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Parliamentary elections in Belarus were neither free nor democratic

The European Green Party has expressed disappointment that, according to international election observers, the parliamentary elections held in Belarus on September 28th in no way lived up to international democratic standards, in spite of some minor improvements.

EGP Co-Spokesperson Ulrike Lunacek said: "These elections were a great opportunity for the Belarus authorities to show that they had made real progress towards genuine democracy and so a better relationship with the EU was now possible. Unfortunately, the preliminary report of the election observers from the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) says that although the actual voting process was generally well conducted, the vote count was not carried out in a fair or transparent way. Not only were OSCE monitors prevented or in some way impeded from observing the vote count in 35% of cases, but the count was assessed as bad or very bad in 48% of those polling stations that were visited. These elections have clearly shown that the government of President Alexander Lukashenko can still not be regarded, in any meaningful sense, as being democratic and it is vital that the EU maintains its pressure on the Belarus government so that they make real improvements in terms of respect for the democratic and human rights of the people of Belarus. However, it is also important that the EU finds ways of supporting the many people in Belarus, particularly young people, who are enthusiastic about a better relationship with the EU. "

Senator Deirdre De Burca, of the Irish Green Party, was Ireland's official representative in the OSCE Observer Delegation. Senator De Burca said: "At the ten polling stations that I visited with a fellow OSCE observer, we were met with a great degree of courtesy and co-operation and the mechanics of the voting process seemed to work reasonably well. However, the real problems started when the votes were being counted because we were prevented from closely observing the counting process and we were not given any of the information we needed to make a proper assessment of

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how satisfactory the process was. In short, there was a total lack of transparency and any type of meaningful oversight of the vote count was impossible."
