

Position Paper

For a New Russia Policy

Why only a united EU can successfully withstand the Kremlin's destabilization attempts

Disclaimer: This strategy paper towards a "New Russia Policy" is the joint product of 12 liberal youth organizations from Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe elaborated at the first Eastern Europe Summit. The organizations met in September 2021 in Prague and are planning to hold another summit to expand deliberations and common demands.

Preface

As liberal youth organizations we want to emphasize the urgent need of establishing a new policy strategy to counter the Kremlin's destabilizing and hybrid forms of aggression against member states of the EU and its neighbours. We are deeply concerned about the Kremlin's disregard of international law and human rights abroad and within Russia, its military aggressions against its neighbour countries as well as its influence through gas supplies, state-funded media, and the support of anti-democratic movements all over Europe. In addition to that, it is not acceptable that the government of the Russian Federation covers the tyrannic actions of the leading dictator Alexander Lukashenko in Belarus.

Although we fully agree that diplomatic dialogue with the Kremlin is the appropriate manner of solving issues like these, we currently don't see a common ground for a dialogue at eye level from the side of the Russian government. Instead, we demand that the European Union in cooperation with its neighbours has to react to this unacceptable behaviour. In fact we are in favour of good economic relations with Russia, but as long as Putin's regime doesn't change its attitude regarding international and democratic standards, rule of law, and human rights, the economic ties should move into the background. In this context, it is also necessary to emphasize the difference between the Russian population, including its civil society, and the Kremlin's authoritarian re-

gime. The paper seeks to address the liberal family as well as the international and European community of values. We encourage them to put an agenda into practice in order to protect our common values and democratic-pluralistic societies from authoritarian tendencies and the undermining of our political systems.

As a proactive countermeasure, the EU must implement a common foreign as well as a common energy policy for the EU. The EU should support civil society and democratic movements in Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, and other neighbour states. Also, the EU must implement means to counter propaganda and disinformation which seeks to address radical forces and disorientated individuals in our societies. The EU should actively promote the democratic resilience of its member states in order to successfully counter external aggression in the long term.

This strategy paper was elaborated at the first Eastern Europe Summit which was organized and funded by the Prague office of the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom. As we couldn't discuss all related topics due to a lack of time, we hope to find more common demands and views regarding European integrity with even more liberal organizations in the future. The paper briefly summarizes the problems and national contexts identified and point out necessary steps that should be considered in dealing with the Kremlin.

Issue 1: Supporting democratic movements in Eastern Europe and diminishing dependence on Russia by implementing a common EU foreign policy

Since the collapse of the Soviet Union, Russia has exerted considerable influence on post-Soviet states as a military and economic power. In particular, states such as Ukraine or Belarus are strongly exposed to this influence. At the same time, through Eastern Partnership and Association Agreements or the EU membership of the Baltic States, the EU has intensified its ostensibly economic cooperation with many post-Soviet states. Even if this cooperation embrace democratic values, the support of democratic movements obviously has its limits on the part of the EU. It is also questionable whether potential new member states or partner countries from this area will comply with the EU's general democratic pillars at all levels. Nevertheless, the EU should support democratic developments in countries that are eager to shed their undemocratic and post-Soviet heritage.

We therefore demand that the EU must:

- Take seriously the interests of neighbouring countries that are dependent on Russia or are victims of Russian aggression.
- Support the development of energy diversification and economic cooperation with the EU in these countries.

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The EU must establish a common value-based foreign policy that responds decisively and quickly to political and economic developments in the EU and its neighbourhood through simple majority voting in the Council of the European Union.

- Promote common democratic values, human rights, and rule of law in these countries. Especially activists groups of civil society and democratic movements should be supported and empowered with the help of existing exchange and education programs.
- Accelerate simplified visa regulations for politically persecuted persons to enter and migrate to the EU. This should also apply to people from these countries already living and working for a longer time in the EU without permanent residence permission.
- Establish a value-based EU foreign policy that responds decisively and quickly to political and economic developments in the EU and its neighbourhood through simple majority voting in the Council of the European Union.
 - Developing the military capabilities of the EU in the areas of military mobility and interoperability as well as recognizing the importance of the transatlantic defence cooperation through NATO.

Issue 2: Energy security in Europe and the EU: united in the diversity of energy sources

Europe and especially Germany are dependent on Russia as a gas supplier: The EU obtains 43% of its natural gas imports from Russia. In comparison with all EU member states, Germany has the highest imports of natural gas from Russia with the amount of 55% of

its overall gas imports. In general, gas is often regarded as a bridging technology for the energy transition; however it is clearly more important to use energy sources with low CO₂ emissions in the long term. At the same time, the obvious political leverage of the Kremlin

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was ignored by the German government in particular when it approved Gazprom's Nord Stream II plans just one year after the Crimea annexation. Germany, as the successor state to the National Socialist state, which had also annexed other states, should have reacted to this fundamental breach of international law by rejecting this controversial project. The German government has thus made it clear that it places its national economic and energy interests above the territorial integrity of other states like Ukraine. The fact that this decision was clearly directed against the interests of the EU and Germany's direct neighbours and friends shows the political caesura behind it: there is neither a common EU foreign policy nor a common EU energy policy. Once again, it has become clear that the national interests of a large state have been placed above the interests and objections of its smaller neighbours in the EU. The EU has the urgent need finding a common energy policy and diversifying its sources of energy.

Issue 3: Russian disinformation and soft power

As an end in itself, the Kremlin spreads contradictory disinformation campaigns that ostensibly do not claim truth, but are a direct attack on democratic societies. These campaigns target radical forces and frustrated individuals who don't see themselves represented by the political systems. In addition to that, the Kremlin's administration has actively established a state policy since 2008, according to which Russian-speaking citizens of the former USSR play a special role in Russian foreign policy. Aligned with these three groups, the Kremlin's disinformation exploits the foundations of our democracy: press freedom and the variety of opinions.

It uses social media to spread distrust and doubts about democratic and Western values through disinformation on various channels.

We therefore demand that the EU must:

- Further a common EU energy market and the expansion of electricity grids within the EU.
- Establish a structure in which the EU energy market relies on a variety of energy sources by:
 - Using non-Russian natural gas imports as one of the options.
 - Building new LNG ports in Europe to import more LNG outside of Russia or Russia's political allies.
 - Drafting a plan to systematically, and across Europe, increase the capacity of renewable energies and/or nuclear power.
- Support the Euro-Atlantic integration of states like Ukraine or Moldova which eagerly demand cooperation in the field of energy questions.
- Counteract the Russian pressure on states that are dependent on Russian gas supplies through new cooperation formats regarding energy capacities.
- Publicly condemn and expose the beneficiaries of political and self-serving projects like Nord Stream II. These intransparent and undemocratic structures need to be discussed publicly in order to establish transparency within a common EU energy market.

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As the Kremlin's undermining actions seriously threaten pluralistic societies in Europe, the EU must provide adequate responses to challenges such as disinformation, lack of integration and political participation of the Russian-speaking diaspora, and the rise of radical anti-democratic forces.

We therefore demand that the EU must:

- Promote independent Russian speaking media within and outside the EU.
 - Establish education programs and trainings supporting media literacy and critical thinking in society.
 - Educating about disinformation.
 - Offering seminars oriented to different age groups and individual life situations.
 - Implement an EU-wide integration strategy for the minorities and the diasporas from the former USSR by
 - Providing citizenships through less bu-reaucratized naturalization procedures
- for members of the diaspora and the minorities from the former USSR.
- Diminishing language barriers through cultural exchange and language courses.
 - Providing civic and political education for these minorities in order to impart knowledge about the political system and human rights.
- Support the disclosing and investigating of connections and cooperation of radical organizations with the Kremlin.
 - Require media to transparently disclose their financial resources.

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European Youth of Ukraine

junos

JUNOS – Young liberal
NEOS



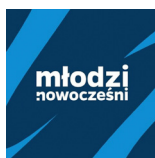
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Lithuanian Liberal Youth



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