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## Situation in Belarus on the eve of the presidential elections

Opinion  
Committee on Culture, Science and Education  
Rapporteur: Mr McIntosh, United Kingdom, Socialist Group

### **A. Conclusions of the Committee**

The Committee on Culture, Science and Education supports the draft Resolution and Recommendation adopted by the Political Affairs Committee and suggests the following amendments:

#### **Amendments to the draft Resolution:**

1. REPLACE PARAGRAPH 4 WITH A NEW PARAGRAPH:

The Assembly recalls that, four years ago, the Minister of Information promised to send the draft media law to the Council of Europe for advice. In the absence of any action and the media situation deteriorating, the Assembly was forced to adopt its Resolution 1372 (2004) on the persecution of the press in the Republic of Belarus. Two years later, on the eve of the presidential elections, the situation has not improved but actually worsened and freedom of expression is now blatantly flouted. Under such circumstances, the people of Belarus cannot receive the information necessary in order to form freely political opinions and make a democratic choice in the coming elections.

2. ADD AT THE END OF PARAGRAPH 12.2:

in particular allow all political parties fair and equal access to the electronic and print media;

3. ADD TWO NEW SUB-PARAGRAPHS TO PARAGRAPH 12:

12.10 comply with Article 19 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United Nations' International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and respect freedom of expression in the media in accordance with Assembly Resolution 1372 (2004) and this present Resolution;

12.12 respect academic freedom and in particular provide appropriate conditions for the European Humanities University to return to Minsk and for Belarusian students to participate in studies as well as student organisations abroad.

4. REPLACE PARAGRAPH 14 WITH THE FOLLOWING

14. The Assembly also calls on Council of Europe member states to:

14.1 give immediate financial and if necessary logistical support to independent broadcasting to Belarus from abroad, which should preferably employ independent Belarusian journalists and broadcast in the Belarusian language about Belarus;

14.2 set up student exchange programmes for students from Belarus and with universities in Belarus;

14.3 support humanitarian programmes for young people and children in Belarus.

5. ADD TWO NEW SUB-PARAGRAPHS TO PARAGRAPH 15:

15.4 support student exchanges from Belarus with universities in the European Union and continue supporting the European Humanities University in exile in Vilnius;

15.5 activate immediately financial support which had been allocated to European media broadcasting into Belarus.

**Amendments to the draft recommendation:**

6. ADD THREE NEW SUB-PARAGRAPHS:

1.5 facilitate entry by young people from Belarus into the territory of member states, for instance in accordance with the European Agreement on Travel by Young Persons on Collective Passports between the Member Countries of the Council of Europe;

1.6 instruct its inter-governmental committees in which Belarus participates on the basis of the European Cultural Convention to maintain their contacts with government officials from Belarus at a working level;

1.7 establish and extend, at the levels of its Rapporteur Groups and steering committees, contacts with representatives of all democratic political parties, non-governmental organisations and youth organisations from Belarus.

**B. Explanatory memorandum  
by Mr McIntosh**

1. The Assembly decided on 23 January 2006 to hold a debate under urgent procedure on the situation in Belarus on the even of the presidential election. The Committee on Culture, Science and Education was seized for an opinion on the draft report prepared by the Political Affairs Committee. As rapporteur of the Committee, I have focused on subjects falling under the terms of reference of the Committee on Culture, Science and Education, namely the situation in Belarus concerning the media, educational institutions and students as well as young people.
2. For my comments on the media, I have drawn on the exchange of views the Sub-Committee on the Media held with the Belarusian Association of Journalists in Paris on 30 November 2005 as well as the work of relevant other international and non-governmental organisations and earlier reports by this Committee.
3. When the Special Guest status of Belarus was suspended by the Parliamentary Assembly in 1997, the Council of Europe agreed that a further development of relations with Belarus depended on four key issues: the abolition of the death penalty, the respect of human rights and the rule of law, the reinstatement of real powers of the National Assembly of Belarus, and the respect of freedom of the media. For this reason, my report pays particular attention to the media in Belarus.
4. However, Belarus is a signatory to the European Cultural Convention, and the possibility of contacts in this context with civil society must also be taken into account.

**I. SITUATION OF THE MEDIA**

5. The lack of freedom of expression and media independence in Belarus has constantly been a matter of serious concern for international organisations and relevant NGOs. The Council of Europe has frequently condemned the repressive practices deployed by the Belarusian regime against free media, most recently, in its Report on the Persecution of the Press in the Republic of Belarus in 2004 (Doc. 10107) leading to Parliamentary Assembly Resolution 1372 and Recommendation 1658 (2004).
6. The Committee on Culture, Science and Education itself has repeatedly raised the issue of blatant violations of media freedom in Belarus in its Report on "Media and democratic culture" in 1999 (Doc. 8355), on "Freedom of expression and information in the media in Europe" (Doc.9000, Assembly Recommendation 1506 (2001)), and on "Freedom of expression in the media in Europe" (Doc.9640 rev., Assembly Recommendation 1589 (2003)).
7. The Committee organized a hearing in Strasbourg in 2002 on the situation of the media in Belarus with the participation of authorities and media. In 2004, the Committee expressed its opinion with regard to the report of the Political Affairs Committee on the Persecution of the Press in Belarus.
8. Instead of improving, the situation of media and journalists has further deteriorated at an alarming scale since the adoption of 2004 Report. Belarusian officials led by President Lukashenko have been intensifying their efforts to curtail freedom of expression and shield themselves from criticism. Journalists have to do their job in an atmosphere of intimidation and fear.
9. Suppressive practices are intensifying in the run up to the Presidential Elections due to be held on 19 March 2006. Newly adopted amendments to the Criminal Code initiated by Lukashenko, which envision prison sentence for 'discrediting Belarus', clearly indicate that this is an intention to silence fair public debate and leave space only for official information propagated by the state controlled media.
10. Given that media freedom is quintessential for genuinely democratic elections and that only an impartial media stance could provide for an informed decision of the electorate, there is a stringent need to observe the further evolution of the media situation in this country. The recent cases and developments mentioned in this report relate to the period after the 2004 Report on Persecution of the Press in Belarus.
11. This report has been prepared with information gathered from several Non-Government Organizations committed to defend freedom of expression and the independence of the mass media. These include

Reporters without Frontiers, Article 19, Belarusian Association of Journalists and International Press Institute.

## RECENT CASES OF BREACHES OF FREEDOM OF THE MEDIA

12. Recent developments in Belarus are marked by outrageous infringements of freedom of the media manifested in: murder and violence against journalists; imprisonment of journalists; legal harassment of the media; economic and administrative harassment as well as harsh censorship and government control of state media. According to the Press Freedom Index for 2005, Belarus is among the countries with the most precarious situation in that respect and is placed near the bottom of the list: 152 out of 167.

### Murder and violence against journalists

13. Two journalists have been killed under shady circumstances and the perpetrators of these crimes have not been found and punished so far. Vasily Grodnikov, a freelance journalist for *Narodnaya Volya*, was found dead with a head injury in his home on 18 October 2005. The newspaper has been popular for its frequent critical reports of the Belarusian President.

14. Veronika Cherkasova, a journalist with *Solidarnost*, was stabbed to death in her Minsk apartment in October 2004. From the beginning, the official investigation excluded any connection of this murder with her work as a journalist. Cherkasova used to investigate the Belarusian government's alleged arms sales to Iraq and published a series of articles on the methods of surveillance used by Belarusian Security Services to monitor civilians' activities. The murderer enjoys, de facto, impunity since the investigation into this case was suspended on 27 December last year.

15. Dmitri Zavadski's disappearance in 2000 can be mentioned in the same context. The investigation into this case was stopped in April 2004 soon after the Assembly Rapporteur had articulated suspicions of involvement in this disappearance of three senior Belarusian officials. The impunity of the perpetrators of these crimes clearly denotes that Belarus is a place where critical journalists must fear for their lives.

16. A number of journalists were beaten and arrested on Parliamentary Election Day on 17 October 2004 as well as during protests organised later by the Opposition. Pavel Cheremet, a journalist working for the Russian TV Station *Perviy Kanal*, was beaten up by two unknown persons and then arrested.

### Detention of journalists

17. Belarus is a country where prison sentence is regularly applied for journalists who voice criticism of the authorities. Several Polish and Belorussian journalists have been detained in August 2005. Andrzej Piscalnik, editor-in-chief of *Glos znad Niemna*, a Polish minority newspaper, was arrested on 1 August 2005 and then sentenced to jail for 10 days. The charges against him were "participation in an illegal gathering", a concert organised by the Union of Poles in Belarus.

18. Earlier, on 6 July, Andrei Poczobut, editor-in-chief of *Magazin Polski*, Ivan Roman, a journalist for *Solidarnost* as well as Andrei Piscalnik and several of his colleagues were arrested by police in Grodno during their protest manifestation against the harassment of their newspapers.

19. On 27 July, special police invaded the office of the Union of Poles in Belarus and detained many journalists. These include: Andrei Piscalnik, Pavel Mazheika, the head of the Grodno office of the BAJ, Wacław Radziwinowicz and Robert Kowalewski, journalists for *Gazeta Wyborcza*, Inesa Todryk, a reporter for *Glos znad Niemna* and Siarhey Hryts, a photographer for the *Associated Press*. The journalists were released after two hours of detention and the police destroyed all photos that the journalists managed to take during detention.

20. Andrei Pachobut, a journalist for *Pahonia*, was convicted to ten days in prison for being present (in his professional capacity) at a protest meeting in Grodno on 4 March 2005. Pavel Mazheika, also a *Pahonia* correspondent, was detained on 27 October 2004 in relation to a protest organised by journalists.

21. Volha Klasouskaya of *Narodnaya Volya* was detained in December 2004 while exercising her professional duties. Another incident where journalists were prevented from doing their work concerned three Polish journalists detained in March 2005 in connection with Parliamentary by-elections in Grodno.

Agnieszka Romaszewska, a Polish Television journalist working for *TVP1* was also detained by police on 27 July 2005 in Schuchin. Reportedly, she did not have the accreditation to attend the event which she was going to cover.

### **Legal Harassment: defamation suits and disproportionately imposed fines**

22. Belarus has harsh libel and insult laws. Defamation is a criminal offence under current legislation and officials are given high level of protection against criticism. Moreover the President's 'honour and dignity' is protected under the Law on the Press and other mass media (Art.5) as well as under the Criminal Code. Criminal prosecution and imprisonment for press offences are regularly applied.

23. These provisions contravene international norms and principles of freedom of expression, which stipulate that authorities shall be exposed to a higher level of criticism than ordinary citizens and not to a lower level of criticism. Furthermore, in a democracy, the law should not guarantee the protection of 'honour and dignity' to a single person, even to the President.

24. We recall in this context that, Mikolai Markevich, the editor of the independent weekly *Den* and former editor of the newspaper *Pahonia* (closed in 2001) was convicted to 18 months forced labour in 2002, of accusations related to insulting President Lukashenko. Viktor Ivaskievic of the newspaper *Rabocy* and Pavel Mazejka of *Pahonia* were also imprisoned for 6 and 9 months respectively.

25. Miklos Haraszti, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media in a Report concerning Freedom of Expression in Belarus expressed his concern regarding harsh libel and insult laws functioning in the country. He assessed that "libel and defamation provisions in Belarus are being specifically used to induce a chilling effect on journalists" and that liability for libel and insult has recently changed for the worse.

26. The New Amendments to the Criminal Code which envisage heavy prison sentences for 'Discrediting Belarus towards foreigners and international organizations' clearly indicate further deterioration of freedom of expression. Local and international journalists are directly affected by this law. It is detrimental to free speech and endangers a genuine public debate in the run up to the Presidential elections due to take place in March 2006.

27. The relevant authorities have already warned journalists that these provisions would be rigorously applied and those who would bypass the law would be punished. Thus, the new law is a trenchant message that it is very difficult for the media in Belarus to fulfil its responsibility, which in a democratic system is to serve as a watch dog for those in power.

28. On that occasion, the OSCE Representative on Freedom of the Media has recently condemned such a law in a Regular Report to the Permanent Council on 15 December 2005 and urged President Lukashenko not to approve it. However, despite this recommendation the new law came into effect on 30 December 2005 after the President had put its signature on it. This will inevitably lead to further defamation suits against journalists as well as their self-censorship.

29. This way, Belarusian authorities try to prevent any source of alternative information from reaching the electorate just a few months before the Presidential elections. However, people need impartial information from different sources which provide for a public debate and can help people make an informed decision on their choice.

30. Huge penalties, imposed against media by courts alleged to the incumbents as a result of defamation suits, have proved to be an efficient way to crackdown on independent media. Disproportionate fines inflict heavy burden on media and bring them to the verge of bankruptcy and closure.

31. The Newspaper *Narodnaya Volya* was fined 100 million roubles (approx.US\$46,500) in June 2005 for allegedly defaming pro-Lukashenko leader of the Liberal Democrat Party. The Supreme Court confirmed in June 2004 that *Narodnaya Volya* must pay 20.000 euros for libelling former state TV head Yahor Rybakov. Elena Rovbetskaya, editor of the weekly *Birha Novostei*, was fined 500 euros on 30 September 2004 on charge of "offending the honour and dignity" of the President.

## Economic harassment

32. The independent media in Belarus are systematically denied the essential facilities in order to get their newspapers printed and distributed to the audience. The printing houses as well as distribution and subscription services are practically state owned. Many independent newspapers have recently found themselves cut off from all means of existence because their contracts with printing companies as well delivery and retail services have been cancelled.

33. The fate of *Solidarnost* is an eloquent recent example of the practices intended to wipe out the few remained independent newspapers. *Solidarnost* is no longer available for its readers as from 1<sup>st</sup> January this year. Belsayuzdruk, a state owned monopolist on newspaper distribution announced on 30 November last year that it would not renew their contract with the newspaper. Earlier, the state run postal service decided to stop distribution of the newspaper to its subscribed readers from the beginning of 2006.

34. The first attempt to squeeze *Solidarnost* out of the market was made in January 2004 when they were denied printing facilities by the state owned printing house Krasnaya Zvesda. The journalists found a solution to print in the Smolensk city of Russia. Now, this seems to be the fatal blow since the newspaper is not able to reach its readers. The staff thinks that the very first warning received by *Solidarnost* has been the murder of its journalist Veronika Cherkasova and the impunity that accompanied this crime.

35. *Narodnaya Volya*, a very popular newspaper that is frequently critical of authorities, has been confronting great problems in order to be able to survive. The discrimination against the newspaper did not stop even after the newspaper had managed to pay a cripplingly huge fine imposed by the court as a compensation for moral damages in the defamation case launched by the leader of the Liberal Democrat Party. The state printing house Chyrvonaya zorka and several state distribution companies announced that they would not continue to provide their services as from 1 October 2005.

36. The official reason invoked was that it had not allocated the prepayment for future issues. However, the newspaper couldn't do that since its bank accounts had been frozen following the defamation case. The newspaper applied to other printing houses, but was told, unofficially, that they fear sanctions and persecutions if they work with the newspaper.

37. *Belorruskaya Delovaya Gazeta* received a notification that its contracts with both Belsayuzdruk and the post office, which delivered the newspapers nationwide, were cancelled for 2004. Later, Irina Makovetskaya, one of its journalists, received night time death threats.

38. The independent newspaper Den has also faced the refusal of printers to get the newspaper published. The newspaper was intimidated through a range of confiscations, searches by the secret police and expulsion from its office. Subsequently, the newspaper had to move to Russia to continue its printing.

39. The newspaper *Glos znad Niemna* has been constantly harassed. In May 2005, a printing firm in Grodno refused to print its editions. The same printing company later published two fake issues of the newspaper, which contained government official position in the conflict with the Union of Poles in Belarus. The newspaper then submitted a petition to the police regarding the illegal use of the newspaper's name.

40. According to the Belarusian Association of Journalists, the state owned monopolist distributor Belposhta excluded 13 independent newspapers from the Subscription Catalogue for 2006. There is currently no alternative to the distribution system because at the beginning of 2005 all independent distributors which existed in Belarus were deprived of their licenses. Consequently, BAJ expresses its alarm that, since the beginning of this year, practically no independent newspaper will be able to reach its readers by means of State owned and private distribution companies functioning in the country.

41. Among the methods used to discriminate economically against inconvenient media outlets are police raids and tax inspections which become recently more common in Belarus. Apart from that, pressure has been exerted on advertisers to refrain from placing their ads in dissenting newspapers. The newspaper *Zhoda* stopped in effect its activities after an intrusion of police in its headquarter. On 24 March 2005, the police officials invaded and searched the premises without a warrant and some of the equipment was confiscated.

### **Administrative restrictions and obstacles to the functioning of the media**

42. Belarusian legislation allows for increased level of intrusion in the activities of the mass media. In particular, the Ministry of Information is given excessive authority to interfere with media. According to Article 16 of the Law on the Press and other Mass Media, for example, the Ministry can issue warnings, suspend or even close the newspapers for different administrative irregularities. The Ministry has the same power with regard to the content of a publication. This provision is enshrined in Article 5 and offers protection against defaming the President.

43. There have been numerous reports that the Ministry abuses the power given to it by the law and that oral reprimands, written warnings and even closure or suspension of media outlet are currently a sinister routine for Belarusian media. On 23 July 2004, for example, Belarusian authorities decided to close the Minsk office of the Russian TV station *Rossia*. They accused the TV station of broadcasting “biased reports” about an opposition demonstration two days earlier.

44. The activities of sanctioning media outlets, undertaken by the Ministry of Information, significantly intensified in the run up to the Parliamentary Elections and referendum held on 17 October 2004. At least 11 independent or pro-opposition newspapers were suspended between June and October for one to three months for bureaucratic reasons. These are some of them: *Rabochaya Solidarnost*, *Regionalnaya Gazeta*, *Regionalniye Vedomosti*, *Vremia*, *Narodni Predprinimatel*, *Navinki*, *Novaya Gazeta Smorgoni*, *Birzha Informaciji*. They were accused for failure to keep to regular publication dates, language rules or lack of registration certificates.

45. Adrian Severin, the UN Special Rapporteur on the Situation on Human Rights in Belarus condemned, in a report to the UN Commission on Human Rights in Geneva on 29 March 2005, the tendency of ‘mainstreaming of State Censorship’. He also stressed that 160 registered print media outlets had been shut down in the eight months preceding the elections and referendum of 17 October 2004.

46. One of the administrative requirements contrary to international norms and principles of freedom of the media is registration and re-registration of newspapers. According to the latest measure set up by the authorities, commercial and non-profit organizations are forbidden to use the words ‘national’ and ‘Belarusian’ in their names. Consequently, many publications will have to re-register. However, it is well known that the registration or re-registration procedure is one of the filters for “problematic” media.

### **Government control and censorship of the state media**

47. The state media are under severe government control and are subject to strict censorship. The state print and electronic media currently do not provide a balanced and impartial account of events in Belarus. Heavily subsidised state media do not allow for alternative views, nor do they provide for a platform of genuine public debate that is prerequisite for a democratic society.

### **Freedom of Information on the internet**

48. The NGO “Reporters without borders” mentioned Belarus among the “enemies of the Internet” in 2005. It is among a list of 15 countries, Burma, China, Cuba, Iran, Libya, the Maldives, Nepal, North Korea, Saudi Arabia, Syria, Tunisia, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Vietnam, which are called the harshest towards online freedom of expression and for censoring independent news websites and spying on Internet traffic to silence dissident voices.

49. Beltelecom is the only one central Internet Service Provider in Belarus. It is controlled by the Ministry of Communication. There are reported incidents of Internet blocking or filtering activities. *Digital Media News for Europe* affirmed that Beltelecom recently blocked access to both Belarusian and Russian sites.

### **SUPPORT FOR FOREIGN MEDIA TO BROADCAST TO BELARUS**

50. Given the dramatic deterioration of freedom of expression and independence of the media in Belarus, there have recently been numerous appeals from relevant NGOs as well as international organisations to support civil society by offering opportunities for alternative sources of information. Providing support for

foreign media to broadcast from outside to Belarus seems to be a way of compensating for the lack of impartial information about the events and the situation in the country.

51. The European Union initially reacted to the deplorable state of affairs regarding freedom of expression through granting a euro 138.000 contract to *Deutsche Welle* Radio to broadcast via radio and Internet into Belarus during one year. *Deutsche Welle* has already been broadcasting since October last year. It carries out 15 minute Russian language daily broadcasts Monday to Friday, which are intended to cover news and reports from inside Belarus on political, social and economic matters.

52. There are some issues concerning this initiative. Both EU MEPs and Belarusian Association of Journalists (BAJ) expressed concern over the use of the Russian language. BAJ insisted that the debate raised in Belarus on language of broadcasting (Russian instead of Belarusian) revealed the problem of a message. It asserted that the language issue discussion "has shown that really important (national democratic) audiences and "speakers" were excluded by the fact of Russian language broadcasting of *Deutsche Welle*".

53. Mrs Litvina, the President of BAJ stressed that reports about Belarus needed to be prepared by journalists from Belarus. She referred to recent reports by the German radio *Deutsche Welle* which, because of broadcasting in Russian instead of Belarusian, have been criticised by the intellectuals.

54. The European Union has recently initiated another project aiming at supporting broadcasting from the EU to Belarus. The Commission has called a tender for radio and television broadcasts and the creation of websites targeted specifically at Belarus. Two million euro are earmarked for this project which will have a duration of two years. Broadcasting was intended to begin in January 2006. However, the decision on the media company- winner of the tender- has not been made yet. According to Belarusian Association of Journalists the selection of the broadcaster is expected to be announced at the end of January.

55. Despite these initiatives BAJ affirmed that this was not an appropriate reaction to the alarming scale of the deterioration of freedom of speech in Belarus. Journalists call for long term strategies of support to broadcasting to Belarus. BAJ also expressed doubts that these stations would prove helpful with the view of offering public campaign space for the single democratic candidate as well as for the civil society.

## II. THE EUROPEAN CULTURAL CONVENTION OF THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

56. Since 1993, Belarus is a signatory party to the European Cultural Convention. At that time, Belarus was aspiring to a democratic transition and to accession to the Council of Europe. President Lukashenko took office in 1994. After the non-democratic referendum in Belarus in 1997, the Council of Europe reduced its contacts with representatives of the authorities in Belarus which also concerned the work under the European Cultural Convention.

57. While the Belarus Minister of Culture had participated in the Ministerial Conference in Wroclaw in 2004, the Belarus Sports Minister was declared a persona non grata by the European Union and was not invited to the Conference of Sports Ministers in 2004.

58. With regard to some inter-governmental steering committees of the Council of Europe in the area of culture, media and youth, the Belarus Ministry of Foreign Affairs sought representation. For meetings in 2005, the Ministry of Culture was represented in the CD-PAT, the Ministry of Education in the CD-ED, and Belarus State University in the CD-ESR.

59. At the same time, several non-governmental organisations are active in those areas in Belarus. By establishing contact with them, cultural co-operation may be put on a wider basis and may reach the people of Belarus in a better way. Through contacts with non-governmental organisations we had, we also learnt that such contacts would better protect individuals working for these organisations against intimidation, harassment or violence by the Lukashenko regime. Therefore, all organisations and all bodies of the Council of Europe should favour direct contacts with non-governmental organisations in this respect and set up specific assistance activities.



### III. ACADEMIC FREEDOM

60. In 2004, Belarusian authorities closed down the European Humanities University (EHU) based in Minsk. The University has functioned for over 12 years and has been the only independent university in Belarus. Reportedly, the official reason was that the government needed the facilities. However, according to other sources, the real reason was that the University were refusing governmental instructions. European Democrat Students, a student association, considers the shutdown of the EHU to be an unacceptable attack against the freedom of research and science.

61. European Humanities University has acquired the reputation of one of the most vibrant and forward-looking institutions of higher education not only in Belarus but also in the whole CIS region. It has been pursuing a strategy of cooperation with various international organizations and has been supported by several Western countries, e.g. France, Germany. EHU consisted of eight departments, including academic programs in humanities, foreign and classical languages, and modern and information technologies.

62. Since it was forced to cease almost all its activities in Minsk, the University moved to Vilnius in Lithuania in spring 2005. Now, the EHU functions as University in exile and continues to cooperate with international organizations to seek for support. In January 2006, The Nordic Council of Ministers (NCM) launched a project –Belarusian Higher Education for Democracy and Human Rights- that will be implemented in partnership with the EHU. The project will be co-financed by NCM and the European Commission and will aim at building an intellectual, political and civic leadership in Belarus committed to the values of democracy and human rights by providing high-quality higher education.

### IV. STUDENT OPPOSITION

63. Taciana Khoma, a student at the Belarusian State Economic University, has been recently expelled from the university. The official reason given by the Rector Vladimir Shimov was that the student had not reported her travel to the meeting of National Unions of Students in Europe held in France.

64. The National Unions of Students in Europe (ESIB) is the umbrella organization of 48 national unions of students from 36 countries. Its aim is to represent and promote the educational, social, economic and cultural interests of students at a European level towards all relevant international organizations. In France, on 11-13 November, the ESIB held its General Assembly and Taciana Khoma were elected among 7 members of the Executive Committee 2006.

65. The ESIB condemns the expulsion of Taciana Khoma and strongly believes that this is the violation of human rights to freely move and travel, as well as that this action has been taken for political reasons and the involvement of Taciana in this European student organisation.

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Secretaries to the committee: MM. Grayson, Ary, Dossow and Chahbazian