

# FACTS AND FIGURES ABOUT EU-BELARUS RELATIONS



For the past four years **EU-Belarus cooperation has increased**. EU assistance to Belarus has doubled to around €30 million annually. **Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements** were signed on 8 January 2020, and are expected to enter into force from 1 July, 2020. Belarus has been participating actively in the multilateral formats of the Eastern Partnership. The bilateral relationship will be strengthened through the **EU-Belarus Partnership Priorities**, which are currently being negotiated. They will set the strategic framework for cooperation in the coming years. Tangible steps taken by Belarus to respect universal freedoms, the rule of law, human rights, including the freedoms of speech, expression and of media, as well as labour rights, will remain fundamental criteria for the EU's policy towards Belarus. The EU continues to support Belarus' World Trade Organisation accession process, as this will contribute to the creation of a **more predictable and stable business environment in the country**.

## ECONOMY

- ✓ Cooperation with **international financial institutions** such as the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) has rapidly expanded since 2016, increasing the available funds for the private sector, support to small and medium enterprises, as well as a number of key infrastructure projects, notably within the **extended TEN-T**, and for **climate action** projects.
- ✓ The EU has assisted **4,500 Belarusian companies** with funding, training, and export support to new markets through the EU4Business initiative: **5,700 new jobs** were created helping small and medium size enterprises grow.
- ✓ The EU has stepped up its support to the regions of **Brest** and **Grodno**, with particular focus on resource and energy efficiency.
- ✓ The EU continues to support Belarus in the World Trade Organisation (WTO) accession process.
- ✓ **Bilateral dialogues** on economic and financial issues, trade as well as customs cooperation are in place.

## ENVIRONMENT AND CONNECTIVITY

- ✓ Through the EBRD-managed **Eastern Europe Energy Efficiency and Environment Partnership**, Belarus has access to €10 million for key projects in energy efficiency and environmental protection. The first project - **Puhovich Solid Waste** - has helped to leverage total investments of €7 million. A new investment grant for wastewater treatment facilities in 6 cities in Belarus was also approved at the end of 2019.
- ✓ EU support has helped to improve **energy efficiency in educational facilities** for the benefit of **2,000 school and pre-school children**, and support to modernisation has improved the living conditions of 10,000 citizens and reduced electricity bills for 10 municipalities.
- ✓ Under the TEN-T indicative investment plan, a total of **890 km of road** and **200 km of rail** improvements will bring **better connectivity**, improved road safety and use of intelligent transport systems. First works on renovation of the M7 road (Minsk – Lithuanian border) will start in 2020.
- ✓ The **Strengthening Air Quality and Environmental Management programme** backs Belarus' efforts to modernise air quality monitoring and contributes to improved air quality in Belarus.
- ✓ Bilateral dialogue on **environment and climate action** takes place on an annual basis.

## GOVERNANCE

- ✓ The **EU-Belarus Coordination Group** meets twice a year, at the level of senior officials, to steer cooperation between the EU and Belarus and oversee further development of relations.
- ✓ The annual **EU-Belarus Human Rights Dialogue** provides a forum for discussion on the human rights situation in Belarus and joint steps to be taken in this area. **The EU remains committed to cooperate with Belarus to enhance democratic governance.**
- ✓ The EU regularly raises issues related to freedom of assembly and association, freedom of speech and media as well as fundamental labour rights with the Belarusian authorities at all levels. The EU raises its strong opposition to capital punishment, which is still in use in Belarus, and calls for a moratorium on the death penalty.
- ✓ The EU has been supporting the implementation of the **National Human Rights Action Plan** in the period 2016-2019 and has encouraged dialogue between the Government and civil society. In the period 2014-2018, the EU has provided €30 million to support social entrepreneurship, civil society capacity building and participation in decision-making processes, enhancing professional reporting and strengthening the capacities of independent media professionals.
- ✓ With seven projects, Twinning, which brings together public sector expertise from EU Member States and beneficiary countries, has since 2016 become a new track of a preferred modality for EU-Belarus cooperation.

## SOCIETY

- ✓ **Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements** with Belarus were signed on 8 January 2020 and are expected to enter into force from 1 July, 2020. Cooperation under the Mobility Partnership takes place since 2016. Several cooperation projects were launched in 2018 and 2019 in the area of border and migration management, to increase Belarus' capacity and reinforce **cross-border cooperation** in the area.
- ✓ Under Erasmus+, over **3,000 students** and academic staff exchanges have taken place between Belarus and the EU since 2009 and over **3,400 young people** and youth workers from Belarus have been involved in joint exchanges, training and volunteering projects in the EU since 2014.
- ✓ Over **5,500 Belarusians** have benefitted from **short-term professional exchanges** in the EU in the areas of culture, education, health, science, technology, innovation and entrepreneurship, gaining skills, knowledge and establishing professional contacts with peers in EU Member States thanks to a dedicated **Mobility Scheme for Targeted People-to-People Contacts** (MOST) programme.
- ✓ Belarus has participated in 48 projects under the Horizon 2020 programme, enhancing **research and innovation** capacity.

# EU STANDS BY BELARUS DURING COVID-19 PANDEMIC

The EU reacted fast and responded to the urgent needs of countries in the Eastern Partnership during the COVID-19 pandemic. As part of Team Europe, the EU has mobilised an ambitious support package totalling over **€980 million** to help tackle immediate needs, such as support to the health sector and vulnerable communities, as well as short-term needs to support the social and economic recovery of the six countries.

As part of this, a tailor-made COVID-19 response package for Belarus worth over **€60 million** is being mobilised using a mix of existing and new funds to deliver concrete support to people.

## ✓ SUPPORT TO THE HEALTH SECTOR AND EMERGENCY NEEDS:

- Working with the WHO to supply medical devices, testing kits, masks, goggles, safety suits, gowns and other equipment. Training of medical and laboratory staff.
- Thanks to the EU Cross-Border Cooperation Programme Poland-Belarus-Ukraine, the EU has helped Belarus' emergency medical services to better respond to emergencies.

## ✓ SUPPORT TO CIVIL SOCIETY:

- Emergency grants to support vulnerable citizens, the elderly and children.

## ✓ SUPPORT TO SMEs AND TO SMALL FARMS:

- Through the **EU4Business** Initiative, SMEs and the self-employed can access grants, loans and business advice to withstand the crisis.

## ✓ SUPPORT TO SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESILIENCE:

- The EU will support Belarus' national administration to provide the health system with the necessary tools to deal with the COVID-19 outbreak and similar future outbreaks; ensure Belarusians have access to social support to cope with the negative effects of the COVID-19 outbreak; and support the economic recovery of businesses.

## IN FOCUS:

examples of what has been already delivered

**24**  
schools received  
**1,300**  
**litres of disinfectants**  
to help students stay safe during classes.

**15,000**  
booklets and  
**2,000**  
posters on COVID-19 prevention delivered to schools.

**Personal protective equipment**  
delivered to ensure the safety of volunteers and medics.

Thanks to Erasmus+ funding, a small-scale FABLAB workshop has been  
**making protective screen masks**  
for medical workers and parts for medical ventilators.

**145,000**  
leaflets with tips distributed in **public transport** and trainings for elderly people living in rural areas on computer skills to stay connected amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

## IN FIGURES

The **EU** is Belarus' **2nd trading partner** with a share of almost a quarter of the country's overall trade. In 2018, trade between the EU and Belarus increased by **16%** compared to the previous year.

In the period 2014-2020, the **EU's assistance to Belarus** under the European Neighbourhood Instrument amounted to **€170 million**

Over **5,500** Belarusians have benefitted from **short-term professional exchanges** through the Mobility Scheme for Targeted People-to-People Contacts (MOST) programme.

Since 2016, the EIB has committed **€530 million** to support private sector and small and medium enterprises, key infrastructure and climate action projects.

## NUCLEAR SAFETY

The **respect of the highest nuclear safety standards is a key priority for the EU**, especially since a nuclear power plant is being constructed so close to the EU borders (in Astraviec). It is important for the EU that nuclear safety is ensured beyond its own borders and, with this objective, the EU encourages Belarus to continue constructive cooperation with the relevant international authorities.

## CLIMATE CHANGE MITIGATION

The number of local authorities joining the **Covenant of Mayors initiative**, the mainstream European movement involving local authorities in the implementation of sustainable energy policies, has doubled in the past years in Belarus, reaching 52 signatories. This demonstrates a high interest, motivation and capability for **local level action in Belarus to cut CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and save energy**.

## CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Belarus benefits from **two Cross Border Cooperation programmes**, Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus and Poland-Belarus-Ukraine. These programmes promote economic and social development in border areas and provide opportunities for enhanced people-to-people contacts.