

FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT EU-BELARUS RELATIONS

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Over the past two years, there has been progress in EU–Belarus relations. Belarus has been participating more pro-actively in the Eastern Partnership, in particular in the multilateral formats. Tangible steps taken by Belarus to respect universal freedoms, the rule of law, and human rights, including fundamental labour rights, will remain fundamental criteria for the shaping of the EU's future policy towards Belarus. The EU considers that the WTO accession process should top the agenda. Belarus' accession to the WTO would contribute to the creation of a more predictable and stable business environment in the country, a necessary

STRONGER ECONOMY

The EU lifted most of the restrictive measures against Belarus in February 2016, also activating a key package of economic and other cooperation-related measures. The package includes:

- ✓ **cooperation with international financial institutions** such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD);
- ✓ enhanced preparations for World Trade Organisation (WTO) accession;
- ✓ the **removal of textile quotas for exports**.

The Strengthening Private Initiative Growth in Belarus (SPRING) Programme backs private local economic initiatives and job creation in Belarus.

STRONGER GOVERNANCE

- ✓ The **EU-Belarus Coordination Group** has been established at the level of senior officials. It is a forum for a policy dialogue, steers cooperation between the EU and Belarus, and oversees the further development of relations.
- ✓ The EU is providing technical assistance to help Belarus with **preparations for WTO accession** through the TAIEX twinning instrument.
- ✓ The **EU-Belarus formal Dialogue on Trade** gathers twice a year in order to exchange on a regular basis, including on domestic regulations and other trade concerns.
- ✓ The **EU-Belarus Customs Dialogue** has been established. It is aimed at identifying possible cooperation and assistance activities for facilitating trade, ensuring supply chain security and safety, and combating fraud.

STRONGER CONNECTIVITY

- ✓ In June 2017, Belarus joined the Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership (E5P). This Trust Fund, managed by the EBRD, supports loans for municipal sector projects on energy efficiency and the environment across the Eastern Partnership countries.
- ✓ Belarus is one of the **strongest-performing Eastern Partnership countries in the Horizon 2020** programme for research and innovation.

STRONGER SOCIETY

- ✓ The EU repeatedly raises human rights issues, including the freedom of assembly and association, fundamental labour standards, freedom of speech and the media with the Belarusian authorities at all levels.
- ✓ The Belarus 'National Action Plan on Human Rights', adopted in October 2016, underpins the process of domestic reforms and the legislative amendments.
- ✓ The EU-Belarus **negotiations on a Mobility Partnership were concluded** and negotiations on a Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements are underway.
- ✓ Erasmus+ gave the possibility to **almost 1,000 students and academic staff from Belarus** to study or teach in the EU countries between 2015 and 2017.
- ✓ Over 2,300 young people and youth workers from Belarus have been involved in joint exchanges, volunteering and capacity-building projects.

IN FIGURES

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EU is the 2nd trading partner with almost a 1/3 share in the Belarus's overall trade.

91,5 million

From 2014-2017, the EU's assistance package to Belarus under the European Neighbourhood Instrument amounted to €91.5 million.

NUCLEAR SAFETY

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

ABOLITION OF DEATH PENALTY

Belarus is the only country in Europe where the death penalty is still in use. Four people are currently on death row in Belarus. The EU repeatedly raises human rights issues, including the death penalty, with the Belarusian authorities at all levels. The remaining death sentences should be commuted and a moratorium introduced as a first step towards its abolition.