**Friday 16 March 2012**

**ESU Statement**

**Belarus Working Group (BWG) of ESU calls for**

**the reconsideration of democratic values in Belarus**

Democratic values’ control in Belarus has been a great concern for its citizens and international community for a long time now. Numerous situations of violation of human rights have been spotted. By following the situation and being close to students in Belarus, European Students` Union sees that students have not been an exception, as expulsions for political reasons and pressure on students have been seen throughout years. Lack of democratic values is significantly affecting not only the academic development, but Belarus’s inclusion in the European society, which could highly affect country’s development.

BWG strongly calls for the reconsideration and affirmation of democratic values in Belarus, evidencing an obvious need for development of democracy and academic freedom. Country`s attempt to become a member of the European Higher Education Area is welcomed, nevertheless without democratic values in action Belarus cannot integrate into the EHEA. Students must be allowed to enhance the student participation in higher education in Belarus, being regarded as equal partners. They must be included in the governance of higher education institutions, ensuring freedom of voicing their needs, equally participating in decision making processes– as stated in Berlin 2003 Communiqué.

BWG sees academic freedom as a basic need of all students of Belarus, and highly supports their actions aimed at the increase of students` participation, and students` rights’ protection. Students are crucial part of today`s and especially tomorrow`s society, thus BWG reminds that sustainable and independent student movement can bring highly positive changes in Belarus as a whole. Students should be free to participate and become active citizens both within the higher education and civil society, without fear of persecution.

Therefore, Belarus Working Group of ESU calls Belarus authorities to increase democracy and transparency in the country and higher education system, to ensure legislative and practical support for the independent student movement, increasing student participation in higher education and higher education institutions’ governance and to open up the information networks for students to become full members of today`s free society.