



Recommendation 1874 (2009)¹

Situation in Belarus

Parliamentary Assembly

1. Referring to its [Resolution 1671 \(2009\)](#) on the situation in Belarus, the Parliamentary Assembly confirms its view that the measures recently undertaken by the Belarusian authorities, namely the release of all internationally recognised political prisoners, the registration of the opposition movement “For Freedom!”, the possibility for two independent publications to be printed in Belarus and to be distributed through the state network, the co-operation with the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe/Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (OSCE/ODIHR) with a view to reforming Belarusian electoral legislation and practice, the creation of consultative councils and the consent to the opening of an Infopoint on the Council of Europe in Minsk are steps in the right direction, reflecting the authorities’ willingness to engage with European organisations, including the Council of Europe, at a political level.

2. The Assembly reiterates its conviction that the best way for the Council of Europe to encourage the continuation of this process is by resuming political dialogue with the authorities, while continuing to support the strengthening of democratic forces and civil society in the country. At the same time, however, the Assembly insists on the fact that dialogue can only be sustained through continuous efforts by the Belarusian leadership to make progress towards the attainment of Council of Europe standards.

3. It also welcomes the initiatives already taken by other bodies of the Council of Europe to restore dialogue with the various interlocutors in Belarus.

4. The Assembly, therefore, invites the Committee of Ministers to resume contacts with the Belarusian authorities, in particular by:

4.1. allowing the presence of the diplomatic representatives of Belarus at the meetings of its rapporteur groups every time that the issue of Belarus is on the agenda;

4.2. monitoring the situation in Belarus, also through the organisation of field visits, in particular as regards:

4.2.1. the issue of political prisoners;

4.2.2. freedom of association;

4.2.3. freedom of assembly;

4.2.4. freedom of the media;

4.2.5. electoral reform;

4.2.6. the death penalty;

4.3. considering in a positive spirit the accession of Belarus to Council of Europe instruments open to non-member states for which Belarus has made a formal request and, until accession is possible, consider ways of co-operating with the Belarusian authorities with a view to helping them bring the legislation of Belarus in line with Council of Europe standards.

1. *Assembly debate* on 23 June 2009 (20th Sitting) (see [Doc. 11939](#), report of the Political Affairs Committee, rapporteur: Mr Rigoni; and [Doc. 11960](#), opinion of the Committee on Legal Affairs and Human Rights, rapporteur: Mr Pourgourides). *Text adopted by the Assembly* on 23 June 2009 (20th Sitting).



5. In the same spirit, the Assembly asks the Committee of Ministers to devote very special interest to local democracy in Belarus and accordingly to support the action of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe aimed at promoting compliance with the principles of the European Charter of Local Self-Government (ETS No. 122) and aiding the formation of a national association of local and regional elected representatives.

6. At the same time, the Assembly calls on the Committee of Ministers to step up its activities in support of the development of civil society, with an emphasis on raising awareness of Council of Europe values and knowledge of its standards in Belarus, by:

6.1. establishing a voluntary fund with a view to financing traineeships at the Council of Europe for young Belarusians;

6.2. promoting the participation of Belarusian NGOs and civil society representatives in Council of Europe events;

6.3. encouraging its intergovernmental committees to organise meetings, seminars and other events in Belarus, and ensure that they are given high visibility;

6.4. setting up an information campaign on the Council of Europe, to be conducted throughout Belarus, also relying on the Infopoint on the Council of Europe in Minsk;

6.5. setting up a webpage on Belarus in the Council of Europe website, in order to facilitate access to relevant information by ordinary Belarusians;

6.6. co-operating with the European Union and the OSCE in the elaboration and implementation of joint programmes and other activities in Belarus.