

## Russia

ELDR notes that:

1. Russia is a country in transition from a totalitarian state with minimal freedoms and with a centrally planned and owned economy and industry to a post-Communist mixed economy with democratic accountability and the rule of law;
2. The current Government headed by President Vladimir Putin while rightly seeking to correct the excesses of the Yeltsin era whereby ownership of much of the Country's natural resources was handed to a small number of now super-rich individuals, has embarked on a programme of de facto re-nationalisation, notably through control of Gazprom and Rosneft;
3. Russia has sought to replace Soviet imperialism by a system of economic and political dominance of its "near abroad". This has included interference in the internal affairs of other States, including the economic boycott of Georgia and open support for the break-away regions of South Ossetia and Abkhazia, in both of which Russian troops are stationed; a similar boycott of Moldova and support for the breakaway "Trans-Dnistran Republic", where Russian troops are also stationed; the interruption of gas supplies transiting Ukraine and Belarus, with consequent effects on Western European consumers; sanctions and cyber attacks against Estonia, a European Union State, in response to perceived action against the Russian settlers in that country;
4. The Putin Government seeks to "manage" democracy by imposing high minimum thresholds for parties to participate in national and provincial legislatures; by banning parties from participation in elections for spurious reasons with the assistance of a flawed Electoral Commission; by banning or breaking up free demonstrations; by harassing NGO's who seek to promote democracy;
5. The justice system is not independent of Government influence and control, and the Russian Constitution and laws are not fully applied; in particular, the tax police are used to harass legitimate business activity;
6. Press freedom is curtailed, several journalists have been murdered, all TV stations have passed to the control of the State

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or State-controlled organisations, and opposition politicians have limited access to the media, even at election times;

7. The methods used to suppress the Chechen rebellion have involved gross abuses of human rights in the name of the “war against terror” and, along with the intimidation by Russia of the Republics of Georgia and Moldova, have been inadequately criticised by the EU and the West;

Congress recognises the right of Russia to be an independent nation without foreign interference in its internal affairs;

However, Russia has signed up to a large number of conventions and organisations which require observance of certain rules. These include the Council of Europe, the OSCE, the World Trade Organisation, G8 as well as the United Nations and its Agencies;

ELDR asserts the right of Russia’s partners to monitor the Russian Government’s compliance with its obligations, especially in the democracy and human rights fields, and by persuasion, publicity and, if necessary, economic sanctions, to insist that Russia proceeds down a free market and democratic path;

ELDR condemns the tendency of individual EU member states to deal with energy and other trade issues on a bilateral basis, thereby weakening a common approach which would provide genuine military and energy security for all, and calls upon all EU States to work through the EU in such negotiations;

ELDR encourages the negotiation of a long-term agreement with Russia establishing the trade and development links between Russia and the European Union, including in the area of environmental co-operation. However, any such agreements shall be subject to Russia becoming a full multi-party democracy, operating a free market economy and respecting the rule of domestic and international law;

ELDR supports member party Yabloko and all citizens of Russia who desire to live in democratic, free, and open society. ELDR expresses its concern and strong opinion that the present political trends in Russia are contrary to the principles of democracy, human rights and rule of law which is unacceptable. These trends could result in a situation where the upcoming parliamentary and presidential elections in Russia will not be considered as free and fair, and that might lead to the serious and undesirable consequences to EU-Russia relations;

ELDR calls upon the Member States of the European Union to develop a common strategy for partnership with Russia and the Russian people

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based on the common values of justice freedom and democracy. This strategy should be the foundation for a more unequivocal and by that more powerful European voice towards the undemocratic developments in Russia.

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