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# BELARUS

## – THE EU'S UNKNOWN NEIGHBOUR

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# General information and history of Belarus

## Geography

Belarus is a country in Eastern Europe located between three new member states of the EU (Lithuania, Latvia and Poland) and Russia. In the south, it borders Ukraine. It is a landlocked, lowland country, its highest point being Dzyarzhynskaya Hara (345 m above sea level). The area of Belarus is 207,600 km<sup>2</sup> (37,000 km<sup>2</sup> less than the area of Great Britain), and its population in January 2005 was 9.79 million. About 20 percent of the population of Belarus live in Minsk.



Republic of Belarus

Belarus has been an independent state since 1991 (it declared independence in August and in December Soviet Union collapsed). The official name of the Belarusian state is the Republic of Belarus. The capital city is Minsk. The national emblem and flag introduced in June 1995 are reminiscent of the symbols of the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic. Previously, in the period 1991-95, Belarus had the "Pahonia" (the former emblem of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania) as its national emblem, and a white, red and white flag, reminiscent of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania traditions.



State symbols of Republic of Belarus (1991 – 1995)



State symbols of Republic of Belarus (as of June 1995)

## Population

Ethnic Belarusians account for a great majority of the country's population. According to official figures (1991 census), 81 percent of people have declared themselves to be of Belarusian nationality, 11 percent declare themselves as Russians, 4 percent as Poles, 2.5 percent as Ukrainians, and 1 percent as Jews. Only 36.7 percent of people in Belarus declare that they speak Belarusian at home, with 62.8 claiming that Russian is their mother tongue.

According to the encyclopaedic data, most people in Belarus (about 60 percent) are Orthodox; Roman Catholics account for about 8 percent, and about 30 percent are atheists. However, sociological surveys (e.g. European Values Survey 2000 and David Rotman "Value systems and social transformation in Belarus" in: "The EU and Belarus: between Moscow and Brussels", 2002) show that atheists account for 48 percent, Orthodox for 43 percent, Roman Catholics for 6 percent, Protestants for 1 percent and other for 2 percent. The Orthodox church of Belarus is a patriarchal exarchate of the Russian Orthodox Church.

Belarusian and Russian are both official languages with equal status in Belarus. In practice, however, Russian predominates in public life, the media and in the cities, while Belarusian remains the language of the rural communities and the patriotic intelligentsia.

The Belarusian national identity is still weak, and state policies are not conducive to its development. Nevertheless, following independence a strong sense of identity with and bonding to the state developed. This is not undermined by the fact that a majority of the population speak Russian, or by Belarus' special relationship with its eastern neighbour.

## **Standard of living**

The GDP of Belarus in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) is much lower than that of neighbouring countries (except for Ukraine). According to the IMF (World Economic Outlook, April 2005), in 2004 Belarusian PPP *per capita* amounted to US\$7560 (to compare, in Russia it amounted to US\$10179, in Poland – US\$12244, in Lithuania – US\$12918, and in Ukraine – US\$6554).

Since the 1990s, Belarus has reported negative birth rates; in 2004 alone its population shrank by 51,000. The average life expectancy is 68 years (71 years for women and 61 years for men).

## **Outline of the history of Belarus**

Like the Ukrainians and the Russians, the Belarusians are East Slavs. From at least the 8<sup>th</sup> century, the area of today's Belarus was inhabited by the Slavic tribes of Drehovians, Kryvians and Radzimians, who are believed to be the earliest ancestors of present-day Belarusians. The first proto-state organisations on Belarusian territory formed in the late 8<sup>th</sup> and early 9<sup>th</sup> century. They included the principalities of Polotsk, Smolensk & Turau and Pinsk.

In the 10<sup>th</sup> century the area of today's Belarus became part of Kyiv Rus, which embraced Christianity in 988. The Belarusian territory was Christianised according to the Eastern rite in the 11<sup>th</sup> century.

In the 14<sup>th</sup> century, all of Belarus found itself within the boundaries of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (GDL). When the latter adopted Christianity according to the Catholic rite in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, and following the personal union with the Kingdom of Poland, Western European cultural influences began to reach Belarus. At the same time, Belarusian territory became the centre of the GDL, Old Belarusian being the Duchy's official language until the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1569, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland formed the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, in which the Grand Duchy retained the status of a constituent federal state.

In 1517, the first printed book in Old Belarusian (parts of the Bible) was published by Frantishek Skaryna. However, in the late 17<sup>th</sup> century, rapid Polonisation of the Belarusian nobility began, hastened by controversies related to the Reformation. However, Polonisation and conversions to Roman Catholicism did not weaken the sense of a political bond with the Grand Duchy as a state. In 1596, the Orthodox Church in the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth became subject to the Pope. Thus the Uniate Church was established. It retained the original rite and liturgical language, and existed until 1839 when the Russian authorities liquidated it.

After the fall of the Commonwealth in 1795, the Belarusian territory was incorporated into the Russian Empire. The Empire did not recognise Belarusian as a separate language, treating it as a local dialect of the Great Russian language, and actively suppressed the Belarusian national revival. As a result, the first grammar of modern Belarusian could only be written in 1918.

The October Revolution revived nationalist movements in Russia, including the Belarusian national movement. On 25 March 1918, the Belarusian People's Republic proclaimed its independence. It was the first Belarusian state, however not recognised on the international arena (in fact, the state was fully dependent on the German military, quartered on the Belarusian territory during World War I). In 1919, the Red Army put an end to the Republic's existence. In 1920, the Bolsheviks proclaimed the Belarusian Soviet Socialist Republic, which two years

later became one of the founding members of the USSR. In the aftermath of the Polish–Bolshevik War (1919–1920), part of Belarusian territory was incorporated into Poland.

Following the initial period of support for the development of national cultures, in the 1930s policies of brutal Russification as well as atheisation were resumed in the USSR. During that time several hundred thousand people of all nationalities who lived in Belarus were executed, and at least one million were deported to Siberia. Almost all of the Belarusian national intelligentsia fell victim to the repression of that time. On one site alone, in the Kuropaty Forest near Minsk, the NKVD executed between thirty and three hundred thousand people between 1937 and 1940.

In September 1939, by virtue of the Ribbentrop–Molotov Pact, the USSR annexed Western Belarus (part of Poland at the time) and incorporated it into the Belarusian SSR. During World War II, several million Belarusians fought in the Red Army (including about 400,000 in guerrilla warfare). Attempts to create state structures under German auspices were not widely supported. The Germans exterminated the Belarusian Jews, who had accounted for a major part of the Belarusian population, as well as at least 750,000 Belarusian civilians. When the war was over, a substantial part of the Polish minority was resettled to Poland. With a total of 2.5 million people killed and murdered (representing about 28 percent of the population) and colossal damage to national property, Belarus was among the European countries most badly affected by the war.

In the post-war period, Belarus focused on developing its machine-building industry, including the armaments industry. The country had no major natural resources of its own (except for rock salt and potassium salt). Its industry was dependent on co-operative supplies from the other republics, but as a result of industrial development, the urban population in Belarus from the late 1960s enjoyed some of the highest living standards in the then USSR. Also at that time, the memory of the Great Patriotic War laid the foundation of a new Belarusian identity expressed mostly through the Russian language.

One of the most important events in Belarus in the post-war period was the accident at the Ukrainian Chernobyl nuclear power plant near the Belarusian border on 26 April 1986. 70 percent of the radioactive fallout released in the accident fell on Belarus, heavily contaminating a quarter of the republic's territory.

## Independent Belarus 1991–2005

Among all Soviet republics, the Belarusian SSR was the one in which independence processes developed at the slowest rate. Unlike the nations of the Baltic or the Caucasus, the Belarusians did not actively fight for independence.

On 27 July 1990, the Supreme Council of the BSSR proclaimed the republic's sovereignty within the Soviet federation.

Belarus proclaimed independence, on 24 August 1991, after the collapse of the August Coup in Moscow. On 19 September 1991, the state's name was changed to the Republic of Belarus and new state symbols redolent of the GDL's tradition were adopted, namely the white, red and white flag, and the 'Pahonia' emblem. On 8 December 1991, Belarus, Russia and Ukraine signed the agreement on the dissolution of the USSR in Viskuly, in the Bielovezhskaya Forest in western Belarus.

Following independence, no fundamental changes were made to the Belarusian system of government, and people representing the old nomenklatura remained in power, joined by a few politicians from the anticommunist camp. A mode of government developed fairly quickly which could be described as a parliamentary-cabinet system. Stanislau Shushkevich became the Speaker of the Parliament (and was acting as the head of state), and Vyacheslav Kebich became prime minister.

In March 1994, a new constitution was passed which replaced the old Soviet constitution and introduced a presidential system of government.

On 23 June and 10 July 1994, the two rounds of the first presidential election in the history of Belarus were held. Contrary to expectations, the winner was the young deputy Alaxandr Lukashenka, and not the then prime minister Vyacheslav Kebich.

From the very beginning of his rule, President Lukashenka strove to reorganise the system of power so as to strengthen his position. Changes were made to all major political, enforcement and economic structures. Between 1994 and 1995, Lukashenka took control of state executive authorities, local authorities and security structures.

As a result of the referendum announced by the president and held on 12 May 1995, the national symbols were changed and Russian was introduced as the second official language with equal status, among other measures. Simultaneously, parliamentary election took place. Due to a highly complicated election procedure and obstruction on the part of Lukashenka's adherents in the executive authority, the elections were taking place from May to December 1995. As a result, a number of politicians opposed to Lukashenka became members of parliament. Subsequently, in 1996 the parliament, then still independent of the president, initiated an impeachment procedure against the head of state. In reaction to this, Lukashenka announced another constitutional referendum. It was held on 24 November 1996 and endorsed a substantial extension of the president's powers, and a limitation of the parliament's prerogatives. That referendum was not recognised by Western states because of violations of democratic standards. Under the constitutional amendments approved by the referendum, Lukashenka extended his term in office by a year and a half, and removed opposition deputies from parliament.

On 2 April 1996 in Moscow, the presidents of Russia and Belarus, Boris Yeltsin and Alaxandr Lukashenka signed a treaty on the Commonwealth of Russia and Belarus. The treaty provided for co-ordination of defence policy as well as foreign and economic policy. Sovereignty and separateness of the both countries was to be maintained. A year later, on 2 April 1997 in Moscow the presidents signed an agreement on the Union of Belarus and Russia, which provided a legal basis for the further integration of the two states. On 8 December 1999, the two presidents signed a treaty establishing the Union State of Russia and Belarus.

On 9 September 2001, Alaxandr Lukashenka won his second presidential election, the outcome of which was not recognised by Western states because of numerous cases of electoral fraud and misuse of authority.

On 17 October 2004, another referendum was held at President Lukashenka's initiative, as a result of which the constitutional limit of no more than two terms as president to be served by a single person was lifted. This opened the way to Alaxandr Lukashenka's third term as president.

## **New political developments in Belarus**

**President Alaxandr Lukashenka's primary political goal is to win the upcoming 2006 presidential election and extend his rule. All the actions the ruling group has taken are aimed at achieving this goal. Since the end of last year, the repressive policies of the Belarusian state have been significantly toughened, the aim being to eliminate or marginalise independent social structures (political parties, non-governmental organisations and the media).**

### **Lukashenka's third term as president**

As a result of the referendum held on 17 October 2004, the constitutional ban prohibiting a person from serving more than two terms as president was lifted and Alaxandr Lukashenka was authorised to run for president for the third time. The course of the referendum raised a number of controversies concerning its legality (for example, on 9 October 2004 the Venice Commission of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe issued a statement claiming that the referendum was inconsistent with the election laws of Belarus). The very manner in which the referendum was held ran counter to the fundamental principles of freedom of choice, while local observers claimed the results had been falsified.

### **Impact of the Ukrainian "orange revolution" on the actions of the Belarusian regime**

The so-called "revolutions" in the CIS states (Ukraine, Georgia and Kyrgyzstan), where social protests brought about a change of government have had a significant impact on President Lukashenka's actions. The course and effects of the "orange revolution" (massive protests that led to the change of the ruling elite and launched processes of democratisation) in Ukraine, Belarus's neighbour, had the key impact on Lukashenka. The Belarusian authorities have also taken note of the important role played by the European Union and its member states (especially those bordering Belarus, i.e. Poland and Lithuania), as well as the United States, all of whom were actively involved in supporting the democratic transformation in Ukraine. At that point the Belarusian regime began to perceive the international activities of those states and organisations as a serious threat.

### **Tougher policies**

The two factors discussed above, namely Lukashenka's struggle for a third term as president and the events in Ukraine (as well as in Georgia), have led to a toughening of the Belarusian regime's repressive policies. The measures presently being implemented are comprehensive, and are affecting various spheres of public life.

The changes which occurred in the Belarusian ruling élite following the 2004 referendum have further contributed to this. As a result of these changes, Viktar Sheyman, who presently heads the Presidential Administration and who is known to prefer repressive methods of rule, has achieved the strongest position in Lukashenka's inner circle. Sheyman managed to marginalise other nomenclature groups; presently he acts as the only significant representative of the Lukashenka circle. Sheyman is strongly suspected of being responsible for the disappearances of opposition activists who went missing between 1999 and 2000, as mentioned in the report of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe issued on 4 February 2004 (Doc. 10062). He is also very unfavourably disposed towards the West.

## **The opposition consolidates**

The Belarusian authorities are stepping up their repression against the opposition, which makes opposition groups continue the process of consolidation which was initiated before the 2004 parliamentary election. The main objective of their co-operation is to select a common candidate for the 2006 presidential election and to conduct that candidate's campaign.

On 20 November 2004 in Vilnius, all the major opposition groups signed a co-operation agreement establishing the 10+ coalition (also known as 5+). The opposition groups' activities are co-ordinated by the Council of Democratic Forces.

The joint candidate will be elected by the National Congress of Democratic Forces, which will be held in October this year. The frontrunners include an NGO activist, Alaxandr Milinkevich, and the leader of the United Civic Party, Anatol Lyabedzka.

(See – appendix 1: Profiles of the Belarusian power system and political scene).

## **Repression against society**

Repression of opposition political parties, non-governmental organisations and the media has been on the rise in Belarus for several months. On 29th June 2005, the laws on political parties and social associations were amended, making the activities of such organisations much more difficult, and the organisations themselves much easier to ban. A much more complex procedure was introduced for the registration of organisations, and provisions were implemented enabling the authorities to suspend such organisations' activities for a period of 6 months. The most important change concerned the requirement for political parties to have structures in Minsk as well as in at least half of the country's districts. As a result, all political parties now face the threat of being outlawed, as since the beginning of 2005 about 80 percent of all regional party structures have been liquidated by administrative decisions (under the laws requiring parties to have their legal addresses in office spaces rather than private apartments; local authorities who own most of the office buildings usually refuse to let office space to opposition parties).

As of January 2005, much more stringent conditions for the registration of mass media were introduced, and the Ministry of Information has threatened that media companies infringing the law would be liquidated. It also pledged to strengthen state presence in the Belarusian publishing market. According to official figures, 25 press titles were suspended and 81 newspapers received a total of 160 warning notices in 2004. Presently, there are now only a few social and political titles providing independent information as an alternative to the state propaganda which have full national reach. However, there is a huge disparity between the independent media's reach and that of the state media. There is no independent television channel or radio station in Belarus that could provide the society with information different than the state propaganda. Besides, the total weekly circulation of all non-state-owned press (not only social and political titles) is less than 100,000, while the pro-presidential newspaper Belarus Segodnya has a weekly circulation of about 2.5 million copies.

The Belarusian authorities show no hesitation in using violence against their own society. Opposition demonstrations are usually forcefully dispersed by the police, and the activists arrested are given ever higher sentences. For example, the organisers of the anti-Lukashenka protests following the October 2004 referendum, Pavel Severinets and Mykola Statkevich, were each sentenced to three years' imprisonment for organising an illegal demonstration (their sentences were cut short by a year under an amnesty). Penalties for insulting the president are being imposed ever more frequently, with sentences of up to several years being handed down (for example, Valery Levaneusky and Alaxandr Vasilyeu were sentenced to one and a half years of imprisonment each in 2004). In 2003-4, more than a dozen cases of opposition activists being beaten were reported.

Non-governmental organisations independent of the regime also have to cope with great pressures. A number of them have been liquidated by arbitrary administrative decisions. In the first half of 2005, 38 organisations were closed according to official figures. Banned organisations frequently have their equipment confiscated, and high fines are imposed on their activists. There has been much controversy around the newly amended law on the internal armed forces, which extended the authorisation to use live ammunition, also at the president's order, without specifying the circumstances.

## **Polish minority falls victim to repression**

The repressive measures implemented by the Belarusian authorities are also affecting the organisation representing the Polish national minority, the Union of Poles in Belarus (ZPB), which is one of the largest functioning socio-cultural organisations in Belarus with 25,000 members. In May this year, the Ministry of Justice invalidated the March congress of the ZPB after it elected a new leadership independent of the state authorities with Angelica Borys as chairperson. In late July, more severe measures were employed against the Union; the police forcefully occupied the ZPB's head offices in Hrodna, six activists were arrested for more than ten days, and the Union's chairperson was summoned to multiple interrogations and confronted with threats that criminal charges would be brought against her (Angelica Borys was interrogated for 45 times in 2005). On 27 August Belarusian authorities carried out a new congress of the ZPB which elected new leadership, loyal to Minsk. Angelica Borys' adherents were kept out of the congress. Thus the authorities' actions have led to a split in the organisation. Part of the ZPB members, who were against subjugation of the organisation to the state, were forced to go underground.

However, it should be emphasised that the repression against the ZPB is merely part of a wider process by which the Belarusian authorities are aiming to take control of all forms of independent social activity.

## **Self-isolation in international relations**

Belarus has implemented a policy of self-isolation in its relations with Western states, a policy which has been reinforced since the beginning of 2005.

The European Union and the United States continually demand that the Belarusian authorities respect human rights and democratic standards, and so the officials in Minsk perceive them as a major external threat, especially after the EU and the US backed the democratic transformations in Ukraine. This is why the Belarusian authorities are striving to limit external contacts, in order to minimise the possibility of the US and the European Union influencing Belarus. This purpose was served, among other measures, by President Lukashenka's decree No 460 and the amendments introduced to it on 17 August 2005, which prohibited Belarusian organisations and individuals from accepting foreign aid granted for the organisation of conferences, scholarly exchanges and elections. This demonstrates that the country is closing itself off even further from the external world.

## **Prospects for the future**

The policy direction Alaxandr Lukashenka has adopted suggests that any liberalisation of the regime in Belarus is extremely unlikely. As the democratic standards and human rights situation continues to deteriorate, the Belarusian authoritarian regime is becoming a dictatorship, as mentioned inter alia in the UN Human Rights Commission report of 18 March 2005.

Still, at the moment President Lukashenka is the most popular politician in his country, with 40.7 percent of citizens ready to vote for him, according to the May survey carried out jointly by NISEPI, an independent public opinion institute in Vilnius, and the Pontis Foundation of Bratislava (23.2 percent would vote for an opposition candidate, [www.iiseps.org](http://www.iiseps.org)). At the present time, having a full monopoly on the political scene and in the media, Alaxandr Lukashenka could win a fair and democratic election without the need of falsifications. However, in 2006 the Belarusian leader probably will not choose to hold a democratic election for at least two reasons. Firstly, he would win with only a slight advantage over his opponent, and that would not be enough to satisfy his ambition and preserve the image that Lukashenka is building of himself as a leader supported by a decisive majority of the nation. Secondly, holding a democratic election in Belarus would strengthen the processes which could lead to Lukashenka's overthrow in the longer term.

On the other hand, a survey carried out in July 2005 by Gallup/Baltic Surveys indicated that 48 percent of respondents (64 percent among young people) would prefer someone else to be president (*Byelorusskaya Delovaya Gazeta*, issue 1547, 2 August 2005). This suggests that people do not actively support the current president, but rather, their support stems from passivity and a lack of faith in the possibility of change. This perception is reinforced as Belarusian society faces mounting difficulties in finding access to media which are free of state propaganda, and as Belarus' self-isolation on the international stage progresses.

## Economic situation

**The Belarusian economy is controlled to a large extent by the authorities, or even by the president himself. Alaxandr Lukashenka makes or approves all economic decisions. The economic policy is subordinated to current political objectives. There is hardly any progress in terms of reforms, and the centrally planned economic model still prevails, with very few elements of a market economy. A system of production plans and prices control is in place. In principle, no privatisation has been carried out. While some indices are improving, the Belarusian economy remains ineffective, and the foundations of its growth are highly unsustainable. Belarus' economic situation largely depends on Russia. As long as Moscow continues to support the energy-intensive Belarusian economy with cheap energy resources and loans, Belarus' economic condition will remain relatively stable.**

In 2004, the GDP growth in Belarus amounted to 11 percent, compared to 7 percent in 2003. During the first six months of 2005, the GDP increased by 8.8 percent over the first half of 2004. This relatively high economic growth in recent years was possible due to, inter alia, favourable external conditions including high economic growth in Russia (Belarus' main economic partner), privileges in the Russian market owing to the customs union, financial assistance from Russia (cheap loans) and growing internal demand. Minsk also benefits from the low prices on energy resources imported from Russia, combined with the growing prices on oil products and energy-intensive products exported from Belarus to the EU. It should also be remembered that the Belarusian Ministry of Statistics applies a special methodology when calculating the indices. The Ministry itself admits that if international standards were complied with in the calculation, Belarus' GDP growth would be lower by some 3 or 4 percentage points. Another factor that influences the indices is the system of economic plans; the statements are often adjusted to the plans.

The Belarusian economy is dominated by state-owned enterprises. According to the IMF, they account for 75 percent of the GDP in Belarus. Most of them are rather ineffective. In the first quarter of 2005, 26.9 percent of enterprises reported losses. Unstructured and employing highly energy-intensive production models, Belarusian plants would not be able to compete with companies from Russia or the remaining neighbour countries in market conditions. In 2004, industrial production in Belarus continued to grow at a high rate of 15.6 percent. However, 59 percent of the 2004 production found no buyers and ended up in warehouses. Moreover, Belarusian companies depend heavily on energy resource imports from Russia, which they can afford owing to the preferential prices.

**According to official Belarusian statistics, the agricultural production sector has likewise reported high growth (12.6 percent in 2004). In 2004, the Belarusian agricultural sector reported profit for the first time in many years. After the first ten months of 2004, only 18.5 percent of agricultural establishments reported losses, compared to 59.8 percent in the same period in 2003. This significant improvement was the result of changes implemented in 2004, the "year of the agricultural revival" as proclaimed by Alaxandr Lukashenka. Nevertheless, the changes were frequently superficial and visible only in the statistics. Among other measures, the transformation plan provided that kolkhozes reporting losses should be put in the care of well-prospering industrial plants, thus placing the burden of financing such kolkhozes on the plants concerned. Groups of several unprofitable kolkhozes would also be consolidated to form single large enterprises, which led to a rapid decrease in the percentage of enterprises reporting losses.**

Inflation continues to decrease, and in 2004 it reached the lowest level in the history of independent Belarus: 14 percent (compared to 25 percent in 2003 and 35 percent in 2002). The forecasts for 2005 are also optimistic. In the first half of 2005, inflation reached 4 percent. This decrease in inflation is the result of relatively stringent fiscal and monetary policies and stable exchange rates. In addition, in order to keep inflation within the limits forecast for 2005 (8–10 percent), in January this year the Council of Ministers adopted a regulation limiting price increases implemented by businesses to 0.6–0.8 percent per month.

The value of Belarus' trade exchange has been increasing systematically over the last five years. However, its balance remained unfavourable for Minsk throughout this period. In 2004, the value of Belarusian exports reached nearly US\$ 14 billion, Russia accounting for about 47 percent of this figure. Belarus' most important partners outside the Commonwealth of Independent States included Poland (US\$ 0.7 billion) and Germany (US\$ 0.5 billion). In 2004, the EU Member States accounted jointly for 37 percent of Belarusian exports. Belarus' chief export commodities included petroleum products, exported mainly outside the CIS (they accounted for about 50 percent of total exports outside the CIS), as well as chemical products (including fertilisers), machine and equipment. Exports from Belarus were carried out by several major plants from the machine-building sector (especially the MAZ truck factory and the MTZ tractor factory) and the petrochemical sector (the Belneftekhim holding). Imports in 2004 reached US\$ 16.5 billion. Of this figure, Russia accounted for as much as 68 percent, and the EU Member States for 19.7 percent (including Germany with US\$ 1 billion and Poland with US\$ 0.5 billion). The main import commodities included energy resources, i.e. oil and gas from Russia. In addition, Belarus also imported machines and equipment.

The average monthly income in 2004 amounted to about US\$190. In June 2005, it reached US\$221.6. According to the government's assumptions, the average income in December 2005 should amount to US\$250. However, there are substantial differences in income levels

between the industry and agriculture. In the agriculture sector, average income did not exceed 60 percent of the national average. Salaries are paid regularly.

The average old age pension (OAP) at the end of 2004 amounted to US\$85, representing 92.5 percent of an OAP's welfare minimum.

Registered unemployment is not high. At the end of the first half of 2005, 1.7 percent of working-age people able to work were registered as unemployed. However, according to experts these figures fail to fully reflect the scale of the problem. A large number of unemployed do not register officially because the benefits involved in one's official status as unemployed are insignificant. Unemployment benefits in 2004 averaged US\$14.5, i.e. 22 percent of the welfare minimum. In the first half of 2005 the average unemployment benefit amounted to 25 percent of the welfare minimum. Because of standstills experienced by businesses, many persons who are formally employed should be counted among the unemployed. On the other hand, however, many of those unemployed in Belarus work abroad (mostly in Russia).

## **Relations between Belarus and Russia. Moscow–Minsk: a difficult partnership**

**Russia is Belarus' single most important political, economic and security partner. Bilateral relations are highly asymmetric, and Minsk is dependent on Moscow in many areas.**

### **Economic ties between Belarus and Russia**

Belarus' dependence on its eastern neighbour is especially apparent in the sphere of economic co-operation, notably in the energy sector. The Belarusian energy sector imports 90 percent of its energy resources from Russia. Belarus has no alternative to Russian oil and natural gas. Russia sells these resources to Belarus at preferential prices: a barrel of Russian Urals oil sold to Belarus in August 2005 cost US\$34 (US\$57 when sold to Poland), and natural gas cost US\$47 per 1000 m (over US\$100 when sold to European countries).

In addition, Russia is Belarus' key trading partner; in 2004, imports from Russia accounted for 68 percent of total imports to Belarus. It is also the greatest market for Belarusian exports; in 2004, its share in exports from Belarus was 47 percent. (See Appendix 2: Economic indices).

Russia provides financial support to Belarus (including a US\$175 million loan last year), and Belarus enjoys various privileges in terms of access to the Russian market under the customs union.

Russian economic support is of key importance for the relatively good state of the Belarusian economy. On the other hand, it makes Belarus' economy dependent on Russian policies (energy resources are sold to Belarus at preferential prices on the basis of the Kremlin's political decision) and on the economic situation in Russia.

### **Russian-Belarusian integration**

The formal process of the two states' integration began in 1995, when the customs union was created. On 8 December 1999, the agreement on the Union State of Belarus and Russia was signed, which provided for the unification of the two states but did not define the terms of such a unification.

Belarusian-Russian integration is proceeding at different rates in different spheres. It is most advanced in the defence and security spheres. The Belarusian army has close ties with the army of the Russian Federation, and in operational terms it is actually a part of the latter. Both armies are in the process of formation of an integrated Regional Military Group and a joint Regional Air Defence System. Two Russian military bases are situated in Belarus, including the radar station in Hantsevichy and the Baltic Fleet communications centre in Vileyka. Both armies carry out joint exercises on a regular basis, during which they practice different variants of repulsing aggression from the West.

The secret services of both states also co-operate closely, with the Russian services clearly dominating in this co-operation. The asymmetry of relations has become dangerous even for President Lukashenka himself, who has been trying for several years to curb the influence of the Russian secret services (e.g. he has established the President's Security Service, which he controls on an exclusive basis; in 2004 the KGB was purged and officers closely linked with Russian secret services were eliminated).

Under the union agreements, both states co-ordinate their foreign policies. They agree on foreign policy assumptions during regular consultations at the foreign-minister level. Thus, Moscow is able to continue influencing the international activities of the Belarusian leadership, which does not undertake any initiatives which might counter Russia's position. Russia, on the other hand, defends Belarus in international forums (including the UNO, OSCE and the Council of Europe) when the latter comes in for criticism over its human rights violations, and opposes any resolutions condemning the Belarusian regime.

## **Minsk and Moscow – differences**

In spite of multiple declarations by both parties, the integration process has not materialised in any concrete form. Since 2000, differences between the political and economic objectives of Minsk and Moscow have become apparent. The lack of agreement over the draft Constitutional Act of the Union State is a notable example. The Belarusian side would like to establish itself as an equal partner of Russia, while Moscow's aim is to subordinate Minsk formally. The diverging economic interests are another obstacle. Russia's goal is to strengthen economic control over Belarus, e.g. by replacing the Belarusian rouble with the Russian currency and by acquiring the most profitable and strategic Belarusian companies (especially in the energy sector). For the Belarusian president, granting Russia's demands would entail a serious weakening of his political position, and for the Belarusian state it would involve a substantial limitation of the sovereignty.

## **Profile of bilateral relations**

Belarus is important from the point of view of Russia's interests, especially because of its geographic location along the transport routes to and from Europe and the Kaliningrad Oblast (See Appendix 2. Economic indices), because of its economic objectives, and because it is important for Russia's security policy (the possibility of deploying military bases). For these reasons, Russia wants to continue co-operating closely with Belarus, and is prepared to support its leaders as long as they opt for such co-operation.

Belarus cannot function without economic support from Russia. For Alaxandr Lukashenka, Russia is the only significant international partner (the Belarusian president has pursued a policy of self-isolation in relations with the West). A democratic transformation in Belarus would not be in keeping with Moscow's interests. Russia's expectations concerning Belarus are fundamentally different from those of the Western states, including the European Union.

# **Appendices**

## **Appendix 1.**

### **Profiles of the Belarusian system of government and the political scene**

**Belarus has an authoritarian system of power. President Alaxandr Lukashenka plays the dominant role, and his aim is full control of political processes in the country and the marginalisation of all opposition.**

#### **President**

As a result of the referendum held in November 1996 – in breach of democratic standards – constitutional amendments were enacted which granted the president very extensive powers. All state institutions are subordinated to, and accountable to, the president. The president manages their activities directly or through the Presidential Administration. Head of state appoints major state officials at the central and regional level, including the prime minister, ministers, deputy ministers, heads and deputy heads of the secret services, the chair and board members of the National Bank, the chair and half of the members of the Central Election Commission, the most important members of the judiciary and local administration leaders. In addition, the president defines the structure of the government and other key state institutions, and sets the directions of their activities. The president of Belarus is also authorised to issue decrees with statutory force, and to propose laws to the parliament.

Alaxandr Lukashenka also controls the Belarusian economy. He formally endorses, and actually appoints, the directors of nearly two hundred of the largest state-owned companies. The so-called presidential funds, managed by the Presidential Affairs Department guarantee financial independence for the Belarusian head of state (the department also manages many profitable and strategic companies). As a result, the funds are not subject to any budgetary supervision, and their revenues are at the president's exclusive disposal.

#### **State administration**

A specific feature of the Belarusian political system is that President Lukashenka's power is based not on a party or other political formation, but on the officials of the executive administration (the so-called vertical). As a result, Alaxandr Lukashenka is the only true politician in the Belarusian government; the others are merely state officials who report to the president or the Presidential Administration. The organisation of the department of power is strictly centralised and hierarchical, and subordinated to the Presidential Administration, which is presently led by Viktar Sheyman.

#### **Parliament, government and local authorities**

The Belarusian parliament has very limited authority and no real influence on political life. It is a bicameral legislature composed of the lower house, elected in general elections, and the upper house formed by local district authorities and the president. Following the most recent parliamentary election (October 2004), the parliament has been composed exclusively of pro-presidential deputies. The House of Representatives (the lower house) is made up of 110 deputies, and its speaker is Uladzimir Kanapliou. The upper house, the Council of the Republic, comprises 64 deputies and is led by Henadz Navitski.

The Council of Ministers led by prime minister Siarhei Sidorski has limited competencies in terms of shaping policies and taking strategic decisions. Its role is limited to implementing the policies and decisions of the president and the Presidential Administration. There is no self-government in Belarus. Local authorities (executive committees) are part of the political system and are subordinated to the Presidential Administration.

## **State security bodies**

The extensive system of state security bodies is one of the foundations of President Lukashenka's rule. The security structures in Belarus have wide-ranging authority and relatively high technical and financial capabilities. They are not controlled by other state institutions such as the Parliament or the Council of Ministers. Their activities are only supervised by the president and those institutions of the interior security system which are designated by the president. It is typical of this system that the institutions control one another and their competencies overlap. The most important bodies include the Committee for State Security (KGB, led by Styapan Sukharenka), the President's Security Service (led by Yuri Zhadobin), the State Control Committee (led by Anatol Tozik) and the structures of the Interior Ministry, including the police and the internal forces (minister Uladzimir Naumau) and the Security Council Secretariat (led by Henadz Nevyhlas).

## **The opposition**

The opposition in Belarus plays a minor role in political life, and is not able to influence the country's situation. It includes a number of different groups whose ability to act is limited by the authoritarian regime. It is characteristic of the Belarusian opposition that, in addition to political parties, a substantial group within its ranks is composed of social and non-governmental organisations (independent trade unions do not play a significant role).

The opposition groups have formed the 10+ coalition which includes the following political parties, among others: the Belarusian National Front, the United Civil Party, the Belarusian Party of Communists, the Belarusian Women's Party "Nadzeya", the Green Party, as well as a number of non-governmental organisations, youth movements and independent trade unions.

In addition to the anti-Lukashenka groups gathered in the 10+ coalition, there is also the so-called post-nomenklatura opposition, i.e. former members of Alexandr Lukashenka's team. They have not created any strong organisational structures, though.

## **Major opposition groups**

### **Belarusian National Front – BNF – <http://www.pbnf.org>**

Chairman: Vintsuk Vyachorka; Deputy chairmen: Alyaksey Mikhalevich, Alyaksey Yanukevich.

The BNF is one of the most important opposition parties, whose tradition dates back to the 1980s dissident movement of the Belarusian-speaking intelligentsia. It calls for full independence of Belarus and a revival of the Belarusian language and culture. In terms of foreign policy, its outlook is pro-Western (e.g. it advocates Belarus' integration with the EU, and was the only Belarusian party to back the US intervention in Iraq). It opts for close co-operation with the EU and the US.

In addition to the leaders named above, its leading politicians include Lavon Barshcheuski, Yuri Khadyka, Ales Byalatski and Viktar Ivashkevich.

### **United Civil Party – <http://www.ucpb.org>**

Chairman: Anatol Lyabedzka; Deputy chairmen: Siarhey Alfer, Alaxandr Dabrvolski, Yaraslav Ramanchuk; Honorary chairman: Stanislau Bahdankevich.

A liberal opposition party composed of advocates of market reforms. It has a powerful intellectual background.

### **Belarusian Party of Communists (PKB) – <http://pkb.promedia.by>**

Chairman: Siarhey Kaliakin.

In its programme, the PKB refers to Marxist ideology and calls for sovereignty and democratisation of Belarus. Its leading politicians include Siarhey Kaliakin, Vasily Novikau, Valery Shchukin, Alena Skryhan. Next to BNF and AHP, it is one of the most important groups in the Council of Democratic Forces.

In the local election on 2 March 2003, PKB garnered the greatest number of mandates throughout the country (78) of all opposition groups.

### **Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Hramada" (BSDP) – <http://www.bsdp.org>**

Chairman: Alaxandr Kozulin; first deputy chairman: Uladzimir Nistsiuk

An opposition party that distances itself from the remaining opposition groups. Established in April 2005 as a result of the union of two social democratic opposition parties, the Belarusian Social Democratic Hramada (BSDH) and the Belarusian Social Democratic Party "Narodnaya Hramada" (BSDP-NH).

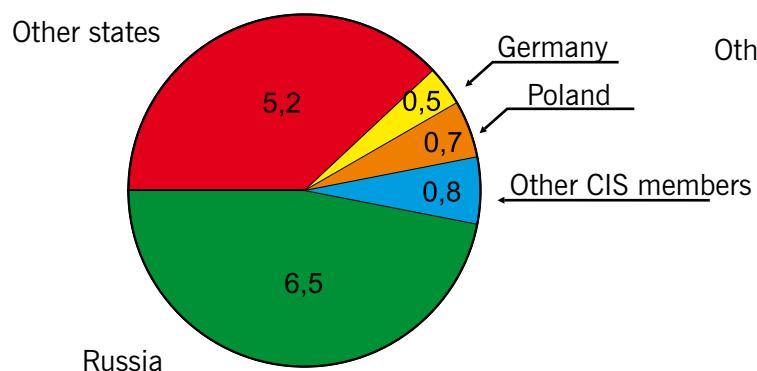
## Appendix 2.

### Economic situation

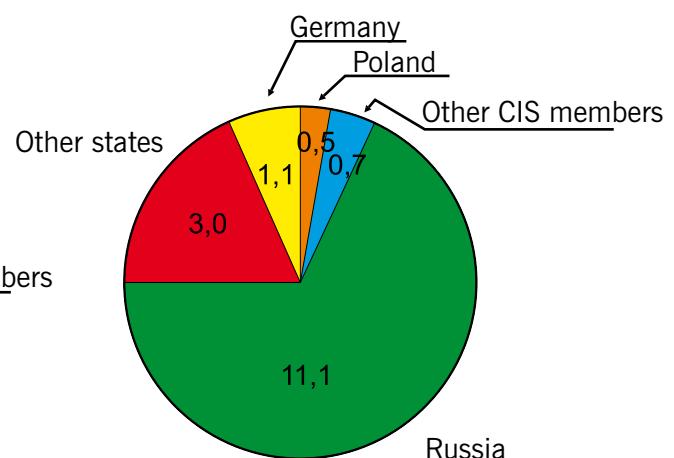
## BELARUSIAN TRADE EXCHANGE

### Geographic structure

2004 exports (US\$ billion)

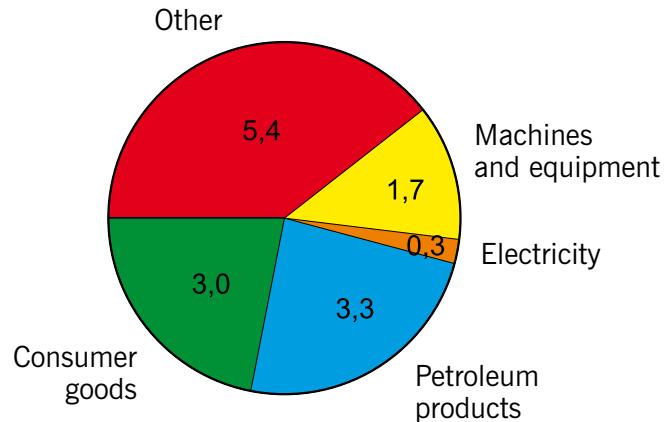


2004 imports (US\$ billion)

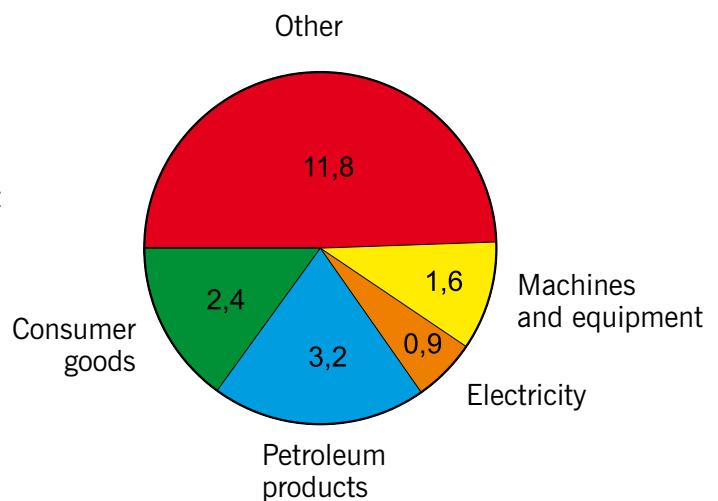


### Commodity structure

2004 exports (US\$ billion)



2004 imports (US\$ billion)



## Map. Major oil and gas transport routes from Russia to the European Union

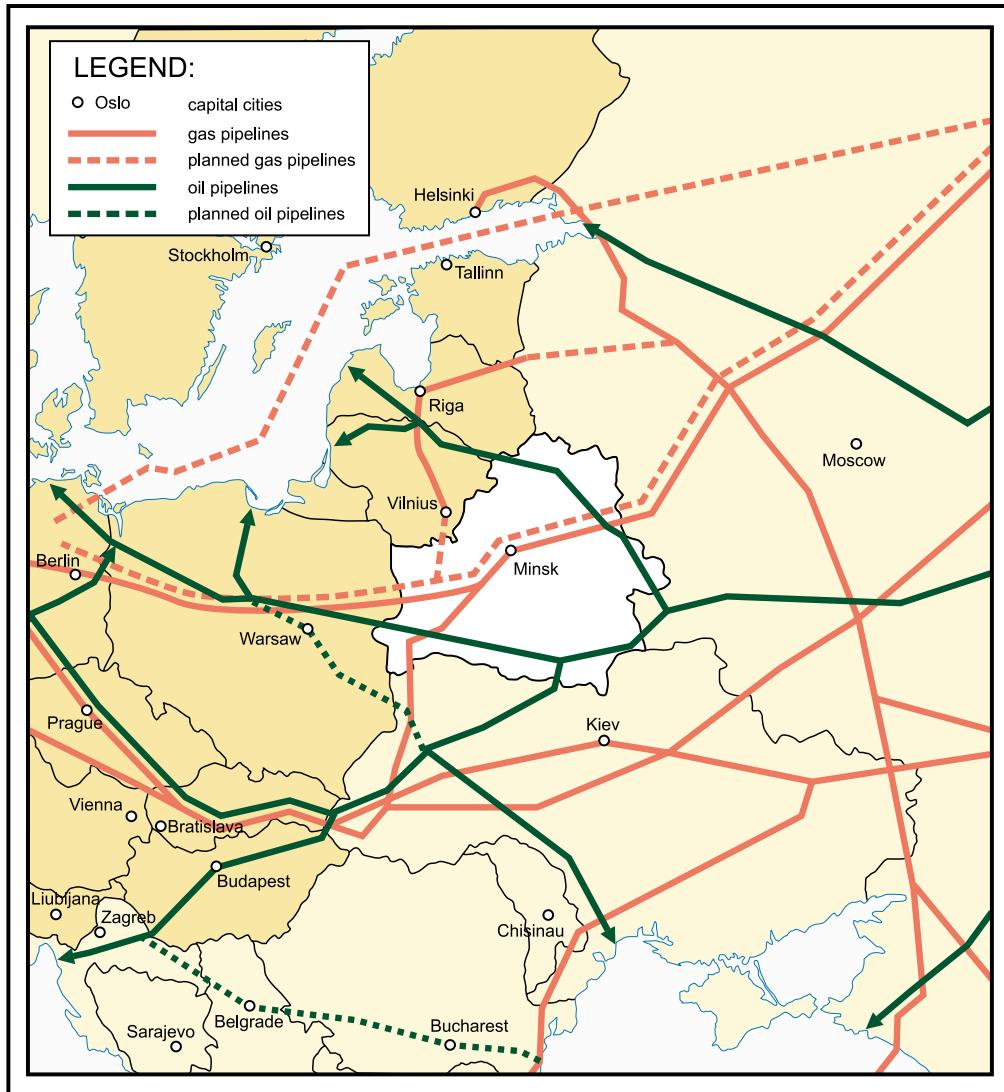


Table. Economic indicators of Belarus in 2000–2004

	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004
GDP % change	5.8	4.7	5.0	7.0	11.0
Industrial production % change	7.8	5.9	4.5	7.1	15.6
Inflation (CPI), end of period	108	46	35	25	14
Real wage average % change	12	30	8	3	17
Consolidated budget revenue % of GDP	45.8	44.9	44.6	45.8	46.2
Consolidated budget spending % GDP	45.9	46.8	46.4	47.2	46.2
Exports, US\$ billion	7.3	7.5	8.0	9.9	13.8
Exports to Russia, % of total exports	51	53	50	49	47
Imports, US\$ billion	8.6	8.3	9.1	11.6	16.4
Imports from Russia, % of total imports	65	66	65	66	68
Balance of current account, % of GDP	-2.6	-3.5	-2.6	-2.4	-4.6
Gross currency reserves of the CBB, US\$ billion	0.40	0.40	0.45	0.50	0.80

Source: IMF Country Report No. 05/218, Republic of Belarus: Statistical Appendix, June 2005

# **Civic society and non-governmental organisations**

**Non-governmental organisations (NGO), together with political parties, are the foundation of the democratic structures of Belarusian civic society. This makes them the subject of constant pressure from the authorities, whose aim is to marginalise independent social initiatives.**

## **Characteristics of the Belarusian non-governmental sector**

According to official data provided by the Ministry of Justice (as of 1 June 2005), there were 2300 civic organisations registered in Belarus. However, a clear distinction should be made between pro-presidential organisations, which are often linked to and financed by the authorities (such as the Belarusian Republican Youth Alliance) and those which are not dependent on the authorities (such as those associated with the Assembly of Independent Democratic Organisations). A number of independent organisations have not been officially registered but still conduct vigorous illegal activity.

Independent non-governmental sector in Belarus must face a number of difficulties, as the authorities' aim is to control all social activity. In Belarus there are a number of social organisations whose activity is not politically oriented. Still, for the Belarusian government, every initiative that they do not control seems suspicious and is subject to pressure. This attitude on the part of the authorities causes politically uninvolved organisations to go into politics. For the same reason, a number of NGOs actively supports democratic political parties (many social activists act simultaneously in parties and NGOs). About 200 non-governmental organisations, youth assemblies, labour unions etc. are part of the 10+ opposition party coalition.

The main platform that musters Belarusian civic organisations is the Assembly of Belarusian Pro-Democratic NGO's, <http://www.belingo.info>, which consists of more than 500 NGOs.

## **The authorities versus NGOs**

The Belarusian authorities have been waging a battle against the non-governmental sector. In 2003 they launched a process of liquidating 51 organisations, among them the so-called umbrella organisations which used to support the smaller ones. This has actually paralysed activity in the "third sector". In the first half of 2005, as a result of government action, a further 38 organisations were liquidated.

The authorities regularly use administrative pressure. At the moment, the main problem for the NGOs is the requirement that every organisation should have a legal address. Assigning this address is entirely within the gift of the local administration. More than 200 organisations face this problem now, and there is a danger that they will be de-legalised.

Another problem is the extremely complicated procedure of registration for new organisations. According to the data provided by human rights organisations (the Viasna Centre), only 6 per cent of registration applications are accepted.

The authorities have been trying to reduce the NGOs' foreign links to the minimum. On 17 August 2005 President Lukashenka amended the decree "On International Technical Aid", ordering that technical aid from abroad should not be accepted without government permission. "Technical aid" in this case is to include students' and scientists' exchange programmes, organisation of seminars and conferences, support for election campaigns, and organisation

of rallies and demonstrations, as well as sharing experience and transferring funds to Belarus. Thus, it is at present virtually impossible to provide legal support for a Belarusian organisation from abroad.

Due to these restrictions, many NGOs have no choice but to break the existing law. In spite of that, their activity is of vital importance for the formation of the democratic structures in Belarusian society.

## The non-state owned media in Belarus

**The Belarusian authorities have striven to monopolise the domestic information market. Any media that try to present information different from state propaganda are subject to constant repressions. The battle with the independent media has brought results: the state dominates on the information market. Nevertheless, it has not achieved absolute control.**

### Belarusian information market

The Belarusian Ministry of Information has officially registered 1221 newspapers, of which two-thirds are in private hands. However, most of these papers are freesheets, the entertainment press and specialist titles. The number of private newspapers dealing with politics & social issues and offering alternative information is very limited. At the moment, there is only one non-state owned daily sold all over Belarus (*Narodnaya Volya*); four weeklies (*Byelorusskaya Gazeta*, *Byelorusskiy Rynok*, *Nasha Niva* and *Svobodnye Novosti Plus*); and one paper that has several issues a week (*Byelorusskaya Dylevaya Gazeta*). In around 30 districts, independent local papers have managed to survive, although they are exhibiting ever more self-censorship, and limit their reports on domestic and foreign politics to the minimum. The total weekly circulation of all private newspapers does not exceed 100,000. To compare, the weekly circulation of the presidential daily *Belarus Segodnya* exceeds 2.5 million.

One source of alternative information to the state media is the Internet. More and more of the liquidated newspapers have moved onto the net. However, only about 15 per cent of Belarusians have access to the Internet. There is no radio station or television channel that could deal with political and social issues, at least as far as news is concerned. The only exception that breaks the state monopoly is Radio Svaboda (the Belarusian section of Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, transmitted on short-wave from Prague; its maximum audience does not exceed 10 per cent of the radio listeners). According to a poll conducted by NISEPI (independent Belarusian polling station) in May 2005, state television is the main source of information for 69.7 per cent of Belarusians. 66.8 per cent of the respondents indicated Russian television (which is available in Belarus via terrestrial transmission), 34.2 per cent radio, 33.7 per cent the state press, and 17.1 per cent the private press (more than one option could be chosen).

Access to other, non-Russian television programmes is not common. According to official data, only 1 per cent of Belarusians have satellite dishes, but many more (34.2 per cent) are connected to cable TV networks (in Minsk this number exceeds 70 per cent). However, cable TV networks are partly censored by the state. After the "orange revolution" the operators were forced to remove Ukrainian and Polish TV stations from their offer. The aforementioned NISEPI poll shows that 11.4 per cent of respondents get their information on Belarusian and world politics from foreign TV channels.

## **The authorities fighting the media**

Belarusian authorities have been following a policy of repression towards the non-state owned media. The basic element of this policy is economic sanctions. Printing houses and selling agents are obliged to impose much higher rates on independent media than on state-owned ones. The staff of "disloyal" press are constantly harassed by all sorts of financial and tax controls; their computers and electronic and printing equipment are often confiscated and never returned. The Ministry of Information often exercises its right to impose administrative sanctions. On the other hand, the state media enjoy cheaper services and premises, and in addition they receive budget subsidies (a total amount of US\$30 million a year). This year Alaxandr Lukashenka has promised another US\$ 45 million for the development of state TV.

Discrimination against independent media is also practised by the subscription system. In the majority of working places subscription to the official press is obligatory (both for companies and individual employees). At the same time, state institutions (including libraries) are forbidden to subscribe to independent newspapers. In most of the cities and towns, the local authorities have also put a ban on advertising in the non-state owned media.

The authorities' actions are also directed against "disloyal" media journalists. Representatives of independent media have great difficulties accessing official information and getting accreditation. Within the last 2 years, 3 journalists have been found guilty of "insulting the president" and jailed. In 2004, 3 foreign journalists were deported from Belarus without right of return. Around a dozen other journalists have been heavily fined.

In 2004 the Belarusian market lost 262 independent newspapers. Some of them were closed by the authorities, others had to liquidate due to their increasingly difficult economic situation. 25 press titles have been suspended by the Ministry of Information for 3 months (11 of them during the election campaign). 81 editorial boards have received a total amount of 160 notices from the ministry (imposing 2 notices allows the authorities to start the process of liquidating the newspaper).

## **Media struggling to survive**

Private press publishers are trying to maintain their existence by any means possible, despite the obstacles which the state multiplies in front of them. They try to evade soaring distribution fees and bans on servicing independent media by organising their own distribution networks, mainly using volunteers. Since some papers suffered a "printing ban" in state printing houses, they have been printed abroad (in Russia, Lithuania and Poland). This is the case with *Nasha Niva*, *Byelorusskaya Dyelovaya Gazeta* and *Dyen*. Some of the newspapers that were deprived of their licenses started to officially issue 399 copies, as this is the amount that can be issued without a license (in fact these papers have much bigger circulation). Other papers have moved to the Internet.

# **Ideologisation of the Belarusian educational system**

**In March 2003 President Alaxandr Lukashenka presented his concept of a state ideology that is intended to form the basis of the Belarusians' perspective, and is to justify Belarus' political system and its position in the world.**

## **State ideology – the struggle for the Belarusians' minds**

The state ideology formulated by President Lukashenka is a chaotic collection of slogans, often contradictory, and heavily reminiscent of Soviet-style propaganda. It includes elements of different ideologies and standpoints (pan-Slavic, Soviet, Orthodox), and emphasises the exceptional role of the Belarusian nation (elements of national megalomania). Its main elements are the appeal for consolidation around a strong leader and highlighting external threats. According to Lukashenka, the external threats include "liberal terror" (quotation taken from Lukashenka's speech on state ideology, 27 March 2003), and "Western aggression of a cultural and ideological character". According to the Belarusian leader, "there is virtually nobody out there who would want to help us"; this is his attempt to justify Belarus' self-isolation from the Western world. The president's domination within the political system is explained as the will of the Belarusian nation who have always supported Alaxandr Lukashenka during elections and referendums.

The authorities attach great importance to the propagation of the state ideology. According to a special decree of the President (no. 111, dated 20 February 2004), each firm with more than 150 employees is to establish an ideological department or appoint an ideological supervisor. Schools and universities have to conduct special courses on state ideology.

## **The ideologisation of education**

The Belarusian government, in its struggle for the people's minds, have paid much attention to the educational system. The minister of education Alaxandr Radkou has declared that universities and colleges should become not only centres of education, but also centres of ideology. This is of key importance for the authorities, as President Lukashenka's popularity among young people is comparatively low.

Thus, since 2004 schools have been obliged to give the pupils an ideological upbringing. During the ideology courses, the Belarusian leader's declarations are quoted extensively.

On the other hand, the authorities have been shutting down schools whose programme has not been "state-oriented", as Alaxandr Lukashenka put it. In February 2004 the authorities shut down the International Humanitarian Institute (within the Belarusian State University), which had used western standards in its programme. In July 2004 the Ministry of Education withdrew the license of the best private high school, the European Humanitarian University in Minsk, which had been financed by the European Union, the French Embassy in Minsk and numerous foreign foundations.

In June 2003 the authorities de-legalised the last school in Belarus with Belarusian as the teaching language, the Yakub Kolas Lyceum for Human Studies in Minsk. At the moment there are no state schools in Belarus where all lessons would be conducted in the Belarusian language. The language used in Belarusian schools is Russian.

## **The underground lyceum**

Still, the very strong determination of some Belarusian circles to carry out an education program which is not dependent on politics and state ideology can be observed. An example of this is the Lyceum for Human Studies in Minsk (<http://licej.net>). This school was founded in 1990; at the moment it has gone underground. All the lessons are conducted in Belarusian. The school offers a modern and high-level education as the programmes are prepared specially for the students. A key element of the lyceum's education is the cultivation of civic and democratic values among the young people.

This was probably the reason why on 25 June 2003 the then Prime Minister Henadz Navitski de-legalised the lyceum (officially because of an "optimisation of the educational system"). Since then, all lessons have been conducted in rented private flats. Formally students study in an extramural system; at the end of each year they pass exams in state schools. Despite extremely harsh conditions, the school is one of the best in Belarus.

The Lyceum for Human Studies maintains close foreign contacts, especially with the Central European states (the Czech Republic, Lithuania and Poland). In July 2005 about 90 students and 20 teachers came to Warsaw at the invitation of the Catholic Intelligentsia Club. In Warsaw they were able to have normal lessons in proper conditions.

## **A selection of international resolutions and reports on Belarus**

### **United Nations Organisation**

UNO Commission on Human Rights, 2005 – human rights in Belarus  
<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/LTD/G05/121/22/PDF/G0512122.pdf?OpenElement>

The report of the special rapporteur on human rights in Belarus Mr Adrian Severin, document no E/CN.4/2005/35, 18 March 2005  
<http://daccess-ods.un.org/TMP/9382084.html>

<http://daccessdds.un.org/doc/UNDOC/GEN/G05/129/94/PDF/G0512994.pdf?OpenElement>

<http://www.ohchr.org/english/bodies/chr/sessions/61/lisdocs.htm>

### **Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe [www.osce.org](http://www.osce.org)**

Final report on Parliamentary Elections in the Republic of Belarus, 17 October 2004  
[http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2004/12/3951\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2004/12/3951_en.pdf)

Limited Election Observation Mission Final Report (presidential election), 9 September 2001  
[http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2001/10/1237\\_en.pdf](http://www.osce.org/documents/odihr/2001/10/1237_en.pdf)

The OSCE Parliamentary Assembly Resolution on Belarus, 2003  
<http://www.oscepa.org/admin/getbinary.asp?fileid=300>

### **Council of Europe [www.coe.int](http://www.coe.int)**

The Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe resolutions:  
Disappeared Persons in Belarus, Resolution 1371 (2004)  
<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Adopted-Text/ta04/ERES1371.htm>

Persecution of the Press in the Republic of Belarus, Resolution 1372 (2004)  
<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Adopted-Text/ta04/ERES1372.htm>

Report “Disappeared persons in Belarus”, by Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights  
Rapporteur: Mr Christos Pourgourides, Doc. 10062, 4 February 2004.  
<http://assembly.coe.int/Mainf.asp?link=http://assembly.coe.int/Documents/Working-Docs/Doc04/EDOC10062.htm>

Statement by the Chairman of the Committee of Ministers on the situation  
in Belarus 14 May 2005  
<https://wcd.coe.int/ViewDoc.jsp?id=863243&BackColorInternet=9999CC&BackColorIntranet=FFBB55&BackColorLogged=FFAC75>

## European Union

Declaration from the Presidency on behalf of the European Union on Belarus  
2 August 2005  
[http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/85899.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/en/cfsp/85899.pdf)

European Parliament resolution on the political situation and the independence  
of the media in Belarus, P6\_TA-PROV(2005)0295, 7 July 2005  
<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2005-0295+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=3&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y>

European Parliament resolution on Belarus, P6\_TA-PROV(2005)0080,  
10 March 2005  
<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2005-0080+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=3&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y>

European Parliament resolution on the political situation in Belarus after the parlia-  
mentary elections and referendum of 17 October 2004, P6\_TA(2004)0045,  
28 October 2004  
<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2004-0045+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=3&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y>

European Parliament resolution on the situation in Belarus, P6\_TA(2004)0011,  
16 September 2004  
<http://www2.europarl.eu.int/omk/sipade2?PUBREF=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P6-TA-2004-0011+0+DOC+XML+V0//EN&L=EN&LEVEL=3&NAV=S&LSTDOC=Y>

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