

EU Suspends Sanction Against Belarus Minister for Regional Talks

By [The Moscow Times](#)

June 25, 2013

The  Moscow Times

LUXEMBOURG — The Belarussian foreign minister will be allowed to visit Brussels next month for EU talks about relations with its former Soviet neighbors after his visa restrictions are suspended, EU foreign ministers said.

Vladimir Makei is under EU sanctions, including a ban on travel to the bloc, because of concerns over human rights and democracy in Belarus.

But the restrictions will be suspended on Tuesday, EU foreign ministers said Monday at a meeting in Luxembourg, until at least October.

Diplomats said that there was no change in how the European Union viewed political developments in Minsk, but that the 27 EU governments wanted Belarus to attend talks later this year on democratic reforms in the region.

The European Union is planning a summit in November with leaders from several of its eastern neighbors — Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine — and foreign ministers are due to prepare the talks next month in Brussels.

The EU wants to work out how to speed up democratic reforms and bring the countries closer to the EU.

Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko is seen as a pariah in the West for his treatment of political opponents, many of whom have been rounded up and jailed.

A crackdown after the 2010 election prompted the European Union to impose travel bans and asset freezes on the president and his inner circle.

"The EU maintains its policy of critical engagement with Belarus, including its policy of sanctions, with a view to furthering the respect for human rights, the rule of law and democratic principles in Belarus," the ministers said.

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