

EU-Belarus relations: a new round of engagement in the new geopolitical situation?

*14 October 2015 (12h30 – 15h00)
European Parliament, Room JAN 2Q2*

Opening address: MEP Bogdan Zdrojewski, Chair of the Delegation for relations with Belarus

Panellists:

- **Dirk Schübel**, EEAS, Head of Division ‘Eastern Partnership – bilateral’
- **Andrei Yahorau**, Co-chair of the Steering Committee of the EaP Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF), Center for European Transformation
- **Anna Gerasimova**, Director of the Barys Zvozkau Belarusian Human Rights House
- **Vladimir Dunaev** PhD, Belarusian National Platform of the EaP CSF, co-founder of European Humanities University, Member of Belarusian Independent Bologna Committee

Moderator: Natalia Yerashevich, Director of the Secretariat of the EaP Civil Society Forum

Language of the meeting: **English**
Sandwich lunch **provided at 12.30**

The European Union has reached for many of diplomatic instruments towards Belarus in the past two decades. However neither ‘carrots’ nor ‘sticks’ have put the country on the path of political and economic transformation.

The panellists will seek to answer the following questions.

Does the release of six political prisoners by Alexander Lukashenko as well as the new geopolitical reality created by the Russia-Ukraine war, and Belarus’s difficult economic situation create an opening for an improvement in EU-Belarus relations? What might future EU policies towards Belarus be and what lessons should be drawn from the previous cycles of engagement/non-engagement?

The discussion on the fate of the EU sanctions on Belarus will take place after the presidential elections on 11 October 2015. Can we expect these sanctions to be renewed? Do new geopolitical realities dictate an improvement in relations despite the flawed election processes and continued violations of human rights? Is the recent accession of Belarus to the European Higher Education Area a step in the right direction?

With the increasing Russian assertiveness in the region and overwhelming Russian propaganda in Belarus, does reducing the Belarus’ dependence on Russia seem realistic? How the EU can increase its engagement with the Belarusian society at-large bearing in mind the EU’s limited appeal to Belarusians at present?