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Rappresentanza locale dell'Unione Europea  
delegata dalla Presidenza Olandese

**PRESS RELEASE**

EU HOMs in Minsk on Tuesday, 21 December, paid a visit to the Independent Institute of Socio-Economic and Political Studies (IISEPS). They met with Director Prof. Oleg Manaev and his staff and learned with concern that the Institute is under inspection by the authorities.

No specific reasons are known for the ongoing inspection that seems to follow a predetermined pattern politically motivated of harassment on NGOs, media and analytical institutions not linked with the Government. The IISEPS is an internationally respected center that played an important role in providing free and independent data in the run up to Parliamentary elections and the referendum.

EU HOMs deplore any action to put further restrictions to the activity of the Institute of Socio- Economic and Political Studies that will cast worrying shadow on the rights of free thinking and on the political situation in Belarus that can led only to further negative developments in Belarus' relations with the European Union.

EU HOMs recall in this respect the Council Conclusions of November, 23, 2004, calling upon the authorities of Belarus to stop harassing political parties, independent media outlet and academic institutions.