

Relations between the EU and Russia

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The Committee on Foreign Affairs adopted the own-initiative report drawn up by Janusz ONYSZKIEWICZ (ALDE, PL) on a proposal for a European Parliament recommendation to the Council on the new EU-Russia agreement.

Recalling that EU relations with Russia are of crucial importance for the purposes of pragmatic cooperation and that Russia is the third largest trading partner of the EU and the fourth largest trading partner of the Eurozone and an essential energy supplier to the EU, MEPs address the following recommendations to the Council and the Commission and ask

them to take them into account when pursuing the negotiations:

Human Rights: MEPs:

- continue to insist on a broad, wide-ranging and legally binding agreement based on a shared commitment to human rights;
- insist that the EU's relationship with Russia must be based on respect for the rule of international law and all binding agreements and treaties to which Russia and EU Member States adhere, including the UN Charter, the European Convention on Human Rights and the Energy Charter Treaty, as well as the rules and commitments incumbent on members of the OSCE and Council of Europe;
- proposes putting in place a consultation mechanism, under the responsibility of the High Representative, which would enable Member States to consult each other sufficiently in advance on every bilateral issue – whether an agreement or a dispute – with Russia which could have repercussions on other Member States and the EU as a whole;
- insist on raising with the Russian Government concerns about the human rights situation and the shrinking space for Russia's civil society and to take prompt and effective steps to foster a favourable working climate for human rights organisations and independent charitable organisations engaged in the promotion of cultural links between Russia and EU Member States;
- call on the Russian Government to fully respect media freedom and guarantee the enjoyment by independent media of political and economic conditions;
- call for the revision of the EU-Russia human rights consultation to make it more efficient;
- appeal to the authorities of the Russian Federation to guarantee the existence and sustainable development of the traditional lifestyle, culture and language of indigenous people living within its borders.

Membership of the WTO: MEPs:

- continue to maintain support for Russia's accession to the WTO and support the further opening-up of the Russian economy and to create a **free-trade zone** between the EU and Russia, which continues to be a long-term objective;
- call for further improvements to be made in legislation and law enforcement as regards the protection of intellectual, industrial and commercial property rights in order to increase competitiveness and make the investment climate attractive;
- call for new measures to combat effectively counterfeiting and piracy.

Energy and environment: MEPs:

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insist that the Energy Charter Treaty, as an existing treaty which is legally binding on Russia and all EU Member States, should be the basis for relations in the field of energy;

- call for the establishment of a **legal framework** governing the transit of energy supplies and insist on increased transparency, reciprocity and security of investment and for a consequent **enhancement of security of energy supply**;
- underline the need to establish mechanisms for a transparent rules-based system and dispute settlement mechanism in the field of energy.

Political dialogue and Georgia issue:MEPs call for:

- a clear code of conduct governing relations between the EU, Russia and the countries of the shared neighbourhood, including provisions relating to respect for the sovereign independence of all European states, a commitment to the peaceful settlement of disputes and a determination to resolve frozen conflicts;
- improvements on the existing political dialogue so as to encourage discussion of “hard security issues”, which are often at the core of the disagreements between the EU and Russia but which indubitably affect European and global security;
- a positive contribution to finding a sustainable political solution for the future of Kosovo and for the further enhancement of the stability of the Western Balkans;
- a real commitment from the Russian authorities to resolve in a constructive and peaceful manner, together with Georgia and the EU, the “modalities of security and stability in Abkhazia and South Ossetia” (MEPs urge the Russian Government to ensure that EU monitors are granted full access to all areas affected by the conflict, in compliance with the mandate of the EU Monitoring Mission).

Visa policy: MEPs:

- insist that the goal of visa-free travel vis-à-vis Russia be pursued in the light of Council Regulation (EC) No 539/2001;
- insist on a clear commitment from the Russian authorities to reduce bureaucratic obstacles applied in a non-reciprocal manner with respect to all travellers, such as the need to have an invitation and to register upon arrival;
- insist that visa facilitation for students, researchers and businessmen should be a priority in order to promote people-to-people contacts;
- urgently address the Kaliningrad transit and visa problem, possibly by providing for the whole of the Kaliningrad Oblast to be covered by the local border traffic regime.

Market liberalisation: MEPs call for:

- the liberalisation of markets and the reciprocity of investment rights between the partners, as well as the guarantee the property rights of foreign investors;
- the compatibility of Russian legislation with Russia's current and future obligations under the WTO;
- the phasing out of Siberian overflight payments requested by Russia and the signature of the agreement reached on this issue at the summit in Samara;
- free passage through the Pilawa strait to allow access for EU shipping to the passage to Asia along the Northern Russian territory.

Lastly, MEPs ask the Council and the Commission to **keep Parliament regularly and fully informed** of the progress of the negotiations.