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European Parliament
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STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE PES CONGRESS ON BELARUS

Brussels, 24 April 2004

On 1 May, the European Union will be enlarged with ten new members. This historic achievement should not prevent us from looking beyond the new borders of the European Union.

After enlargement, the European Union will have new neighbours. These countries are often in a dire state when it comes to the development of democracy. In Belarus, President Lukashenka is tightening his grip in the run-up to parliamentary elections. Human rights are violated, the media are controlled by the state and the opposition is being intimidated and oppressed.

We, as European Socialists and Social Democrats, should not turn a blind eye to these worrying developments. We should give our full support to the Belarusian opposition in its courageous struggle against the regime and for democracy and we condemn the undemocratic regime. A united effort will have to be made involving all democratic forces in Belarus. We will develop new initiatives in Belarus at European level.

Our solidarity does not stop at our new borders.