



RESOLUTION ON THE SITUATION IN THE REPUBLIC OF BELARUS

ADOPTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ROTTERDAM, THE NETHERLANDS, 13-15 NOVEMBER 2008

For many years, the Belarusian government has been known to be repressive and undemocratic. Issues of human rights violations, including the right to freedom of association, have been repeatedly raised by the international community. This criticism was repeatedly represented in resolutions of the UN, OSCE, Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, decisions of the UN Human Rights Committee, in numerous statements of international non-governmental organisations, and in the '12 demands' of the European Union.

So far, Belarus has remained excluded from the political processes within Europe. However, in reaction to positive signs during the recent electoral campaign, European Union countries have begun abandoning the existing policy of isolation and started a dialogue with the Lukashenko government.

The European Youth Forum is very concerned about this development, given the fact that political repression and the imprisonment of civil rights activists have picked up again shortly after the elections. The atmosphere of fear has returned, democracy remains a facade to mask an authoritarian regime. The rights of young people to freedom of association, freedom of choice and self-identification are still being violated. International contacts of Belarusian youth are limited; access to independent sources of information is restricted, and official youth work is monopolized by pro-governmental youth organisations.

Acknowledging the role that the European institutions can play in influencing the Belarusian leadership towards restoring the minimal level of political dialogue that would be necessary to ensure the development of true democracy, we urge them to push for:

1. **Abolishing penal responsibility for acting in the name of non-registered organisations.** The Parliament should provide this by amending the Criminal Code of the Republic of Belarus -excluding Article 193, amending the "Law on public associations" and excluding part 2 of its Article 7.
2. **Executing the decision of the former UN Human Rights Committee, which states that the Republic of Belarus has violated the right to freedom of association in respect of at least associations liquidated.** The Supreme Court of the Republic of Belarus should provide this by reviewing previous decisions and restoring the violated right.
3. **Creating law-enabling practice in line with international standards, international commitments taken and the national legislation:** discontinuation of discrimination by reason of political opinions, both at the stage of registration and activity of public association. This should be effected by the Ministry of Justice acting on behalf of the Government as the registration and supervising authority for public associations.
4. **Allowing free access to the programmes, projects and resources of international funds and organisations.** The Government of the Republic of Belarus should provide this by liberalising the access to foreign funding programmes for civil activity, namely by cancelling all provisions requiring

special governmental permissions for the use of non-governmental financial sources by public associations.

5. Providing equal opportunities to all youth and children NGOs in accessing resources and political participation.
6. Cancelling practices that prevent the studying youth from participating in international activities.

The European Youth Forum and its full member RADA will continue lobbying the interests of independent Belarusian youth movements at the European Institutions and will further assist meetings between these movements and members of the Commissions responsible for youth work, especially those responsible for making decisions concerning the Republic of Belarus;

The European Youth Forum encourages its member National Youth Councils to address their Governments with the proposal to develop a political dialogue with the Lukashenko government, provided that Belarus reliably fulfils minimal and necessary conditions in observing the right to freedom of associations.