



Newsletter  
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The European Union should strongly consider lifting trade preferences for Belarus – believes Minsk – because economic sanctions will be felt most by the ordinary citizens. Such was the response to the decision by EU experts excluding Belarus from the group of beneficiaries of the Generalised System of Preferences. Responding to economic sanctions, Belarus may slacken security on its border with the EU, says Belarusian senator Michaił Čarhiniec.

Last week, the European Commission presented a new variant of developing relations with neighbouring countries and again underlined that the full participation of Belarus in the programmes within Europe's policy of goodneighbourly relations will be possible once Minsk complies with the 12 conditions set out by the EU, which Minsk officials refuse to do.

On the other hand, Belarusian opposition turned to the authorities with an offer to establish a joint working group to discuss the EU's demands. It is necessary to start a general national dialogue in Belarus, as the EU's proposals have been put forward not only to the authorities but to all citizens – says the opposition.

One of the opposition leaders, Anatol Labiedźka, approached parliamentarians to start impeachment procedures on Alaksandar Łukašenka. After the head of state confessed to falsifying the results of the presidential elections (March 2006), the Central Electoral Commission has no grounds to organize the election campaign for local governments (January 2007).

Alaksandar Kazulin has now been on hunger strike for 50 days. The former Belarusian presidential candidate weighs 40 kilogrammes and is in a critical condition. The politician has declared that he will continue the strike until his original demand is met, i.e. that the situation in Belarus is tackled by the UN Security Council.

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Alaksandar Kazulin has now been on hunger strike for 50 days. The former Belarusian presidential candidate is in a critical condition.

Efforts to draw attention to the problem are being made by opposition activists. Among others the Belarusian Social Democratic Party (Hramada) held a rally in support of their leader. Some 30 people took part in a relay hunger strike.

One of the leaders of the Belarusian opposition, Alaksandar Milinkievič, proposed Kazulin to the prestigious Martin Ennals award.

A 6-day-long hunger strike by Catholics in Grodno forced the authorities to do what they failed to in 10 years. At last there is a decision agreeing to the construction of a Catholic Church in place of the chapel of the parish of the Holiest Virgin of Ostra Brama, Mother of Compassion. ■

## OFFICIALLY

### Belarus threatens with weakening the control on the eastern boarder of the European Union

**Belarusian senator threatens Europe with weakening the defence of the country's borders. Michail Čarhiniec, the head of the Committee for International Affairs and National Security, stated that it may happen should Europe withdraw commercial preferences for Belarus.**

The senator claims Europe praises Belarus for its well-protected borders. „It may be reasonable to use a part of the resources spent on protection of our borders to cover the losses caused by withdrawal of commercial preferences” remarked Čarhiniec. As he indicated the decision would apply to approximately 44% of Belarusian exports. In August 2006 the European Commission gave Belarusian authorities eight months to comply with twelve recommendations of the International Labour Organisation concerning the rights of independent trade unions. The United States have already withdrawn such preferences yet commercial exchange between the US and Belarus is insignificant.

### Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian interior minister meet

**The interior minister of Russia, Belarus and Ukraine are meeting in Minsk to discuss cross-border crime in the economies of the respective countries.**

The Belarus interior ministry has informed that the tripartite co-operation is characterized by a good dynamics. However, problems remain concerning attempts to legalize illegal gains stemming from crime, illicit sales of fuels and tax evasion.

The Russian, Belarusian and Ukrainian interior minister will also look into the possibilities of exchanging information on organized crime rings, counteracting corruption among customs officers and order guards, belaruspartisan. org reports.

## POLITICS

### European Union strengthens support for neighbour countries

**The European Commission presented in the evening of December 4th „a once again analysed option” of neighbourhood policy of the EU in which Belarus is also mentioned. „Our policy of neighbourhood works well but the EU may achieve more in strengthening peace, stabilization and economic well-being of our neighbours. The best means is to support economic and political reforms”stated the EU commissioner for**

## **external relations and policy of good neighbourhood Benita Ferrero-Waldner.**

Previous option of the neighbourhood policy has been in power for eighteen months and, as it turned out, it was the most beneficial for the southern neighbours of the EU. Ferrero-Waldner would like also the eastern neighbours to benefit from the programme.

„Such countries as Ukraine, Georgia, Armenia, Moldova, and in the future also Belarus should be able to make good use of a deep economic integration with the EU, especially lifting custom barriers” indicated Benita Ferrero-Waldner.

In 2007-2013 period states which participate in the programme will receive from Brussels aid amounting to 12 billion euro – 1/3 more than in the previous six-year budget.

Currently participation of Belarus in the good neighbourhood policy programmes is limited. A complete participation will be possible once Minsk authorities fulfil twelve conditions set forth by the EU – they will liberate all political prisoners, allow completion of enquiries in the deaths of politicians and journalists, organise free and just elections, stop interfering with the work of courts of justice and private enterprises, guarantee freedom of the press, respect for the rights of social organisations, independent trade unions, and national minorities.

## **OPPOSITION**

### **Alaksandar Milinkievič's call**

**The leader of united Belarus democratic forces Alaksandar Milinkievič has called on the Russian, US and French presidents, as well as on the German chancellor, to do what they can to save the life of Alaksandar Kazulin, who carries on his hunger strike, and to free political prisoners in Belarus.**

Alaksandar Kazulin said he would interrupt his hunger strike when at least one G8 state brings human rights in Belarus onto the UN Security Council agenda.

Milinkievič says in his appeal that it is up to the presidents and the German chancellor to save the life of a man who dared to oppose the dictatorial Belarus regime.

Former presidential candidate Kazulin was sentenced to 5.5 years in prison for his political convictions. He started his protest

on October 20. Over the eight months of arrest and 49 days of the hunger strike, Kazulin is reported to have lost 40 kilograms of weight. According to physicians, the politician's condition is life-threatening.

### **Leader of "Young Front" illegally moved to penal colony**

**Leader of the „Young Front” organisation Źmicier Saškievič has been illegally transferred from arrest to a penal colony in the city of Škłoŭ.**

According to members of his organisation, in the light of Belarusian law, Dashkevich could have been moved to the colony only after his appeal had been considered in court. Representatives of "Young Front" believe that the move is a way of pressurizing the activist.

On 1 November, Dashkevich was sentenced to 1.5 years of imprisonment in a penal colony for "active participation in an illegal organisation". His appeal is to come before the court on December 15th, informs Charter'97 on its internet pages.

## **ECONOMY**

### **"Beltranshaz" price set at 10-17 billion USD**

**The market price of "Beltranshaz" – the Belarusian distributor and operator of gas pipelines – should be 10-17 billion USD, believes Belarusian PM Syarhey Sidorski.**

"We are expecting that the data which the Belarusian side presents in the negotiation process will be objectively received by our Russian partners", he said.

Both parties commissioned an independent appraisal from Dutch concern ABN Amro, which valued "Beltranshaz" at 3.5 billion USD.

However, the Belarus PM believes that the data supplied by Belarusian experts are based on concrete economic grounds – writes Nasha Niva on its internet pages.

## EU to withhold preferential trade terms for Belarus

**A working group of European Union experts has overwhelmingly voted to exclude Belarus from a group of countries that benefit from the General System of Preferences, BielaPan agency reports.**

„This step should officially be approved by permanent EU representatives, which could happen even before Christmas, probably on December 20”, an EU press service representative has said.

Those countries that voted for excluding Belarus from the system included Greece, Cyprus and Latvia. The Czech Republic and Slovakia abstained from voting. If permanent EU representatives backed the decision, it would enter into force in half a year's time.

The procedure of suspending preferential trade terms for Belarus was initiated by the EU Council In September 2005 due to the violations of trade union rights In Belarus.

Belarus stands to lose up to 300 million euro as a result of the move. In 2005 two-way trade between the EU and Belarus amounted to 3 billion euro.

The General System of Preferences is a system of customs concessions, which the developer countries offer to the developing nations. The group includes 77 countries of the former USSR and the former communist bloc, which remain outside the EU, as well as China.

## SOCIETY

### "Viasna" calls on A. Kazulin to end hunger strike

**The human rights organisation "Viasna" has called on Alaxandar Kazulin to end his hunger strike. Human rights activists say they support the politician's demands but are deeply concerned about the effects of the protest on his health.**

"We appeal to you to end the hunger strike. Please do not give the regime any reasons for satisfaction or joy (...) Your strenght, talent and knowledge are vital for our country to gain victory in the future and to bring Belarus closer to democracy and respect for human rights. Please do not let a tragedy happen" reads the appeal of "Viasna".

Also Baćkaŭščyna, the World Association of Belarusians has urged the former presidential candidate to end his hunger strike.

Alaxandar Kazulin, sentenced to 5 and a half years in prison for his political convictions, began a hunger strike on October 20th. Over 8 months of arrest and 50 days of the protest he lost more than 40 kilogrammes. Doctors say that his condition is life-threatening.

Kazulin wants the human rights situation in Belarus to be put before the UN Security Council.

### Parents of young Belarussians studying in Poland meet in Minsk

**Parents of Belarussian students, participants in the Kanstancin Kalinoŭski programme, have met in the Polish Embassy building in Minsk. About 150 people attended the meeting.**

According to Ina Kulej, head of the committee for the defence of the repressed "Solidarność", the initiator of the meeting, the main objective of the event was to bring together the parents of young people who study in Poland. Their children represent the active part of Belarussian youth, who took part in the protests against falsifying presidential elections last March. They were expelled from universities in Belarus and must continue studies abroad.

Not all the parents supported the oppositionist activities of their offspring but in the wake of events many have understood the sense of the struggle and are now ready to fight not only for their children but also for a democratic Belarussian state. The parents also met with director of the K. Kalinoŭski grant programme, Jan Malicki, thanking him for giving their children the possibility to continue education in Poland.

There are around 200 students expelled from Belarussian universities for oppositionist activity who study at universities in Poland within the K. Kalinoŭski programme.

## CULTURE

## Chernobyl begins In Poznan

**A theatre production by Belarusian, Polish and Ukrainian directors entitled „Chernobyl TM” has been staged in Poznan. It’s the first major theatre project of its kind, conducted as a joint arts venture between the three countries.**

The project is co-ordinated by Polish actor Jarosław Siejkowski, Ukrainian director Svyatlana Aleshka and Belarusian student of the Krakow Higher Theatre School Żmicer Čartkoŭ.

The Project, which is supported by the Polish minister of culture, the European Cultural Fund and the Polish Institute in Minsk, made its debut on Polish stages last week. On December 9 the production is to be shown to

Minsk audiences.

According to Jarosław Siejkowski, the idea of a production devoted to the Chernobyl nuclear Power station disaster was born after those behind the Project read the book „Chernobyl Prayer” by Svyatlana Aleksiyevyeh. Then came trips to the contaminated zone, during which conversations were held with local inhabitants, those who took part in the clean-up operation, ecologists, as well as public officials. All this provided material for the „Chernobyl TM” production, where TM stands for trademark.

The web edition of the Nasha Niva newspaper reports that the production will soon be shown in Minsk, Homel and in Ukraine.



There are various sites devoted to events in Belarus, which are, however, little known in Western Europe, and among people dealing with politics towards Belarus who do not understand the Russian or Belarusian languages.

The [belarus-live](http://belarus-live) site fills this gap. The site allows to order weekly reception of news in English, French, German, Polish, Belarusian, Russian and Ukrainian.

