

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT EU-BELARUS RELATIONS

#easternpartnership



Over the past three years, there has been some progress in EU-Belarus relations. Belarus has been participating actively in the multilateral formats of the Eastern Partnership. The bilateral relationship will be strengthened through the EU-Belarus Partnership Priorities, which are currently being negotiated. This will set the strategic framework for cooperation in the coming years. Tangible steps taken by Belarus to respect universal freedoms, the rule of law, and human rights, including the freedoms of speech, expression and of media, and labour rights, will remain fundamental criteria for shaping the EU's policy towards Belarus. The EU also supports Belarus' World Trade Organisation (WTO) accession process as this will contribute to the creation of a more predictable and stable business environment in the country. Negotiations on a Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreement with Belarus are also ongoing.

STRONGER ECONOMY

Since the EU lifted most of the restrictive measures against Belarus in February 2016, the EU has supported a number of key measures to help further develop the country's economy:

- ✓ **Cooperation with international financial institutions** such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD); a number of large-scale infrastructure projects are under consideration for funding.
- ✓ Enhanced **preparations for World Trade Organisation (WTO) accession** – the **removal of textile quotas for exports**.
- ✓ The **Dialogue on Economic and Financial issues** resumed in April 2018 in order to exchange views on the economic and financial situation and outlook in Belarus.
- ✓ Under the **EU4Business** initiative, which supports private sector development, **900 enterprises** have so far benefitted from loans, trainings and advice; **3,900 new jobs were created**, helping Small & Medium Enterprises to grow and increase trade opportunities.
- ✓ The first Twinning project in Belarus has started between the **National Bank of Belarus** and the Bundesbank, together with the Central Banks of Poland and Lithuania.

STRONGER CONNECTIVITY

- ✓ In June 2017, Belarus joined the **Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P)**. This Trust Fund, managed by the EBRD, supports loans for municipal sector projects on energy efficiency and the environment across the Eastern Partnership countries, and will provide Belarus with gradual access to €10 million for key projects in energy efficiency and environmental protection.
- ✓ The Strengthening Air Quality and Environmental Management programme backs Belarus efforts to modernise air quality monitoring and contributes **to improved air quality in Belarus**.

STRONGER GOVERNANCE

- ✓ **The EU-Belarus Coordination Group** meets twice a year at the level of senior officials. This policy dialogue forum steers cooperation between the EU and Belarus and oversees further development of relations.
- ✓ The annual **EU-Belarus Human Rights Dialogue** provides a forum for discussion on the human rights situation in Belarus and joint steps to be taken in this area. The EU remains committed to cooperate with Belarus to enhance democratic governance and develop institutions responsive to citizens' needs.
- ✓ Taking into account remaining important challenges in this area, the EU regularly raises issues related to freedom of assembly and association, freedom of speech and media as well as fundamental labour rights, with the Belarusian authorities at all levels. The European Union has raised its strong opposition to capital punishment, which is still in use in Belarus, and has called for a **moratorium on the death penalty**.
- ✓ In October 2016, Belarus adopted the **National Human Rights Action Plan** which underpins the process of domestic reforms and legislative amendments in respect of human rights and fundamental values. The EU is supporting its implementation, including for continued dialogue between the Government and civil society.

STRONGER SOCIETY

- ✓ After the EU-Belarus negotiations on a **Mobility Partnership** were concluded in 2016, the first high-level meeting took place in November 2017. The first cooperation project to increase Belarus' capacity in view of the future Readmission Agreement with the EU was launched in 2018. Negotiations on **Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements** are underway.
- ✓ **Erasmus+** gave the possibility to **almost 1,000 students and academic staff from Belarus** to study or teach in the EU countries between 2015 and 2017.
- ✓ Over **2,100 Belarusians have benefitted from mobility exchanges** through the Mobility Scheme for Targeted People-to-People-Contacts (MOST) programme offering short-term cultural exchange for professionals.
- ✓ Over **2,300 young people and youth workers** from Belarus have been involved in joint exchanges, volunteering and capacity-building projects.

IN FIGURES

The EU is Belarus' 2nd trading partner with almost a

1/3

share in its overall trade.

In 2017, trade between the EU and Belarus increased by

+19%

compared to the previous year.

From 2014-2017, the EU's assistance to Belarus under the European Neighbourhood Instrument amounted to

€91.5 million

NUCLEAR SAFETY

The respect of the highest nuclear safety standards is a key priority for the EU, especially since a nuclear power plant is being constructed so close to the EU border (in Astraviec, Belarus). It is important for the European Union that nuclear safety is ensured beyond its own borders, and Belarus should continue to cooperate constructively with the relevant international authorities.

CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

The number of local authorities joining the Covenant of Mayors initiative has doubled in the past year, reaching 45 signatories. This demonstrates a high interest, motivation and capability for local level action in Belarus to cut CO2 emissions and save energy.



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