

POSITION PAPER

COUNTERING RUSSIA'S WAR OF AGGRESSION AGAINST UKRAINE AND ITS HYBRID ATTACKS ON EUROPEAN SOCIETIES

**NECESSARY MEANS FOR UNPRECEDENTED SUPPORT OF
UKRAINE AND WAYS TO PUSH BACK RUSSIAN INFLUENCE**



This strategy paper is the joint product of 14 liberal youth organizations from Eastern and Central-Eastern Europe elaborated at the second Eastern Europe Summit. The organizations met in November 2022 in Prague and are planning to hold another summit to expand deliberations and common demands.

Preface

The Russian full-scale invasion of Ukraine is the main geopolitical threat to European security and especially to the existence of Ukraine. As liberal youth organizations, we condemn this war of aggression of the totalitarian regime led by Putin. **We call on the EU and its partners to support Ukraine as strongly as possible** in order to win this war and restore sovereignty over its entire territory. The Russian Federation is not a reliable partner, not only since 24 February 2022, and needs to be sanctioned more drastically than ever before. In addition, its meddling in European societies by spreading disinformation undermines the democratic systems in Europe and

needs to be counteracted. Already in 2021, at the first Eastern Europe Summit, 12 liberal youth organizations from Central and Eastern Europe argued in favor of a new policy towards Russia taking the sentiments of Central and Eastern European states into account. The paper addressed the issues of geopolitics, the EU's economic relations with the Russian Federation as well as Russian disinformation campaigns. In November 2022, **14 organizations** came together to discuss these issues again, find complementary demands that consider the new situation and **underline the irresistible solidarity with Ukraine**.

Issue 1: Geopolitical questions / Ukraine's future belongs in Europe / military and financial support for Ukraine

Since 1991, the Russian Federation has exerted considerable influence on post-Soviet states as a military and economic power. In particular, states such as Ukraine or Moldova are strongly exposed to this influence and are victims of Russian aggression. 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. At the same time, the EU and NATO have missed the right moment to provide these states with decisive security guarantees. The Russian war against Ukraine can only end when Ukraine has re-acquired the entirety of its sovereign territory. Therefore, the EU and NATO should offer these states security guarantees and economic perspectives in order to reestablish European security.

We demand:

- the EU should offer Ukraine and Moldova a realistic EU perspective in order to integrate both into the EU in the long term. Additionally, the European Union must heavily invest into Ukraine's strategic security, namely through a Marshall Plan for Ukraine* and its already ongoing reconstruction as well as military-industrial complex and security cooperation. The reconstruction of the country should go hand in hand with the EU accession process of Ukraine.
 - the renunciation of the NATO-Russia foundation act since Russia entirely ignores it for its strategic benefit, leading to severe threats for the concerned countries in Central and Eastern Europe.
 - for NATO to freely deploy substantial troops to its frontier in order to defend the NATO territory, in light of Russian conventional and nuclear threats towards NATO and its partners.
- that Russia pays war reparations, and Putin and other individuals responsible for the war and war crimes be brought before the International Court of Justice in The Hague. Russia must remain isolated as long as its totalitarian regime is in power and continues to threaten the international order.
 - that Russia does not interfere with the export of food from Ukraine, especially through the Black Sea and Ukrainian ports. We call on third countries and international organizations to guarantee the exports, in order to prevent a global food crisis.
 - to establish (for the moment) a common European air defense system including Ukraine and investments in heavy weaponry to protect Europe from aggression by Russia and its allies. At the same time, a common European army should be the long-term objective of the EU.
 - the EU should support Ukraine with a guaranteed amount for humanitarian aid and the reconstruction of the country's economy and infrastructure based on an annual review on the needed resources. Additionally, the Russian assets frozen in Europe should be used for the reconstruction of Ukraine wherever possible.



It's necessary to establish an interim common European air defence system involving Ukraine and investment in heavy weapons to protect Europe from aggression by Russia and its allies. A common European army should be a long-term goal of the EU.



* Acknowledging that the support package for Ukraine with the amount of 18 billion € is already a significant step into the right direction for humanitarian aid and the reconstruction of Ukraine.

Issue 2 Energy security in the EU and sanctions against Russia

Europe and especially Germany were and still are dependent on Russia as a gas supplier: The EU obtained 43% of its natural gas imports from Russia in 2020. In comparison with all EU member states, Germany has had the highest natural gas imports from Russia, with 55% of its overall gas imports in 2020. At the same time, the obvious political leverage of the Kremlin was ignored, in particular, by Germany – Gazprom reduced its gas supplies up to 24 of February 2022. Since then, there has finally been an understanding of the problem of diversifying energy imports and dependencies. Since 2014, the EU has regularly extended sanctions against Russia. The sanctions were further extended after 24 February. Sanctions against Russia and decisions taken on the individual or European level have achieved considerable progress in lowering the European dependency on Russian energy exports, and have curbed the further growth of Russian profits from these exports. Nevertheless, the EU still needs to promote sanctions and its energy diversification.

We therefore demand that the EU must:

- expand the SWIFT ban to more Russian banking institutions as the current state is not at all sufficient, and its randomization creates inequalities and “back doors” used to pay for further imports of Russian energy materials
- continue and fulfill complete cut off of all Russian energy imports while making strides towards energy independence
 - noting that LNG imports are a viable short-term solution used to bridge this gap and are not environmentally sustainable with regard to the undemocratic character of certain exporting countries such as the Gulf states .
 - promoting, swiftly and systematically, and across Europe, increasing capacity of renewable energy sources and nuclear power.
- always bearing in mind the long-term goal of reducing energy reliability from all third

countries and striving for ambitious climate goals

- promote the expansion of interconnectivity between the electrical grids of EU member states and its regional partners and secure that critical infrastructure is up to date and able to resist sabotage attempts or cyber attacks
- ban tourist visas for Russian citizens and establish a common European framework for more precise and in-depth background checks for visas considering the current misuse of visas



The EU must further cut off energy imports from Russia in their full extent and at the same time concentrate on creating energy independence.



- intensify controls of exports
 - the main goal of the sanctions is the strangling of the Russian military complex; hence we advocate for more stringent control of exports relevant to Russian military production.
 - the Russian military industry is highly import dependent. Russia imports large parts of its tools relevant for industrial production, such as CNCs, from just a few Western countries. This constitutes a critical import bottleneck.
 - currently, this bottleneck seems not to be sufficiently exploited
 - thus, we demand export controls to be stricter enforced, monitored and breaches effectively prosecute.

Issue 3 Countering Russian meddling

Russian disinformation campaigns have become a great threat to democratic societies. These campaigns target especially radical forces and frustrated individuals who do not see themselves represented by the political systems and try to spread confusion. 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. The Kremlin's disinformation exploits the basis 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.

As these 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 diaspora, and the rise of radical anti-democratic forces. Especially since the full-scale war against Ukraine, the Russian disinformation campaigns have become even more aggressive and need to be counteracted.

We therefore demand that the EU must:

- support European measures to make information and news more accessible through the translation of media releases into minority languages.
- establish education programs and trainings supporting media literacy and critical thinking in society
 - o implementing interdisciplinary education on critical thinking, critical consumption of media (including reading of statistics and graphs, double fact-checking) handling misinformation in schools as well as in higher education.
 - o schools should encourage media curiosity by making a diverse set of news sources accessible.

- o continuing training for educators, teachers, and lecturers on media literacy.
- o promote a standard of social sciences being part of the school curriculum.
- o offering seminars and low level public information and information campaigns on all governmental levels oriented to different age groups and individual life situations.
- o while the EU Digital Service Act serves as a basis for fighting disinformation, the EU has to employ mechanism that go beyond that such as.
 - continuous effective legislation and work against the mechanisms employed to spread disinformation while respecting privacy rights and the freedom of speech.
 - Venice commission serving as an advisory institution for legislation initiatives for each state.

“

The EU must promote and create educational programs and trainings to develop media literacy and critical thinking in society.

”

- promote independent media within and outside the EU, in particular in Russian.
- diminishing language barriers through cultural exchange and language courses to enable people to actively consume media in national language(s) of one country.
- support actors from civil society who actively disclose and investigate connections and cooperation of organizations and individuals with the Kremlin.

- block Russian state television channels and propaganda broadcasted on other media channels as well.
- establish contact points where people can get professional support if they have experienced trauma or are related negatively to a topic, making it easier to manipulate them with Russian disinformation.
- financially support local authorities and Ukrainian communities all around Europe to enable an exchange between the local population and Ukrainians who provide personal insight into their war experiences.



European Liberal Youth



European Youth of Ukraine (UKR)



International Federation of Liberal Youth



Young liberal NEOS (AUT)



Liberal Democratic Youth of Ukraine (UKR)



MlaDa Bulgaria (BGR)



Nowoczesna Youth (POL)



Save Romania Union Youth (ROU)



Swedish Youth (FIN)



Young ANO (CZE)



MLADÍ OBČANÉ

Young Citizens (CZE)



Young Liberals (DEU)



Young Progressives (SVK)



Ze!Molodizhka (UKR)



**FRIEDRICH NAUMANN
FOUNDATION** For Freedom.
Central Europe and the Baltic States

This position paper was supported
by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation for Freedom.