

The President of Belarus administers economic discipline

On 27 May, during a meeting on the current economic situation, President Alyaksandr Lukashenka criticised the government's actions aimed at avoiding the crisis, and ordered social discipline to be reinforced, and also that companies must increase their production. In this way, the Belarusian president showed that he does not want to implement the necessary economic reforms, and he sees the only way of combating the crisis to be increasing control and administrative regulations.

In Lukashenka's assessment, the government is unable to cope with the ongoing rises in prices, the shortage of foreign currency on the market, and the panic buying of goods in shops. In his opinion, the situation may be stabilised by increasing control over the public (including the sphere of labour discipline), increasing companies' output, and introducing a number of administrative constraints, such as fixing retail prices for essential goods. At the same time, Lukashenka has categorically excluded the possibility of privatising major Belarusian companies (including machine and petrochemical works). In addition, he has accused the media (primarily in Russia) of fomenting panic among Belarusian citizens, and has threatened to have them blocked. The President's speech once again shows his confusion in the face of the growing economic crisis in Belarus. Everything indicates that Lukashenka will continue to avoid reforms, and will instead base his actions on further administrative restrictions and the hunt for perpetrators of the current crisis. The continuation of such a policy may lead to economic collapse and/or an explosion of public resentment in the longer term. <kam>