



Procedure file

Basic information		
RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects	2012/2581(RSP)	Procedure completed
Resolution on the situation in Belarus		
Subject 6.10.04 Third-country political situation, local and regional conflicts		
Geographical area Belarus		

Key players			
European Parliament Council of the European Union	Council configuration	Meeting	Date
	Foreign Affairs	3157	22/03/2012

Key events			
14/03/2012	Debate in Parliament		
22/03/2012	Resolution/conclusions adopted by Council		Summary
29/03/2012	Results of vote in Parliament		
29/03/2012	Decision by Parliament	T7-0112/2012	Summary
29/03/2012	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information	
Procedure reference	2012/2581(RSP)
Procedure type	RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects
Procedure subtype	Resolution on statement
Legal basis	Rules of Procedure EP 132-p2
Stage reached in procedure	Procedure completed

Documentation gateway					
Motion for a resolution		B7-0178/2012	13/03/2012	EP	
Motion for a resolution		B7-0179/2012	13/03/2012	EP	
Motion for a resolution		B7-0180/2012	13/03/2012	EP	
Motion for a resolution		B7-0181/2012	13/03/2012	EP	
Motion for a resolution		B7-0182/2012	13/03/2012	EP	
Motion for a resolution		B7-0183/2012	13/03/2012	EP	
Joint motion for resolution		RC-B7-0178/2012	13/03/2012		

Resolution on the situation in Belarus

Against the background of the further deterioration of the situation in Belarus, the Council debated the situation and adopted conclusions. It reiterates its grave concern about the continued lack of respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law in Belarus, and regrets that further repressive measures have taken place. As the political prisoners have not been released, the Council decided to designate 12 additional persons responsible for serious violations of human rights or the repression of civil society and democratic opposition, to the list of those subject to travel restrictions and assets freezes. The Council also decided to designate further businessmen and companies benefitting from or supporting the regime and will agree further such designations at upcoming Council meetings if all Belarusian political prisoners are not released. The EU's restrictive measures remain open and under constant review.

The EU calls for:

- the immediate release and rehabilitation of all remaining political prisoners, stating that it is deeply concerned about reports of torture and inhumane prison conditions of political prisoners, such as of former presidential candidates Andrei Sannikaw and Mikalay Statkevich;
- Belarus to join a global moratorium on the death penalty as a first step towards its universal abolition;
- the end of all harassment of members of the opposition, human rights defenders, journalists and civil society, and not to hinder their freedom of movement.

The EU also condemns the suppression of non-violent protests and the systematic use of the judicial system as a means of repression, including against peaceful protesters. It is furthermore strongly concerned about the introduction of new legislation that will further restrict the Belarusian citizens freedoms of assembly, association and the free flow of information on the internet, as well as the provision of support to civil society.

The Council again urges Belarus to:

- respect internationally recognised diplomatic immunities and privileges of EU diplomatic representations and their personnel in Minsk and to stop the ongoing harassment and intimidation ;
- follow up on its previously announced intention to initiate a national dialogue with civil society and the opposition to pave the way for the holding of parliamentary elections in 2012 in line with international norms and standards ;
- cooperate within the OSCE in view of a re-opening of the OSCE field presence in Belarus, and to adhere to and implement OSCE commitments across all three dimensions, in particular in the area of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

In the context of the upcoming 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship, the EU will keep International and National Ice Hockey Federations informed about its deep concerns as regards the lack of respect by Belarus for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles. The EU reiterates its readiness to launch negotiations for visa facilitation and readmission agreements which would enhance people-to-people contacts to the benefit of the Belarusian population at large, and strongly regrets the unconstructive position of the Belarusian authorities in not responding so far to the letter sent in June 2011 inviting them to start negotiations. In order to facilitate the issuing of visas to the Belarusian public, the Council welcomes the fact that the EU Member States will strive to make optimal use of the existing flexibilities offered by the Visa Code, in particular the possibilities to waive and reduce visa fees for certain categories of Belarusian citizens or in individual cases. The Council recalls the possibilities of facilitating movement of persons living in border areas, and calls on the authorities of Belarus to take the necessary steps for the entry into force of all local border traffic agreements with its neighbouring EU member states in accordance with the EU acquis on local border traffic.

The Council reiterates its commitment to the policy of critical engagement, including through dialogue and the Eastern Partnership, and recalls that the development of bilateral relations is conditional on progress towards respect by Belarus for the principles of democracy, the rule of law and human rights. The EU remains willing to assist Belarus to meet its obligations in this regard.

These decisions come in addition to already existing measures: more than 200 individuals are already subject to a travel ban and a freeze of their assets within the EU. Moreover, the assets of three companies linked to the regime are already frozen while exports to Belarus of arms and material for internal repression are prohibited.

Resolution on the situation in Belarus

The European Parliament adopted a resolution tabled on behalf of the Committee on Foreign Affairs on the situation in Belarus. It continues strongly to condemn the deteriorating situation as regards human rights and fundamental freedoms, combined with the lack of deep democratic and economic reforms in Belarus, and will continue to oppose the repression of the regime's opponents in Minsk. Members note the political situation in Belarus has been seriously deteriorating since the presidential elections of 19 December 2010, with repressive measures being taken against members of the democratic opposition, the free media, civil society activists and human rights defenders, despite repeated calls from the international community to halt these measure immediately.

Parliament strongly deplores the execution of Uladzislau Kavalyou and Dzmitry Kanavalau in March 2012 despite continuous domestic and international protests. It calls on the Belarusian authorities to immediately introduce a moratorium on the death penalty, and it condemns the continuous persecution of human rights defenders and members of the democratic opposition. Parliament demands the unconditional and immediate release of all political prisoners, including former presidential candidates, reiterating that there cannot be any progress in the EU-Belarus dialogue without progress by Belarus in terms of democracy, human rights and rule of law and until all political prisoners, are unconditionally released and their civil rights are fully rehabilitated.

Noting an EU-Belarus diplomatic conflict of unprecedented scope escalated after the Council decision of 28 February 2012 to add 21

Belarusian officials to the list of people subject to the assets freeze and visa ban, Parliament states that the subsequent decision to withdraw all the ambassadors of the EU Member States from Belarus proves that the Belarusian authorities' attempts to divide the European Union over decisions on sanctions have failed. It deplores the foreign travel ban list drafted by the Belarus Government that forbids several opponents and human rights activists from leaving the country, and stresses that, instead of choosing increasing self-isolation, Minsk should make the right choice for its people and open itself to democracy.

Parliament welcomes the above-mentioned Council decision to strengthen restrictive measures and also welcomes the Council decision of 23 March 2012 to reinforce restrictive measures against the Belarusian regime by adding 12 more persons, benefiting from and supporting the Belarusian regime as well as persons responsible for the repression of civil society and the democratic opposition in Belarus, to the list of those targeted by a travel ban and an asset freeze as well as freezing the assets of 29 entities supporting the regime. It calls on the Council and Commission to:

- take stock of the latest developments in EU-Belarus diplomatic relations and of the further deterioration in the situation regarding human rights and basic freedoms in the country and, on this basis, to adopt a decision concerning further restrictive measures, including targeted economic sanctions;
- support, with financial and political means, the efforts of Belarusian civil society, independent media (including TV Belsat, European Radio for Belarus, Radio Racja and others) and non-governmental organisations in Belarus to promote democracy.

Members call on the National Ice Hockey Federations of the EU Member States and all other democratic countries to urge the IIHF, including at its next Congress in May in Helsinki, Finland, to re-discuss its earlier decision envisaging the possibility of relocating the 2014 World Ice Hockey Championship from Belarus to another host country until all political prisoners, are released and until the regime shows clear signs of its commitment to respect human rights and the rule of law.

Furthermore, Parliament stresses the need for increased cooperation between the EU and its eastern neighbours in the framework of the Eastern Partnership, including its parliamentary dimension the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly with the shared aim of initiating a genuine process of democratisation in Belarus.

Lastly, Parliament states that a firm commitment by all EU Member States and other democratic countries to act in a united manner in times of necessity can foster the successful promotion of universal values in such countries as Belarus and bring these countries closer to the path of democratic transition.