



[Shaping Europe Pragmatically](#)

# Thoroughly European

Belarus is Currently Dependent on Moscow – but the Democratic  
Opposition Wants to Lead the Country towards the West

[Jakob Wöllenstein](#)

The Lukashenko regime is tying Belarus ever closer to Russia, but the democratic forces seek an orientation towards the West – and are even talking about joining the EU. Although that sounds utopian at the moment, in the long term an alignment of the country with the European Union would be in our interests, too. For this reason, we need a mental “eastward enlargement” – and Belarus is surprisingly European in many respects.

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In June 2024, when more than 400 million EU citizens are called on to vote in the European elections, this will in fact be just over half of the people who live on the continent of Europe. The rest of the European population is either too young or lives in a country outside the European Union, i.e. either in a country that has just left the EU, or in one of the few countries that do not want to join it under any circumstances, or in one of the many that cannot wait to join. Or in Belarus.

While the country between the Dnieper and the Bug under the rule of Aleksandr Lukashenko is now more isolated from the West than ever before and is being sucked ever deeper into the Russian orbit, the democratic forces in exile issued a remarkable statement in August 2023 at their conference on the third anniversary of the fraudulent 2020 elections: they adopted a Declaration of Future Membership of Belarus in the European Union<sup>1</sup> and announced their intention to lead their country out of all Russian-dominated alliance systems. Since the 2020 presidential elections which were documented as having been stolen by the regime from Sviatlana Tsikhanouskaya, the actual winner, the democratic forces have been claiming to represent the majority of the Belarusian people. Now their movement is making a clear break with both the regime’s long-standing seesaw politics and any dreams that the country might become a neutral island in the midst of heavy geopolitical storms.

As expected, reactions to the declaration were mixed. Some see it as pure fantasy – the final decoupling of the “exile opposition” from the

realities back home. Others congratulated the democratic forces on finally showing a visionary direction instead of trying to pander to public opinion, which has been shaped by propaganda and fear.<sup>2</sup>

As is well known, the EU Treaty stipulates that “any European state” that respects the common values can apply to become a member of the Union (Article 49). Yet although Belarus is labelled “*Europe’s* last dictatorship”, all kinds of statements regularly seem to suggest that Belarus and Europe have nothing to do with each other or are even mutually exclusive opposites. On a mental map, especially for people in the West, “Europe” often ends at the EU’s external border. But since any (future) enlargement of the EU requires the consent of all other members, it is crucial to work on a “mental eastward enlargement” even now so as to firmly anchor countries such as Moldova, Ukraine and indeed Belarus in our shared European consciousness. Belarus in particular is thoroughly European – geographically, historically and culturally – and in the event of a democratic transition there are many ways in which it would be a partner country that could benefit the EU.

### **Geographically Right at the Centre**

The attribute “European” is often associated with the idea of a specific cultural area with a high level of cultural advancement to which many consider it desirable to belong.<sup>3</sup> The question of the geographical boundary of Europe, particularly towards Asia, has been disputed

for centuries, but there is widespread agreement that the line should be drawn somewhere along the Urals, i.e. almost 3,500 kilometres east of Brussels.<sup>4</sup> This means that 40 per cent of Europe is geographically located inside the Russian Federation – which puts Belarus at the centre of the continent. In fact, a whole range of different places consider themselves to be the centre of Europe, but there are actually five methods of calculation that place this point in the Republic of Belarus (or in the immediate vicinity, in Poland or Lithuania). Belarus is perhaps also particularly “European” in that it is by far the largest landlocked country on the continent – Europe surrounded by Europe, with no “exit” to the oceans.<sup>5</sup>

## After the Mongol invasion, the Belarusian lands were reorganised.

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### Deeply Intertwined Historically

Belarusian historians often trace the origins of the country’s statehood back to the early medieval principalities of Polazk and Turau. Though highly independent, both belonged to the Kyivan Rus’, a multi-ethnic empire presumably founded by Scandinavians, which was in close if not always conflict-free contact with the Eastern Roman Empire. In addition to trade and cultural exchange, it was via this line that Christianity came to Eastern Europe – the Belarusians emphasise that they were converted directly via Byzantium, without any “detour” via Kyiv.<sup>6</sup> After the Mongol invasion had accelerated the disintegration of this empire, the Belarusian (and today western Ukrainian) lands were reorganised and became part of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania. Starting from the region between Vilnius and Navahrudak, this state saw a breathtaking rise in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century under Grand Duke Gediminas (Belarusian: Hiedzimin) to become a major European power, thanks to a mixture of alliances, guarantees of protection and conquests. Gediminas’ grandson Jogaila was baptised a Catholic,

and through his marriage to the Krakow princess Jadwiga in 1386 he founded the line of Jagiellons who were to rule the Kingdom of Poland for two centuries, in close alliance with Lithuania.<sup>7</sup> After a decisive joint victory over the Teutonic Order in 1410, the Grand Duchy actually became the largest state in Europe, with today’s Belarus at its centre – and despite sometimes devastating



wars, mostly against Muscovy, the country saw an astonishing period of prosperity in the centuries that followed.

The Grand Duchy of Lithuania brought together a multitude of peoples, languages and religions in an area almost the size of modern-day Germany and France combined. While the rural

population in what is now Belarus was predominantly Ruthenian, the towns, many of which were founded based on the Magdeburg rights, saw a mixed population including Balts, Jews, Poles, Germans and Russians.<sup>8</sup> As an important centre of Jewish life, the capital Vilnius was nicknamed the “Jerusalem of the North”, while some 300,000 Tatar Muslims settled in the



Unholy alliance: Aleksandr Lukashenko (right) is a key ally of Russian President Vladimir Putin (left) and his regime. The Belarusian dictator has led his country into complete dependence on its large neighbour Russia. Photo: © Alexander Demianchuk, AP, picture alliance.

Grand Duchy, too. Catholic steeples towered next to Orthodox ones, and at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century even a unique crossover denomination emerged. The “Greek Catholic Church”, loyal to the Pope but orthodox, advanced – albeit under state pressure – to become a kind of “national religion” of the Belarusians and western Ukrainians for around 150 years. At the same time, the Reformation also swept through large parts of the country, particularly in what is now Belarus, but this remained largely confined to elite circles. Theological disputes tended to be settled with pen and parchment rather than with firebrand and pitchfork. Latin was the main language of debate, as well as increasingly Polish. But also Ruthenian, the “old Belarusian” vernacular played a key role. For example the “Statutes of Lithuania” which introduced an early modern rule of law in the 16<sup>th</sup> century were written in Ruthenian.

### Three uprisings against the Russian occupiers ended in disaster.

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Links with other European states ranged from trade – there were branches of the Hanseatic League in Polazk and Wizebsk – and culture to the highest levels of politics. Poland and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, whose union was elevated to a “real union” in 1569, formed an aristocratic republic with an elective monarchy, with kings appointed from France, Sweden, Saxony and Hungary over the centuries. Queen consort Bona Sforza brought a large number of Italian artists and architects into the country, and the Renaissance arrived, bringing forth prominent figures such as the great humanist and printer Francysk Skaryna. The buildings and facades of the subsequent Baroque period still dominate many towns in Belarus to this day and are typical of the historical centre of Vilnius, too. Shortly before the forced partition by Russia, Prussia and Austria, the Polish-Lithuanian Parliament passed Europe’s first modern constitution in 1791 – four months earlier than

revolutionary France. In some respects, this old “Lithuania” was a prototype of today’s European Union – at a time when absolute monarchies ruled the roost in Western Europe.

### At Ground Zero of Europe’s Major Disasters

When talking about “European imperialism”, many people will probably think of Columbus and distant overseas colonies. Yet Belarus experienced this “phenomenon” at the very heart of the continent after its conquest by Russia at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>9</sup> Right at the start of this period, Napoleon’s “Grande Armée” also marched through northern Belarus twice in the course of its “Russian campaign”, inflicting considerable devastation upon the country. Three uprisings against the Russian occupiers over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century ended in disaster – the Tsar imposed severe repression in areas such as language, economy and culture, cancelling the old legal statutes and having all town halls across the country blown up to symbolically erase any memory of independence and self-government. The restrictions were not relaxed until shortly before the First World War, which initially ended in the East with a victory for the Central Powers and the peace treaty of Brest-Litovsk, named after the Belarusian city. Shortly afterwards, under German occupation, the Belarusians proclaimed their own People’s Republic.<sup>10</sup>

Unlike many other newly established or re-established states in Eastern Central Europe, however, this was short-lived. Belarus was divided after the Polish-Soviet War, with the west becoming part of Poland and the east becoming a founding member of the USSR as the “Belarusian Soviet Republic” in 1922.<sup>11</sup> After a few “liberal” years, this in turn brought the “Great Terror” upon its peoples, with tens of thousands of representatives of national elites – including countless Belarusians – being specifically targeted alongside supposed opponents of the regime.

Finally, Belarus became a central arena for the great catastrophes of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. No other country paid a higher price in blood relative to the size of its population during the Second

World War – up to a third of the population lost their lives, not least as a result of the Holocaust: before the war, Jews had made up the majority or largest ethnic group in Minsk and many other cities. The war, German extermination policies and Stalin’s purges caused irreparable damage to the fabric of the country’s traditional linguistic, ethnic and religious diversity. Many Poles were expelled from Belarus as a result of their state’s westward shift, with new settlers arriving from other Soviet republics. Accelerated by industrial growth and intense urbanisation, as well as a widespread stigma against the Belarusian language, which was regarded as rural and “backward”, the country became more Russified than ever before. Yet for many, these years and the 1970s in particular were a period of prosperity. Belarus became the “workbench” of the USSR: US historian Timothy Snyder concludes that no country came as close to realising the “Soviet ideal” as Belarus.<sup>12</sup>

### **Elected president in 1994, Aleksandr Lukashenko was never particularly interested in either democracy or national culture.**

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After the fall of Communism, there was often talk of the former Communist countries “returning to Europe”. This solidified a West-centred view suggesting that the Eastern Bloc and the Soviet Union had nothing to do with “Europe”. Yet the central pioneers of Communism were all European – like Marx and Engels, Rosa Luxemburg, Gramsci, Trotsky and Lenin. Moscow effectively put the political goal of a “world revolution” on the back burner in favour of achieving the greatest possible advance in Europe. The notion of modernisation also involved the idea of “catching up” with Europe, which is why Snyder comes to the conclusion that Russia has “never been as European” as it was during the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> It seems like an irony of history that the dissolution of this – cynically

speaking – rather different “European integration project” was decided in Belarus of all places, on 8 December 1991 with the Belovezha Accords.

### **The Search for New Stability**

Independent Belarus was the first successor state of the Soviet Union to sign the Charter of Paris in 1992. A phase of rapprochement with the West culminated in a state visit by US President Bill Clinton in spring 1994, and the new constitution declared foreign policy neutrality. Domestically, the new-found freedom went hand in hand with a wave of national reawakening, also in the area of language policy. The Belarusian language, which was now strongly promoted, is similar to Ukrainian and related to Polish and Russian. But it had also been in competition with these languages for centuries, having been heavily influenced and suppressed by Russian in particular since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. In contrast to Russian, however, Belarusian contains hardly any loan words from Turkic languages or Mongolian, but instead numerous words from German, Yiddish and Lithuanian.<sup>14</sup> One distinctive feature is that it is written in several alphabets. In addition to the Latin and Cyrillic alphabets, which as we know are based on the Greek alphabet, Jews also once wrote Belarusian using the Hebrew alphabet and Tatars using the Arabic alphabet.

Elected to the newly created office of president in the summer of 1994, Aleksandr Lukashenko was never particularly interested in either democracy or national culture (and this remains the case to this day). He ushered in re-Russification, rules in an authoritarian neo-Soviet style and led the country back towards Moscow – almost to the point of a union of states. From then on, relations with the West ran in a series of political thaws and ice ages that coincided with the cycles of internal electoral fraud and repression. Yet while maintaining membership in Russian-dominated alliance systems – the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), the Union State, the Collective Security Treaty Organization (CSTO) and the Eurasian Economic Union – Minsk also joined the EU’s Eastern Partnership programme



in 2009. After the shock of the annexation of Crimea, some hoped that the eternal back and forth could be overcome in favour of Belarus' self-proclaimed positioning as "the Switzerland of Eastern Europe". In the course of the Ukraine

conflict, Minsk acted as a "pillar of regional security" through mediation, seeking to diversify its options through a multi-vectoral foreign policy as well as improved relations with the West, Ukraine and countries such as China. While



Face to face with the forces of the regime: After the stolen election of 2020, there was a large wave of protests in Belarus. Photo: © Sergei Bobylev, dpa, TASS, picture alliance.

The population made the most of the opportunities offered by the thaw to strengthen business and civil society, but also simply to travel – no other country in the world had such a high quota of Schengen visas as Belarus during this period.<sup>16</sup>

### **The majority of under 45-year-old Belarusians believe that Western democracy is the best system.**

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Surveys on geopolitical attitudes had long consistently shown that a majority prefer not to make a geopolitical choice between East and West, but when faced with the question of “Russia or the EU”, a majority have been in favour of Russia. This is de facto a recognition of reality since Belarus is closely linked to its eastern neighbour, but the figure has decreased steadily in recent years. While in 2018 around 60 per cent still preferred a union with Russia over an alliance with the West – of which only five per cent wanted to become part of Russia – this figure had fallen to less than 40 per cent by the end of 2020. At the same time, in the face of the crackdown on protests following the rigged presidential elections, the pro-European vector shot to first place for the first and only time to date.

#### **2020 as the Culmination and Turning Point**

Lukashenko’s opportunistic seesaw politics always served more than anything else to secure his own rule, and in the 2020 presidential elections he demonstrated that he was prepared to subordinate everything else to this goal. For the first time, candidates from the centre of the system dared to enter the race and a majority of people believed they could lead their country successfully. When this choice was clumsily

giving somewhat greater emphasis to European heritage, internal liberalisation remained modest, though it did reach the point that Russia replaced Belarus as “Europe’s last dictatorship” in 2018 according to the Freedom House index.<sup>15</sup>



stolen from them, they took to the streets in their hundreds of thousands. They did not initially do this in the name of geopolitics: in contrast to the Ukrainian Euromaidan, no EU flags flew over Minsk or other Belarusian cities. Instead, the protesters chose the old symbol of the republic to demand their rights – the white-red-white flag. Democratic forces in exile today often use the term “new Belarus” to describe their vision of a future democratic country. Yet the shift away from post-Soviet paternalistic attitudes towards a free, self-determined existence began much earlier and merely found its most visible expression in 2020. Surveys show that from 2010 to 2016, the share of those in favour of the status quo compared to those who want social change shifted from 48:41 to 25:67.<sup>17</sup> A closer look reveals an enormous gap between the generations, even compared to other post-Soviet countries.<sup>18</sup> This begins approximately with people born in 1975 and then increases in both directions.

People born after the end of the Soviet Union are three times more likely to welcome its demise than those aged over 60. Young people get their news online and watch Hollywood movies, while older people watch state television news and Soviet films. The contrast is most obvious when it comes to the political system: a clear majority of under 45-year-olds believe that Western democracy is the best system – as many as 60 per cent of those under 30. Not even one in ten of this generation is in favour of the Soviet system. These figures are reversed among senior citizens.

On the one hand, it was Lukashenko himself who put a geopolitical spin on the developments in 2020, demonstrating which way to turn in order to push through a rigged election. Moscow assured him of loans and showed the demonstrators where the perhaps decisive red line was: there was to be no storming of administrative buildings, otherwise the Russians threatened to provide “administrative assistance”. The suppression of protests set in motion the massive repression that continues to this day, accompanied by an exodus of (not only) liberal elites and a sanctions duel with the country’s Western-oriented neighbours. Meanwhile, the groups that

previously supported the peaceful protests are now continuing their work in forced exile, which they have mostly found in the West.

Even standing up for democracy – a form of government derived from ancient Greece – can be regarded as a “European” phenomenon. While the regimes in Minsk and Moscow endeavour – more or less<sup>19</sup> – to maintain a democratic facade, Belarusian civil society and the democracy movement are actually breathing life into the concept with a creative variety of initiatives. Many experts agree that the experience of community in confronting a state that resorts to brute force has brought about a pivotal change of awareness in Belarusian society. Some even talk of a historic breakthrough in the consolidation of the Belarusian national identity. People are united in their desire for a different way of life and they know that, unlike people in Russia so far, they proved in 2020 that they are in the democratic majority.

## A significant proportion of the Belarusian population is still oriented towards Russia.

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### The Need for an Attractive, Credible Alternative

Nonetheless, the democratic majority against Lukashenko three years ago does not automatically mean that a majority are in favour of an EU perspective today. As mentioned above, the preference for Europe over pro-Russian attitudes only briefly prevailed in surveys on geopolitical orientation in autumn 2020. The pro-Russian stance has “recovered” since then and is now around the 2019 level of approximately 50 per cent – compared to just over 25 per cent of pro-European responses.

Given the country’s repression, state surveillance and omnipresent anti-Western propaganda, such survey results are neither entirely surprising nor fully representative. Official channels present

the West as decadent, aggressive and imperialist, while Russia is a “big brother” whose aid loans since 2020 are supposedly not designed to keep a dictator in power but to help the country in difficult times – and its soldiers are supposedly protecting Belarus from a NATO attack. Independent news is difficult to access and its consumption is often penalised. Cross-border contacts are decreasing because travelling to the West is severely restricted, partly due to the tight visa regulations of the latter, and the language barrier is also growing as the regime is cutting back on English lessons in schools. People of a pro-European orientation are therefore under-represented in the surveys: they are more cautious, or have left the country in large numbers, and are therefore not able to act as “influencers” within their social setting.

### **A strong, democratic Belarus would also be a promising partner for the EU.**

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Yet the sobering finding remains that a significant proportion of the Belarusian population, especially the state elite, is currently oriented towards Russia – for various reasons. In qualitative interviews (conducted before 2020), frequently cited arguments included the common language and closely related culture, the shared history of the Second World War and the Soviet era, and also “Slavic values”.<sup>20</sup> Many Belarusians have Russian family connections, watch Russian media or have worked in Russia, so they do not equate the country with the Putin system. In the economy, which was already heavily dependent on Russia for its energy supply, for example, adaptation to sanctions is creating additional path dependencies – up to 85 per cent of Belarusian exports currently go through or to Russia – and jobs are dependent on the Russian market. Last but not least, the example of Ukraine is acting as a deterrent: the latter is now seen to be paying for its westward orientation with war and territorial losses. Even those who condemn this might come to the sobering

conclusion that it is better to keep your head down in Russia’s shadow than to throw yourself into “geopolitical adventures”.

But this is exactly where the democratic forces come in with their desire for an EU perspective – not in spite of the fact that all developments in their home country are pointing in the opposite direction, but precisely because of it. They firmly believe that the old Belarusian dream of remaining an island of neutrality in the midst of severe geopolitical storms has irretrievably gone, as clearly shown by the war.

By providing Moscow with comprehensive support for the invasion of Ukraine, the Minsk regime has unambiguously sided with the aggressor, having previously erased the nominal neutrality clause from its constitution. Not only has it isolated itself from all its other neighbours, it is also tragically promoting a neo-imperial campaign of subjugation that by its very nature also threatens Belarus as a cultural nation. As such, internal Russification is in full swing, with Russian nuclear missiles in Belarus securing Moscow’s military access. Yet if the alliance with Russia means shared guilt in the aggression, isolation and self-destruction, and neutrality is not an option – Russia in particular will not accept the latter – the European path is perspectively the only reasonable alternative.

The democratic forces are aware that a radical change in the geopolitical situation is required before a government in Minsk can ever submit a formal application for EU membership. Russia would need to be preoccupied with itself after losing the war, while Belarus would have to undergo a democratic transformation. Yet the democratic forces are working towards precisely this scenario, which would also be in the interests of the country’s European neighbours. Today’s expression of the EU perspective is intended to vividly emphasise that Belarus would not be on its own in such a scenario. The European Union could, it is hoped, reach out at such a historic moment with offers of close cooperation, investment and a package of stabilisation measures in the economic, security

and energy sectors. If this were to happen, there would very likely be a shift in public opinion in the country, too.

A strong, democratic Belarus would also be a promising partner for the EU, and in view of its high level of education, promising economic sectors such as IT and electromobility, a comparatively well-functioning administration, moderate levels of corruption and a strong sustainability record, it would be an attractive candidate for membership in the long term, potentially also providing key impetus for a – currently utopian – democratic restart in Russia itself. The strategic question for the EU is therefore whether it wants to accept the challenge of offering the people of Belarus an alternative of this kind. In any case, the EU faces the task of having to advance significantly if it is to remain capable of geopolitical action, accommodate the countries already in the “waiting room” – from Albania to Ukraine – and effectively convey a sense of stability, both on the continent and beyond.

With regard to Belarus, however, the initial priority for today is to think of the country as being part of the “European family” and to communicate this clearly to the people and relevant target groups in Belarus. At best, this can serve to initiate preparations – even today – in the form of visible, concrete steps of support that deepen and stabilise cooperation between the EU and (pro-democratic) Belarus. This includes dialogue formats, improving the framework conditions for Belarusian companies and preserving freedom of travel in order to convey a sense of welcome to the population at large.

*– translated from German –*

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- 1 Democratic Forces of Belarus 2023: Declaration of Future Membership of Belarus in the European Union, Conference “New Belarus 2023”, 11 Aug 2023, in: <https://bit.ly/3r44nka> [8 Sep 2023].
- 2 Current opinion polls show around 25 per cent in favour of the EU and 50 per cent in favour of Russia.
- 3 In the Balkans and Eastern Europe, for example, the prefix “EURO-...” is often used to advertise products and services.
- 4 A recent expedition to demarcate Europe from Asia took place in 2010, see Chibilev, A.A. 2010: Первые Уточнения Границы Европа-Азия (First clarification of the Europe-Asia border), Orenburg Regional Department of the Russian Geographical Society, in: <https://bit.ly/3LgH11L> [8 Sep 2023].
- 5 Europe has 15 landlocked countries. Hungary, the second largest, is less than half the size of Belarus.
- 6 Arlou, Uladzimir / Herasimovich, Zmicier 2018: Faszination Belarus, Vilnius, p. 37.
- 7 Nowadays, the word “Lithuania” refers to the Baltic republic of the same name. Historically and as used in this article, the word refers to the multi-ethnic Grand Duchy.
- 8 From a modern perspective: Belarusians, (western) Ukrainians and various Baltic tribes that either no longer exist in such diversity or, according to today's understanding, have been absorbed under the term *Lietuvai* (Baltic Lithuanians).
- 9 Relations with Poland, both before and after, were not easy either. Critical historians in Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine see a colonialist attitude on the part of the Polish state, leading to such events as the Khmelnytsky Uprising of 1648 and also gaining a foothold in the inter-war period. To this day, Russian and Belarusian regime propaganda argues that the Tsarist Empire liberated Belarus from the yoke of Polish rule.
- 10 This is still a point of reference for nationally and democratically minded Belarusians today.
- 11 Dornfeldt, Matthias / Seewald, Enrico 2019: Die Beziehungen zwischen Deutschland und Belarus 1916 bis 1925, Vilnius.
- 12 Snyder, Timothy 2011: Bloodlands. Europe between Hitler and Stalin, Munich.
- 13 Ibid.
- 14 Some estimates put the number of German words in the language at up to 1,000, especially in areas such as trade, crafts and the military.
- 15 Freedom House 2018: Freedom in the World 2018 Scores, in: <https://bit.ly/3sMjRtG> [8 Sep 2023].
- 16 Ivanova, Antonia 2019: Литва – самая лояльная к белорусам по выдаче шенгенских виз (Lithuania is most loyal to Belarusians in issuing Schengen visas), Delfi, in: <https://bit.ly/487JyoD> [8 Sep 2023]; Schengen Visa Statistics 2018: 2018 Schengen visa statistics by third country, in: <https://bit.ly/3P7PIMN> [8 Sep 2023].

- 17 Shelest, Oksana 2020: Revolution in Belarus – Faktoren und Werteorientierungen, Belarus-Analysen 53, 21 Dec 2020, p. 2, in: <https://bit.ly/3sQVivr> [8 Sep 2023].
- 18 O’Loughlin, John/ Toal, Gerard/ Bakke, Kristin 2020: Is Belarus in the midst of a generational upheaval? Global Voices, 17 Sep 2020, in: <https://bit.ly/3Ety410> [8 Sep 2023].
- 19 Peskov does not even claim this anymore. Instead, he speaks of a costly bureaucracy. Krumbeck, Victoria 2023: “Rote Linie”: Putin flirtet in Russland mit dem Übergang zur “offenen Diktatur”, Frankfurter Rundschau, 21 Aug 2023, in: <https://bit.ly/465afZ9> [8 Sep 2023].
- 20 Yet the 2020 protests were also predominantly Russian-speaking, and five Slavic countries are members of the EU.