activities, allegedly in connection with their presenting "a threat to the security" of the country.

In March 2021, the Polish authority in charge of foreigners' affairs, based on a submission from the Military Counter-Intelligence Service, included the Russian journalist, VGTRK special correspondent E. Reshetnikov, in the list of undesirable persons. The time period of the ban on entering Poland is 5 years, on entering the Schengen zone – 3 years.

The recent years' practice shows that the legal mechanisms for protection of persons accused under politically motivated criminal cases or persons to whom restrictive measures are applied, allegedly motivated by "security" reasons, do not work in Poland. The examples thereof are the proceedings under the aforementioned case of correspondent L. Sviridov, accepted for examination by the ECHR or the case (doubtful from the point of view of the evidential base) of S. Shipovsky, our compatriot who was arrested on the back of spy

hysteria and spent 7 years in detention facilities on the charges of espionage (released in connection to expiry of his sentence in autumn of 2021).

As regards children's rights, it is worth noting that the Polish authorities, including the judicial ones, still maintain an overall meaningful position aimed at family values protection. No incidents with violation of Russian families' rights have been recorded in Poland lately. Moreover, there is an opposite example when in 2019 the Polish side provided protection to the family of the Russian citizen D. Lisov who was prosecuted by the Swedish authorities for allegedly unlawful taking away from the country of his three minor children, who had been earlier placed in a Muslim foster family. In April 2019, a district court in Warsaw delivered the decision to leave them in their father's guardianship. The Regional Court of the Capital City of Warsaw, by its decision of July 10, 2019, refused to surrender D. Lisov to the Swedish authorities. Further, D. Lisov and his children were allowed to return to Russia.

After the beginning of the special operation of the Russian forces in Ukraine, an unprecedented, in terms of its violence and falsehood (even by that country's standards) anti-Russian propaganda, nourishing the fantastic, as to its scale, outburst of Russophobia, was unfolded in Poland. This campaign is largely initiated and encouraged by the Polish government and most local media.

The Polish officials are distinguished for their being inspired with utmost anti-Russian attitude, and they publicly advocate the need to destroy Russia and Russian culture. Thus, on 30 March 2022, the Prime Minister of Poland M. Morawiecki said that Russophobia in this state had become a mainstream. Earlier, he also informed that confiscation of Russian property may be started in the country, pointing out that he intended to meet with the opposition in order to discuss this issue for its further bringing before the Sejm. Simultaneously, the process of seizure of facilities that "are in unauthorized ownership" of Russia (the secondary school at the embassy and a vacant building) has already been

initiated by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Poland.²³

On April 4, 2022, the Vice Prime Minister of the Government, the Minister of Culture and National Heritage of Poland P. Glinski urged to disappearance of the Russian culture from the public space. In his opinion, the time of the special operation is inappropriate for the Russian ballet, staging the works of A.P. Chekhov and A.S. Pushkin or performance of A.V. Aleksandrov ensemble.²⁴

The country's economic policy is also flying the country's flag. The Prime Minister M. Morawiecki, while announcing the program for support of the Polish economy in the conditions of the Ukrainian crisis, called it "anti-Putinist" aimed at "de-Russification", that is, decreasing Poland's dependence on Russia, first of all in the energy sector.

The next step of the Polish government was the proposal announced on March 21, 2022, regarding the sanctions against the Russian oligarchs who own property in Poland and firms that work in the Polish market but simultaneously make business in Russia. According to the Polish government's press secretary, it concerns seizure of real property and imposing additional taxes on firms that continue their work in Russia.

The Russophobic campaign affected the Russian diplomatic missions in Poland. As early as on February 25, 2022, the bank accounts of the Embassy and Trade Mission of Russia in Poland were frozen, this constituting an outrageous violation of the 1961 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations. To justify their decision, the Warsaw fiscal control and prosecution authorities refer to suspicions of funding by the Russian diplomatic missions of terrorist activity in Poland.

On February 26, 2022, unknown persons splashed paint on the plate with

²³ Polish Prime Minister stated the plans for confiscation of Russians' property in the country, RBC. March 21, 2022

<https://www.rbc.ru/rbcfreenews/6237a0e49a794719c51ff7a5>

²⁴ In Poland, they decided that the Russian culture must disappear from the public area. RBC. April 4, 2022 <https://www.rbc.ru/politics/04/04/2022/624ae60d9a7947ec8b2d2561>

official symbols on the Embassy main entrance gate and broke the windows. Approximately at the same time other persons threw packages with paint at the walls of the school at the Russian Embassy.

On March 9, 2022, the last of the four Russian language and culture centres, located in Lublin, stopped its work.

During laying of a wreath in commemoration of Victory Day on May 9, 2022, at the Memorial Cemetery of the Soviet soldiers in Warsaw, the Ambassador of Russia in Poland S.V. Andreev and persons accompanying him were attacked. At the entrance to the cemetery, they were confronted by an aggressively minded crowd that was chanting insults, tore off the Ambassador's St. George ribbon and splashed red paint on him. The nearby police squad did nothing to ensure the possibility of holding the memorial ceremony. On the same day, attempts to upset the memorial event were made when the Russian consul in Gdańsk was putting a wreath on the Soviet memorial.

From the end of February 2022, the Russophobia spread by the Polish government found its reflection in the already active "war" against monuments and memorials in honour of the Red Army soldiers who died liberating the country from Nazism during the Second World War. After the beginning of the Russian special operation, endless acts of vandalism on the Soviet memorials and burial grounds began happening. As a rule, vandals write Nazi and Ukrainian neo-Nazi symbols, obscene words, and also splash monuments with paint. Thus, only in March 2022 the Soviet military cemetery in Wrocław was desecrated three times and the Soviet military cemetery in Poznań – 2 times, including one destroyed tomb. In the same month, the following were subjected to desecration: the military burial ground in Świdnica as well as the obelisk on the common grave of Red Army soldiers in Tczew (the obelisk itself was wrapped in black packaging foil, with a note attached on top demanding "to take this rubbish away asap"). Besides, the obelisk at the Soviet military cemetery in Gniezno was spoiled. In Głubczyce, vandals splashed paint on the monument in

honour of the Soviet soldiers erected in the city park. In Wałbrzych, the vandals desecrated the monument located at the entrance to the Soviet military cemetery.

Local authorities of different level, on agreement with the Institute of National Memory of Poland, initiate mass-scale removal of Soviet monuments located outside burial grounds.

On the everyday level, Russians staying in Poland, including employees of Russian diplomatic missions, quite often – taking into consideration that many Ukrainians work in Poland in the services sector – face refusals to provide services. This takes place in food stores, shops, pharmacies, clinics, dentist offices, beauty parlours, etc.

On March 5, 2022, in the evening (approximately at 18.00-19.00), at one of the Shell filling stations in the town of Konin (the Greater Poland Province) an attack occurred on the Russian citizen V. Konovalov, driver of a Volvo vehicle with a Russian license plate number, taking part in international freight service operations. Unknown persons who arrived in three cars with Ukrainian (one) and Polish (two) license number plates forced V. Konovalov out of the vehicle compartment, violently beat him and tried to murder him with a knife. The murder was prevented by the Polish police, who however refused to record this incident, draw up and issue to V. Konovalov a respective report and did not apprehend the persons who attempted at his life.

In connection to this incident, the Embassy of Russia sent an application to the Main Command of the Polish police requesting to conduct a thorough investigation of the incident and bring the offenders to liability. The Embassy also sent a respective note to the MFA of Poland.

The propagated Russophobia affected Russian athletes playing for sports clubs in Poland.

On March 3, 2022, Polish media²⁵ informed that the Polish hockey club BS Polonia Bytom, Silesia Province had terminated contracts with five Russian hockey players: D. Babets (who has Kazakh citizenship along with Russian citizenship), K. Kleymenov, E. Rudsky, V. Polinin and I. Smirnov. BS Polonia Bytom chair S. Kaminski, named as the reason thereof the athletes' refusal to take "a definitely anti-military position" as well as "unnecessary anti-Ukrainian activity on social media" that the club cannot agree with. The Bytom town authorities supported this decision. At the same time, the Belarussian players the Senkevich brothers remain in the club as they, according to the Polish media, have Polish origins and hope to obtain the Polish citizenship.

On March 4, 2022, the Polish hockey club Ciarko STS Sanok (the Subcarpathian Province, bordering Ukraine) published on its Facebook account a statement²⁶ that, in connection with the "open war" of Russia against "the neighbouring country", they announced termination of the contract with the Russian hockey player A. Mokshantsev. Simultaneously, the club expressed full support for the Western countries' sanctions introduced against our country.

On March 9, 2022, the Polish hockey club GKS Katowice, Silesia Province, informed on its website²⁷ that the club management took the decision to immediately terminate the contract with the hockey player A. Yakimenko. "The athlete's failure to definitely condemn the aggression of Vladimir Putin and the Russian Federation against Ukraine" was named as the basis for this decision.

Portugal

The beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by the Russian Federation had a perceptible impact on the situation of the Russian citizens and fellow citizens in many countries of

25 <https://eurosport.tvri24.pl/sportv-zimowe.l30/bs-polonia-bvtom-rozwiazala-kontrakty-z-zawodnikami-z-rosii-hokej-na-lodzie,1098157.html>; <https://sport.dziennik.pl/sporty-zimowe/artykuly/8371667,hokej-na-lodzie-polonia-bytom-rosja-wojna-walerij-polinin-wladimir-putin.html>

26 <https://pl-pl.facebook.com/stssanok/>

27 <http://hokej.gkskatowice.eu>

Europe, including in those countries where no significant incidents of violation of the rights of persons of Russian origin had been recorded earlier. Portugal is among such states.

News stories in the Portuguese media widely disseminate publications about "bad Russians". Thus, the publicity around the investigation of the activities pursued in the country by criminal money laundering group of Russian origin was no incidental. By contrast, the facts of indecorous conduct of Ukrainian refugees are hushed up.

Representatives of the Ukrainian community make significant efforts to spread Russophobia; they publish on social media insulting materials using obscene language that are utterly ignored by moderators. Ukrainian diplomatic representatives get involved in propagating Russophobia.

Protest actions are organized every day near the building of the Embassy of Russia in Lisbon. The Ukrainian Ambassador I. Ognivets took part in one of such actions organized by the Portuguese office of Amnesty International on March 19, 2022. Apart from the standard accusations of "Russian aggression", she spoke about the "pernicious influence" of Russian-language schools in Portugal. After that, the head of the largest Ukrainian association in the country, Spilka, P. Sadokha published a list of all associations of the Russian expatriate community with photos, under the guise of warning Ukrainians against joining them. The aforementioned publication instigated an outbreak of Ukrainian nationalists' insulting posts addressed to Russian-speaking activists.

Additionally, refusals to provide services to persons of Russian origin began to be reported in Portugal. We are aware of a case when a communications operator informed our compatriot that she would no longer be able to use the service of making calls to Russia in accordance with the tariff that had been earlier included in the service plan. The attempts to contact the customer support service also failed. There, they told to the Russian that it was a forced measure in the EU taken in connection with the situation in Ukraine. It

remained unclear at what price it would be possible (if possible, in principle) to make calls to Russia.

Romania

In 2021, Russian diplomatic missions did not find out any cases of arrest of Russian citizens in Romania and their prosecution on political motives, taking away their children, impeding and restricting activities of Russian journalists and persons representing our media, nor any facts of violations of our citizens' rights in detention facilities.

At the same time, aggravation of unfriendly atmosphere around Russia in the Romanian political discourse, stirring up Russophobic attitudes in pro-Western media, on the whole, have a negative impact on the situation and moral state of our compatriots residing in Romania. Open expression of agreement with the Russian position and even partially accordant point of view on history issues, first of all, the Second World War, and urgent international problems is wrought with the risk of turning into a target for bullying by some particular Romanian media and, as the consequence, by appearance of difficulties in other spheres of life, including at one's place of work.

Besides, a tense situation still prevails around the Union of Subcarpathian Rysins of Romania, making part of the Coordination Council of the Organizations of Russian Compatriots Living in Romania. According to the Union Chairman M. Lauruk, unjustified harassment of the organization activists because of their pro-Russian views still continues. There were reported cases of the authorities' omission in the issue of illegal takeover of property and business assets belonging to Rysin. The Union representatives also raise concerns about Bucharest's pandering to forced Ukrainization of the Rysin national minority.

With the beginning of the special military operation of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine, Romanian officials hastened to make assurances not only of absolute commitment to the "European-Atlantic solidarity" but of their readiness to make

a concrete contribution to "punishing" Russia via restriction of the activities of our companies present in Romania.

The Romanian Parliament members were most active at that. On 26 and 28 February 2022, the Chairman of the Senate F. Cîțu called on enhancement of the sanctions in respect of the Russian companies working in the EU Member States and on meticulous compliance with these restrictions by the industry-specific government agencies of Romania. On March 4, 2022, he supported complete termination of trade with Russia, and on March 9 announced making amendments to the government's urgent resolution No. 25/2021 with the aim to restrict possibilities for Russian legal entities' participation in state procurement.

On February 28, 2022, the speaker of the Chamber of Deputies, Chairman of the Social Democratic Party M. Ciolacu supported introduction of a "total blockade" in respect of activities of Russian companies and entrepreneurs.

Realizing in practice the aspiration of the Romanian political establishment to "punish" Russia as soon as possible, the National Consumer Protection Authority on February 28-29, 2022, demonstratively inspected the filling stations of Gazprom, Lukoil, and Beryozka Russian products retail network all over the country. At that, the head of the supervising authority's H. Constantinescu unequivocally suggested that the decision about the sudden inspection was supported by political motives, namely the intention to contribute in this manner to "stabilization of peace" by their own "war against deviation from the lawful norms".

The anti-Russian atmosphere affected the Russian companies present in Romania who, under the pretext of international sanctions, were deprived of the possibility to dispose of their own financial assets. This, in its turn, put into question their performance of their social and economic obligations to their employees, especially payment of salary.

The grounds for applying sanctions against Russian legal entities were controversial. On March 16, 2022, the National Tax Management Agency instructed to block the funds of the representative office of PJSC Aeroflot – Russian airlines in Romania in the local bank Raiffeisen Bank SA. The decision was substantiated by the fact that the funds of the airline's Romanian office were allegedly "indirectly controlled" by the members of its Board of Director (Minister of Transport of the Russian Federation V.G. Savelyev, CEO of Rostekh Corporation S.V. Chemezov and former CEO of PJSC Aeroflot M.I. Poluboyarinov), against whom personal sanctions have been introduced, that was not confirmed by any evidence. However, the bank, without waiting for publishing of the tax authorities' ordinance, blocked the representative office's access to accounts as early as March 11, 2022.

On March 10, 2022, the banks Raiffeisen Bank SA, Unicredit Bank Romania SA and Banca Comercială Română SA froze the accounts of TMK Artrom plants (making part of PJSC TMK International Group) in Romania and the accounts of their employees who had Russian citizenship. The reason thereof was the "connection" with the Russian entrepreneur D.A. Pumpyansky though the latter quit the ranks of the Russian head company's beneficiaries as early as on March 3, 2022. The tax service had not published its orders with the reasons for restrictions by the moment of freezing of the accounts. Meanwhile, due to the Romanian banks' actions, TMK Artrom enterprises failed to pay salaries timely to their 2,400 employees and make payments to their counterparties, having no access to their financial assets.

Apart from the freezing of the Russian business' accounts, a number of Romanian banks, in the first turn Raiffeisen Bank SA, distinguished themselves by blocking the accounts of absolutely all their clients from among our compatriots. To unblock them, individuals had to repeatedly present to the bank the grounds for their staying in the country (residence permit, certificate issued

by the local employer). And even after passing the inspection, there were obstacles for using the bank services.

Another example of unjustified restriction on the social and economic rights of companies with Russian participation is the refusal of the Romanian courier company TAZZ (HCL Online Advertising S.R.L.) of cooperation with Dodo pizza manufacturer under the contrived pretext that the product manufactured by it "may directly or indirectly become the subject of international sanctions of the EU, USA, U.K., Canada and the European Council.

The Russophobic activity fully affected the activities of the Russian media in Romania. On February 28, 2022, access to the information resources Sputnik Romania and Russia Today was restricted on all platforms including websites, social media, messengers, and mobile applications. Moreover, on the same day, the National Television and Radio Broadcasting Council (NTRBC), in a manner that was far from unbiased, promised to take measures in order that "not a single TV channel from the Russian Federation would be rebroadcasted in Romania" as well as "to monitor how topics related to the aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine are highlighted in news programs and talk shows". In this case, based on the NTRBC decision, in March 2022 fines were imposed on TV channel Realitatea Plus (40,000 leu, which is equivalent to 9,300 US Dollars) and radio station Gold FM (50,000 leu, about 11,600 US Dollars), and warnings were made to TV channels Naşul TV and B1 TV.

The Romanian journalists who publish information from Russian sources from the point of view alternative to that of the Romanian official narrative receive threats in social media. For example, the correspondent of Sputnik Romania, author of news blogs "Vladimir Putin's friends" and "In the first line" (inprimalinie.org) J. Arsene was insulted for dissemination of the information of the Ministry of Defence of Russia on the progress of the special operation, exposure of Ukrainian fake news and for placement of the Russian flag image

under the photo of her profile. From February 28, 2022, companies providing Internet hosting services, without any notifications and explanations, blocked for J. Arsene as the author of the blog "In the first line" and for the editor of the news website "News from Russia" (vestidinrusia.ro) V. Samoshkin access to the opportunity to edit their websites.

Russian citizens, fellow citizens and Romanians with Russian origins regularly inform the Russian Embassy in Bucharest of the threats and insults received by them in the social media. In a number of private schools in Bucharest, there were some instances of manifestation of aggression towards Russian pupils on the part of other pupils, pandered by teachers. The affected children's parents fear to officially report such incidents believing that this may only worsen the situation.

USA

The situation with protection of Russian citizens' rights in the USA remains extremely distressing.

It has to be acknowledged that Washington has been avoiding normal, civilized cooperation with Russia in the line of law enforcement authorities based on the Russian-American 1999 Treaty on Mutual Legal Assistance in Criminal Matters. Instead, the inadmissible practice of arrest of Russian citizens in third countries based on the US law enforcement authorities' inquiries is going on. It actually concerns unlawful extraterritorial application of the American legislation against our citizens. Almost sixty such cases have been reported since 2008. In 2021, V. Dunaev (from the Republic of Korea) and V. Klyushin (from Switzerland) were extradited to the USA.

On repeated occasions, situations occurred when American intelligence services organized obvious provocations against and even kidnappings of our compatriots. Arrests of K. Yaroshenko, V. But and R. Seleznev are vivid examples thereof.

Overall, there are about one hundred of Russian citizens in US prisons

and remand prisons. As shown in practice, the majority of them serve punishment for non-violent crimes (violation of immigration laws, fraud, stealing, etc.).

Absence of exact information about the number of the detained Russians is explained by the fact that the US government not always inform about our compatriots' release from custody. The application of the Embassy of the Russian Federation to the US Department of State requesting to provide data about the number of citizens of the Russian Federation who are in detention facilities remained unanswered.

As a rule, when our fellow citizens fall into the hands of the American justice they are subjected to biased approach from the investigative bodies and courts. They are subjected to psychological pressure. The well-known situation with Maria Butina is another confirmation thereof.

Using various methods, including direct threats, they try to coerce our fellow citizens to admission of their guilt and plea bargain, notwithstanding the absurdity of the charges, and if they refuse, they are sentenced to long terms of imprisonment.

The cases of K. Yaroshenko, V. But, R. Seleznev are the most high-profile ones among them. K. Yaroshenko was arrested in May 2010 in Liberia by the officers of the US Drug Enforcement Administration, tortured, unlawfully transferred to the USA, and sentenced to 20 years of imprisonment. During his detention, K. Yaroshenko faced disdainful attitude to the state of his health on the part of the American authorities. The penal institution administration refused to provide him with dental care and necessary medicines. Notwithstanding his serious diseases, it was possible to obtain even minimal medical care only after repeated applications from the Embassy of the Russian Federation in the USA, and most requests for conducting full-fledged examinations and complicated medical procedures remained without answer. After the lengthy negotiation process between the Russian and American

parties, on April 27, 2022, K. Yaroshenko was exchanged for the American student T. Reed convicted in Russia for attacking a police officer.

Another example is V. But who was convicted in the USA on doubtful charges and is serving 25-year imprisonment. He is regularly placed to the special prison blocks with additional regime restrictions, without any reasons therefor. The Russian also experiences difficulties with obtaining medical assistance.

The situation around the Russian citizen R. Seleznev gives rise to concerns. Notwithstanding his serious health problems, the prison authorities do not provide him the necessary medical assistance and refuse to transfer him to another penitentiary facility where his comprehensive medical examination could be done.

The aforementioned cases clearly demonstrate the repressive nature of the American justice. Our citizens' rights are continuously violated. They are placed in a solitary confinement cell without explaining the reasons, refused to provide them qualified medical assistance and necessary medicine. Of course, this has negative impact on both physical and mental state of health of our fellow citizens.

Spreading of the coronaviral infection aggravated the demanding situation of our Russian fellow citizens detained in penitentiary facilities. Notwithstanding the drastic growth of COVID-19 incidence, qualified medical assistance is rarely provided to the Russian convicts. Testing for coronavirus is realized effected in exceptional cases.

Protection of the rights and lawful interests of the Russian convicts is one of the primary tasks of the Embassy. Close attention is paid to the Russians' state of health and their detention conditions.

The Russophobia propagated by the American government had a negative impact on the situation of persons originating from our country (there is one of the largest Russian expatriate communities in the USA, consisting, as per the

data of the 2020 census, of over 2.8 million persons, or 0.8 per cent of the entire population). During 2021, about three hundred fellow citizens permanently residing in the USA were subjected to prosecutions by the American intelligence services on contrived grounds, therefore their lawful rights to preservation their natural cultural identity and free maintaining of ties with Russia were grossly violated. As a consequence, some representatives of the Coordination Council of the Russian Fellow Citizens Organizations (CCRFCO), including its head E. Branson and executive secretary S. Gladyshev, had to leave the USA. On November 18, 2021, the Coordination Council took the decision to suspend its activities. In the statement published by the CCRFCO it is noted that the American authorities have created inadmissible conditions for continuing the work on consolidation of the community, promotion of the Russian language, holding memorial actions.

Our compatriots were subjected to searches, interrogations and psychological pressure, their personal belongings (including electronic devices) and documents were seized. These actions were realized under the pretext of investigating the CCRFCO activities without registration as a foreign agent.

Attempts to intimidate our citizens by punishment for "maintaining relations" with the Russian Embassy and Russian consular missions in the USA had been taken earlier – before the presidential elections.

The CCRFCO members informed the MFA of Russia, the Governmental Commission for Affairs of Fellow Citizens Residing Abroad, the Foundation for Support and Protection of Rights of Compatriots about the claims that the American law enforcement agencies had in respect of the public activities of their organization and requested to take measures for settlement thereof.

The Russian position of inadmissibility of putting pressure on our compatriots was more than once informed to the American government. Inadmissibility of gross violation of the Russian citizens' rights to maintain relations with their historical Motherland was emphasized.

The Embassy of Russia in Washington will continue to render the necessary assistance and consular and legal aid to all compatriots residing in the USA.

There is continued pressure of the American authorities on representatives of the Russian media who in the recent years became victims of cruel and unjustified actions of law enforcement agencies on repeated occasions. Thus, while dispersing demonstrators in Minneapolis (Minnesota) on May 30, 2020, the police poured teargas in the face of IMG Rossiya Segodnya journalist M. Turgiev. This happened notwithstanding his showing to the police officers his press card. As could be seen from the video taken at the place of the incident, the Russian had identified himself in a loud and clear manner, he did not offer any resistance and his clothes had the necessary markings.

Another incident happened on the night of July 22, 2020, in Portland, Oregon. The correspondent Yu. Olkhovskaya and operator V. Arkhipov of Channel One Russia suffered from the actions of law enforcement officers in the course of preparation of materials about the disorders provoked by the killing of Afro-American J. Floyd. The "guardians of law and order" inflicted damage to the health of the Russians and damaged their professional equipment – broke the video camera and mobile phone. The incident happened after our fellow citizens had informed about their appurtenance to the media. Total over thirty journalists were wounded as the result of unlawful actions of law enforcement and intelligence service officers in Portland while highlighting the protests.²⁸

On October 29, 2020, in Philadelphia (Pennsylvania), an assault related to robbery was made on Channel One crew. Correspondent G. Olisashvili suffered, operator M. Kataev had a concussion, multiple bruises, and scratches. The robbers broke into the Russian citizens' car, stole a bag with personal

28 NGO Committee to Protect Journalists

<https://cpj.org/2020/08/were-scared-shitless-out-here-four-reporters-on-covering-the-federal-response-to-portland-protests/>

belongings and funds and a video camera. As informed by the journalists, the local law enforcement officers demonstrated absolute indifference and total absence of any interest to investigate the incident.

On October 15, 2020, officers of the Federal Customs and Border Control Service interrogated RT channel journalist K. Rozhkov during many hours. The Russian citizen arrived in the USA for shooting a documentary about America on the eve of presidential elections. The discontent was caused by his intention to highlight burning issues in the country and, on the whole, his work for RT channel that had been included in the list of foreign agents. They demanded the reporter to open access to all available electronic media, further on – to provide explanations on the information placed in public domain (including about the performed vaccination with Sputnik V) as well as on the correspondence related to his journalistic activity. What happened definitely went beyond the ordinary procedures related to ensuring public safety.

On October 23, 2020, IMG Rossiya Segodnya employee D. Zlodorev was subjected to a thirty minutes' telephone interrogation by a representative of the Baltimore FBI office. Our citizen was requested to provide information about his professional contacts with the CCRFCO as well as with the representative office of Rossotrudnichestvo (Federal Agency for CIS Affairs, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation) in Washington.

In July 2020, YouTube video hosting blocked the accounts of Tsargrad TV channel and Imperial Eagle historical society. The formal ground was "violation of the platform terms and conditions and of export legislation". In March 2021, the service administration also restricted access to the film of the Russian journalist A. Kondrashev named "Crimea. Way to Motherland", and in September 2020 the access to A. Rogatkin's film "Beslan" was also restricted, under the pretext that they contained materials able to frighten or shock users.

As of today, the US Department of State has not reacted to any application of the Russian Embassy urging thorough investigation into each of

the incidents, bringing the perpetrators to liability and ensuring safety of media representatives.

After the beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by the Russian Federation, Russophobic attitudes have increased in the USA, actively stirred up by the American media and official rhetoric.

Owners of shops and restaurants, who used in the names of their businesses the word "Russian" or included Russian specialties in the menu, were one of the first to face everyday aggression. It was demonstrated mostly through petty hooliganism – insulting graffiti on walls and shopwindows, negative comments on websites, anonymous threatening telephone calls. However, this contributed to spreading fear among restaurant keepers. Thus, Varda M., the owner of the "Russian House" restaurant in Austin, Texas, decided to rename her restaurant as simply "House".

The owner of "Sveta" restaurant in the Manhattan quarter of New York, Svetlana Savchits, who immigrated to the USA from Ukraine in 1993, receives dozens of threats and insults addressed to her every day. She has to make regular complaints to the police because of that. As the consequence of the bullying, Svetlana has changed the gastronomical focus of the restaurant, now calling it a place with Eastern European cuisine.

The president of the association Russian Youth of America Igor Kochin confirmed increase of Russophobia in the USA in his interview to FAN media. According to him, the negative attitude is felt even more, though public catering places do not yet hang out plates "Russians not permitted" and they have not yet started writing "we do not employ Russians" in job advertisements.

I. Kochin noted in particular that Russian persons have faced pressure and bullying of children at schools, started losing their jobs. According to him, persons of Russian origin more often face loss of their income sources. Discrimination is prosecuted by law in the USA. However, it is quite

problematic to prove the fact of harassment based on national or ethnic origin. Due to such negative background, many emigrants, even those who have achieved remarkable success abroad, started thinking of possibility to return to Russia. The anti-Russian attitudes in the American society not only influence colleagues' attitude towards persons of Russian origin, but they also destroy families. There are reported incidents when American spouses stopped communicating with, speaking with, or even letting into the house their Russian spouses.²⁹

Serious aggression to Russians and even just Russian-speaking persons is demonstrated by representatives of the Ukrainian community residing in the USA. Fearing attacks, Russians try to avoid speaking their native tongue in public places. In this connection, I. Kochin also noted American policemen's accepting attitude to facts of discrimination of Russian-speaking people. Our compatriots fear that it will be demonstrated to the greatest extent in organization of pro-Russian events. Previously, when pro-Russian actions were conducted, their participants were often approached by nationalistically minded persons who tried to impede the holding of such events. They even had confrontations with the police. However now, according to our fellow citizens' assessment, one cannot expect protection from the law enforcement authorities.

Even minimal connection to Russia may become the reason for physical violence. An example of this may be the attack on the American blogger, Brooklyn resident, by his Ukrainian neighbour. It was provoked by the fact that the man carelessly unfolded in the street the flag of the "Somali" division – a present mailed to him by his subscriber from the Donetsk People's Republic. For this, he was hit on the face, and his tooth was broken. The attacker pursued him several quarters shouting racist insults. Charges have been already brought

29 "People are sacked": the head of the association Russian Youth of America Kochin confirmed growing Russophobia in the US. https://riafan.ru/22912317-lyudei_uvol_nyayut_glava_obschestva_russkaya_molodezh_ameriki_kochin_podtverdil_usilenie_rusofobii_v_ssha

against him, including those of commission of a hate crime, and a court injunction on approaching the blogger has been delivered. At that, the latter is of both Russian and Ukrainian origins.³⁰

The Rubic website popular in the USA published its readers' stories about demonstration of discrimination that they have faced. Among others, there were also reported cases of discrimination and aggression in respect of Russian children at schools, biased attitude, and fault-finding in respect of persons of Russian origin at work, especially on the part of those company owners who were Ukrainian. Serious growth of insults on the Internet and social media is observed.³¹

Propagation of Russophobia and its visual manifestation may be close to absurd. After the beginning of the Russian special operation, stickers with the Ukrainian flag at the entrance to shops, cafes, polyclinics, dry cleaners, and other public places became widespread in the USA. At that, quite often the specialists working there explain to their Russian clients that in this way they just avoid unnecessary conversations.

On February 24, 2022, the management of Carnegie Hall concert hall in New York informed that the Russian orchestra director V.A. Gergiev would not be heading the Vienna philharmonic orchestra at three concerts. At the same time, the participation of the Russian pianist D.L. Matsuev in the concert planned for February 25, 2022, was cancelled.³²

On April 6, 2022, the Boston Athletic Association, a non-commercial association positioning the promotion of healthy lifestyle as its main goal, informed about its decision to prohibit participation in the annual Boston marathon to Russian and Belorussian athletes who were residents of these two

30 Brooklyn man attacked for pro-Russian flag says he got it from YouTube fan. New York post. March 18, 2022

<https://nypost.com/2022/03/18/nyc-man-attacked-for-pro-russian-flag-says-he-got-it-from-youtube-fan/>

31 "You speak Russian? Then, you are a traitor": How they treat immigrants from the former USSR in America now. <https://www.kp.ru/daily/27374/4567724/>

32 Carnegie Hall in New York cancelled the performances of Gergiev and Matsuev. TASS. February 25, 2022. <https://tass.ru/kultura/13850801>

countries. At the same time, non-residents are allowed to the competition not depending on their citizenship. Until further notice, the organization refused to acknowledge any designation by the athletes of their appurtenance to Russia and Belarus, including using their state flags.³³

The American government actively use the tactics of "fighting using others" against Russia and the Russian people. First of all, it is expressed in providing huge military aid to the Kyiv regime and putting pressure on the USA's allies in NATO to take similar measures. Apart from that, open pressure is exerted on sovereign states in the attempt to form the respective negative backdrop around our country in the international arena.

Washington actively involves its controlled media and IT companies who, using all possible means, obstruct bringing the Russian approaches and objective points of view on the events in Ukraine to the attention of the international community. For these purposes, censoring is openly used, up to full exclusion of the Russian position from the media environment. Both Russian media and common persons who publish content reflecting the Russian positions fall under repressions on the Internet.

Starting from April 2020, Roskomnadzor (the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecom, Information Technologies, and Mass Communications) found out over sixty instances of discrimination of videos posted on YouTube platform by the Russian media as well as by civic and sports organizations and their functionaries. The restrictions in respect of the Russian media resources were drastically enhanced in the end of February 2022. Among other things, the accounts or content of the information agencies Russia Today and Sputnik, of the TV channels Russia 24, Zvezda, RBC, NTV, THT, REN TV, Izvestiya, The Fifth Channel, Russian Radio, Tsargrad and others were blocked. Channel One, Russia 1, Culture, RIA Novosti also fell within the

33 B.A.A. Policy on Russian and Belarusian Athletes.
<https://www.baa.org/baa-policy-russian-and-belarusian-athletes>

scope of the restrictions. According to the statements of the video hosting administration, the content disseminated by the TV channels, including that dedicated to the special operation, "violates its policy".

Simultaneously with these restrictions, the administration and moderators of YouTube do not object to dissemination of information by extremist organizations, first of all by the "Right Sector" banned in Russia and by the "Azov" nationalistic formation. In fact, YouTube became one of the key platforms disseminating fake news about the course of the special military operation in the territory of Ukraine, discrediting the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. According to Roskomnadzor, over 12,000 of such materials are posted on the service.

In the end of February 2022, Google prohibited to Russian official media to place advertisements on its platforms. In the beginning of March, its management informed that Google Play users in Russia will not be able to prolong paid subscriptions or install paid applications due to decisions taken by the payment systems.

Censorship is actively used by the company Meta that owns Facebook and Twitter social media. These resources also restrict dissemination of content of Russian media, public persons, and public figures, as well as of ordinary citizens, containing the Russian position. At the same time, in the beginning of February – March 2022 the calls "to kill Russians", instructions on the ways of killings and making explosives, as well as other similar content, were actively distributed on these platforms. Moderators ignored complaints from users about such definite dissemination of ideology of hatred.

On March 11, 2022, a letter from Meta internal communications was published. As followed from this letter, the company would temporarily allow to Facebook and Instagram in some countries not to block users' calls on violence against Russians including military servicemen. It was also noted that calls to death addressed to the presidents of Russia and Belarus would not be

removed on social media.

After the revealed fact of using double standards in respect of Russian citizens, Meta attempted to repair the situation. However, its statement yet once again confirmed the racist approaches to publications. In particular, it was stated that users would be allowed to call to "death to Russian occupants" but at the same time the platform administration would block calls to violence against Russian civilians. The company also noted that publications on ways of killings would be banned.

The company also did not comply with the Russian government's lawful demand to delete such dangerous materials. On March 21, 2022, the Russian court declared Meta an extremist organization and its activities were prohibited in Russia.

North Macedonia

No incidents of prosecution of our compatriots and Russian citizens by the government are reported in North Macedonia.

At the same time, in September 2021 there was an incident with apprehension of NTV Channel crew in the city of Kumanovo by law enforcement officers, without explaining any reasons thereof. The journalists were unlawfully detained and interrogated during five hours, without any concrete charges brought against them. Russian Embassy representatives were not allowed to visit the apprehended media workers. Their release became possible only after the Ambassador of Russia contacted the Prime Minister and the Minister of Internal Affairs of North Macedonia.

The cult of loyalty to the West propagated in the country found its reflection after the beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine by the Russian Federation. On April 4, 2022, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, referring to the applicable legislative provisions, reminded to all residents about the possibility of bringing to criminal liability for "denial of war crimes in Ukraine". Refuting fake news disseminated

by Western and Ukrainian media and aimed to discredit Russia and its Armed Forces may also fall within these definitions. At the same time, it is worth noting that no cases of prosecuting Russians under such pretexts in North Macedonia have been reported so far.

Slovakia

The Russophobic campaign unleashed by the West was reflected on Slovakia. After beginning of Russian special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine, the country adopted amendments to the law on state tenders allowing introducing a ban on participation in such tenders of companies from unfriendly countries (the list of such states is developed as an annex to this document). This concerns, first of all, tenders for procurement in such strategic areas as energy and defence industry. Its authors are honest about the fact that these amendments target, first of all, Russian enterprises (however, companies registered by citizens of such "unfriendly" countries in Slovakia do not fall under the restrictions).

Slovenia

Some particular cases of discrimination of Russians were reported in Slovenia. There were a few incidents with bullying Russian children at schools by their classmates of Slovenian and Ukrainian origin.

Apart from that, on March 19, 2022, the authorities held up a sailing yacht belonging to a Russian citizen that was going to sail to Russia. The named pretext was the need to comply with the law on admissibility of transfer luxury items beyond the EU customs area; the yacht was qualified as such an item.

Ukraine

The situation with the rights of Russian citizens and compatriots in Ukraine remains stably difficult.

In 2021, the National Security and Defence Council of Ukraine took a set of decisions to introduce restrictions on Russian legal entities and individuals, in particular providing for suspending their economic activities, freezing their

assets, restricting entrance to Ukraine. As of today, about 1,400 of Russians and over 1,000 of Russian enterprises and companies have been included in the sanction lists.

Russian citizens arriving to the country from Crimea are subjected to unjustified criminal prosecution. Criminal cases on charges of "treason", "attempts on territorial integrity and immunity", "creation of paramilitary armed groups", "aiding terrorists and separatists" are initiated against them. In January 2020, I. Antonov, a person with hearing disabilities of III disability group, who was returning from a pilgrimage to Kyiv Pechersk Lavra Monastery, was arrested. In early November 2020, the head of division of the Crimea state enterprise Chernomorneftegaz, former deputy head of the Main Directorate of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of Ukraine in Crimea, N. Fedoryan, was arrested; the Ukrainian government brought against him the charges of "providing assistance to the occupation authorities in conducting searches and unlawful detention of individuals."

There are reported numerous violations of the procedural rights of the Russian citizens in the course of conducting criminal proceedings initiated against them. Thus, in 2020 an incident was reported when G. Odanets was subjected to tortures by the Ukrainian law enforcement officials who were trying to obtain his confession.

Additionally, Russian citizens, notwithstanding the region of their residence, face significant problems in Ukraine as the result of provocations of the Ukrainian intelligence services, contrived charges of espionage, attempts on the sovereignty and territorial integrity of Ukraine, involvement in the events in Crimea and Donbas; prosecutions in third countries are also possible. In September 2021, the Russian citizen A. Franchetti was arrested in Prague on the Ukrainian party's inquiry in connection to his alleged participation in the 2014 events that lead to the reunification of Crimea with Russia. The Kyiv authorities accuse him of "creating illegal armed groups". The issue of his extradition to the

Ukrainian party is pending before the judiciary of the Czech Republic.

Difficulties are faced in obtaining consular access of the Russian diplomatic missions' employees to their compatriots arrested in Ukraine. In 2021, the Embassy was denied consular access to the Russian citizens N. Fedoryan, A. Kosyak and A. Lapushnyak, with reference to their existing Ukrainian citizenship.

According to the data of the State Border Service of Ukraine, in 2021 over 6,600 Russians were not allowed in the country's territory for distinct reasons. Of these, about five hundred persons were denied entry in connection with their "unlawful" visiting Crimea and the proclaimed republics in Donbas. The tacit ban is still valid on entering the territory of Ukraine of male persons aged from 18 to 60 with Russian citizenship, having no confirmation of the purpose of the visit.

In 2021 the Ministry of culture of Ukraine additionally included 45 Russian artists, culture, and arts workers in the "blacklist" of the persons "posing a threat to national security". There is a total 210 persons on this list (as of March 25, 2022) who are banned from entering the country.

Since 2014, Ukraine has banned about eight hundred works of the Russian cinema industry, over three hundred Russian printed editions, about three hundred books.

The notorious Myrotvorets website, containing personal data of politicians, journalists, civic activists not loyal to the government, as well as of Russian citizens suspected of "anti-Ukrainian activities", is still functioning with the support from SBU (the Security Service of Ukraine). Overall, there are about 75,000 Russians in its database, including our fellow citizens residing in Donbas, ever children.

In October 2021, a 12-year-old resident of Luhansk F. Savenkova who allegedly "poses a threat to the national security of Ukraine" was included in the Myrotvorets database. Moreover, she was termed "a victim of psychological

violence and Russian terrorist propaganda." Now she and her family are at risk. The reason thereof was her open appeal to the members of the UN Security Council on the Children's Day where she drew attention to the situation of children in Donbas.

Russian journalists are de facto deprived of the right to pursue their activities in Ukraine. They are not allowed to events designated for the media, conducted by the state governmental institutions. Their applications for accreditation are not accepted for consideration. In 2021, the Kyiv office of TASS was closed due to the sanctions restrictions introduced against it.

The Ukrainian government also does not waive its practice of banning journalists, first of all the foreign ones, from entering the country.

Within the framework of the anti-Russian policy pursued by the government, in April 2021 severe sanctions restrictions were applied in respect of Rossotrudnichestvo, leading to closure of the RCSC (Russian Centre of Science and Culture) in Kyiv and narrowing possibilities for the compatriots to realize their cultural and language needs.

The situation of the Russian compatriots, whose rights and freedoms are infringed on a regular basis, still remains complicated in the country. Russian-speaking activists continuously face violation of their rights to the integrity of person, dwelling, property, are intimidated and subjected to pressure by healthcare authorities, law enforcement authorities, intelligence services and nationalist groups.

In December 2018, SBU officers conducted searches in Poltava in the premises of the Russian-speaking community members. A Pushkin medal was seized from the coordinator of the All-Ukrainian Coordination Council of the Russian Fellow Citizens Organizations (ACCRFCO) S. Provatorov (who also heads the Russian Commonwealth Association).

Investigative activities were conducted in respect of the historian Yu. Pogoda (a well-known researcher of the Great Northern War period), poet

and publicist V. Shestakov (head of the Poltava Region Russian Community). Criminal proceedings were brought against them under Article 110 of the Criminal Code of Ukraine ("attempts on territorial integrity").

In May 2019, the SBU conducted a search of the head of the Transcarpathia Regional Association Rus V. Saltykov. They seized mobile communications devices and his personal computers.

The arrest (in August 2020) by the SBU officers of a Russian language and literature teacher, head of the non-government organization Russian National Community Rusich, a distinguished teacher with long-term experience T. Kuzmich, who is wide known for her active work to promote the Russian language in Ukraine, on suspicion of treason, caused great public outcry. The Ukrainian security services accuse her of the fact that during her stay in Crimea she allegedly "was involved by the FSB of Russia in espionage activities, transferred materials for conducting subversion activities in the Kherson Region and all over Ukraine" and that she is also involved in "creation of a spy network". It is worth noting that T. Kuzmich paid regular visits to the peninsula since 2008 within the framework of her professional duties for taking part in the Great Russian Word Festival. The measure of restraint chosen for her was remand in custody, however in the beginning of October 2020 she was released on bail. T. Kuzmich risks a punishment in the form of imprisonment for a period of 12 to 15 years with confiscation of her property.

One of the elements of the official Kyiv's policy in respect of national minorities – forced Ukrainization – is discrimination of a significant part of the population based on language, including gross violation of the rights of the Russian-speaking community. As the result, Russian-speaking residents of the country have no opportunity to receive education in their native language.

Starting from 2017, the course for banning the use of any other language, except Ukrainian, in the state sector, educational process and media, has been consistently pursued in the country's legislation. As the result of a number of the

laws adopted, including the laws On Education, On General Secondary Education and On Ensuring Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the Official Language, the Russian language was subjected to triple discrimination in the Ukrainian state: in respect of the official language, official languages of the EU and indigenous peoples' languages. In 2021, by decisions of the Ukrainian courts, the Russian language was deprived of the status of the regional one in the Dnepropetrovsk, Zaporozhsk, Mykolayiv Regions and in the city of Kharkiv.

In addition to that, laws were adopted aiming at Ukrainization of social life, media and TV, services sphere.

Ukrainian radicals regularly organize various aggressive actions against teachers who continue to use the Russian language. In March 2020, nationalists organized bullying of lyceum teachers in Lviv. The teachers were accused of "propaganda of the Russian World" and "Russification of Ukrainian children". A similar incident happened to the honoured teacher of Ukraine P. Viktor. In April 2020, nationalists unfolded an aggressive campaign against him because he had created video lessons of physics in Russian.

In November 2020, the professor at the National Technical University Dneprovskaya Politekhnik (the city of Dnepropetrovsk) V. Gromov, under the pressure of the university administration, had to retire after an official complaint lodged against him by a student who was indignant at the fact that the professor lectured in Russian.

The teacher of the department of cultural studies and philosophical anthropology of M. Dragomanov National Teachers' University (Kyiv) E. Bilchenko, who had earlier supported the Maidan movement but later changed her views, was dismissed in January 2021 after posting a message on social media criticizing the Law on Ensuring Functioning of the Ukrainian Language as the Official Language.

The beginning of the special military operation for denazification and

demilitarization of Ukraine by the Russian Federation fully highlighted how seriously this country has been reformatted into a Russophobic state with its main characteristics consisting in confrontation with Russia and denouncing everything connected to it in whichever way.

It is worth noting that this report covers data on discrimination and prosecution of Russian citizens and fellow citizens. The atrocious crimes of the Ukrainian neo-Nazi groups and foreign mercenaries against Russian military servicemen are not included in this document. The assessment of these criminal acts, which have fully confirmed the commitment of the present-day neo-Nazi in Ukraine to the ideas and tactics of the German Nazis and local collaborators from the OUN (Organization of Ukrainian Nationalists) and UPA (Ukrainian Insurgent Army) during the Great Patriotic War, is made by the Russian competent authorities within the framework of investigation of numerous criminal cases based on these monstrous crimes. Significant efforts are also made by the Russian civil society organizations and by all persons concerned who reveal the truth about the real face of the Ukrainian government and the National-Radicals protected by it. Data on these crimes will be included in separate analytical materials.

From the start of the special military operation, the MFA of Russia received applications from over 5,000 Russian citizens staying in Ukraine. In most of the cases, these letters contained requests to inform about safe ways of evacuation from Ukraine to Russia and other countries. Many of our fellow citizens point out to the terror unleashed in Ukrainian cities by representatives of the so-called homeland defence and other persons who had received weapons in the course of their uncontrolled handing over.

The Kyiv regime governmental authorities take measures for restrictions on our citizens' rights. The National Bank of Ukraine became one of the first among such bodies who prohibited to the credit institutions in the country to perform any currency operations using the Russian rouble. This step made by

the regulator left thousands of persons in the country without means of subsistence.

As the special military operation continued, the situation of compatriots in Ukraine was significantly worsening due to the Russophobic hysteria unfolded by the media controlled by the Kyiv regime. It reached an unthinkable scale. Ukrainian officials make serious efforts in this area. Thus, commenting the cynical staged-up action in the town of Bucha, the Minister of Culture A. Tkachenko, in his interview to 1+1 TV channel said that "there is no mentioning of good Russians, as there are no good Russians" and urged to fight with them all over the world. The advisor to the President of Ukraine A. Geraschenko called on in the social media "to find and punish" all civilians who cooperated with the Russian military servicemen in the Kyiv Region. The well-known hater of Russians, the mayor of the city of Dnepropetrovsk (now Dnepr) B. Filatov called on in Facebook "to kill Russians all around the world, and in substantial numbers".

It should be mentioned that numerous Ukrainian refugees that found themselves in the countries of Europe, as well as representatives of the Ukrainian expatriate community residing there "caught on" this call and began implementing it in practice, publishing threats addressed to Russian citizens and Russian people and publishing their personal data, and in some cases attacking Russian citizens and Russian people in these countries. Data on such manifestations are included in the specific country sections of this report.

The Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine contributed to the discrimination of our compatriots by adopting amendments to the Law of Ukraine on the Basic Principles of Forced Seizure in Ukraine of Subjects of Ownership of the Russian Federation and its Residents. The document defines the range of the residents of the Russian Federation whose assets will be forcibly seized. They include Russian citizens (except for those who fight on the side of Ukraine using weapons), persons who are not citizens of the Russian Federation but

have close ties with it, as well as residents denying or supporting "the armed aggression of the RF against Ukraine".

Moreover, the Ukrainian representational authority opened up a new measurement of the rampant Russophobia by beginning examination of the draft law on banning in Ukraine geographic names related to Russia, its history, and prominent personalities. Many Ukrainian municipalities expressed their intention to rename dozens of city streets and other objects.

Thus, on April 13, 2022, the Ivano-Frankivsk City Council decided to rename twenty-five streets bearing the names of Russian and Soviet prominent persons in the sphere of culture and science. The streets named after F.M. Dostoevsky, M.Yu. Lermontov, A.P. Chekhov, L.N. Tolstoy, D.I. Mendeleev, K.E. Tsiolkovsky, I.E. Repin, V.G. Korolenko, A.S. Makarenko and the Soviet dissident academician A.D. Sakharov will disappear from the city map. Instead of them, the streets named after the Heroes of Chernihiv, Mariupol, Volnovakha, Mykolayiv, Kharkiv, Kherson will appear. Some streets will be named after the OUN-UPA members and Ukrainian cultural workers. Apart from that, in Tismenichany settlement of the Ivano-Frankivsk community, Gagarin Street will become Roman Shukhevich Street and Rudnev Street – Stepan Bandera Street.

On April 14, 2022, the Uzhhorod city council also adopted the resolution to rename fifty-eight streets. Where possible, they will be returned their "historical names" and a number of objects will be named in honour of "the heroes of the war with Russia" after its "victorious end".

In Odessa, they decided to remove from the Memorial Sign of twin cities the names of the Russian cities Volgograd, Moscow, Rostov-on-Don, Saint Petersburg, and Taganrog.

On April 15, 2022, the deputies of the Kyiv [City] Council supported the renaming of the public garden of friendship between Kyiv and Moscow (on Teremki) as "the Mariupol heroes public garden". Apart from that, names of

three railway stations were changed (Kyiv-Oktyabrsky to Grushki, Kyiv-Moskovsky to Kyiv-Demeevsky, Kyiv-Petrovka to Pochayna) and the name of S. Chekalin Children's Library in the Obolonsky district of the capital. According to the Kyiv City Council Secretary V. Bondarenko, the next plenary meetings will consider renaming the streets, lanes, and Kyiv metro stations whose names are related to Russia.

On April 11, 2022, draft law No. 7273 on banning Russian music on radio, in public transport, cafes and cinemas was registered in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. According to the document the measure will apply to audio-visual works performed by "citizens and residents of the aggressor state" on radio and TV, in places of entertainment, in public transport, educational institutions, hotels and restaurants, cultural and recreational facilities, cinema halls and in public space. It is proposed to introduce the restrictions for the period until the "liberation of all occupied Ukrainian territories and termination of the aggression on the part of Russia."

Active struggle against the Russian language is going on, especially in the sphere of education. The Commissioner for Protection of the Official Language of the Verkhovna Rada, T. Kremin, takes active racist positions. Following the Education Ombudsman S. Gorbachev, he demanded to fully cancel teaching Russian in the country from September 1, 2022, and urged to send Russian language teachers to "down time" till the end of this academic year. He added that the "Russian language" discipline should be replaced by other ones, and, to the extent it has not yet been done, make the teachers, before beginning of each Russian language lesson, to explain to Russian-speaking children that their native language is by default the language of the aggressor and they should be ashamed to speak it. On April 11, he urged to get rid of the Russian-language names of communities in the country justifying it by the slogan "Ukraine for Ukrainians".

Ukrainian nationalists proceeded to hunting the Russian culture and

everything connected with it. "A threat to national identity" was perceived also in monuments to A.S. Pushkin. On April 7, 2022, in the town of Mukachevo of the Transcarpathia Region, based on the local authorities' decision "for the purpose of carrying out de-Russification events", the Russian poet's bust and the memorial plate on the building of School No. 1 were removed. The authorities of Ternopil and Uzhhorod did the same. In Dnepropetrovsk, the letter Z was painted on the monument to A.S. Pushkin on April 10, 2022. In Cherkasy, the poet's bust was painted with the colours of the Ukrainian flag.

Dismantling monuments to liberators of Ukraine from Nazism during the Great Patriotic War is continuing. Here are some recent examples. The monument to the Soviet T-34 tank was dismantled in Mukachevo on April 11, 2022. On the same day, the stela to the Soviet soldier was dismantled in the city of Stryi of the Lviv Region. On April 14, 2022, in Ternopol, the monument to the Soviet MIG-17 plane (located at the entrance to the National Renaissance Park on the "Eastern" massive) was dismantled. On April 16, 2022, in the town of Zdolbunov the monument to the Hero of the Soviet Union, partisan N.T. Prikhodko, was removed using a tractor. On April 17, 2022, in Kharkiv, the shooters of the local "Kraken" armed group demolished the monument to the Soviet military commander G.K. Zhukov. Soviet symbols were removed from the territory of the Glory Hill memorial complex in Lviv.

Museums constitute a standalone area of the Kyiv anti-Russian policy. As informed by observers, opening of the so-called "occupation museums" is planned in many Ukrainian cities for the purpose of the final marginalization of the Soviet period in the history of the country. It should not be excluded that the existing exhibition areas will be subjected to serious censorship to comply with the political climate, or even plundered. Thus, as reported by the media, the "Azov" nationalists leaving Mariupol took exhibits of historical value from the local museum where they had been deployed.

The canonical Ukrainian Orthodox Church (UOC), that the Kyiv

government has been trying to uproot from the country's confessional environment for many years, got under the blow of the Russophobic manifestations. A large-scale information campaign was launched against the UOC clergy, aimed to discredit its priests in the eyes of the parishioners and to turn them into an image of "enemy accomplices". Slandorous rumours are spread about archpriests of parishes, numerous fake news is posted on social network saying the church hierarchs allegedly assist the Russian Armed Forces storing food for them and forming arms caches. Every day, denunciations are sent to the Ukrainian police and the SBU about alleged storage of weapons, ammunition, and food in the UOC churches for "the aggressor". Ukrainian politicians and public persons urge to prohibit the UOC and to deprive it of its property.

Some legislative steps have already been taken in this respect. Two draft bills aimed against the UOC were registered in the Verkhovna Rada of Ukraine. Draft law No. 7204 dated March 22, 2022, proposed by the representative of the nationalist party VO Svoboda O. Savchuk provides for, in particular, direct ban on the activities of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine and nationalization of all the assets of the Church. Those religious communities who wish to avoid restrictions will be provided 14 days for "changing their jurisdiction". A document similar in trend but more lenient in terms of its contents, No. 7213, was proposed on March 26, 2022, by the inter-fraction group of MPs who are supporters of the Orthodox Church of Ukraine (OCU). This draft law does not contain a direct reference to the Moscow Patriarchate; however, it proposes to introduce restrictive measures against confessions "whose directing centre is located outside Ukraine."

The UOC parishes become targets of numerous marauders who justify their plundering by struggle against "occupants" and their "spiritual lackeys". Videos of these actions are disseminated on social media in Ukraine with calls to follow these examples.

Nationalists became active again applying violent tactics in respect of the UOC clergy. At least 4 cases of kidnapping of priests of the canonical church have been reported: On March 9, 2022 the archpriest of the Dukonsky Monastery of the Ivano-Frankivsk diocese, archimandrite Tita (Drachuk) disappeared; on March 16, 2022 there was an attack on the archpriest of the temple in the village of Ivanovka in the Zhitomir Region, archimandrite Lavr (Berezovsky); on the same day, Father Gennady was kidnapped in the village of Tomashovka of the Fastov District of the Kyiv Region; on March 28, during the divine service in the Saint Protection Church in the town of Smela of the Cherkassy Region, priest-monk Vasily was kidnapped by armed persons.

After the beginning of the special operation, the efforts of the Kyiv government, aimed to clear the environment from any alternative-thinking and sane public figures and activists speaking from positions different from the official one, became more aggressive. All who, in whichever form, questioned V. Zelensky's course for unleashing a war with Russia, had dissenting opinions and supported development of equal relationships with our country, are subjected to repressions.

The SBU arrests members of the Ukrainian opposition on a mass scale. According to the media, they are beaten and tortured to make them record anti-Russian appeals (mostly video). After that, the SBU takes hold of the access to the opposition activists' webpages on social media and on video hosting channels and starts its own information and psychological operations via these media, trying to convince the subscribers of these activists in the need to unite around the existing Kyiv regime. In particular, it is known about the arrests of a TV presenter and political scientist D. Dzhangirov, political scientist Yu. Dudkin – former SBU officer, participant of programs of Ukrainian and Russian TV channels V. Mulyk, political scientists Aleksandr Kononovich and Mikhail Kononovich who support friendship between Ukraine and Russia. There are also reports about the arrest of the opposition politician V. Volga and

beating of the Opposition Platform – For Life deputy N. Shufrich.

On March 16, 2022, the SBU arrested the well-known Ukrainian human rights activist E. Berezhnaya. Nothing is known about her fate as of today. E. Berezhnaya has long ago caused irritation of the Kyiv government by her uncompromising struggle for human rights, especially by asserting the rights of the Ukrainian Russian-speaking population to receive education in and speak their native language. She often spoke at international conferences organized by the OSCE and UN where, using concrete examples, she disclosed the official Kyiv's discriminatory practice and infringement of the rights of the country's Russian-speaking residents. She unveiled the government's direct involvement in protection of neo-Nazi groups. Among other actions, on December 22, 2021, at the informal meeting of the UN Security Council held according to the "Arria formula", the human rights activist talked about the outrage of Nazism in Ukraine.

On April 12, 2022, the Kyiv government announced the arrest of V. Medvedchuk, the chair of the political council of the Opposition Platform – For Life. The assets of the politician and his wife were seized. His photo in handcuffs was posted by the Ukrainian president V. Zelensky. V. Medvedchuk's haggard appearance, his oversized military uniform, traces left by beating may evidence that most probably he had been seized much earlier and spent far from one day in the SBU prison being subjected to physical and psychological pressure and cruel and inhuman treatment.

Finland

Increasing intolerance in respect of national minorities' representatives, including the Russian-speaking population, was detected in Finland as far as in 2017 (which, in particular, was pointed out by the Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination).

Along with a higher unemployment level as compared to that among the Finnish population, poor employment in the professional field obtained in the

USSR or in the Russian Federation still remains a critical issue for the compatriots constituting economically active population. Many are forced to agree to low paid jobs where no high qualification is needed. Biased attitude to Russians in everyday life is widely spread in the Finnish society, which happens largely due to the anti-Russian position of a number of the central media.

As the result of large-scale anti-Russian information campaign of the Finnish government after the beginning of the special military operation in Ukraine and protection of the DPR and LPR by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, significant growth of discriminatory attitude towards our compatriots has been noted. This is emphasized also by civic organizations, including the Finnish Association of Russian-speaking Organizations (FARO) and the Mannerheim Child Protection Union.

At the same time, the Finnish government, understanding that persistent exaggerating of Russophobic attitudes may inflict a serious blow on the social stability of the society where more than 100,000 representatives of the Russian-speaking community, who have successfully joined this society, do not occupy the last place, began taking measures to decrease the degree of Russophobia. Thus, Prime Minister S. Marin said that there was no place in Finland for manifestations of intolerance to ordinary people notwithstanding the country of their origin or the language they spoke. A joint similar statement was issued by the parliamentary fractions of all the largest Finnish parties. The head of security police A. Peltari, in his column on the agency's website, pointed to the fact that inadequate treatment of people of Russian origin internally weakens Finland and provides the "weapon" to be used by the propaganda machine of the Russian government. Administrations of large Finnish cities, including Helsinki, expressed their concerns in connection with the increasing xenophobic rhetoric. The largest Finnish trade union organizations called for inadmissibility of racist insinuations and discrimination at work. It might be possible to assess the effectiveness of such statements later.

Germany

The issues of protection of the rights of Russian-speaking persons remained challenging in 2021. These issues concerned mostly the language, educational, labour, information, and social sphere.

At the same time, the situation with the rights of the Russian compatriots in 2021 was to a certain extent marked by the continuing political warming-up of the topic of Russophobia and sanctions against Russia, affected by the German media. This background is used not only as an instrument for controlling the Russian-German relations but also for forming respective attitudes in the German society.

Notwithstanding the totality of these factors, no serious elements of discrimination of our compatriots by the German authorities were recorded in 2021.

As a rule, our citizens' complaints lodged with the Russian diplomatic missions were related to family disputes, domestic conflicts, property issues. They were resolved in accordance with the procedure established by the local legislation. No formal violations on the part of the FRG government at resolving such situations and instances of prosecution by political motives were recorded.

The most sensitive issues for the expatriate community representatives in 2021 remained claims under family law when in case of divorce of international (mixed) couples children, as a rule, were not left with the Russian parent or were taken away from the family. At the same time, proving violation of civil rights in German courts poses a problem. Representatives of the Embassy and Consulates-General are not allowed to court sessions in similar cases.

There were incidents aimed against our compatriots with participation of German right extremists. Thus, in October 2021 in Schwerin (federal land Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania) unknown persons painted anti-Semite slogans and Nazi symbols on the building of the German Red Cross where the

office of the Russian compatriots' organization Kulyugin is located. The law enforcement authorities are conducting the investigation.

During 2021, the Russian diplomatic missions in the FRG provided consular assistance under several inquiries of our citizens in connection to incidents of taking children away from families.

The Russian diplomatic missions provided support in high-profile cases in respect of our fellow citizens. Among these, there was the case against the Russian citizen V. Sokolov, who was arrested on August 23, 2019, in Berlin on suspicion of commission of the murder of the Georgian citizen of Chechen origin Z. Khangoshvili. On December 15, 2021, he was found guilty and sentenced to life imprisonment. The court decision contained a statement that he had acted on instruction of an unidentified Russian state authority, thus giving the verdict a clear political and Russia-unfriendly tint.

Another high-profile case was concerning the musician D. Kaznacheev who was arrested on May 29, 2020, in Berlin based on an American arrest warrant on the charges of commission of cyberfraud. Thanks to the efforts of his lawyers, the Russian citizen was released on bail on July 15, 2020. On January 11, 2022, the American authorities informed their German colleagues by a note about the termination of the procedure of D. Kaznacheev's extradition to the USA, therefore all restrictions on his movement were lifted, and he was able to return to Russia.

The case of I. Nagaev may be counted among such incidents of prosecution. He was arrested by the German law enforcement authorities on June 18, 2021, in Augsburg on suspicion of cooperation with the Russian intelligence services. The judicial proceedings resulted in I. Nagaev being sentenced to a suspended sentence, and now he is at liberty.

There were no significant violations of the provisions of the 1963 Vienna Convention on Diplomatic Relations recorded in respect of consular access to the Russian citizens in custody in this case and in the two other aforementioned

cases. What gave rise to complaints was only the requirement of the federal judicial authority to conduct the conversation of the Russian consular officials with our citizen I. Nagaev on December 13, 2021, in the remand prison of Augsburg in the presence of two representatives of the Bavarian criminal police authority.

In 2020-2022, targeted attacks continued on the part of socio-political and journalistic circles at the Russian media active in the country, first of all at the TV channel Russia Today (RT DE) and its affiliated video agency Ruptly. A toxic background had been carefully created around this Russian media: the German press disseminated baseless insinuations about its political prejudice and bias, attempts to sow the seeds of discord in the German society, etc.

After announcing, in December 2020, the plans to launch in the FRG full-fledged TV broadcasting of RT DE in German, an aggressive propaganda campaign was immediately unfolded towards the channel, with the aim to discredit its activity. False information about the "dishonesty" of the Russian foreign broadcaster started spreading in the German media environment, and top German politicians called it "the voicer" of Russian disinformation and propaganda.

In May 2021, Commerzbank, without explaining the reasons thereof, announced the closing of the accounts of RT DE and Ruptly and stopped rendering financial services to them. Under the pressure from Berlin, the Luxembourg authorities denied appropriate license to the Russian TV channel for broadcasting in German in the territory of the FRG (at that, the TV channel's application had been drawn up in compliance with the Luxembourg and general EU legislation and submitted on the same grounds on which a number of other media, including from the states located beyond the territory of the European Union, had been certified by the Luxembourg authorities without any impediment). The apotheosis was the statement of the representatives of German security services that they were officially "following" the activities of

RT DE.

Just a few days after the launching of the TV channel (December 16, 2021) based on a license issued by the Serbian authorities in compliance with the European Convention on Transfrontier Television of May 5, 1989, the media regulator of the federal lands of Berlin and Brandenburg achieved the termination of its broadcasting from the European telecommunications satellite EUTELSAT 9 and also started the process for further limiting of RT DE's broadcasting in the territory of the FRG. On February 2, 2022, the Berlin-based company that was responsible for the management of the TV channel received from the media regulator an official notification about the need to stop its line broadcasting via the Internet, satellite and external media platforms and applications. Thus, there is clearly biased and discriminatory treatment on the part of the German authorities, contradicting their international obligations, including those within the framework of the UN, OSCE and Council of Europe.

After beginning of the special military operation of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation for demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine and protection of the DPR and LPR, the Russian media RT DE and SNA News (former Sputnik Deutschland) fell under the general EU sanctions implying the ban on their activities in all European Union countries. SNA News took the decision to fully terminate broadcasting in the FRG and closed its official web portal and social networks accounts. Broadcasting of the TV channel RT DE is officially blocked in Germany, but its programs are still available on some external network platforms. The channel home page on the Internet is subjected to massive DDoS-attacks. On March 17, 2022, the Administrative Court of Berlin dismissed the appeal of RT DE of March 8, 2022, where our media tried to challenge the fine in the amount of 25,000 euro imposed on it by the media regulator of the federal lands Berlin and Brandenburg for non-compliance with the ban on line broadcasting in the FRG. It was prescribed to RT DE to pay an

additional fine of 40,000 euro.

In connection with the beginning of the Russian special operation, there was noted a drastic outbreak of manifestations of discrimination, not only of Russian persons and persons of Russian origin but all representatives of the Russian-speaking expatriate community, including Jews and "Russian" Germans from among the recent repatriates. It is worth noting that most representatives of the Russian-speaking expatriate community who fell victims to ostracism and harassment also have German citizenship. From the end of February, there have been a lot of quite different incidents, even those coming beyond the legal framework and connected with violence: use of physical force, threats, insults, facts of spoiling property, refusals to provide services, including the healthcare ones, dismissals from work, coercion to public repentance and condemnation of Russian government's actions, etc. Harassment of Russian-speaking children at schools, both by their classmates and by teachers, became widely spread. At many schools, there are lessons and homework discrediting Russia and its government and distorting information about the events in Ukraine. Those who refuse to attend such lessons and do such homework are threatened with dismissal.

In such conditions, the Embassy of Russia in Berlin on March 2, 2022, organized a special feedback channel for the Russian fellow citizens in order to ensure prompt reaction to their concerns in connection to discriminatory incidents. The information received by this hotline with regard to particular instances of violation of Russian-speaking citizens' rights in the FRG is systematized by the Embassy and posted on its official website in the section #StopHatingRussians. From the beginning of March 2022, when the hotline was opened, the number of such applications exceeded eight hundred.

According to the data of the Federal Authority of the Criminal Police of the FRG, as of the end of March – beginning of April 2022, about two hundred unlawful actions targeting Russian-speaking individuals having relation to the

situation in Ukraine or committed for "anti-Russian motives" were recorded weekly.

One of such new forms of discrimination was the German banks' refusal to service Russians' accounts and freezing of the funds in such accounts. Thus, the German bank ING-DiBa AG sent communications to its clients that their accounts would be blocked in connection with the conflict in Ukraine. Deutsche Bank, Frankfurter Sparkasse and Postbank Hamburg acted in a comparable manner; referring to possible restrictions in provision of banking services, they sent to their clients who had Russian citizenship letters that require providing FRG or EU residence permit.

Apart from harassment of Russian citizens in their everyday life in Germany, the discrimination of Russians was reflected on the sphere of culture as well. A campaign for coercing to public condemnation of the Russian government's actions was unfolded throughout the country. It started with putting pressure on the world-known orchestra director V. Gergiev from the part of the leading concert halls of the FRG, including the Munich philharmonic orchestra which he had directed since 2015. V.A. Gergiev was dismissed from the position of the leading director of the Philharmonic Hall because of his refusal to make a public statement condemning Russia's actions in Ukraine. The Bavarian State Opera also terminated its relations with him. Apart from that, in March 2022 information appeared on the refusal of the German-Russian Music Academy to support the performance at the Krasnoyarsk Opera Theatre (scheduled for September).

Russophobic acts also affected places of religious worship. In March, there were reported incidents with attacks on and desecration of the Orthodox temples of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate (in Düsseldorf, Essen, Krefeld) and the Russian Orthodox Church outside Russia (in Hannover, Berlin, and Bielefeld).

On March 11, 2022, there was an attempt to set on fire M.V. Lomonosov

Russian-German School in the Marzahn district of Berlin. CCTV cameras recorded an unidentified person throwing a bottle with incendiary mixture at the entrance door of the school gymnasium building. The incident is investigated by the division of the Land criminal police department whose competencies include investigating politically motivated crimes. Its representatives proceed from the fact that the incident is directly related to Russia's special operation in Ukraine. The attack on the educational institution was condemned by the Berlin authorities and by a number of the FRG federal politicians.

In general, it is worth noting that the German authorities do not leave unnoticed manifestations of Russophobia in everyday life. In case of official application to law enforcement authorities, investigations are conducted, and criminal proceedings are initiated. The German government publicly spoke against aggressive Russophobia, thereby reacting, among other things, to the escapades undertaken towards the MFA of Russia and the Embassy of Russia in the FRG. Thus, on March 17, 2022, at a video conference with heads of federal lands German Chancellor O. Scholz said that insults or violence against co-nationals of Russian origin or Russian-speaking co-nationals were inadmissible. He stressed that the task of the state is ensuring the security of all people residing in Germany. The Minister of Foreign Affairs A. Baerbock, the Minister of Internal Affairs N. Faeser, the Federal Minister of Justice of the FRG M. Buschmann, the FRG Government commissioner on culture and media C. Roth, as well as some regional politicians, publicly condemned the harassment and discrimination based on origin and language appurtenance.

Among the discriminatory manifestations towards the Russian-speaking expatriate community, there should be mentioned in particular the restrictions introduced on demonstration of symbols related to Russia, which in fact may be regarded, among other things, as an attempt on the freedom of expression. Thus, a number of federal lands (Bavaria, Lower Saxony, and Berlin), referring to Article 140 of the Criminal Code of the FRG, announced introduction of

criminal prosecution for using the "Z" sign. At that, in Lower Saxony, the ban was also extended on using in the course of "propaganda actions" USSR flags and St. George ribbons under the pretext that they allegedly symbolized the "expansion of the Russian state".

On May 6, 2022, shortly before the Victory Day celebration, Berlin police authorities announced restrictions of the right on the freedom of assembly (from the morning of May 8 until the evening of May 9) in the areas where the main Soviet military memorials were located. Specially for this period, public demonstration of symbols and signs that could be used for "glorification or justification of the Russian-Ukrainian war" was prohibited, including the ban on wearing military uniform, military insignia, demonstration of St. George ribbon, "Z" and "V" symbols, state flags of Russia, Ukraine, the DPR and LPR, as well as other flags with Soviet, Russian, or Ukrainian symbols. Performance and playback of military marches was also banned.

St. George ribbons and state flags were allowed only as elements of decoration of wreaths and bouquets laid on the graves and memorials. The aforementioned restrictions did not apply to members of delegations of diplomatic and consular missions and war veterans taking part in the festive ceremonies.

France

Russian citizens and fellow citizens face violations of their rights in France.

A vivid example of a politically motivated attitude of the French judiciary to our compatriots under the pressure from the USA is the situation of A. Vinnik.

This Russian man, arrested in 2017 in Greece on request of the US government, in January 2020 was extradited to France as the main suspect in the organization of the scheme for extorting money using Lokki virus program and laundering ransoms obtained in bitcoins via BTC-e cryptocurrency exchange

platform. A. Vinnik worked as an operator of this exchange and denies any connections with the criminals whatsoever. On December 7, 2020, the French criminal court delivered the decision to find A. Vinnik guilty on a number of charges and sentenced him to 5 years of imprisonment and payment of a fine and compensations.

In the course of the session of the court of appeal, even the prosecutor agreed that A. Vinnik was not involved in the work of the virus software and lifted these charges. Nevertheless, the criminal court sentence was upheld. The detention period expires on June 27, 2022. The cassation appeal lodged by the lawyers must be examined within the first quarter of 2022.

Notwithstanding the repeated application of the Russian party to the French authorities requesting extradition of A. Vinnik to the Russian Federation, the latter, referring to the obligation to perform the European order, let know that after serving of his punishment they will return him to Greece from where he is highly likely to be extradited to the USA.

The Russian citizen's defence is taking attempts, via the Court of Cassation, to achieve the situation where A. Vinnik's return to Greece would be based on a court decision and would not take place "by default" in accordance with the obligations assumed by the French party when issuing the Euro order for his extradition. A. Vinnik himself equals his return to Greece for further transfer to the American authorities to "death penalty". Taking into consideration that our citizen is not a resident of Greece and, prior to his arrest, has never visited either France or the USA, his extradition to the USA and not to Russia, the country of his citizenship, evidence biased attitude towards him.

What may be considered as indirect indicator of the ambiguousness of the situation with protection of A. Vinnik's lawful rights is the decision taken on February 15, 2022 by the Criminal Division of the Court of Cassation of France to transfer for examination by the Constitutional Board of France the issue of possible ignoring of his right to defence, allowed in the period after issuing of

the European arrest warrant and till the moment of presenting to him the decision on conducting the investigation by the French side. Therefore, the Court of Cassation allowed the possibility of violation of the Russian citizen's right to effective judicial remedy, enshrined in the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen (structural part of the French Constitution).

On April 22, 2022, the Constitution Council of France dismissed the appeal lodged by the Russian citizen's lawyer, thereby limiting his chances to justice in the issue of returning to his Motherland. Presently, A. Vinnik's defence is studying additional possibilities for application of the provisions of the Criminal Procedural Code of France, mentioned at the session of the Constitutional Council, in order to attempt avoiding his automatic sending to Greece after delivering of the decision on his sentence by the cassation instance.

On the whole, the conditions of A. Vinnik's detention at the Paris Sante prison follow the requirements for such facilities. At the same time, the Russian side was denied his transfer under home arrest notwithstanding the Russian Embassy's guarantees to provide an apartment for this purpose. Moreover, A. Vinnik's request to transfer him from a solitary cell to a common one was denied. The French authorities explain the extension of the isolation regime, among other things, by the need to ensure the safety of the convict.

Apart from the aforementioned high-profile case, the French party generally, on a regular basis, ignores its obligations under international treaties and does not timely provide information about citizens of the Russian Federation placed in custody; it also very rarely informs about releasing of the earlier arrested Russian citizens.

In France, incidents occur of taking minor children away from parents with Russian citizenship. However, unlike a number of European countries, they have sporadic nature.

Biased attitude of the French government to the Russian media working in the territory of the country is recorded, too. In particular, RT France TV

channel and Sputnik information agency are perceived by the acting French government as "the Kremlin influence agents" and are in the focus of special attention of the local supervisory authorities. Their representatives are denied accreditation at the Elysée Palace press centres and at a number of French government agencies and political parties. Refusals are delivered notwithstanding the fact that both organizations are French legal entities and pursue their activities in compliance with the requirements set forth by the French law. Besides, a number of French politicians, experts and journalists pursue a campaign for discrediting of the aforementioned media.

After beginning by the Russian Federation of its special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine, the situation of Russian citizens and Russian-speaking persons in France considerably worsened. They face manifestations of aggression in their everyday life and are discriminated by French organizations.

This was to a significant extent caused by the hysteria and anti-Russian speech disseminated by the French government. All official state authorities of France support the European sanctions against Russia on their webpages.

On March 7, 2022, the French Government issued an order (signed by the Director of the Department in Charge of Affairs of French Citizens Abroad and the Consular Administration of the MFA of France) on suspending the procedure of adoption of children from Russia for three months.

The French authorities are active in detecting and "freezing" in the country's territory the assets of the Russian individuals who have been included in the EU sanctions lists. For these purposes, the Ministry of Economy and Finance of France created a special division staffed with officials from the Tax Service, financial intelligence department (Tracfin) and customs. It deals with determining movable and immovable property and accounts belonging not only to the persons included in the sanctions list but to their relatives and trusted persons.

The Ministry of Economy and Finance, jointly with the Ministry of Justice, is developing the mechanism of confiscation of the discovered assets that will require amendments to the applicable legislation.

Apart from that, Tracfin uses its powers to block doubtful transfers of funds to suspend withdrawal of funds by Russian individuals from their French accounts to other jurisdictions. Given the government's actions in respect of Russians who have accounts in French banks, the local credit and financial institutions often preventively suspend any transactions of citizens of the Russian Federation for conducting additional inspections of their compliance with the new requirements under sanctions.

L'Express weekly noted in particular that dozens of officials from the Main State Finances Department of the Ministry of Economy and Finance of France, financial intelligence department, customs were checking bank accounts, immovable property, and tax dossiers, marine and airports, in order to draw up a list of the assets possessed by people of Russian origin. Real estate brokers, notaries and banks of the country take active part in this work.

As the result of these efforts, a number of Russian vessels were seized at French ports: "Baltic Leader" cargo freighter (on February 26, 2022, located at the port Boulogne-sur-Mer), "Vladimir Latyshev" cargo freighter (on February 28, 2022, located at the port Saint-Malo), "Viktor Andryukhin" cargo freighter (also on March 1, 2022, located at the port Fos-sur-Mer). On March 3, 2022, the French Customs published on its website a communication about seizure of the yacht Amore Vero located in La Ciotat port.

Starting from February 24, 2022, and until now, Russian diplomatic and consular missions, cultural representations became the subjects of the most aggressive actions. Offenders threw packets with paint at the building of the Russian Embassy in France, painted a swastika on the pavement in front of the Embassy. Swastika was also painted on the stands near the Consulate-General in Strasbourg. Unknown persons smeared with paint the plates at the entrance to

the building of the Office of the Defence Attaché, the Russian Spiritual and Cultural Orthodox Centre, the Permanent Mission at UNESCO, the Consulate-General in Marseille, and the Registry of Consulate-General in Marseille in Villefranche-sur-Mer. The Russian House of Science and Culture in Paris (RHSC) is subjected to regular attacks. On the night from 6 to 7 March 2022, unknown persons threw a bottle with incendiary mixture at the Centre's gates. Several times, the RHSC stands were covered with provocative inscriptions. The Embassy of Russia in Paris receives constant messages with threats in respect of diplomats. An envelope containing white powder and a replica of an explosive device were received via mail. Some employees' service cars were painted in the colours of the Ukrainian flag.

There were reported incidents of psychological pressure put on priests of the Russian Orthodox Church in France. The Archpriest of the Saint Nicholas Cathedral in Nice, Father Andrey (Eliseev) and the clergy of the Saint Trinity Cathedral in Paris, located in the territory of the Russian Spiritual and Cultural Educational Centre (RSCEC), received anonymous letters with a threat to murder them if they refuse to leave France as soon as possible. Murder threats to priests "as henchmen of the Russian government" are published in social media. The French law enforcement authorities promptly reacted to the incidents, collected the letters for further taking fingerprints, initiated criminal proceedings.

The French Government makes efforts to completely oust the Russian media from the country. On March 2, 2022, following the EU Council's decision, the French media regulator banned the activities of RT-France TV channel and Sputnik information agency in the territory of France.

Many Russian citizens and persons of Russian origin faced discriminatory attitude on the part of French banks that blocked their accounts and bank cards. Because of this, our compatriots are deprived of the possibility to pay for the basic services – accommodation, food, healthcare services. Arbitrary refusals of

banks to issue loans to Russians are reported. Thus, on March 9, 2022, an employee of one of the Paris offices of CIC bank informed Russian citizens Yulia and Dmitry T. by telephone that the bank refused to provide them a loan for purchasing an apartment "in connection with the events in Ukraine". In reply to the client's request to obtain any lawful justification whatsoever, they were informed that the bank could not be sure that the Russians' residence permit would be extended. Later on, an official refusal was sent to our citizens. The Russian family intended to take a loan for purchasing immovable assets, for which the initial security had already been deposited. At that, Dmitry T. has in France a contract with Maillance company, valid for an indefinite period, and both spouses have a residence permit with "talent passport" mark, which implies residing in France for over 4 years and gives the right to stay in the country for many years.

Another Russian citizen permanently residing in Rennes informed about the inquiry she had received from the bank Société Générale to provide a copy of her French residence permit, which she does not have as she has been a citizen of France for a prolonged period. The bank manager who was calling her was incredibly surprised by the fact that a woman with a Russian name was a French citizen.

The discriminatory attitude towards all persons of Russian origin significantly affected students at French universities who, starting from the end of February 2022, faced the problem of blocking by the international payment system operators (VISA, MasterCard) of credit cards issued by Russian banks. Our students have great difficulties with payment of the necessary expenses (accommodation, food, studies) that makes it practically impossible to continue their studies in France. The Russian Embassy, other Russian diplomatic missions and the honorary consulate in Lion have been recently receiving multiple applications in this regard (telephone calls and emails). In addition, the problem of money transfers from Russia has become acute for Russian students.

French banks block transfers from Russia and significantly complicate transfers to Russian citizens and to organizations from other countries.

The student Polina P., studying at the National School of Arts and Textile Industry (ENSAIT) in the city of Roubaix, informed that her own card and the cards of four other students from Russia, issued by Russian banks, were blocked by French banks. At that, the banks refuse to open accounts and issue new cards for Russians, explaining this by the fact that they have Russian citizenship. Because of the situation that has formed with blocking of money transfers from Russia, relatives have no other ways to send money to our students.

A comparable situation was described by Alina, a student from the town of Aix-en-Provence. According to her, on March 11, 2022, her international payment system cards issued by the banks in Russia, were blocked in France. And the French banks BNP Paribas, Cr dit Mutuel, CIC and Soci t  G n rale refused to open an account for her "for political reasons".

Refusals to render services to clients only because they are Russian take place within the whole services sector. For example, on March 18, 2022, the furniture repair workshop Atelier Bettenfeld-Rosenblum, located in the city of Pantin, informed its clients by a letter signed by its director about their refusal to work on orders from clients related to the Russian Federation, as the company was guided by "the prohibition of the French State Treasury".

Two days earlier, on March 16, 2022, the private French security bureau Phaz S curit  that controlled the outer perimeter of the Embassy of Russia in France under a contract informed about its wish for early termination of the contract with the Russian diplomatic mission and so it was done. The indicated reason was that the French security agencies trade union had recommended to "cancel contracts with Russian clients in connection with the events in Ukraine." In the opposite case, restrictions up to withdrawing the license could be applied to the bureau.

Nevertheless, presently the Embassy is temporarily guarded by the

French law enforcement agencies due to the overall unfavourable atmosphere around Russian diplomatic missions, connected to growth of Russophobia.

At the level of private persons and companies, too, efforts are made to inflict as much damage on the Russian citizens as possible. On March 1, 2022, J. Teveno, the chair of the Bar Council of Valenciennes and simultaneously the chairman of the Autonomous foundation for effecting financial settlements of lawyers (CARPA) at the Bar Association of Hauts-de-France Region, sent to five bars of the said region a letter with the instruction "to block all transfer of funds to clients whose names sound like Slavonic ones." He justifies his actions by saying that the term "Slavonic origin" refers to many nations, therefore, in his opinion, it is not discriminatory and even less racist. As the result, all Russian-speaking persons found themselves in a difficult position. However, funds of non-Russian beneficiaries are given out to the clients against presentation of a document certifying that Russia is not the country of their origin.

There are reported facts of damaging of personal cars of our compatriots (infliction of dents by blows, deep scratches, breaking rear-view mirrors and windshield wipers, spoilage of cars with blue and yellow paint, less often – breaking glass) as well as attacks on immovable property and business objects belonging to Russian people. Thus, one of the Russian-speaking owners of a grocery store in Rennes reported acts of vandalism towards his store.

Everything that reminds of Russia risked being prohibited. Thus, on 1-3 March 2022, a number of bookstores in Toulon received instructions to withdraw from sales all Russian-language editions including teachers' books for teaching Russian, and to return them to their editors.

On 11–16 March 2022 announcements about withdrawal of "Russian products" from sale appeared in grocery stores in France. They refer to the food products manufactured "according to the Russian standards" in the FRG for Russian compatriots. Moreover, as reported, in some cases in other grocery

stores promotion materials with Russian symbols and colours of the Russian tricolour were removed from shelves with goods displayed. Shops selling products from Western European countries and restaurants offering in their menus dishes "that look like Slavonic ones" also decreased their sales.

It turned out that this was for a reason. On February 24, 2022, restaurants of Russian cuisine in various regions of France received letters with threats of similar nature, demanding to leave the country. The scale of mailing out threatening letters has not been fully assessed as not all owners informed about receiving such letters. The following examples may be provided. The owner of the oldest Paris Russian cuisine restaurant La Cantine Russe Georges Kazarian received several similar letters with threats and insults and a series of anonymous telephone calls to his personal mobile telephone number with threats to his life. He had to contact the police because of that. The owner of Roi Alexandre restaurant in Lyon also received a letter with threats and insults and a series of anonymous calls to her private mobile number with threats to her life. Letters and calls with threats and insults were also received by the owners of the restaurants La Volga in Lyon and Baba Yaga in Lille.

Many Russian citizens encountered threats addressed to them. The coordinator of the "Immortal Regiment" action in Lyon, Svetlana Terekhova-Mayorga, informed that representatives of the Ukrainian expatriate community effected correspondence, using her data from the social media, containing insulting statements and threats to her life. Kseniya P. who had lived many years in France with her son and parents received threats to her life via the Internet from a French citizen of Polish origin who promised to send her data to the local neo-Nazi for the purpose "to uproot Russians in the West". She complained to the police, but no reaction followed from the law enforcement authorities.

There were reported incidents of oral threats and insults from passers-by addressed to our compatriots in the streets of French cities, simply because they

were speaking Russian in public places.

Russophobia manifests itself in the sphere of education, too. There are incidents in French schools when Russian-speaking children are insulted by other pupils, provoked to engage in fights or just beaten. For example, such incidents occurred at Pablo Picasso lyceum. There is information about manifestation of aggression in respect of children of Anna P.-F. A pupil at school hurt the head of one of her children with a stone. The principal and teachers of the educational institution did not take any measures to counter this aggression. Apart from that, the local police placed the Russian citizen under direct outdoor surveillance with manifestation of abusive attitude (abusive language used towards her). On March 10, 2022, the police, together with unidentified persons, took the children away from their mother without explaining the reasons thereof and without providing any document; they orally threatened the Russian woman with trial.

Croatia

In Croatia, after the beginning of the Russian special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine, the level of anti-Russian propaganda in the media increased and fake news began spreading on a mass scale. However, no manifest Russophobic attitudes have been noted in the society yet. Letters with insults and threats were emailed to the Russian Embassy.

There have been a few discriminatory incidents in respect of the Russian representative office employees. The two biggest banks, PBZ and Raiffeisen Bank, refused to open accounts for Russian diplomats without explaining the reasons. The declared condition for further providing services to Russian citizens in a number of financial organizations was signing of an application by the accounts owners that contained a provision about consent to the measures adopted by the EU in connection to "the destabilizing measures taken by Russia in the territory of Ukraine." One of Croatian proprietors pointedly refused to

extend the lease of apartment to an employee of the Russian diplomatic mission.

There are reported cases of discrimination of Russian compatriots residing in Croatia based on the ethnic principle, including intimidation of Russian-speaking children at schools.

Anti-Russian attitudes influenced the activities of Russian companies. Thus, the Russian Sberbank had to sell its assets in the country.

Cancellation of flights for Russian airlines in Europe affected the situation of the Russian tourists who were in Croatia. Notwithstanding the impediments they managed to leave the country via Turkey for Serbia. The Croatian side refused to agree the flight and landing in Zagreb of the humanitarian plane for evacuation of the Russian Embassy officers expelled from Croatia.

Czech Republic

No serious violation of the rights of Russian citizens and fellow citizens has been recorded in the Czech Republic. At the same time, it is worth noting that the unhealthy atmosphere around the Russian expatriate community is created by the serious brainwashing on the part of the Czech security services and the Russophobia exaggerated in the Czech society.

The Russian Embassy in the Czech Republic follows the situation with the Russian citizen A. Franchetti, who was arrested in Prague airport on September 12, 2021, based on a direct inquiry by the Prosecutor General of Ukraine to the Ministry of Justice of the Czech Republic, under the pretext of his participation in organization of volunteer self-defence squadrons to defend Sevastopol.

On September 14, 2021, the Russian citizen was remanded in custody based on the decision of the Prague City Court. At the same time, the Higher Court of Prague on April 21, 2022, delivered the decision on impossibility of extradition of A. Franchetti to Ukraine and on his release from custody. However, after announcement of the verdict, he was apprehended again by the

Czech police in connection with the criminal proceedings initiated against him under the Article "participation in an organized criminal gang". In connection to this, the defence lodged an appeal against the judgment on criminal prosecution of A. Franchetti.

No data on material violation of A. Franchetti's rights were recorded, except for the Russian citizen's complaints about the insufficient level of the healthcare services provided to him.

There was noted infringement of the compatriots' rights in the Czech Republic to receive education in their native language due to the Czech government's unfriendly actions in respect of the school at the Russian Embassy in 2021. As the result, the school had to suspend its work.

After the beginning of the special military operation for demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine and protection of the DPR and LPR by Russia, manifestations of discrimination of Russian citizens and compatriots, especially noticeable in everyday life, have drastically increased in the Czech Republic.

The first emotional reaction to the events in Ukraine entailed an outbreak of "individual sanctions" against people of Russian origin in various spheres of the social life. In some cafes in Prague announcements were noted that services will not be provided to Russians or will be provided only if they declare their denouncement of the foreign policy of Russia and its government (including in writing) and apologize for what is happening in Ukraine. Reports about refusals to provide medical assistance appeared in the public space. Incidents in the educational sphere were also recorded. Thus, a deputy from TOP 09 Party, professor at the Higher School of Economics in Prague M. Dlougi wrote on his Facebook account that he refused to teach students of Russian origin, administer their tests and examinations, as well as cooperate with Russian scientists. After criticism from the University and the heads of that Party, M. Dlougi deleted his post and published apologies referring to his emotionality.

The administration of the Ostrava Technical University took the decision

not to admit applicants from the Russian Federation.³⁴

Russian citizens face complications with renting dwellings and booking hotels in the Czech Republic. Thus, Pytloun Hotels network (comprised of fourteen city and mountain hotels) announced its refusal to accommodate guests with Russian and Belarussian passports until the end of the special operation in Ukraine. Central Group, the largest construction company in the country, stated in its official press release that it would not sell immovable property to Russian citizens. Exceptions are possible if the buyers renounce in writing the Russian government's policy in Ukraine.

A Russian student of one of the Prague universities and his girlfriend had been leasing an apartment from Ukrainians for over six years. When he decided to change the dwelling, the proprietors made a scandal accompanied by insults and manifestation of aggression. The owners of the apartment just threw the young couple's belongings in the direction of the lift, not taking care of their safety. The affected party asserts that the police does not suppress discriminatory attitude to Russians and the Mayor of Prague supports what is going on.³⁵

Incidents when Russian citizens were denied opening accounts were recorded in various banks. Banking sector representatives do not have a uniform approach; in some banks they only extend the package of the necessary documents for persons of Russian origin and procrastinate the process itself, in other banks they fully refuse without explaining the reasons.

At the same time, some particular reasonable and weighted positions regarding absurdity of anti-Russian attitudes can still be heard in the Czech Republic. The former president of the country V. Klaus, in particular, condemned the "cheap Russophobia" and "superficial denial of the Russian culture". When urged to return the Russian state the award conferred on him in

³⁴ Violations of the rights of Russian citizens and fellow citizens abroad in the period of the events in Ukraine in March – April 2022. Monitoring review by the Moscow Human Rights Bureau.

³⁵ Ibid.

2007, the Pushkin medal, he replied that such behaviour would be infantile and that he did not allow such possibility.³⁶

The Czech Prime Minister P. Fiala, the Minister of Foreign Affairs J. Lipavský, the Minister of Internal Affairs V. Rakušan, the Minister of Education, Youth and Sports P. Gazdik, the Ombudsman S. Křeček and a number of other Czech officials also made statements about inadmissibility of Russophobia. Notwithstanding that, the Czech Republic introduced criminal liability for public support of the Russian government and Russian actions in Ukraine, providing for actual imprisonment for a period from one to three years. This was announced by Prosecutor General I. Stříž. Thus, the Czech government equalled the right to freedom to hold opinions and their free expression to Article 365 "approval of criminal offence" and Article 405 "denying, approval and justification of genocide" of the Criminal Code of the Czech Republic.

Within the framework of the well-known decisions of the European Union, by resolution of the Government of the Czech Republic No. 130 dated February 25, 2022, the Czech party suspended issuing visas and permits for long-term and permanent residence for citizens of the Russian Federation, including under the applications lodged before coming into force of the aforementioned document. Exceptions may be made only in case of existence of foreign policy interest of the Czech Republic. It was stated however that visas would be issued for humanitarian reasons. The Czech Minister of Internal Affairs V. Rakušan, commenting the Czech position on this issue, explained that the Czech understood humanitarian reasons as reunification of families and risk of prosecution in Russia, The Czech foreign policy authority extended this possible list by specifying: "Humanitarian visa shall be issued to a person whose life is at peril due to repressions, resistance to regime or criticizing

36 Ex-president of the Czech Republic condemned Russophobia and refused to return a RF award. TASS. March 19, 2022
<https://tass.ru/mezhdunarodnaya-panorama/14121355>

thereof as well as where the risk of prosecution for political and other motives exists". Even obtaining healthcare services or death of a close relative are not considered by the Czech government as strong reason for obtaining a visa. Starting March 2, 2022, the Czech government issued a resolution restricting the rights of Belarussian citizens.

This logic also encompasses the Czech authorities' approach to Russian citizens who came to the country before or immediately after the beginning of the special operation, for whom the residence permit was approved for the purposes of getting education, reunification with the family or pursuing labour activities. In particular, they are not impeded by the Czech authorities in formal completion of the procedure for receipt of a residence permit. Numerous cancellations of booking for taking photo for biometric documents and refusals to issue the ready IDs are noted. In some cases, as a way to resolve the problem, representatives of the Czech bodies of the Interior suggest to Russians to seek political asylum; for example, this is what was informed to the Russian Embassy in Prague by a student from Pardubice M. Zlobina.

Not only ordinary people originating from Russia but diplomatic representatives, too, were subjected to aggression. On February 24, 2022, unknown persons attacked the building of the Embassy of Russia in Prague. The attackers tried to break into the territory of the institution, broke CCTV cameras and threw various objects at the Embassy building.

Along with the progress of the special operation, repressions begin in the Czech Republic against sober-minded citizens who had the courage to publicly express their opinion. In particular, it is known that at one of the schools in Prague a teacher of Czech was removed from teaching after an objective assessment of the events going on in Ukraine and their real causes, and now she risks dismissal for implementation of her right to freedom of expression. Pupils informed on her, having secretly recorded the teacher's words with a mobile telephone. The Minister of education of the Czech Republic P. Gazdik, known

for his Russophobic views, officially supported this rigid approach. Earlier he termed Belarussian and Russian students studying at Czech universities "a threat to the country's national security".

Sweden

Anti-Russian attitudes in the form of "everyday" Russophobia, including the respective publications in the media, were quite widespread in Sweden in the recent years. After the beginning of the special military operation for demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine and protection of the DPR and LPR, the Russian expatriate community in Sweden faced unprecedented pressure, threats and discrimination on language and ethnic grounds.

Open bullying of compatriots takes place for their refusal to openly condemn the actions of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Cases of dismissal from work on ethnic grounds became more frequent. Actually, isolation of heads and employees of small and medium enterprises and civic organizations connected to our country takes place. In the conditions of large-scale anti-Russian propaganda, interpersonal communications are destroyed, including relations between spouses in mixed families. It has become risky to speak Russian in public places and in transport.

Russian-speaking children face manifestations of hatred by other pupils with acquiescence of school administrations (one of the reasons thereof are the lessons on the Ukrainian issues in schools). Not only children of Russian citizens but children of people originating from former USSR republics are subjected to harassment. Attempts made by parents to apply to the administration of the educational institutions to prevent bullying are not always successful.

Unprecedented pressure is put on Russian compatriots' organizations in Sweden. Thus, letters with threats come to the Chairman of the Coordination Council of the Organizations of Russian Compatriots L. Sigel. On March 11, 2022, an inquiry was sent to the Minister of culture of Sweden

J. Gustafsdotter from the member of Parliament from the Social Democratic Labour Party of Sweden A. Esterberg seeking to deprive the Coordination Council of the Organizations of Russian Compatriots in Sweden and the Swedish parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church of the Moscow Patriarchate of subsidies from the state budget if they do not put distance from the policy of the Russian government. The Minister said in her turn that the issue would be resolved at the level of the relevant institution – the Youth and Civil Society Affairs Authority. The Swedish trade union association ABF put forward similar requirements in respect of compatriots' organizations.

In the beginning of March 2022, the administration of the city of Luleå (North Sweden) took a decision to stop funding from the city budget for the Russian-Swedish organization Sputnik. The head of this organization E. Ekstrom was invited for a "preventive conversation" to the local police station where she was recommended to quit the office of the chairperson of this association, but E. Ekstrom refused to do so. The local newspaper Norrbottens-Kuriren unfolded an information and propaganda campaign against her.

The Russian citizen L. Kuzmin applied to the Embassy hotline regarding prosecution of his spouse A. Kuzmina (who was an officer of the Swedish Border Control Police) by the heads of her unit and her colleagues because of her support of Russia's position with regard to Ukraine. An internal inquiry was begun concerning A. Kuzmina.

Recently, the practice of targeted mailing of anti-Russian materials has become widely spread; these materials allege that the actions taken by Sweden and other Western countries are aimed against the Russian government and not against the Russian people. Such documents often also contain strong recommendations to join denunciation of Russia's actions on social media and in the course of public actions.

Switzerland

Before the beginning of Russia's special military operation for demilitarization and denazification of Ukraine, violations of the rights of Russian citizens and fellow citizens in Switzerland had a sporadic nature.

In 2021, no cases of their politically motivated prosecutions were recorded, with the exception of apprehension and arrest of the Russian entrepreneur V. Klyushin based on a US extradition inquiry, on March 21, 2021. He came to Switzerland as a tourist. The grounds for the extradition request were the charges of organized conspiracy, fraud using electronic means, unlawful access to computer systems and fraud with securities. No violations of his detention conditions in prison were found.

The decision to extradite V. Klyushin to the USA, delivered by the federal judicial authority of Switzerland in June 2021, was challenged by the defence with focus on unlawful methods of collection of evidence by Americans and the political basis for the prosecution. However, the appeal was dismissed.

A "competing" inquiry of the General Prosecutor's Office of Russia to extradite V. Klyushin to Russia on the charges of commission of the crime provided for by Article 159 §4 of the Criminal Code of Russia (fraud on an especially large scale) was also dismissed by the Swiss party in August 2021 due to the fact that the national legislation of the Confederation provided for no punishment for such a deed. Besides, Bern does not consider the General Prosecutor's Office of Russia a party to the proceedings under the Swiss extradition procedure. Consequently, the requesting state has no opportunities to challenge decisions delivered by the judicial authorities.

On November 16, 2021, the Federal Criminal Court delivered the decision to extradite V. Klyushin to the USA and rejected all objections submitted in this case. On December 18, 2021, after dismissal of the lawyers' cassation appeal, V. Klyushin was extradited to the USA.

The beginning of the special military operation in Ukraine on February 24, 2022, entailed enhancement of anti-Russian attitudes in Switzerland, including among representatives of the country's political elite. Thus, on March 1, 2022, the co-chairman of the Social Democratic Party of Switzerland (SDPS), deputy to the National Council (lower chamber of Parliament) S. Vermut called in his Twitter account to sabotage of "the Kremlin disinformation" by joining cyber-attacks on Russian websites via malicious links.³⁷ In this connection, the Embassy of Russia in Switzerland sent a protest note to the Federal Department (Ministry) of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, two Swiss NGOs filed applications with law enforcement agencies seeking to initiate a check whether such call may be qualified as criminal offence (unauthorized amendment, destruction, or spoilage of electronic data, etc.) under the Swiss Criminal Code.

On March 5, 2022, co-chairmen of SDPS S. Vermut and M. Maier sent to the Federal Council (Government) an open letter containing the idea to create a special interdepartmental commission to check the property of both sanctioned and other wealthy Russian citizens in order to disclose a network of "dummies" to avoid "further funding of the war in Ukraine" from the territory of the Confederation. It was also proposed to review the Swiss residence permits issued to this group of population.³⁸

At the meetings in support of the Kyiv government held in February and March of 2022, mayors of the largest Swiss cities made insulting statements stirring up hatred towards the Russian government. In particular, according to the Mayor of Zurich K. Mauch, the President of Russia should be personally brought to liability for the most gross violation of international law by Russia in

³⁷ <https://www.twitter.com/cedricwermuth/status/1498767241613041676>

³⁸ <https://www.sp-ps.ch/publikationen/rote-linien/den-oligarchen-im-umfeld-von-wladimir-putin-gezielt-das-handwerk-legen>

Ukraine.³⁹ On March 19, 2022, the Mayor of Bern A. von Graffenried, in the course of the manifestation with the participation of the President of Switzerland I. Cassis and V. Zelensky (by videoconference) said that "Putin will lose this war" and "will die as a war criminal".⁴⁰

On February 28, 2022, pursuant to the decisions of the Federal Council, the formally neutral Switzerland proceeded its voluntary and consistent joining, to the full extent, to all EU sanctions packages against Russia, reasoning that the restrictions were not of military but rather of economic nature. The Permanent Group for coordination of the sanctions policy in cooperation with the concerned departments works on the basis of the State Secretariat. The cantonal authorities began active search for immovable property registered in the name of designated Russian citizens.

Additionally, the Swiss government intends to cancel the "gold investor visas" (residence permits) of D. Pumpyansky, his wife and A. Melnichenko.

On March 24, 2022, the State Secretariat gave the assessment of the volume of Russians' frozen assets for the first time. As of that date only it exceeded 6 billion US dollars⁴¹ (as of May 12 – about 6.3 billion US Dollars, taking into consideration that part of the earlier frozen assets has been unblocked).

The Consular Division of the Embassy of Russia in Switzerland receives information that Swiss banks, on a mass scale, have proceeded to checking the reasons for opening accounts for non-designated Russian clients residing in the Confederation who have no additional Swiss or EU countries citizenship.

A special Working Party was created within the Swiss Prosecutor's

39 Zürcher Stadtpräsidentin verurteilt russischen Angriff auf Ukraine. Swissinfo.ch. February 28, 2022.

<https://www.swissinfo.ch/ger/zuercher-stadtpresidentin-verurteilt-russischen-angriff-auf-ukraine/47389466>

40 Tausende lauschen Rede von Selenski. Kritik an Nestlé. Cassis hofft auf Waffenruhe. Schweiz. March 20, 2022

<https://www.tagesanzeiger.ch/botschaft-kuendet-live-rede-von-selenski-an-cassis-macht-einfuehrung-742133932530>

41 Swiss freeze more than \$6 billion worth of sanctioned Russian assets. Reuters. March 24, 2022.

<https://www.reuters.com/business/finance/swiss-freeze-more-than-6-billion-worth-sanctioned-russian-assets-2022-03-24/>

Office, tasked with collection of evidence of war crimes "connected to Russia's invasion of Ukraine" as well as investigation of attempts to circumvent the anti-Russian sanctions. Moreover, the Office of the Prosecutor General of Switzerland stated about suspension of cooperation with the Russian Federation on inquiries for providing legal assistance.⁴²

Violations of the right to freedom of opinion and their free expression could not be avoided. In March 2022, the largest Swiss cable network operators (Swisscom, Sunrise UPC, Teleboy, and Salt) decided to stop rebroadcasting of RT and Sputnik channels.⁴³

Estonia

In Estonia, Russian-speaking population is discriminated. Notwithstanding that the Russian-speaking community consists of about 360,000 persons (25 per cent of the population) and that it actually means not a minority "in the Conventional sense" but a state-forming people in terms of their number and historical role in the building of the state (as the Flemish people in Belgium, Scots in the U.K. or Bosnian Croats and Serbs in Bosnia and Herzegovina), in Estonia the privileged position of the Estonian ethnic group, its language and culture is enshrined at the Constitutional level, and the policy of political, socio-economic, cultural and language discrimination of the "non-aboriginal" population continues.

One of the main human rights protection problems is preservation of the mass-scale "non-citizenship" for the purpose to ensure "ethnic purity" of the Estonian passport. Deprivation of "non-citizens" of their civil rights is justified by the fact that the Russian population was allegedly "brought" to the country in the period of "the Soviet occupation" and therefore may not qualify for equal status with the titular nation.

The majority of the "non-citizens" (or "grey passport holders") are our

⁴² Swiss prosecutors set to go after Russian sanctions busting. Reuters. March 22, 2022.

<https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/swiss-prosecutors-set-go-after-russian-sanctions-busting-2022-03-22/>

⁴³ Ukraine Krieg: Swisscom & Co. sperren russische TV-sender. Nau.ch. February 28, 2022.

<https://www.nau.ch/news/wirtschaft/ukraine-konflikt-swisscom-co-sperren-russische-tv-sender-66119183>

Russian compatriots and their descendants (68,000 persons, 6 per cent of the population). The reduction of their number happens mainly due to mortality. To obtain the Estonian citizenship, "non-citizens" need to undergo the humiliating naturalization procedure (they need to pass a mandatory exam for knowledge of the official language – at least B2 level – and the fundamentals of the Constitution). For this reason, Estonia (according to Eurostat) remains the absolute outsider in the EU in terms of naturalization pace that constantly decreases: 1,589 people in 2014, 558 in 2017, 497 in 2020.

Pursuant to the Law On Ratification of the Framework Convention of the Council of Europe for the Protection of National Minorities, the majority of our compatriots in Estonia (both "non-citizens" and Russian citizens residing in the country) are excluded from the number of persons falling within the scope of this document and do not benefit from protection as a national minority, as only "permanent residents having Estonian citizenship" are qualified as representatives of national minorities.

The official Tallinn avoids performance of the provisions of Article 11 of the Convention that expressly obliges to acknowledge patronymics of national minorities and refuses to write them in the national identity documents issued to the Russian residents.

The nationalistic forces, who dominate in the security agencies in Estonia, use high-profile cases involving national minorities that occur in the country (road accidents, domestic violence, etc.) to promote the "crackdown" policy in respect of non-titular population in general, encouraging manifestations in its respect of discrimination in the labour market and discontent in the Estonian social milieu. Thus, Kitezh human rights centre received a complaint regarding the fact that Russian-speaking conscripts were forced to rehearse as a marching song the so-called "Forest Brothers' Song" that contained the lines "now I go around swamps and paths and kill Russian tiblas" ("tibla" is an insulting name for Russians).

The legislative innovations of the recent years, allegedly aimed to resolve the non-citizenship problem, though slightly improving the situation, did not actually change it.

Thus, the natural reproduction of "non-citizens" stopped from 2016, as it was permitted to provide Estonian citizenship to their children born in the country. As "indulgency", "grey passport holders" were provided an opportunity from 2018 to study at Estonian language courses at the expense of state budget funds with further mandatory passing the language examination.

The amendments that came into force in February 2020 were really Jesuitic, they provided the right of simplified obtaining of Estonian citizenship without examinations (after presenting a certificate on the absence of citizenship of another state) for a minor person if one of his or her ancestors had a "grey passport" and permanently resided in Estonia at the moment of its obtaining independence on August 20, 1991 and another was a citizen of a foreign state. According to the opinion of the Chancellor of Justice of Estonia Ü. Madise, this document initially implies discrimination, as over 90 per cent of children will not be able to exercise their right to titular citizenship before 18.

In the conditions of the state course for Estonization of all spheres of social life, in the first turn education, there occurs assimilation of Russian-speaking children and depriving them of the right to be educated in their native language. This automatically leads to restriction on their access to quality education.

Notwithstanding the fact that the Russian language in Estonia is the native one for about 30 per cent of the population and de-facto still plays the role of the interethnic language, it has no status of state language, official language, or national minority language, including areas densely populated by our compatriots. Even in the city of Narva, where there are less than 4 per cent of ethnic Estonians, Russian may not be introduced as the official administrative language as the Russian-speaking citizens of Estonia constitute only 47 per cent

of the city population.

At the first stage of Estonization of the education sphere, Russian was ousted from universities, including private ones, and further on from the vocational and technical education system.

Transferring of teaching of 60 per cent of disciplines at senior high schools (10-12 forms) to the official, that is, Estonian language in 2011 was quite painful for our young Russian fellow citizens.

Now, the Estonian Government takes measures to oust the Russian language from the school and pre-school education system. The Program of Development of Estonian Language for 2021-2035 and Estonia-2035 Strategy provide for full transfer of education in state and municipal educational institutions to Estonian not later than in 2035. The step-by-step action plan for unification of the budgetary Estonian-language secondary and pre-school education under the pretext of integration, presented in December 2021, implies intrusive interference of the state in the affairs of the local self-governments and educational institutions.

Simultaneously, at the local level, under the pretext of "optimization", the practice of "infusion" of Russian-language educational institutions into the Estonian-language ones continues. Thus, for example, new schools and senior high schools appeared in the cities of Kohtla-Järve, Keila, Kallaste, Tartu, Rakvere, Haapsalu, Viljandi, Põlva, Võru, etc. Similar steps are planned in the cities of Narva (where Russians constitute a significant part of population), Jõhvi and Tallinn.

The results of such measures are visible: by the present time, of the 520 secondary education institutions, seventy-four remain with partial teaching in Russian (for comparison, in 1995, there were 141 such institutions and in 2009, 96).

Acceleration of the Estonization of the educational sphere is favoured by the fact that from the beginning of 1990s training of Russian language teachers

was terminated in the country.

Consolidation of the linguistic discrimination of non-Estonians is provided for by the activities of the Language Department – a separate supervisory and punitive authority not subject to parliamentary or public control. Its functions are limited solely to detection of insufficient level of knowledge or use of Estonian, with imposing – first of all, on Russian-language educational and medical institutions and their staff – sanctions/fines disproportionate to the violations or prescriptions of dismissal.

Infringement of the rights of the Russian-speaking residents (even those speaking Estonian) is recorded in the social and economic sphere, as employers prefer representatives of the titular nation. Russians have been actually ousted from many important spheres of Estonian economy. The share of Russian-speaking unemployed persons is by several times higher than in the Estonian-speaking environment. Intentional under-funding of Russian regions takes place.

The low level of representation of non-Estonians in government agencies (10.8 per cent), especially in ministries and government departments (2.9 per cent of Russian-speaking persons, including not a single representative in the Ministry of Defence) is still maintained. There is an acute problem of unequal representation of the titular and non-titular communities in local self-government authorities, especially in Tallinn.

Estonian courts continue the practice of expelling to Russia Russian citizens with criminal record permanently residing here, on the formal grounds that they have "a country of nationality". It is not taken into consideration that this category of persons does not have stable ties with Russia (dwelling, work, relatives, etc.), and so they find themselves in unfavourable economic conditions.

Russian-speaking residents of Estonia face discrimination in the sphere of judicial proceedings and in the penal system. Thus, the share of

Russian-speaking persons among the accused and convicts is disproportionately high. Judicial proceedings are conducted solely in Estonian, which creates problems with providing access to justice for Russian-speaking residents. Broadcasting Russian-language TV programs is prohibited in detention facilities. Regular complaints are received from Russian citizens serving their punishment in Estonian prisons against implicit discriminatory actions, for example, biased attitude and everyday chauvinism on the part of the prison facilities' administration where predominantly ethnic Estonians are employed. The typical complaints from our compatriots also concern formal performance by the state-appointed lawyers of their obligations at the investigation stage and in courts.

For more than 20 years, the government has been trying to oust from Estonia the Russian retired military serviceman A. Galitsky. The Estonian side believes that he is staying in the country illegally, in violation of the agreement on the issue of social guarantees to retired military servicemen of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation in the territory of the Estonian Republic dated July 2, 1994.

Apart from that, the Estonian government actively pursues the policy of glorification of Nazi accomplices and propagation of nationalist ideology. All these favour increasing Russophobia and restrictions of the rights of the Russian-speaking population in many spheres.

Security services are engaged in severe fighting against all dissident civil society representatives and media, employing methods of pressure and repressions in respect of politicians, public persons, human rights activists, and journalists presenting a point of view that is different from the official one as well as protecting the rights of the Russian-speaking community. Criminal and administrative punitive prosecution under a contrived pretext is extensively used.

In February 2019, the court sentence in respect of the prominent Estonian

specialist in Russian philology, director of Non-Profit Organization Pushkin Tallinn Institute A. Krasnoglazov became final. He was charged with "misappropriation of funds" and "forgery of documents" (the trial court's sentence of acquittal was reviewed on the motion of the Estonian prosecutor's office). In the beginning of March 2020, the Põhja District Prosecutor's Office terminated the criminal proceedings, pending from mid-2019, against the chairman of the board of the Non-Profit Organization Russian School of Estonia (RSE) and director of Kitezh human rights centre M. Rusakov.

In March 2021, a criminal case was fabricated against S. Seredenko, a human rights activist and well-known Estonian specialist in Constitutional law, on the charges of "maintaining contacts aimed against the Estonian Republic". In August 2021 the case was referred to court, the proceedings will be closed. If the bill of formal accusation is accepted, the court may sentence S. Seredenko to life imprisonment.

Strict censoring of information has been de-facto established in the local media. Tallinn, within the framework of the general policy of countering the "Kremlin influence", pursues the course to restriction, using any means, of the work of the accredited Russian information agencies in the country, forming a blockade regime around them as "hostile propaganda channels".

From March 20, 2020, under the pressure of state and law enforcement authorities, issuing of the daily information program Estonia news in the First Baltic Channel was terminated (works under the franchise of Channel One of Russia).

The Estonian Government demonstratively ignores inquiries and applications of representatives of the Russian media accredited in the country: Interfax, RIA Novosti, TASS, VGTRK. Journalists do not receive information mail-out and press releases of Estonian government bodies; they are not allowed to government institutions and not accredited for official events. Under the pressure of the security services, banks refuse to provide services to them

(accounts closure, unilateral termination of contract obligations without providing the reasons thereof, etc. is practiced).

The blatant anti-Russian campaign with evident Russophobic subtext, unleashed in the West against the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine conducted by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, was energetically picked up in Estonia. This creates a favourable environment for aggressive disorderly actions of delusional persons who have come under the influence of Western propaganda. The Embassy of Russia in Tallinn has already become the object of their attacks. In particular the house intercom with CCTV was damaged in the Consular Division, in the main building the facade was splashed with paint, the window with a historical painted glass was broken, and the Embassy cars were spoiled. According to the Russian Ambassador, one employee of the Russian diplomatic institution received murder threats. In connection to this incident the Estonian police reported that the threat was an emotional outbreak, and the offender had no real intention to kill. Authorized and non-authorized anti-Russian actions take place in front of the Embassy building, numerous posters are deployed containing definitely insulting and sometimes obscene texts about Russia and its government as well as Nazi symbols. The police prohibit to remove them, probably thinking that they contribute to the calmness and safety of the diplomatic mission.

In March 2022, the Russian flag was torn off from the Secretariat building of the Consular Division of the Russian Embassy in Tartu by unknown persons (only rags fastened to the flagpole remained). On March 22, the flag was returned to the Russian diplomat by the city police prefect, in a damaged state and not fit for further use.

Some particular Estonian diplomatic service representatives also make efforts. The ER Ambassador in Ukraine K. Kuusk published in his Twitter a

photo of the popular liqueur Vana Tallinn in form of a "Molotov cocktail" evidently hinting on its use against Russian citizens.

The Russia-blaming campaign noticeably influenced the situation of the Russian citizens and compatriots living in Estonia. The increased anti-Russian attitude became a predictable reflection of the Russophobic efforts made by the Estonian government, striving to struggle with Russia not only on the political and diplomatic level but also by interfering with the life of the civil society. In the first turn, blows are inflicted on the sphere of commemorating of the fighters against Nazism and on use of the Russian language in the media.

On April 21, 2022, the Estonian Parliament adopted the law banning open demonstration of symbols "used at commission of an act of aggression, genocide, crime against humanity or war crime, to support or justify such crimes." The law also establishes a punishment up to 5 years of imprisonment for "joining the armed forces of a foreign state committing an act of aggression, or to another armed group of a foreign state taking part in the act of aggression; taking part in commission or preparation of an act of aggression or conscious support of an act of aggression on the part of a foreign state including its financing.

On 22 April, the Minister of the Interior K. Jani in his interview to Delfi portal allowed inadmissible statements in respect of the state flag of the Russian Federation saying that its public demonstration should be prohibited.

The Russophobic approach was supported by the Labour Inspection of Estonia, which on March 18, 2022 issued an explanation recommending employers, if they note that an employee is wearing a St. George ribbon, Z symbol or uses the flag of Russia in social media, to proceed from the fact that "instigation to war and stirring up hatred pursuant to the Penal Code of the ER constitute crimes and give the right to terminate labour relations in connection to loss of trust, based on Part 1, para. Five of Article 88 of the Law on Labour Contract.

This recommendation justifies the local managers who have proactively operated in this way. Thus, the head of Elron company (suburban trains) L. Betlem, as early as on March 1, 2022, informed his employees about inadmissibility of expressing "support to the Russian criminal regime" in social media. He noted that labour contracts would be terminated with those who do it, for "loss of trust and damaging the employer's reputation".

Actions are taken to create practical obstacles for celebration of Victory Day in Estonia. The head of the Central Criminal Police of the Police and Border Control Department A. Alavere said on March 24, 2022, that the law enforcement officers' attitude to appearance of St. George ribbon in public space would have to be reviewed, as this symbol is worn by the Russian soldiers who "kill Ukrainians".

The same position was stated at the TV program of the Estonian state TV and radio ERR by the Head of the Police and Border Control Department E. Vaher who said that the Estonian police will be taking measures to counter the demonstration of the Russian military symbols on the 9th of May (the Soviet Army uniform and St. George ribbons were qualified as such symbols). He stated in particular: "We are ready to stop such activities on May 9. We will use more resources as the situation cannot be compared to the previous years." He also expressed the hope that the Estonian Parliament will make some amendments to the law by the 9th of May in order to give a free hand to the police in respect to those who come with such symbols.

On March 24, 2022, the Mayor of Tallinn M. Kõlvart (Centrist Party) urged the residents of the capital "to refrain from using symbols that may cause negative reaction", noting that a legal ban on particular symbols may have an opposite effect.

The Estonian police officially banned public assemblies related to the "Bronze night" from April 26 to May 10 and public assemblies on May 9 expressing support to the "aggressor country" and using military symbols

including the flags of the USSR and Russia, St. George ribbons and Soviet military uniform. Initially, the ban was established in Tallinn, Harjumaa and Ida-Virumaa and further extended to the whole country. On the eve of May 9, police control (including social media control) was enhanced: On this day, "provocative" symbols were recorded in various regions of Estonia, about thirty persons were detained because of that, fines were imposed on 12 "habitual offenders".

A Tallinn resident who hung the "wrong" symbols – the Russian flag, St. George ribbon and letter Z – in the window of his apartment was sentenced to a 13-day arrest.

On May 4, 2022, the Estonian Republic Security Police (KaPo) expelled from the country one of the organizers of the "Immortal Regiment" A. Esakov, a Russian citizen with permanent residence in Estonia, as a person posing "a threat to Estonian sovereignty". Last April, M. Reve – one of the defenders of the monument to the Soldier-Liberator from its blasphemous transfer during the "Bronze Night" in 2007 – had his residence permit cancelled and was banned from entering the Schengen zone on security grounds for a ten-year period ("threat to the Constitutional order, terrorist crime or other grave crime").

On April 27, 2022, the Russian citizen, one of the organizers of the "Immortal Regiment" events S. Chaulin, who came to Tõnismägi (where the "Bronze Soldier" stood before the transfer) with flowers and candles, was apprehended on suspicion of organization of unlawful public actions. On May 9, 2022, so was the activist of the Russian-speaking community Yu. Kalinina.

Law enforcement authorities and special services of Estonia take measures to identify pro-Russian-minded persons. The Police and Border Control Department urged social media users on March 8, 2022, to promptly inform web policemen about "doubtful publications" (i.e., pro-Russian publications) for their checking for "instigation of war and stirring up hatred".

On the next day KaPo (Security Police) specified that the security service had to be immediately informed about "flagrant cases" of activity in social media.

On March 11, 2022, KaPo announced on its website that information billboards about criminal liability under Articles 234² and 235¹ of the Penal Code of the ER for assistance to or contacts with Russian security services were installed on the Estonian border control points at the Russian border. When commenting the aforementioned publication, Deputy Director General of the service A. Toots explained that the notification was connected to the "active approach of the Russian security services to persons crossing the border" and urged to inform of any attempts of such contacts, otherwise "when convicted, people will find themselves on one list with traitors and anti-state offenders."

Moreover, Estonian border guards cancel visas because of "hostile symbols" (St. George ribbons, elements of the Russian Army uniform and other symbols, Latin letters Z and V).

The Estonian security services make "efforts" to expose "unreliable elements". It is known, in particular, that KaPo summoned for a "preventive conversation" S. Solodova, an active participant of the activities of the Russian compatriots' organizations in Kohtla-Järve.

There are continued attempts to oust the Russian language from the media. On March 25, 2022, the Minister of Finance of Estonia K. Pentus-Rosimannus suggested to the government to allocate, as targeted state dotation, 1.3 million euro to the Ministry of Culture for support of Russian-language editorial offices of the Estonian media. The project provides that the grantee must be a private law legal entity registered in Estonia that issues information products in Estonian and Russian and be a member of the Union of Media Entities of Estonia. Resources published only in Russian will not be able to obtain such a grant.

The Estonian Government, which has earlier pursued a consistent course for restricting, by any means, the activities of the Russian media in the country,

took advantage of the development of the situation in Ukraine to block Russia's information presence.

Aggressive propaganda is conducted in respect of everything that has connection to our country. The Estonian media environment is completely closed for alternative points of view, any "dissent" is interpreted as war propaganda and deceptive information, Russian media are censored/closed, criminal cases are forged against unwanted journalists, scrupulous monitoring of social media (including those of the Russian diplomatic missions) is affected. Thus, in the beginning of March 2022 the information web portal Sputnik Meedia⁴⁴ announced termination of its work due to pressure and restrictions on the part of Estonian banks and authorities, as well as because of threats to its employees. During the year, the banks in Estonia were freezing salaries to the employees and closing the accounts of Sputnik Meedia on the suspicions of "money laundering, financing terrorism, illegal sale of alcohol". Besides, recently many newsmakers refused to cooperate with the portal, and "open threats" from unknown persons started coming to its editor-in-chief and employees.

On April 6, 2022, the Estonian intelligence services apprehended the editor-in-chief of the portal, Russian citizen E. Cherysheva, on suspicion of the allegedly committed crime against peace and violation of the international sanctions, including by supporting the work of the previously closed portal. After a 16-hours search in her dwelling, she was taken to a remand prison. All gadgets, telephones, cash were seized from E. Cherysheva. After several days, the editor was released, she was prohibited to leave the country and leave her home for a period longer than three days.

By May 2022, Estonia banned as a whole over 40 Russian and Russian-language TV channels (including The First Baltic Channel, that

⁴⁴ We remind that Sputnik Meedia portal was created by the former employees of Sputnik Estonia information agency closed two years ago due to great pressure from the Estonian police.

rebroadcasts the programs of the Russian Channel One in the Baltic countries), CTC, REN TV, Russia 24, NTV+, etc.), and over 50 websites (including TASS, RT, RBC, Sputnik); the newspaper Komsomolskaya Pravda in North Europe was ousted from the media market.

The "cancel culture" is demonstrated in Estonia in full. On March 3, 2022, the Tallinn concert hall Alexela on its own initiative cancelled the performance of B. Eifman's ballet theatre (scheduled for March 11). On March 17, 2022, the Estonian Ministry of Culture informed that many private organizers, in connection with the situation in Ukraine, "have made their moral choice in accordance with the shared values by cancelling events with participation of Russian artists."

On April 21, 2022, the members of the Estonian government supported the fundamental position that "the road to enter Estonia is closed" for those performers and cultural workers of Russia and Belarus who justify "Russia's aggression against Ukraine and support Putin's actions." However, the so-called blacklist of "pro-Putin" artists will not be drawn up in Estonia. According to K. Kallas' statement: "Everything is O.K. with the moral compass of most businessmen, event organizers and self-government bodies. But there are only a handful of those who are still planning to organize in Estonia concerts of artists who justify the war and killings of people. Such artists may not come to Estonia. Our position is clear – personalities and artists chanting praises to Putin will not be allowed into Estonia. Their concerts and presentations will not be held here." The Ministry of Internal Affairs promised to introduce individual entry bans where necessary.

Rejection of everything that is Russian covers the editorial business too. It became known that Prisma and Selver trading networks removed from sale all printed products from Russia, including children's books.

Restrictions on contacts also affected the ties between "twin" Russian and Estonian cities and towns. In particular, the partner relationships of the city of

Tartu with Pskov and the Vasileostrovsky District of Saint Petersburg were terminated.

On March 7, 2022, the member of the Ruling Reformist Party in Riigikogu and simultaneously the head of the party fraction in the Tallinn City Assembly K. Mihal called to "de-Putinization of the Estonian capital and clearance of its media environment from Russian propaganda."

Discrimination of people originating from Russia concerned the educational sphere as well. On March 7, 2022, the Tartu University announced its decision not to admit applicants from our country for studying in the 2022/2023 academic year, thereby expressing its position "against the aggression in Ukraine". It was followed by the Tallinn Technical University that informed on March 22, 2022, that, "out of solidarity with Ukraine and following security experts' recommendations", it decided not to accept Russian applicants for studying for the same period. Then, on March 24, 2022, the Estonian Music and Theatre Academy also announced its decision not to admit individuals from Russia in the following academic year. In the beginning of April, the Tallinn University informed about its decision not to admit for studies in the 2022/2023 academic year citizens of Russia and Belarus who have no residence permit or long-term visa in Estonia, do not study in the ER and have no international protection (meaning, that is not applied in respect of the Russians and Belarussians who already live, study or work in Estonia).

In the beginning of March, the Tartu University unilaterally suspended the validity of the agreement with the Pskov State University for an indefinite period (referring to a certain resolution of the Association of Universities of Estonia), terminated exercising the bilateral academic mobility programs cancelling payment of scholarships to two PskovSU students who already studied under ERASMUS+ multi-faceted international program (Belarus, Sweden, Netherlands, Estonia), proposing them to stay in Tartu "for their own account" or to continue the education remotely. In addition to that, according to

available data, access to online courses for students from the territory of Russia was closed.

In March of this year, the Tallinn announced "termination of cooperation and termination of the respective agreements with the municipalities of Russia (including Moscow, Saint Petersburg) and suspending Russian cities' participation in all formats of inter-municipal cooperation."

There are recorded instances of excluding Russian members of civic and political organizations who oppose the official position of the government. The Centrist Party did so. On February 26, 2022, it excluded the member of its Lääne-Virumaa branch E. Fedorova for "public justification of war and violence" (later on, she was dismissed from her job). On March 17, 2022, the deputy of the Tartu City Assembly N. Põdramägi (a doctor by profession) spoke at the meeting of the municipal legislative authority with criticism of Russophobia in Estonia. The Doctors' Union of Estonia criticized the "views justifying the war" and initiated his exclusion from the organization. The Centrist Party satisfied N. Põdramägi's application on quitting the party "at his own request".

Japan

No mass-scale violations of the rights and discrimination of Russians had been recorded in Japan earlier. However, after the beginning of the special military operation for denazification and demilitarization of Ukraine and protection of civilians of Donbas by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, a campaign (unprecedented in its Russophobic tension) against Russia and its citizens unfolded in the country. The Japanese information space, including the media, social media, and blogosphere, has a trend for increased anti-Russian rhetoric. The official authorities undertake consistent steps to implement into the public conscience as an imperative the thesis "about the full solidarity with the collective West and commitment to the culture of condemnation and cancelling of Russia."

Similar Russophobic attitudes are projected onto everyday life of Russian citizens in Japan and lead to violation of their social and economic rights. Anonymous threats and demands to our fellow citizens "to clear off from Japan" are received by the Russian visa application centre located in the district of Akasaka (Tokyo) on a regular basis.

Similar "applications" are sent to the Metochion of the Moscow Patriarchate in Tokyo and to the clergy of the Japanese Autonomous Orthodox Church.

There were recorded incidents of refusal of employment due to appurtenance to the citizenship of the Russian Federation. A number of Japanese companies form the working atmosphere where their Russian employees do not openly express their opinion on the events taking place in our country, fearing dismissal.

On March 3, 2022, an incident of vandalism took place when damage was inflicted to the "Red Square" shop with Russian goods in Tokyo.

The consular institutions of the Russian Federation receive complaints from Russian women evidencing facts of domestic violence on the part of their Japanese husbands as well as of insults and humiliations based on their ethnic origin.

Given the official Tokyo's accentuated promotion of the "human security concept", its principles and norms are demonstratively not applied to aspects concerning the events in Ukraine. In particular, in April 2022 the Japanese party excluded from the list of terrorist organizations the reference to the Ukrainian nationalist Azov Battalion in its 2021 Review of the Situation in the Sphere of International Terrorism. Thus, Japan, proceeding from political reasons, actually encourages the activities of the aforementioned terrorist organization that is wrought by new threats for life and safety of Russian citizens.