

Basic information

2012/2815(RSP)

RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects

Resolution the situation in Belarus after the parliamentary elections of 23 September 2012

Subject

6.10.04 Third-country political situation, local and regional conflicts
6.10.08 Fundamental freedoms, human rights, democracy in general

Geographical area

Belarus

Procedure completed

Key players

Council of the European Union

Council configuration

Meetings



Date

Foreign Affairs

3191

2012-10-15

Key events

Date	Event	Reference	Summary
15/10/2012	Debate in Council		Summary
26/10/2012	Decision by Parliament	T7-0410/2012	Summary
26/10/2012	Results of vote in Parliament		
26/10/2012	Debate in Parliament		
26/10/2012	End of procedure in Parliament		

Technical information

Procedure reference

2012/2815(RSP)

Procedure type

RSP - Resolutions on topical subjects

Procedure subtype

Resolution on statement

Legal basis

Rules of Procedure EP 136-p2

Stage reached in procedure

Procedure completed

Documentation gateway

European Parliament

Document type

Committee

Reference

Date

Summary

Motion for a resolution		B7-0463/2012	17/10/2012	
Motion for a resolution		B7-0464/2012	17/10/2012	
Motion for a resolution		B7-0465/2012	17/10/2012	
Motion for a resolution		B7-0466/2012	17/10/2012	
Motion for a resolution		B7-0471/2012	17/10/2012	
Motion for a resolution		B7-0472/2012	17/10/2012	
Text adopted by Parliament, single reading		T7-0410/2012	26/10/2012	Summary

Resolution the situation in Belarus after the parliamentary elections of 23 September 2012

2012/2815(RSP) - 15/10/2012

The Council discussed the situation in Belarus in the wake of the parliamentary elections of 23 September and adopted the following conclusions:

- The Council noted the importance that it attaches to Belarus and to its citizens, and remained **gravely concerned about the lack of respect for human rights, democracy and rule of law in that country**. The elections, which took place against an overall background of repression, represented another missed opportunity for Belarus to hold elections in line with OSCE and international standards. The Council calls on the Belarusian authorities to address the recommendations made by the OSCE/ODIHR, to cooperate fully to that end with the OSCE/ODIHR, and to permit the return of an OSCE Office to Belarus.
- It reiterates its calls for the **immediate release and rehabilitation of all remaining political prisoners**, and remains deeply concerned about decisions concerning additional prison sentences and continued reports of mistreatment of political prisoners. The Council again calls upon the Belarusian authorities to stop the harassment of civil society, the political opposition and the independent media, and to comply with the Human Rights Council Resolution 20/13, and to cooperate fully with the new UN Special Rapporteur on Belarus. As not all political prisoners have been released and no released prisoner has been rehabilitated, and against the background of the lack of improvement as regards the respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles, the Council **decided to prolong the existing restrictive measures until 31 October 2013**.
- The Council reiterates its **firm commitment to strengthening the EU's engagement with the Belarusian people and civil society** and expresses its continued full support for the "European Dialogue on Modernisation" which has stimulated a substantial debate among representatives of Belarusian society with a view to proposing concrete ideas on the reform needs and encourages the authorities of Belarus to engage in the discussions.

It reiterates the EU's readiness to **launch negotiations for visa facilitation and readmission agreements** which would enhance people-to-people contacts to the benefit of the Belarusian population at large, and regrets the absence of response from the Belarusian authorities to Commission's invitation in June 2011 to start negotiations.

Resolution the situation in Belarus after the parliamentary elections of 23 September 2012

2012/2815(RSP) - 26/10/2012 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted a resolution on the situation in Belarus after the parliamentary elections of 23 September 2012.

The resolution was tabled by the S&D, ECR, Greens/EFA, EPP, ALDE and GUE/NGL groups. It deeply regrets that the conduct of parliamentary elections in Belarus once again failed to meet many of the basic standards set by the OSCE, resulting – notwithstanding some minor improvements in the elections' legal framework – in unfair, non-free, non-transparent and unbalanced consultations. Parliament states that it is evident that with no democratic opposition candidates elected to the national parliament, and with many political prisoners still in jail, the Belarusian authorities ignored the numerous calls of the international community, and decided instead to take another step away from democracy and to further isolate their country.

Believing that the parliament elected in Belarus falls short of democratic legitimacy, the European Parliament will continue its policy of not recognising it, both in its bilateral relations with Belarus and within the framework of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly. Parliament regrets that the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly does not at this stage have grounds to invite the official representatives of the legislative body in Belarus to take their seats in the Assembly, and that their absence deprives the Eastern Partnership of an important tool for bringing Belarus closer to the EU's democratic values.

They urge the Belarusian authorities to:

review their actions, improve and upgrade the electoral legislation and conduct new, free and fair parliamentary elections in line with international standards;

immediately and unconditionally to release, and rehabilitate, all political prisoners, without coercing them into signing false confessions and pardon pleas, and to respect their own people by protecting their basic freedoms and allowing them to enjoy their basic rights.

Parliament calls on the Council and the Commission to support initiatives aimed at **developing Belarusian civil society**, which could result in increasing citizens' political participation, and raise awareness of the need for change. It stresses the need to create a **consistent and long-term programme of support and strengthening of Belarusian opposition organisations**, and to offer and expand the dialogue with Belarusian civil society, and believes that the attempt to empower Belarusian citizens is a vital milestone and the most effective way towards democracy and rule of law in Belarus.

It also calls on the Council, the Commission and the EEAS, as appropriate, to:

- continue the dialogue with – and devise a clearer policy vis-à-vis – Belarus, subject to strict positive conditionality based on a gradual step-by-step approach and equipped with benchmarks, timetables, a revision clause and adequate financial resources;
- take further steps, unilaterally if necessary, towards the facilitation and liberalisation of visa procedures for Belarusian citizens, as such action is crucial to fulfil the main goal of EU policy towards Belarus, namely to facilitate and intensify people-to-people contacts and to democratise the country;
- consider the scope for lowering the cost of visas for Belarusian citizens entering the Schengen Area, which is the only way to prevent Belarus and its citizens from becoming increasingly isolated. Members **deplore the foreign travel ban list** drafted by the Belarus Government that forbids several opponents and human rights activists from leaving the country;
- support, with financial and political means, the efforts of Belarusian civil society, independent media (including TV Belsat, European Radio for Belarus, Radio Racja and others) and non-governmental organisations in Belarus to promote democracy;
- give increased attention to the protection of digital freedoms in Belarus which are enablers of other human rights, particularly freedom of expression and freedom of assembly;
- consider measures to improve the business climate, trade, investment, energy and transport infrastructure and cross-border cooperation between the EU and Belarus, so as to contribute to the well-being and prosperity of the citizens of Belarus, as well as their ability to communicate with and freely travel to the EU in this context.

EU Member States are asked to avoid using the existing visa procedures in ways that contradict or go against the Council and Commission's efforts to strengthen Belarusian civil society.

Furthermore, in the light of a number of recent incidents pertaining to cooperation between Belarusian and EU authorities, Members stress the need to improve the EU's internal cooperation and information-sharing significantly, and to refrain immediately from cooperating with the Belarusian authorities in the field of police training in order to prevent any further endangerment of Belarusian civil society activists.

Members go on to call on international sports organisations to take into account the human rights situation in the country when granting Belarusian authorities the honour to host high-profile international sports events, in order to apply pressure to the regime until it shows clear signs of its commitment to democratic principles and fundamental freedoms.

Recalling that Belarus is the only European country which still carries out capital punishment, Parliament urges Belarus to introduce an immediate moratorium on executions and to immediately announce a **moratorium on the death penalty** as a first step towards complete abolition.

Lastly, Parliament regrets the decision of the Belarusian authorities repeatedly, in the past couple of years, to **refuse entry visas to Members of the European Parliament** and to national parliamentarians, and calls on the Belarusian authorities not to create any further obstacles that prevent the European Parliament Delegation for relations with Belarus from visiting the country.