



Believe in *People*

EPP Group **Position Paper**

on Russia



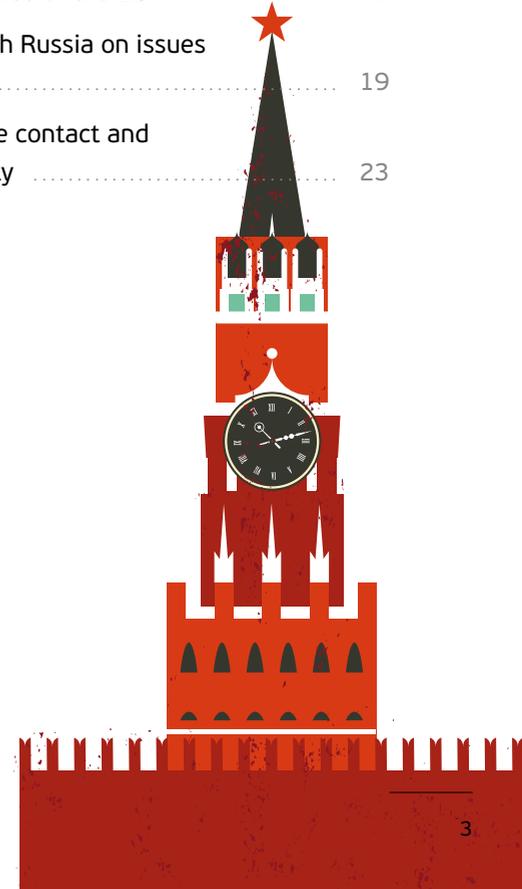
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EPP Group Position Paper on Russia

Russia is an important neighbour. We take the view that a realistic and responsible strategy for the EU's relations with Russia must be based on the principles of international law, credible deterrence and on a principled approach in areas of common interest, with a view to guaranteeing security in the EU's neighbourhood and a European peace order. We underline the importance of investing more in cooperation with and support to Russian civil society, so as to strengthen the democratic movements in Russia and build a long-term basis for EU-Russia relations. Sanctions are needed as a principled reaction to any flagrant violation of internationally recognised borders and the sovereignty of states. They have proven to be an effective means of deterring further Russian aggression in Ukraine. We insist that the EU should stand ready to consider adopting further sanctions, including targeted personal sanctions, because of Russia's continued actions.

Through their internal development and their foreign policies, Russia and the EU directly and indirectly influence one another and the EU Member States. The global challenges of climate change, energy security, non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the fight against terrorism and organised crime call for close cooperation. Therefore, the EU and Russia take great interest in good relations. Re-establishing good relations based on mutual trust requires Russian willingness to rebuild confidence and peaceful cooperation.

Consistency in the EU's internal and external policies is key to a more coherent, effective and credible EU foreign and security policy, including vis-à-vis Russia. Member States and the EU should speak with one voice and act in step with each other. We call for the consolidation of common policies, in particular in the areas of trade, financial services and transactions, migration, energy, external border management, information and cyber-security.



We underline that, without prejudice to a selective engagement with Russia on issues of interest to the EU, a resumption of cooperation between the EU and Russia could only be envisaged on the condition that Russia fully 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 borders of the EU and its neighbours. The EPP Group rejects the Russian doctrines of having special interest zones and having special rights for its compatriots abroad, which have resulted in deliberate actions aimed at destabilising its neighbours. The arbitrary entry ban on a number of European politicians and officials, including current and former MEPs, must be immediately and unconditionally lifted.

Russian officials whose action or inaction have enabled or resulted in war crimes in Syria and Ukraine will have to face international criminal justice. We call on Russia to cooperate fully with the investigation on the downing of MH17, which could possibly constitute a war crime.

The EPP Group supports the five guiding principles for EU-Russia relations agreed by the Foreign Affairs Council on 14 March 2016:

- > Implementation of the Minsk agreements as the key condition for any substantial change in the EU's stance towards Russia;
- > Strengthened relations with the EU's Eastern Partners and other neighbours, in particular in Central Asia;
- > Strengthening the resilience of the EU (for example in energy security, hybrid threats, or strategic communication);
- > The possibility of selective engagement with Russia on issues of interest to the EU;
- > The need to engage in people-to-people contact and support Russian civil society.



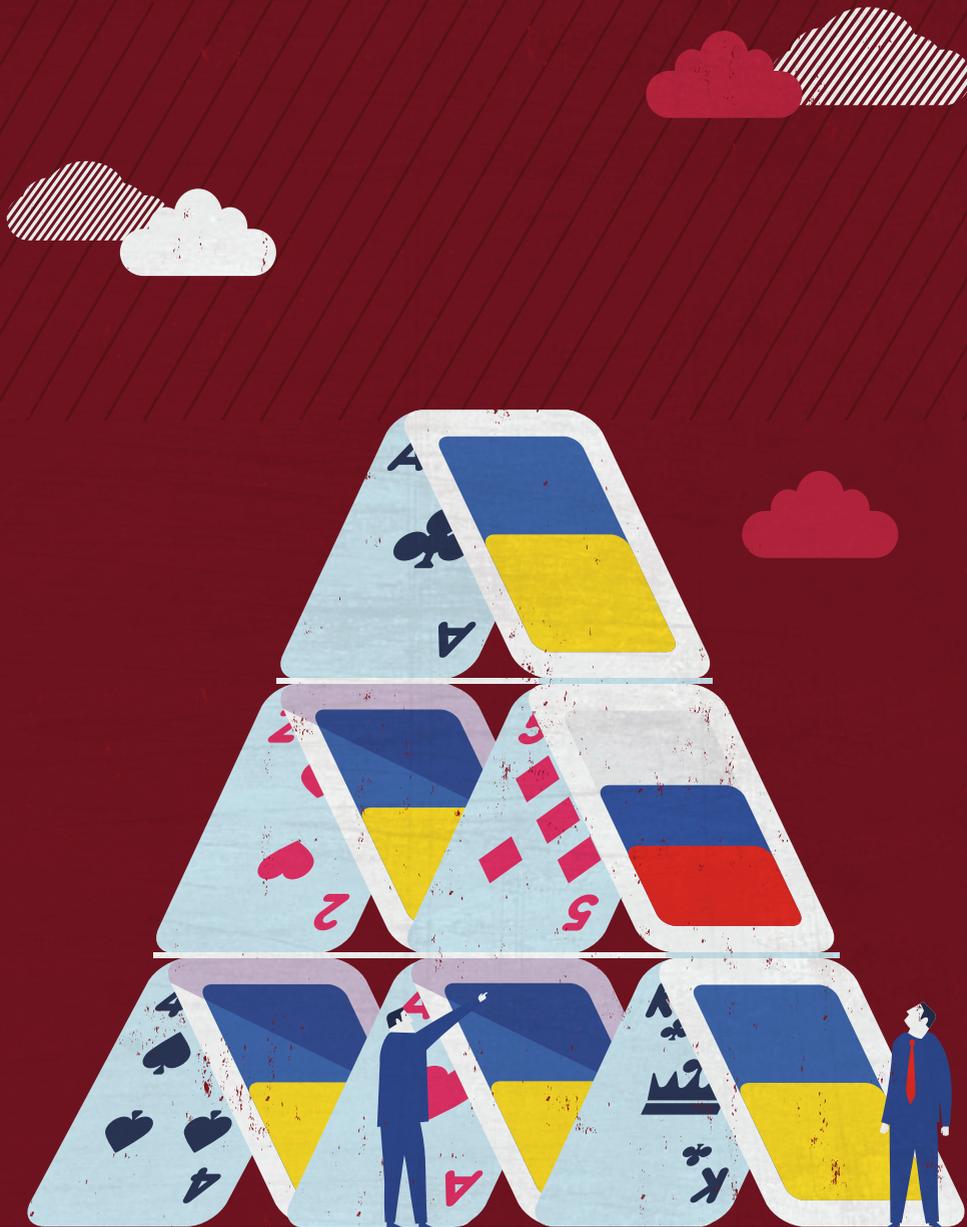
Implementation of the Minsk agreements

A sustainable solution to the war in Ukraine can only be reached with the full implementation of the Minsk agreements and unconditional respect for Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. We reiterate our strongest condemnation of Russia's illegal annexation of the Crimean peninsula and of its continued support to the militants in Eastern Ukraine.

We regret to note that the Minsk agreements have not been implemented by the initial deadline. Russia continues to provide military and financial support to the militants. The killing of soldiers and civilians continues. OSCE monitors face constant impediments in accessing the areas controlled by Russia-backed militants. We call for unrestricted access to the areas controlled by Russian backed militants for OSCE monitors.

The sanctions implemented as a result of Russian action to destabilise the situation in Eastern Ukraine can only be lifted once the Minsk agreements have been completely implemented.

In addition, the restrictive measures imposed in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol will be suspended once the Crimean Peninsula is returned to Ukraine. Russia must respect Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty within its internationally recognised borders. For the time being, however, not only is there no progress in Russia's implementation of the Minsk agreements, but the situation in the non-controlled areas of Eastern Ukraine has been seriously deteriorating, with Russian troops and Russian-led separatist forces responsible for the bulk of ceasefire violations.



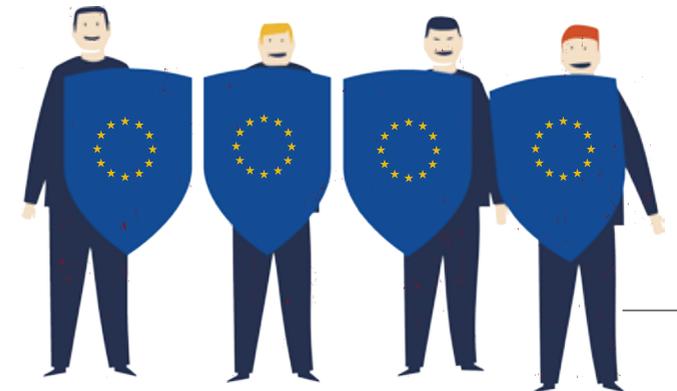


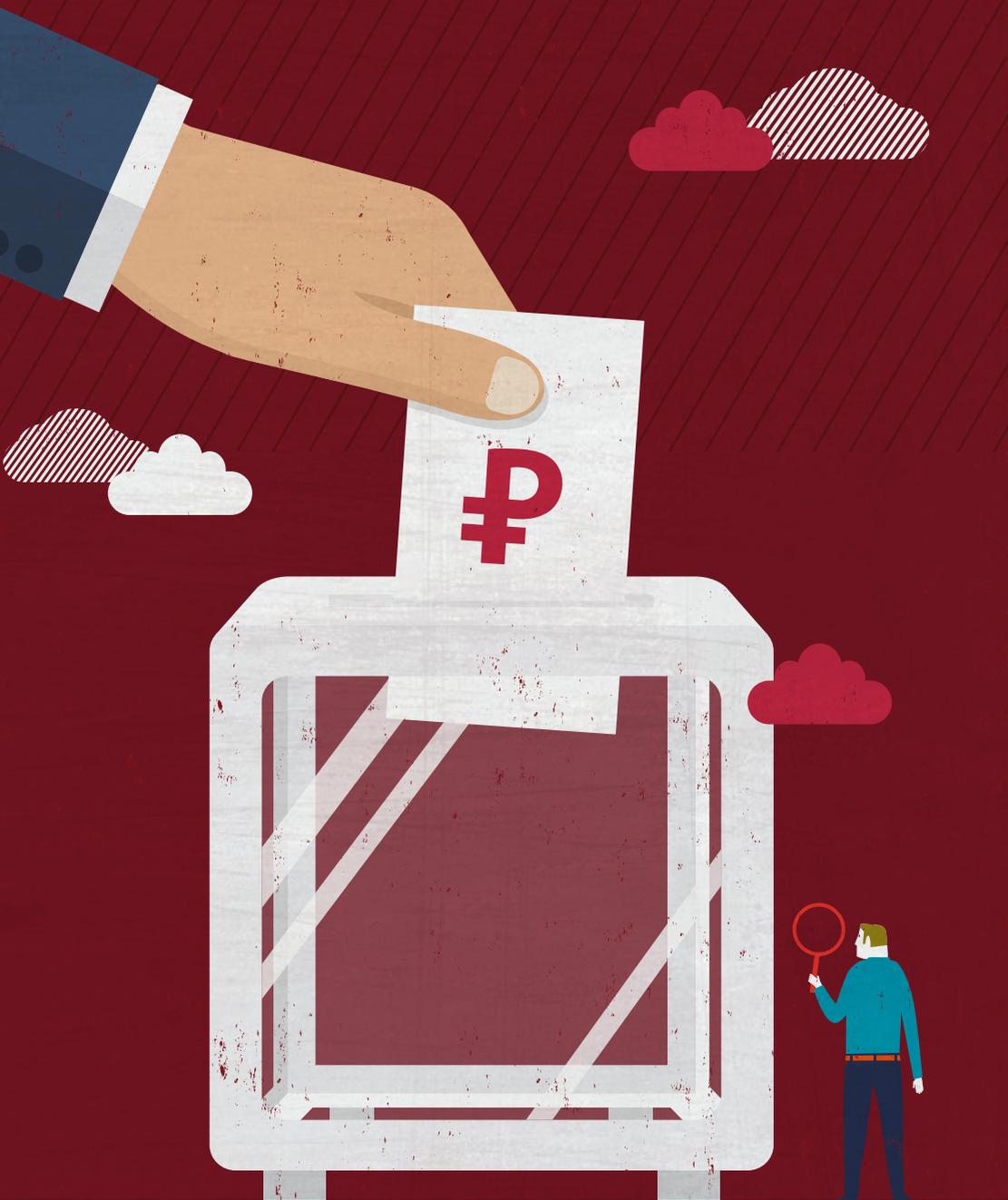
Strengthened relations with the EU's Eastern Partners and other neighbours

The EU needs to step up its cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries in order to strengthen their democratic institutions, resilience and independence, especially taking into account Russia's attempts to covertly influence the Eastern Partnership countries by impeding many pro-democratic reform initiatives in those countries. We see the need to create a mechanism for exchange of information between the EU and Eastern Partnership countries in the field of cyber-security. We call on the Member States to increase aid to Ukraine, including adequate defensive systems, in order to deter military escalation in Eastern Ukraine. The EU has a strong strategic, political and economic interest in

strengthening its bilateral and multilateral relations with all the Central Asian countries. The EU's Enlargement Policy should balance Russia's increasing influence in the Western Balkans and its attempts to undermine Euro-Atlantic integration in the Western Balkans.

We call on the Member States to strengthen the Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP) cooperation with the Eastern Partnership countries that share EU values and are able and willing to contribute to CSDP missions and operations.





Strengthening the resilience of the EU

Russia's systematic hybrid threats require strong deterrence and the resilience of the EU.

The Kremlin's information strategy is part of Russia's policy to weaken the coherence of the EU, as well as the EU as a whole, and to undermine EU policies.

We deplore Russia's attempts to undermine democratic processes in European societies, including through the systematic and strategic use of disinformation and propaganda, as well as through support for and the financing of radical and extremist parties both inside and outside the EU. Information and Communication Technology (ICT) companies must better cooperate in the fight against Russian social media trolls and bots if they want to continue to operate in the EU. To halt any further Russian interference in national election campaigns in Europe, the EPP Group calls for stricter regulation of political party financing (notably through a ban of direct or indirect financing from foreign sources and increased transparency) in all the Member States. We call for a

major review into indirect Russian funding of European parties and foundations. The EPP Group calls on the Member States to prioritise investigating Russian interference in election campaigns through hacks, misinformation or cyber-attacks. We call for more stringent sanctions against targeted hacking and falsified publication of sensitive data in the course of electoral campaigns.

We welcome EU initiatives such as creating the European External Action Service's (EEAS) East StratCom Task Force. We regret to observe that, up to now, the East StratCom Task Force comprises as little as 10 members and the staff is to a large extent sponsored by the Member States as seconded national experts. We call for the EEAS East StratCom Task Force to be turned into a permanent EU structure without further delay, with adequate and sustainable funding and significantly-increased personnel. The EPP Group urges the development of an effective, well-targeted and tailor-made strategy for the communication and promotion of



EU policies and values, especially in the Eastern Neighbourhood. It should give a positive signal to those societies, present real benefits from concrete policies like visa liberalisation and increase public awareness of disinformation activities by external actors. We encourage strong cooperation with the European Endowment for Democracy within the area.

There is an essential need for professional, independent, ethical and fact-based journalism - in particular in Russian-language media - to counter lies and misinformation, as well as a need to highlight the urgency of training and educating journalists in this area. We underline the importance of awareness-raising, education and online media for citizens of both the EU and the Eastern Partnership and Western Balkans regions in order to enable them to critically analyse media content and to identify propaganda. The EU needs to provide support to projects aimed at promoting and developing high journalistic standards, the freedom of the media and unbiased and trustworthy information in Russia.

Energy Policy is a significant element of EU external policy. We firmly support the swift completion of an integrated European Energy Union, specifically the

interconnection of national energy networks, to reduce considerably the dependence of individual Member States on external energy suppliers, particularly Russia. We urge the Member States to take into account European strategic interests and follow the principles of solidarity before engaging in exclusive energy deals with Russia. Eastern Partners should be integrated in a future European Energy Union.



We believe that the Nord Stream 2 project is not in line with EU energy policy, reinforces the EU's dependence on Russian gas supply and threatens the internal EU gas market. This project is also not compatible with the



core principles of Eastern Neighbourhood Policy, nor the EU's Foreign and Security Policy. We therefore call on the EU Institutions to thoroughly assess the compatibility of the Nord Stream 2 project with EU law and, if necessary, to freeze it, to ensure that all relevant EU legislation is fully respected and to conclude a legal agreement with Russia on energy infrastructure at the EU level. We call on the EU Institutions to ensure that all offshore and onshore pipeline infrastructure leading to the EU in no way undermines the EU's Energy Union strategy and is operated fully in line with EU legislation, in particular the third energy package, rules on the security of gas supply and competition and environmental rules.

Russia is exploiting the absence of a legal international framework in areas such as cyber-security and the lack of accountability in media regulation, and is using any ambiguity in these matters in

its favour. We condemn the hybrid warfare pursued against Ukraine and the deliberate interference in electoral and democratic processes. Europe needs to significantly step up its individual and collective cyber-security and cyber-defence capabilities, conduct risk assessments, monitor cyber-threats and develop strategies on how to counter cyber-warfare and information warfare. For the improvement of cyber-security solutions, we need to develop a European cyber-security industry with stronger engagement in research.





Selective engagement with Russia on issues of interest to the EU

We believe that it is important to find ways to de-escalate current tensions and engage in constructive dialogue with Russia to identify measures aimed at reducing the risk of dangerous misunderstandings and miscalculations. Increased mutual transparency in military and border guard activities is important in order to avoid land, air and maritime incidents with Russia.

We support dialogue in areas of common interest, such as counter-terrorism, non-proliferation, arms control and trade, with the aim of Russia complying with international treaties and agreements.

In the field of economy and trade, the EU and Russia have much to gain from improved relations. However, until the Russian Federation fully addresses the serious concerns of the European Union set out in this paper, including the full implementation of the Minsk agreements, the EU will not seek nor agree to any increased trade and economic arrangements with the Russian Federation. Moreover,

any discussions or work on any formal arrangements between the European Union, its Member States and the Russian Federation, or any bodies or trade arrangements that Russia is party to, must be preceded by the Russian Federation's full implementation of its WTO Accession Protocol and other WTO obligations*. The European agricultural sector, hit by the Russian embargo that followed the introduction of EU sanctions, needs an adequate economic shield.

A fundamental change in Russia's aggressive policy vis-à-vis the EU and its Member States would allow further steps in implementing important projects and proposals for more intense cooperation. The EU and its Member States must support and motivate positive developments in Russia.

*To the extent such arrangements should include states other than the EU, its Member States and the Russian Federation, WTO membership of such states and their full compliance with their WTO obligations is also a prerequisite of such an arrangement.



In Syria, it will be impossible to defeat terrorism without a political settlement. We deplore Russian military actions in Syria which have led to even more civilian casualties. Russia must do its utmost to use its influence over the Assad regime to stop this tragedy and to contribute effectively to de-escalating violence. If Russia is prepared to use its influence positively and stops committing hostilities, there is preparedness to work together in resolving the conflict in Syria, and to pursue a political settlement.

The EU has always been open and willing to engage in constructive dialogue within the framework of international law and governance.



Engage in

people-to-people contact and **support** of Russian civil society

We welcome a willingness to give more support to Russian civil society and engage in people-to-people contact, in particular with young people in Russia and in the EU. We underline the need for encouraging people to engage in the development of genuine and independent civil society, despite deteriorating human rights, including the rights to freedom of expression, association and assembly and the rights of LGBTI people, such as those in Chechnya, where recently there was a purge against their community.

The EU is encouraged to reach out to Russian officials at the local, regional and national level, through all platforms and civil society organisations that are inclined to develop a vision of political and

diplomatic relations with the EU based on partnership and cooperation.

We suggest granting further funding to programmes fostering non-state actors, such as the European Endowment for Democracy and the European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights, in order to address the issue of human rights in Russia. The rule of law and democratic principles must be strengthened.

We highlight the important role of the EU in supporting democratic processes, human rights and its defenders, and civil society in the conflict or post-conflict zones where the Russian Federation is involved.



We believe that framework initiatives such as Horizon 2020 and Erasmus+ should be enhanced.

We shall continue to assess developments in the relationship with Russia and shall seek to advance and adapt adequate measures and guidelines on how to deal - at interparliamentary level as well as in day-to-day interactions - with Russia.





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