Resolution on the situation in Belarus

2016/2934(RSP) - 24/11/2016 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 468 votes to 21, with 93 abstentions, a resolution on the situation in Belarus.

The text adopted in plenary was tabled by the EPP, S&D, ECR, ALDE and Greens/EFA groups.

Insufficient progress as regards human rights: Members remain deeply concerned by the shortcomings observed by independent international observers during the **2015 presidential and 2016 parliamentary elections**. They recognised the attempts to make progress, which are still insufficient. Counting and tabulation of the 2016 legislative elections saw a significant number of procedural irregularities and lacked transparency.

Parliament called on the Belarusian authorities to **resume work without delay on a comprehensive electoral reform** as part of the broader democratisation process and in cooperation with international partners and ensure that domestic and international observers may be present at the municipal elections in March 2018. This is key to achieving the desired progress in EU-Belarus relations.

Members expressed their concern that since 2000 **no new political party** has been registered in Belarus. They called for all restrictions in this regard to be abandoned.

The Belarusian authorities are called upon to:

- ensure respect for democratic principles, human rights and fundamental freedoms, in accordance with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the international and regional human rights instruments ratified by Belarus;
- rehabilitate the political prisoners released and to fully restore their civil and political rights;
- top the harassment of independent media for political reasons;
- allow the full, free and unhampered legal functioning of public associations and organisations.

Death penalty: Parliament urged Belarus, the only country in Europe still applying capital punishment, and which has recently resumed executions, to join a **global moratorium on execution of the death penalty** as a first step towards its permanent abolition. The European External Action Service (EEAS) and the Commission are called upon to strongly prioritise the abovementioned concerns at the ongoing EU-Belarus Human Rights Dialogue.

Nuclear safety: Parliament is concerned about the safety problems raised by the construction of the **Belarusian nuclear power plant in Ostrovets**, less than 50 km from Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, and close to the Polish border. It stressed the need for comprehensive international supervision of the implementation of this project to ensure that it complies with international nuclear and environmental safety requirements and standards. It called on the Commission to include the issue of safety and transparency of this nuclear power plant under construction in its dialogue with Belarus and Russia.

Sustaining the EU's commitment: Members called on the EU to sustain the momentum for the further normalisation of relations with Belarus. They reiterated the view that existing differences can be best addressed through enhanced channels of communication and that further engagement of the EU, and notably the European Parliament, in a dialogue with Belarus and in particular its citizens and civil society, as well as with the parliament and various political parties.

Parliament **lends its support to the EU in its policy of 'critical engagement'** with the Belarusian authorities, and expressed its readiness also to contribute to it via its Delegation for relations with Belarus. It called on the Commission to monitor the legislative initiatives closely and to scrutinise their implementation.