



Brussels, 12.12.2017
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COMMISSION IMPLEMENTING DECISION

of 12.12.2017

**on the Annual Action Programme 2017 in favour of the Republic of Belarus to be
financed from the general budget of the European Union**

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THE EUROPEAN COMMISSION,

Having regard to the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union,

Having regard to Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 October 2012 on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union and repealing Council Regulation (EC, Euratom) No 1605/2002¹, and in particular Article 84(2) thereof,

Having regard to Regulation (EU) No 236/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 laying down common rules and procedures for the implementation of the Union's instruments for financing external action², and in particular Article 2(1) thereof,

Whereas:

- (1) The Commission has adopted the Multiannual Indicative Programme for the Republic of Belarus for the period 2014-2017³, points 1.2 and 4 of which provide for the following priorities: Local / Regional economic development and complementary support to civil society.
- (2) The objectives pursued by the Annual Action Programme to be financed under the European Neighbourhood Instrument⁴ are to establish a functional dialogue between the Government of Belarus and civil society organisations, which advances legislative initiatives, policy developments and decision-making that involves inputs from civil society members, enhancing governance principles of joint responsibility, inclusiveness, efficiency, transparency and accountability; to strengthen conditions for private sector-led growth by improving the business environment, upgrading innovation capacity of SMEs, strengthening institutional capacity to promote private investment, and improving MSME access to finance and fostering structural reforms; and to promote the transfer of best practices and encourage mutual understanding between European Union's and Belarus' societies.
- (3) The first action entitled “EU Good Governance Programme in Belarus” will enhance Belarusian citizens’ participation and voice in decision-making affecting their lives, advancing inclusive, accountable and responsive governance at the local, regional and national levels and reinforcing rule of law and access to justice practices; build an inclusive and enabling society where women, girls and young people are empowered and protected; and strengthen governance practices through partnership of civil society and the Government resulting in the advancement of rights of vulnerable families,

¹ OJ L 298, 26.10.2012, p. 1.

² OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 95.

³ Decision C(2014)5097, 23.07.2014. Pending the approval of the Single Support Framework 2017-2020.

⁴ Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument (OJ L 77, 15.3.2014, p. 27).

children, adolescents and young people. The action will be implemented under indirect management with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) and with the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

- (4) The second action entitled “Support to Business and Economic Development in Belarus” will reduce the administrative burden to businesses to comply with regulatory requirements and administrative procedures needed to conduct regular business and investment activities; streamline procedures related to export and import transactions and develop an effective market surveillance system based on the EU and international standards; improve the quality of dialogue with the private sector aimed at addressing core bottlenecks in the regulatory environment, finding mutually acceptable solutions, and joint monitoring over implementation of the agreed decisions; and strengthen Belarus' policy framework to steer the economy towards a more private-sector led sustainable economic model through greater efficiency and ultimately smaller size of the public sector. The action will be implemented under direct management through grants.
- (5) The third action entitled “MOST PHASE II” will support professional mobility of Belarussian citizens in the fields of science and technology, entrepreneurship and innovation, culture, education, health and others; facilitate the establishment of sustainable professional contacts between Belarusian participants and their counterparts in the European Union; and improve the understanding of the European Union and its Member States, to share EU best practice and values among Belarusian participants to the programme and the general public. The action will be implemented under direct management through procurement of services.
- (6) It is necessary to adopt a financing decision the detailed rules of which are set out in Article 94 of Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012⁵.
- (7) It is necessary to adopt a work programme for grants in accordance with Article 128(1) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 and in Article 188(1) of Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012. The work programme is set out in Annex II.
- (8) The Commission should entrust budget-implementation tasks under indirect management to the entities specified in Annex I to this Decision, subject to the conclusion of delegation agreements. In accordance with Article 60(1) and (2) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012, the authorising officer responsible needs to ensure that these entities guarantee a level of protection of the financial interests of the Union equivalent to that required when the Commission manages Union funds. These entities comply with the conditions of points (a) to (d) of the first subparagraph of Article 60(2) of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 and the supervisory and support measures are in place as necessary.
- (9) The authorising officer responsible should be able to award grants without a call for proposals only in the exceptional cases set out in Article 190 of Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012.
- (10) It is necessary to allow the payment of interest due for late payment on the basis of Article 92 of Regulation (EU, Euratom) No 966/2012 and Article 111(4) of Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012.

⁵ Commission Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 of 29 October 2012 on the rules of application of Regulation No 966/2012 of the European Parliament and of the Council on the financial rules applicable to the general budget of the Union (OJ L 362, 31.12.2012, p. 1).

- (11) Pursuant to Article 94(4) of Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012, any substantial change to a financing decision that has already been adopted should follow the same procedure as the initial decision. It is therefore appropriate that the Commission defines the changes to this Decision that are considered non substantial in order to ensure that any such changes can be adopted by the authorising officer responsible.
- (12) The measures provided for in this Decision are in accordance with the opinion of the European Neighbourhood Instrument Committee set up by Article 15 of Regulation (EU) No 232/2014.
- (13) The envisaged assistance to Belarus is deemed to strictly comply with the conditions and procedures set out by the EU restrictive measures concerning the said country.

HAS DECIDED AS FOLLOWS:

Article 1

Adoption of the programme

The Annual Action Programme 2017 in favour of the Republic of Belarus, as set out in the Annexes, is adopted.

The programme shall include the following actions:

- Annex 1: EU Good Governance Programme in Belarus;
- Annex 2: Support to Business and Economic Development in Belarus;
- Annex 3: MOST PHASE II.

Article 2

Financial contribution

The maximum contribution of the European Union for the implementation of the programme referred to in Article 1 is set at EUR 29 million and shall be financed from the general budget of the European Union for 2017 for an amount of:

- EUR 14.50 million from budget line 22 04 02 01;
- EUR 14.50 million from budget line 22 04 02 02;

The financial contribution provided for in the first paragraph may also cover interest due for late payment.

Article 3

Implementation modalities

Budget-implementation tasks under indirect management may be entrusted to the entities identified in Annex I, subject to the conclusion of the relevant agreements.

The elements required by Article 94(2) of Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 are set out in the Annexes to this Decision.

Grants may be awarded without a call for proposals by the authorising officer responsible in accordance with Article 190 of Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012.

Article 4

Non-substantial changes

Increases or decreases of up to EUR 10 million not exceeding 20 % of the contribution set by the first paragraph of Article 2, or cumulated changes to the allocations of specific actions not exceeding 20 % of that contribution, as well as extensions of the implementation period shall not be considered substantial within the meaning of Article 94(4) of Delegated Regulation (EU) No 1268/2012 provided that they do not significantly affect the nature and objectives of the actions.

The authorising officer responsible may adopt such non-substantial changes in accordance with the principles of sound financial management and proportionality.

Done at Brussels, 12.12.2017

For the Commission

Johannes HAHN

Member of the Commission