

Action Plan on the future relations with Russia (26 April 1996)

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Working Party on Eastern Europe and Central Asia - European Union action plan for Russia (Brussels, 26 April 1996)

European Union action plan

The European Union is committed to establishing a substantial partnership with Russia in order to promote the democratic and economic reform process, to enhance respect for human rights, to consolidate peace, stability and security in order to avoid new dividing lines in Europe and to achieve the full integration of Russia into the community of free and democratic nations. To that end, the European Union signed a Partnership and Cooperation Agreement with Russia and the Council meeting on 20 November 1995 adopted conclusions on the strategy to be followed for the European Union's future relations with Russia, which were confirmed by the Madrid European Council.

On the basis of these priorities, the European Union hereby adopts the action plan outlined below.

The action plan will clearly require close and ongoing coordination between the actions of the European Community, whose principal support instrument remains the TACIS programme, and the actions of the Member States and, where appropriate, with the other main donors in order to ensure maximum efficiency in terms of synergy and complementarities.

Action based on this plan will be reviewed if necessary.

I. Contribution to Russia's democratic reforms

- Participation in the international monitoring of the forthcoming presidential elections on the basis of the positive experience acquired during monitoring of the parliamentary elections on 17 December 1995. This action will be supported under the TACIS Democracy Programme (TDP).
- Implementation of the Agreement between the European Community and the Council of Europe on the harmonization of Russian legislation with Council of Europe rules, centred on the constitutional and legal aspects of the legal reform commitments entered into by Russia upon accession to the Council of Europe.
- Support for contacts between the European Parliament, the Parliaments of the Member States and the Russian Parliament to promote the further development of democratic institutions and the rule of law. Support for cooperation between regions and the twinning of cities in the European Union and Russia, notably via the TACIS "City Twinning Programme".
- Support for the development of local and regional administration in Russia by means of long-term programmes, to consolidate democracy at local and regional level throughout the country.
- Continuation of seminar programmes organized by the European Community and its Member States for the benefit of young decision-makers (MPs, businessmen, senior administrators, etc.) and journalists to facilitate, inter alia, direct contact with European institutions and political and administrative systems in the West and a deeper understanding of Russia within the EU.
- Support for institutions, particularly within the framework of the OSCE and the Council of Europe, which organize ad hoc seminars on the rights of individuals belonging to minority groups and on human rights, open to political, legal and administrative leaders.
- Support for legal training, particularly through activities centred on the training of law professors and through training and exchange programmes for members of the Russian judiciary.

II. Economic cooperation

Contractual relations

Implementation of the Interim Agreement - which entered into force on 1 February 1996 -ensuring observance of the rights and obligations deriving there from.

- Ratification as soon as possible of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and early accession to that Agreement of the three new Member States on the basis of the appropriate instruments.
- Negotiation and conclusion of new bilateral agreements provided for in the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. These agreements should be used to strengthen cooperation and commercial links with Russia in the context of its transition to a market economy. Particular attention should be paid to improving market access in certain sectors such as financial services.
- Proper coordination between sectoral negotiations and specific trade questions and the European Union's general policy as reflected in its strategy.

Development of trade relations and integration of Russia into the international economy

- Support for Russia, inter alia through the TACIS programme, in its efforts to meet the conditions for accession to the WTO and to integrate fully into the international economy. In this connection, the Community will attach particular importance to Russia's meeting the obligations regarding the liberalization of trade policy.

Support for Russia's alignment on international standards and, as far as possible, on those of the European Union single market.

- Setting up of studies to detect obstacles to expanding trade and investment flows. Particular attention should be paid to clarifying a whole series of questions, especially the impact on the economies of the Union Member States and the extent to which legislation will have to be aligned, from the point of view both of Russia's accession to the WTO and in the light of the relevant provisions of the PCA of the possible introduction of a free-trade area between the EU and Russia. Regular assessment, on the basis of clearly defined criteria, of Russia's progress towards a market economy.
- Creation with Russia of a joint Working Party on Trade Facts which will collate factual information on specific trade questions with a view to facilitating the management of trade relations between the Community and Russia. The Council will be kept regularly informed of the work of this Working Party.

Regional cooperation

Promotion of regional cooperation between Russia and its neighbours in accordance with the principles of the OSCE through a series of initiatives to:

- Promote transfrontier cooperation between the new Independent States and the Union and between the new Independent States and Central Europe;
- Strengthen regional cooperation with Russia in the Baltic Sea region by means, inter alia, of the initiative which the Commission was instructed to prepare further to the conclusions of the Madrid European Council, in the Barents Sea region and in the Black Sea region;
- Promote the development of trans-European transport and energy networks between Russia and its Central and East European neighbours and with the European Union;

- Continue selective assistance for the promotion of economic cooperation on a voluntary basis between Russia and the countries of Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Nuclear energy and nuclear safety

- Development of programmes, also in the TACIS framework, for the approximation of laws in the context of the Energy Charter and for energy sector reforms with a view, inter alia, to improving the quality and safety of the Union's energy supplies (various programmes are under way concerning either Russia and adjacent Member States, or a more regional context in which the full association of Russia is desirable).
- Assistance on energy price policy, bearing in mind the recommendations of the International Energy Agency, with particular reference to accountancy and management training.
- Further assistance to Russia in applying in the nuclear sector internationally agreed principles of nuclear safety taking into account the outcome of the forthcoming nuclear summit in Moscow. To that end, the Union will support, in particular, the independent regulation of the nuclear sector, together with improvements in the safety of nuclear installations, including short term improvements in those installations most at risk, with a view to closing them down as soon as possible. The Union's assistance will also include the preparation of decommissioning operations including fuel cycle and waste management aspects.
- Willingness to consider providing on the spot emergency assistance should Russia so request.

Encouragement to Russia to ratify the International Convention on Nuclear Safety and to adhere to the 1993 amendments made to the London Convention which ban the dumping of radioactive waste at sea, and to the Vienna Convention on Civil Liability for Nuclear Damage.

- Support for the objective of a high degree of nuclear safety and sound management of pipelines, both of which, inter alia, are essential to the prevention of ecological disasters.

Environment

- Continued support for Russia in the field of the environment based, as far as TACIS is concerned, on the possibilities afforded by the new Regulation. In this connection, particular importance will be given to the strengthening of institutions, to legislation and to training.
- On a general level, special attention will also be given to cooperation in combating pollution in a transboundary context.
- Environmental considerations will also be taken into account when it comes to designing and implementing assistance programmes, in particular in the TACIS framework.
- All the attention necessary will also be given to initiatives already proposed or likely to be proposed at regional level, such as those already being prepared for the Baltic region.

Modernization of the production system

- Help to make Russian businesses more competitive. With this in view, the introduction of modern information technologies should be encouraged and, in particular through TACIS, the training of businessmen and executive staff to develop the competitiveness of undertakings.

- Particular attention should continue to be paid to assisting the introduction of an effective social policy to back up the economic restructuring process.
- Particular attention will be given inter alia in the TACIS programme and in the context of the action already undertaken by the European Union to support the privatization process to the restructuring and setting up of undertakings, and of a modern banking system and capital market.
- Assistance for Russia's efforts to create an environment capable of developing both national and foreign investment. In this connection, particular importance will be given to assistance centred on the improvement of taxation, the introduction of modern standards of accounting and auditing and proper legal protection for investors.
- Support for local and regional economic development in Russia in order to consolidate progress towards a market economy throughout the country.
- Promotion of industrial cooperation, for example by encouraging small and medium-sized undertakings in the European Union to set up joint ventures in Russia, in particular through the Joint Venture Promotion Scheme.
- Encouragement of more active competition policies in Russia with a view to reducing the importance of monopolies.
- Support for cooperation programmes in the field of research and development. Preservation of Russia's potential for research and development in the field of basic science and encouragement of cooperation in high tech industries.
- Organization of round tables between European Union and Russian businessmen with the aim of strengthening direct contacts in professional areas of common interest.

Humanitarian aid

- Further provision of humanitarian aid through the Community and its Member States as necessary. The European Union will ensure that there is proper coordination between humanitarian aid and the other forms of aid provided by the European Union.

III. Cooperation in the field of Justice and Home Affairs

- Action to combat organized crime, particularly drug related crime, including money laundering and action to combat terrorism. Cooperation to prevent the diversion of chemical precursors. Illegal economic activities, including corruption, counterfeiting and illegal transactions in various goods should also be covered. Cooperation could take the form of regular exchanges of information, having due regard to national and international legislation on data protection, the setting up of a network of contact points and participation in seminars.
- Action to combat illegal immigration and cooperation on asylum and readmission policy. Priority in this context should be given to preparation and follow-up of the Regional Conference which is to take place in Geneva in May 1996 concerning the problem of refugees and displaced persons in the CIS countries.
- Cooperation on mutual judicial assistance, in particular by establishing a network of contact points.
- In putting cooperation in these areas into effect, any duplication of Council of Europe initiatives will be avoided.

IV. Security in Europe

- Initiatives to develop more contacts within the framework of existing mechanisms between specialist working parties and Russian experts in the field of security, covering relevant aspects of disarmament, non-proliferation, arms export controls and conflict prevention and management.
- Further cooperation with Russia in the elaboration of a security model for the Europe of the 21st century, in preparation for the OSCE summit due to take place in December 1996.
- Initiatives to strengthen the role played by the OSCE in Chechnya, in particular in order to give tangible support to the activities of the "Assistance Group" in Grozny in carrying out its mandate and to stress the importance of its role in seeking a negotiated solution to the conflict.
- Measures to develop existing cooperation between the EU and Russia with a view to preventing and suppressing illegal traffic in nuclear material, particularly as a follow up to the conclusions of the Essen European Council (9 and 10 December 1994), and bearing in mind the Moscow Conference on nuclear safety, especially the ideas put forward in the "Action plan to prevent illegal traffic".
- Support for Russia's efforts to meet its commitments in the field of disarmament in order to comply with the international agreements on the matter, for example, promoting the speedy ratification by Russia of the Convention on chemical weapons.
- Continued European Community support for the International Science and Technology Centre (ISTC Moscow).
- Continued promotion of information activities, particularly those of the Member States, with a view to outlining EU policies on security, and sponsoring of conferences and debates with Russian university institutions.
- Projects, particularly within the context of the TACIS programme, for the conversion of Russian military industries and the retraining of demobilized Soviet army personnel, as well as in the wider field of relations between the civilian and military spheres. Continued support for the Moscow School of Political Studies and the development of civilian responsibility for security issues could also be considered.

V. Foreign Policy

- Strengthening of the political dialogue with Russia, in accordance with the provisions of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. Under that heading, organization of meetings between Russian experts and EU working parties, according to requirements and on the basis of a programme to be drawn up by each Presidency.
- In the context of the political dialogue, organization of consultations with Russian representatives on the eve of important international political events.
- Exchange of experience on the conduct of foreign affairs, especially exchanges on foreign policy formulation and foreign ministry organization, for example, legal departments.
- Creation of a training programme covering the European Union (institutional and legal structures, development, etc.) for diplomats and other Russian officials, drawing on TACIS and the resources of the Member States (e.g. training procedures for diplomats).
- Increased consultation with Russia on questions relating to the peaceful settlement of disputes in the context of the OSCE and the United Nations.
- Initiation of discussions with Russia on the concept and practice of preventive diplomacy.