

DAAD Meeting „Setting Out for the Future – How can we Drive Europe Forward?“

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Workshop „Europe’s role in the world “ – Policy Paper’s Draft

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Introduction

- We acknowledge that the Russian government is an aggressor, and we vocally condemn its aggression against Ukraine. At the same time, Russia is and will remain a neighbor; hence, we call upon the EU to establish a sustainable but value-based working relationship with Moscow. Furthermore, we believe that the alienation of the Russian people, especially Putin's opponents, should be avoided.
- We see this dramatic crisis also as an opportunity to drive change in the EU. Because this war, the climate crisis and the EU energy dependence on Russia are overlapping issues, we must take advantage of the current momentum to take long-term decisions to make the EU stronger and greener.

Recommendations

1) People-to-people contacts

Reaching out to Russian citizens: while we understand the “maximum pressure” strategy on the Russian Federation, we observe worrying instances of discrimination against Russian citizens (i.e. hate speech on social media, discrimination of Russian citizens living abroad, unilateral stop of artistic or academic collaborations with Russians...). Such cases could be used as propaganda tools as they fit into the Kremlin’s narratives on “Russophobia”. Instead, the EU should reach out to Russian citizens, especially to those who oppose Putin. To this end, we recommend EU policy-makers:

- To make use of diplomatic means and channels on all levels to reach out to Russian citizens. That includes EU institutions, companies and interactions between members of civil society (hence, a revival and update of first, second and third track diplomacy). In all of this, it is of crucial importance to present a united front and a coherent strategy in EU foreign diplomacy.
- to publish guidelines or statements to help EU states to better tailor the EU isolation strategies avoiding plain, indiscriminate discrimination against Russian citizens that could be unfair and counterproductive.

Find ways to bypass media laws in Russia: The Kremlin’s crackdown on independent media reached new highs with the war. As a result, more independent Russian news outlets shut down, and many foreign outlets have suspended all of their operations in Russia. In light of this, we recommend EU policy-makers:

- To look into ways to provide Russian citizens with free VPNs

- To encourage foreign journalists to stay in Russia to keep providing coverage, albeit reduced due to the current challenging conditions. At the same time, the security of these journalists is a priority, meaning that EU governments should find ways to ensure it, for instance through embassies.
- To increase funding for the European Endowment for Democracy.

Foster academic exchange. Academic exchange is a powerful tool for EU soft power, but under the current circumstances, it can become a matter of life and death for many Ukrainian scholars who are fleeing the war. A similar point could be made for Russian scholars, who expressed their opposition to Putin and now need to leave the country for their safety. In light of this, we recommend EU policy-makers to:

- Encourage universities within the EU to boost their exchange and scholarship programs, open to people at risk (Ukrainians **and** Russians)
- Provide additional funds and European coordination to administer EU scholarships for scholars at risk (for example, through Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions, the EU's reference programme for doctoral education and postdoctoral training)

II) Design inclusive and impactful policies towards Ukraine

We consider it of utmost importance to continue reaching out to the most vulnerable groups inside and fleeing Ukraine (i.e., disabled persons, women, and others). We recommend EU policy-makers to:

- Involve citizen lobbies and use personal connections (networks) in the policy design
- Create a fund that NGOs can apply for to organise initiatives involving Russian and Ukrainian participants to keep people-to-people connections both between Russians and Ukrainians and the EU
- Push for the inclusion of women in the ongoing bilateral and multilateral peace negotiations. A sustainable peace depends on their active participation and diverse negotiation teams. This point is certainly valid for the Russian negotiating team as well, but the EU has little chance to influence the process from Moscow's side. On the other hand, the EU should make use of the political leverage and conditionality it possesses vis-a-vis Ukraine to make a positive impact.

A transparent and swift accession process for Ukraine

In its Conclusions of the meeting of 24/25 March 2022, the European Council reaffirmed its Versailles Declaration of 24 February and its invitation to the Commission to submit its decision on Ukraine's application for EU membership. Additionally, the European Council has pledged to provide support for the reconstruction of a post-war democratic Ukraine.

- We acknowledge that the EU accession process should continue in its current form regarding all the ongoing applications for membership, but call for it to be conveyed more transparently and evaluated on possibilities of speeding it up.
- The EU should furthermore swiftly set out a clear roadmap for development cooperation with and economic assistance to a post-war democratic Ukraine.
- The EU should reflect on how future enlargement would affect the EU internally, which potential measures should be included in the future reform of the Treaties and what kind of Union the EU should develop into.

III) EU's energy independence

We endorse EU efforts to achieve independence from Russian gas through the REpowerEU plan and urge EU policy-makers to speed up the process even more. We recommend to:

- Keep imposing harsh sanctions, especially an energy embargo, following the approach Poland has announced, of phasing out imports by the end of the year. Meanwhile, we need to keep in mind the risk of “catastrophic success” and the void that is left in Russia after sanctions (sober risk assessment). A possible energy embargo could be lifted only when specific conditions set by the EU (for instance, withdrawal of Russian military forces from the Ukrainian territory) will be met by the Russian government.
- At the same time, we acknowledge that an energy embargo on a short timescale will have drastic consequences for European consumers and businesses. To soften the blow, we propose a new European energy solidarity mechanism to address price hikes and possible shortages of fossil fuels. This solidarity mechanism should be comprised of a financial tool and a technical one.
- We propose to set up an EU fund to provide i) relief funds supporting low-income households facing short-term rising energy prices in an EU-wide, coordinated programme, ii) flexible credits for businesses most affected by the energy prices, iii) funds to increase energy efficiency in both homes and businesses. We highlight that the increasing energy efficiency can also significantly contribute to the ambitions of the European Green Deal.
- On the technical side, we propose that the EU should i) coordinate the distribution of available fuels to avoid shortages in single-member states, ii) identify and improve the infrastructure needed to share resources (e.g. LNG terminals, pipelines, storage facilities).