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## **Belarus: Commission experts in Minsk for technical talks on energy, transport and environment**

Experts from the European Commission will meet their Belarusian counterparts on 28-30 January in Minsk to discuss technical matters relating to the energy and transport situation in the EU and Belarus. A technical meeting between environment experts will take place on 7 February in Brussels.

Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, said: *"The holding of technical meetings between experts of both sides could lay the ground for substantial cooperation in the framework of a full partnership, provided that Belarus takes steps toward democratisation. A full partnership would allow us to significantly increase assistance to Belarus and to boost, among others, economic and environmental development which would improve Belarusians' quality of life."*

Commissioner Ferrero-Waldner added: *"We are satisfied with the early release of three political prisoners in the past days. And we hope that the other political prisoners will be released soon as well."*

To make the people of Belarus more aware of the advantages of EU assistance and the benefits of a closer relationship, the European Commission has issued a "non-paper" in November 2006 with the title: '[What the European Union could bring to Belarus](#)  [32 KB] '.

Currently, EU assistance to Belarus is concentrated in a limited number of areas, including civil society and the social domain. Higher education is a special priority for assistance, and the Commission also provides support to the country's independent media.

Further information:

[http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/country-cooperation/belarus/belarus\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/where/neighbourhood/country-cooperation/belarus/belarus_en.htm)