



Newsletter  
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Negotiations concerning an agreement on establishing a representative unit of the European Commission in Belarus have started in Minsk. The person responsible for negotiations on the Belarusian side will be the deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Valery Varanietski.

Coordinator for Belarusian issues from the representative unit of the European Commission in Ukraine Jean-Eric Holzapfel has pointed out that at present it is difficult to estimate how long it will take to complete the negotiations. The problem is that the Belarusian side is still demanding to be given the right to determine the scope of the representative unit's activity, which has the status of a diplomatic mission. It is mainly about impeding the activity in domains such as human rights, as well as in other political and humanitarian issues.

"As far as human rights are concerned, the situation in Belarus is by far among the worst in the region", said Souhayr Balhassen, President of the International Federation of Human Rights, in an interview with an independent agency, BielaPAN. Balhassen paid a visit to Belarus between 29-31 October.

It is noteworthy that the representative unit of Belarus at the European Commission has had the status of a fully fledged diplomatic mission for some years now. The Embassy of the Republic of Slovakia in Belarus, which is carrying out presidential duties in Belarus on behalf of Portugal, is currently coordinating the work of EU diplomats.

And so, 30 October in Minsk a secret meeting of the heads of diplomatic missions from EU member states and the leaders of the united democratic forces took place. Diplomats wanted to gain insight into the opposition leader's view of the country's situation. The EU ambassadors were primarily concerned with the preparations to the Social Parade, planned for 4 November.

"The heads of the EU diplomatic missions pointed out with satisfaction that opposition leaders have noticed some progress in the dialogue between the citizens and the government concerning finding new solutions to the serious problems connected with reforming social services in Belarus", wrote the Embassy of the Republic of Slovakia in its statement.

The phrase "some progress in the dialogue between the citizens and the government" most likely refers to the fact that authorities have started giving the opposition special permission to hold meetings and events, which is safeguarded in the present Constitution of Belarus.

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The indicator of the Social Parade's importance may be the number of entrepreneurs who decide to take part. It is widely assumed that this very group was the catalyst of the orange revolution in Ukraine.

The Association of Belarusian Entrepreneurs keeps organizing protests concerning changes into Directive No# 760, whenever local authorities give them a go-ahead. It is worth mentioning that the Supreme Court has declined to check whether the Directive is constitutional.

However, one cannot say that Belarusian entrepreneurs present a consistent and active attitude. Many of them must be assuming that there are more effective ways of solving the problem. One of them is to register employees as individual entrepreneurs (IP). Another is to transfer business activity into neighboring countries, work according to old schemata, as well as illegal employment.

According to many experts, all these actions, instead of creating more civilized rules for entrepreneurship, will bring back the commercial rules from the beginning of the 1990's, which were characterized by lack of social and legal protection of people involved in SME activity, higher demand for services offered by criminal groups as well as higher cash turnover. Moreover, the liquidation of many enterprises will lead to an increase in the number of people who are officially not employed in the state economy. This number is already almost 1 m, of all the 4.5 m of economically active population.

It is commonly thought that the "Future without communism" Forum, which is to take place 3 November, will be an event of considerable significance. Scientists, victims of communist repressions culture activists, as well as representatives of the clergy and foreign guests will participate. After the authorities of the Cultural Facility MAZ refused to host the event, the organizers had to think of a new venue. The cause of refusal was completely made up and the event will ultimately take place, albeit on a smaller scale, said Ales Michalewicz, head of the organizational committee of the Forum.

The Forum is an answer to an international meeting of representatives of communist parties, which is to be held 4 November in Minsk and in which President Aliaksandr Lukashenka is personally involved. It is in Minsk that festivities to celebrate the Russian Revolution will begin. They are to end in Moscow, 7 November.

Some resonance in the internal political matters in Belarus may also be caused by another event. 1 November in Minsk, the First Congress of Belarusian Scientists was opened. 2,500 delegates are to participate. Many acclaimed Belarusian scientists refer to this event as a "propaganda show". Former President of the National Academy of Sciences, Prof. Aliaksandr Vaytovich, whose name does not feature on the list of delegates, is convinced that none of them will be allowed to criticize the shape in which science is nowadays. It can be safely assumed that no dissidents like Prof. Sakharau will be allowed to take the floor during the Congress.

At the same time, one day before the congress, rumors have spread, concerning a conflict between PM Siarhei Sidorski and the President of the National Academy of Sciences, Michail Miasnikovich on science management reform and some other matters of state character. It is worth reminding that before taking the post of the President of the National Academy of Sciences, Michail Miasnikovich was the first deputy PM and the head of presidential administration.

According to many observers, it is not to be excluded that the "propaganda show" will result in significant changes in the National Academy of Sciences staff, as well as in the Belarusian government.

## OFFICIAL

### Deputy prosecutors have greater power of attorney

**MP from the House of Representatives have passed a law concerning “Changes and amendments in some laws of the Republic of Belarus relating to the activity of the prosecutor’s office”.**

The new law greatly widens the power of attorney of deputy prosecutors. They will be able to detain, for the period of 10 days, people who breached the law in border zones or crossed the border illegally. Deputy prosecutors will also be able to detain foreign citizens or people without Belarusian citizenship for breaching the rules of stay in the Republic of Belarus.

## POLITICS

### Group for Belarusian issues in the European Union

**Former Minister of Foreign Affairs, deputy chair of the parliamentary commission for European issues in Ukraine, Antanas Valionis, proposed creating a group for Belarusian issues in the European Union, reports the portal naving.by.**

“It is necessary to consider a more effective policy of the European Union regarding Belarus”, stated Valionis. “To this end, experienced and respected politicians must gather in order to analyse the situation and propose solutions”, added the Lithuanian politics.

So far, it is just an initiative and so it is still too early to talk about it in more detail. Antanas Valionis informed that a proposal has been made to former President of Poland, Aleksander Kwasniewski, to become head of the group.

## ECONOMY

### Belarusian export of oil-based products makes up for trade deficit

**Exporting products made from Russian oil to Europe allows Belarus to make up for this year’s deficit in trade with Russia, informed the Belarusian deputy PM Andrej Kabiakou. The deficit in trade with Russia is made up for with a positive balance of trade with the EU.**

“We intend to keep making up for this deficit through trading with other countries”, said Kabiakou. Referring to the planned increase in the price of Russian gas, deputy PM said it would not affect the costs of Belarusian production.

### Belarus plans to start extracting oil in Venezuela before the end of the year

**According to the President of the Bielnafachim concern, Michal Asipienka, the process of creating a joint enterprise for oil extraction is currently under way. The Venezuelan parliament is reviewing documents. An objective has been set out, to start extraction before the end of this year. “The premises have already been prepared for extraction”, informed Asipienka.**

Bielnafachim’s contribution to the enterprise will amount to \$200,000.

Recently a joint geological and quest venture has been created in Venezuela. It is to start its works in the Orinoco valley. Moreover, geologists from Belarus will check whether there is any oil there.

### Belarusian papers on Belarusian paper

**From 1 January Belarusian papers will be printed on Belarusian paper,**

**informs the governmental agency BielTA.**

Works in the paper factory in Szklow have almost been completed now. Almost all devices and machinery have already been installed there. A mock production will take place 1 December. The new technology will be tested within two weeks' time and in the next year Belarusian papers will be printed on Belarusian paper.

## SOCIETY

**70th anniversary of shootings celebrated in Minsk**

**29 October 1937 mass shootings of Belarusian intelligentsia took place. Some 100 people, among them 22 writers, were killed in an NKVD prison.**

The 70th anniversary was celebrated at the victims' of Bolshevik terror burial place.

**Belarusian beer consumption rises by 19%**

**Beer consumption in Belarus in 2007 is 46 liters per person, which means a 19% rise in comparison with the previous year, informed the head of the Institute for Coordination and Development of Production of Food and Tobacco Products, Henrykh Charniak. 45 to 46 litres per person is in accordance with the development program of beer industry, informs Interfaks agency.**

Henrykh Charniak stated that in a free competition market, Belarusian beer producers do not stand a chance of competing with world breweries. The expert meant the price, quality and advertising.

## OPPOSITION

**Psychiatrists examine opposition activist**

**Andrei Tsianiuta, "Youth Front" opposition activist from Homl, spent 7 years in a psychiatric facility. As Polish Radio already informed, the local KGB ordered him to undergo psychiatric examination. Criminal proceeding have been started against him. He is accused of being a member of an illegal organization.**

During the examination, Tsianiuta was questioned about his family, school-related activities and free time, informs Radio Racja.

## CULTURE

**Inhabitants of Grodno make an appeal to Hugo Chavez**

**The leadership of the Hrodna-based "Freedom" movement has made an appeal to the Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez to remain cautious while working on joint projects with Belarus. The board of the Venezuelan capital city has decided to accept the proposal of the Belarusian Ministry of Architecture and Construction concerning the renovation of the historical center of Caracas.**

The movement is concerned about the fate of the old town in Caracas, architectural pearl of Latin America. "We are concerned about it, since Grodno underwent a similar reconstruction. In the previous year "experts" have ruined the historical center of ancient Grodno in a cynical and planned manner. Though damaged, the city survived several centuries of Russian occupation, almost 50 years of the Soviet rule, as well as two world wars", reads the statement by the "Freedom" movement.

## Polish classics at the Sofijski synod

**The 25th concert season begins in Polatsk as part of the Sofijski synod, informs the portal “Narodnyja naviny Viciebsku” (“People’s News from Vitsebsk”).**

The event will be inaugurated with a concert commemorating the 125th birthday of the renowned Polish composer, Karol Szymanowski. The program features

Szymanowski’s works, which will be performed by the University Choir and the Symphonic Orchestra of the Belarusian Radio and Television Company. Acclaimed Polish conductor, Czeslaw Grabowski, will come to the concert especially to conduct on this occasion.

Karol Maciej Szymanowski was born into a Polish family in Ukraine. He was a pianist, continuing the tradition of Skriabin and Chopin, an excellent teacher, and the first dean of the Warsaw Music Conservatory.



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

