

Belarus: Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the



Recalling the Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the European Union of 11 September, the EU once again reiterates that the 9 August Belarus Presidential elections were neither free nor fair. The European Union does not recognise their falsified results. On this basis, the so-called 'inauguration' of 23 September 2020 and the new mandate claimed by Aleksandr Lukashenko lack any democratic legitimacy.

This 'inauguration' directly contradicts the will of large parts of the Belarusian population, as expressed in numerous, unprecedented and peaceful protests since the elections, and serves to only further deepen the political crisis in Belarus.

The European Union's position is clear: Belarusian citizens deserve the right to be represented by those they freely choose through new inclusive, transparent and credible elections.

We are impressed and moved by the courage of the Belarusian people who continue to demonstrate peacefully for democracy and for their fundamental rights despite the brutal repression of the Belarusian authorities. We stand in solidarity with them and fully support their democratic right to elect their President through new free and fair elections under the OSCE/ODIHR's supervision.

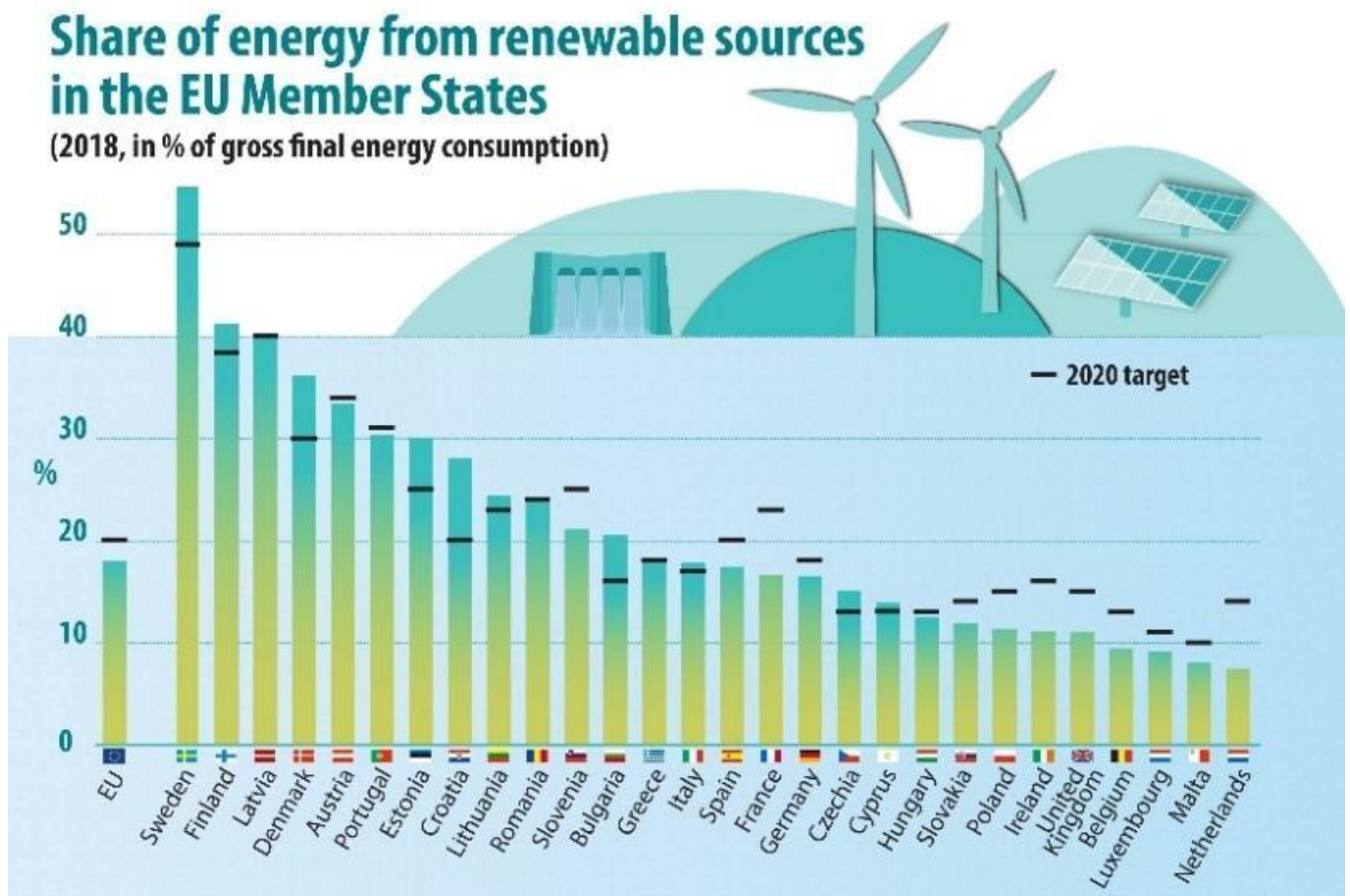
We reiterate our expectation that the Belarusian authorities immediately refrain from any further repression and violence directed against the Belarusian people and immediately and unconditionally release all those detained, including political prisoners.

The EU remains convinced that an inclusive national dialogue and responding positively to the demands of the Belarusian people for new democratic elections are the only way forward in finding a way out of the serious political crisis in Belarus that respects the wishes of the Belarusian people.

In light of the current situation, the EU is reviewing its relations with Belarus.

Poland: BNP Paribas Bank Polska and

EIB join forces for energy efficiency investments



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- PLN 71.2 million (EUR 16 million) first loss guarantee agreement to help BNP Paribas Bank Polska to finance Polish energy efficiency projects.
- The guarantee comes under the first Polish operation included in the PF4EE programme funded by the EIB and the European Commission.
- The project is expected to benefit around 15.000 households, small farmers and housing associations.

The European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed a PLN 71.2 million (EUR 16 million) guarantee agreement with BNP Paribas Bank Polska to provide a first loss portfolio guarantee to support the financing of energy efficiency projects from Polish homeowners, micro-farmers, and housing associations. The guarantee will help BNP Paribas Bank Polska to provide, under the agreement with the EIB, PLN 742 million (EUR 166.7 million) of new financing for energy efficiency projects. The banks estimate that around 15.000 clients will benefit from the project. The EIB guarantee comes under the [Private Finance for Energy Efficiency \(PF4EE\)](#), a joint initiative launched by the European Commission via the LIFE programme and the EIB.

The increased [use of renewable energy](#) is one of the key objectives of the Polish authorities and the European Union, which BNP Paribas Bank Polska and the EIB support. This operation is set to facilitate investments in energy efficiency and renewable energy by Polish home owners, farmers and housing associations. The programme can support the installation of renewable energy sources in individual homes and micro-farms, as well as finance the comprehensive energy refurbishment of multi-home apartment buildings. Measures that are eligible for this financing include solar photovoltaic installation for private homeowners and micro-farmers and a wide range of energy efficiency measures for multi-apartment buildings, such as energy efficient windows or facades, heating and ventilation systems, renewable energy sources integrated into the buildings and other measures.

EIB Vice-President [Teresa Czerwinska](#) commented: *"When you talk about climate action, there is much to be gained from energy efficiency. Investing in climate-relevant projects is not only about energy generation or e-mobility – a huge effort is needed to better manage and use the energy that we consume. In line with our commitment to raise the share of our climate financing to 50% by 2025, we wholeheartedly support this project with our long-time partner BNP Paribas Bank Polska, which will give Polish homeowners and farmers the chance to improve their environmental standing and save on their energy bills."*

Managing Director responsible for Assets and Liabilities Management and Head of BNP Paribas Bank Polska's Sustainable Finance Competence Center **Jarosław Rot** added: *"Care for the environment, sustainable development and energy efficiency are now key topics of public debate and challenges we all face. At BNP Paribas Bank Polska, we actively take initiatives to support the construction of a sustainable economy and protect natural resources. As the first on the Polish market, we have established cooperation with European institutions regarding the PF4EE instrument. Thanks to this, we can offer our clients financing of renewable energy sources in their homes and farms as well as thermo-modernisation projects for multi-family buildings on a massive scale. We are proud to be able to participate in the energy transformation of so many market segments and to help a wide group of Poles to derive renewable energy from home appliances."*

European Commissioner for Energy **Kadri Simson** said: *"Energy efficiency is a common priority for many countries around the globe. It is an essential component of EU energy policy and key for the clean energy transition. Therefore, the 'energy efficiency first' principle remains our motto to live and work by. Given the challenges we have faced this year with the COVID-19 outbreak, it will have an even bigger role to play in the future as we look to recovery: small-scale energy projects have significant potential to create new jobs and reduce energy bills. I am pleased to see projects that boost the usage of renewables and energy efficiency in Poland."*

Background information

[BNP Paribas Bank Polska S.A.](#), which has been listed on the Warsaw Stock Exchange since 2011 is a member of the BNP Paribas banking group whose footprint spans 71 countries. In Poland, as a universal bank with a global

reach, it provides services to retail customers and other segments including Wealth Management, microbusinesses, SMEs and corporate banking. As it advocates green initiatives, BNP Paribas supports its clients in the transition to a low carbon economy, endeavors to curtail the adverse impact of its operations on the natural environment and inspires clients to make good financial decisions. The Bank has provided funding for more than 10 thousand households to install photovoltaic panels. The Bank also consistently pursues its strategy of financing businesses in Poland while also supporting investments of strategic importance to the country with a positive social, economic and environmental impact.

PF4EE is a joint EIB-European Commission financial instrument to promote energy efficiency lending by financial institutions. This is the 11th operation under the programme and the first in Poland. The PF4EE Instrument Risk Sharing Facility is a risk mitigation mechanism that enables financial intermediaries to partially recover losses they may incur in their newly originated portfolios of energy efficiency loans to final beneficiaries.

[Press release – New committees begin their work](#)



Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU (INGE)

Chair: Raphaël GLUCKSMANN (S&D, FR)

1st Vice-Chair: Javier ZARZALEJOS (EPP, ES)

The other three vice-chairs will be elected at a later meeting.

The Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the EU is composed of 33 [members](#) and is [mandated](#) to examine, among others, how outside manipulation and campaign financing affected elections in the EU and what the EU could do to counter disinformation.

You can follow all news about the special committee by signing up to its twitter account, @EP_Democracy

Special Committees on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age (AIDA)

Chair: Dragoş TUDORACHE (Renew/RO)

1st Vice-Chair: Miapetra KUMPULA-NATRI (S&D/FI)

2nd Vice-Chair: Geoffroy DIDIER (EPP/FR)

3rd Vice-Chair: Edina TÓTH (EPP/HU)

4th Vice-Chair : Birgit SIPPEL (S&D/DE)

The Special Committee on Artificial Intelligence in a Digital Age is made up of 33 [members](#). Its [mandate](#) is to analyse the future impact of artificial intelligence in the digital age on the EU economy, in particular on skills, employment, fintech, education, health, transport, tourism, agriculture, environment, defence, industry, energy and e-government.

You can follow all news about the special committee by signing up shortly to its twitter account, @EP_ArtifIntel

Special Committee on Beating Cancer (BECA)

Chair: Bartosz ARŁUKOWICZ (EPP, PL)

1st Vice-Chair: Joanna KOPCIŃSKA (ECR, PL)

2nd Vice-Chair: Sara CERDAS (S&D, PT)

3rd Vice-Chair: Nathalie COLIN-OESTERLÉ (EPP, FR)

4th Vice-Chair: Ivars IJABS (Renew Europe, LV)

The Special Committee on Beating Cancer is made up of 33 full [members](#) and is specifically [tasked](#) with evaluating opportunities for concrete EU action, identifying legislation and other measures that can help prevent and fight cancer.

You can follow all news about the special committee by signing up to its twitter account, @EP_Environment

Subcommittee on Tax Matters (FISC)

Chair: Paul TANG (S&D, NL)

1st Vice-Chair: Markus FERBER (EPP, DE)

2nd Vice-Chair: Martin HLAVACEK (Renew, CZ)

3rd Vice-Chair: Kira PETER-HANSEN (Greens, DK)

4th Vice-Chair: Othmar KARAS (EPP, AT)

The subcommittee on tax matters is composed of 30 [members](#) and its [mandate](#) instructs it to deal primarily with the fight against tax fraud, tax evasion and tax avoidance, as well as financial transparency for taxation purposes.

You can follow all news about the subcommittee by signing up to its twitter account, @EP_Taxation

Committee of Inquiry on Animal Transport (ANIT)

Chair: Tilly METZ (Greens/LU)

1st Vice-Chair: Marlene MORTLER (EPP/DE)

2nd Vice-Chair: Anja HAZEKAMP (GUE/NL)

3rd Vice-Chair: Mohammed CHAHIM (S&D/NL)

4th Vice-Chair : Martin HOJSÍK (Renew/SK)

The Animal Transport Inquiry Committee, made up of 30 full [members](#), should [investigate](#) alleged violations in the application of [EU law on the protection of animals during transport and related operations](#) within and outside the EU. It will focus on how EU rules are being implemented by member states and whether the EU Commission is enforcing them properly.

You can follow all news about the inquiry committee by signing up to its twitter account,

@EP_Agriculture

[Press release – COVID-19: MEPs call for measures to close the digital gap in education](#)



The resolution was adopted by 26 votes in favour, none against and 4 abstentions.

“The last six months have seen our education and training turned upside down. The pandemic has shown both creativity and ingenuity and at the same time exposed deeply worrying gaps in terms of access to and quality of education. The digital divide is making existing inequalities worse and leaving behind those who are already at a disadvantage,” said the rapporteur Sabine Verheyen (EPP, DE).

Digital education must be reality for all

In the resolution, MEPs deplore the “severe discrepancies” in learning across the EU during the lockdown, with 32% of pupils in some Member States not having had any access to education for several months. They fear that this will decrease future income levels for a whole generation and negatively impact labour productivity and competitiveness for the Union as a whole.

Therefore, closing the digital divide must be an “immediate priority”, with the Commission prioritising investments in digital infrastructure and equipment, particularly in remote and rural areas. “The primary lesson from the crisis” is that inclusion and equal opportunities must be at the heart of the EU’ s future education and training policies.

“A bold vision for the European Education Area”

MEPs also criticise the missing coordination and exchange of best practices during the crisis, and say that the EU should play a more active coordinating role.

“We want to see a bold vision for the European Education Area across education and training sectors that is backed up by concrete measures. And we want to see a Digital Education Action Plan that evolves from a collection of

small-scale actions to a fully-fledged digital skills and education strategy. Grand ideas without the money to fund them cannot work though”, said Ms Verheyen.

The expected “education package” proposals should transform the European Education Area “from a loose vision of principles into a concrete work programme” that also ensures automatic mutual recognition of qualifications, diplomas and learning periods abroad by 2025 at the latest, MEPs say. The foreseen Digital Education Action Plan must set out a fully-fledged digital skills and education strategy.

Plans need a funding to match

MEPs also underline that high-quality education systems are the foundation of the EU’s global competitiveness and criticize the proposed cuts in the long-term budget. in programmes such as Erasmus+, Horizon Europe and the European Social Fund Plus. They therefore reiterate their call for the Erasmus+ budget to be tripled compared to the 2014-2020 MFF.

Further steps

The resolution is set to be put to plenary vote during the second plenary session of October .

The European Commission has promised to come up with a new “education package” – Communication on the European Education Area and a revised Digital Education Action Plan – by the end of this month.

[S.O.S for education: Speech by the High Representative / Vice-Pr](#)



Check against delivery!

Today we are launching an SOS for education.

Why? Because more than 1.5 billion students have been affected by school closures.

Do you understand what does it mean? 1.5 billion students without school.

This affects their future and our present. This affects the future of the world, because the future of the world will be built by these young boys and girls deprived of school.

That is why cooperation on education with the United Nations and UNICEF is a priority for the European Union. This is why, together with the Executive Director of UNICEF [Henrietta Fore], we decided some months ago to join our forces, because the right to education must be at the centre of the political agenda.

Education is an equality builder. Through education, you build equality -we have always been saying that. L'école c'est la fabrique de l'égalité. La escuela es la fábrica de la igualdad. It is the best social elevator. For people who are born in poor households, the only hope to improve their life is through education, being competitive in the job market.

How do you become competitive in the job market? By knowledge, by learning. That is why education is the best endeavour of the governments. That is why we are here calling not to deprive young boys and girls of education.

The coronavirus has shown to all of us how vulnerable we are, even in the most developed countries. It is here, in the richest part of the world, where these things happen.

As you said, Vice-President [for Democracy and Demography, Dubravka Šuica], how many poor young boys and girls are here in Europe will be deprived of a strong future because they would not be able to go to a good school. Only together can we overcome this crisis, through solidarity and cooperation.

This SOS concerns all of us: institutions, governments, civil society. These 200 blue packs writing an SOS here in the streets of Belgium, in Brussels, are here to remind us, the whole world, that hundreds of millions of children are still waiting to put on their school bags again, to receive the education that will determine their future.

But maybe this pandemic gives us an opportunity. An opportunity to be aware of that, to build back better, to build a better future overcoming old inequalities, facing the digital age and avoiding the big digital divide with people getting closed off in their homes. The digital divide has been more important than ever, because now either you are digital or you are out of everything. It is not a luxury anymore, it is a basic tool, as basic as water if you want to survive in this world.

We have to reimagine our future, but also to build our present. You cannot

tell people 'Do not worry, your future will be digital.' Yes, but what about my present? My future will be very good, but what about my present? Because it is today, it is this afternoon, it is tomorrow morning, when I have needs [that need] to be fulfilled. That is why it is urgent, that is why it is an SOS. It is calling everybody in the world, government, civil society organisations, like UNICEF, to understand that the freedom of education is the best basic tool for the humankind to build a better future. That is why these 200 blue bags are here, in the middle of the European Institutions.

Thank you for inviting me and thank you for this initiative.

Link to the video: <https://audiovisual.ec.europa.eu/en/video/I-195375>