

February 2014

Position Paper

# It is Time to Pursue a Cooperative Greater Europe

Task Force on Cooperation in Greater Europe



PISM



## About the Task Force

The Task Force brings forward proposals to allow all countries of the region to decisively break with the costly legacy of the Cold War and focus more effectively on meeting the emerging political, economic, and security challenges of the 21st century. It addresses the causes of current levels of mistrust between key countries and actors in the region, has trust-building as a central theme in its deliberations, and sets out a rationale and vision for a cooperative Greater Europe and a range of practical steps necessary to move the international relations of the continent in that direction.

The Task Force is supported by, and draws on, independent analytical work by the European Leadership Network (ELN), the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), and the International Strategic Research Organisation in Ankara (USAK).

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*This paper is issued in the name of all Task Force members, with their signatures added.*

*Updates on project activities will be placed on the ELN, PISM, RIAC and USAK websites at the following addresses: [www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org](http://www.europeanleadershipnetwork.org); [www.pism.pl](http://www.pism.pl); [www.russiancouncil.ru](http://www.russiancouncil.ru); [www.usak.org.tr](http://www.usak.org.tr).*

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# **IT IS TIME TO PURSUE A COOPERATIVE GREATER EUROPE**

## **1. Why Greater Europe?**

We believe recent divisions between the EU and Russia over the future of Ukraine demonstrate the urgent need to pursue a new European cooperative project: One that conceives of Europe in its broadest sense geographically and politically, from Norway in the north to Turkey in the south and from Portugal in the west to Russia in the east. A project that has as its goal not the creation of a single institution, but the creation of a Greater European zone of overlapping and deepening security, economic, political and cultural cooperation between all countries and institutions in the region.

Creating such a zone will not be easy but drawing on the work of an impressive coalition of think tanks from the UK, Poland, Russia, Turkey and elsewhere in Europe, the signatories of this paper believe not only that we should try but that it is possible to lay the foundations of such a zone in the next decade by pursuing a series of distinct but well-coordinated initiatives in a number of areas. We also believe that such a zone is compatible with ongoing efforts to deepen transatlantic cooperation in the west and efforts to create a Eurasian Union in the east, and that the long-term vision can be linked to specific and incremental steps that leaders can begin working on today.

The rationale for pursuing such cooperation is strong.

More than two decades after the Cold War ended, and as the case of Ukraine has demonstrated, Europe still stands divided. The relationship between NATO and Russia is characterised by real disagreements, exacerbated by mutual mistrust. Thousands of nuclear weapons remain central to the security arrangements of the continent, many of them on short notice to fire. The EU-Russia relationship has not delivered on the promise of a genuine partnership. Several conflicts in south-eastern Europe remain frozen rather than resolved and represent a continuing risk of military conflict. And people to people movement between the EU countries and several others in Europe, especially Russia, remains difficult, and limited.

This is despite the fact that all countries of the region share a common interest in the pursuit of security, prosperity and development, and all countries share some common challenges, be they related to countering terrorism and climate change, the need to find new paths to sustainable economic growth, or the need to cooperate, as is now happening in Syria, on the fight against proliferation of weapons of mass destruction.

At a time of deep budget cuts across the entire region, the status quo is expensive and damaging to all of us. Valuable resources that could be used to meet social need and to promote economic innovation and cooperation are being invested in security arrangements and military modernization programmes that reflect the collective failure of our leaders to put European security on a more stable and cooperative footing. Military suspicion also holds back economic cooperation across the region.

While a key trend in modern international relations is the diffusion of power to many levels and actors, moreover, and an accompanying trend is to cross border coalition building to address problems that are no respecters of borders, the Greater European space as a whole risks being dragged back into a struggle over spheres of interest and influence with the EU/ NATO and Russia on either side and countries like Ukraine and to some extent Turkey, sitting uncomfortably alongside or between both as they try to pursue more nuanced and multidimensional diplomatic strategies.

More widely still, as economic power and demographic momentum shifts from the global north and west to the global south and east, ushering in a poly-centric world, the additional danger is that such continued divisions on our continent will condemn the countries of Europe to global irrelevance or at least to peripheral status.

## **2. Why Now?**

It is time to do something about this situation.

Europe is a continent under economic stress and is already undergoing institutional and architectural transformation. This transformation presents a moment of strategic opportunity.

The crisis in the Eurozone and the developing institutional response to it is changing the institutional landscape of Europe. The future relationship between members of the Eurozone and other, non-euro members of the EU, such as the United Kingdom, is unclear. The trauma of the Eurozone crisis and the requirements of internal change to deal with it are also limiting the appetite and capacity of the EU to contemplate a further expansion of EU membership. There remains deep uncertainty over the longer-term nature of the relationship between the EU and Turkey, partly as a result, and also over the future of relations between the EU and the countries of the Eastern Partnership, such as Ukraine. NATO is beginning to grapple with what its own future will look like after the departure from Afghanistan in 2014. Again, an appetite for further enlargement is missing and it therefore remains unclear what the NATO relationship with the Europe beyond its current institutional borders will look like in future. How Russia ultimately relates to the rest of the continent and to these and other institutions is one of the biggest uncertainties of all.

Our contention is that a declaration of intent to pursue a Greater European zone of cooperation, building on but not replacing the existing and overlapping institutions of cooperation that already exist, could help to fill what is currently a strategic vacuum where a vision for the future of the whole of Europe should be. It could also provide a focal point for efforts to progress cooperation on multiple tracks simultaneously.

### **3. Paving the Way for a Cooperative Greater Europe**

As we have already acknowledged, translating this commitment into policy practice and concrete outcomes is not an easy task, but it is also not undoable. The priorities and perspectives of the different states and actors in the region may differ but common ground can be found. Greater Europe should develop not as an event but as a process enabling dialogue and cooperation among different but increasingly interdependent powers and actors.

#### *3.1 The Process:*

The process for building a cooperative Greater Europe must have multiple characteristics:

1. It must be open and inclusive. It must provide an opportunity for all states and institutions in the region to describe their vision of what the future should look like. Several states, such as Ukraine, Turkey and the countries of the Caucasus have distinct perspectives and reject the notion of a binary division between the EU and Russia or NATO and Russia. It is important that in pursuing the long-term goal, the full diversity of views is heard.
2. It must include sustained efforts to build habits of cooperation, especially with regard to challenges of mutual interest. Syria has shown the potential benefits of this approach. Iran might, over the medium-term, do the same. It is also vital that the many areas of good cooperation that already exist are publicized and enjoy higher profile.
3. It must include a systematic focus on trust and the requirements of trust-building in the Greater European area. The concern with a lack of trust applies across the security, economic and energy fields yet focused work on the kinds of substantive policy changes and processes that might contribute to enhanced trust remains scarce.

#### *3.2 Content*

In terms of practical steps, we believe cooperative initiatives need to be developed and given greater momentum in the following priority areas:

### *3.2.1 Security cooperation on threats common to us all:*

This should prioritise cooperative work to address the jihadi threat in Syria, to stabilize post-2014 Afghanistan, to address emerging cyber and bio-security challenges and to deal with drug and human trafficking problems and with illegal migration. It should involve continued joint diplomatic efforts to reach a long-term, comprehensive, deal with Iran on the latter's nuclear programme and use that as a platform to build further cooperation on countering proliferation of weapons of mass destruction more widely.

### *3.2.2 Building Greater Europe as a security community*

This should pursue a state of affairs where war between states in the region is excluded and all disputes are resolved peacefully. It should prioritise efforts to come to an agreement between the US/NATO and Russia on missile defence; continued dialogue on nuclear reductions; finding a way to reinvigorate arms control with regard to conventional force issues in Europe; increasing transparency and predictability with regard to military deployments, manoeuvres, and exercises, and discussion of NATO's future enlargement plans.

It will also be vital to make progress on the four "frozen" ethno-territorial conflicts that play a vital role in the EU-Russia relationship. These frozen conflicts are a tragedy for the peoples concerned and represent one of the major barriers to the realisation of the Greater European concept. We need an effective joint approach to one or more of them and on the basis of that positive experience we could in the future think of a more joint approach to civil/military crisis management.

### *3.2.3 Building Greater Europe through deepening trade and investment links*

The EU accounts for just over half of Russia's foreign trade turnover and about 70 percent of its accumulated foreign investment. Mutual trade has grown steadily: over the past decade Russia has become the EU's third largest trading partner, just after the United States and China, accounting for 7 percent of the EU's exports and 11 percent of its imports. However, the trade relationship is asymmetrical. The oil trade accounts for 63 percent of total Russia-EU trade turnover and bi-lateral EU-Russia trade talks are stalled. There is huge potential to broaden and deepen trade and investment links. Some actors in the Greater European region have an advantage in access to capital and technology and others have a need for injections of technology and for massive infrastructure investments but can provide commodities, access to a well-educated workforce and to a potentially large additional market for European goods and services in return. There is an economic win-win on offer in Greater Europe but we are not currently grasping it. It is in all our interests to do so.

### *3.2.4 Building Greater Europe through Improved Energy Cooperation*

36 percent of the EU's total gas imports, 31 percent of crude oil imports and 30 percent of coal imports come from Russia. In turn, the share of oil, gas and coal deliveries to the European Union accounts for 80 percent, 70 percent and 50 percent (respectively) of Russian energy exports. Thus, energy interaction with the EU involves a significant revenue stream for Russia's national budget and Russian supplies are a matter of national energy security for many EU members. The result is an energy relationship between the EU and Russia that is characterized by high levels of interdependence and politicization.

It will not be possible to build a cooperative Greater Europe unless mutual confidence and trust can be built on the issue of energy. Long-term measures to widen the economic relationship between the EU and Russia, so Russia is less dependent on energy exports for revenue, and to diversify supplies of energy to the EU, so the EU is less dependent on Russian supplies, are necessary, in the interests of a more stable and depoliticized relationship, and should be pursued in parallel.

### *3.2.5 Building Greater Europe through Increased People to People Contacts*

Today, the ease of travel within the Greater European space differs enormously depending on one's departure and destination points. Regimes such as the Schengen Area and arrangements within the EU provide great ease of travel in some areas but travel between the EU and several of the countries outside of the EU, especially Russia, is difficult, time consuming (in terms of visa requirements and applications) and administratively costly. This constrains opportunities for our citizens to travel for either business or leisure purposes and limits their ability to see how other Europeans live.

The building of a cooperative Greater Europe requires more open arrangements and active pursuit of a visa free travel regime throughout the entire area. The differing views on this goal within Europe must be reconciled and concerns managed, not only for the sake of people movement itself, but also because of the valuable contribution visa-free travel could make to economic development, reduced suspicion, and to the goal of a cooperative Greater Europe as a whole.

### *3.2.6 Building Greater Europe through Sub-regional and Transborder cooperation*

The importance of this level of cooperation in Europe is sometimes underestimated but it can be vital in preventing deeper divisions and in offering a path through which to ease relations when tensions are high. It is also an arena in which many different local, regional, NGO and other actors can play a role in building practical cooperation, alongside state governments and supranational actors like the EU. Successful cooperative practices in one



sub-region or locale can offer lessons and models that can be replicated elsewhere, serving as a laboratory on how best to build cooperative relationships in practice.

It is clear that the current distribution of this sub-regional cooperative fabric across Europe is highly asymmetric: in some places (for example at the Russian-Finnish border or within the framework of local border traffic between the Kaliningrad oblast and certain Polish districts) it is quite dense, while in others it is too thin. Building a Greater European Cooperative Zone will require a major expansion of cooperative activities at this level. There is a need and opportunity to expand cooperation in the framework of the Northern Dimension and the Baltic Sea Region, and to pursue deeper cooperation in the Black Sea and Caspian regions, as well as to explore how the concept of transnational Euro regions could be expanded to play a role in bridging old divides.

### *3.3 The Institutional Architecture of Cooperation*

In today's Europe, there is already no shortage of institutions that are supposed to enable cooperation but in practice, the results of many of them have been limited. We do not believe that the solution is to create new institutions but rather to get more cooperative value out of the institutions that already exist. At a minimum, this means examining how the NATO-Russia Council, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and the EU-Russia relationship, are currently working. There is also an urgent need to discuss how existing institutions can work together to strengthen and maximize, in the short to medium term, the economic relationship between the EU, the EU Eastern Partnership countries, the members of the emerging Eurasian Union, and Turkey.

## **4. Alternatives to Greater Europe and their Costs**

While we acknowledge that the building of a cooperative Greater Europe in the way we have described will be difficult, the likely alternatives are worse. The absence of a vision for Europe's future as a whole increases the risk that the current sense of drift will become a fundamental drifting apart. This could embed a conflictual and competitive dynamic in Europe rather than a cooperative one and in turn limit the ability of Europeans to build a common economic space to the benefit of all. It could also entrench the divisions that already exist, be likely to require higher levels of defence spending to deal with intra-European security challenges than otherwise would be the case, and limit the ability of Europeans to work together collectively to address the global challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. If European leaders take a passive approach in current circumstances, they radically increase the chances that this will in fact be the outcome.

## 5. Greater Europe: the cooperation dividend

If we can avoid this trajectory however, the benefits could be enormous. In particular:

Mutual suspicions on the European continent could be reduced and levels of trust substantially increased. The prevalence of thousands of nuclear weapons in European security arrangements could be addressed and levels of military predictability, transparency and confidence increased;

The combination of finance, technology, people and natural resources contained within Greater Europe could be combined and put to more innovative and efficient use to the benefit of all of our peoples, easing the domestic economic pressures being faced in many European countries;

All the peoples of Europe would be able to experience ease of travel to practice commerce and to experience the rich diversity of culture, history and ways of life on the continent;

Instead of being distracted by internal differences, the countries of Greater Europe would be able to work more productively and collaboratively together in helping to meet the global challenges facing us all.

In coming months, drawing on independent analytical work being conducted at the European Leadership Network (ELN), the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC), the Polish Institute of International Affairs (PISM), and the International Strategic Research Organisation in Ankara (USAK), among others, we intend to set out specific proposals on each of the inter-locking dimensions of the Greater European idea in more detail, in pursuit of these benefits. We encourage a wide range of other actors and institutions to contribute to and further develop the concept and to advocate for its adoption. In our view, all our futures depend on it.

### Signed

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