



**STATEMENT BY MEMBER OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT
Petras AUŠTREVICĪUS**

**on freezing cooperation with Belarusian authorities within the EU Eastern Partnership
policy framework**

Brussels, 10 September 2020 - “I am appalled by and strongly deplore the behaviour of Belarusian authorities towards Belarusian citizens peacefully protesting against fraudulent election results and calling for a new presidential election in accordance to the international election standards.

Until Belarusian authorities cease their brutal behaviour, restore the basic human rights and fundamental freedoms and enter into a dialogue with Belarusian citizens to organize a peaceful power transfer, the EU has to stop any engagement and cooperation with Belarusian authorities in the programs and initiatives under the EU Eastern Partnership policy. All the EU support to Belarus, including the additional funds of EUR 53 million, has to be directly channelled to and for the benefit of Belarusian people via the civil society actors and organizations.

A special mechanism enabling such distribution of the EU funds has to be immediately developed by taking the best practices of the development cooperation agencies of the EU Member States, the European Endowment for Democracy, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum and other international organizations working in Belarus.

Many Belarusian civil society organizations are deprived of official registration in Belarus and are registered in the EU Member States. These organizations should not be excluded from organizations eligible for the EU support. Moreover, they require a particular assistance with legal and operational matters in the country of their registration. Also, their representatives should be exempt to strict Covid-19 related travel rules and to be allowed to enter the country where organization is registered.

Position of the Belarusian civil society actors and organizations should be taken into consideration when deciding upon distribution and channelling of the EU financial support.”

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