

Gaps in the "Common Spaces"? The Future of Russia-EU Relations

Fellows Debate Russia-EU Relations in Moscow



Just weeks before the Duma elections that sparked mass popular protest on the streets of Russia's major cities, 50 Fellows from the Russian Federation and 15 other countries of the EU and beyond gathered in Moscow for the Fellowship seminar, "Gaps in the 'Common Spaces'? The Future of Russia-EU Relations".

Hosted and sponsored by a grant and in-kind support from the Yeltsin Presidential Center and Yeltsin Foundation, the two full-days of presentations, discussions, and small group debates addressed a number of topics within current bilateral talks including:

- **Economics and Trade** – led by the European Commission's Russia Team Coordinator, Timo Hammaren
- **Energy Security** – led by the Russian Academy of Sciences' Leading Researcher in its Energy Research Institute, Igor Lavrovski
- **External Security** – led by Science Po's professor in the School of International Affairs, Marie Mendras
- **Education Reform** – led by the Bologna Follow-up Group Secretariat's Coordinator, Ligia Deca
- **Human Rights and Civil Society** – led by the Russian President Dmitri Medvedev's advisor on human rights, Mikhail Fedotov



The seminar also saw a panel presentation of the "Jacques Delors Lecture on the State of the European Union," concentrated on the Union's "near-abroad" with presentations by former Austrian ambassador to Russia, Martin Vukovich, and director of the Carnegie Moscow Center, Dmitri Trenin (both Salzburg Global Fellows).



In the many plenary and small group discussions, Fellows were encouraged to consider the most promising and the most pressing issues facing Russia-EU relations and to devise suggestions to policy makers in Brussels and Moscow on how these issues might be best moved forward.

The following quotes give a feel for the conversations, both formal and informal, that took part between Fellows at the seminar:

On general Russia-EU compatibility:

"The EU and Russia are natural partners as neither have ambitions to expand. It's in the EU's interests that Russia succeeds"



“Russia and the EU have common interests but competing mind-sets”

“The question of how to belong is the crucial challenge”

“Russia doesn’t even agree if it’s part of Europe”

“For as long as both parties are suspicious of each other, this will result in direct losses to both”

On Russian reforms:

“How can Russia adapt to EU Rules? It’s very hard for a country that was the world’s 2nd superpower a few years ago to adapt”

“Russia needs to absorb modernization but a lot will depend on the EU’s desire to be a partner”

“Modernization and totalitarian stereotypes cannot go together. Without modernization Russia will very quickly become a 3rd world country”.

“There are no decisions in the energy sector that are not political”

“Putin said on TV that ten years after he has first assumed power, the whole country still hangs by a thread – which is a damning indictment on his term”

“Putin’s approach is to ‘freeze regions’ rather than ‘sphere of influence’.”

“Trying to avoid a revolution is the best way of creating one”

On wider relations between Russia and the world:

“The Russian Empire in any form cannot be restored”

“The cold war is over but there’s no peace agreement”

“What Russia wants is strategic independence from the USA and China, the two hegemonies in the world”

“Russia is at danger of becoming China’s appendage”

“Russia has no real allies or alliances”

Additional materials including lecture recordings and photos from the seminar are available on the seminar webpage: www.SalzburgGlobal.org/go/Moscow2011.

This seminar was conducted under the auspices of Salzburg Global Seminar, Austria