

EU Expands Sanctions on Belarus

May 23, 2011

The  **Moscow Times**

BRUSSELS — The European Union toughened its sanctions against Belarus on Monday, extending asset freezes and travel restrictions to 13 more officials in response to the jailing of Andrei Sannikov and other opposition figures.

Sannikov of the Charter 97 rights group was sentenced on May 14 to five years in prison for organizing mass disturbances. His wife was given a two-year suspended sentence two days later.

On Friday, a Belarussian court also gave suspended two-year prison terms to two politicians who ran against President Alexander Lukashenko in a disputed election last December.

Two other presidential candidates, Nikolai Statkevich and Dmitry Uss, are also on trial over a protest in Minsk after Lukashenko's re-election, criticized by observers as fraudulent.

The EU said the names of those added to the sanctions list would be published Tuesday. The bloc has already imposed a travel ban on Lukashenko and about 150 of his close political associates following his crackdown after the December vote.

Foreign ministers of France, Germany and Poland said this month that the EU planned further sanctions targeting Lukashenko and firms that finance his government. They mentioned no names but large state-owned firms had been thought to be likely targets.

An EU statement made no mention of sanctions on any firms.

Russia, which hopes to buy more than \$7 billion worth of Belarussian assets as it helps Minsk tackle a currency crisis, said Saturday it was against tougher EU sanctions against Belarussian firms, and that these would be counterproductive.

Lithuania, concerned that economic sanctions against Belarus would only help Moscow increase its influence, said it was against imposing economic sanctions.

Original url: <https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2011/05/23/eu-expands-sanctions-on-belarus-a7145>