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WHO HAS BENEFITED FROM THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY IN BELARUS?

Introduction

SINCE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE AUTHORITARIAN regime of Lukašenka's rule in 1996, Belarus's political relations with the EU have constantly been deteriorating. Negotiations with Belarus on the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA) were completed in 1995, but the ratification of the PCA and the Interim Trade Agreement has stopped since 1997. The legal foundations of EU-Belarus relations so far have only been covered by the 1989 Trade and Cooperation Agreement and the 1993 bilateral Agreement on Trade in Textile Products. Due to human rights and democracy standards violations, a range of sanctions was introduced with regard to Belarus in 1996-2004: contacts at the ministerial level were stopped in 1996, and in 2002 the visa ban on Belarus's leadership was imposed. The visa ban blacklist had constantly been widening and reached 37 persons in 2006.

In 2002-2003, there were some attempts of a step-by-step normalization of relations with Belarus in response to improvements in the protection of democratic principles and human rights (the so-called "benchmarks approach") (Chronology of bilateral...). However, these steps had not had any significant results. On the eve of the ENP announcement, the European Parliament in its Resolution of 11 February 2003, called for moving towards a future partnership with Belarus, expressed strong concern over the increasing "self isolation" of Belarus (European Parliament resolution, 2002). The resolution also underlined the need for the EU to develop a strategy within the European Neighbourhood Policy framework, to provide greater financial support to NGOs working to strengthen civil society and independent media, and to enhance cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs.

The ENP programme documents mentioned Belarus, but did not provide "a clear strategy" for its engagement (Vysotskaya A. et al., 2008). The Commission Communication on "Wider Europe – New Neighbourhood" 2003 stressed only that *"the EU faces a choice over Belarus: either to leave things to drift – a policy for which the people of Belarus may pay dear and one which prevents the EU from pursuing increased cooperation on issues of mutual interest – or to engage, and risk sending a signal of support for policies which do*

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not conform to EU values” and proposed to “*engage Belarus in a measurable, step-by-step process focused on creating the conditions for free and fair elections and, once achieved, the integration of Belarus into the neighbourhood policy*” (European Commission, 2003: 15).

The EU approach toward Belarus is more clearly highlighted in the General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) Conclusions. GAERC of November 2004 proposed two tracks of relations: (i) restrictions on political contacts, all the contacts were established through the Presidency, SG/HR, the Commission and the Troika and (ii) assistance to support the needs of the population and democratization process “*by humanitarian, regional, cross-border cooperation and by projects supporting directly or indirectly democratization and democratic forces in Belarus*” (ENPI. Belarus). This approach was reaffirmed by the GAERC conclusions of 7 November 2005, which were supplemented by statements of its “*willingness to engage with Belarusian officials*” and the need to “*promote shared democratic values between the people of the EU and Belarus by intensifying people-to-people contacts and by strengthening good neighbourly relations across borders*”. In reality, however, this meant that a third track also existed: technical assistance and expert cooperation that developed despite the lack of improvements in democracy, human rights and the rule of law. The EU constantly supported contacts with Belarusian authorities in such sectors as border management, fight against the trafficking of drugs and human beings, cooperation on assistance for Chernobyl-affected areas.

Although the European Neighbourhood Policy has covered Belarus, no Action Plan for the country has been envisaged. Instead of bilateral Action Plans, the Commission has elaborated a Country Strategy Paper and a National Indicative Programme (NIP) on unilateral basis. Country Strategy Papers (2005-2006 and 2007-2013) have directed allocation of technical assistance to Belarus under TACIS and European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI). Belarus has had limited but still level of participation in the Neighbourhood Policy. ENP influenced Belarus to some extent and there were “winners” and “losers” of such an influence and ENP itself could be successful or unsuccessful in achieving its objectives in Belarus. It is possible to say that ENP in respect of Belarus was more or less successful in promoting security and stability and totally failed in its democratization ambitions. Paradoxically, it appears that the main Belarusian ENP “winner” is the undemocratic state and the main “loser” is the democratic civil society. This paper examines the courses of such results.

Political Placebo

As Michael Emerson argued in his 2004 paper that ENP had a potential to be a comprehensive and integrative policy of the EU, but at the same time,

there were threats of turning it into just a placebo (Emerson, 2004). In the case of Belarus, it was more a placebo than an attractive policy. Despite all the steps of the EU, the political situation in Belarus was deteriorating and EU-Belarus relations on political level collapsed. The responsibility for such a minor size of relations and cooperation with Europe is primarily on the Belarusian regime. And this is certainly correct. However, in all bilateral and multilateral relations, the responsibility is still to some extent shared between all parties and it cannot be said that the EU and member states were very active in the normalization of Belarusian-European relations.

Moreover, this low activity has a very simple explanation. Since the early 1990s, Germany (openly) and other EU countries (in a more veiled form) recognized Belarus as a sphere of Russia's interests. This recognition was the essence of the doctrine that guided the European Union until 2008-2009. It was believed that even the spread of democracy and market economy in Belarus could be carried out by Russia or through Russia's mediation. The dominance of such a doctrine immersed Belarus in the context of Russian foreign policy more and more, and the Belarusian economy was tied to the Russian one. If during president Yeltsin's period this doctrine had at least some reason, in the last decade, it reposed solely on the inertia of political thinking and bureaucratic institutions.²

Until last years, political relations with the EU, due to this doctrine domination, were limited to statements, resolutions, nominations of mutual claims and complaints. The majority of the EU political actions had a declarative and symbolical character. The implemented visa ban and the freezing of accounts of the Belarusian leaders (2006) were no more than an indicator of the fact that the EU had no other essential tools of influence at that moment. These measures had a dual character as they limited possibilities of communication not only for Belarus, but also with Belarus. Nonetheless, the EU did not see any other political subjects for communications. The Belarusian government remained the main vis-à-vis to the European Union. Addressed as if to the people of Belarus, the Commission's 2006 Non-Paper turned exclusively to the Belarusian political regime, and only its actions or inactions were considered as grounds for the EU policy changes.

Recognizing that "the people of Belarus are the first victims of the isolation" (European Commission Non-Paper, 2006), Non-Paper did not propose any clearly defined strategy for the Belarusian civil society. And it de-motivated the pro-European oriented civil society to a large extent. In 2008-2009, the shortage of channels of communications created a problem for the EU as the inclusion of Belarus in the initiative of the Eastern Partnership demanded a renewal of contacts. In October 2008, after the minimal and symbolical liberalization steps of the Belarusian regime, the Council of European Union

² See more in (Matskevich Ul., 2008).

made a decision to freeze the sanctions, which marked a new period in the relations of Belarus and the EU (Council of European Union, 2008).

The 2008 thaw of Belarus-EU relations was not caused by any essential actions of both parties. Neither Belarus, nor Europe did anything that could make any of the parties to change the usual tactics of actions concerning the other party. It is necessary to assume that the reason for the thaw was not in actions and events, but in the change of relations themselves. It is possible to say that the relations changed owing to their own immanent dynamics. It is impossible to infinitely stay in the condition of a cold war and alienation. The situation had to change one day under the influence of internal reasons. Actually, this immanent dynamics is the main reason of the thaw of the Belarusian-European relations in 2008 (Matskevich Ul., 2009). The relations returned again to a zero point, which is an indirect recognition of the fact that the previous policy of the EU concerning Belarus and the policy of self-isolation of the Belarusian regime had exhausted themselves, having brought no real advantages to any of the parties.

EU Assistance to Belarus: Technical Cooperation vs. Democracy Support

Despite the political level tensions, EU technical assistance to Belarus remains considerable. According to the National Coordinating Unit of the TACIS Program in Belarus, “the estimated volume of EU technical assistance to Belarus from 1991 to 2006 totals 216 million euros, or more than 40% of all the technical assistance provided to Belarus. This makes the EU the single largest donor of assistance to this country” (National Coordinating Unit). Since 2005, the EU assistance to Belarus has been provided through the Neighbourhood Programme (TACIS and, since 2007, ENPI). The TACIS programme 2005-2006 (totaled € 10 million) focused on “*support for institutional, legal and administrative reform*”, including support to civil society, education and training, and “*support in addressing the social consequences of transition*”, mainly addressing the Chernobyl consequences (Country Strategy Paper..., 2004). The majority of 2005-2006 projects, “however, have prioritized border management (customs control/border crossings) financed under regional and cross-border programme headings” (Vysotskaya A. et al., 2008). About € 13,3 million was spent on Enhancing Border Management in the Republic of Belarus (projects BOMBEL 1, 2005-2006 and BOMBEL 2, 2006-2007) (Porogramme for the Prevention...).

The Strategy Paper and National Indicative Programme for Belarus for 2007-2013 highlight the two priority areas of “Social and Economic Development” and “Democratic Development and Good Governance”. The financing distribution makes it obvious that the priority among these two areas is given to social and economic development — 70% of allocations. Support for

democratic development, which “*comprises almost exclusively the exchange of students, teachers and business partners, as well as capacity-building support for institutions at the level of the central government*” (Vysotskaya A. et al., 2008), gets only 30% of all allocations.

The Strategy Paper 2007-2013 stresses that “*despite the lack of progress in the areas of democratization, human rights, and respect for fundamental freedoms, it is in EU’s strategic interest to continue assistance programmes in certain areas which require the assent of the Belarusian authorities*” (ENPI. Belarus). Assessing the previous period of cooperation, the Strategy Paper 2007-2013 admits “*the difficulty in delivering assistance to NGOs in Belarus*”, and, “*by contrast, cooperation in sectors such as border management and the fight against the trafficking of drugs and human beings, as well as cooperation on assistance for Chernobyl-affected areas has proven successful*” and “*the Belarusian authorities are supportive of EC assistance in this area*”. Within the scope of ENPI in 2007-2009, three large programmes for cooperation with the government in the field of energy, ecology, and food safety were launched; the total amount of financing of these programmes reaches 18,5 million euros.

It is possible to say that in the field of technical cooperation, the Belarusian state works quite successfully with the EU. However, the hopes that this technical cooperation can lead to political changes are naïve.³ The point is not in limiting or freezing such cooperation. It is not possible and it is useless. The question is in the form of rendering such technical help. Today, the projects which are being carried out in Belarus within the scope of technical cooperation are not transparent and are not open. Belarus’s civil society has no information on the course and real results of such cooperation. The total majority of public organizations included in such projects are GONGOS which are not independent from the state.

It is paradoxical, but in the field of democracy support, the EU was much less successful than in the field of technical cooperation. The most considerable means have been allocated for projects to support education and independent mass media. In 2005-2008, about 7,5 million euros were spent to support the European Humanities University which is situated outside Belarus. The return from the investment of these means is very low, considering the fact that the EHU graduates, receiving European-standard diplomas (not Belarusian ones), not always can find a job in Belarus and will often emigrate to the West (“Prague accent”, 2007). The same situation is with the independent mass media.

³ Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner in January 2008 assumes that : “The holding of technical meetings between experts of both sides could lay the ground for substantial cooperation in the framework of a full partnership, provided that Belarus takes steps toward democratization” (European Commission, Belarus, 2008).

The television channel RTVI allocated about 2 million euros to create a special weekly programme for Belarus, which, according to sociological polls, is watched by less than 6% of Belarusians (IISEPS, 2009). Direct support of the activity of the civil society was carried out only within the scope of the programmes of the Decentralized cooperation, the Non-state Actors and Local Authorities programme (NSA-LA) and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights (EIDHR). In 2005-2009, the volume of support was about 7 million euros, which is much less than the volumes of means used by the state bodies.

The Belarusian regime is very successful in blocking support for civil society organizations. Several strategies are used for this purpose - complication of the order of reception of help and replacement of real organizations of citizens by state-run public organizations (GONGOs). Since 2002, the financial conditions of reception of means for the EU programmes in Belarus are so rigid and difficult from a procedural point of view that civil society organizations prefer to use the means of the EU programmes illegally. The legal registration of grants includes a long procedure of coordination with a profile ministry, receptions of proofs from KGB that the project does not threaten national safety, solution of the tax exemption issue with the Ministry of Taxes; the means are to be received through the Department on Humanitarian Activity of the President of Belarus. And even in the case of registration of a project, CSOs are not relieved of possible consequences in the form of law suits. Thus, the Ministry of Taxes once demanded several organizations which worked with TACIS programmes, to pay taxes in spite of the fact that, according to the international agreement between the government of Belarus and the EU, projects of international technical help are exempt from tax payments (BHC Successful..., 2004).

A separate problem is the replacement of real civil society organizations by colourable public structures. Last initiative of the head of the Administration of the President, Uladzimir Makiej, was an attempt to replace the delegation of civil society of Belarus at the Civil Society Forum of the Eastern Partnership with representatives of the Public Advisory Council of the Administration of the President (Civil Society Forum, 2010). Today in Belarus, there is a process of creation of public councils of the branch ministries, which should show the presence of interaction with civil society. In these cases, the European Commission should distinguish very accurately between real civil society and its simulation in the form of GONGOs. A way to distinguish it can be a degree of openness of the activity of such public structures and principles of their formation.

The Belarusian oppositional forces have also got some support from the EU. The EU member states and the USA supported political campaigns inside Belarus and political parties' leaders were invited to the meetings

with EU representatives; in 2006, Belarusian oppositional leader Aliaksandr Milinkievič was awarded the Andrei Sakharov prize by the European Parliament. However, since the unsuccessful efforts of the OSCE observation mission to organize a political dialog between Lukašenka and the opposition in 1999, the latter had lost any political influence on the situation in the country. Political parties and their coalitions in fact did not differ from the rest of civil society neither in their functions, nor in the political weight. Direct EU and US political support of the opposition could not bring any effect, but only created dividing lines inside independent Belarusian society by favouring more political opposition than civil society.

The Eastern Partnership: a First Step for the Better

On the eve of the announcement of the Eastern Partnership, Belarus made a number of symbolical steps towards liberalization of its political regime. In many respects, it was caused by a worsening dynamics of political and economic relations with Russia after the 2007 crisis. Belarusian regime took a step to update its relations with the EU. In 2008, political prisoners were freed, two independent newspapers were allowed to be sold publicly, and the oppositional “Movement For Freedom!” was registered. It allowed the EU to start a thaw of relations, to introduce a temporary moratorium on sanctions concerning the higher officials, and to carry out several summits; participation in the initiative of the Eastern Partnership was offered to Belarus.

The Eastern Partnership has declared a possibility of participation of Belarus, having made a remark that the “*level of Belarus's participation in the Eastern Partnership will depend on the general process of relations between the EU and this country*” (Communication from the Commission, 2008). It has actually meant an exception of Belarus from the bilateral component of cooperation, but has given it a place in the structure of multilateral interaction of the Eastern Partnership. For the government, it pragmatically meant that Belarus can keep developing the component of technical interstate cooperation. Understanding the quite concrete benefits of reception of the means of the European programmes for the implementation of projects in the sphere of economy, transport, and energy, the government of Belarus is still not interested in any democratic transformations, the price of which looks too high for Belarus's leaders.

The transformational potential of the Eastern Partnership lies in the correction of approaches and bases of the ENP. The conditional approach should not be cancelled, but, at least, added with an “instrumental” approach. The Eastern Partnership should be considered not as a certain sort of an award for the steps the countries make to reform their political and economic systems according to the European standard, but a tool of their long-term transformation. It replaces the EU policy of reaction on positive (e.g. colour revolutions)

or negative events (e.g. the Russian-Georgian war) with a more pro-active approach of the EU to its eastern neighbours.

The European Union should pay attention to the long-term processes and the political and social forces in the neighbouring countries, which will involve more and more countries in the general space of Europe. In the relation of the enlargement policy, there was the “push” principle, when the countries of Eastern Europe pushed themselves towards the EU, leaving their communistic past behind. For the Eastern Partnership, there is a need in the “pull” principle, i.e. to attract the countries of the region to the space of the European norms and standards through cooperation with active promoters of Europeanization inside the countries.

Potential possibilities of democratization and Europeanization of Belarus are in the expansion of participation of civil society in the Eastern Partnership and its further strengthening. Only pro-European-oriented civil society is capable to prevent simulation of reforms by the government of Belarus. However, it takes an inclusion of a component of civil society in the political level of cooperation of Belarus and the EU. It means that civil society should become, in a long term, a third participant in setting priorities and implementation of concrete projects of this cooperation. In particular, according to Štefan Füle, a draft plan of interaction of Belarus and the EU (Joint Interim Plan), which has been developed by the Commission since autumn 2010, should be coordinated not only with the government of Belarus, but also with structures of civil society. Civil society should also receive a comprehended and institutionally fixed place for monitoring and evaluation of changes within the framework of the Eastern Partnership.

Development of the civil society component in the Eastern Partnership in the form of the Civil Society Forum looks promising, but meanwhile all these mechanisms remain mostly potential. The real place of civil society remains uncertain. The role that is supposed to be carried out by civil society, i.e. monitoring and control of the national governments, does not possess any obvious mechanisms of implementation. The Civil Society Forum has limited information on projects of cooperation developed within the scope of the thematic platforms of the Eastern Partnership, and has no sufficient level of financing even for support of work of its operating bodies (Steering Committee).

General Recommendations

It is possible to raise the efficiency of the tools of the ENP and EaP concerning Belarus if the component building democracy and developing civil society is strengthened. Several steps for this purpose can be outlined:

Introduction of mechanisms of internal monitoring of the progress of the Eastern Partnership in the achievement of the purposes of rapprochement

of the eastern neighbouring countries with the EU (multilateral track monitoring). If the bilateral interaction of ENP gets into the monitoring sphere, then the multilateral interaction does not receive an appropriate estimation. More than a year has elapsed since the beginning of the Eastern Partnership, and nobody can accurately answer the question of how (to what degree) the eastern neighbouring countries have become closer to the EU. Today, the degree of their closeness to the EU is evaluated depending on the level of development of bilateral relations. However, it says nothing about the real state of affairs in concrete thematic areas such as education, culture, freedom of economic activities, and even respect of fundamental human rights. Can we say that Belarus is further from the EU standards than Ukraine in the sphere of education, poverty reduction, and regional development? Can we say that Belarus has reached smaller progress than Azerbaijan in the field of freedom of the mass media and respect of human rights? These questions have got no exact answers.

For the bilateral interaction in the ENP, the monitoring scheme is to be built in two stages: a preliminary evaluation through the ENP Country Report and an annual evaluation through Progress Reports, reflecting the execution of the ENP Action Plans. Civil society is included in the system of monitoring of the ENP Action Plans and has a possibility to make its own estimations through negotiations on the Action Plan, stakeholder implementation conferences, independent research institutes' analyses of the implementation of the ENP Action Plans, civil society contributions to European Commission on the ENP progress reports (Non – Paper, 2006; European Commission – External Relations). Such a system of monitoring does not exist for the multilateral interaction. In case of Belarus, the problem is also aggravated by the fact that the acceptance of the Action Plan is not provided for it. Accordingly, the European Commission makes only a unilateral estimation of the implementation of its strategy concerning Belarus. Both government and civil society are generally excluded from the monitoring system; their opinion is requested through consultations, but it is not obligatory taken into account when decisions are made.

A prototype of the EaP monitoring and coordination could be the Open Method of Coordination (OMC), which is used in the EU in social and economic policy and has already shown its efficiency as a means of a coordinated movement of various actors to common social and political standards and reference points without unification. The idea of this method is in regulating and directing the process of solving joint social and political problems (unemployment, poverty reduction, harmonization of education systems, etc.) not via strict and centralized requirements but through creating a joint monitoring system. Through the mechanisms of the EaP Civil Society Forum, civil society must receive possibilities to carry out an alternative evaluation

of the implementation of multilateral cooperation. These estimations should be obligatory taken into account when strategic directions of cooperation are defined; the CS Forum should receive the right of reception of written answers to its letters of inquiry to thematic platforms and other structures of the Eastern Partnership.

The European Commission and the European Council should call the EU member states for a deeper involvement in the processes of the Eastern Partnership. In particular, coordination of the strategy of financial help of separate EU countries in the field of democratization and support of the countries of the region of the Eastern Partnership could be such a step.

The EU member-countries have different enough and not always constant interests in the eastern direction of ENP. If during its presidency in the EU, the Czech Republic was active enough, then during 2010 it shows much smaller interest in the EaP. Sweden and Poland remain the basic promoters of the Eastern Partnership, however their purposes and support strategies can be rather various. If Sweden is active enough in involving Belarusian civil society organizations into definition of strategic priorities of their programmes and their implementation, the Polish strategy is focused more likely on support of the organizations which are based in Poland and work with Belarus. Coordination of the policies of the countries-partners can be reached by means of the following mechanisms:

- a) Country-to-country consultations. The European Commission can gather representatives of the interested member-countries on a regular basis (1-2 times per year) for coordination of their policies towards separate countries of the Eastern Partnership and towards the initiative as a whole. An approach on division of responsibility of separate countries for development of separate spheres (support of the independent media, rights of minorities, local development, etc.) can be productive.
- b) Coordination of the donor policy. For coordination of financial assistance, the consultations should include not only the state structures, but also the financial organizations (World Bank, European Reconstruction and Development Bank, European Investment Bank), international organizations (Council of Europe, OSCE, UN, ILO), independent donors (Soros Foundation, Marshal Foundation, etc.). Consultations of donor structures should provide coordination of policies not only with each other (as it happens now), but also include the governments and civil society of the countries-receipients of the help in the consultations.
- c) Creation of a voluntary fund to support initiatives of the Eastern Partnership. A number of fruitful undertakings of the Eastern Partnership do not undergo their development because of the general shortage

of financial means. In particular, the multilateral interaction of civil society has no sufficient support. Actually, the expenses for only single annual meetings of the Forum and its four working groups (5 meetings per year) are covered from the EU budget. It is obviously not enough for a high-grade building of cooperation. The means of the voluntary support fund could finance the work of the Civil Society Forum Steering Committee, as well as initiatives of horizontal cooperation between civil societies of the countries-partners and the EU countries — meetings of independent experts, support of initiatives on monitoring of the progress of the EaP by civil society organizations, joint researches, exchange of the best practices, involvement of civil society into the solution of conflicts, etc.

Financial tools of EU (ENPI) should be balanced in order to increase the assistance of democracy and development of civil society. Today, the EU programmes work to support civil society and democracy only to a limited degree. For a bigger efficiency of the programmes, it is necessary not only to equal the quantity of means allocated for the issues of technical cooperation with the state, but also to introduce mechanisms providing their bigger flexibility and adequacy to the country's specificity. The programmes of democracy development will not be effective while civil society of Belarus is in isolation. In its present marginalized condition, it cannot solve and will not be able to solve the tasks of its own development, advancement of democracy and European values. To settle this matter, it is necessary:

a) To develop and accept a frame document which would normalize and regulate partner interaction (dialog) of the European structures, donors, and institutions of civil society with the Belarusian state and structures of civil society. In this process, the Parisian declaration The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness (2005) and the Accra Agenda for Action (2008) can be used as a prototype, but with obligatory participation of not only the governments, but also institutions of civil society. Exclusion of civil society from the system of definition of priorities, implementation, or monitoring of assistance programmes allows the state to easily feign the development of democracy and dialogue with civil society.

b) For implementation of such a dialog, to organize a constantly working joint body (for example, the Social Council, Round Table, etc.) with its special expert groups, which would have the powers to implement organizational, methodical, legal, and evaluation functions and which would promote the development of partnership of Belarus and the European Union. Participation of such a joint body is necessary

at all development cycles of European programmes: from analysis of the situation and formation of a plan to estimation of productivity and efficiency monitoring at all levels of inter-institutional interactions. Organization of such a body is expedient within the scope of functioning structures of the EaP Civil Society Forum; it is also possible in the form of the creation of Belarus-EU standing committee.

c) To sign an intergovernmental Memorandum of registration of the EU integrated international programmes on the territory of Belarus in order to eliminate the necessity of registration of separate projects within the scope of these programmes, thus implementing in practice a notifying principle of registration instead of the allowing one which is applied now.

To support the activity and initiatives of the CS Forum of the Eastern Partnership and its constant working bodies organizationally, infrastructurally, and financially. In particular:

a) To promote the organization of regular meetings of the Coordinating Committee (CSF Steering Committee) and working groups of CSF and to provide financial support to their technical (executive, secretarial, organizational) activities.

b) To spur the launch of the work of multilateral thematic expert working groups which are to develop substantial offers and concepts for the thematic platforms of the Eastern Partnership and the Civil Society Forum.

c) To expand contacts and interaction of the EU official structures with the National platform of the EaP CSF, in particular - to promote the expansion of contacts of the diplomatic corps with representatives of the National platform, possibly through the appointment of representatives for cooperation with Belarusian civil society in both the European Union and its member states.

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