

BELARUS - - OUR NEW NEIGHBOUR

CONFERENCE REPORT



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Prague, March 20, 2004

Senate of the Parliament of the Czech Republic



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Belarus – Our New Neighbour

Conference Report

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The texts in this publication were not authorized and were abridged by the editors. The texts may include transliterations from Belarusian Cyrillic spelling. For example, all utilisation of the name Miensk – rather than Minsk – is an intentional result of such transliteration.

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CONTENTS

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Message from the President of the European Parliament Mr. Pat Cox	7
Václav Havel on Belarus	9
Executive Summary	13
Conference Programme	17
Opening Speeches	19
First Session: Belarus between East and West?	23
Second Session: Enlarged EU – Enlarged possibilities...	
... of Supporting pro-democratic Forces in Belarus?	31
Europe has More Perspective Partners in Belarus...	
... than its Government (Policy Paper)	37
Youth-related European Union Programmes in Belarus (Policy Paper)	41
Organisers	45
Resumes	49

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT MR. PAT COX

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I regret that I am unable to be with you today, to support your welcome efforts in promoting the 'Wider Europe' initiative and closer dialogue with our new neighbours. 2004 will be a decisive year for Europe. The enlargement on the 1st May, to a continent-wide Union of 25 members, will bring with it a new Eastern dimension, and extend the European Union to the borders of Belarus. Already at the European Council in Copenhagen, which concluded the accession negotiations under the banner of 'One Europe', the Union took cognizance of the concomitant need to develop a long-term approach to promoting democratic and economic reform in the

new neighbouring countries, including Belarus. In the near future, it will lead to the adoption of a new policy framework, now known as 'Wider Europe'. I and the European Parliament which I lead, fully endorse this development and support initiatives which deepen cooperative ties and contribute to cross border and mutually beneficial economic development. It has nevertheless been a source of sadness to me, during my mandate as President, that the authorities in Belarus have continued on the path of isolation, and have persisted in their violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms, including freedom of expression and of the media.

International conferences such as yours can help. Your deliberations can be a source of hope and, however indirectly, can contribute to the consolidation of democratic forces for change in Belarus. The development of practical cooperation projects, which I am sure you will call for – with Belaruaisn civil society, democratic forces, NGOs, mass media, youth organisations and local authorities – have an important role to play in this regard. The Europe we are building is one based on shared values of pluralist democracy, freedom, justice and solidarity. Promoting and encouraging reform in our new neighbour Belarus can only lead to better understanding, greater prosperity and enhanced security and stability.

I remain hopeful. I hope that, in the words of the Belarusian poet Janka Kupala, in his powerful poem 'Young Belarus', one day soon Belrus will come forth and take the place among the community of nations that its people deserve. I commend to the participants from Belarus here today that they continue their peaceful endeavour to build a free and democratic society in their country. I wish you success for this conference.

VÁCLAV HAVEL ON BELARUS

//

Eight countries of the former communist bloc are about to become new members of the European Union. Something that hardly anyone could have imagined until recently will thus become reality. Countries ruled just fifteen years ago by totalitarian regimes suppressing basic human rights and freedoms; countries, whose fate was dictated by a narrow group of people and a governing party backed by armed forces, will now become a part of the first multinational community based on truly democratic principles, sharing common values as well as the responsibility for the future of the whole continent. The precondition for the states of Central and Eastern

Europe to apply for membership in the Union was their adoption of the principles of democracy and the rule of law.

One of the eastern neighbours of the enlarged European Union will be Belarus, ruled by Alexander Lukashenko. Ten years of his autocratic reign has brought the country into deep political isolation. This isolation, however, should not include those who wish to cooperate with Europe.

One of the hallmarks of a regime lacking in freedom is the resignation of citizens from public activity and their withdrawal in face of any expression of concern or responsibility for public affairs. This is the situation one sees in Belarus, where citizens are exposed on a daily basis to violations of their basic rights, such as the right to freely disseminate information or express themselves. The criminalization of free-thinking Belarusians and their persecution at work or at school are facts of life and so are arbitrary changes in legislation that suit the whims of the administration. The acceptance of repression and corruption as a social-political standard in unfree conditions leads to the pervasive attitude that everyone ought to care primarily about his own good; that public activity is foolish, and the criminalization or even disappearance of fellow citizens is just a consequence of their carelessness. However, the external view of Belarus as a society of citizens resigned to such a fate is balanced by a number of activists and groups. These people are well-known by Lukashenko to be the greatest opponents of corruption and the germs of truly free decision-making that may gradually develop into free elections. In other words, a free future for Belarus depends on the present activity of independent civil initiatives.

Belarus apparently focuses its attention on traditionally close ties with Russia and is not much concerned about Europe. Nevertheless, there is an upcoming generation that sees its future precisely in the European Union. It includes mainly those who try to point out corruption and the lies and distortions in official information, regardless of their own comfort and often even their safety. Similar to the Czechoslovak, Polish, or Hungarian dissent during Communism, this is a minority, the influence of which may seem to be marginal and its chances of achieving better conditions next to nil. Perhaps this is the main source of the Europeans' misgivings, scepticism, and sense of helplessness about the fate of the Belarusians, their new neighbours.

Up to now Europe has primarily coped with the existence of Lukashenko's regime through criticism and political isolation, but the time has come to lend support to those who appreciate Europe's cooperation and partnership. Quite clearly, in the case of Belarus this is not the official political representation but the democratic opposition, independent initiatives, students, and citizens, for whom a democratic Belarus is equal to a European Belarus.

It is my deepest conviction that the Europeans should not only isolate official Belarusian representatives but should also make available as many of their programmes and funds as possible to those who are keen to cooperate – despite

possible hindrances from the side of the ruling regime. Only in this way will there be a chance for a change in the local conditions and the establishment of prerequisites for free elections. Whether the Belarusians then decide to join Europe or not would be at their discretion, which should be respected by all. However, the door must remain open.

I believe that the future of Belarus is firmly linked with the future of Europe, as is the future of Europe with the future of a democratic and independent Belarus. I believe that partnership with the pro-European part of the Belarusian society may lead to something hardly anyone could imagine today – that Belarus will become another of the former communist bloc countries that experiences a triumph of democracy and becomes a part of a united Europe.

Article for leading European dailies was published at the end of March 2004.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The conference on 'Belarus – our New Neighbour' held on 20 March 2004 in the Czech Senate, Prague, reflects the importance attached by new EU Central and Eastern European member states to Belarus. The conference emphasised that this ascension into the EU does not connote an abandoning of Belarus by its Central and Eastern European neighbours. Rather, such ascension may instead provide a strong position through which to effectively support democratic transition in Belarus, through increasing European awareness and interest in their new common neighbour, and through the active encouragement of EU policy towards Belarus.

This conference brought together politicians, non-governmental organisations and grassroots activists from the Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Belarus. The co-operation in organising this conference between the Association for International Affairs, People in Need, and the Czech Senate highlights the extensive commitment to communication and cooperation with communities and opposition politicians in Belarus.

The conference was a time of deliberation and debate concerning the role of new member states in defining EU policy towards Belarus and its eastern neighbours in general. It was an opportunity to listen to first-hand accounts of present day Belarus from both opposition politicians and representatives of institutions of civil society; to share the experiences and advice of those countries with recent experience of democratic reform; and to discuss the most effective and suitable means through which to support the Belarusian people.

Participants in the conference helped provide an insight into the present-day deficit of democracy in Belarus. Belarusian opposition politicians and activists described the increasingly aggressive repressions by Lukashenko's regime, as well as the high level of despondency amongst the people. Yet recently formed political coalitions, combined with a growing number of young, democratically minded people elected as local representatives, provide grounds for restrained optimism. Representatives from neighbouring countries described their unsuccessful experiences with the Belarusian government, and their positive interactions with the Belarusian people. Many saw a certain semblance between present-day Belarus and their own countries under Communist rule in the 80s, and consequently stressed the collective responsibility of Eastern European countries in assisting those suffering under an authoritarian regime.

Participants maintained that the EU must work to isolate the Belarusian government without isolating Belarusian society, and debated the actions that may make this goal attainable. Many voiced the fear that any policy of total isolation may disproportionately affect the Belarusian people, and may also result in the separation of Europe into two distinctly separate systems. Of particular gravity and contention was the debate concerning the plausibility of eventual ascension by Belarus into the EU. Although many participants stressed the function of an offer of EU entry as a tool through which to counter the isolation of the Belarusian people, and to support their pro-European aspirations; others stressed the improbability of such an offer. There was unanimous agreement that new Central and Eastern European member states can play an important role in the future of Belarus, by using their experience to influence and define future EU policy towards its neighbours. By sharing their experience regarding Belarus, and their own experience of democratic transformation, new member states can improve the debate on Belarus, and thus help raise awareness throughout Europe. New member states must unite and collectively send a clear message to the Belarusian people by pressing for clear EU

strategy and a comprehensive action plan that details practical measures regarding both policy and the supporting of civil society.

Supporting institutions of civil society and political opposition was also considered as a key aspect in assisting democratic reform in Belarus. In addition to the creation of EU policy, a system of direct assistance must be created with which to support independent initiatives and the Belarusian people. Projects of practical co-operation must be substantially extended, in particular study trips and exchange programmes for students and the civil society professions, including the legal and medical spheres, NGOs and local representatives. In addition to the support of civil society institutions, some participants stressed the need for simultaneous reinforcement in the political domain. The EU must help provide the Belarusian people with the opportunity to make decisions concerning their own future, by ensuring free and fair elections, without repression, discrimination or manipulation. Achieving this requires: external election observations, support of democratic coalitions, opposition politicians and activists; and the support and reinforcement of institutions of civil society, including a free media, both externally and internally, and a self-governing legal sphere.

The level of Russian participation in the democratisation of Belarus was also extensively debated. Russian interests in Belarus, both economic and political, were dissected and analysed, as were the consequences of such interest on the country. Some participants underlined the lack of true democratic values and ideals in Russia, and consequently it's inability to participate in assisting Belarus along the road to democratic transformation. Other participants, however, emphasised that due to Russia's tight hold on Belarus, any move towards democratisation would have to be taken with Russia's consent, if not their participation. Participants also detailed Lukashenko's present uncertainty regarding unity with Russia, which may have major consequences concerning Belarus's position between East and West, and concerning Russia's attitude towards the formulation of a relationship between the EU and Belarus. Yet despite debate concerning the level of Russian participation, there was unanimous agreement that decisions concerning the future of Belarus must be made in Miensk by the Belarusian people, rather than by Moscow.

This publication consists of keynote addresses, including those by former president Václav Havel, delivered at the conference, and a summary of all sessions and discussions.

CONFERENCE PROGRAMME

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9:30

OPENING SESSION

Opening remarks:

Mr. Petr Pithart, President, Senate of the Czech Republic

Mr. Šimon Pánek, co-founder, People in Need, Czech Republic

Mr. Jan Šnidauf, Vice President, Association for International Affairs, Czech Republic

Opening speeches:

Mr. Václav Havel, Former President of the Czech Republic

Ms. Ivonka Survilla, President, Council of the Belarusian Democratic Republic (in exile)

Mr. Jan Ruml, Vice President, Senate of the Czech Republic

10:30 COFFEE BREAK

11:00 FIRST SESSION: 'BELARUS BETWEEN EAST AND WEST?'

Moderator:

Mr. Jan Marian, Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung

Speakers:

Mr. Ales Janukievič, Deputy Chairman, Party Belarusian Popular Front

Mr. Petr Mareš, Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Damian Gadzinowski, representing Mr. Bogdan Klich, President, Institute for Strategic Studies and Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Affairs, Poland

Mr. Ivars Pundurs, Undersecretary of State, Latvia

Mr. Jonas Cekuolis, Head, Lithuanian Delegation to Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe, Lithuania

Mr. Jan Marinus Wiersma, Chairman, Delegation for relations with Belarus, European Parliament

13:00 LUNCH

15:00 SECOND SESSION: 'ENLARGED EU – ENLARGED POSSIBILITIES OF SUPPORTING PRO-DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN BELARUS?'

Moderator:

Ms. Eva Palatová, Head, Independent Division on European Affairs, Senate Chancellery, Czech Republic

Speakers:

Mr. Pavol Demeš, Director, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Transatlantic Center for CEE, Slovakia

Ms. Iryna Vidanava, Editor in Chief, Studentskaya Dumka magazine, Belarus

Mr. Ales Michalevič, Co-Chairman, Association of Democratic Local Deputies, Belarus

Mr. Paweł Kazanecki, President, East European Democratic Centre, Poland

OPENING SPEECHES

// VÁCLAV HAVEL

Former President of the Czech Republic

Countries which had to endure years of totalitarian regimes should be especially sensitive towards all types, and even signs, of totalitarian methods of governing. Even more awareness is demanded from those who have personally experienced the importance of international support and solidarity. It is not true that we live in an ideal democracy and are therefore eligible to criticise others. Like all democratic countries in the world we face the stormy phenomena of modern civilisation in ad-

dition to post-communist features. If we comment the situation in other countries and criticise their governments we must at the same time be prepared for criticism which may be directed towards our own system. There is a difference between solidarity and arbitrary advice as to what to do.

I have the impression that the people in this country follow the situation in Burma, Cuba and many other countries and display their support for those who stand up for human rights and the revival of basic civil liberties. A particular point of interest is, or should be, the situation in Belarus, a country which is not far from us both geographically as in regards to its fate and problems.

It is immensely important for Belarus to exist under truly free conditions and build not only formal but really democratic institutions based on a developing civil society as is the case in other post-communist countries. That those in power are tempted to manipulate their people with the help of the media is one example of what has to be confronted very carefully.

We do not have the right to tell Belarus whether it should belong to the East, the West, the North or the South. It has to decide this of its own free will, democratically, without an authoritarian leader. Our obligation is to do what is in our power to help create a situation in which free decision-making will be possible. If it chooses to become part of an integrated and united Europe, it will again be our obligation to do what we can to support this decision.

Let us hope, that those supporting freedom in Belarus will not have to wait long.

// IVONKA SURVILLA

President of the Council of Belarusian Democratic Republic (in exile)

I would like to express my deep gratitude to the Senate and all organisers of this event dedicated to the European future of Belarus. Blessed with an excellent geo-political situation at the crossroads of Europe, Belarus has not yet had the chance to benefit from this advantage. On the contrary, it has made our country become one of the most coveted, and therefore vulnerable, places in Europe. The Soviet system has left our long-suffering, Chernobyl-stricken people with one single concern: their physical survival. The instinct of survival has developed to a degree unknown to many nations. Thanks to their survival skills, the Belarusian people continue to exist, but are hesitant to exert themselves in the face of the challenges they endure in daily life, and the dangers they face from a government that violently discourages freedom of speech. This

may be why the development of democratic values in Belarus, although present, seems at times stalled. However, our young generation admires Western values, and our intelligentsia, who has always looked to the West, is ready to defend their European heritage.

Every young Belarusian should have the possibility to study without being brainwashed and without being forced to become a member of Lukashenko's youth organisation. Freedom and democracy are concepts that are learned, nurtured and fostered. As such, they require exposure, free thinking, and the conviction to generate change. Every Belarusian should have the opportunity to learn first hand about the concept of freedom. Our young people need the opportunity to study abroad, our decision-makers need Western experience in the fields of economy, education, health and ecology, our freedom fighters need help to inform our people of such basic things as human rights. The members of the European Union will, perhaps unknowingly, contribute to the cultivated isolation of Belarus by closing the borders between Belarus and the European Union. The future of Belarus is not to be halfway between Europe and Russia, it is not a no man's land, nor a consolation prize in political negotiation. Belarus is a nation whose geography, history and identity define its place and whose potential as a contributor to the future of Europe rests in the political decisions of our time. If I were to make one request today, it would be to ask you to become participants in the defence of Belarus by insuring the country remains open to Europe, with the hope that Europe will remain open to Belarus.

// JAN RUML

Vice President of the Senate of the Czech Republic

I visited Belarus for the first time, and also for the last time, in 2000 as a member of a delegation of the Senate of the Czech Parliament. Since then, the authorities of Belarus have refused to issue me a visa. One could see similarities with the Czechoslovakia of the 1980s: a determined but fragmented opposition, individual attacks by the regime against dissidents, the hunger of young people for freedom and democracy, strong and merciless repressions, the mockery of elections in different guises, the evident illegitimacy of Lukashenko's regime, and simultaneously, completely passive rural areas. Repressions by the Lukashenko regime are escalating: independent press and NGOs have been annihilated; the Jakub Kolas National Humanities Lyceum, the only Belarusian language secondary school, has been shut

down; dissidents and the public are being arrested and imprisoned for simply attending street gatherings. Yet there is reason for hope. Despite the falsification of municipal elections, several dozens of young democratically-minded opposition representatives managed to become municipal officials. In addition, opposition coalitions have been formed.

I would like to mention three very interesting topics which represent issues frequently discussed in Belarus. The first is the dialogue with undemocratic power. Based on my own experience, I believe that the only possible form of a dialogue is to remind Lukashenko's regime of violations of all international commitments which Belarus has undertaken in the area of human rights and freedoms. Any other type of dialogue could result in further fragmentation of efforts.

The second issue concerns the question of isolation or non-isolation of Lukashenko's regime. We must insist on all resolutions condemning this oppressive regime and undemocratic election mockeries, and a position of no negotiation with Lukashenko and his representatives. However, isolation of Lukashenko's regime must not mean isolation of the Belarusian nation. On the contrary, here we should open up all channels, both informational and personal, so that the space for free dialogue with the people of Belarus is as wide and open as possible. Relations between Belarus and Russia represents the third topic. It is said that the planned union of Russia and Belarus can bring democracy to Belarus. I wish to dispute this, as I believe democracy in Russia is formal and authoritarian, rather than a material democracy based on a certain value system. If the efforts of the people of Belarus and the international community are to result in Belarus becoming a member of NATO and the EU, the road to democracy, freedom and prosperity must be based on traditional Euro-Atlantic values, respecting a broad range of human rights.

Let's have public hearings in our parliaments and let's adopt clear resolutions. Whenever possible, visit Belarus, meet the opposition, provide scholarships and invite the opposition representatives of Belarus to our own countries. Let's activate the international community and its bodies to become more involved in the support of democracy and freedom in Belarus, and create committees for a free Belarus. Let's send material assistance to our persecuted colleagues, IT equipment in particular. And finally, let's hang out the banned national flag of Belarus on the occasion of the independence day of Belarus, celebrated on the 25th March.

FIRST SESSION

// BELARUS BETWEEN EAST
AND WEST?

// JAN MARIAN

Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung

Opening the first session, Mr. Marian described it as an opportunity to discuss a wide range of issues that fit under the broad title 'Belarus: Between East and West'. In particular, he introduced two fundamental areas of interest that such a title generates. Firstly, the current situation in Belarus as seen by Belarusian politicians and activists, its neighbouring countries, and its neighbour as of 1st May, the European Union, and secondly, issues generated by the extension of the EU, such as new common borders, developing European policy and contacts with the regime.

// ALES JANUKIEVIČ

Deputy Chairman, Party Belarusian Popular Front

Mr. Janukievič focused on two main issues: the political climate in Belarus, in particular detailing the creation of the 'People's Coalition 5+'; and the role of new eastern EU members in supporting a change to the political climate in Belarus, thus enabling its people to decide the political future of their country.

Mr. Janukievič briefly described Belarusian society's increasing awareness of the regime. He outlined recent opinion polls, carried out by Baltic Surveys, in which 80 % of Belarusians supported state independence, and more than 65 % would vote for joining the EU. Although support for Lukashenko was found to be only 20–25 %, support for opposition forces is of a similarly low level. As a solution to such fragmented support, Mr. Janukievič outlined the creation of 'People's Coalition 5+' that has united the five main democratic opposition political parties, plus Belarusian NGOs, trade unions and youth organisations. This coalition has created a common list of candidates for the next parliamentary elections in autumn 2004, and has also helped create regional coalitions. Mr. Janukievič was optimistic about the future of the coalition, as 'through this coalition, we believe that working together we can change the situation in our country and build an independent, democratic, strong and prosperous Belarus, a Belarus which will one day become a member of NATO and the EU'.

Mr. Janukievič discussed the central role he believed the new eastern members to the EU could play in the political future of Belarus, by encouraging both the formulation of EU strategy concerning relations with Belarus and the sending of a clear message to Belarusian society that their country may become a member of European Union, after fulfilling the Copenhagen criteria. Mr. Janukievič spoke of the enhanced possibility of success that such a message would provide for the coalition.

// PETR MAREŠ

Deputy Prime Minister of the Czech Republic

Mr. Mareš broke down the theme of the session 'Belarus: Between East and West?' into three key areas: where Belarus appears to belong today; where Belarus should belong; and finally how to get Belarus to where we believe it should belong.

Taking the issue of the present political status of Belarus, as previously raised by Mr. Janukievič, Mr. Mareš stated that despite many attempts by Lukashenko to isolate Belarus from the rest of Europe, Belarus could no longer be hidden from international observation. Thanks to technical advancements, including the internet, electronic media, and possibilities for travel, Belarusians are now connected to the world.

In reference to Mr. Havel's opening comments, Mr. Mareš argued that although we must not influence the Belarusians decision as to whether they belong East or West, we must provide guidance through the sharing of our experiences of transformation. He introduced three points Belarusians must bear in mind when deciding where their future lies. Firstly, Belarus is an independent entity, and decisions about its future should be made in Miensk rather than Moscow. In addition, EU policy must isolate Lukashenko's government without isolating the Belarusian people. Therefore, connections and projects of co-operation must be maintained and built upon, such as student scholarships in the Czech Republic. Lastly, he stated that chances for inclusion in Euro-Atlantic institutions are not lost, despite appearances. Hope once seemed lost for Slovakia, he argued, a country that once seemed far from the possibility of democracy, yet within a few months it became a major candidate for accession to the EU.

Concerning the issue of how to reach a situation in which both the position and status of Belarus will be decided by its people, Mr. Mareš stressed the importance of unity amongst its activists, a characteristic he complemented in the formulation of the 'People's Coalition 5+'.

// DAMIAN GADZINOWSKI

Representative of Mr. Bogdan Klich, President, Institute for Strategic Studies and Deputy Chairman of the Parliamentary Commission on Foreign Affairs, Poland

Mr. Gadzinowski detailed Belarus's geo-political history of entanglement between East and West, and the country's subsequent isolation. Since Lukashenko was elected, a deficit of democracy and the breaching of human rights have caused Belarus' connections to the international community to deteriorate further, and its isolation to deepen.

The vision of integration with Russia has become Lukashenko's solution to such isolation, but contradictions have recently begun to show in the Moscow-Miensk axis. Russian interest in Belarus is both economic – in particular in adjusting the Belarusian economy to the Russian system, and political – especially in integration within the framework of the federal state. Since 2002 Lukashenko has resisted such postulates, thus fuelling the worst crisis in bilateral relations in February 2004. Mr. Gadzinowski went on to highlight that despite Lukashenko's resistance, unless he agrees to such concessions, 'he sentences Belarus to total isolation, even in regard to Russia.'

Mr. Gadzinowski agreed with other speakers on the need for a comprehensive EU policy regarding Belarus. He went on to stress that the maintenance of an independent and sovereign Belarus should be of the upmost importance to the EU, as it would play an important role in the regional stabilisation of European security system. Furthermore, forging relations with its nearest neighbours would confirm EU competence in the international arena, in which it wishes to play a greater role. New Central and Eastern EU member states must ensure that the new borderline does not become the 'boundary between western wealth and freedom and eastern poverty and despotism.' New Central and Eastern members have a special obligation to initiate Belarusian aspirations for democracy and integration, and consequently must work together to develop an Eastern dimension policy. He went on to argue that the realisation of a long term perspective regarding the admission of Belarus into the EU may provide an incentive towards democratisation and liberalisation.

Mr. Gadzinowski concluded by highlighting concrete steps to be taken with regard to promoting European economical and political standards in Belarus. In particular, he echoed Mr. Mareš's statements concerning the support of civil society, especially an independent mass media, as a precondition for a functioning democracy.

// IVANS PUNDURS

Undersecretary of State, Latvia

Mr. Pundurs outlined the ways in which benchmark policy with Miensk has so far not produced tangible results, as Lukashenko is determined to stay in power. He discussed what the European line towards official Miensk should be, and concluded that although we must have contact with official Miensk, 'our line should be firm, and there should be no illusions that without free and fair elections, and respect for human rights, there will be no change in the policy of the West'. However, the

development of a firm policy against Lukashenko will not achieve the desired result if implemented alone; rather, results are only plausible if combined with support of civil society and political forces.

Mr. Pundurs highlighted an alleged contradiction between support to civil society and support to ‘freedom fighters’, i.e. democratic political forces, in which support to the latter is seen as less politically correct than the former. Mr. Pundurs argued that both are essential, and therefore should not be played off against one another. The struggle for freedom is political in nature, and therefore we should not be afraid to be political, and to support political parties, in addition to civil society. In particular, in the face of upcoming parliamentary elections, we must support democratic forces so that they can be stronger after the elections, rather than weaker and pessimistic as in the aftermath of previous elections.

He stressed that the EU must develop an action plan for Belarus, in which the partners for implementation on the Belarusian side are institutions of a democratic civil society rather than official authorities in Miensk. We need to make known to Belarusians what the EU could offer if democracy were in place. New member states that neighbour Belarus must make it clear that they are not indifferent to their plight. He maintained that Central and Eastern Europe is united in wishing for a stable and prosperous Belarus, and will do all in its power to achieve it. Belarus, he argued, will be a serious test for the common foreign policy of the EU, yet he was confident that Belarus would feature high on its list of priorities.

// JONAS CEKUOLIS

Head of Lithuanian Delegation to Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe, Lithuania

Mr. Cekuolis shared his experience as both a Lithuanian politician, and as the chairman of the Council of Europe’s sub-committee on Belarus, whose actions he detailed. This sub-committee was established two years ago with members from various European parliaments, and aims both to stress the necessity of implementing European standards in internal Belarusian legislation, and to encourage active co-operation with Belarusian society. Yet there has been little change in the areas of media law, the electoral code or an ombudsman for human rights. Mr. Cekuolis stressed that the October elections make this a critical year for Belarus – which is why the presence of international organisations, as well as members of the international community in Belarus for long-term electoral observation is necessary, despite a lack of formal mandates concerning this. However, he went on to voice his concerns regarding the lack of alternative information for the Belarusian people. ‘I fear that come election day, it will be unnecessary to have any major miscountings

of votes, due to an absolutely one side media, the harassment of opposition parties, the closure of human rights NGOs and the closure of newspapers’.

He agreed with Mr. Pundurs that we must push for an EU ‘action plan’ towards Belarus, one which includes small practical steps which will help the people understand better what Europe is and what it plans to do in their country. He detailed examples such as: the creation of an information centre on Belarus in one of Europe’s capitals; the opening of an information center in Miensk by the EU and Council of Europe as an additional source of European information for Belarusian NGOs and people; and joint European/Belarusian media outlets to be published in Belarus. In addition, he stressed the need for political pressure from member states, including sanctions, to send a strong signal condemning Lukashenko’s authorities, and their breaches of human rights.

// JAN MARINUS WIERSMA

Chairman, Delegation for relations with Belarus, European Parliament

Mr. Wiersma began by stating that Belarus was highly unlikely to be admitted into the EU in the near future, due to the high number of changes necessary before even credible discussion about membership may take place. There is little optimism regarding Belarus in the EU, he argued, yet nevertheless he spoke of the responsibility all countries share to address problems in undemocratic countries. The EU, he continued, is willing to cooperate greatly with regards to Belarus, as there is a strong geopolitical motive for the EU to be more active in that area. If the EU chooses not to act, and continues to strengthen the EU from inside, within five years we will have two very separate and distinct systems – the EU, which is democratic, open and free, and a closed and undemocratic system to the East. He claimed that new members of the EU would greatly improve the quality of debate due to their greater level of experience with Russia.

Mr. Wiersma echoed other speakers in stating that Belarusians must have the right to decide their own future on the basis of a free debate, in the form of free elections. A complete regime change is required, as with the present regime, one cannot expect the real opening of society or the improving of relations. He spoke of the economic impetus behind Russian interest in Belarus, but also stated that the political impetus is often overlooked – that Moscow wants to stop further enlargement of NATO and the EU. He went on to say ‘I think that there are two possible scenarios: one is the Moscow scenario where Moscow finds a suitable replacement for Lukashenko; and the other is a kind of Georgia/Serbia scenario. Whatever the final regime may be, I hope it will not be Moscow that changes the regime, but the people themselves’.

Finally, Mr. Wiersma spoke against the isolation of Belarus, and instead argued that we must work with the Belarusian opposition, engage civil society, and yet not rule out engagement with political power.

// DISCUSSION

The first session concluded with discussion of the current political climate and the EU enlargement, in particular focusing attention on: the issue of visas and access across the new European Union borders; how much it is necessary to include Russia in debates concerning the future of Belarus; the financing of civil society activities; and whether contacts and cooperation should be maintained with Miensk authorities.

With regard to the first issue, Mr. Wiersma highlighted the collective responsibility to maintain high security of the EU's collective borders, yet also detailed the European Commission's move to develop policy to facilitate cross-border traffic easier, particularly in relation to visa applications for families separated by the new borders, and for students wishing to study abroad. Mr. Janukievič also stressed that the visa question is crucial, in particular further facilitating the process of visa application for members of NGOs, youth organisations and political parties.

With regards to the second issue, there were a wide variety of views concerning the suitable level of Russian involvement. Mr. Janukievič argued that Russia cannot help bring democracy to Belarus, and that any political changes carried out by Lukashenko will be concerned merely with Russian interests rather than the promotion of democracy. Both Mr. Mareš and Mr. Wiersma questioned being able to encourage democracy without the involvement of Russia. Mr. Wiersma argued that the best, although quite unlikely, solution would be a Russia-EU combination, with Russia encouraging the opening up of the economy, and the EU on observing and transforming political conditions.

Both Rodger Potocki (National Endowment for Democracy, USA), and Pavol Demeš (German Marshall Fund Transatlantic Center, Slovakia) questioned the lack of financial support in Belarus from the European Union in comparison to the contributions made by American government and organisations. Mr. Wiersma agreed that further finances should come from the EU, but detailed the differences in European and US financial funding mechanisms which have held back higher contributions.

Mr. Cekuolis argued that when dealing with a dictator such as Lukashenko, contacts with the regime and all forms of compromise must be heavily avoided. Rather, he argued, sanctions are one of the few effective means of action. Likewise,

Mr. Janukievič stated that associations with official Miensk must be avoided, yet associations on the local level must be built upon. Mr. Wiersma argued that we must rather do all that we can to increase the number of international officials and parliamentarians going into Belarus, but stressed the need to interact with institutions of civil society rather than Belarusian authorities.

SECOND SESSION

**// ENLARGED EU -
ENLARGED POSSIBILITIES OF SUPPORTING
PRO-DEMOCRATIC FORCES IN BELARUS?**

// EVA PALATOVÁ

Head of Independent Division on European Affairs, Senate Chancellery, Czech Republic

Ms. Palatová opened the second session by briefly recapping the previous discussion and highlighting that, while touched on earlier, this session will focus on the role of the European Union regarding Belarus. More specifically, the following speakers will focus on the question of what will be the impact of an enlarged EU on Belarusian politics and society and what the EU as an independent actor can do.

// PAVOL DEMEŠ

Director, German Marshall Fund of the United States, Transatlantic Center for CEE, Slovakia

Mr. Demeš began by stressing that it is the collective responsibility of European countries and organisations to help bring Belarus into mainstream European society. He noted that, being a representative of Slovakia, he is in a unique position to advise Belarus in democratisation efforts, as the two countries share a similar history in democratisation experiences. Slovakia, like Belarus, is a relatively young country, and for a period (1993 to 1998) had been under the yoke of a neo-authoritarian regime and for that period was therefore excluded from EU and NATO expansion. However, the efforts of NGOs in Slovakia largely contributed to reforms in the country, and helped to bring about the end of the regime in 1998. He stressed that organisations in Belarus can learn from the Slovakian experience and that there should be a free flow of exchange of ideas and experiences between Slovakian and Belarusian NGOs.

Mr. Demeš then proposed a thesis which stated that first, when recounting previous attempts and successes of democratisation, one must always recognise the support that came from various organisations and institutions (NGOs, media, etc), and secondly, that rather than exporting democracy, democratic reforms must come from within, with the support of outside assistance. He specified that the immediate goal must be to mobilize external interest in the Belarusian situation. In order to generate more interest in the region, better social, economic, and political arguments must be developed that illustrate why Belarus matters in the international arena, specifically for Europe and North America. In addition, Belarusian activists must learn how to better approach EU and US institutions, both public and private, to convince more donors from abroad to contribute to reforms in Belarus. Furthermore, the media must learn to convey more about Belarus externally aside from focusing on the psychoanalysis of Lukashenko. NGOs and other organisations within Belarus must improve communication between themselves in order to better organise and advocate their cause.

// IRYNA VIDANAVA

Editor in Chief, Studentskaya Dumka Magazine, Belarus

Ms. Vidanova stressed that in order to create an active Belarusian youth, help must be provided in order to make a change possible. Belarusian youth live in a society in which schools and universities are closed at whim by the administration, students are arbitrarily expelled, and are subjected to high levels of propaganda. While Belarusian youth do not suffer from nostalgia of the Soviet Era and engage in Western music and fashion, many young people are passive regarding politics. Most are disappointed and disillusioned, convinced that change cannot occur. Ms. Vidanova voiced her fears that if Belarus becomes isolated from the rest of Europe, this generation will be lost forever. Therefore, Ms. Vidanova stressed that external help is needed in order to encourage youth to become civically engaged. Effective European aid must be provided in order to fund and support programmes for Belarusian youth, in particular student exchanges and other short term programmes, which would enable young people to observe the opportunities available outside of their native country. Furthermore, support must be given to programmes within Belarus. Currently student programmes are very complicated and are largely unknown, and therefore unused. Lastly, she proposed that additional scholarships must be provided by the European community in order to act as insurance for youth in trouble with the government for becoming involved in activism.

She concluded by outlining three key ways in which new programmes within Belarus could be started and supported. Initially, she stressed that approval from Belarusian authorities will not be granted for programmes, and thus it is imperative that new structures of support and methods of reinforcement are created. Second, she warned against signing official agreements with universities and other institutions, largely because they are state-affiliated and therefore unreliable. Third, she stressed that the most logical place to begin is through exchange programmes involving teachers, professors, and NGOs.

// ALES MICHALEVIČ

Co-Chairman of Association of Democratic Local Deputies, Belarus

Mr. Michalevič began by focusing on the need to support local democratic deputies, and to provide them with the facilities through which they can do something positive for their local communities. Voters in Belarus, he argued, vote for candidates that seem in possession of the capacities to change the country's situation, however slight. The candidates nominated by the authorities are frequently heads

of a department of education, medicine, or local administration, or directors from a state owned enterprises, all positions that embody the tools and power needed to make changes. Opposition candidates, on the other hand, are often ordinary teachers, engineers, or are unemployed due to political repressions. Belarusian authorities have spread the opinion that the opposition can do nothing positive for Belarus, an opinion that can only be destroyed with financial support from outside. The development of Centres of European Information, as mentioned in the last session, would have a great effect on the support of democracy on the local level if established in the provinces.

Mr. Michalevič went on to express his belief in programmes of twinning and exchange, in particular concerning local officials, doctors, lawyers, judges, and school pupils, and maintained that Belarus should also be included in EU programmes concerning European regions. He described the lack of local self-governance in Belarus, and the nomination of deputies by the presidential administration. Therefore, it is particularly difficult to establish a union of towns or town council members. Consequently, programmes of direct cooperation between towns/municipalities in Belarus and Europe which encourage discussion between local administration and leaders of democratic communities have the positive effect of attracting the interest of local communities, and establishing a wide movement for self-governance.

He also highlighted the importance of supporting a free media, in particular unregistered newspapers, as he claimed that within a few years most newspapers will be unregistered. In addition, he stressed the need for FM radio broadcast from Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, as it can cover more than 40 % of Belarusian territory.

// PAWEŁ KAZANECKI

President, East-European Democratic Centre, Poland

Mr. Kazanecki began by highlighting the advancing separation of Belarus from Europe, both politically and in the increasingly alienated mentality of the Belarusian public. This was described as due to three key issues: a lack of free information; limitations on travel through which to build foreign contacts in democratic countries; and the lack of political will in Western Europe to change the political situation in Belarus.

Concerning the last issue, Mr. Kazanecki insisted that new EU members must unite and work together to draw the attention of Europe to this region. The Polish government has begun this process through its recent 'non-paper concerning policy towards new eastern neighbours after EU enlargement', developed by the Polish

Ministry of Foreign Affairs. He stressed the difficulty in finding states in Western Europe to support, and fund, an interest in Belarus, and appealed for a political gesture from the EU describing Belarus's potential future as a member state, as without such a political declaration, any promotion of Europe would be worthless.

New programmes and new strategies with which to support civil society in Belarus must be developed by new member states, in particular since the recent collapse of the TACIS programme in the region. A new, young, open-minded elite must be built, through the further invitation of Belarusian students to European universities, and more importantly, through the creation of mechanisms to encourage their return to Belarus. Furthermore, he argued that the lack of free information can be remedied through investment in cross-border media, specifically FM Belarus radio to be broadcasted from neighbouring countries.

Mr. Kazanecki concluded by stressing the need to avoid contact with members of the Belarusian state. The only viable cooperation can be between local authorities in European countries and local deputies in Belarus. Consequently, we must work to support unofficial, rather than official NGOs, to avoid our efforts and finances being placed in the hands of Belarusian authorities.

// DISCUSSION

The second session concluded with a discussion of the concrete measures that the EU, new Eastern and Central European member states and Belarusian activists can implement to reinforce pro-democracy activities in Belarus, in particular focusing on the importance of recognising and evaluating the relative failure of previous forms of assistance, and continuing the brainstorming dialogue concerning future projects of support and cooperation within Belarus.

Concerning the first issue, Mr. Demeš argued that there are increasingly persuasive political, moral, and security arguments regarding the need for enhanced assistance in Belarus, arguments which must be further publicised and stressed by new Central and Eastern European member states. If the EU is to take action against such a security threat, it must recognise why standard forms of assistance used in other countries are incompatible with the Belarusian situation, why numerous past projects in Belarus have been unsuccessful; and also be willing to develop new approaches and programmes. Mr. Demeš stressed the need for a holistic approach, in which there is cross-border cooperation and exchange of ideas and skills. Ms. Vidanova further emphasised this point, adding that as new member states have considerable experience in the difficulty of implementing EU programmes in

those countries outside of the EU, they can help adapt such programmes to the needs of Belarus, or assist in the developing of new strategy and programmes.

Concerning the second issue, Mr. Kastens, MP for Latvia, asked for further examples of mechanisms and instruments through which to strengthen democracy in Belarus. There was unanimous agreement that the trust of the Belarusian people can only be achieved by commitment to the continuation, and extension, of present programmes, though there was continued debate concerning the content of such programmes. Whilst some participants highlighted the need to support both civil society and democratic political opposition, others contended that previous support for political opposition has been unsuccessful, and that therefore pro-democracy programmes must be created anew. This was underlined by Mr. Jarabik (Pontis Foundation, Slovakia), who went on to argue that despite the high level of activity in Belarus by Czech Republic, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland and increasingly Slovakia, structures of financial contribution must be formed amongst new member states, and the EU in general. This will require much political will, he argued, due to Belarus's non EU status as a developing country.

Previous successful activities were praised by all speakers, in particular the growing number of student exchanges, scholarships, and work exchange programmes. Ms. Vidanova stressed the need to assist Belarusians to travel abroad, through providing visas, and through the further extension of travel, study, and exchange programmes. Mr. Biela, MP, representative of the Polish Senate, suggested projects concerning small business exchange and border activities. In addition, he stressed Poland's interest in protecting its diaspora in Belarus, and therefore the importance of Poland maintaining a relationship with Lukashenko. This statement was criticised by Mr. Kazanecki, who argued for a more comprehensive Polish foreign policy, and stressed that the priority in Belarus must be democracy promotion rather than provisions for diaspora.

EUROPE HAS MORE PERSPECTIVE PARTNERS IN BELARUS THAN ITS GOVERNMENT

**// EVA PAĽATOVÁ
AND LUBOŠ VESELÝ**
POLICY PAPER

With its enlargement to the east, the European Union will acquire not only new borders but also new neighbours. In the course of the last fifteen years, the western community has succeeded in stabilising states in the immediate neighbourhood to the east of the Oder and the Bavarian forest through dialogue and cooperation in

order to prepare them for membership in an integrating community. Now the – already enlarged – Union is facing the same challenge: to stabilise a new area on the east and south of its borders. Whether the community will be able to live up to the purpose of its existence ensuring to its citizens security, democratic and just government, stability and sustainable economic development, will depend largely on its ability to fulfil this aim.

The EU is aware of this and by using the methods already proven during the present enlargement process it is developing its new strategy for a so called 'Wider Europe', on the basis of which it wants to establish close cooperation with its new neighbours. It is clear and understandable that this will happen without giving these countries any hope of joining the EU-25 in the near future. The principle of the above method is simple: in exchange for respect to international commitments, human rights and the values of democracy as well as for progress in reforms (the implementation of which is generously supported by the EU), the European Union offers gradual integration into the common market including the introduction of all four freedoms of movement. The aim of this process is ambitious: to enhance stability and prosperity along the EU borders. To the east the EU concentrates mainly on the Ukraine, Russia, Moldova and also Belarus.

The key condition of any progress in relations with these countries is a constructive approach of their governments – a basic and understandable principal reflecting on all steps taken, the realisation of all programmes and use of all instruments evolving from it. The starting point for any cooperation is the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement between the European Community (EC) and any given country in Eastern Europe. It is a legal frame, which in the case of Russia and the Ukraine functions as a gate for cooperation, yet in a specific situation – by which we mean Belarus – does not symbolise a gate but a requirement, which at this moment cannot be met.

With regard to the developments in Belarus after 1996, the already established Partnership and Cooperation Agreement was frozen by the EU, after which implementation of supportive programmes, designed to strengthen democracy, economy as well as civil society, were stopped. The above mentioned altered concept of 'Wider Europe' takes Belarus into account, however, only after 'the preconditions for free and fair elections are insured'. Until then, the EU will not compromise in its efforts towards achieving democratic values by supporting a regime, whose policy is not compatible with the values shared by the community.

It is clear that if the EU does not want to leave this country that lies between Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, the Ukraine and Russia completely to its own devices, it cannot simply 'wait and see' when or whether Mr. Lukashenko meets the set conditions – it has to start seeking ways of breaking this vicious circle. Otherwise we will continue to wait for a change that will not come by itself. We are relying on measures which count on a partner who does not cooperate, and our programmes follow

aims which look good in the overall picture (integration into the common market) but cannot at present be applied in that country.

Lukashenko's Belarus shows little interest in becoming part of the community of European democracies. The situation regarding the violation of human rights has significantly worsened in the course of the last year and there is no sign that the governing regime would be prepared to change its behaviour. Some tens of NGOs and independent media have been liquidated by the state, it can be expected that before the autumn 2004 parliamentary elections even more will be banned. On the other hand one cannot expect that these elections will be free or democratic due to the mass media and the state apparatus being under the control of the governing regime, which – similar to the countries of Central Europe before 1989 – is based on efforts to gain total control of information and politics, through both the security services and state authorities; the strict control is also implemented through schools and employers.

However, an improvement of the situation cannot be supposed even in the case members of the opposition would be elected. The power and significance of the Belarus parliament are negligible. It is obvious that it is necessary to communicate with the representatives of the current regime even if there is little hope that this might bring a change of the current situation. Official Miensk has not shown any interest in real cooperation with the European Union and, taking into account the nature and structure of the regime, one cannot expect that it ever will. The only guarantee for an improvement of the situation is the gradual and purposeful strengthening of civil society and the enforcement of principles of democracy. In this area, non-governmental organisations and initiatives as well as independent media should become the natural partners of the EU. However, the Union has not yet found a way how to cooperate with these and how to utilise their potential.

If the enlarged European Union wants to influence the developments in Belarus in order for it to become a stable country which respects the generally shared values of a rule of law and democracy, it has to abandon the strict dependence on the relations with official Miensk. Its main partners should then become those Belarusians and their initiatives, whose aim it is to bring their country closer to the democratic world. Therefore it is necessary to use existing and find new and unusual methods and instruments, which until now have not been applied. Further it is necessary to take into account that most of these organisations and initiatives in Belarus are currently forced to give up their activities within the existing legal framework and operate more and more informally.

One of the possible methods could be to grant financial support to NGOs in countries of the enlarged EU that cooperate with Belarusian partners – similar to NGOs in democratic countries who supported partners in the unfree part of Europe before 1989. As this experience showed, most effective in the support of independent initiatives would be small flexible grants, which are easy to administrate.

An appropriate instrument for its implementation could be the European Initiative for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR), which permits granting financial support without the participation and permission of the receiving country's administration. Paradoxically for the period 2002–2004 Belarus was not included in this programme.

It is also necessary to pay attention to programmes for students and young people as the mobility of youth is of extreme importance. Scholarships granted by the International Visegrad Fund could serve as an example of such cooperation. In addition, it is paramount that present projects and initiatives on the small-scale local level need to be supported, and new projects created and extended.

Another clear signal for enhanced engagement of the European Union in Belarus would be the installation of a visible and active representation of the European Union (a delegation of the EU Commission) directly in Belarus. Under the circumstances of repression and regarding the disinformation policy of the Belarusian regime towards the EU, a presentation of the principals of European policy and an active political support of democratic initiatives and individuals directly on the spot are particularly important. For objective information about the EU it is also possible to take advantage of emerging local pro-European democratic initiatives.

In regard to its relationship with a new neighbour balancing on the edge of totality, the enlarged Europe does not face the dilemma of whether to legitimise the governing regime or to leave it to its own devices. There are a number of ways and methods how to contribute to a gradual strengthening of civil society and thus also conditions for a transformation to a free and democratic country. The individual institutions of the European Union, its member countries and NGOs must, however, take an active position and take advantage of existing possibilities. Broad reflection concerning this topic is necessary especially regarding the current preparation of new instruments and financial perspectives of the EU for the years 2007–2013. If not, preserving the present approach and waiting for a positive answer from the Belarusian authorities could mean waiting for Godot.

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YOUTH-RELATED EUROPEAN UNION PROGRAMMES IN BELARUS

**// IRYNA VIDANAVA
AND ALENA SHALAEVA
POLICY PAPER**

Support in the field of education, training, exchange programmes and cross-border cooperation for youth are among the European Union's stated priorities. Across Europe, an increasing number of young people are participating in exchanges and different kinds of programmes. Unfortunately, this is not the case for the youth of

Belarus, at present one of Europe's most isolated countries. Although young people make up the most pro-European segment of Belarusian society, their access to EU programmes remains limited.

Of the three major EU initiatives in the field of higher education, Belarusians are only eligible to participate in the TEMPUS programme. In fact, many of the EU's programmes designed to help CIS countries, such as the TACIS programme, have experienced great difficulties in Belarus. This is because most EU programmes, including the provision of support for youth groups, operate on a government-to-government basis, thus allowing the autocratic regime in Belarus to control the operation of such programmes. Access to these programmes is reserved for youth groups which are controlled by, and which support the antidemocratic policies of the Lukashenka regime. Most of the pro-European and pro-democratic youth groups in Belarus are either not recognized or are repressed by the government, and therefore have little chance to benefit from EU programmes. Access to these programmes for groups which truly deserve support would be enhanced if the EU was able to work directly with individual youth organisations.

On a positive note, Belarusian youth groups are able to take part in the EU's Youth Programme via the third country status. This programme offers broad opportunities for intercultural learning and cooperation among young people in Europe. Unfortunately, the Youth programme is not well known in Belarus, and only a few groups are currently taking part in it. A key reason for such low participation is a lack of information. The EU's Information Center for CIS countries is based in Warsaw, which makes it difficult for Belarusian groups to obtain information about programmes or to seek assistance in applying. For organisations and groups which have heard about the programme, there is the additional problem of finding partners in member states with which to carry out their projects. Few Belarusian youth activists have personal contacts with foreign organisations, nor do they participate actively in international events, such as conferences, training workshops, or summer schools because of language barrier or participation fees.

The TEMPUS programme was most active in 1996–97 when 17 Belarusian universities took part in EU projects. This year, only one institution of higher education, Gomel Technological University, is participating in an international project: 'Dissemination, Cooperation, and University Reform in Economics Education in Belarus.' Universities from France and Spain are the partners for this project.

The decline in numbers of Belarusian universities participating in the TEMPUS programme can be explained by two major factors. As with other EU programmes, TEMPUS requires official agreements at the state level. Unfortunately, the Belarus' authoritarian regime seeks to reduce and control all international activities and assistance, especially in the fields of education, youth activism, and civil society development. For example, criminal investigations and court cases were launched against several Belarusian organisations that had received EU TACIS grants. The con-

ditions in which Belarusian entities and international partners might plan joint projects under the TEMPUS programme are getting more difficult and complicated.

Another factor that explains the low participation of Belarusian actors is lack of information. The contact person for the TEMPUS programme is located in the Academy of Management of the President of Belarus, which is the most odious, pro-regime institution of higher education in the country. This institution is dead set against any cooperation with pro-democratic structures. It is hard to imagine that an individual working at the Academy would make information about the TEMPUS programme widely available. As a result, little is known about the programme in Belarusian universities; most students have never heard of it.

As with other EU programmes, TEMPUS is facing ever more difficulties and restrictions in Belarus. The regime is simply not interested in developing international educational partnerships, integrating Belarusian universities into Europe's system of higher education, or instituting real educational reforms in the country. As more programmes like TEMPUS become controlled by the state, fewer universities and other entities will participate. One way to reverse this trend is to encourage the international participation and initiatives of progressive, reform-minded, and pro-democratic educators and students on an individual basis. In the case of Belarus, the EU should increase the flexibility of its programmes and adapt them to operate on a non-governmental basis.

There is a need to dramatically expand the access to European exchange programmes for Belarusian youth. More student exchanges and a greater participation in EU-supported activities would help to train new leaders and to spread information about the EU among young people in Belarus. Support for youth activities in Belarus would encourage young people to become more involved in civil activities and promote the needed democratic change in the country. Finally, it is necessary to help students who are already active. Many risk being dismissed from their universities because of their pro-democratic activities. Scholarships and other educational opportunities in Europe would encourage and support their brave efforts.

The lack of success for broad youth programmes between the EU and Belarus has been largely due to the specific character of the Lukashenka regime. Therefore, it is vital to search for new ways through which to inform and involve Belarusian youth without being dependent on state authorities.

Iryna Vidanava is a long-term third sector activist who currently serves as editor-in-chief of the independent youth magazine 'Students' Thought'. She previously worked as International Coordinator for the Assembly of Belarusian Pro-Democratic NGOs. Ms. Vidanava is also a PhD candidate and teaches history at Belarusian State University.

Alena Shalaeva graduated from Belarusian State Pedagogical University majoring in journalism. Ms. Shalaeva has worked for the magazine 'Students' Thought' since 2002. She specialises in youth educational issues.

ORGANISERS

// ASSOCIATION FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

The Association for International Affairs (established 1997 in Prague) is a non-profit, non-governmental organisation whose aim is to conduct research and educate about international relations and foreign affairs.

The Research Centre at the Association for International Affairs (AMO) was established in October 2003 to coordinate the AMO's research activities. The Research Centre aims at identifying and researching issues regarding the foreign

policy of the Czech Republic and its position in today's world. The Centre provides independent expert analysis, supports discussion at different levels and provides possible solutions for these issues. Within the Research Centre three programmes have been established:

The Eastern European Programme focuses on the research of the European countries of the former Soviet Union. Main fields of interests are issues, which are highly important for the Czech Republic from a political, economical and security point of view. Attention is also paid to the broader context of political, social and economical transformation processes in this region.

The Eurasian Programme involves a broad spectrum of issues, from closed political development and state building processes over processes of social transformation and economical development to questions of security and foreign policy of the newly independent states in the Caucasus and Central Asian region (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan and Turkmenistan).

Programme of Atlantic Security Studies (PASS) has been realized in co-operation with the Prague Security Studies Institute. Information about the PASS' activities is available at www.pass-prague.cz.

Furthermore, the Research Centre organises various public and internal roundtables, seminars, conferences and a number of other events.

Work of Research Centre is supported by the Open Society Fund Prague with resources provided by the Trust for Central and Eastern Europe.

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// PEOPLE IN NEED

People in Need is a Czech non-profit, non-governmental organisation whose mission is to inspire a largeness of spirit in Czech society by helping others in need and by promoting democratic freedoms for all. People in Need is a major advocate of democratic inclusion both in the Czech Republic and abroad, and in its 12 years of existence, has administered over 40 million EUR in 33 countries worldwide. In recognition of its achievements, People in Need received the Czech Foreign Ministry's Gratias Agit Award in 1997 for outstanding contribution to the Czech Republic's image abroad. In 1998, the foundation was honoured with the Democracy and Civil Society Award by the United States and European Union, in commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Marshall Plan. Former Czech President Václav Havel, a long-term partner of People in Need, has also recognized the foundation's work in the field of human rights.

People in Need has a special commitment to supporting groups and people working in totalitarian regimes. The organisation is convinced that it is obligated to assist people in need; that it must aid those abroad the way that dissidents in Czechoslovakia were helped during the reign of Communism. People in Need supports political prisoners and their family members and documents torture, execution, and crimes against humanity in oppressed societies. To highlight its support for peace, democracy and human rights, People in Need established the annual Homo Homini Award given to individuals who display exceptional courage in defence of these values. Currently, People in Need is working to support human rights movements in Belarus, Burma, Cuba and North Korea.

People in Need's **Belarusian Center** (BC) was founded in 1998 in cooperation with exiled Belorussian opposition figures with the aim of supporting persecuted political groups, the independent media and pro-democracy initiatives and reforms in the country. Thanks to generous support from the National Endowment for Democracy in Washington D.C., the BC organises a number of events such as special seminars, study trips and lectures involving representatives of the democratic opposition in Belarus.

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// FRIEDRICH-NAUMANN- -FOUNDATION

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RESUMES

// ПА БЕЛАРУСКУ

Канферэнцыя 'Беларусь - Наш новы сусед', што праходзіла 20 сакавіка 2004 году ў Сэнаце Чэскай рэспублікі ў Празе, зь вялікай увагаю паставілася да важнасці суседства новых краінаў-сябраў Эўрапейскага з'вязу з Цэнтральнае ды Ўсходняе Эўропы зь Беларусьсю. Канферэнцыя клала акцэнт на тое, што далучэньне новых сябраў да Эўрапейскага з'вязу не павінна адмежаваць Беларусь ад Цэнтральнае ды Ўсходняе Эўропы новымі межамі. Наадварот, большая ўвага павінна надавацца

ажыццяўленню й узмацненню эфектыўнай падтрымкі дэмакратычных пераўтварэнняў на Беларусі праз звышэньне эўрапейскае зацікаўленасці да новага суседа ды актыўнай стымуляцыі палітыкі Эўразьвязу ў дачыненні да Беларусі.

Гэтая канферэнцыя сабрала разам палітыкаў, актывістаў няўрадавых арганізацый і мясцовых ініцыятываў з Чэскае рэспублікі, Польшчы, Летувы, Латвіі, Славацкае рэспублікі ды Беларусі. Супрацоўніцтва ў арганізацыі гэтае канферэнцыі паміж Асацыяцыяй па міжнародных пытаннях, Гуманітарнай арганізацыяй 'Чалавек у нядолі' і Сэнатам парламанту Чэскай рэспублікі выявіла вялікі інтарэс да шырокіх кантактаў і супрацоўніцтва з грамадзянскай супольнасцю ды апазіцыйнымі палітыкамі ў Беларусі.

Канферэнцыя сталася прасторам для перамоў і дэбатаў адносна ролі новых сябраў у вызначэнні палітыкі Эўразьвязу як адносна Беларусі ў прыватнасці, так і да ўсходніх суседзяў наагул. Канферэнцыя дала магчымасць пачуць зь першых вуснаў як пра сёньняшні стан на Беларусі ад апазіцыйных палітыкаў ды прадстаўнікоў грамадзянскае супольнасці, так і пра досьвед суседніх краінаў у правядзеньні дэмакратычных рэформаў апошняга часу, што прывяло да плённае дыскусіі адносна больш эфектыўнай і адпаведнай падтрымкі беларускага народу.

Удзельнікі канферэнцыі дапамаглі пабачыць сутнасць сёньняшняга недахопу дэмакратыі на Беларусі. Беларускія апазіцыйныя палітыкі й актывісты засьведчылі нарастаючую агрэсыўнасць рэпрэсіўнага рэжыму Лукашэнкі, пашырэнне безнадзейнасці сярод беларускага люду. Толькі ня так даўна створаныя кааліцыя ды вялікая колькасці маладых, дэмакратычна мыслячых людзей, якія перамаглі на мясцовых выбарах, даюць падставы для стрыманага аптымізму. Прадстаўнікі суседніх краінаў распавялі пра свой негатыўны досьвед у стасунках зь беларускай уладай і пра пасьпяховаыя кантакты з беларускім народам. Шмат падабенства было заўважана паміж сёньняшняй сітуацыяй на Беларусі й станам іх краінаў у часах камуністычных рэжымаў 80-х гадоў, што змушае іх браць на сябе калектыўную адказнасць за лёсы ўсходнеэўрапейскіх краінаў і дапамагаць у змаганні з аўтарытарным рэжымам.

Удзельнікі прыйшлі да высноў, што Эўразьвяз музіць працаваць у накірунку абмежаваньня беларускіх улад без ізаляцыі беларускага грамадства ды імкнуча да дасягнення гэтае мэты. Бальшыня ўдзельнікаў выказалася супраць татальнае ізаляцыі, бо гэта шкодна паўплывае на беларускае грамадства ды як вынік прывядзе да ўсталяваньня ў Эўропе дзвух адасобленых сістэмаў. Вялікую ўвагу прыцягнула дыскусія наконт патэнцыйнае магчымасці далучэння Беларусі да Эўрапейскага зьвязу. Паколькі бальшыня ўдзельнікаў пагадзілася з патрэбаю захаваць магчымасць далучэння Беларусі да Эўразьвязу, як механізма пераадолення ізаляцыі беларусаў і як падтрымку іх прээўрапейскіх памкненняў, некаторыя ўдзельнікі выказалі сумніў на гэты конт. Удзельнікі аднагалосна пагадзіліся з тым, што новыя Цэнтрална й Усходнеэўрапейскія дзяржавы мусяць адыгрываць важную ролю ў будучыні Беларусі, выкарыстоўваючы для гэтага свой досьвед для вызначэння й ўплыву на будучую

палітыку Эўразьвязу адносна сваіх суседзяў. Улічваючы іх стасункі зь Беларусьсю ды іх уласны досьвед дэмакратычных трансфармацый, новыя краіны-сябры Эўразьвязу могуць прысьпець дыскусіі па Беларусі, а такім чынам спрыяць звышэнню разуменьня беларускай праблематыкі ў Эўропе. Новыя краіны-сябры павінны аб'яднацца й разам даць ясна зразумець беларускаму народу стратэгію Эўразьвязу й агульны план дзеяньняў, якія ў дэталях прапануюць канкрэтныя крокі ў палітычнай сфэры ды падтрымцы грамадзянскае супольнасьці.

Падтрымка інстытуцый грамадзянскае супольнасьці й палітычнае апазіцыі разглядаюцца як асноўны аспект дапамогі ў правядзеньні дэмакратычных рэформаў на Беларусі. У дадатак да стварэньня Эўрапейскае палітыкі, павінна быць створана сістэма найпроставе дапамогі незалежным ініцыятывам і беларускаму народу. Праекты практычнае кааперацыі, такія як праграмы навучаньня й абмену для студэнтаў і гуманітарных адмыслоўцаў, у тым ліку зь юрыдычнай і медычнай сфэраў, няўрадавых арганізацый і мясцовага самакіраваньня, павінны стала пашырацца. У дадатак да падтрымкі інстытуцый грамадзянскае супольнасьці, некаторыя ўдзельнікі канферэнцыі прапанавалі адначасовае стымуляваньне палітычнага сэктару. Эўразьвяз павінен дапамагчы беларускаму народу ў атрыманьні магчымасьці самому вырашаць пра сваю будучыню праз поўнасьцю свабодныя ды справядлівыя выбары без рэпрэсій, дыскрымінацыі й маніпуляцый. Для дасягненьня гэтых мэтаў будуць патрэбныя: замежнае назіраньне за выбарамі, падтрымка дэмакратычных кааліцый, апазіцыйных палітыкаў і актывістаў, падтрымка й узмацненьне інстытуцый грамадзянскае супольнасьці, улучна са свабоднымі медыямі, а таксама мясцовага самакіраваньня.

На канферэнцыі таксама шырока абмяркоўваўся ўзровень расейскага ўдзелу ў дэмакратызацыі Беларусі. Расейскія інтарэсы на Беларусі, як эканамічныя, так і палітычныя, былі разгледжаны й аналізаваны з пункту погляду выніковага эфэкта, які яны могуць прынесці Беларусі. Некаторыя ўдзельнікі падкрэсьлілі недахоп сапраўдных дэмакратычных каштоўнасьцяў і ідэалаў у Расеі, а з таго вынікаючую няздольнасьць дапамагаць Беларусі на шляху дэмакратычных трансфармацый. Іншыя ўдзельнікі канферэнцыі выказвалі меркаваньні, што паколькі Расея мае вялікі ўплыў на Беларусь, то й прасоўваньне да дэмакратыі мусіць адбывацца ў згодзе ці нават пры ўдзеле Расеі. Удзельнікі канферэнцыі таксама дэталёва прааналізавалі сёньняшнія няўдачы Лукашэнкі па стварэньні саюзу з Расеяй, што можа мець вялікі ўплыў на пазіцыю Беларусі між Усходам і Захадам ды прысьпець да фармуляваньня Расеяй асноваў сваіх адносінаў між Эўразьвязам і Беларусьсю. Праз дэбаты пра ўзровень расейскага ўплыву, удзельнікі канферэнцыі пагадзіліся, што будучыня Беларусі можа вызначацца толькі беларускім народам ў Менску, але ні ў якім разе не ў Маскве.

Гэтая публікацыя ўтрымлівае выступы ўдзельнікаў, у тым ліку й прамову былога прэзідэнта Чэскай рэспублікі пана Вацлава Гаўла, якая прагучала на канферэнцыі, а таксама агляды ўсіх сэсій і дыскусій.

// FRANÇAIS

La conférence 'Belarus – notre nouveau voisin' tenue le 20 mars 2004 au Sénat tchèque à Prague reflète l'importance que les nouveaux états membres de l'UE de l'Europe Centrale et orientale attachent au Belarus. La conférence a fait ressortir que cette accession au sein de l'UE n'implique pas un abandon du Belarus par ses voisins d'Europe Centrale et orientale. Plutôt, une telle accession pourrait fournir une position forte qui favoriserait effectivement la transition démocratique au Belarus, à travers de la prise de conscience européenne et des intérêts grandissants en leur voisin commun, et grâce à l'encouragement actif de la politique de l'UE envers le Belarus.

Cette conférence a rassemblé des politiciens, des ONG et des activistes radicaux de la République tchèque, Pologne, Lituanie, Lettonie, Slovaquie et du Belarus. La coopération dans l'organisation de cette conférence entre l'Association pour les Affaires Internationales, People in Need, et le Sénat tchèque met en vedette l'engagement extensif vers la communication et la coopération avec les communautés et les politiciens d'opposition au Belarus.

La conférence était un temps de délibération et de débats concernant le rôle des nouveaux états membres en définissant la politique de l'UE envers le Belarus et ses voisins en général. C'était une opportunité d'entendre un premier compte-rendu du Belarus aujourd'hui, à la fois par les politiciens d'opposition et les représentants d'institutions de la société civile; pour partager les expériences et conseils de ces pays avec une expérience récente de réforme démocratique; et discuter des moyens les plus effectifs et convenables pour soutenir le peuple biélorussien.

Les participants à la conférence ont contribué à fournir un aperçu du déficit de démocratie au Belarus actuellement. Les politiciens biélorussiens d'opposition et les activistes ont décrit l'augmentation des répressions agressives sous le régime de Loukachenko, ainsi que le haut niveau de dépendance parmi le peuple. Les coalitions politiques formées récemment, combinées avec un nombre de jeunes en augmentation, des gens d'avis démocratique élus comme représentants locaux, produit des raisons pour retenir l'optimisme. Les représentants des pays voisins ont décrit leurs expériences sans succès avec le gouvernement biélorussien, et leurs échanges positifs avec le peuple biélorussien. Beaucoup ont vu une certaine ressemblance entre la situation aujourd'hui au Belarus et leur propre pays sous le régime communiste des années 80, et ont, par conséquent, accentué la responsabilité collective des pays de l'Europe de l'Est en assistant ceux qui souffrent sous un régime autoritaire.

Les participants ont maintenu que l'UE doit travailler en éliminant chaque support pour le gouvernement biélorussien sans isoler la société biélorussienne, et ont débattu des actions qui pourraient rendre ce but atteignable. Beaucoup ont exprimé la crainte que toute politique d'isolation totale pourrait affecter le peuple

biélorussien disproportionnément, et pourrait aussi déboucher sur la séparation de l'Europe en deux systèmes distincts et séparés. Le débat concernant la plausibilité d'une éventuelle entrée du Belarus dans l'UE. Bien que beaucoup de participants aient souligné la fonction d'une proposition d'entrée dans l'UE comme un instrument par lequel on peut contrer l'isolement du peuple biélorussien, qui soutient leurs aspirations pro-européennes; d'autres ont relevé l'improbabilité d'une telle proposition. Il y avait un accord unanime que les nouveaux états membre du Centre et de l'Est de l'Europe peuvent jouer un rôle important dans le futur du Belarus, en utilisant leur expérience pour influencer et définir le futur de la politique de l'UE envers ses voisins. En partageant leur expérience concernant le Belarus, et leur propre expérience de transformation démocratique, les nouveaux états membres peuvent améliorer le débat sur le Belarus, et ainsi aider à provoquer une prise de conscience à travers l'Europe. Les nouveaux états membres doivent s'unir et envoyer collectivement un message clair au peuple biélorussien en insistant pour une stratégie claire de l'UE et un vaste plan d'action qui détaille les mesures pratiques concernant à la fois la politique et le soutien de la société civile.

Soutenir les institutions de la société civile et l'opposition politique était aussi considéré comme un aspect clef en assistant la réforme démocratique au Belarus. En plus de la création de la politique de l'UE, un système d'assistance directe doit être créé avec lequel on peut soutenir les initiatives indépendantes et le peuple biélorussien. Des projets de coopération pratique doivent être étendus substantiellement, en particulier les voyages d'étude et les programmes d'échange pour étudiants et professions de la société civile, incluant les secteurs médicaux et juridiques, les ONG et les représentants locaux. En plus du soutien des institutions de la société civile, quelques participants ont souligné le besoin de renforcement simultané dans le domaine politique. L'UE devrait aider à fournir au peuple biélorussien l'opportunité de prendre des décisions concernant leur propre futur, en assurant des élections libres et honnêtes, sans répression, discrimination ou manipulation. Pour y parvenir, il soit requis: des observations externes aux élections, le soutien des coalitions démocratiques, des politiciens d'opposition et des activistes; ainsi que le soutien et le renforcement des institutions de la société civile, incluant un média libre, à la fois externe et interne, et un secteur judiciaire auto-gouverné.

Le niveau de la participation russe dans la démocratisation du Belarus était aussi débattu extensivement. Les intérêts russes dans le Belarus, à la fois économiques et politiques, ont été disséqués et analysés, comme l'étaient les conséquences d'un tel intérêt pour le pays. Les participants ont aussi détaillé l'incertitude de Loukachenko sur l'unité avec la Russie, qui pourrait avoir des conséquences majeures concernant la position du Belarus entre l'Est et l'Ouest, et concernant l'attitude de la Russie envers la formulation d'un rapport entre l'UE et le Belarus. Malgré le débat concernant le niveau de la participation russe, l'accord était

unanime que les décisions concernant le futur du Belarus doivent être prises à Minsk par le peuple biélorussien, plutôt que par Moscou.

Cette publication consiste en un compte-rendu des réactions, y compris celles de l'ancien président Václav Havel, délivrées à la conférence, et un sommaire de toutes les sessions et discussions.

// DEUTSCH

Die am 20. März 2004 im Tschechischen Senat in Prag abgehaltene Konferenz 'Weißrussland – unser neuer Nachbar' spiegelt jene Priorität wieder, welche sich die neuen EU-Mitgliedsstaaten in Zentral- und Mitteleuropa in Bezug auf die neuen Nachbarn der EU nach dem 1. Mai, insbesondere Weißrussland, gesetzt haben. Auf der Konferenz wurde betont, dass die EU-Erweiterung nicht die Preisgabe Weißrusslands durch seine Nachbarn im Westen bedeutet, sondern dass die Erweiterung der Europäischen Union die Wahrnehmung und das Interesse der EU an Weißrussland stärken und damit ein effizienteres Netzwerk schaffen kann, eine demokratische Transformation in Weißrussland zu fördern.

Die Konferenz brachte Politiker, Vertreter von NGOs und Basisaktivisten aus Tschechien, Litauen, Lettland, Polen, Slowakei und Weißrussland zusammen. Durch die Zusammenarbeit von Mensch in Not, der Assoziation für Internationale Angelegenheiten und dem tschechischen Senat bei der Organisation der Konferenz wurde der Wille bewiesen, mit Vereinen und Oppositionellen in Weißrussland zu kommunizieren und zusammenzuarbeiten.

Die Konferenz bot Platz für Überlegungen und Debatten, wie die Rolle der neuen EU-Mitgliedstaaten bei der Gestaltung der EU-Politik gegenüber Weißrussland und der neuen Nachbarn im Osten im allgemeinen zu definieren sei: in dem man Berichten aus erster Hand zuhörte, von Oppositionspolitikern aber auch Vertretern von Vereinen der Zivilgesellschaft vorgetragen; in dem man Erfahrungen und Rat mit Vertretern jener Staaten austauschte, die erst kürzlich demokratische Reformen erfahren haben; und in dem man nach den effektivsten und geeignetsten Maßnahmen suchte, die Menschen in Weißrussland zu unterstützen.

Die Konferenzteilnehmer halfen dabei, einen Einblick in das aktuelle Demokratiedefizit in Weißrussland zu bieten. Weißrussische Oppositionelle und Aktivisten beschrieben die zunehmend aggressivere Repressionspolitik Lukaschenkos und seiner Regierung sowie das hohe Maß an Verdrossenheit in der Bevölkerung. Trotzdem geben neue politische Koalitionen zusammen mit der

Wahl von jungen Demokraten auf lokaler Ebene zumindest leichten Grund zur Hoffnung. Vertreter aus Nachbarstaaten beschrieben ihre negativen Erfahrungen mit der weißrussischen Regierung und ihre positiven Zusammentreffen mit dem weißrussischen Volk. Viele sahen in der derzeitigen Lage Weißrusslands eine Parallele zur Vergangenheit ihrer eigenen Staaten im Kommunismus der 80er Jahre und betonten dadurch auch die kollektive Verantwortung, die osteuropäische Staaten bei der Hilfe dieser unter autoritärer Kontrolle leidenden Länder tragen.

Die Konferenzteilnehmer bestanden weiter darauf, dass die EU zwar nicht Regierung Weißrusslands unterstützen, dabei aber keineswegs die Bevölkerung in die Isolation treiben dürfe; Strategien um dies zu erreichen wurden besprochen. Viele warnten davor, dass eine Politik der völligen Isolation vor allem die Bevölkerung Weißrusslands treffen und zu einer Spaltung Europas in zwei grundverschiedene Systeme führen könnte. Besonders wichtig war in diesem Zusammenhang die Möglichkeit eines eventuellen EU-Beitritts Weißrusslands. Viele Teilnehmer betonten die Möglichkeit eines EU-Angebots als Werkzeug um dem weißrussischen Volk aus der Isolation zu helfen und pro-europäische Hoffnungen zu unterstützen, andere jedoch sahen ein solches Angebot als unwahrscheinlich an. Einstimmigkeit herrschte jedoch in der Frage der Rolle der neuen EU-Staaten: sie können durch ihre Erfahrung und ihren Einfluss eine künftige EU-Strategie mitdefinieren und damit eine bedeutende Rolle in Weißrusslands Zukunft spielen. Die neuen EU-Mitgliedstaaten können darüber hinaus ihre Erfahrungen mit Weißrussland und mit demokratischer Transformation dabei nützen, die Weißrussland-Debatte zu intensivieren und Europas Wahrnehmung zu verbessern. Dies kann nur erreicht werden, wenn die neuen EU-Staaten ihre Mühen vereinen und eine kollektive Botschaft an das Weißrussische Volk schicken, in dem sie in Brüssel mit Nachdruck auf einer klaren EU-Strategie beharren sowie auf einem umfassenden Plan, der praktische Maßnahmen für eine politische Haltung und eine Unterstützung der Zivilgesellschaft enthält.

Den Schlüssel bei der Hilfe zu demokratischen Reformen in Weißrussland sahen die Teilnehmer in der Unterstützung von Vereinen der Zivilgesellschaft und der politischen Opposition. Neben einer EU-Linie muss ein System direkter Unterstützung geschaffen werden, mit dem sowohl unabhängigen Initiativen als auch dem weißrussischen Volk geholfen werden kann. Dabei müssen Projekte praktischer Kooperation bedeutend ausgeweitet werden, insbesondere Studienreisen und Austauschprogramme für Studenten und Professoren der Zivilgesellschaft, einschließlich der medizinischen und rechtlichen Sphäre und NGOs, sowie lokaler Vertreter. Einige Teilnehmer betonten neben der Unterstützung der Zivilgesellschaft auch die Notwendigkeit für gleichzeitige Unterstützung in der politischen Sphäre. Die EU muss Weißrussland und seiner Bevölkerung helfen, ihre Zukunft selbst zu bestimmen, in dem sie freie und faire Wahlen garantiert, ohne Repression,

Diskriminierung oder Manipulation. Dazu würde man externe Wahlbeobachtung und die Unterstützung von demokratischen Koalitionen, Oppositionspolitikern und Aktivisten benötigen, sowie eine ausgedehnte Unterstützung von Institutionen der Zivilgesellschaft, einschließlich der internen und externen Medien und einer selbstbestimmenden rechtlichen Sphäre.

Das Niveau russischer Beteiligung am Demokratisierungsprozess in Weißrussland wurde ebenfalls weitläufig besprochen, wobei Russlands wirtschaftliche und politische Interessen in Weißrussland sowie die Folgen dieser Interessen für das Land betrachtet und analysiert wurden. Einige Teilnehmer betonten, dass in Russland selbst ein Mangel an wahren demokratischen Werten und Idealen herrsche und Russland seinem Nachbarstaat dadurch unmöglich bei der Demokratisierung helfen könne. Andere Teilnehmer argumentierten wiederum, dass durch die starke Bindung beider Staaten jede Anstrengung in Bezug auf Transformation mit Russlands Zustimmung, wenn nicht sogar mit Russlands aktiver Teilnahme geschehen müsse. Im Detail besprochen wurde auch Lukaschenkos derzeitige Unklarheit in Bezug auf eine Union mit Russland, die weitläufige Auswirkungen auf Weißrusslands Positionierung zwischen West und Ost haben würde, sowie auf Russlands Haltung gegenüber einer Neudefinierung der EU-Position zu Weißrussland. Trotz unterschiedlicher Meinungen bezüglich der russischen Beteiligung am Prozess der Transformation herrschte Einstimmigkeit darüber, dass Entscheidungen über Weißrusslands Zukunft in Minsk und nicht in Moskau gefällt werden müssen.

Diese Publikation enthält alle auf der Konferenz gehaltenen Grundsatzreden in gekürzter Fassung, einschließlich der Rede des ehemaligen Präsidenten der Tschechischen Republik Václav Havel, sowie ein Resümee aller Sitzungen und Diskussionen.

// ПО-РУССКИ

Конференция 'Беларусь – Наш новый сосед', которая прошла 20 марта 2004 года в Сенате Чешской Республики в Праге, с большим вниманием отнеслась к важности соседства новых стран-членов Европейского Союза из Центральной и Восточной Европы с Республикой Беларусь. Конференция акцентировала внимание на то, что присоединение новых членов к Европейскому Союзу не должно отделять Беларусь от Центральной и Восточной Европы новыми границами. Наоборот, больше внимания должно уделяться осуществлению и укреплению эффективной поддержки

демократических изменений на Беларуси через повышение европейской заинтересованности к новому соседу и активной стимуляции политики Евросоюза в отношении Беларуси.

Эта конференция объединила вместе политиков, активистов негосударственных организаций и местных инициатив из Чешской Республики, Польши, Литвы, Латвии, Словакии и Беларуси. Сотрудничество при организации этой конференции между Ассоциацией по международным делам, гуманитарной организацией 'Человек в беде' и Сенатом Парламента Чешской Республики проявило большую заинтересованность к широким контактам и сотрудничеству с гражданским обществом и оппозиционными политиками Беларуси.

Конференция стала простором для переговоров и дебатов относительно роли новых членов Евросоюза в определении политики ЕС как в отношении к Беларуси в частности, так и к восточным соседям вообще. Конференция дала возможность услышать из первых уст как о сегодняшнем положении на Беларуси от оппозиционных политиков и представителей гражданского сообщества, так и об опыте соседних государств в проведении демократических реформ в последнее время; что привело к результативной дискуссии относительно более эффективной и соответственной поддержки белорусского народа.

Участники конференции помогли увидеть сущность сегодняшнего дефицита демократии на Беларуси. Белорусские оппозиционные политики и активисты рассказали о нарастающей агрессивности репрессивного режима Лукашенко, а также о распространении атмосферы безнадежности среди белорусского народа. Лишь не так давно созданные коалиции и большое число молодых, мыслящих по-демократически людей, которые победили на местных выборах, дают основания для сдержанного оптимизма. Представители соседних стран рассказали о своём негативном опыте в отношении с белорусскими властями и про успешные контакты с белорусским народом. Было отмечено много подобного между сегодняшней ситуацией на Беларуси и ситуацией в их странах во время коммунистических режимов 80-х лет, что вынуждает их брать на себя коллективную ответственность за судьбы восточноевропейских стран и помогать им в борьбе с авторитарным режимом.

Участники пришли к выводу, что Евросоюз должен работать над созданием препятствий для белорусских властей без изоляции белорусского общества и стремиться к достижению этой цели. Большинство участников высказалось против тотальной изоляции, потому что это отрицательно влияет на белорусское общество и как результат приведет к установлению в Европе двух отдельных систем. Большое внимание вызвала дискуссия насчёт потенциальной возможности присоединения Беларуси к Европейскому Союзу. Поскольку большинство участников согласилось с необходимостью сохранить возможность присоединения Беларуси к Европейскому Союзу, как с механизмом преодоления изоляции белорусов и как поддержку их проевропейских стремлений, так некоторые участники восприняли эту идею со скептицизмом. Участники единогласно согласились с тем, что новые центрально

и восточноевропейские государства должны играть важную роль в будущем Беларуси, используя для этого свой опыт для определения и влияния на будущую политику Евросоюза относительно своих соседей. Учитывая их отношения с Беларусью, а так же их собственный опыт демократических трансформаций, новые страны-члены Евросоюза могут внести свою лепту в дискуссию о Беларуси и таким образом способствовать увеличению внимания к белорусской проблематике в Европе. Новые страны-члены должны объединиться и вместе дать ясно понять белорусскому народу стратегию Евросоюза и общий план действий, который предлагает конкретные шаги в политической сфере и в поддержке гражданского общества.

Поддержка институтов гражданского общества и политической оппозиции рассматриваются как основной аспект помощи в проведении демократических реформ на Беларуси. В дополнение к созданию европейской политики должна быть создана система непосредственной помощи независимым инициативам и белорусскому народу. Проекты практической кооперации, такие как программы образования и обмена для студентов и гуманитарных специалистов, в том числе и из сфер медицины и юриспруденции, негосударственных организаций и местного самоуправления, должны постоянно расширяться. В придачу к поддержке институтов гражданского общества некоторые участники конференции предложили и одновременное стимулирование политического сектора. Евросоюз должен помочь белорусскому народу в получении возможности самому решать о своём будущем посредством полностью свободных и справедливых выборов без репрессий, дискриминации и манипуляций. Для достижения этих целей будут нужны: международное наблюдение за выборами, поддержка демократических коалиций, оппозиционных политиков и активистов, поддержка и усиление институтов гражданского общества вместе с независимыми средствами массовой информации, а также местного самоуправления.

На конференции также широко обсуждался уровень российского участия в демократизации Беларуси. Российские интересы на Беларуси, как экономические, так и политические, были рассмотрены с точки зрения конечного эффекта, который они могут принести Беларуси. Некоторые участники подчеркнули недостаток реальных демократических ценностей и идеалов в самой России, а из этого следующую неспособность помогать Беларуси в демократических трансформациях. Другие участники высказали мнение, что поскольку Россия имеет большое влияние на Беларусь, то и расширение демократии должно проходить при взаимопонимании и даже с участием России. Участники конференции детально проанализировали сегодняшние неудачи Лукашенко по созданию союза с Россией, которые могут сильно повлиять на позицию Беларуси между Востоком и Западом и побудить Россию сформулировать свои отношения к Евросоюзу и Беларуси. После дебатов про уровень российского влияния участники конференции сошлись на мнении, что будущее Беларуси может решаться только белорусским народом в Минске, но ни при каких обстоятельствах не в Москве.

Эта публикация содержит как выступления участников, в том числе и прозвучавшее на конференции обращение бывшего президента Чешской Республики господина Вацлава Гавела, так и итоговые обзоры всех сессий и дискуссий.

