



EU further steps up its support to the people of Belarus

Brussels, 12 December 2021

The European Commission will mobilise an additional €30 million to further strengthen its support to the people of Belarus. This new funding will complement and expand the already existing EU support for youth, independent media, small and medium-sized enterprises in exile, and culture.

President of the European Commission, Ursula **von der Leyen**, said: *"The EU stands by the people of Belarus in their fight for freedom and democracy. We will step up our support with a new €30 million for youth, independent media, SMEs in exile and cultural actors – that the Lukashenko regime continues to repress. And we have a €3 billion economic and investment package ready to go for a democratic Belarus. The drive for freedom of the Belarusian people is an inspiration to us all."*

Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement, Olivér **Várhelyi**, said: *"Ahead of the Eastern Partnership Summit, this announcement to increase our support is another clear sign that the European Union continues to stand firmly behind the Belarusian people in their fight for freedom. The Belarusian people can continue to count on the support and solidarity of the European Union in their struggle for building a democratic future."*

The objective of this increased assistance is to strengthen the resilience and capacity of the Belarusian people affected by the political crisis to promote democratic changes in Belarus, with focus on key priority areas, including:

- **Independent media**, expanding EU support to the systematically repressed independent media in Belarus through technical assistance and training, and establishing of a donor coordination structure.
- **People-to-people contacts, especially among youth, academic staff, and professionals**, providing opportunities for international mobility to students, academic staff, and professionals, and continuing support to the European Humanities University.
- **Entrepreneurs and SMEs in exile**, supporting companies in exile, including through advisory services.
- **Cultural and art initiatives**, supporting grants to cultural and art initiatives, and to artistic professionals' skills development, both in Belarus and by Belarusian artists abroad.

Overall, this would bring the overall assistance the European Union is providing to the people of Belarus since August 2020 to close to €65 million. In the immediate aftermath of the fraudulent elections, €3.7 million was mobilised for emergency support for the victims of oppression and independent media. The European Union further committed €24 million to preserve space for civil society, €6 million to facilitate SME access to finance, and additional €1 million for independent media and civil society support.

Background

Following the falsification of the presidential election in Belarus in August 2020 and the following unprecedented wave of repression on civil society by the Lukashenko regime, the European Union has firmly supported the right and the democratic aspirations of the people of Belarus.

In line with the [October 2020 Council Conclusions](#), the EU has repeatedly called for a democratic solution to the crisis through inclusive national dialogue with the broader society.

In this context, the EU has reviewed its relations with Belarus. More than half of the EU's bilateral assistance has been suspended or redirected to support the Belarussian people and civil society. The EU has also imposed five rounds of sanctions, sending a clear message that human rights abuses will not be tolerated.

The European Commission is also ready to launch a €3 billion comprehensive plan of economic support for a democratic Belarus, in line with its commitment to support a peaceful democratic transition in the country. Should such a transition take place, the EU stands ready to use a variety of instruments in line with [the Eastern Partnership policy](#) to accompany such a democratic transition.

For More Information

[Belarus country factsheet](#)

[Delegation of the European Union to Belarus](#)

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