

**LIETUVOS RESPUBLIKOS SEIMO PIRMININKĖ
SPEAKER OF THE SEIMAS OF THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA**

H.E. Mr Jerzy BUZEK
President of the European Parliament

Vilnius, 5 January 2011

Dear Mr President,

Due to the recent political developments in Belarus, we are greatly concerned about further possibility of democratic changes in this country. It is obvious that while shaping its policy vis-à-vis Belarus the European Union should focus on actions and projects aimed at promotion of democracy and protection of human rights.

In this context we attach a great significance to the European Humanities University (EHU), which is one of the most successful projects of democracy promotion supported by the European Commission and EU member states. The EHU was closed down by the authorities in Minsk in 2004 and now it continues its mission in exile in Vilnius. Today, the EHU is the only Belarusian university that offers the opportunity for approximately 2000 young Belarusians to study in an academic environment free of any discrimination. So far, the EHU can boast of 232 MA graduates in four groups and 264 BA graduates in two groups. The majority of EHU graduates tend to return to Belarus.

Lithuania has been supporting the EHU since the very beginning and has committed to continue its financial and accommodation support. Last year, Lithuania's contribution made through the EHU Trust Fund (set up under the initiative of the European Commission) amounted to 200 000 euros. Similarly, this year Lithuania is going to support the University with the allocation of the same amount.

The current political situation in Belarus is still not favourable for the University to be located in its home country. Furthermore, the recent presidential election and subsequent events do not indicate any positive progress in the area of human rights. As you may already know, a group of EHU students and teachers have been detained in Minsk following their participation in the demonstrations related to the presidential election. Continuous repressive measures taken against young people in Belarus justify our commitment to the EHU.

The European Commission is one of the principle donors contributing to the long-term sustainability of the EHU. Since 2008, the support to the Belarusian university in Vilnius has been channelled through the EHU Trust Fund with financial assistance allocated through the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights.

We are well aware that you, Mr President, have visited the EHU and expressed your support to the University on several occasions and that last year you made a personal contribution to the University by donating your Prize awarded by the German Federal State of North Rhine-Westphalia for your achievements in life. Therefore, we would like to ask you, Dear Mr President, to encourage the European Commission to continue its financial support to the EHU by contributing to the EHU Trust Fund.

A commitment to further support the University in the same manner in these difficult times is a strong signal to all, including other potential donors, that we are not indifferent to the future of Belarus and its people since the EHU trains potential future leaders of the Belarusian society.

Taking this opportunity I express to you, Mr President, my profound respect.

Irena Degutienė