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INFORMATION NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Council

Subject: The situation of the Belarusian language and culture
- *Information from the Polish delegation*

Delegations will find attached an information note from the Polish delegation on the above subject, which has been put on the agenda under ‘Any other business’ of the next Education, Youth, Culture and Sport Council meeting of 15-16 May 2023.

The situation of the Belarusian language and culture

EYCS Council, 16 May 2023

Non-governmental organisations working for the cause of a free Belarus draw attention to the problem of the systematic destruction of the Belarusian language and culture by Alexander Lukashenko's regime. Poland has received a letter on this matter from a representative of the Belarusian Youth Hub and the National Embassy of Belarus in Poland.

The Belarusian Youth Hub is one of many Belarusian non-governmental organisations operating in Poland that identify with the democratic opposition. The National Embassy of Belarus is an entity project related to the activities of the Belarusian opposition, aiming to gain support for the democratic choice of Belarusians among representatives of state administration, non-governmental organisations, and civil society in selected countries worldwide.

The goal of destroying Belarusian culture and language and falsifying history by the regime is to convince the population of Belarus that they are part of the Russian nation. Education in the Belarusian language has been limited, and the publication of books in Belarusian has been curtailed. Non-governmental organisations promoting the Belarusian language and culture have been outlawed, and activity in unregistered organisations is punishable by imprisonment. Citizens are under surveillance, and cultural institution employees are harassed or forced to leave the country. Belarusian activists warn that these actions threaten not only Belarusians but also the European Union and its values.

In Poland, there is just one Belarusian-language television station, Belsat, but its capabilities are limited, whereas greater support is necessary. In the opinion of the representative of the Belarusian non-governmental organisations, the European Union should take action against the destruction of Belarusian culture by developing a joint action plan. Belarusian non-governmental organisations operating in exile are ready to substantively support such work. Poland seeks to raise awareness among Member States about the situation in Belarus and the threats to the national and linguistic identity of Belarusians. The possibilities of support in this regard should be considered.