

WRITTEN QUESTION P-0603/06
by Barbara Kudrycka (PPE-DE)
to the Commission

Subject: Reservations concerning the call for tenders for a broadcasting project for Belarus

I would be grateful if the Commission could clear up certain issues surrounding the recent decisions in the call for tenders for entities to broadcast TV and radio programmes for the benefit of Belarus (EuropeAid/122075/C/SV/BY).

Was the Commission aware when it was assessing the members of the newly-formed consortium led by Media Consulta that the Polish Government does not provide support for the activities of the organisation European Radio for Belarus, financially or otherwise (see CIR statement)? Furthermore, European Radio for Belarus has not been awarded a licence to make radio programmes nor a broadcasting frequency by Poland's National Radio and Television Council. It seems that the Commission is in possession of different information in this regard. The statement by the Commission spokeswoman, Emma Udwin, on 26 January 2006 referred to the Polish Government's support for European Radio for Belarus, including of a financial nature.

How can the Commission justify the legality of the change to the composition of the consortium, which appeared on the published shortlist as Media Consulta (Germany) and Center TV (Russia) while in the winning consortium Center TV has been replaced by other participants: European Radio for Belarus (Poland), Radio Baltic Waves (Lithuania) and RTVi (Russia)?

During the tender procedure, the consortium consisting of Telewizja Polska and Radio Białystok asked about the possibility of taking on new partners (including subcontractors) and was informed by the Commission that no change would be permitted to the composition and identity of bidders (Instructions to Tenders, item 3d). In view of this interpretation of the rules, the consortium abandoned its plans to include the Belarusian Association of Journalists (awarded the Sakharov Prize by the European Parliament), with which it is working closely on current programmes.

It is unclear how the Media Consulta consortium will win the trust of the Belarusian public when the level of participation in the consortium of journalists from Belarus, including those who are citizens of EU Member States such as Poland, is very low.

In view of the above discrepancies, can the Commission clarify whether there has been a case of disinformation, whether the equal treatment of bidders has been fully guaranteed and whether the project selected is the one with the most credibility among Belarusian society?