



Ukraine: the way out of the crisis

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What should be done to resolve the crisis in Ukraine? Political leaders from around Europe and the world have had crisis talks for days in order to find the best way to deal with Russia over the divided country and prevent further escalation. We discussed the situation with Knut Fleckenstein (S&D, Germany), chair of the delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee, and Paweł Kowal (ECR, Poland), chair of the delegation to the EU-Ukraine Parliamentary Cooperation Committee.

How should the EU deal with Russia in order to defuse the current volatile situation?

Knut Fleckenstein

First of all, we insist that Russian troops leave Ukraine, because they are in clear breach of international laws and commitments. Secondly, we have to be prepared to help the interim government reach solutions that reflect the interests of a broad majority of citizens in their country, including people from all parts of Ukraine and of course the Russian speaking Ukrainians.

Paweł Kowal

The most important thing is to stand firmly on the ground of international law and basic facts – Crimea is an integral part of Ukraine and no-one has ever questioned that. Russian forces have breached international and bilateral commitments.

A coordinated and quick response of the EU is needed. Member states, the institutions, the USA, NATO and all other important players on the global scene, which we diplomatically trust, have to send the same message and send it fast to show there's no place for *fait accompli* politics in Crimea. If we fail to do so today or tomorrow, we lose our chance.

What could stop Putin from developing the situation in Crimea? Are sanctions enough or should possible expulsion from international organisations be considered? What should Ukraine do?

Knut Fleckenstein

I wouldn't concentrate on sanctions now. I would concentrate more on the possibilities of diplomacy and dialogue. And we expect the same from Russia. There is however nothing to discuss with Russia concerning their troops in Crimea. They have to leave. It's now also time for the government in Kiev to show they are prepared to work on a constitutional reform that will find a broad majority. The new government's policy must be inclusive and should duly take into account the interests of those Ukrainian citizens living in the east and the south-east of the country. There is no solution to the political crisis of the last months that you would call "the winner takes it all". There is only a solution to the current situation in Ukraine if political decisions reflect the interests of a broad majority of people in Ukraine.

Paweł Kowal

The first step should be strong diplomatic resistance, amplified by the possible expulsion from international organisations or suspension of work of such institutions such as the NATO-Russia Council. If that's not enough, sanctions targeted at all politicians supporting aggression on a sovereign country should follow.

Ukraine should appeal to international law and state loudly and clearly that we are dealing with a regular occupation of their territory. If they keep silent, Ukrainian authorities might

be accused of idleness.