
Gabrielius Landsbergis: "Sanctions against Russia are already bearing fruit"

EU-Russia relations were discussed today during the plenary session in Strasbourg and tomorrow MEPs will vote on a report on the state of EU-Russia relations. We spoke to Lithuanian EPP member Gabrielius Landsbergis, who wrote the report, about the impact of sanctions against Russia and the country's recent entry ban on EU politicians and officials.

How do you react to Russia's recent entry ban on 89 EU politicians and officials?

The unfortunate "black list" is shedding some light on embarrassing cases when fellow MEPs were halted at the airport and not allowed to enter Russia with no explanation given. This list is untransparent, illegal and arbitrary. But You could say being on this list is "an honour", because those on it are there for their outspoken position on human rights violations in Russia, for their concern about the situation in Russia and its aggression against Ukraine.

We in the European Parliament firmly support our colleagues and others included on the list. However, it is unfortunate that while the European Parliament is trying to keep channels for dialogue open, Russian authorities are closing them.

Given the reactions from some member states, do you think that sanctions targeting Russia will be effective?

It's difficult to measure the exact results, but what we see is that together with the low oil prices, the Russian economy is really suffering. The sanctions' main aim was to get Russia to change its policies. I think that the big infrastructure projects are under huge pressure and the Russia can't complete them. So I think that we are already seeing the sanctions bearing fruit and I'm really hopeful that member states will provide support in the future.

What is the role of the European Parliament during the negotiations?

The European Parliament is a strong partner in the negotiations. I've been in contact with Council President Donald Tusk's office and shared information. The Parliament can provide very strong support for the negotiations if we can find a common language with the Council. It sends a strong message that Europe really does have a backbone when it comes to issues such as Russia.

This interview was originally published on 26 March 2015. However, the first question about the entry ban and Landsbergis's response to it was added on 9 June 2015.

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