



# NORDIC BELARUSIAN HISTORY DIALOGUE

Final Report

HWB Report 5, 4/2020



HISTORIANS  
WITHOUT  
BORDERS



# **NORDIC BELARUSIAN HISTORY DIALOGUE**

Final Report

Kristiina Silvan

ISBN 978-952-69180-3-7

Historians without Borders in Finland

Helsinki, 2020

## Contents

Summary.....	1
What is a History Dialogue?.....	2
1. Background.....	3
2. Overview of the Dialogue.....	4
3. Points of Success.....	7
4. Challenges.....	8
4.1. Flexibility of the format.....	8
4.2. Stuck in roles.....	8
4.3. The Unspecified Role of Nordic Historians.....	9
4.4. Role of HWB.....	10
5. Recommendations.....	10
5.1. Clarify the Aims and Objectives of the History Dialogue.....	10
5.2. Introduce Mechanisms of Joint Ownership.....	11
5.3. Select the Participants Carefully and Train the Moderators.....	12
6. Appendices.....	13



## SUMMARY

- The Nordic-Belarusian History dialogue was organised by HWB Finland at the University of Lund, Sweden, in January 2020. The Belarusian participants of the dialogue were historians from independent and state-affiliated institutions. The Nordic historians came from Swedish, Danish, Norwegian and Finnish universities and had demonstrated a research interest in Belarus. The dialogue was supported by a grant from the Nordic Council of Ministers.
- Despite the potential for mutual distrust between the perceived "government-affiliated" and the "non-affiliated" camps of Belarusian historians, the dialogue succeeded in generating an open discussion on various debated aspects of Belarusian history and establishing avenues of mutual interest for Nordic and Belarusian historians.
- All major challenges that emerged from the dialogue stemmed from the perceived lack of clear aims and objectives for the history dialogue.
- The history dialogue is a potential tool for voicing, reflecting and potentially reconciling different narratives of Belarusian historiography, providing the current shortcomings are overcome in the future.
- For future events, the author of the report suggests to clarify the aims and the objectives of the history dialogue, introduce mechanisms of joint ownership, select the participants carefully, and train the moderators

## WHAT IS A HISTORY DIALOGUE?

History Dialogue is a way of discussing difficult histories and painful pasts. It is a conversation with the aim of opening new perspectives on the past and in order to help look at history from other people's points of view. The purpose is to increase the participants' knowledge and understanding of the themes of the dialogue.

The purpose of the History Dialogue is not to create confrontation or a juxtaposition between the participants or to bring participants with different viewpoints around a table to argue. The aim is to bring together a diverse group which, in addition to presenting their own viewpoints, is willing to listen and seeks to understand other participants' opinions.

The ultimate goal of a History Dialogue is to increase the group's knowledge and understanding of the differing viewpoints regarding the subject at hand. The contents and aims of the History Dialogue often develop as the dialogue develops and proceeds. Outcomes of the process can later be used in developing possible reconciliation processes, while during the dialogue the group might recognise areas where further academic research would be needed.

*Jenni Laakso  
Secretary General  
Historians without Borders in Finland*

## 1. BACKGROUND

Belarus (re)emerged on the map of Europe in 1992, when it was declared as an independent state following the collapse of the Soviet Union. The early 1990s witnessed the opening of Belarus to the West: there were collaborative cross-border projects in all spheres of state and society. However, following Alyaksandr Lukashenka's rise to presidency in 1994 and the consolidation of his rule in Belarus, the priority of Belarus's foreign policy shifted from Europe to Russia. When Western observers were talking with hope about the consolidation of democracy in both of Belarus' neighbours – Poland and Russia – Belarus was labelled as Europe's last dictatorship.

After the collapse of communism, the Nordic countries were active in supporting Belarusian civil society. In the early 1990s, there was budding collaboration in spheres such as environment protection, gender equality, and youth policy. However, the heavy-handed government response to the opposition's activities, especially during the protests of 2000-2001, put projects of Belarusian – Nordic cooperation on hold. There were attempts to resume cooperation with Belarus on many occasions in the 2000s, including on the framework of the EU's Eastern Partnership, but people-to-people contacts between Belarus and the Nordic countries have remained weak. Following the annexation of Crimea to Russia in 2014 and the subsequent attempt by Russia to forge closer ties with Belarus, Lukashenka's government has become eager to re-establish connections to Europe. In this changing political environment, collaboration with European countries, including the Nordic states, has once again been made possible. In 2014, the Nordic Council resumed its annual meetings with representatives of Belarusian civil society and political parties from all across the political spectrum. The Nordic countries have also supported Belarusian civil society initiatives inspired by European values in a variety of spheres. Since Belarus is located in the Baltic Sea region, supporting its political and social resilience is an important policy objective for the Nordic states.

The development of Belarusian history writing has gone through different stages in the post-Soviet era. In the late 1980s, the relaxing of state censorship enabled the examination of former taboos. Belarusian historians could, for the first time, conduct research on controversial topics such as the short-lived Belarusian People's Republic of 1918, Stalin's repressions, and the Holocaust. The opening of contacts to Europe enabled Belarusian historians to broaden the theoretical underpinnings of their work beyond Marxism-Leninism. Opportunities for research mobility in Western universities emerged practically overnight.

In the newly established Republic of Belarus, historians contributed to the construction of a coherent narrative of Belarus as a state, and of Belarusians as a nation. The task was not an easy one: after all, Belarus as a perpetual borderland between Russia, Poland, Lithuania and Ukraine had never existed as an independent nation state prior to 1992. Some historians rejected the existence of Belarusians as a people, and of Belarusian as a language. After Lukashenka's ascent to power, the Soviet narrative of the Belarusian state and nation regained ground. According to this narrative, Belarusian statehood has no roots beyond the Soviet

era, while the Belarusian and Russian people are bonded by eternal brotherly ties. In this narrative, there is little space for interpretations that would consider Belarus as a part of Europe.

Since the reinstating of the rigid state narrative of Belarusian history, the community of Belarusian historians has become extremely polarised. Some promote the “official” narrative about the country’s past, while others aim to challenge it. The government’s approach towards those that try to challenge the official narrative is very negative, and such historians have experienced difficulties with state-funded universities and the Institute of History, the primary unit for history research at the Belarusian Academy of Science. Indeed, Belarusian historians promoting an “alternative” narrative work today primarily in places that are not affiliated with the state, such as the originally Belarus-based European Humanities University in exile in Vilnius and the University of Warsaw. The quality of the connections between historians who promote the “official” view of Belarus’s past and those who seek to challenge it ranges from disregard to overt hostility.

In the course of the politically turbulent 20th century, historians in the Nordic states have faced serious challenges in trying to reconcile different interpretations of the countries’ past. For example, in Finland, interpretations of the civil war of 1918 have ranged from portraying the event as a communist uprising to a war of liberation. Trying to make sense of the Second World War, too, has required a significant effort to voice, reflect, and reconcile different viewpoints. These experiences, among others, have contributed to the Nordic state’s current position as experts in mediation. Like Belarus, the Nordic states are perceived to be located on the (sometimes contested) periphery of Europe, which is why none of the countries have been able to treat the “Europeanness” of their past as a given.

Several factors contributed to the decision to organise the Belarusian–Nordic History Dialogue in January 2020: Belarus’s geographical proximity to the Nordic states, the geopolitical location of both Belarus and the Nordic states at the edge of Europe, the recent opening of the Belarusian political system to more cooperation with Europe, the polarisation among Belarusian historians, the experience of Nordic historians in reconciling conflicting viewpoints, and Historians Without Borders’s expertise in facilitating history dialogues.

## 2. OVERVIEW OF THE DIALOGUE

The idea for a Nordic–Belarusian history dialogue dates back to May 2018 when Erkki Tuomioja, the Chairperson and a founding member of Historians without Borders in Finland, met with local historians during his trip to Minsk, Belarus. Those who attended the meeting agreed that, for reasons analysed in the previous sections, Belarusian historians could benefit from a history dialogue — one of the flagship projects of Historians without Borders — especially if organised in collaboration with Nordic historians.

After the Nordic Council of Ministers granted funding for the project, a planning meeting was organised in Lund, Sweden, in September 2019. Two Nordic scholars working on the history of Belarus, Per Anders Rudling and Barbara Törnquist-Plewa, are based at the University of Lund and suggested that their university

host the forthcoming dialogue. The decision to use Russian as the primary language of the dialogue was based on HWB's prior experience of organising history dialogues.

During the planning meeting, it was decided that the participants of the history dialogue would be invited personally rather than be selected from an open call of applications. Considering the divergent views that Belarusian historians hold, the organising committee wanted to make sure that there would be a gender, age and "narrative" balance among the participants. Moreover, given the non-academic nature of the history dialogue, the committee also wanted to ensure that the participants of the dialogue would be those who see historians as active members of society. The participants from the Nordic countries were invited based on their demonstrated research interest on Belarusian history and - for practical reasons - their ability to conduct the dialogue in Russian.

Invitation letters to potential participants were sent out in October 2019. Most of the invited participants accepted the invitation. The programme of the history dialogue was drafted by the organising committee. Participants received information about the format of the dialogue in advance, and four participants were requested to deliver a short introduction on a topic chosen by the organising committee. Moderators were selected among Nordic historians.

Participants arrived to Lund on Wednesday, January 22, 2020. In the evening, they attended a reception in Copenhagen, at the Nordic Council of Ministers that had provided funding for the organisation of the dialogue. Unfortunately, nine participants flying from Minsk missed their connecting flight and thus missed the opening reception. The dialogue lasted for the entire day on Thursday, January 23, from 9 am to 6 pm. The dialogue consisted of four thematic sessions, one summarising session, as well as a debriefing session on the following day. The language of the workshop was primarily Russian, but an interpreter was present to translate for those who preferred to speak in English.

The first session was devoted to a discussion on the making of Belarusian identity. The introducing remarks analysed the development of the officially sanctioned narrative of Belarusian history and identity in the post-Soviet period. After this, a lively discussion on the topic ensued. Some argued that it was crucial to teach about Belarusian identity at the university in order to support the ongoing nation-building process; while others claimed that the practice was harmful, not least because it promoted a stereotypical and one-sided representation of Belarusian identity. Another question that generated debate was the role of the Institute of History of the Belarusian Academy of Science. Some claimed that the institute had an undesirable monopoly in the field of historiography, while others argued that the institute was not in a privileged position compared to other institutions. Although most of the participants did not know each other in advance, almost everyone contributed to the discussion, which can be interpreted as a success.

The second session discussed Belarus's place in European history. Much of the discussion was linked to the inevitable but notorious question: "What is Europe?" Was Europe to be understood just in terms of geographical, religious, and linguistic heritage, or also in terms of values, such as the rule of law? Moreover, is "Europeanness" compatible with the Russian civilisation, or are the two mutually exclusive? Some participants argued that, culturally, Belarus was more closely connected with the "Russian world" than Europe, an idea that others vehemently opposed. In this session, Nordic historians also actively shared their thoughts on the place of the Nordic states in European history.

The introducing speaker of the third session put forward a theoretical argument about Belarusian statehood and politics of history. This discussion was somewhat more heated than those in the previous two sessions, as there was a clear conflict between two groups of participants. Regarding the subject, one point of disagreement was whether the medieval Principality of Polotsk had attributes of statehood in the contemporary understanding of the concept, while on a more fundamental level, the debate was about the traditional opposition between history as a narrative and history as a science. On a practical (and personal) level, the participants disputed whether there is enough diversity in historians' interpretations in Belarus, and if not, is the perceived lack of diversity a result of government censorship.

The fourth session analysed Belarus in the context of Nordic historiography. In addition to noting Belarus's weak presence in Nordic historiography, participants suggested topics for further research collaboration. For example, it was argued that further research ought to be conducted on the Nordic countries' recognition of the Belarusian People's Republic of 1918 and the role of Belarusian Red Army soldiers in the Finnish Winter War.

The final session on Thursday, January 23, summarised the discussions of the day in four themes: Belarusian identity; the concept of Europe (is Belarus part of Europe or not?); historians and state authorities; and common interests of Belarusian and Nordic historians. Although participants were already tired after a long day of dialoguing, there was not a moment of silence during this session either, possibly due to the skilful work of the moderator. The participants also discussed the ongoing "soft Belarusianisation" policy, put into effect since 2014. Some argued that a big change had taken place in the government's attitude towards the "cultural nationalist" intelligentsia, while others claimed that nothing had changed.

After the final session, participants attended dinner. Those who had any energy left continued the history dialogue late into the night.

On Friday morning, there was one more session, the aim of which was to discuss potential for future dialogues. Some highlighted the need to do "something concrete", whether in the academic or non-academic sphere, while others had detailed suggestions of future research collaboration. Participants also pondered upon the fruitfulness of comparative research. The Nordic–Belarusian history dialogue closed with a final lunch hosted at the University of Lund.

Feedback about the dialogue was collected with an anonymous online form sent to all participants shortly after the dialogue, which generated 11 responses. Members of the organising committee also had a short concluding meeting after the participants of the dialogue had left. The following section discusses opinions voiced in the feedback in addition to the perceptions of the writer of this report.

### 3. POINTS OF SUCCESS

The first major point of success was that the dialogue managed to facilitate a conversation among people that otherwise would not have wanted to talk to each other. In addition to the polarisation of Belarusian historians, there were also notable inter-personal issues between the participants of the dialogue. The fact that these people engaged in discussing topics of mutual interest is a point of success that ought not to be downplayed. One of the participants openly said that they had not been in contact with their colleagues from state-affiliated institutions for twenty years (!) although they lived in the same city and researched the same historical period.

Although one of the sessions escalated into a conflict between two groupings, people from different sides did arrive at some kind of reconciliation in an informal discussion during the coffee break that followed. In the evening, those who had had an argument during the day were having a laugh over drinks while talking about Soviet history. Perhaps some trust was built during the day – although as discussed in the latter part of this report, this trust has its limits.

Another point of success was the flexibility of the format. Participants seemed to enjoy the format of the history dialogue that allowed a structured yet spontaneous exchange of ideas, not just during the coffee breaks (as is usually the case in academic conferences), but during the sessions as well. There was no moments of silence, and almost everyone contributed to the discussion regularly. As a result, participants engaged in a collective knowledge creation exercise not just among Belarusian historians, but amidst Nordic ones as well. For example, different insights from the historical experience of being on the edge of Europe were of interest to all participants.

The flexibility of the format also enabled participants to suggest their own ideas on how to continue the dialogue in the future. The creation of shared ownership over the project by encouraging bottom-up input is vital for the history dialogue to become something more than sporadic event(s), organised on the initiative of Historians without Borders in Finland. To continue the dialogue, participants suggested the organisation of both academic and non-academic events, such as a roundtable at one of the upcoming conferences in Minsk or summer school for Nordic and Belarusian PhD students.

All in all, the dialogue succeeded in bringing people together, building trust, and creating a foundation for future dialogues. However, as the following section argues, there were also notable challenges during the

history dialogue. If these issues were to be resolved, in the future the history dialogue could meet the potential that it undeniably has.

## 4. CHALLENGES

### 4.1. Flexibility of the format

As argued in the previous section, the flexibility of the history dialogue was an asset that enabled the (limited) ownership of the dialogue by its participants. Paradoxically, however, the flexibility of the project was also the biggest challenge of the history dialogue. First of all, the novelty and the flexibility of the format made it difficult to prepare for the event. Because the participants had never participated in such an event before, they did not know what was expected of them. The survey responses highlight that the information that was circulated beforehand failed to communicate the aims, objectives, and practicalities of the history dialogue.

As a result, participants – most of whom were academic historians – resorted to codes of behaviour familiar to them. One of the people delivering introductory remarks repeatedly referred to the history dialogue as a “conference”. During some sessions, moderators acted out the role of a chair in an academic conference. After the presentation, they collected questions and comments from the audience and then gave the floor to the person who delivered the presentation. One of the sessions escalated into a verbal confrontation between the presenter and the other participants. As the skirmish started to get personal, it would have been beneficial if the moderator had taken on the role of a mediator rather than someone who merely passes the floor between the presenter and the members of the audience.

After the dialogue, there was also notable confusion regarding the future. Participants voiced practical proposals for continuing the dialogue, ranging from summer schools to PhD students to collaborative research projects; but there was no joint decision on what ought to be done next and by whom. Judging by the survey responses, the participants expected HWB in Finland to take a leading role in taking the dialogue to the next level.

### 4.2. Stuck in roles

As discussed in the previous section, the community of Belarusian historians is extremely polarised. As a result, there is a tendency to see scholars primarily as representatives of their home institution, and only secondarily, as experts in a given field. What makes things worse is that the institutional affiliation is interpreted as a political marker, which generates normative assumptions about a person’s life and career choices. For example, one participant reflected that due to the political nature of the Belarusian regime, scholars working in state institutions had to inevitably sacrifice their personal and professional integrity (by resorting to self-censorship or refusing to support their colleagues, for example) in order to pursue their career. These compromises, the participant argued, unavoidably changed the personality of the scholar. It is likely that the

representatives of state institutions have critical assumptions as well regarding the integrity of the scholars who pursue their research outside state institutions. In essence, the entrenched suspicion towards the other “camp” meant that it was hard for the participants to see the scholar behind the affiliation.

There is hardly an instant fix to the polarisation, and since politically motivated purges within universities are perceived as a real threat in Belarus, the prevalent aversion to state institutions among non-state affiliated scholars is perfectly understandable. It is assumably only by continuous efforts of building trust between individual members of the community of historians that the mutual suspicion can be alleviated. Perhaps if participating scholars were to have a chance to present their merits as researchers and specialists, the institutional affiliation could fade into the background. Luckily, discussions at the coffee breaks and after dinners did demonstrate that historians from different institutions could still find a common language on professional matters.

#### 4.3. The Unspecified Role of Nordic Historians

One point of unfulfilled potential at the Nordic–Belarusian history dialogue was the role of Nordic historians. The aspect was observable both during the dialogue and in the participants’ survey responses. The survey responses reveal that Belarusian participants had hoped to get to know Nordic historians and establish collaborative research based on mutual academic interests. However, during the dialogue it seemed that none of the participating Nordic historians envisioned collaborative research projects. Rather, their participation seemed to be motivated primarily by their interest towards Belarusian history and politics, and the fact that they had been personally invited by the HWB.

The selection of Nordic historians had been conducted on the basis of their prior research on Belarus. Language proficiency was another criterion for selection, since the language of the history dialogue was Russian. It can be argued that the use of Russian as the dialogue’s working language (with English interpreting provided when necessary) was a factor that excluded Nordic historians from a more active participation in the dialogue. Reacting to this assumption, a few survey respondents suggested English as the working language in future dialogues.

However, my own interpretation for why Nordic historians played only a minor role in the dialogue was because they did not know what was expected of them during the dialogue. When they did speak, they mostly asked clarifying questions related to Belarusian history or politics rather than contributed to the dialogue with their own comments. Perhaps they assumed the aim of the dialogue was merely to provide a platform for Belarusian historians to engage in dialogue and thought that their active participation would have been interrupting or distracting. It could be that they felt that their knowledge on Belarusian history was so limited that they had nothing to say, or that the interpretation of Belarusian history was to be left to Belarusian historians.

All in all, the Nordic participants in general acted more like observers than participants. This clearly puzzled the Belarusian participants, who had clearly expected a more active stance from the Nordic historians. Moreover, as none of the Nordic historians were specialists in Nordic history, Belarusian participants' aspirations regarding comparative projects were not met.

#### 4.4. Role of HWB

A final point of challenge regards the organiser of the history dialogue, Historians without Borders in Finland. Perhaps surprisingly, neither Belarusian nor Nordic participants grasped the role nor the motivation of the organisation in organising the history dialogue. One of the Belarusian participants explicitly stated this confusion in the closing panel, by confessing: "I do not understand what is the point of HWB [as an organisation]. Is it to support joint initiatives? Or to enable networking?" Another participant added a question in the same vein: "Why is Belarus important for the Nordics?"

Although the Chairperson of the HWB in Finland did give a short presentation on the organisation, it appears that more time ought to have been dedicated to explaining what the HWB does and why. Moreover, the possibility of joining the HWB – an important aspect, one would assume – was introduced only briefly on the first day. As a result, one of the Belarusian survey respondents pointed out that they did not know how to join HWB. It would be interesting to know whether any of the dialogue's participants joined the organisation afterwards. While the HWB representatives perhaps consciously decided not to speak at length about setting up a branch of HWB in Belarus in order not to put pressure on the participants, it now seems that the suggestion of establishing HWB in Belarus was presented so swiftly it was hardly even noticed.

When explaining the role of the HWB as an organiser of the history dialogue, it came across as if the main function of the HWB was to facilitate the organisation of history dialogue events and to apply for external funding. What exactly motivates HWB in Finland to play a facilitating role and "combat the misuse of history", however, remained a puzzle.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

### 5.1. Clarify the Aims and Objectives of the History Dialogue

One of the major challenges that was present at every stage of the History Dialogue was the lack of understanding regarding the aims and the objectives of the event. While it is true that the dialogue is a dynamic event for which it is impossible to set a concrete goal, it would be beneficial to make sure that everyone involved in the event - participants, coordinators, moderators and interpreters – is aware of the general principles guiding the dialogue. Time permitting, it might be advisable to devote the very first session of the dialogue to the clarification of practical matters, assuming that in today's information over-load environment written guidelines are often either skimmed through in haste or outright ignored.

It is also necessary to consider the aims and objectives for the dialogue's aftermath, even if the history dialogue has been organised on a one-time basis. Considering that HWB in Finland facilitated and coordinated the preparation and implementation of the history dialogue, it was surprising that it had nothing to say after the event except for thanking the participants and making vague remarks about the potential continuation of the dialogue. Although some concrete ideas for continuing the dialogue were voiced by the participants during the last session of the dialogue and in the feedback forms, HWB in Finland has not responded to these suggestions in any tangible way. The abrupt exit of the organisation could potentially jeopardise the positive results generated by the dialogue, since it can be interpreted that the organisation is in no way interested in contributing to the dialogue's continuation in the future. It would thus be advisable for the HWB to continue its facilitating role for some time after the event, as well as to communicate what kind of engagement can be expected from it after the dialogue.

## 5.2. Introduce Mechanisms of Joint Ownership

Although participants of the history dialogue voiced their desire for future collaboration in concrete terms and suggested various ideas on how to continue the history dialogue in the future, it looks like none of the ideas have been yet put into practice. The reason for this lack of self-organisation could arguably lie in the asymmetrical ownership of the history dialogue project. Although the flexibility of the history dialogue enabled the participants to take some ownership of the event, it cannot be ignored that the Nordic–Belarusian History Dialogue was initiated by the HWB in Finland, funded by a grant awarded to the HWB, and organised by the HWB in collaboration with stakeholders at the University of Lund. As a result, the project was owned first and foremost by the HWB. The beneficiaries of the project – Belarusian historians, and to some extent their Nordic colleagues – had a passive role up until the end of the dialogue, which is perhaps why it was hard for them to envision a more active role after the dialogue.

Academic and policy literature on donor-recipient relations suggests that shared ownership is important for ensuring the project's effectiveness and sustainability. If the aim of the history dialogue is to establish lasting dialogue among the participants, not only would it be advisable to communicate this in advance, but also would it be good to make an effort to share ownership with the participants already during the planning and the implementation of the project. Once the participants consider themselves as co-owners of the history dialogue and deem the dialogue as valuable, the history dialogue would not be dependent on financial resources, but rather on the enthusiasm of the participants. In such an instance, the HWB in Finland could indeed play only a minor role as the facilitator.

An attempt to share ownership was arguably made by the HWB Finland when a representative of the organisation suggested that the participants set up a branch of the HWB in Belarus. However, since the suggestion was not explained in detail, there was confusion on why establishing the organisation would be advisable (knowing the Belarusian government's distaste for independent civil society associations). The author of this

report would be surprised to hear that without later persuasion from HWB Finland, a branch of HWB has indeed been established in Belarus.

### 5.3. Select the Participants Carefully and Train the Moderators

As the success of the history dialogue depends primarily on the people involved in it, it probably comes as no surprise that it is advisable to pay close attention to the selection and preparation of the participants and the moderators of event. Although the preparatory committee of the Nordic-Belarusian History Dialogue was aware of the divisions within Belarusian historians and sought to invite an equal number of participants from both sub-groups, due to last minute cancellations representatives of state institutions were greatly outnumbered by non-state affiliated historians. As a result, one of the participants was treated as an official representative of the Belarusian state institutions and was repeatedly picked on by those participants that have a critical attitude towards state institutions.

The preparatory committee also sought to ensure gender and age balance among participants. This goal was sufficiently met. The share of women was roughly one half. Although it might have been advisable to invite more junior scholars, it can be assumed that in work places that are characterised by rigid hierarchies, such as higher educational institutions, senior scholars are better placed to spread new ideas among their colleagues and students. Moreover, the participation of senior scholars functions as an important legitimising factor for the history dialogue.

It would be advisable to offer preparatory training for the moderators of the history dialogue. At the Nordic-Belarusian History Dialogue, moderators were primarily academic historians. Although some of them had understood the nature of the event and the way it differs from regular academic seminar work, others did not. It would be beneficial for the moderators to be aware of the aims and the objectives of the dialogue, as well as know how to steer the dialogue if a conflict arises or if participants are hesitant to talk. Arguably, the role of the moderator is even more significant than that of the participants.

## 6. APPENDICES

### APPENDIX I: PROGRAMME

#### Wednesday 22 January 2020

- 17:30 Bus from Kastrup Airport to the reception
- 18:00 Reception Hosted by the Nordic Council of Ministers
- 20:00 Transportation to Lund

#### Thursday 23 January 2020

- 10:00 Welcoming words
- 10:15 The Purpose and Aims of the Dialogue
- 10:30 1st Dialogue Session: *Making of Belarusian Identity*  
Comments and discussion on the presentation
- 11:30 Coffee
- 12:00 2nd Dialogue Session: *Belarusian History as Part of European History*  
Comments and discussion on the presentation
- 13:00 Lunch
- 14:00 3rd Dialogue Session: *“Belarusian History” in Contemporary Concept of Belarusian Historical Politics*  
Comments and discussion on the presentation
- 15:00 Coffee
- 15:30 4th Dialogue Session: *Belarus in Nordic and European Historiography*  
Comments and discussion on the presentation
- 16:30 Coffee
- 17:00 Discussion on the Day’s Presentation and Reflection on the Purpose of the Dialogue
- 19:00 Dinner

#### Friday 24 January 2020

- 10:00 Plenary Discussion on the Continuation on the Dialogue  
Feedback and Improvement Ideas and Suggestions from the Group
- 13:00 Lunch
- 15:00 Return to Kastrup Airport Copenhagen



Nordic Council  
of Ministers



**Nordic Council  
of Ministers**

This report was carried out with funding provided by the Nordic Council of Ministers.



HISTORIANS  
WITHOUT  
BORDERS

[HWB.fi](http://HWB.fi)