



 European
Leadership
Network

*Building European capacity to meet
the challenges of the 21st century*

June 2016

Survey

What is the future for EU–Russia relations?

A survey of European Leadership
Network members for the EU's Global
Strategy on foreign and security policy

Executive Summary

In February-March 2016, the European Leadership Network contacted its members – former, present and emerging political, military, and diplomatic leaders from the broader Europe area – to seek out their opinions regarding the current state of and future prospects for EU–Russia relations and the pan-European security architecture. The 42 respondents represent a diverse and experienced group of individuals from 20 countries and all major regions of Europe.

The main findings of the survey can be summarized as follows:

- **The pan-European security system is not ideal, but it is worth preserving.**
While some modifications were proposed, there was very little support for the creation of a new system.
- **The EU should put its weight behind the OSCE as an instrument for monitoring and mediating the conflicts in the broader European area.**
- **A transformation of Russia’s policy, not accommodation with Moscow, should be the EU’s goal.** The current EU policy of making a full resumption of ties and any future deepening of cooperation with Russia contingent on a change in Russian behaviour received the broadest support.
- **The top three areas of potential EU security cooperation with Russia**, as identified by the respondents, should be:
 - The Middle East crisis;
 - the fight against terrorism and;
 - Non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms control.
- **Regarding the common EU-Russia neighbourhood, cooperation is possible to envision, but difficult to pursue at the present time.**
The majority thought that it is possible to reach a satisfactory modus vivendi with Russia at some point, but Moscow’s policy towards the region remains the main obstacle.
- **An overwhelming majority of respondents (85%) remained in favour of maintaining the original linkage of EU sanctions removal with Russia’s actions in Ukraine.**
More specifically, half of the respondents supported the position that the sanctions should be gradually phased out only in return for progress on the implementation of the Minsk 2 agreements.

- **There was substantial backing for the EU's engagement with the Eurasian Economic Union**, but most of the respondents opted for a conditional offer, with EU-EEU cooperation being made dependant on the modification of Russian behaviour.
- **With regard to the sufficiency of protection of EU member states against hybrid warfare through EU/NATO cooperation, the survey revealed widely diverging assessments.**

While 26% considered the actions taken so far by NATO and the EU as adequate, 29% thought them insufficient.

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What is the future for EU – Russia relations?

A survey of European Leadership Network members for the EU's Global Strategy on foreign and security policy

Introduction and Key Findings

The European Union is in the process of preparing a new Global Strategy on foreign and security policy. In the context of the volatile situation in the eastern part of the continent and Russia's behaviour, the future of the pan-European security architecture and EU's relationship with Moscow cannot help but feature prominently in this new document.

In order to contribute to the development of the Global Strategy, the European Leadership Network has undertaken to survey its members¹ regarding the present security situation in Europe and the state and future prospects of EU-Russia relations. A structured survey was used to elicit views and was mailed to 160 members of the ELN. **42 members of the ELN provided responses to the survey conducted in February-March 2016**, representing a response rate of 26.25% percent. A copy of the survey questionnaire is included in Appendix 1.

The respondents represent a diverse and experienced group of individuals from 20 countries covering all the major regions of Europe. It included 12 participants from countries outside of the EU (Russia, Serbia, Turkey, and Ukraine). Among the respondents were acting and former ministers and members of governments, parliamentarians, retired military officers, diplomats and leaders of international organizations.²

The survey thus offers a snapshot of attitudes towards Russia and views on EU-Russia relations as expressed by members of the political class and opinion-shapers throughout the continent.

¹ The ELN brings together former, present and emerging European political, military, and diplomatic leaders, including not only from the EU but also Russia, Turkey, Ukraine and the rest of continent.

² The full list of survey respondents is included in the annex to this report. The ELN members took part in the survey in their personal capacity.

The main findings of the report include the following points:

- **The European security system³ is not ideal, but it is worth preserving.**

A 64% majority of the respondents supported the notion that what is needed is not a new security arrangement for Europe, but rather better implementation of the already agreed upon principles and rules. However, a notable 24% of the survey participants held the view that even though the system as such is still acceptable, there is a need to modify some of its principles.

- **The EU should put its weight behind the OSCE.**

An overwhelming majority of 83% of respondents supported the notion that the EU should work to strengthen the role of the OSCE as a forum for dialogue, as well as an instrument for monitoring and mediating the conflicts in the OSCE area.

- **A transformation of Russia's policy, not accommodation with Moscow, should be the EU's goal.**

The current EU policy of making a full resumption of ties and the deepening of cooperation with Russia contingent on a change in Russian behaviour enjoyed the support of 55% of respondents. However, a mixed group of Western European and Russian participants (24%) expressed the view that the EU should accept that Russia is pursuing a particular kind of foreign policy which is unlikely to change in near future, and should therefore base its policy on a pragmatic rather than transformative agenda.

- **When asked to identify the top three areas of security cooperation between the EU and Russia, the Middle East crisis, the fight against terrorism, and the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms control topped the list of survey participants' choices, singled out in 26%, 19%, and 14% of the responses respectively. Crisis management in the common neighbourhood was in 4th place with 12%. Notably, only 6% of the responses mentioned explicitly the crisis in Ukraine or the Minsk agreements; 5% mentioned energy security; and a mere 3% the Arctic as a topic for cooperation.**

³ Understood as a system based on the 1975 Helsinki Principles and subsequent OSCE commitments, voluntarily accepted by all the countries from the region.

- **Cooperation regarding the common EU-Russia neighbourhood is possible to envision, but difficult to pursue at the present time.**

The results of the survey show that a vast majority of respondents (71%) shared the opinion that the EU and Russia have both converging and conflicting interests when it comes to the common neighbourhood. It is therefore possible to reach a mutually satisfactory *modus vivendi*, however Moscow's current policy towards the region remains the main obstacle to reaching it. Taking an opposing view, however, 26% of the surveyed group supported the view that the EU and Russia's interests in Eastern Europe remain essentially irreconcilable and the EU should pursue its own policy goals in the region, even if it causes a deterioration of relations with Moscow.

- **Out of 42 respondents, only four supported ending the EU sanctions against Russia without any further change in the Russian position.** An overwhelming majority of respondents (85%) remained in favour of maintaining the original linkage of EU sanctions with Russia's actions in Ukraine. Within this group, the majority (52%) supported the position that the sanctions should be gradually phased out in return for progress on the implementation of the Minsk 2 agreements, while a smaller group (33%) remained in favour of maintaining or even enhancing the EU sanctions as a pressure instrument to restore the full territorial integrity of Ukraine, including Crimea.
- **There was strong backing for the EU's conditional engagement with the Eurasian Economic Union.** 63% of the 41 respondents to this question opted for such a conditional offer, with EU-EEU cooperation being made dependant on the modification of Russian behaviour. However 29% supported the development, at the EU's instigation, of a working relationship with the EEU without any preconditions.
- **With regard to the sufficiency of protection of EU member states against hybrid warfare through EU-NATO cooperation, survey participants differed sharply in their responses.** 28% of responders did not provide any answer to this question, perhaps mirroring confusion around the concept itself. 26% considered the actions taken so far by NATO and the EU as adequate whereas 29% thought them insufficient, with a further 17% noting that the Eastern members can never be fully 'proofed' against hybrid threats by these organizations.

The rest of this report provides a more detailed analysis of the survey findings. It is structured to mirror the order in which the eight survey questions were asked.

Theme 1: European Security Architecture

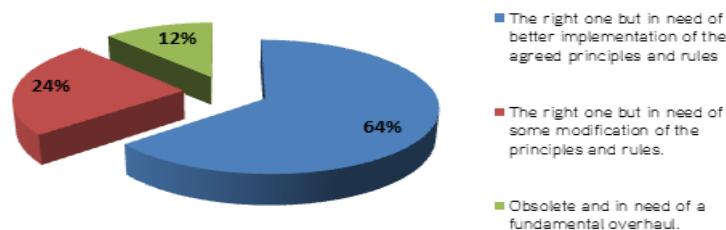
Survey Question (1): In your opinion, is the current pan-European security architecture, based on the Helsinki principles...

- a. The right one but in need of better implementation of the agreed principles and rules?*
- b. The right one but in need of some modification of the principles and rules. If so, what changes would you suggest*
- c. Obsolete and in need of a fundamental overhaul. If so, what changes would you suggest.*

The European security system has been severely tested by the events of the last two years. Some of its basic principles, including refraining from the threat or use of force, respect for the territorial integrity of states, inviolability of borders, human rights and fundamental freedoms have been called into question, primarily in the context of the Russian actions in Ukraine. While the crisis re-focused attention on the importance of the OSCE neither this nor any other institution managed to stop the crisis from deteriorating further or provided an effective resolution.

In relation to this crisis and the uncertainties it generates, the ELN survey revealed strong support for the maintenance of the security system based on the Helsinki principles and for the strengthening of the existing pan-European security architecture.

The current pan-European security architecture, based on the Helsinki principles is...



64% of respondents (27 of those surveyed) supported the notion that what is needed is better implementation of the already agreed upon principles and rules. A number of respondents highlighted that the existing rules of the European security system are based on international law. The Helsinki Final Declaration – although adopted during the Cold War – has been re-confirmed and expanded by the Paris Charter for the New Europe and all

subsequent OSCE documents; it was also adopted by the European Union as the foundation of its policy. One respondent termed the Helsinki principles “*the equivalent of a 20th century Treaty of Westphalia*.” Another noted that the relevance of Helsinki’s basic principles may be as pronounced now as in the 1970s: “*if those principles were agreed upon during a period of confrontation, they are surely valid today, when we got back to square one, namely to confrontation*”. Two respondents also expressed their concern that opening up the system for review and potential modifications would lead to more instability, and even potentially to some countries and groups questioning the territorial status quo in Europe.

However, **24% of the survey participants (10 people) held the view that even though the Helsinki-based system as such is still acceptable, there is a need to modify some of its principles**. Those who supported the modification of the existing rules presented a wide array of view. Some declared in favour of strengthening the accountability and enforcement mechanisms within the system in order to deter violations or punish the perpetrators. One respondent went as far as to suggest that the European security architecture should be re-modelled to exclude Russia, as “*it is impossible to have an effective security architecture trying to combine absolutely different approaches to security*”.

From the group, four respondents (including two from Russia) suggested that the system should be modified broadly in line with suggestions expressed by Moscow, for example by highlighting the importance of the principle of indivisibility of security and “*eliminating double standards in the implementation of the principles*”.

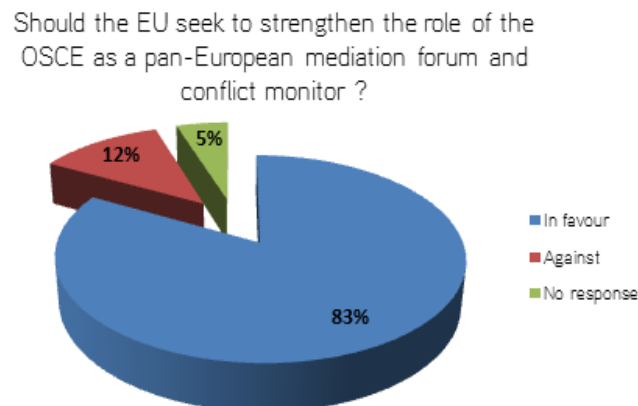
One participant suggested that the existence of NATO should be discussed, as it is an obstacle to the emergence of an effective security system in Europe. Finally, there were specific proposals for the modification of the principles, including introducing explicitly the concepts of humanitarian intervention and the responsibility to protect, elaborating on the principles of self-determination and non-intervention, as well as examining the influence of technological progress on the exercise of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Only five respondents (12%) thought that the current system and architecture is obsolete and in need of a fundamental overhaul. They mostly referred to the consequences of rapid geopolitical changes in the decades following the collapse of the Soviet Union. As put by one of the respondents, the “*Helsinki principles dealt with a radically different historical period*” and thus are no longer adequate to the new circumstances. Another respondent suggested the need to work on a new overall institutional framework, as “*the OSCE mandate [is] too limited*” and other organizations remain too narrow in terms of membership or scope of activities.

Role of the OSCE

Survey question (2): Should the EU seek to strengthen the role of the OSCE as a pan-European mediation forum and conflict monitor and if so, how?

An overwhelming majority of respondents (83%, 35 respondents) supported the notion that the EU should seek to strengthen the role of the OSCE as a forum for dialogue, as well as an instrument for monitoring and mediating in the conflicts in the OSCE area.



Survey participants highlighted that the organization remains the only body bringing together all the states from the Euro-Atlantic and Eurasian regions and is particularly needed now as a forum to decide jointly on the measures to stabilize the newly-emerged conflict zones.

As put by one respondent: *“Since the fall of the USSR, the OSCE embodied the role of a soft security chaperon. However, the de-stabilization of the European Eastern neighbourhood renewed its significance”*. Field missions of the OSCE, primarily the SMM in Ukraine, were also mentioned as evidence of the organization’s usefulness.

This group agreed that the EU can be instrumental in making the OSCE more effective and adjusting its activities to the new circumstances. Several specific recommendations for the EU and its members were broached, including:

- EU support with regards to the allocation of additional funds, personnel, equipment, as well as broadening the mandates for the OSCE missions;
- Better coordination of the EU’s and OSCE’s political agendas, in particular when an EU member state assumes the OSCE Chairmanship;

- Better use of collective EU political 'weight' to ensure a balanced OSCE agenda.

At the same time, a number of respondents took note of the limitations and weaknesses of the OSCE, including its ability to act only on the basis of consensus and thus relative ease with which its actions can be blocked, lack of resources and weak or non-existent enforcement mechanisms for some of its decisions.

Five respondents (12%) took the opposing view. One participant went as far as simply stating that *'the OSCE is dead'*. The other four focused on highlighting its ineffectiveness for mediation and conflict monitoring efforts, with an assessment that the organization *'will remain the place for endless discussions'* but it is ill-suited for effective mediation and resolution of the crisis.

Theme 2: Relations with Russia

Survey question (3): As a matter of general approach to relations with Russia, the EU should...

- a. accept Russia's stance on foreign policy as it is and agree new rules of coexistence and closer cooperation
- b. try to influence Russia's policy by making closer cooperation contingent upon Moscow's adherence to the rules and values of the European security system and its previously accepted obligations
- c. offer cooperation only in specific areas where the interests of the EU require Russia's involvement

Even before the current crisis, the EU-Russia relationship was troubled. Ambitious plans for closer political, societal and economic links were largely not implemented. Russia expressed more and more forcefully its opposition to the EU's Eastern Partnership agenda of forging closer links with former Soviet Union countries. The EU grew increasingly critical of Russia's internal developments, its assertive policy towards its neighbours and attempts to gain influence over EU decision-making.

Currently, beyond the tactical issues, such as the scope and utility of sanctions, the basic strategic question for the EU seem to be whether to oppose and try to influence Russia's policy by making closer cooperation contingent upon Moscow's adherence to the rules and values of the European system, or whether to accept the new Russia and its policy "as it is" and move towards agreeing the new rules of the relationship.



The survey confirmed that the current policy of the EU of making a full resumption and any future deepening of cooperation with Russia contingent on alteration of Russian behaviour enjoys the broadest support, with 23 (55%) of the respondents in favour of this option.

As put by one of the respondents, “*we are where we are because Russia, not the EU, reversed its course from cooperation to confrontation*”, hence it is ‘logical’ to demand that it steps back from its current stance. Another highlighted that the EU can and should use its economic leverage in relations with Moscow, and increase or decrease cooperation “to the same extent as Moscow adheres to the European rules and values”.

Five respondents also explained why they rejected the alternative of seeking accommodation with Russia. According to one response, it would be interpreted by Russia as “*a sign of weakness, encouraging further assertiveness*”. Another respondent noted that resumption of relations would enable Russia to “*pursue an agenda-setting role in EU member states*”, giving it more influence on internal political processes.

However, a notable group of respondents took a different view on the future of the EU-Russia relationship. **10 respondents (24%) supported the view that the EU should accept Russia’s stance on foreign policy as it is and agree on new rules of coexistence and cooperation.**

Within this group, which included Russian as well as western European participants, some highlighted the need for more dialogue with Moscow “*without patronizing*” it and for developing a better understanding of the rationale and trajectory of Russian policy vis-à-vis the European Union.

One participant called for a re-examination of the “*past mistakes*” of EU policy towards the Eastern neighbourhood. Another suggested accepting that the EU has limited space of manoeuvre in relations with Russia and re-engagement is the most realistic option.

Four respondents believed the EU should pursue purely pragmatic cooperation with Russia, focused on specific areas where the interests of the EU require Russia’s involvement. According to one participant in the survey, “*as distasteful as I find acceptance of the situation, I don’t see how [other options] bring Europe closer to any kind of improved relationship with Russia*”. Three further respondents suggested that the EU can pursue pragmatic cooperation and simultaneously hold out the offer of broader improvement of relations if Russia’s overall policy changes.

One participant noted that the EU should do more fundamental soul-searching with regard to its Russian policy. In the past, “*the EU’s well-meaning attempts to influence and improve*

relations with Russia have achieved nothing (apart from piles of unreadable paper)". As a consequence, "we should resign ourselves to the truth" that the EU cannot influence Russia's future or its policy in any significant way.

Areas of Cooperation

Survey question (4): What in your view are the three most important areas of foreign and security policy (regionally or globally) where the EU should cooperate with Russia?

Regardless of current policy differences, there seems to be a widespread agreement that as far as foreign affairs and the security domain are concerned, the EU and Russia have some common interests and cooperation would be mutually beneficial. The survey participants were asked to identify the three most important areas of foreign and security policy where the EU should cooperate with Russia. The respondents were invited to identify the areas themselves and were not given a prepared list of options. Since some of the participants decided to choose less than three topics this resulted in 117 responses.⁴

The largest number of responses (26%) singled out the situation in the Middle East and North Africa (including the Syrian crisis and relations with Iran) as an area for cooperation. These were mentioned 30 times by all the respondents. The severity of the challenges coming from the region and the need to cooperate to tackle them was widely recognized by participants from all major regions, indicating that cooperative solutions and multilateral diplomacy, involving the EU, Turkey and Russia, would be preferable for the respondents to unilateral initiatives.

Taking into account the increased level of threat and the severity of the recent attacks conducted in a number of countries in Europe, is it unsurprising that **countering terrorism was identified as a subject for cooperation by 18 participants.** Four participants also mentioned specifically the fight against ISIS. Overall, these 22 responses represent 19% of the poll.

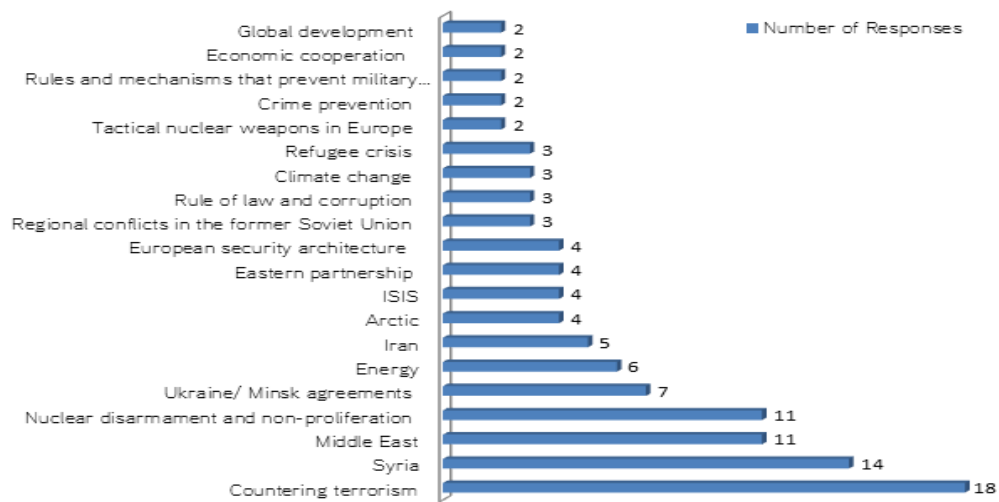
The third most frequently mentioned area of cooperation is **non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, nuclear and conventional disarmament and arms control**, which was highlighted 12 times. Two additional respondents have singled out tactical nuclear weapons in Europe as a topic for possible cooperation; with a further two suggesting a focus on the prevention of military incidents and increasing the transparency and predictability of operations of the armed forces. Overall these 16 responses represent 14% of the poll.

The European security architecture, conflicts in the common neighbourhood area in general, and the Ukraine crisis and implementation of Minsk agreements specifically, were identified as topics for EU-Russia cooperation 14 times in total, representing 12% of all the responses.

⁴ Rather than 126 responses had all survey participants picked three topics.

Notably, only six responses singled out energy security as a field of cooperation, only three participants identified the refugee crisis and only four the Arctic as areas of possible cooperation. This could be an indication that most of those surveyed consider that the interests of the EU and Russia are so divergent in these areas that cooperation may not be feasible.

Most important areas of foreign and security policy where the EU should cooperate with Russia



Mentioned once: conflict management and resolution, respect for OSCE rules, stabilising the global economy, enforcing the fundamental principles of international law, protection of environment, conventional disarmament, North Korea.

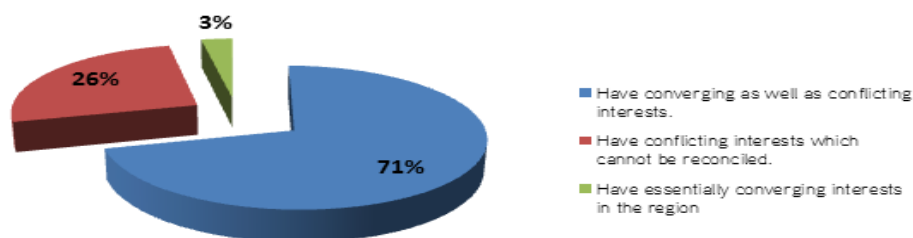
Common Neighbourhood

Survey question (5): In your opinion, with regard to the common neighbourhood of Eastern Europe, do the EU and Russia...

- a. have conflicting interests which cannot be reconciled? If so, should the EU be pursuing its own interests even at the expense of those of Russia?*
- b. have converging as well as conflicting interests? If so should the EU agree on a mutually acceptable regional modus vivendi with Russia to limit confrontation while maximising cooperation?*
- c. have essentially converging interests in the region? If so, what can be done to ensure that these converging interests are more fully understood and impact on relations?*

The countries situated 'in-between' the European Union and Russia are often said to face a choice between the EU and Russia-promoted models of political and economic development. The EU's offer for the region does not include membership, but its Eastern Partnership program covers association, visa-free movement and free trade area perspective. Russia pursues its own policy of strengthening its influence and links with the countries of its Western neighbourhood, including through the Eurasian Economic Union. Far from being passive actors, the common neighbourhood countries pursue their own policies which are more Western-leaning (Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova), more Moscow-oriented (Belarus, Armenia), or multi-vector (Azerbaijan), but often are more nuanced and flexible than such simple description would indicate, as well as subject to changes over time.

With regard to the common neighbourhood of Eastern Europe,
the EU and Russia...



As for the future of the EU's Eastern policy, the basic issue to determine seems to be whether, in the perception of the decision-makers, EU and Russian interests in the area can be somehow reconciled, or whether they will remain mostly divergent. If the former is the case, current tensions can be overcome. If the latter is true, the EU and Russia will

most likely remain locked in a lengthy conflict over the political and economic choices of the countries concerned.

The results of the survey show that an overwhelming majority of 71% (30) respondents share the opinion that the EU and Russia have converging as well as conflicting interests when it comes to the common neighbourhood.

Stability in the region, advancement of trade and mutually beneficial energy relations were identified by the respondents as areas where Russian and EU interests come together. One respondent noted that the differences of interests towards Eastern Europe and the South Caucasus are natural and not problematic as such, but it is *“the wider context of Russian behaviour”* and tactics used by the Russian government to pursue its goals – particularly in Ukraine – that makes cooperation difficult even when common interests exist.

In terms of achieving a mutually acceptable regional *modus vivendi* with Russia, the issue of the freedom of common neighbours to shape their strategic relations with the EU and Russia was identified in five of the responses as the main obstacle. As put by one of the respondents, *“while the EU considers the area as a “common neighbourhood”, expecting the countries to decide for themselves who to join, Russia considers it as its sphere of influence, asking for a “droit de regard” over their [strategic] decisions”*.

As a way around it, another participant suggested an agreement on *“no further movement in membership of collective defence organisations for the foreseeable future”*, but accompanied by a declaration that the common neighbourhood countries have full rights to pursue relations with the EU. Another respondent described the possible new aim for EU-Russia relations as regards the common neighbourhood as *“honest competition without confrontation”*.

Only two responders within this group expressed an opinion that, as long as Russia continues with its behaviour, competition remains a dominating factor in the relationship, hence *“no overall modus vivendi is possible or desirable”*.

According to 11 respondents, or 26% of the surveyed group, the EU and Russia currently pursue conflicting and irreconcilable sets of interests towards the common neighbourhood area. As a consequence, most agreed that the EU should be pursuing its own interests even at the expense of Russia. One of the respondents noted that since Russia sees no problems in pursuing its own interests at the expense of the EU or its partners, the EU should not try to restrain its own behaviour. On the contrary, *“the EU should be very firm (much firmer than now) in protecting its interests, partners and the integrity of international law from unwarranted and illegitimate infringements by Russia”*.

Only one respondent was of the opinion that EU and Russian interests are essentially converging, and the current conflict has been caused by “disturbances” in the relationship, resulting from a lack of “meaningful discussions” between the two sides.

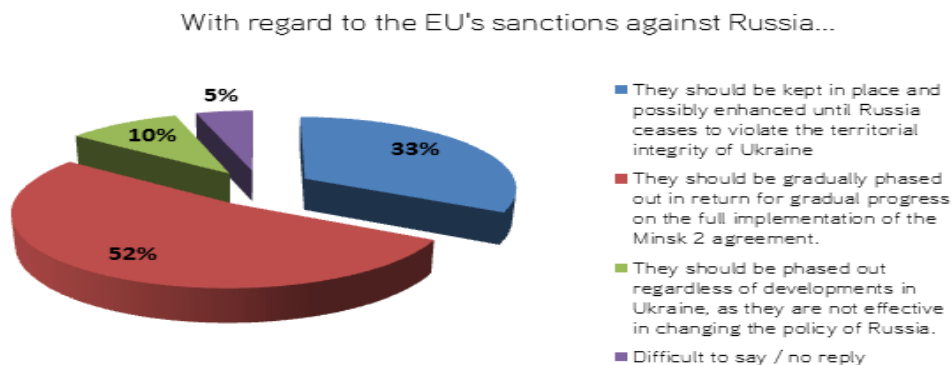
Sanctions

Survey question (6): With regard to the EU's sanctions against Russia:

- Should these be kept in place and possibly enhanced until Russia ceases to violate the territorial integrity of Ukraine?
- Should they be gradually phased out in return for gradual progress on the full implementation of the Minsk 2 agreement?
- Should be phased out regardless of developments in Ukraine, as they are not effective in changing the policy of Russia?

In the aftermath of the Russian seizure of Crimea, the EU imposed a set of sanctions on Russia with the broadest economic measures introduced in July and September 2014 as the confrontation in Eastern Ukraine escalated. Russia responded with its own sanctions, targeting imports of agricultural products from the EU. Subsequently the sanctions have been prolonged both by the EU and Russia. On the EU side, the question of review of their continued application has been linked most prominently with the implementation of the Minsk agreements on a ceasefire and the resolution of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine.

The survey participants were presented with three policy choices with regards to the future of the sanctions. The first, while not explicitly mentioning Crimea, stipulated that the sanctions should be kept in place and possibly enhanced until Russia ceases to violate the territorial integrity of Ukraine. The second option made an explicit link between gradual easing of sanctions and gradual implementation of the Minsk 2 agreements on Eastern Ukraine, with the phasing out of the sanctions as a consequence of their full implementation. Finally, the third option was to discontinue the sanctions regardless of developments in Ukraine.⁵



⁵ Two respondents did not wish to provide a reply to the question, noting that they are not EU citizens.

Out of 42 respondents, only four supported the unconditional phase-out of sanctions.

In one case, the discontinuation was suggested as a *“test to see the Russian reaction”*.

The main line of division seems to be, in essence, the issue of whether to keep the EU sanctions as a pressure instrument to change the overall Russian policy towards Ukraine (including on Crimea) or whether to treat them as an instrument to support conflict resolution specifically in Eastern Ukraine.

52% of those surveyed (22 participants) supported the notion that the sanctions should be gradually phased out in return for gradual progress on the implementation of the Minsk 2 agreements.

As summarized by one of the respondents, *“the focus should be now on the peaceful resolution of the conflict in Eastern Ukraine and on motivating Russia for a constructive cooperation”*. Since the link between EU sanctions and the Minsk arrangements has been made, moving away from it *“would harm the EU’s credibility in the eyes of both Russia and the world”*. It was also noted that the sanctions have been important in terms of *“the signal they send of the EU’s continued unity (much stronger than expected by the Russian leadership)”*. At the same time, three of the respondents noted that Russia is not the only participant of the Minsk process, and the future of sanctions needs to be assessed against the performance of other parties, most importantly Ukraine.

Regarding Crimea, four respondents within the group noted that while they acknowledge that some of the EU’s punitive measures were introduced in response to Russian annexation of the peninsula, the focus should now be on what can *“realistically”* be achieved in relations with Moscow. As put by one in those responses, *“the continued Russian possession of the Crimea must not prevent an easing of tension and removal of sanctions”*.

However, **33% of those surveyed (14 participants) expressed the view that the sanctions should be kept in place – and possibly enhanced – until the territorial integrity of Ukraine is fully restored.** One participant explained that the main issue is the EU’s credibility in the face of a violation of the basic rules of European security system by Russia and solidarity with Ukraine. For another, it is an issue of managing a continuing security threat, since *“if the EU ‘forgives’ Russia Crimea and Donbas, Russia’s next stop will be Tallinn or Riga and the EU/NATO project will be over”*. Finally, one participant noted that the sanctions are already having an effect on Russia and its economy and thus they increase the EU’s leverage over Moscow.

Theme 3: EU–EEU Relations

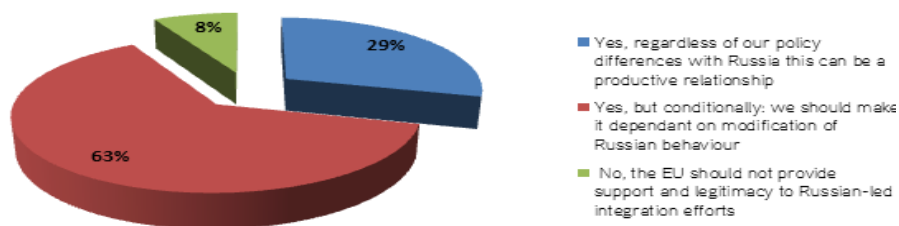
Survey question (7): Given Russia's leadership in the organization, should the EU offer to forge a cooperative working relationship with the Eurasian Economic Union?

- a. Yes, regardless of our policy differences with Russia this can be a productive relationship*
- b. Yes, but conditionally: we should make it dependant on modification of Russian behaviour*
- c. No, the EU should not provide support and legitimacy to Russian-led integration efforts⁶*

Building on previous integration efforts in the former Soviet Union area, Russia emerged as the main force behind the creation of the Eurasian Economic Union, which was inaugurated in January 2015. The EEU includes Russia, Kazakhstan, Belarus, Armenia and Kyrgyzstan and aims at facilitating economic cooperation and trade between their members. While the project formally excludes political integration, it seems to be an element of wider efforts to create a Russian-led 'Eurasian' variation of the European Communities, cementing the links of the EEU countries with Moscow. Critics of the Russian policy see the EEU as an instrument of Moscow's control over other members and a geopolitical counterbalance to the Western presence in the common neighbourhood.

So far no links have been established between the EU and the EEU, but the idea of starting a dialogue or cooperation with the organization has been repeatedly raised in the West as a means to substitute, or kick-start, stalled EU–Russia relations.

Given Russia's leadership in the organisation, the EU should offer to forge a cooperative working relationship with the Eurasian Economic Union



Responding to the question of whether the EU should forge a cooperative working relationship with the Eurasian Economic Union, 26 or 63% of the respondents opted for a conditional offer of engagement, where EU cooperation with the EEU should be made dependant on some modification of Russian behaviour.

⁶ 41 respondents provided a response to this question.

Three of the survey participants suggested explicitly linking the prospect of cooperation with a change of Russian policy towards Ukraine and not aggravating tensions with other countries in the common neighbourhood. Another respondent noted that a conditional offer of cooperation with the EEU would be a “*strategically sound choice*” as the EU has “*little to lose from limited engagement and much to lose from an open confrontation*”.

It was suggested that the EU should make clear that it approaches the EEU purely as an economic entity and that any proposal on establishing relations should not be seen as agreeing to limiting relations with its individual members. In any case, one participant concluded, the EU needs a “*comprehensive analysis of the economic and geopolitical implications of such engagement*” before making a proposal to the EEU, and also assess the actual functioning the EEU and its growth potential.

12 respondents (29%) supported the notion that the EU should offer a working relationship to the EEU without any preconditions. Two of them noted that the EU could benefit economically from such a relationship. Others viewed engagement with the EEU as a means to influence Russia, “*diversify the channels of communication*” and steer Moscow towards being a “*more responsible player*”.

One participant suggested that, once the EU-EEU relationship is initiated, other EEU members may decide to support the EU position in joint meetings and thus influence Russia towards more constructive behaviour.

Finally, **three participants rejected the suggestion of initiating a cooperative working relationship with the EEU.** One response noted that the two organizations are not comparable and thus cooperation would be disproportionately in Russia’s favour, while another suggested that initial dialogue on cooperation with the EEU may begin but no commitments on cooperation should be made.

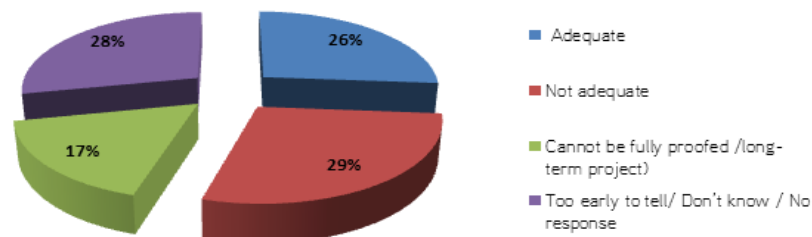
Theme 4: The Challenge of Hybrid Warfare

Survey question (8) In your opinion has EU/NATO cooperation on 'proofing' eastern members against Russian hybrid warfare been adequate? If not, what more could and should be done?

Following the annexation of Crimea and the operations in eastern Ukraine, the hybrid techniques Russia used to achieve its goals there have been of key concern to policy makers and experts at the national and EU levels. This came on top of the recognition that member states should work to address social grievances and inequalities, better integrate minorities and encourage civic engagement in order to minimise their vulnerabilities. Furthermore, the EU-NATO relationship has come to the forefront of all the efforts to tackle hybrid threats and increasing the resilience of the most exposed countries.

ELN network members were asked to assess the effectiveness of EU-NATO cooperation efforts so far on 'proofing', or making more resilient, the eastern members against Russian hybrid warfare techniques.

The EU/NATO cooperation on 'proofing' eastern members against Russian hybrid warfare has been ...



The results highlight an ambivalent assessment of what has been implemented so far. Only 30 out of 42 respondents expressed an opinion on the issue. The other participants (28%) considered the question to be either outside their area of expertise, or to have been raised prematurely as “*the EU and NATO are in the early stages of assessing hybrid threats and devising effective means to counter them*”. A further clarification provided by one of the respondents suggested that addressing the risk factors of hybrid threats is “*largely a matter for the individual member states*” while the EU as a key facilitator in this specific context could provide a “*central monitoring system with early warning signs*”.

Overall, no opinion enjoyed a clear majority, perhaps mirroring the complicated nature of hybrid challenges and responses to them.

11 participants or 26% of those surveyed assessed EU-NATO collaboration in building resilience as adequate. Both organisations are seen as having ‘acted responsibly’ in extending their efforts to help eastern member states mitigate hybrid threats and risks. Given the constantly evolving nature of such threats, three ELN members from the group noted that their assessment only reflects actions taken until now, and that there is still a need for a long-term strategy to guide all future efforts. Lastly, those who consider the current response to hybrid threats as adequate call for EU/NATO cooperation to be significantly intensified.

A slightly larger group of 12 participants (29%) evaluated the EU-NATO collaboration on addressing hybrid threats as inadequate. Three main reasons for this can be drawn from their comments. Firstly, the lack of substantial joint measures for strengthening resilience exemplifies that EU-NATO collaboration has not reached its full potential. One member categorised the relationship between the two organisations as ‘embryonic’ compared to what is possible and needed. Secondly, some respondents pointed to the fact that the mechanisms introduced as defences against the hybrid threat only exacerbate the tension in the relationship with Russia. They emphasised the need to find a *modus vivendi* with Russia, and to pursue ‘transactional’ cooperation in the areas of common interest.

Lastly, and most significantly, respondents suggested that the EU response to hybrid threats should be better resourced and more comprehensively focused on cybersecurity and strategic communications.

Finally, **a view shared among 17% (7) of the respondents is that eastern members cannot be fully ‘proofed’ against hybrid threats by the EU and NATO.** In that respect, any cooperative activities should be pursued according to the respective strengths of the organizations, but with full understanding of their limitations. A purely military response cannot counter hybrid threats, but it can complement civilian measures such as counter-information campaigns and broader political tools. Mechanisms for strengthening ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ security can be streamlined and optimised, and the scope of joint initiatives and instruments extended.

Despite the differences in the overall assessment of the defence against hybrid threats, a recurring theme in all the answers is the need to do more. Two measures stood out: firstly preparing a long-term EU/NATO counter-hybrid warfare plan which includes a joint threat perception and establishes guidelines regarding the proportionality of actions, and secondly agreeing practical steps for the implementation of such a plan.

Conclusions

The results of the survey confirm that there are no simple solutions to improve the state of EU– Russian relations. Apart from an unlikely substantial re-evaluation of Russian policy towards Europe, there seem to be no silver bullets to remove the tensions between the two sides, especially over the common neighbourhood area. Instead of forging a working partnership, the best-case scenario most of the participants can envisage seem to be a gradual and most likely torturous process of establishing a new regime of co-existence and limited EU-Russia cooperation.

The majority of the respondents seem to reject the notion that the EU should start ‘adjusting’ itself to Russian behaviour and seek a new opening in the relationship, for example by removing the sanctions or supporting a major adjustment of the principles of the European security order in line with Russian proposals. The reoccurring theme was that Russia should be the first to demonstrate, through its words and actions, that it is interested in a better relationship with the EU. Only a handful of participants’ responses suggested that the EU should make an opening move itself and put an offer of cooperation with Russia on the table. Even the idea of establishing EU-EEU links, thought by some experts to be the least controversial way forward for the EU, received only cautious support.

At the same time, the judgment that the EU and Russia are pre-determined to part their ways was very much a minority view. This suggests that with enough political will, especially on the Russian side, and some creative diplomacy, it might be possible to find an acceptable *modus vivendi* and avoid clashes over the policies pursued by the EU and Russia, especially in the common neighbourhood.

It was also recognized that there are areas in which the EU may benefit from pragmatic cooperation with Russia, based on the convergence of interests or communality of threats. Among these, the problems of the Middle East, including Syria, the fight against terrorism, and non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and arms control featured most prominently. With regards to crisis management in the common neighbourhood, working together with Russia may not necessarily be the favourite option for many participants, but seems to be unavoidable in most cases.

Finally, it should be noted that a majority of the survey participants remain committed to the European security system based on the OSCE principles, even if some are open to discussing the possible update of specific rules. Furthermore, the participants expect the European Union to help preserve the system, re-assert its importance and strengthen its legitimacy. This can be done through the EU’s own activities consistent with the OSCE principles, and through providing political and practical support to the OSCE, its institutions and its activities, including the field missions.

Appendix 1: Survey Questions

For questions 1,3,5,6 and 7 please choose the response which you think is most accurate.
For questions 2, 4 and 8 please give us your opinion.

EUROPEAN SECURITY ARCHITECTURE

1. In your opinion, is the current pan-European security architecture, based on the Helsinki principles,

- a. the right one but in need of better implementation of the agreed principles and rules?
- b. the right one but in need of some modification of the principles and rules. If so, what changes would you suggest (such as)
- c. Obsolete and in need of a fundamental overhaul. If so, what changes would you suggest.

2. Should the EU seek to strengthen the role of the OSCE as a pan-European mediation forum and conflict monitor and if so, how?

RELATIONS WITH RUSSIA

3. As a matter of general approach to relations with Russia the EU should:

- a. accept Russia's stance on foreign policy as it is and agree new rules of coexistence and closer cooperation
- b. try to influence Russia's policy by making closer cooperation contingent upon Moscow's adherence to the rules and values of the European security system and its previously accepted obligations
- c. offer cooperation only in specific areas where the interests of the EU require Russia's involvement

4. What, in your view, are the three most important areas of foreign and security policy (regionally or globally) where the EU should cooperate with Russia?

- a.
- b.
- c.

5. In your opinion, with regard to the common neighbourhood of Eastern Europe, do the EU and Russia:

- a. have conflicting interests which cannot be reconciled? If so, should the EU be pursuing its own interests even at the expense of those of Russia?
- b. have converging as well as conflicting interests? If so should the EU agree on a mutually acceptable regional modus vivendi with Russia to limit confrontation while maximising cooperation?
- c. have essentially converging interests in the region? If so, what can be done to ensure that these converging interests are more fully understood and impact on relations?

6. With regard to the EU's sanctions against Russia:

- a. Should these be kept in place and possibly enhanced until Russia ceases to violate the territorial integrity of Ukraine?
- b. Should they be gradually phased out in return for gradual progress on the full implementation of the Minsk 2 agreement?
- c. Should be phased out regardless of developments in Ukraine, as they are not effective in changing the policy of Russia?

7. Given Russia's leadership in the organization, should the EU offer to forge a cooperative working relationship with the Eurasian Economic Union?

- a. Yes, regardless of our policy differences with Russia this can be a productive relationship
- b. Yes, but conditionally: we should make it dependant on modification of Russian behaviour
- c. No, the EU should not provide support and legitimacy to Russian-led integration efforts

8. In your opinion has EU/NATO cooperation on 'proofing' eastern members against Russian hybrid warfare been adequate? If not, what more could and should be done?

Appendix 2: Survey Participants

Please note that all survey participants are acting in a personal capacity, and their response to this survey does not in any way reflect the position of any organisation they are affiliated with.

1. Lord Arbuthnot of Edrom (James Arbuthnot), former Conservative MP in the UK Parliament and Chairman of the UK Defence Select Committee, member of the House of Lords, UK
2. Ambassador Giancarlo Aragona, former Secretary General of OSCE, Ambassador to London and Moscow and Italian representative to the Albright Group for the drafting of NATO's "New Strategic Concept", ITALY
3. Mustafa Aydın, Rector of Kadir Has University (Istanbul) and President of the International Relations Council of Turkey, TURKEY
4. Ambassador Alexander Bessmertnykh, former Soviet Minister of Foreign Affairs, former Soviet Ambassador to Washington, RUSSIA
5. Dr Hans Blix, former Director General of the IAEA; Former Foreign Minister, SWEDEN
6. Ambassador Jaakko Blomberg, former Under-Secretary of State at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, FINLAND
7. Sir Tony Brenton, former UK Ambassador to Russia, UK
8. Oleksandr Chalyi, former First Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, UKRAINE
9. Tarja Cronberg, former MEP, Former Chair of the European Parliament Iran delegation, Former member of the Foreign Affairs Committee and Subcommittee of Security and Defence, FINLAND
10. Admiral Giampaolo Di Paola, former Minister of Defence, ITALY
11. Anatoli Diakov, Director at Centre for Arms Control, Energy and Environmental Studies at the Moscow Institute of Physics and Technology, RUSSIA
12. Ambassador Rolf Ekeus, former Swedish Ambassador to the Conference on Disarmament, SWEDEN

13. Uffe Ellemann-Jensen, former Danish Foreign Minister, DENMARK
14. Vahit Erdem, Ambassador, former head of the Turkish Delegation to the NATO Parliamentary Assembly and former Secretary General of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey, TURKEY
15. Stephen Gethins MP, Scottish National Party MP for North East Fife, UK
16. Anatoliy Grytsenko, current Member of Parliament, former Chairman of National Security and Defence Committee at the Parliament of Ukraine, former Defence Minister, UKRAINE
17. Lord Hannay of Chiswick (David Hannay), former Ambassador to the EU and to the UN; current Chair of UK All Party Parliamentary Group on Global Security & Non-Proliferation, UK
18. Ambassador Wolfgang Ischinger, Chair of the Munich Security Conference and co-chair of the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative, former Deputy Foreign Minister, GERMANY
19. Ambassador Tedo Japaridze, Member of Parliament and Chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee and former Minister of Foreign Affairs, GEORGIA
20. Angela Kane, former UN High Representative for Disarmament Affairs and former Under-Secretary-General for Management in the United Nations, GERMANY
21. Katja Keul, member of the German Bundestag, former member of the Subcommittee on Disarmament, Arms Control and Non-proliferation, Parliamentary Secretary of the Alliance 90/The Greens Parliamentary Group, former Member of the Defence Committee, GERMANY
22. Ambassador Imants Lieģis, Ambassador of the Republic of Latvia to France, former Defence Minister of the Republic, LATVIA
23. Linas Linkevičius, Minister of Foreign Affairs (participation in Network suspended, while in his present post), LITHUANIA
24. Dr Faruk Loğoğlu, former Ambassador to the US and currently a member of The Grand National Assembly of Turkey, TURKEY
25. János Martonyi, former Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs, HUNGARY

26. General Sir John McColl, former NATO Deputy Supreme Allied Commander Europe (DSACEUR) and Lieutenant-Governor of Jersey, UK
27. Tom McKane, former Director General for Strategy and Security Policy, Ministry of Defence, UK
28. Louis Michel, current member of the European Parliament (MEP), former Minister of Foreign Affairs, Former Deputy Prime Minister, BELGIUM
29. Volodymyr Ogrysko, former Foreign Minister, UKRAINE
30. Janusz Onyszkiewicz, former Defence Minister of Poland and Chairman of the Executive Council of the Euro-Atlantic Association, POLAND
31. Ioan Pascu, MEP and Vice President of the European Parliament, former Secretary of State for Defence Policy, ROMANIA
32. Dr Solomon Passy, former Foreign Minister, BULGARIA
33. Dmitry Polikanov, Vice-President at PIR-Centre and former Deputy Head of the "United Russia" Central Committee, RUSSIA
34. Paul Quilès, former Defence Minister and former President of the Defence and Armed Forces Committee of the National Assembly of France, FRANCE
35. Ambassador Özdem Sanberk, President of the International Strategic Research Organisation (USAK) and former Undersecretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Turkey, TURKEY
36. Professor Ivo Šlaus, former Member of Parliament and member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, CROATIA
37. Goran Svilanovic, Secretary General of the Regional Cooperation Council, former Co-ordinator of OSCE Economic and Environmental Activities, SERBIA
38. Ambassador Carlo Trezza, former Member of the Advisory Board of the UN Secretary General for Disarmament Matters and Chairman of the Missile Technology Control Regime, ITALY

39. Ambassador Vyacheslav Trubnikov, former Director of the Russian Foreign Intelligence Service, current member of the Institute of World Economy and International Relations (IMEMO) and member of the Euro-Atlantic Security Initiative (EASI), RUSSIA
40. Pierre Vimont, former Executive Secretary-General of the European External Action Service (EEAS), FRANCE
41. Lord Wallace of Saltaire PC (William Wallace), former Spokesperson for the Cabinet Office in the House of Lords and former Liberal Democrat Spokesperson for Defence and Foreign and Commonwealth Affairs, UK
42. Dr Klaus Wittmann, general of the Bundeswehr (retired), Senior Fellow Aspen Institute Germany, GERMANY

Contact

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The European Leadership Network (ELN) works to advance the idea of a cooperative and cohesive Europe and to develop collaborative European capacity to address the pressing foreign, defence and security policy challenges of our time. It does this through its active network of former and emerging European political, military, and diplomatic leaders, through its high-quality research, publications and events, and through its institutional partnerships across Europe, North America, Latin America and the Asia-Pacific region. It focuses on arms control and political/military issues, including both conventional and nuclear disarmament challenges inside Europe, and has a particular interest in policy challenges arising in both the eastern and southern peripheries of the continent.

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