

Fields of Policy of particular relevance to the relations between the EU and Russia – a general overview (including energy politics).

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EU-Russia Conference: The relations between the EU and Russia from the German perspective – expectations with regards to the upcoming elections

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This summer I travelled to the Inner and Outer Hebrides in Scotland. The Hebrides are the most westerly islands in Europe - next stop is America, but that is not its only significance. It is from this area, the island of Iona to be precise, where the Irish and Scottish monks came from to bring Christianity to my fellow Franconians.

My next trip should have been to Volgograd to join a delegation from the Bavarian region of Ingostadt/Eichstätt to deepen the partnership between Bavaria and Volgograd. Because of some last-minute-problems with the charter plane the trip had to be postponed until next year. Nevertheless, the two places show not only the geographical expansion of Europe. From the Western Isles to Volgograd you can also trace the development through European history, a journey from the first stepping stones of Christianity to the battlefield of Stalingrad one of the biggest graveyards in Europe..

For centuries the Europeans have preferred the sword to the cross. After the First World War “a peace to end all peace” - as David Fromkin titled his book - led the Europeans straight into World War II. Sixty million Europeans died in wars during the first half of the twentieth century. The Nazi crimes and the total war led by Adolf Hitler are unparalleled in history.

It was time to turn “swords into ploughshares”, as the Old Testament prophet Micah said. More than sixty years ago, on 5 May 1949, the fathers of the New Europe based in 10 European countries founded the Council of Europe and adopted the Convention of Human Rights. Whereas the German poet Heinrich Heine concluded in 1825 that “baptism is the entry ticket to Europe”, the acknowledgement of Human Rights has proved to be the entry ticket to Europe after World War II. Europeaness is not so much about absolute geography, ethnicity, religion or language, it’s more about common European values.

This was the beginning of a policy for an ever closer union. The post-war history of Europe has been a time of peace. Compared to the first half of the last century, less than one million people have died in wars, most of them in the Yugoslav wars in the nineties.

In the documents of the conference you find a depiction of the European family. There are various European treaties, numerous European bodies and agencies and many forms of European cooperation. The overlapping spheres with the flags of the member countries go from the outer sphere marking the Council of Europe to the inner circle of the euro-zone. The euro-zone shows the most advanced cooperation between countries in Europe.

Since 1949 more and more countries have made their way into the European Community, thereby enjoying freedom, justice and peace. Each country was able to do things at its own pace. The founder-countries have been the pacemakers until now. Germany and France have just embarked on the next step towards a greater and closer cooperation in economic and financial affairs as a consequence of the collapse of the global financial markets since 2008 and the euro-crisis. All members of the European family are equal. There are no first-class and second-class Europeans.

I'm going to concentrate my comments on Russia's membership in the Council of Europe and on the partnership and cooperation agreement EU-Russia of 1997, which has created so called four common spaces between the EU and Russia.

Russia and the Council of Europe

"The Council of Europe seeks to develop common, democratic principles throughout Europe based on the European Convention on Human Rights and other reference texts on the protection of individuals", as the COE defines itself on its website. After the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 and the subsequent break-up of the Soviet empire, Russia emerged as the Russian Federation. All Eastern European countries including Russia became members of the COE. The only exception up till now is Belarus. From the Council of Europe's political objectives are Human Rights and Freedom of the press and the media of particular relevance.

Human Rights

During the Communist era human rights were not observed carefully in Russia, nor in the rest of the Soviet block. Rigorous censorship, repressive policing and the lack of civic rights and individual freedom were the dark reality in people's daily lives. The German drama "The Lives of Others", an Oscar winner in 2006, depicts the government of East Germany as a dictatorship in spite of it being called the German Democratic Republic and shows how it used the secret police to remain in control. As a member of the COE, Russia has the obligation to secure Convention rights to everyone within its jurisdiction. (Article 1 of the convention) The COE has set up a system of how to check and monitor the member-states to ensure that they are conforming to the Convention of Human Rights. The judgements of The European Court of Human Rights are binding for the contracting parties. In the event of any violation the State concerned should ensure that there no such violations occur in the future, otherwise the Court may rule against them. In some cases the State will have to amend its legislation to bring it into line with the Convention.

There are some explosive issues:

- **The Russia fact sheet of the Court reports 1019 violation judgements against Russia. According to the Court's statistics from 31 August 2011 there are 43, 800 applications pending, which means 27,3% of all cases. In my opinion, this percentage is far too high.**

 - **The Convention of human rights demands the complete abolition of the death penalty in Protocol 13. Former President Putin has established a moratorium as well as the Constitutional Court of Russia. Russia has not executed anyone since 1996, and the regulations of the Council of Europe prohibit it from doing so at any time in the future. However, the death penalty still remains codified. And Russia and Azerbaijan have not signed the protocol 13 until now.**

 - **The Commissioner for Human Rights, Thomas Hammarberg points out in the report on his visit to the Russian Federation from 12 to 21 May 2011: Impunity and insecurity undermine human rights protection in the North Caucasus.**

 - **Human Rights Watch in a letter to President Medvedev on 12 August 2011: We are writing to express deep concern with regard to the draft legislative proposals that would allow Russia's Constitutional Court to override certain judgements handed down by the European Court of Human Rights. We believe this initiative, if adopted, would impede enforcement of the European Court's rulings in Russia, place Russia in violation of its international legal obligations, and obstruct access to justice for Russian citizens.**
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Media Freedom

The freedom of expression in Article 10 of the convention includes the Freedom of the Press and the Media. In the press freedom index 2010 published by the Reporters Without Borders, a human-rights group, Russia ranks below Iraq and Turkey, just ahead of Afghanistan. According to Reporters Without Borders at least 22 journalists have been murdered in Russia in the past ten years. After an assault on Oleg Kashin in November 2010 Dmitry Medvedev, Russia's president, tweeted that "the criminals must be found and punished". But many observers like "The Economist" do not believe that adequate investigation will be carried out and that it will not lead to any prosecutions. "Yet although the Kremlin can have a magic sway over television news, its powers to investigate attacks on journalists and bring criminals to justice are less impressive. Almost none of the high-profile murders of Russian journalists have been solved, despite Kremlin promises.." (11th November 2010)

The freedom house report "Freedom of the press" 2011 reads as follows: "The media environment in Russia, which serves as a model and patron for a number of neighbouring countries, is marked by the use of a pliant judiciary to prosecute independent journalists, increased self-censorship by reporters, impunity for the physical harassment and murder of journalists, and continued state control or influence over almost all media outlets".

I think Russia has a lot to do in the near future to comply with the Convention on Human Rights.

The four Spaces of EU-Russia Cooperation

In 1994 the EU and Russia negotiated a Partnership and Cooperation agreement which came into force in 1997. At the Petersburg Summit in 2003 the EU and Russia agreed to reinforce their cooperation by creating four common spaces in the framework of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement .

a common economic space

a common space of freedom, security and justice;

a space of co-operation in the field of external security;

a space of research, education, and cultural exchange.

A common economic space

Because of time I would like to deal only with the economic policy and the energy policy in more detail.

With a share of 9,7 % Russia is one of the EU's key trading partners, following the USA (15, 2%) and China (11,4%)The trade figures between Russia and the EU are impressive: More than 10,000 EU and Russian companies are in the process of developing activities in each other's markets.

10 Years Energy Dialogue 2000 – 2010

Energy policy is one of the most important fields within the EU-Russia cooperation. Energy represents 65 % of total EU imports from Russia. The Russia- EU-Summit in Paris in 2000 established the EU-Russian energy dialogue. The Joint Report EU-Russia Energy Dialogue 2000 – 2010 “Opportunities for our future Energy Partnership” gives an overview of the intensity of EU-Russia energy relations over the last ten years.

- Russia is the biggest supplier of oil, gas, uranium and coal to the EU and the third biggest supplier of electricity.
- 24 % of the total EU gas sources are supplied by Russia. For several EU Member States, Russia is the only natural gas source (and supplier).
- The export of raw materials to the EU makes up about 40 % of the Russian budget,

The Roadmap of the EU-Russia Energy Cooperation until 2050

The progress report “The Roadmap of the EU-Russia Energy Cooperation until 2050” released in July 2011 describes the roadmap of common energy policy up until 2050

The roadmap worked out by the expert group defines strategic targets:

- By 2050 energy security in the relations between countries on this continent should no longer to be a divisive issue.
- By 2050, Russia and the EU should be strategic allies. Russia, its non-EU neighbours and the EU will have moved steadily towards a common energy market, supported by a further political rapprochement between the EU and Russia.

In pursuing these goals the roadmap defines three priorities

- To maintain and improve infrastructure connections
- To work towards a common market –i.e. regulatory approximation

- To build up an efficient and innovative energy sector

Such a policy could transform the European continent into a world role-model for sustainable growth and stability.

Apart from devising a single energy strategy to deal with Russia the EU Energy policy needs to diversify its sources and transport as a main precondition of energy security. One example (among others) is the Nabucco pipeline project, which connects the Central Asian gasfields with the European consumer markets.

Moreover we should remember the Ukraine- Russia gas dispute 2009 and take the EU-Russia-Centre's Energy Review conclusions into account that the overall solution of the European energy problems goes further than just the energy sector. Unless common trust, confidence and mutual assistance can be re-introduced into the EU-Ukraine-Russia relations, we may witness a recurrence of energy and other conflicts. To avoid this all people concerned should take the necessary actions.

Conclusions

The Euro-crisis and the discussions on the change of the European Treaties towards a more unified economic policy have been the hottest spots in German and European politics during the last months. In June, the biannual EU-Russia summit held in Nizhny Novgorod, was dubbed the "Vegetable Summit" in the international media. According to the media Fraser Cameron, the head of the EU-Russia Centre, noted that rolling out the Partnership for Modernisation and other Nizhny-Novgorod agenda items, such as voicing a political will to move ahead on WTO talks and visa-free talks, are not really summit-level issues.

I think this Conference is really addressing summit level issues. I can identify three priorities:

1) Full Implementation of Human Rights and securing the rule of law in Russia.

**2) Energy and climate policy in a common European
Russian interest to make the Continent a global
reference for a green economy**

**3) Improving democratic structures in Russia and
coming to a more modern model of democracy**

During the last few months we have observed a hunger for change around the world. Jack Shenker wrote the following in The Guardian on Saturday 13 August 2011 “From Arab autocrats to euro zone finance ministers, paucity of thought has prevailed at the top. Reheated rhetoric and stencil-cut solutions, all worn lifeless with weary familiarity. Little wonder then that from Santiago to Sana’a, something else has arisen to fill the void – and those still rooted in the old models of thinking find themselves lacking the linguistic tools necessary to even describe the phenomenon, never mind understand it.”

I hope that the upcoming elections in Russia and bold decisions in Europe will revitalize the vision and the reality of a Europe based on values and providing a world of opportunities for young people in all European countries.