

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

2004



2009

Session document

26.3.2009

B6-0177/2009

MOTION FOR A RESOLUTION

to wind up the debate on statements by the Council and Commission

pursuant to Rule 103(2) of the Rules of Procedure

by

- Jan Marinus Wiersma and Justas Vincas Paleckis, on behalf of the PSE Group
- Jacek Protasiewicz, José Ignacio Salafranca Sánchez-Neyra and Elmar Brok, on behalf of the PPE-DE Group
- Janusz Onyszkiewicz, on behalf of the ALDE Group
- Konrad Szymański, Wojciech Roszkowski, Hanna Foltyn-Kubicka, Ewa Tomaszewska and Adam Bielan, on behalf of the UEN Group
- Milan Horáček and Elisabeth Schroedter, on behalf of the Verts/ALE Group

on bi-annual evaluation of the EU-Belarus dialogue

European Parliament resolution on bi-annual evaluation of the EU-Belarus dialogue

The European Parliament,

- having regard to its previous resolutions on the situation in Belarus, in particular that of 15 January 2009¹ on the EU strategy toward Belarus,
 - having regard to the GAERC conclusions on Belarus of 16 March 2009 further suspending the visa-ban sanctions for Belarussian officials, including President Alexander Lukashenko, and extending the restrictive measures,
 - having regard to the Commission Communication to the European Parliament and the Council of 3 December 2008 concerning the Eastern Partnership Initiative (COM(2008)823),
 - having regard to the Commission statement of 21 November 2006 on the European Union's readiness to renew its relationship with Belarus and its people within the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP),
 - having regard to Rule 103(2) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Council, in its above-mentioned conclusions of 16 March 2009, confirmed its readiness to deepen its relations with Belarus subject to progress made by Belarus on the path towards democracy, human rights and the rule of law and to assist Belarus in attaining these objectives,
- B. whereas the Council, after evaluating developments in Belarus following the decision on the temporary suspension of the travel restrictions imposed on certain officials of Belarus taken in October 2008, in accordance with the terms set out in Council Common Position 2008/844/CFSP, has decided to maintain the suspension of the application of these travel restrictions for a nine-month period,
- C. whereas the Council decided to extend for one year the restrictive measures against certain Belarussian officials provided for by Common Position 2006/276/CFSP,
- D. whereas the EU continues to be concerned about the human rights situation in Belarus and the recent cases of violations in this area,
- E. whereas, in response to the positive steps taken by Belarus, the Commission has already entered into an intensified dialogue with that country in fields such as energy, the environment, customs, transport and food safety and confirmed its readiness to further expand the scope of those technical talks, which are beneficial for both sides,
- F. whereas the Council included Belarus in its 'Eastern Partnership Initiative', which the

¹ P6_TA-PROV(2009)0027.

Commission launched to step up cooperation with a number of Eastern European countries,

- G. whereas the Belarussian Minister for Foreign Affairs, Syarhei Martynau, has declared that 'Belarus has a positive view on participation in the Eastern Partnership Initiative' and added that Belarus intends to participate in this initiative,
- H. whereas the Committee to Protect Journalists called on the Belarussian authorities to renew the accreditation of Andrzej Poczobut, a local correspondent for Poland's largest daily, Gazeta Wyborcza, and to investigate recent harassment of him and his family in the western city of Hrodna, due to his criticism of the policies of the government; whereas on 17 March Andrzej Poczobut was fined € 148 for reporting on the meeting of the Union of Poles in Belarus,
1. Supports the decision of the Council to extend for one year the restrictive measures against certain Belarussian officials and at the same time to maintain the suspension of the application of travel restrictions imposed on certain officials of Belarus for a nine-month period;
 2. Continues to be concerned about the human rights situation in Belarus and the recent cases of violations in this area; looks forward to the launching of a Human Rights Dialogue with Belarus in the near future;
 3. Welcomes the increased high-level EU-Belarus dialogue, including bilateral contacts, and the intensified technical cooperation initiated by the Commission, as a way of building mutual understanding and providing an opportunity to address the parties' concerns and issues of common interest;
 4. Believes that intensification of the political dialogue between the EU and Belarus must be conditional on the lifting of restrictions on freedom and cessation of violence against participants in opposition protests and human rights activists; calls, in this context, for the immediate release of entrepreneurs Mikalai Autukhovich, Yury Liavonau and Uladzimir Asipenka and youth opposition activist Artsiom Dubski;
 5. Welcomes and further encourages the continuation of Belarus's cooperation with the OSCE/ODIHR on electoral legislation;
 6. Insists that the democratic opposition of Belarus and civil society must be included in the dialogue between the EU and Belarus;
 7. Calls on the Government of Belarus to use the next nine months to demonstrate substantial progress in the following areas:
 - reform of Belarus's electoral legislation to provide guaranteed representation of opposition members on election commissions at all levels and to ensure the transparency and accountability of the vote count;
 - providing equal rights to all media outlets by lifting a ban on dissemination of independent print media through state-owned distribution networks of 'Sayuzdruk' (system

of kiosks) and the Belarussian state postal service 'Belposhta'; abolishing Articles 367, 368, 369 and 369-1 of the Criminal Code, which are often misused to persecute journalists for their professional activity; simplifying the procedure for obtaining accreditation for all journalists, including official representatives of foreign media outlets;

- guaranteeing freedom of association and assembly by abolishing Article 193-1 of the Criminal Code providing for criminal responsibility for activity on behalf of unregistered public associations, political parties and foundations; safeguarding freedom of religion;
 - guaranteeing political rights and freedoms by discontinuing the practice of politically motivated dismissals from jobs and universities; stopping persecution for avoiding military service of students expelled from universities for their civic stance; reviewing the recent cases of the forcible army conscription of several young activists, such as Franak Viačorka, Ivan Šyla and Zmiter Fedaruk;
8. Calls on the Government of Belarus to immediately establish a moratorium on all death sentences and executions with a view to abolishing the death penalty (as provided for by UN General Assembly Resolution 62/149 of 18 December 2007), commute without delay the sentences of all prisoners currently on death row to terms of imprisonment, bring domestic legislation into line with the country's obligations under international human rights treaties and ensure that the internationally recognised standards for fair trials are rigorously respected;
 9. Calls on the Belarussian authorities to recognise the Union of Poles led by Angelika Borys, who was re-elected as its Chairwoman at the Congress of the Union of Poles on 15 March 2009;
 10. Should Belarus fulfil the above-mentioned criteria during the period of nine months, calls on the Council and Commission to consider lifting the travel ban on a permanent basis, as well as taking measures to facilitate economic and social progress and speeding up the process of Belarus's reintegration into the European family of democratic nations;
 11. Calls on the Council and Commission to take further steps to liberalise visa procedures for Belarussian citizens, as such action is crucial to fulfilling the main goal of EU policy towards Belarus, namely making Belarus part of European and regional processes and rendering the democratisation process in the country irreversible; urges them, in this context, to consider the scope for reducing the cost of visas for Belarussian citizens entering the Schengen Area and simplifying the procedure for obtaining them;
 12. Calls on the Commission to make full and effective use of the possibilities to support civil society and democratic developments in Belarus via the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, EIDHR; urges the Commission to regularly and fully inform Parliament how the funding from the EIDHR is spent;
 13. Calls on the Commission to grant financial support to the independent Belarussian television channel Belsat, and to urge the Belarussian Government to officially register Belsat in Belarus; calls on the Belarussian Government, as a sign of goodwill and positive change, to enable the Belarussian 'European Humanities University' in exile in Vilnius (Lithuania) to return legally to Belarus and re-establish itself under suitable conditions for

its future development in Minsk, in particular by allowing the EHU to re-establish its library in Minsk this year by providing the premises and creating the conditions to allow the extensive collections in Belarussian, Russian, English, German and French to be open and accessible to all;

14. Calls on the Council and Commission to consider measures to improve the business climate, trade, investment, energy and transport infrastructure and cross-border cooperation between the EU and Belarus, so as to contribute to the well-being and prosperity of the citizens of Belarus and enhance their ability to communicate with and freely travel to the EU;
15. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the parliaments and governments of the Member States, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Parliamentary Assemblies of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, the Secretariat of the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Parliament and Government of Belarus.