

State of EU-Russia relations

2015/2001(INI) - 10/06/2015 - Text adopted by Parliament, single reading

The European Parliament adopted by 494 votes to 135, with 69 abstentions, a resolution on the state of EU-Russia relations.

Crimea issue: Parliament reiterated that Russia's direct and indirect involvement in the armed conflict in Ukraine and its **illegal annexation of Crimea**, together with its violation of the territorial integrity of Georgia, and economic coercion and political destabilisation of its European neighbours constitute a deliberate violation of democratic principles and fundamental values and of international law. In this context, the EU cannot envisage a return to 'business as usual' and has no choice but to conduct a critical re-assessment of its relations with Russia, which includes the drafting, as promptly as possible, of a **soft-power contingency plan** to counter the aggressive and divisive policies conducted by Russia, and a comprehensive plan on its future relations with that country and with its Eastern European partners.

It also stressed that:

- the resolution of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine **can only be political in nature**;
- Russia can no longer be treated as, or considered, a 'strategic partner'.

Parliament condemned the **arbitrary measure of banning EU politicians and officials from access to Russian territory**, and stressed that the Russian leadership is repeatedly trespassing against international law and is violating universal standards and impeding transparency. Parliament considered this act to be counterproductive and detrimental to the already weak channels of communication between the European Union and Russia. Targeted EU politicians and officials should have the right to appeal such a decision before an independent court.

Bilateral relations in danger: Parliament underlined that EU-Russia relations must henceforth be based on respect for international law and a dialogue, whereby the EU would be ready to re-engage and relaunch cooperation with the authorities in Moscow in a number of specific fields of common interest. A resumption of cooperation would be envisaged **on the condition that Russia respects the territorial integrity and sovereignty of Ukraine**, including Crimea, fully implements the Minsk Agreements (which include full control of the border by the Ukrainian authorities, the unconditional withdrawal of Russian troops and weapons, and an immediate halt to the provision of assistance to rebel groups), and stops destabilising military and security activities at the EU Member States' borders.

According to Members, **the EU must clearly define both its expectations of Russia**, especially as regards respecting international law and contractual commitments and acting as a predictable partner, and the measures it will take after 31 December 2015, should Russia fail to honour its commitments.

Parliament commended the solidarity and unity demonstrated by the Member States in the context of Russia's illegal annexation of Crimea and underlined that the deepening of EU integration and coherence between its internal and external policies is the key to a more coherent, effective and successful EU external and security policy, including vis-à-vis Russia. It called on the Member States to carry on with, and intensify their efforts towards, the effective elimination of decision-making bottlenecks and, also with candidate countries, the consolidation of common policies, in particular in the areas of trade, financial services and transactions, migration, energy, external borders management, information and cyber security.

Energy policy: Parliament reiterated its conviction that energy policy is a significant element of EU external policy. It supports, therefore, the swift creation of a robust European Energy Union, specifically the interconnection of national energy networks in order to **reduce considerably the dependence of individual Member States on external energy suppliers, particularly Russia.**

Restrictions of individual freedoms: Parliament is deeply concerned by the ever-growing restrictions on media and internet freedom, the tightening of online media control, the use of coercion to curb impartial reporting and the erosion of journalistic standards in Russia.

It renewed its call for the development of **strengthened analytical and monitoring capabilities of Russian propaganda**, especially in the Russian language, in order to be able to identify, and respond swiftly and appropriately to, deliberately biased information spread in various EU languages. It called on the Commission to earmark without delay adequate funding for concrete projects aimed at countering Russian propaganda and misinformation within the EU and abroad, and at providing objective information to the general public in Eastern partner countries, and to develop the appropriate instruments for strategic communication. It called on the Commission and the Member States to also devise a coordinated mechanism for transparency of and for the collection, monitoring and reporting of financial, political or technical assistance provided by Russia to political parties and other organisations within the EU, with a view to assessing its involvement in, and influence over, political life and public opinion in the EU and its Eastern neighbours, and to take appropriate measures. Plenary is deeply concerned at the **recent tendency of the Russian state-controlled media to rewrite and reinterpret historical events of the twentieth century**, such as the signing of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact and its secret protocols, as well as the selective use of historical narrative for current political propaganda.

It is also deeply concerned at the ever more intensive contacts and cooperation, tolerated by the Russian leadership, between European populist, fascist and extreme right-wing parties on the one hand and nationalist groups in Russia on the other. It urged the EU to provide support to projects aimed at promoting and developing high journalistic standards, freedom of the media, and unbiased and trustworthy information in Russia, and at deconstructing propaganda within the EU and the Eastern Partnership countries. **The Commission is called upon to make available adequate funding for initiatives developing Russian-language media alternatives to Russian state-controlled media.**

Parliament called on Russia to acknowledge the scope and gravity of the **problem of violence and harassment against LGBTI people in Russia**, and to commit to taking steps to end these abuses and to repeal the provisions of Law No. 135-FZ of June 29, 2013 (the 'gay propaganda' law) banning distribution of information about LGBTI relationships. It strongly condemned the government's continued crackdown on dissent by targeting independent NGOs through the so-called "foreign agents law" and the persistent and multiform repression of activists, political opponents and critics of the regime. It drew particular attention to the assassinations of Anna Politkovskaya, Natalya Estemirova, Boris Nemtsov, Sergey Magnitsky, Alexander Litvinenko and others. Members reiterated their call on the Council to deliver on its commitment to defend these principles, and to adopt restrictive measures for the officials involved in the well-documented Magnitsky case.

Measures are also called for the continued political and financial support for independent civil society activists, human rights defenders, bloggers, independent media, outspoken academics and public figures and NGOs. They encouraged the EU to reach out to Russian officials and civil society organisations.

Moreover, Parliament called on Russia to cooperate fully with the international community on the investigation into the downing of flight MH17.

Lastly, Members called on the Commission to propose **legislation forbidding financing of political parties in the EU by political or economic stakeholders outside the EU** in line with the

recommendation of the Council of Europe with regard, in particular, to political or economic stakeholders outside the EU.