



**8<sup>th</sup> meeting of the EU-Belarus Coordination Group**

**17-18 December 2019, Brussels**

**BRIEFING**

**Day 1**

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Item	Page number
<b>Agenda</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Briefing for lunch with DFM [REDACTED]</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>General scene setter</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Overall EU-Belarus relations (<i>EU lead</i>)</b>	
• Introductory remarks of the co-chairs and DG NEAR	<b>14</b>
• Exchange of views on recent developments in the EU-Belarus relations and the next steps	<b>15</b>
• State of play on EU-Belarus Partnership Priorities negotiations, including nuclear safety (with DG ENER and DG DEVCO participation)	<b>19</b>
<b>Migration and Mobility (<i>EU lead</i>) – DG HOME</b>	
• State of play on Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements	<b>28</b>
• Implementation of the Mobility Partnership	<b>33</b>
<b>Human rights and democracy (<i>BY lead</i>)</b>	
• Human rights situation and follow-up to the Human Rights Dialogue (including cooperation with civil society)	<b>35</b>
• Parliamentary elections	
• Cooperation in the area of good governance and rule of law (including follow-up to discussions on OECD/SIGMA support)	<b>43</b>
<b>Financial cooperation (<i>EU lead</i>)</b>	<b>48</b>
• State of play (including 2019 and 2020 Special measures) and challenges	
• Preparations for post-2020 programming –MENA 5	
• Communication and visibility of EU support	
<b>ANNEX 1 – Draft text of Partnership Priorities</b>	<b>57</b>
<b>ANNEX 2 – Draft press release</b>	<b>61</b>
<b>ANNEX 3 – Lists of participants</b>	<b>62</b>

# AGENDA

17 December 2019

Timing	Agenda point
12:30 – 14:00	[REDACTED]
13:45 – 14:00	Arrival of participants
14:00 – 15:00	<b>Overall EU-Belarus relations (EU lead)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introductory remarks</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>[REDACTED]</li> <li>• Exchange of views on recent developments in the EU-Belarus relations and the next steps</li> <li>• State of play on EU-Belarus Partnership Priorities negotiations, including nuclear safety (with DG ENER and DG DEVCO participation)</li> </ul>
15:00 – 15:30	<b>Migration and Mobility (EU lead) – DG HOME</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of play on Visa Facilitation and Readmission Agreements</li> <li>• Implementation of the Mobility Partnership</li> </ul>
15:30 – 15:45	<b>Coffee</b>
15:45 – 16:45	<b>Human rights and democracy (BY lead)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Human rights situation and follow-up to the Human Rights Dialogue (including cooperation with civil society)</li> <li>• Parliamentary elections</li> <li>• Cooperation in the area of good governance and rule of law (including follow-up to discussions on OECD/SIGMA support)</li> </ul>
16:45 – 17:30	<b>Financial cooperation (EU lead)</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of play (including 2019 and 2020 Special measures) and challenges</li> <li>• Preparations for post-2020 programming –MENA 5</li> <li>• Communication and visibility of EU support</li> </ul>
19:00	[REDACTED]

**18 December 2019** *(with civil society participation)*

<b>Timing</b>	<b>Agenda point</b>
9:00 – 9:30	Arrival
9:30 – 10:30	<b>Sectoral cooperation – Part I</b> <i>(BY lead)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economic and financial issues - ECFIN</li> <li>• Statistics - ESTAT</li> <li>• Trade - TRADE/SANTE</li> <li>• Agriculture - AGRI</li> </ul>
10:30 – 11:30	<b>Sectoral cooperation – Part II</b> <i>(EU lead)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Privatisation and enterprise development (including an update from BY on the IT sector development) - GROW</li> <li>• Customs – TAXUD/OLAF</li> <li>• Digital economy - CNECT</li> </ul>
11:30 – 11:45	<b>Coffee</b>
11:45 – 12:30	<b>Belarus in the Eastern Partnership</b> <i>(BY lead) – EAST 1</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• State of play in Belarus' implementation of 20 deliverables for 2020</li> <li>• Preparation of the EaP Summit of 2020 and state of play in post-2020 consultations</li> <li>• Preparations for the EaP high-level event in Minsk in 2020</li> </ul>
12:30 – 14:00	<i>Eastern Partnership lunch (4+4 format) hosted by the EU (Fattoria del Chianti, Rue Froissart 19)</i>
12:30 – 14:00	<b>Buffet lunch offered to participants by EEAS (in Borchette)</b>
14:00 – 15:00	<b>Sectoral cooperation – Part III</b> <i>(EU lead)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Civil protection - ECHO</li> <li>• Environment and climate action – ENV/CLIMA</li> <li>• Transport</li> </ul>
15:00 – 15:15	<b>Coffee break</b>
15:15 – 16:15	<b>Sectoral cooperation – Part IV</b> <i>(BY lead)</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Labour, employment and social protection (including vocational education and training)</li> <li>• Education and youth - EAC</li> <li>• Research and innovation - RTD</li> </ul>
16:15	<b>Closing remarks</b>

## State of play of the EU-Belarus Partnership Priorities, including nuclear safety (with DG ENER and DG DEVCO participation)

### Scene setter

[REDACTED]

*In the follow up to ENSREG recommendations, in August 2019 the Belarusian nuclear regulator, published a **National Action Plan** (NacP) for improving the safety of the plant and transmitted the report to ENSREG, for information. On 22 October ENSREG sent a letter to BY regulator requesting that BY submits the NacP for the peer review by ENSREG experts, inviting BY to participate in similar peer review mission in Armenia and finally inviting them to come to ENSREG plenary meeting on 14 November. An expert from the Belarusian nuclear regulator GAN participated to the ENSREG mission to Armenia to peer review the implementation of the recommendations made following Armenia's nuclear stress tests.*

*During the **ENSREG plenary** on 14 November 2019 (a representative of the Belarussian Mission to the EU participated), both ENSREG's experts and the LT regulator presented their assessments of the Belarusian NacP ([REDACTED]). LT comments coincided largely with the ENSREG initial assessment emphasizing that BY NacP does not adequately address certain recommendations as it mostly foresees at this stage further studies and assessments.*

*On 4 December ENSREG Chair sent a **letter to Belarusian regulator** to request GAN to continue their engagement with ENSREG and start an exchange on the implementation of the recommendations from the ENSREG peer review report, including a visit to Minsk with the ENSREG review team leader and COM in the coming weeks/months. No reply from Belarus has been received yet.*

[REDACTED]

*The European Community Urgent Radiological Information Exchange (ECURIE) was set up to facilitate early notification and information exchange in the event of a radiological or nuclear emergency. All EU Member States as well as several neighbouring states participate to the system. The Commission wrote to Belarus on 7.11.2019, reiterating an invitation originally sent in 2018 inviting Belarus to participate to a joint technical workshop on the ECURIE system, which is apparently required by BY in order for them to take a decision on their joining ECURIE. To date no response has been received. It is critical that this cooperation is operational before the start of the nuclear power plant.*

[EU side starts the discussion]

Speaking points for EEAS Chair

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[Give floor to DG ENER]

Speaking points for DG ENER

- Underline that ensuring a high-level of nuclear safety in the neighbourhood is in the common interest of both the European Union and Belarus,
- Welcome the completion of the Stress Test Peer Review, undertaken by the European Nuclear Safety Regulators Group (ENSREG) and the publication of the final ENSREG report in July 2018: this represents an important step in building mutual confidence.
- Note the publication of the National Action Plan addressing the recommendations of the ENSREG peer review team. [Express disappointment that the report was only published in August 2019.]
- Note that senior ENSREG and Commission officials have offered to visit the Belarussian nuclear regulator, GAN, in order to present ENSREG's initial findings on the Belarusian National Action Plan.

- Invite Belarus to demonstrate its continuing adherence to implementing the highest standards of nuclear safety by undertaking the next steps in the stress test process: inviting ENSREG to perform a peer review of the National Action Plan.
- Stress that such a review represents the good practice, followed by the EU's Member States as well the third states which aligned themselves with the EU's post-Fukushima stress testing activities.
- Stress the importance of Belarus working closely together with ENSREG to identify those priority Stress Test recommendations which should be implemented before start-up of Ostravets.
- After review of the National Action Plan, the standard practice for EU stress tests includes periodic verification of the implementation of the plan.
- As regards the Espoo Convention, the Intermediary Meeting of the Parties acknowledged that Belarus had taken all required procedural steps to reach the final decision concerning Ostrovets, while confirming that Belarus did not provide sufficient information on the alternative locations considered to explain the selection of the Ostrovets site in its final decision.
- Encourage the Belarusian authorities to comply with this decision, and likewise encourages both the Belarusian and the Lithuanian side to continue bilateral expert consultations in the field.
- The Commission thanks Belarus for transmitting data from its environmental radioactivity monitoring stations to the Commission and looks forward to formalising Belarus's participation in the EURDEP environmental radioactivity monitoring network through the signing of an administrative arrangement.
- Remind Belarus that the Commission has written to Belarus on two occasions regarding their participation in ECURIE and has offered to organise a workshop on ECURIE as a first step (in the ECURIE HQ in Luxembourg), but has not yet received a reply.
- It is essential that Belarus's participation to ECURIE is operational before the start-up of the Ostrovets NPP.
- Similarly, we expect Belarus to take all constructive steps with Lithuania to finalise the bilateral agreement on emergency preparedness and response.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED] [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]  
[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

#### Speaking points for DG DEVCO

- The Commission considers nuclear safety cooperation a central topic in the EU's partnership with Belarus,
- Already in 2011 and even more since 2013 through the INSC (Instrument for nuclear safety co-operation), managed by DG DEVCO, the EU has been providing the Belarusian nuclear regulatory authority with technical assistance by transferring EU best practices on the regulatory process,
- This technical assistance will continue in the coming years to ensure that the highest possible safety standards are followed and implemented in Belarus. This future technical assistance should improve specific capabilities of the Belarusian regulator and of its TSOs to:
  - Monitor the safe operation of the Belarusian NPP in the early phase of commercial operation,
  - Supervise the implementation of the safety enhancements of the Belarusian NPP following the publication of Belarus Stress Test national Action Plan (NAcP) in 2019
  - Strengthen regulatory supervision over emergency preparedness and response to nuclear and radiological emergencies
- The instrument for nuclear safety will continue in the next MFF (2021-2027). The current proposal for a new instrument dealing with nuclear safety cooperation is pending the conclusion of the discussions on NDICI and budget allocation. It is foreseen that the new instrument will be adopted next year; the current budget is EUR 300 million for the period 2021 - 2027

[REDACTED]



[illegible]

*Regarding the decision on Ostrovets, made at the Intermediate Meeting of the Espoo Parties in February 2019 in Geneva, the Commission encourages the Belarusian authorities to comply with this decision and likewise encourages both the Belarusian and the Lithuanian side to continue bilateral expert consultations in the field.*

*Nuclear safety is the prime responsibility of the operator under the national regulatory authority, in this case of Belarus. As nuclear safety is a key priority for the EU, the EU is trying to maximise cooperation among regulators both within the EU and in the neighbourhood. The stress test exercise plays a crucial role in these efforts and we welcome that Belarus (and other neighbouring countries) have voluntarily conducted such stress tests in accordance with the EU methodology developed after the Fukushima accident in 2011.*

*Both the EU's Member States and the third countries which participated to the EU's Stress Test process have found that participation makes a valuable contribution to enhancing the safety of their NPP as well as maintaining continuous improvement in safety through follow-up by ENSREG of the implementation of the recommendations arising at the various stages of the stress test process. Furthermore, because the Stress Test process is carried out in a fully transparent manner in accordance with ENSREG's Guidelines on Openness and Transparency, participation also serves to demonstrate to civil society and neighbouring states the rigorous application of the highest standards of nuclear safety.*

## **Background**

### ***Ostrovets nuclear power plant***

As a follow-up to the ENSREG peer review, on 19 August 2019 the Belarusian nuclear regulator, Gosatomnadzor, (GAN) published a **National Action Plan** (in Russian only) for improving the safety of the plant and in parallel transmitted the report, still in Russian, to ENSREG, for information. Belarus claimed that the Action plan had been approved and put into effect in February 2019 already, but had awaited the drafting of an accompanying narrative text before publishing.

[REDACTED]

On 22 October 2019, the ENSREG Chair sent a **letter to the BY nuclear regulator** requesting that BY submits its NAcP for the review, inviting BY to participate in a similar peer review mission in Armenia and finally inviting them to come to the ENSREG plenary meeting on 14 November. The Belarusian regulator did not participate to the meeting, but a representative of the Belarusian Mission to the EU did participate – in listening mode. A Belarusian expert from the Belarusian nuclear regulator GAN participated to the ENSREG mission to Armenia to peer review the implementation of the actions and recommendations made in respect of Armenia's nuclear stress tests, which is what the Commission and ENSREG seek from Belarus in respect of Ostrovets. Otherwise the Belarusian reply to the 22 October letter did not address the topic of an ENSREG peer review of the NAcP.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

#### ***Espoo Convention non-compliance case***

Lithuania claims that Belarus had failed to properly complete the Espoo Convention's Environmental Impact Assessment procedure with respect to the planned activity while proceeding with some construction works. An intermediary session of the Meeting of the Parties to the Espoo Convention took place on 5-7 February 2019 in Geneva. After assessing the technical documentation on its own, the Implementation Committee managed to resolve all technical and scientific issues at stake, except the one related to the selection of the locational alternative. On this point, the Implementation Committee justified its deliberations with the precautionary principle and in particular with regard to certain activities such as nuclear power plants where the magnitude of a significant adverse impact could be very high in case of an accident. Therefore, the Committee concluded that the EIA documentation should have provided sufficient information on the site selection and the alternatives, so that to keep the *“the precautionary principle enshrined in the Convention and the Convention's objective of enhancing international cooperation in assessing environmental impact, in particular in a transboundary context”*.

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[Pages 26-65 redacted as out of scope]