

**Sebastian Kurz**, Federal Chancellor, Republic of Austria  
**Sophie Wilmès**, Prime Minister, Kingdom of Belgium  
**Boyko Borissov**, Prime Minister, Republic of Bulgaria  
**Andrej Plenković**, Prime Minister, Republic of Croatia  
**Nicos Anastasiades**, President of the Republic, Republic of Cyprus  
**Andrej Babiš**, Prime Minister, Czech Republic  
**Mette Frederiksen**, Prime Minister, Kingdom of Denmark  
**Micheál Martin**, Taoiseach, Republic of Ireland  
**Jüri Ratas**, Prime Minister, Republic of Estonia  
**Sanna Marin**, Prime Minister, Republic of Finland  
**Emmanuel Macron**, President of the Republic, French Republic  
**Angela Merkel**, Federal Chancellor, Federal Republic of Germany  
**Kyriakos Mitsotakis**, Prime Minister, Hellenic Republic  
**Viktor Orbán**, Prime Minister, Hungary  
**Giuseppe Conte**, Prime Minister, Italian Republic  
**Krišjānis Kariņš**, Prime Minister, Republic of Latvia  
**Gitanas Nausėda**, President, Republic of Lithuania  
**Xavier Bettel**, Prime Minister, Grand Duchy of Luxembourg  
**Robert Abela**, Prime Minister, Republic of Malta  
**Mark Rutte**, Prime Minister, Kingdom of the Netherlands  
**Mateusz Morawiecki**, Prime Minister, Republic of Poland  
**António Costa**, Prime Minister, Republic of Portugal  
**Klaus Werner Iohannis**, President, Romania  
**Igor Matovič**, Prime Minister, Slovak Republic  
**Janez Janša**, Prime Minister, Republic of Slovenia  
**Pedro Sánchez**, Prime Minister, Kingdom of Spain  
**Stefan Löfven**, Prime Minister, Kingdom of Sweden  
**Ursula von der Leyen**, President of the European Commission  
**Charles Michel**, President of the European Council  
**David Sassoli**, President of the European Parliament  
**Josep Borrell Fontelles**, High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy

*Brussels, 28 September 2020*

**Statement of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership  
Civil Society Forum on the adoption of sanctions against the  
perpetrators of election fraud, violence and repression in Belarus  
ahead of the Special European Council, 1-2 October 2020**

In its statements of [12 August](#) and [25 August](#), the Steering Committee of the EaP CSF expressed its deep concern at the violent crackdown against peaceful protesters in Belarus, following the blatant falsification of the country's presidential election on 9 August. With more than 7500 people – including some of the Forum's [own members](#) – having now been detained for the simple act of expressing their desire to live in a free country, the seriousness of the ongoing political and human rights crisis cannot be emphasised enough.

In light of this extremely grave situation, the Steering Committee welcomes the [recent remarks](#) of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell Fontelles, before the European Parliament, where he reaffirmed the European Union's refusal to recognise Aliaksandr Lukashenka as the legitimately re-elected President of the Republic of Belarus. The Steering Committee also welcomes his confirmation of the European Union's intention to adopt sanctions against the perpetrators of election fraud, violence and repression.

The European Parliament's subsequent emphatic endorsement of the implementation of such sanctions in its [Resolution 2020/2779\(RSP\)](#) would appear to underline the unity of purpose between the European Parliament and European Commission on this issue. However, the Steering Committee deeply regrets that the same cannot be said for the European Council.

In its appeal to the government of the Republic of Cyprus on [18 September](#), the Steering Committee underlined the importance of treating the current political and human rights emergency in Belarus as entirely separate to other ongoing international developments and disputes, and the imperative that no EU member state attaches pre-conditions vis-à-vis their European Union counterparts prior to the adoption of sanctions.

Ahead of the Special European Council on 1 and 2 October, and in the wake of the Foreign Affairs Council's failure to reach an agreement on 21 September, the Steering Committee reiterates that message today. Any delay in implementing targeted sanctions against the perpetrators of electoral fraud and repressive actions in Belarus undermines the impact of the European Union's response to human rights abuses in the country, and by extension, strengthens the resolve of the incumbent illegitimate regime - as demonstrated by Aliaksandr Lukashenka's decision to proceed with his inauguration, in secret on 23 September, despite weeks of domestic unrest and international condemnation. Worse still, the European Council's inability to reach a firm decision on sanctions lets down the Belarusian people at a time when they need international solidarity the most.

With this in mind, the Steering Committee urges the members of the European Council to put aside their disagreements on entirely unrelated subjects - while of course continuing to recognise the importance of those issues, and engaging in meaningful dialogue on them - and to adopt a comprehensive set of sanctions against those responsible for gross violations of international human rights norms and electoral standards. Only by matching words with actions, can the European Union's statements of support to the Belarusian people ring true.

***Members of the Steering Committee of the Eastern Partnership  
Civil Society Forum***

*Zaur Akbar, Youth Club Public Union, Azerbaijan*

*Olga Chyzhova, Digital Communication Network, Estonia*

*Ina Coseru, National Environmental Center, Moldova*

*Lousineh Hakobyan, Europe in Law Association, Armenia*

*Mikayel Hovhannisyan, Eurasia Partnership Foundation, Armenia*

*Shahla Ismayil, Women's Association for Rational Development (WARD), Azerbaijan*

*Maksym Koriavets, Polissya Foundation for International and Regional Studies, Ukraine*

*Mikalai Kvantaliani, Association "New Group", Belarus*

*Natia Kuprashvili, Journalism Resource Center, Georgia*

*Adrian Lupusor, Expert-Grup, Moldova*

*Tatiana Marian, National Trade Union Confederation of Moldova*

*Sofia Strive, ForumCiv, Sweden*

*Yurii Vdovenko, Center for Cross-Border Cooperation, Ukraine*