

# EaP Think Bridge

№21

August  
2020

Eastern Partnership monthly analytical digest



## **ELECTIONS IN BELARUS: INTERNATIONAL IMPLICATIONS**

How Europe, Russia and Eastern Partnership countries react to the news from Belarus, torture, rape and murder of peaceful protesters

Issue 21 (27)  
August 2020

EaP Think Bridge is a platform uniting expert communities in the countries of Eastern Partnership region to fill the gap in distributing analytical products for stakeholders

The project benefits from support through the EaP Civil Society Forum Re-granting Scheme (FSTP) and is funded by the European Union as part of its support to civil society in the region. Within its Re-granting Scheme, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) supports projects of its members that contribute to achieving the mission and objectives of the Forum.

Grants are available for CSOs from the Eastern Partnership and EU countries. Key areas of support are democracy and human rights, economic integration, environment and energy, contacts between people, social and labour policies.

**Contacts:**  
ngo-pic@ukr.net

## Belarus: Test for the Neighborhood

**Despite the obvious irregularities in the electoral process in Belarus and the brutal use of force against peaceful protesters, three out of the five leaders of the Eastern Partnership countries hastened to congratulate Alexander Lukashenko on his victory.**

The European Union has expressed its traditional concern and has already announced sanctions. And Russia, although it supports the regime, is in no hurry to take action.

What did Belarusians expect from their neighbors and Europe? What should the next steps be? And how will the situation affect the entire Eastern Partnership region? Belarus is the central topic in the new issue of our Digest, as well as of the international expert discussion on September 4.

Also in this issue: the first candidates and blocs came forward in the upcoming elections in Moldova and Georgia. Quarantine is not an obstacle to the beginning of the electoral process and high-profile layoffs in the anti-corruption bodies in Ukraine. A wedding during an epidemic became pretext for a political scandal in Azerbaijan. Armenia has focused on its national security.

All the main events of the month in the Eastern Partnership are analyzed in the Think Bridge Digest.



# Contents

## Analytica

<b>Border Tensions between Armenia and Azerbaijan: Military and Political Implications</b> .....	<b>4</b>
Vladimir Kopchak, Southern Caucasian Branch of the Center for Army, Conversion and Disarmament Studies (Tbilisi, Georgia)	

## August 2020 in review

<b>Azerbaijan: Authorities' War on Two Fronts</b> .....	<b>7</b>
Turan News Agency (Baku, Azerbaijan)	

<b>Armenia: Public Health Crisis Improves, but Defense Concerns Continue</b> .....	<b>10</b>
Richard Giragosian, Regional Studies Center (Yerevan, Armenia)	

<b>Belarus: Pre-Election Repressions and Economic Voluntarism</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Vadim Mojeiko, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) (Minsk, Belarus)	

<b>Georgia: Opposition Unites ahead of Elections</b> .....	<b>15</b>
Lasha Tughushi, Liberal Academy Tbilisi (Tbilisi, Georgia)	

<b>Is Moldova Still “Learning” How to Be Independent and Democratic?</b> .....	<b>17</b>
Ludmila Nofit, Foreign Policy Association of the Republic of Moldova (Chisinau, Moldova)	

<b>Ukraine on the Brink of New Political Season</b> .....	<b>20</b>
Sergiy Gerasymchuk, Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism”	

<b>Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum News</b> .....	<b>22</b>
---	-----------

# Belarus Elections: International Implications

Vadim Mozhejko, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) (Minsk, Belarus)

How Europe, Russia, and the Eastern Partnership countries react to news from Belarus: torture, rape, and murder of peaceful demonstrators.



Photo: Protests in Belarus  
Author: Franak Vyachorka

## The Elections that Burst

On August 9, the presidential elections were to take place in Belarus. According to the official results, Alexander Lukashenko won with 80.1% of votes, Svetlana Tikhanovskaya gained 10.1%, and the rest of the participants won even less. However, these results did not convince the Belarusian society, which believes in Tikhanovskaya's victory in the first round. Numer-

ous violations at polling stations and mathematical distortions in the voting results were recorded. Since August 9, street protests in Belarus have not subsided, taking various forms: processions, rallies, concerts, chains of solidarity on the sidewalks, strikes at enterprises, picketing of the state institutions, festivities in the courtyards, and much more. The authorities responded to the protests with unprecedented brutality.

## European Union: Sanctions and Playing Chinese Whispers

The European Union's response is as unprecedented as events in Belarus. For the first time, it is not about recognizing the elections as undemocratic and unjust but about not recognizing the elections themselves. Lithuania has already introduced some [sanctions](#), agreed with the Baltic states, against 30 individuals whom it claims to be responsible for the electoral fraud, and plans to expand this list. There will be other sanctions, all of them are primarily of symbolic significance, they block the Western vector of the foreign policy of Belarus but do not push for a real change of the regime.

Lukashenko has no contacts with the European leaders, did not answer the call from the German Chancellor Angela Merkel, and the Chancellor, just as the French President Emmanuel Macron later, discussed the events in Belarus with the Russian President Vladimir Putin. On the one hand, such developments indicate the loss of great deal of Belarus's foreign policy subjectivity. On the other hand, it is a coordinated position of the West and Russia that can be most effective to make the Belarusian authorities enter the dialogue with the protesters and proceed with subsequent political transformations.

So far, the EU allocated €3 million to support Belarus, and 50 of them a long time ago were allocated for COVID-19 response (now the European diplomats are to find how to use these funds without directly transferring them to the Belarusian authorities). However, MEPs have much more ambitious [ideas](#): for example, a carrot in the form of the "The Marshall Plan for Democratic Belarus", €3.5-4 billion for future reforms.

## Russia: Uniformed Services Are a Poor Substitute for Money

Although Vladimir Putin was one of the first to congratulate Lukashenko, Russia's position on what is happening in Belarus remains ambiguous, which is a rather serious change. Until now, Moscow could be in better or worse relations with Lukashenko, supporting marginal pro-Russian activists in Belarus but it did not call for a dialogue with an unhappy society. And now the Kremlin sends contradictory statements.

For example, the press secretary of Vladimir Putin Dmitry Peskov [confirmed](#) dialogue between Russia and the EU on Belarus, but at the same time he denies any "external interference". Putin himself seems to have [promised](#) to help Lukashenko, form a Russian security officials reserve within the CSTO (although its charter mentions only external threats, not internal ones). But at the same time,

he limited the possible assistance with the vague conditions, "until the extremist elements... cross certain boundaries." A few days later, Peskov said: "At present, there is no reason to use this reserve... We see that the state of affairs is under control, so now there is no talk about it."

Actually, Lukashenko needs neither security officials, nor military support even more so, but money. Currency rates are getting stronger, gold and foreign exchange reserves seem to be [falling](#), and refinancing loans with a reasonable interest rate are not on the agenda. Even before the elections, Belarusian Eurobonds were [trading](#) at about 6% per annum (though the country is only considering getting out of the recession), and this was still viewed as a low rate. Without emergency injections, the crisis in the Belarusian economy will deepen even more,

fueling protests and exacerbating Lukashenko's already weak position.

## Eastern Partnership: No Unity

Among the Eastern Partnership countries, Azerbaijan, Armenia, and Moldova recognized the official election results and sent congratulations to Lukashenko. Congratulations

from the Azerbaijani President Ilham Aliyev were expected, he is an old autocrat just like Lukashenko, acting as an "[authoritarian internationale](#)". To recall, in 2016 he awarded Lukashenko with the order named after his father, the highest award of Azerbaijan, with the words: "In his life, Heydar Aliyev always respected men of worth, who behave like men, keep their word, and whom you can rely upon."

The Prime Minister of Armenia Nikol Pashinyan's motives for congratulations look different.

He is a young democratic leader, not an old autocrat, and came to power two years ago as a result of the street protests. Thus, he has no visible reasons to sympathize with Lukashenko.

The Armenian NGOs express their support for the Belarusian protests, note their similarity with the Armenian ones two years ago, and put Pashinyan under criticism for his congratulations and their form. But there are two important political factors, both associated with Russia. First, Armenia is interested in keeping Lukashenko as an ally within the EAEU. Back in the spring, Pashinyan and Lukashenko stood in [solidarity](#) on the energy trade issue as they both consider Russian prices too high. Secondly, congratulations from Yerevan came after congratulations from Moscow. Given the Armenian economy's dependence on Russia, Pashinyan is not interested in a confrontation with Moscow once he can avoid it.

After his congratulations to Lukashenko, the President of Moldova Igor Dodon was [criticised](#) within the country and was forced to [justify](#) his behaviour by the "protocol rules" and economic interests ("we have a lot of joint

**The EU sanctions are primarily of symbolic significance, they block the Western vector of the foreign policy of Belarus but do not push for a real change of the regime**

ventures”). At the same time, he condemned the clashes and confined himself to a vague generality by saying “it’s their internal affair to deal with what is happening in their country” instead of providing support to Lukashenko.

Georgia follows a wait-and-see approach: it did not send congratulations to Lukashenko, but it didn’t criticize his decisions either.

On August 17, after some internal political tension and accusations of secret support for Lukashenko, by the Putin’s order, Tbilisi was nevertheless forced to make a [statement](#), however, consisting of streamlined wording and not supporting either side.

Official Kyiv also tried to keep a balance, although the relations with Minsk are gradually deteriorating. The reasons are on the surface: on the one hand, the importance of economic cooperation with Belarus and preserving the border security, on the other hand, constant anti-Ukrainian rhetoric of the Belarusian authorities, Lukashenko’s rapprochement with Russia and the Ukrainian public opinion itself which recognizes its recent history in the Belarusian protests. After Zelensky ironically [stated](#) that if he were Lukashenko, he would honestly hold new elections in the country, the Belarusian Ministry of Foreign Affairs responded with a tough rebuff: we don’t need your advice, you’d better take care of your own problems. They went to the point of recalling the Ukrainian ambassador for consultations in Kyiv, freezing any official contacts with Belarus, and now the Ukrainian Ministry of Foreign Affairs is [threatening](#) with even tougher measures. This case demonstrates not only the well-known differences within the Eastern Partnership framework in the positions of Ukraine/Georgia and Belarus/Azerbaijan.

It is worth noting that even the most pro-European countries with successful revolutions in their experience demonstrate no active stand on democratic procedures’ and human rights’ violations. As for the current developments’ influence on the future relations of Belarus with other Eastern Partnership countries, it will directly depend on how soon and what kind of political changes will take place in Belarus.

## What Assistance Can Partners Provide to Belarus?

**Hennadi Maksak, Head of the Monitoring Mission of the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum in elections in Belarus (Ukraine)**

**Lukashenko needs neither security officials, nor military support even more so, but money**

– It is not enough to recognize the elections as undemocratic, it must be said that the elections in the form which they were held in do not allow to conclude who the winner is. This is why the elections must

be repeated. This position should be leading, and for the EU position as well. All the elections administration stages, starting from the election commissions formation up to voting and counting of votes, had serious violations.

### **Andrei Yahorau, Transfer of Power in Belarus Coordination Council:**

– We’d most like if the European Union and the Eastern Partnership countries would partner against Russian intervene. This intervention is aimed at an attempt to support this regime and surrenders Belarusian sovereignty in favour of Russia. I don’t see any harsh diplomatic reaction. The EU now has a lot of tools for humanitarian support for Belarusians and spontaneous initiatives within the Belarusian society.

### **Vadim Mozhejko, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS):**

– As for some more global future transformations, there is a need for something that we call the “Marshal’s Plan for Belarus” - a promise of a clear and predetermined package of support for democratic reforms in Belarus, which will become available after free and democratic elections. No doubt, such support is necessary for the change. If it is agreed and presented in advance, it will be more effective than inventing it “on the knee”.

### **Natalia Stercul, Foreign Policy Association of the Republic of Moldova (Moldova):**

– The European Union will defend humanitarian aims, everything related to human rights’ and democratic values’ protection. But of course, I would not expect any real help, I do not think that it will go beyond certain statements. We cannot count on a more acute reaction, as both Ukraine and Moldova have already shown.

### **Mikayel Hovhannisyan, Eurasia Partnership Foundation (Armenia)**

– It is very important to keep the internal political agenda in Belarus in focus and emphasize that this affair is purely internal, a matter of endless Lukashenko’s regime fatigue, protest against violence and injustice. This will increase the chances for more positive developments. Any attempts to introduce a geopolitical factor in the process will lead to the explicit third actors’ intervention.

**Even the most pro-European countries with successful revolutions in their experience demonstrate no active stand on democratic procedures’ and human rights’ violations**

# Armenia: Public Health Crisis Improves, but Defense Concerns Continue

Richard Giragosian, Regional Studies Center (Yerevan, Armenia)

As statistics related to the coronavirus pandemic in Armenia improved in August, the Armenian government resolved to reopen schools and universities, but under a regime of restrictions and precautionary measures. Defense and national security issues continued to dominate public concern, however, in response to the previous month's border clashes. Within that context, Armenian officials expressed concern over heightened "threat perception" from Turkey while Armenia's Defense Minister concluded an important military cooperation agreement with Russia that includes specific measures to upgrade and modernize the Armenian Air Force.



Photo: Military exercises of Turkey and Azerbaijan  
Credits: Vestnik Kavkaza

## DOMESTIC POLICY

### Opposition "Oligarch" Reiterates Criticism of Government

One of Armenia's wealthiest men, oligarch Gagik Tsarukyan, leader of the Prosperous Armenia party renewed

his criticism of the government on August 28 for its handling of the COVID-19 crisis. The MP vowed that he will organize public rallies and meetings throughout the country in preparation for the upcoming parliament legislative session in September. His criticism also focused on attacking

the government's education reforms, which he decried as undermining "Armenian traditional values."

Currently free on bail, the oligarch still faces the pending criminal charge. His opposition Prosperous Armenia Party is the second largest party holding 24 seats in the 132-seat parliament.

**Armenian government is seriously concerned over the increased threat Turkey is posing to Armenian national security.**

of emergency" set to expire on September 11 and widely expected to not be renewed. The rates of COVID-19 infection and fatalities have steadily and consistently declined in recent weeks. The decision was controversial, how-

ever, as a number of parent groups and several education specialists criticized the plans as "irresponsible and hasty," with insufficient or weak safeguards. Against that backdrop, calls for Education Minister Harutiunyan's resignation, first initiated by the political opposition and more nationalist groups, escalated, mainly driven by vehement criticism over planned changes to educational curriculum related to history and the Armenian Church.

## Armenia Decides to Reopen Schools

In a statement released following a meeting of senior government officials on August 17, Armenian Education Minister Arayik Harutiunyan announced the reopening of schools on September 15. While first-year university classes are set to resume sooner, on September 1, the decision for a September 15 reopening applies to all secondary and primary schools. However, a new strict regime of precautionary sanitary and social distancing measures, along with mandatory mask wearing rules, will be in effect to prevent or diminish the threat of coronavirus infection. All schools in Armenia have been closed since March 2020. According to the Minister, the universities will, nevertheless, have the power to decide their own educational format, deciding the proportion of online classes and the size and schedule of classes accordingly.

The decision stems from a related consideration of the pandemic by the government, with the current "state

## New Anti-Corruption Court Planned

On August 14 senior officials of the Armenian Ministry of Justice announced plans to form a new special anti-corruption court. Although the plan must be approved as part of a broader set of proposed changes to the constitution, the proposal calls for the establishment of a new 25-member court, with five judges specifically assigned to rule on cases related to the country's new laws governing the confiscation of property of illegal origin.

## ECONOMY

### Armenian Minister Details Pandemic Spending

In a press conference on August 14, Armenian Economy Minister Tigran Khachatryan reported that since March 2020, the government has distributed over \$300 million in special financing and stimulus packages for businesses and citizens affected by the coronavirus pandemic. Of that total amount, the minister noted that over \$190 million in financing has been allocated in bank-provided preferential loans and credits.

A related announcement on August 12 also reported

that the government has specifically directed funds for "targeted solutions" for specific sectors, such as tourism and agriculture, which the government determined was hit by the pandemic the hardest. For the tourism sector, which the minister noted was impacted by a reduction of over 50% of turnover, the government's support is focused on job retention, with monthly support to companies in the tourism sector who retain "at least 70% of their personnel" through the pandemic. Under the aid program, farmers also receive special interest-free loans.

## FOREIGN POLICY

### Armenian and Russian Defense Ministers Meet

On August 23 in Moscow, Armenian Defense Minister Davit Tonoyan met with his Russian counterpart, Defense Minister Sergei Shoigu, on the sidelines of a security forum coinciding with Russia's hosting of an annual "International Army Games" organized by the Russian military as a largely symbolic exercise with several other partner countries. During the meeting, the Armenian Defense Min-

ister focused on the clashes with Azerbaijan the previous month, and while avoiding any direct reference to Turkey, complained to Russian officials of "the aggressive rhetoric of some countries" that he criticized for adopting military measures "aimed at destabilizing and militarizing the regional situation". Following the meeting in Moscow, the Armenian Defense Ministry released a statement which detailed an agreement between Defense Ministers Shoigu and Tonoyan regarding bilateral ties and "upcoming steps towards military cooperation" between their countries.

In line with that statement, officials from Russia's United Aircraft Corporation (UAC) also formalized a new contract on August 24 for the modernization, upgrade and servicing of Armenia's inventory of approximately 15 Sukhoi Su-25 aircraft. The new contract follows an earlier Armenian procurement of four more modern and sophisticated Su-30SM fighter jets from Russia last year. Defense Minister Tonoyan announced back in January 2020 that Armenia expects to receive more such combat aircraft and plans to acquire as many as a dozen Su-30SMs over "the coming years."

## **Armenian Prime Minister Criticized for "Congratulating" Leader of Belarus**

After leading a non-violent movement to force the resignation of the former Armenian government, Prime Minister Nikol Pashinyan sparked strong negative reaction to his message on August 10 congratulating the authoritarian leader of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenko, for "winning" re-election in a vote on August 9 widely seen as fraudulent. Faced with the unexpected criticism, the Armenian government sought to defend the move by noting the signif-

icance of the country's relations with Belarus, which is a fellow member of the Eurasian Economic Union and Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO).

## **Armenian Vows to Counter "Turkish Threat"**

The head of the Armenian National Security Council, Armen Grigoryan, asserted on August 1-2 that the Armenian government was seriously concerned over the increased threat Turkey is posing to Armenian national security. Pointing to Turkey's strong support for Azerbaijan during several days of border clashes triggered by an Azerbaijani attack on Armenia on July 12, the security official added that Turkey now poses "a serious threat to the region" and "a challenge to the regional security architecture," which "Turkey is now trying to change through its intervention." The statement follows several months of escalating tension between Armenia and Turkey and has culminated in a move by Armenia that, according to Grigoryan involves taking "steps to minimize" the threat by working closely "with our strategic ally Russia in order to prevent such changes in the region."

# Azerbaijan: Wedding Turning into Political Scandal

Turan Information Agency (Baku, Azerbaijan)

The wedding of the granddaughter of the president's administration “grey cardinal” resulted in a high-profile political scandal in the country. As for international environment, all processes are still revolving around July border clashes with Armenia.



Photo: Ramiz Mehdiyev receives the Heydar Aliyev Order  
Credits: BBC

## DOMESTIC POLICY

### Former Head of the President's Administration in Disgrace

August saw a high-profile scandal connected to Ramiz Mehdiyev, the president of the Academy of Sciences of

Azerbaijan and the former head of the president's administration. After Heydar Aliyev coming to power, Ramiz Mehdiyev served as an all-time head of administration and was only exempted in 2019. Many independent and opposition mass media called him the “grey cardinal”.

On August 18, Ramiz Mehdiyev's granddaughter, despite lockdown limitations, celebrated her wedding. Weddings have been banned in Azerbaijan since March 2020 due to coronavirus pandemic. The video footage of the wedding leaked into social media, with some MPs, former ministers and officials present.

Based on mass media and social networks publications, Ramiz Mehdiyev's son-in-law, a former MP Ilham Aliyev and his in-law Rovhsan Mustafayev were arrested for 15 days. Siyavush Novruzov, one of the odious figures of the ruling party "Eni Azerbaijan", received a reprimand for taking part in the wedding. Siyavush Novruzov accused Ramiz Mehdiyev of fraud and resigned from his post of deputy executive secretary of the party. He and his wife, Sabina Aliyeva, as well as many former officials who were present at the wedding, received a fine of 400 manats (\$240).

Later on, the situation got political. Mass media started a campaign against Ramiz Mehdiyev. Many acting MPs and politicians made various comments addressing the situation and accusing him of unsuccessful information policy and of being Russia's "fifth column" in Azerbaijan, creating corruption schemes etc. Ramiz Mehdiyev

**Aliyev stated that the volume of Russian military supplies by freight carriers via Turkmenistan and Iran to Armenia made up over 400 tons**

himself was not silent and published several articles on the official site of the Academy of Sciences, with these articles containing threats to sue the critics and accusing them of short-sightedness.

In August, the State Security Service of Azerbaijan (SSS) continued its anti-corruption operations. On August 19 its employees arrested Jeyhun Jafarov, the head of executive power of Kurdamir district on charges of abuse of power and large-scale bribery.

Another arrest followed when Eldar Hasanov, Azerbaijan's ambassador to Serbia, was arrested. The country's former prosecutor general and acting ambassador Eldar Hasanov arrived in Azerbaijan on August 11 to take part in the meeting of Serbia's head of the security council Nebojša Stefanovic and the secretary of Azerbaijan's security council Ramil Usubov. On August 13 Eldar Hasanov was arrested by the state security forces. He was charged with abuse of power resulting in serious consequences as well as with misuse of public funds. Reports appeared in opposition and independent mass media that Eldar Hasanov's arrest was related to his attempts to play a role in Azerbaijan's domestic political processes.

## ECONOMY

### Customs and Transport Agency – Against Aliyev's Statement

On August 7 the president Ilham Aliyev issued a decree on creating "Azerbaijan Investment Holding". Its purpose is to manage according to single principles all state-owned companies and enterprises as well as business entities with a state share. Institution is aimed at better transparency and economic efficiency of investment projects, implemented by state enterprises. Earlier the president stated that state companies, despite the support, are not efficient and keep on functioning only thanks to budget support.

In August, despite the statement made by Ilham Aliyev on the much needed liberalization of the country's economy, already two state institutions made decisions contradicting such a policy. On August 23 the Cabinet of Ministers with the lobby of the State Customs Committee took a decision to imply stricter customs regulations for importing non-commercial goods by physical entities. According to the new rules, the total cost of goods that can be monthly imported onto the territory of Azerbaijan with granted preferences has decreased from \$1500 to \$800. The cost of international deliveries that can be received by physical entities without additional charges has also been decreased from \$1000 to \$300 per month. When leaving

the country, the citizens of Azerbaijan will need to fill out a customs declaration in the written form if the carried sum exceeds 20 thousand. The decision will enter into force on September 19.

On August 31 Baku Transport Agency stated that they are developing a concept of introducing a single tariff and a single operations control center for all taxi companies. The statement resulted in immediate outrage in social media and independent mass media as it was noted that taxi industry is one of the rare spheres with real competition in Azerbaijan, and therefore in the last 5-6 years taxi prices have significantly dropped.

In August, the State Statistical Committee reported that according to the results of the first seven months of the year the GDP of the country decreased 2,8% against the same period last year. At the same time the Central Bank reported growing currency reserves: in July, the bank's currency reserves went up 3,4% (or \$210 million) since the beginning of the year making up \$6 billion 468 million 700 thousand.

However, the government decided to continue providing financial support to entrepreneurs. Financial support will be provided to those taxpayers who work in the sectors damaged by the pandemic and financially supported by the government yet keeping the majority of their staff employed as of July 1, 2020.

### Diplomatic Confrontation with Russia

Foreign policy arena processes were related mostly to July clashes on the border with Armenia.

In July Azerbaijan accused Serbia of supplying weapons to Armenia prior to military actions. On August 7 the president of Serbia Aleksandar Vučić called the president of Azerbaijan İlham Aliyev and expressed his condolences following the death of Azerbaijani soldiers. He also expressed his regrets regarding Armenia using the weapons produced in Serbia for these battles. On August 11 Nebojša Stefanović, Serbia's head of the security council, visited Baku and had meetings with Azerbaijan's top officials.

Azerbaijan, traditionally rather cautious when it comes to its policy towards Russia, officially accused Moscow of supplying weapons to Armenia during the period of military actions. The press service of Azerbaijan's president, usually reporting short messages regarding İlham Aliyev's telephone conversations, published detailed information on the conversation between İlham Aliyev and Vladimir Putin on August 12. Aliyev stated that the volume of intense military supplies by freight carriers via Turkmenistan and Iran to Armenia made up over 400 tons.

Sergey Shoigu, Russia's minister of defense, visited Azerbaijan and on August 25 stated that the above-men-

tioned supplies were in fact construction materials. However, Azerbaijan was not satisfied with this answer.

Against the backdrop of tense relations between Russia and Azerbaijan official Baku demonstrated stronger military and political ties to Turkey. On August 10-11, the ministers of defense and foreign affairs of Azerbaijan Zakir Hasanov and Jeyhun Bayramov visited Turkey. During the meetings Turkish officials expressed their clear-cut support to Azerbaijan in political and military issues as well as noted that Turkey will not leave Azerbaijan alone to face aggression coming from its neighbor. On August 13 Turkey's military delegation paid an official visit to Azerbaijan headed by Turkish minister of defense Hulusi Akar, who stated that the Turkish army will provide all necessary support to Azerbaijan.

On August 23 in the course of military operation in Goranboy district second lieutenant Gurgen Alaverdyan (born in 1989), the commanding officer of the sabotage and reconnaissance unit of the Armenian forces, was arrested. He was charged with "participating in illegal armed formations created in the occupied Kalbajar region, committing attacks on military personnel, enterprises, departments, organizations or individuals of the Republic of Azerbaijan, as well as acting with an intent to kill people, cause injuries and harm their health, cause significant property loss and illegally trade arms".

# Belarus: Elections Not Recognized by EU and Society, Protests are Ongoing

Vadim Mozhejko, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) (Minsk, Belarus)

Falsified election results and brutal actions of security forces spawn society outrage and revoke Lukashenko's domestic and foreign legitimacy.



Photo: Protests in Belarus  
Author: Franak Vyachorka

## DOMESTIC POLICY

### From Elections to Ongoing Street Protests

The Belarusian society does not believe the official results of the elections that took place on August 9, indicating the victory of Alexander Lukashenko in the first tour of the elections with a landslide victory of 80.1% vote. Since the evening of the election day peaceful street protests

have taken place all over Belarus. On Sundays mass protests and rallies in Minsk gather hundreds of thousands of people. These protests, however, lack leaders and are decentralized. Telegram channels mostly inform about the developments in the country rather than provide their own agenda. Initiated by Svetlana Tikhanovskaya, the opposition candidate, a Coordination Council was created to hold negotiations on power transfer, however, neither the

Council nor Tikhanovskaya herself (who left the country for Lithuania under the pressure coming from the authorities) can influence the protests.

The authorities responded to street protests with unprecedented violence. On August 9-11 Belarusian security forces for the first time actively used rubber bullets and stun grenades, while beating up the detained. At least three protesters are dead, dozens have gone missing, hundreds have been wounded and injured while over 7500 people were detained for participating in peaceful protests and rallies. 41 political prisoners are behind bars. UNO experts received information regarding 450 documented cases of torture and violence towards the detained with physical

abuse of women and minors, “including sexual abuse and rape using rubber batons”.

The authorities use all means to limit access to information. From time to time there is no access to the internet in Belarus, while mobile operators are ordered to slow down mobile internet during protests and rallies. Those journalists that provide coverage of these events are systematically arrested and beaten (for instance, a journalist from Grodno had both of his arms broken). Dozens of websites of independent mass media, non-governmental organizations and VPN-services are blocked. Belarusian printing companies refuse to print non-governmental newspapers.

## ECONOMY

### Waiting for Disaster

150 leading economists from 25 countries are warning the Belarusian authorities of disastrous economic issues in case human rights continue to be violated. The Belarusian rouble showed a 10% devaluation in August. Dozens of IT companies are busy relocating their offices and em-

ployees elsewhere, outside Belarus.

Banks are putting loans on hold. Economists point out that attempts to collectively withdraw money from bank accounts result in banks being put in a state of shock, while the authorities are trying to freeze the ongoing political issues and thus sacrifice social and economic prospects of the country.

## FOREIGN POLICY

### Loss of Legitimacy and the Return of Sanctions

A special meeting of the EU Foreign Affairs Council took place on August 14, where an unprecedentedly firm statement was made regarding the situation in Belarus: the EU not only criticized the violations that took place during the elections, but also stated that it does not accept the official results of the elections. Therefore, after the expiration of the term of Lukashenko's office, he will no longer be the legitimate president of Belarus in the eyes of the European Union.

The EU is ready to offer mediation in the dialogue of Belarusian authorities with the society, however, Lukashenko wants neither mediation nor dialogue itself – and this concerns both his own society and European leaders as well. Having replied nothing to a call

coming from Merkel, Lukashenko provoked losing some part of Belarusian foreign policy subjectivity; now European leaders discuss Belarus with Putin.

The first sanctions towards Belarus have entered into force: at the moment this is only a list from the Baltic countries of personal sanctions for 30 people, but this is only a beginning.

Even though Vladimir Putin was one of the first ones to greet Lukashenko with winning the elections and promised his law-enforcement support, Kremlin's position remains ambivalent. The promises are surrounded by blurred conditions, while the most needed support – financial one – is nowhere to be seen. Instead of those Belarus state TV employees who went on strike there is a personnel of RT journalists working and promoting the narratives of Russian propaganda.

**At least three protesters are dead, dozens have gone missing, hundreds have been wounded and injured while over 7500 people were detained for participating in peaceful protests and rallies**

# Georgia: Opposition Unites ahead of Elections

Lasha Tugushi, the Liberal Academy Tbilisi (Georgia)

Both the authorities and the opposition are mobilizing all their forces before the elections since the stakes are high. Whether the all-against-one plan will work out is not yet clear.



Photo: 30 opposition parties signed memorandum to protect each other's votes.

Credits : <https://www.zdg.md/>

## DOMESTIC POLICY

### Mobilizing before the Elections

About 30 opposition parties signed a memorandum to protect each other's votes in the 2020 parliamentary elections. Opposition parties aim to jointly prevent ruling political force's possible attempts to use administrative or other resources and retain power illegally.

On August 27, the third president of Georgia and the opposition leader Mikheil Saakashvili first apologized to the citizens of Georgia from Ukraine and then published a video in which he announced his decision to return to Georgia. The opposition was not excited about the news. Moreover, some people took it critically because Misha made similar statements before the 2016 parliamentary elections. Many people do not believe that Saakashvili will

be able to cross the border. A Georgian court passed a guilty verdict against the citizen of Ukraine Saakashvili, and upon return he will have to be imprisoned. Experts agree that the oppositionist's arrival will be a serious test of the country's security.

The ruling party Georgian Dream holds the first place in the published pre-election ratings. However, according to the two out of three polls, its rating is not enough to form the government: Edison Research - 39%; IRI - 33%; Survation - 52%.

Opposition parties are also not happy with the polls. For example, according to the IRI poll, the following three places are occupied by the United National Movement (Saakashvili's party) - 16%; European Georgia - 5%; New

Georgia - 5%. Despite a low support level, together with other minor parties, they have a chance to form a majority. A temporary amendment to the Constitution set an almost symbolic 1% threshold for the upcoming parliamentary elections. Thus, up to ten parties can get into the parliament. It is difficult to say how united the opposition will be. Left- and right-oriented, friendly or sceptical to the West deputies sitting by the same table look rather strange. So far, the “all against one” opposition plan is still relevant.

According to the new version of the Constitution, Georgia is a parliamentary republic. The October elections are the last to be held under a mixed electoral system. 120

## Up to ten parties can get into the parliament with an almost symbolic 1% threshold for the upcoming parliamentary elections

out of 150 seats in the parliament will be cast by the proportional party lists and 30 seats by the first-past-the-post voting. The law establishes an interesting “blocking principle”, which means that if a party receives less than 40% of

the votes under the proportional system, then it will not be able to form the government, even if it wins in all 30 majoritarian districts.

The ruling team does not want to share power since it does not see partners. Besides, for the leader of the ruling party, billionaire Bidzina Ivanishvili, a loss in the elections is dangerous, especially if Saakashvili wins, since personally for him, the price of losing could be prison.

## ECONOMY

### The Fall Has Slowed Down

In July, the Georgian economy contracted by 5.5%. According to the optimistic statement of the Minister of Economy and Sustainable Development of Georgia Natia Turnava, the country's economy is on the recovery path. In her opinion, month after month, the rate of economic decline is weakening, and there is a positive trend.

“We still have a recession in July, this year cannot be positive, but the July recession of 5.5% means that the economy is falling three times slower than it was in April,”

Turnava said.

At the same time, according to the international rating company Standard&Poor's, the effectiveness of Georgia's monetary policy is high. According to the National Bank of Georgia, S&P kept Georgia's sovereign credit rating as BB. According to the S&P, despite a challenging external environment, Georgia maintained strong economic growth compared to other countries in the region, was able to quickly cope with volatile external circumstances, and avoided sharp and destructive real exchange rate fluctuations.

## FOREIGN POLICY

### For European Belarus

The President of Georgia reacted to the elections in Belarus a few days after they were held.

“Georgia respects the European values and is committed to democratic principles on which the development, progress, and return of our two friendly states into the European family are based on. We believe that the current process will end not harming or hindering the democratic and European future of Belarus. We distance ourselves from all the forms of violence. We believe that Belarus and its people will be able to choose their future democratically,” Salome Zurabishvili said in a statement disseminated

through her official Facebook page.

Unlike Georgia, both neighbouring South Caucasian countries, Azerbaijan and Armenia, recognized the results of the elections in Belarus. Besides, separatist regimes from Abkhazia and South Ossetia “capitals” sent their congratulations on the voting results to Belarus. The elections were not recognized by the valid Western democracies. Georgia, like Ukraine, is trying to draw its borders where the democratic world is, despite the propagandist theories spreading in the country saying that “Lukashenko will remain in power and will strike back by recognizing the independence of Abkhazia and South Ossetia”.

# Is Moldova still “Learning” How to Be Independent and Democratic?

Ludmila Nofit, Foreign Policy Association of the Republic of Moldova (Chisinau, Moldova)

August was full of political and social events; some of them have shattered the 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Moldova’s independence on August 27. Struggle with unprecedented pandemic crisis and its severe consequences; continuous and tiring political disputes between the Moldovan political forces; everlasting justice reform and fight against corruption; decreasing quality of citizens life; as well expecting the most fiery upcoming November presidential elections are just few major issues which left many open questions ahead concerning further development of Moldova.



Photo: Opposition protests on Independence Day  
Credits: <https://www.zdg.md/>

## DOMESTIC POLICY

### (In)dependence from whom? What?

While fighting the COVID-19 with [over 36.000 confirmed cases](#), having the highest rate of infection in Europe per one million people, Moldova woke up in a political, so-

cial and economic deepening crisis. The 29<sup>th</sup> anniversary of [Moldova’s independence was celebrated](#) without traditional festivity due to the pandemic restrictions, but with well-secured country’s leadership, [protests](#) and [opposi-](#)

[tion march](#). According to a recent [survey](#), more than 65% of respondents declared that either their incomes are just enough or not enough for basic needs; more than 60% consider the implemented reforms not efficient. Nevertheless, among the positive aspects mentioned are visa free regime with EU countries, signing and implementation of the EU-Moldova Association Agreement.

The forthcoming November presidential elections are the big stake for the existing leading political parties and for citizens too. Obviously, the future elected president of the country might have a major impact on further Moldova's political course. [The Central Electoral Commission \(CEC\)](#) officially launched the electoral period on August 25, and according to [the CEC published list](#) 48 political parties can participate in the upcoming elections. However, there are no candidates officially registered yet. Nevertheless, few political parties announced their candidates for the electoral race, namely, [Maia Sandu](#) (PAS - Action and Solidarity Party), [Andrei Nastase](#) (Platform DA - Dignity and Truth Platform DA), [Octavian Ticu](#) (PUN - National Unity Party), [Dorin Chirtoaca](#) (MPU- Political Movement "Union") and [Renato Usatii](#) (PN - Our Party).

The Moldova's political landscape can surprise us when it is less expected. [The return to politics of ex-prime minister and former convicted for abuse of office Vlad Filat](#) elected to run PLDM - Liberal Democratic Party of Moldova raised [different opinions](#) and [critics](#) among the society. Based on his previous experience in initiating political alliances, Filat offered the opposition parties PAS and Platform DA to create a political bloc and nominate a common candidate for presidential elections. [PAS rejected the proposal](#), arguing they've already nominated the candidate, while the Platform DA [did not provide a straightforward response](#). In the end, PLDM nominated [Tudor Deliu](#). The question is if Filat would engage more in politics, how many of Moldovan citizens will support him, forgiving and

**The Central Electoral Commission officially launched the electoral period, and published a list of 48 political parties that can participate in the upcoming elections**

forgetting about his involvement in one billion dollar theft.

The current Moldovan president Igor Dodon has not yet announced his participation in November elections. However, the answer is clear since his actions and statements are full of electoral content, e.g. declaring about a [possible discount on natural gas](#) for consumers starting with September. The [electricity provider company "Energo-com"](#) also informed about a potential cut rate for electricity for August-December 2020 period.

In the meantime, Dodon was allegedly on vacation in Moscow, affirming that he is [offering to be the first person from Moldova to administer the supposed Russian vaccine anti-COVID](#). This is despite the fact that there is no public scientific data on this vaccine and no approvals by the international scientific community. Even the Moldovan Health Minister avoided making any comments on Russian vaccine. Nevertheless, it is obvious that Dodon's behavior, pushing hard to please the Russian leadership, is aimed to get support for November presidential elections.

The Democratic Party of Moldova (PDM)'s fate is at stake facing organizational transformation. Recently the party [expelled two of its MPs](#) who allegedly had been discordant with party activities for a long time. Despite that, the expelled MPs will continue to support the existing government as independent parliamentarians. Thereupon, [several members from five PDM territorial organizations left the party](#), accusing the leadership of PDM, in particular, ex-prime minister Pavel Filip of splitting the Democratic Party. In return, [Filip sustained](#) in an interview that PDM is getting through an important transformation and quality matters more than quantity. Speaking about their candidate for presidential elections, Filip mentioned that the government, parliament and the parliament majority have more weight than the president in a +parliamentary republic like Moldova.

## ECONOMY

### Extreme Drought on Lands and in Pockets

Affected by the pandemic crisis and natural calamities, [several farmers](#) from different regions of Moldova have protested for more than a week, blocking the main national routes. Farmers were claiming Government should declare state emergency in agriculture sector and undertake necessary measures, e.g. increase subsidies for damages caused, reschedule farmers' debt, introduce moratorium on fiscal controls, VAT reimbursement etc. In the end, the Agency for Intervention and Payments for Agriculture

agreed on help of [1500 MDL \(75 Euro\) per hectare](#) for farmers from first group of crops. In addition, a [draft of legislative amendments](#) aimed to support farmers, was sent for coordination to International Monetary Fund. Nevertheless, it will take time until Government and Parliament will approve the submitted draft law. Otherwise, farmers would probably come back [in October to protest](#) again claiming to fulfill their demands. Notwithstanding that out of total 451 thousand hectares sown, 200 thousand were affected, the authorities ensure that food security is out of risk.

The construction of an important project for Moldova's economic and energy security perspective, namely, the

gas pipeline Iasi-Ungheni-Chisinau (120km length) was finalized. At first stage, the pipeline is to provide gas transportation in a volume of 1.5 billion cubic meters per year. However, the pipeline will have the capacity to provide about [70% of the average Moldova's consumption](#) including the Transnistrian region, after finalizing in 2021 the investment on the Romanian territory. Stakeholders of the "Victoriabank" commercial bank (European Bank for Reconstruction and Development and Romanian commercial bank "Banca Transilvania") voiced their [complaints and concerns](#) about the attempts of the prosecutors to inves-

tigate money laundry from 2014. In particular, the Prosecutor General seized the property owned by Victoriabank, valued at 1.9 billion MDL, though EBRD and Banca Transilvania became stakeholders at Victoriabank in 2018 while the fraud took place in 2014. In the meantime, the bank representatives declared its openness to cooperate with the Moldovan authorities on the case. [According to the financial expert](#) and former minister of finance, Veaceslav Negruta, the Moldovan prosecutors shall provide more information about the case otherwise Victoriabank seizure appears to be an abusive measure on behalf of authorities.

## FOREIGN POLICY

---

### Lack of Balance and Cohesion on Foreign Policy

Turkish Foreign Minister Mevlüt Çavuşoğlu paid a two-day visit to Chisinau. The head of Turkish diplomacy and his Moldovan counterpart Oleg Tulea participated in the [first meeting of the Joint Strategic Planning Group](#), addressing a wide range of bilateral issues including the possibility to organize the Joint Intergovernmental Economic Commission when the epidemiological situation will allow. Turkey is Moldova's 7<sup>th</sup> largest trading partner, investing over \$400 million in different projects through the Turkish Cooperation and Coordination Agency (TIKA). [Inauguration of the Turkish Consulate in Comrat city](#). Gagauzia autonomy, is a clear interest to provide support toward Moldovan citizens in particular Gagauzian community.

Contradicting approach of Moldovan authorities to the current developments in Belarus was a debatable issue for local expert community. On the one side, president Dodon hurried up to [express his personal](#) congratulations "on behalf of the Moldovan population" to the elected president A.Lukashenko, making abstraction of Belarusian law enforcement violent repression against peaceful protesters. Few days later, Moldovan foreign office [published a statement of concern](#) regarding the post electoral situation and violence in Belarus, reiterating the importance of respecting human rights and democratic principles. In fact, different lines of addressing the situation in Belarus reflect lack of cohesion on foreign policy issue between the Moldovan leadership. The public opinion and opposition political leaders suggested that Lukashenko's pattern might inspire Dodon in the forthcoming presidential elections.

# Ukraine on the Brink of New Political Season

Sergei Gerasymchuk, Foreign Policy Council “Ukrainian Prism” (Kyiv, Ukraine)

Local elections are to take place in Ukraine this fall. Even though the official campaign is yet to be launched, its preparation already promises a hot political season. August showed that political battles are accompanied by scandalous resignations, discussing elections on all levels including the Minsk format and, of course, promises of reforms and better lives.



Photo: Heads of major anticorruption institutions fired - Nazar Kholodnytkiy (left) and Artem Sytnyk (right).

Credits:<https://glavcom.ua/>

## DOMESTIC POLICY

### Fighting Corruption Is Not a Priority, Lockdown Is Not an Obstacle for Elections

High-profile August resignations raised the issue of efficiency when it comes to fighting corruption in Ukraine. In late August Iryna Venediktova, the Prosecutor General of Ukraine, signed the resignation form for Nazar Kholodnitsky, the head of the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office (SAP) – an institution specifically created to fight corruption in top echelons of power. Nazar Kholodnitsky was dismissed at his own request.

Following this high-profile resignation a decision was made by the Constitutional Court of Ukraine regarding the

unconstitutionality of appointing A.Sytnyk for the position of the Head of NABU (National Anti-Corruption Bureau of Ukraine) in spring 2015. NABU is an institution, which, along with SAP, is supposed to fight corruption at the highest levels and which was created from scratch with the support coming from the West. The Constitutional Court of Ukraine addressed the issue on the request from over 50 MPs of Verkhovna Rada (mostly from the ruling pro-presidential party “Servant of the People” and openly pro-Russian “Opposition Party for Life”).

The Constitutional Court came to a conclusion that the fifth president of Ukraine Petro Poroshenko, according to his own powers, did not have the right to sign the decree on appointing. Such a decree is unconstitutional as the Basic Law contains the full lists of positions that can be appointed by the

president, however, this list does not contain the director of NABU. The decision ruled by the Constitutional court is final and is not subject to appeal. A. Sytnik, the director of NABU himself, explained the attempts to make him resign from this position as the revenge of I. Kolomoisky (a tycoon who returned to Ukraine during Zelensky presidency) for “Privat-bank” and “Ukrnafta” cases investigated by NABU.

Against the backdrop of anti-corruption battles some developments remained practically unnoticed. In about 24 hours several crucial decisions were made, one in the parliament of the country, the other one in the Cabinet of Ministers. At the special session that took place on August 25, the MPs adopted amendments to the “Law on 2020 State Budget”, that increased minimal wages in Ukraine up to UAH 5000 (≈183 \$) starting on September 1, 2020. Such a step of the ruling pro-presidential mono-majority and its satellites can be explained by the upcoming local elections that are supposed to take place at the end of October. The Central Election Commission of Ukraine launched the electoral campaign for local councils. According to the Central Election Commission, the official campaign is starting on September 5.

Executive authorities, namely the Cabinet of Ministers, against the backdrop of threatening statistics and looming

numbers of infected people, decided to prolong the adaptive lockdown for two months until October 31, while foreign citizens are prohibited to enter the country during one month. The exception is made, however, for the citizens of Belarus, who, taking into consideration complicated political environment, will undergo a simplified entrance regime suggested by the President of Ukraine.

Lockdown limitations, in fact, will not influence the electoral process. The issue of local elections was one of the hottest issues on the agenda of the so-called Minsk format Trilateral Contact Group. In particular, Russia insists on suspending the Verkhovna Rada resolution on the impossibility of holding local elections on the occupied territories. In order to unblock the negotiations Leonid Kravchuk, the head of the Ukrainian delegation in Trilateral Contact Group, promised to call on the Verkhovna Rada to review the above-mentioned resolution. However, the position of Ukrainian authorities remained unchanged. The elections can take place in ORD-LO (certain areas of Donetsk and Luhansk regions) after the withdrawal of foreign troops, disarmament, demilitarization, withdrawal of all illegal armed groups and after constitutional order is established.

## ECONOMY

### Looking for New Income Sources

Against the backdrop of recent economic turbulence as well as the risk of post-lockdown economic recession both the government and the president of Ukraine seek opportunities to attract additional financial resources into the country. Among other things, the president insists on tax reform and amnesty of capital (while it is not unlikely that this initiative too is more of an attempt to get electoral points in the upcoming

local elections and compensate reputational losses in the anti-corruption sphere).

Moreover, according to Centre for Economic Strategy, local budgets could get approximately UAH 11 bn in case of privatization of communal enterprises. In cooperation with the World Bank and European Bank for Reconstruction and Development preliminary technical and economic rationale has been prepared regarding the transfer of several parts of roads and three Ukrainian airports in concession.

## FOREIGN POLICY

### Ukraine’s Continued Support on the International Arena?

August did not see the abundance of developments on the international arena, except for the visits paid by the German minister of foreign affairs Heiko Maas and US Deputy Secretary of State Stephen Biegun.

The head of the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs visited Ukraine on August 24, Ukraine’s Independence Day. The federal minister had a series of top-level meetings and snatched an opportunity to state that Germany remains Ukraine’s reliable ally both on the political front and on the front of economic transformations. What is more, Heiko Maas agreed with the necessity to continue EU sanction policy towards Russia until the issues leading to introducing such sanctions are resolved,

namely, the occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and war in Donbas region.

It is worth noting that already on August 26 Ukraine and Germany came to an agreement on energy partnership, in particular, on integrating energy markets within the ENTSO-E frames, increasing the level of energy security, decarbonizing the economy and exchange in innovations in energy technologies.

Moreover, the US Deputy Secretary of State in the course of his working visit to Ukraine on August 26 reassured Ukrainian authorities of continued support in counteracting the Russian aggression as well as in implementing reforms in Ukraine. The situation on the territories temporarily occupied by Russia in the Crimea and in Donbas were separately reviewed. The parties also discussed the current situation in Belarus in the context of regional security.

**The Prosecutor General of Ukraine, signed the resignation form for Nazar Kholodnitsky, the head of the Specialized Anti-Corruption Prosecutor’s Office**

# The EaP CSF Steering Committee condemns the illegal detention of members of the Forum

**The EaP CSF Steering Committee strongly condemns the unjustified and illegal detention of EaP CSF members Andrei Yahorau and Irina Sukhy.**

Following the illegal arrests of Andrei Yahorau and Irina Sukhy on 5 and 6 September, the EaP CSF Steering Committee strongly condemns their unjustified detention:

Andrei Yahorau, Co-Chair of the Coordinating Committee of the Belarusian National Platform of the EaP CSF, and a member of the Coordination Council initiated by Sviatlana Tikhonouskaya, was abducted by unknown people on the street on September 6 during a peaceful protest.

Irina Sukhy, Chair of the Green Network board and representative of the Ecohome NGO, was abducted by plainclothes law enforcement officers from her home and placed in the Sovetskiy district office in Minsk on the night of 5 September. After her arrest, law enforcement officers performed an illegal search in her apartment, refusing to identify themselves or to provide any documents warranting the inspection of the apartment.

In light of this highly alarming situation, the Belarusian

National Platform of the EaP CSF demands calls on Belarusian authorities to:

immediately release all political prisoners, all detained and abducted participants in peaceful protests, including our colleagues Andrei Yahorau and Irina Sukhy;

end the violence and repression by law enforcement agencies and bring the perpetrators to justice;

invalidate the results of the election of the President of the Republic of Belarus on August 9, 2020 due to widespread violations and falsifications;

begin a meaningful dialogue between the illegitimate incumbent government of the Republic of Belarus and Sviatlana Tikhonouskaya, including the appointed representatives of the Coordination Council for a peaceful transfer of power.

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

# Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum Belarus Monitoring Mission Report

The EaP CSF Monitoring Mission has released their final monitoring report on Belarus. The [report](#) asserts that the presidential elections in the Republic of Belarus cannot be considered free or fair due to several violations of democratic norms and standards. As a result, the EaP CSF Monitoring Mission has developed a set of recommendations to several stakeholders: the Belarusian authorities, the EU institutions, the EU member states and EaP partner countries, the OSCE/ODIHR, international civil society and international donors.

First, the report outlines a series of general recommendations. Following, the assessment offers recommendations which are structured around different areas, such as the organisation of a new presidential election, electoral reform, the media and civil society. In general, the Monitoring Mission calls onto the Belarusian authorities to:

Cancel the results of the presidential election of 9 August 2020 due to massive violations that occurred at all stages of the electoral process;

Organise new presidential elections with an improved electoral legislation and an unrestricted access for domestic and international observers;

Release all political prisoners and investigate all cases of torture and inhuman treatment, as well as deaths of protesters that took place in the context of the election campaign period;

Refrain from the disproportionate and unlawful use of special equipment against peaceful protesters.

Preserve the current approach of the Euronest Parliamentary Assembly towards the Belarusian Parliament without changes until significant positive developments in Belarus take place.

# EaP Think Bridge

## Project is implemented by



NGO Promotion of Intercultural Cooperation (PIC) is a non-governmental, non-profit organization aiming to promote international cooperation and intercultural dialogue. The goal of PIC is to raise awareness in different groups (youth, students, business, journalists, state and local authorities, academics, etc.) on the issues of international, intercultural relations, global and local socio-political problems.

<http://ngopic.org.ua/>

## Supported by:



The project benefits from support through the EaP Civil Society Forum Re-granting Scheme (FSTP) and is funded by the European Union as part of its support to civil society in the region. Within its Re-granting Scheme, the Eastern Partnership Civil Society Forum (EaP CSF) supports projects of its members that contribute to achieving the mission and objectives of the Forum.

<https://eap-csf.eu/>

## Network founded by:



Foreign Policy Council "Ukrainian Prism" (Ukraine) is a network-based nongovernmental analytical center, the goal of which is to participate in providing democratic ground for developing and implementation of foreign and security policies by government authorities of Ukraine, implementation of international and nation-wide projects and programs, directed at improvement of foreign policy analysis and expertise, enhancement of expert community participation in a decision-making process in the spheres of foreign policy, international relations, public diplomacy.

[www.prismua.org](http://www.prismua.org)



Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies (BISS) is an independent think-tank, founded in 2007 by a group of leading scientists and civil activists. BISS's mission is to provide a holistic picture of socio-political processes in Belarus based on empiric studies.

<https://belinstitute.com/>



The Regional Studies Center (Armenia) is an independent think tank based in Armenia. The RSC conducts a wide range of strategic analysis and objective research, implements a number of educational and policy-related projects, and develops policy initiatives aimed at bolstering political and economic reform and conflict resolution in the broader South Caucasus region.

[www.regional-studies.org](http://www.regional-studies.org)



The foundation Liberal Academy Tbilisi (Georgia) is a nongovernmental, nonprofit organization, committed to promoting core democratic values, supporting peace-building and European and Euro-Atlantic integration and with that fostering the democratic development of Georgia and the whole Southern Caucasus region.

[www.ei-lat.ge](http://www.ei-lat.ge)



Foreign Policy Association (Moldova) is Moldova's leading foreign policy think-tank, committed to supporting Moldova's Europeanization, integration into the European Union and a viable settlement of the Transnistrian conflict.

[www.ape.md](http://www.ape.md)