

**Question for written answer P-008959/2012
to the Commission
Rule 117
Justas Vincas Paleckis (S&D)**

Subject: EU-Belarus relations after the recent Belarusian parliamentary elections

The recent parliamentary elections in Belarus demonstrated that serious obstacles to a just democracy and human rights still exist. The estimated voter turnout of 74.3 % has been widely labelled as much too high, and reports of voter intimidation and repression of opposition parties have been widespread despite the presence of international observers. The OSCE stated that the elections had failed to meet international democratic standards. The targeted economic sanctions and travel bans imposed by the EU have only had a limited effect on the regime in Belarus. Experts have criticised the EU for engaging with Lukashenko in his games involving political prisoners, noting that by linking enhanced relations with the EU to the release of political prisoners, the Belarusian regime is avoiding having to satisfy conditions relating to democratic reform.

What steps does the Commission intend to take in order to shift current EU-Belarus relations towards a more open relationship that fosters the spread of democratic standards in Belarus?