

The Heinrich Böll Foundation in Warsaw would like to invite you
to a debate in the series

Europe after the Caucasus conflict:

Belarus - lost chance for change?

14th October 2008, time: 18.30-20.30

Conference Centre Zielna, Zielna Street 37

Despite the political system in Belarus being far from democratic, consecutive **elections** awaken hope of democratic standards being introduced and of the **Belarusian opposition** becoming stronger.

Prior to the elections, the general situation was full of contradictory signals – on the one hand we observed signs of the authoritarian system loosening its hold, such as the freeing of political prisoners, but on the other, the opposition forces experienced **rising repression**. Without Moscow's political and financial support (which could have negative and even catastrophic consequences for the Belarusian economy), President Lukashenko has changed direction to a gradual (or perhaps illusory) **opening up to the European Union**. In reply, the EU is considering lifting the sanctions against Belarus. The first ministerial level meetings have also taken place between Poland and Belarus. The **Georgia conflict** changed the West's outlook on the whole post-soviet region, and the EU's (and the USA's) foreign policy will be influenced by the outcome of the Caucasus conflict.

The parliamentary elections of 28 September, their outcome and consequences for Belarusian society and for the development of EU – Belarus relations will be at the centre of our debate. As a starting point, the debate will take the **analyses** of V.Silitski and A.Wilson concerning the state of Belarusian internal and foreign policy, which have been commissioned by the Heinrich Böll Foundation.

This debate is part of the „Europe after the Caucasus conflict” series of debates. The next meeting will take place **4 November** and will be on the subject of **Polish and Ukrainian perspectives** on the Georgia conflict.

Speakers:

- **Vitali Silitski**, Belarusian Institute for Strategic Studies
- **Andrew Wilson**, European Council on Foreign Relations
- **Paweł Wołowski**, Centre for Eastern Studies

Moderator:

Prof. Wawrzyniec Konarski – Warsaw School of Social Sciences and Humanities,
University of Warsaw

The conference will be held in **English and Polish** with simultaneous translation. We invite you to join us for a glass of wine after the event.

Please **confirm your participation** in the event and, if necessary, the need for childcare, either by e-mail (hbs@boell.pl) or by telephone (022 594 23 33).