Russia in Europe

Rapprochement or Isolation?

The results of a representative survey conducted by TNS Infratest Politikforschung in Germany and Russia
Russia in Europe: Rapprochement or Isolation?

Relations between Russia and most of its European neighbors are currently characterized by a profound crisis. On the one hand, political dialogue between the EU and Russia has resulted in very little progress; on the other, the economic sanctions that both sides imposed on each other during the Ukraine conflict are still in place. Clearly then, a deep lack of trust exists on the political level. But do the people of Russia and its neighboring European countries also harbor growing levels of mutual distrust?

In order to answer these questions, the Körber Foundation commissioned representative surveys in Russia and Germany on the issue of “Russia in Europe.” The study sought to answer whether, on balance, Russia belonged to Europe, and to find out which 20th century events most strongly characterized relations between Russia and the rest of Europe. Finally, the study also concentrated on the reasons behind Russia and the EU’s deteriorating relations.

The survey’s main results:

- Both countries’ populations are deeply divided on the issue of whether Russia belongs to Europe. Half of the German and half of the Russian population no longer consider Russia as part of Europe. This view was particularly strong among 30 to 44-year-olds. Moreover, the number of people who reject the idea that Russia belongs to Europe has grown considerably since 2008, particularly in Russia. This is clear from a comparison with a similar study* conducted by the Allensbach Institute: at that time, only one-third of Russians believed that Russia was not part of Europe.

- When asked with which country they would like to see stronger future cooperation, Germans choose France, with Russia a close second; in contrast, Russians ranked Germany in first place, closely followed by China.

- The majority of the German and Russia populations advocate lifting the sanctions imposed in the wake of the Ukraine conflict. Nevertheless, more than half of Germans still see the EU’s policy on Russia as appropriate. Similarly, more than two-thirds of Russians support Russia’s stance on the EU. Both populations view the confrontations over Crimea and in eastern Ukraine as the main reasons behind Russia and the EU’s deteriorating relations.

- Russia and the rest of Europe only share values in certain areas. Russian and German opinions differ considerably on issues such as strikes, demonstrations, homosexuality and the role of the media.

- Opinions on Russia’s formative historical experiences and those of its European neighbors have undergone a paradigm shift: whereas the majority of Russians believe that their country’s relationship with the rest of Europe is most strongly influenced by the collapse of the Soviet Union, Germans treat reunification and the fall of the Iron Curtain as far more significant. The Second World War was ranked a long way behind these other issues.

A table setting out the survey results is available at: www.koerber-stiftung.de/survey-russia-in-europe/

DATA POOL:
1000 individuals in Germany, and 1024 people in Russia; all eligible to vote and over 18. Survey conducted between 22 February and 7/8 March 2016.
Sample/Collection process: representative random sample/randomized sample via CATI. Overall project management: TNS Infratest Politikforschung. Interviews conducted in Germany by Infratel (TNS Infratest Group) and in Russia by CESSI – Russia.

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95% of Germans agree that Russia is a country with great traditions and culture; 86% of Russians view Germany in these same terms.

51% of Russians and 50% of Germans believe Russia does not belong to Europe.

66% of Russians oppose closer relations between Ukraine and the EU; however, 60% of Germans support closer ties.

79% of Russians and 69% of Germans favor lifting the economic sanctions imposed by Russia and the EU.

48% of Germans perceive Russia as a threat; only 25% of Russians view Germany in this manner.

77% of Russians believe that the media should support the work of the government and accept its decisions. Only 36% of Germans agree.

95% of Germans and 84% of Russians believe that it is important or very important that Russia and the EU develop better political relations over the next few years.

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* “Das Russlandbild der Deutschen – das Deutscherbild der Russen,” a study conducted by the Allensbach Institute on behalf of the Deutsch-Russisches Forum e.V.
Germans and Russians largely agree that the current deterioration in Russian and EU relations has been caused by the conflict over Crimea and in eastern Ukraine, followed by EU and NATO enlargement. However, there were different opinions on whether Ukraine should continue developing closer relations with the EU. Whereas two-thirds of Russians were against closer ties, 60 percent of Germans argued that the EU should indeed form closer links to the country. The economic sanctions, which were first imposed in 2014 by the EU and then by Russia, were largely rejected by both populations: 69 percent of Germans and 79 percent of Russians support lifting these sanctions. Nevertheless, more than half of the German population considers the EU’s policy towards Russia as wholly or partially appropriate; and as many as 81 percent of Russians support their government’s policy stance towards the EU.

Germans and Russians believe that reconciliation is in danger

Nearly two-thirds of Germans and almost half of Russians fear that current political developments pose a threat to the reconciliation and rapprochement that occurred between the two countries after the Second World War. Nevertheless, there is a strong desire in both countries to overcome current tensions, and particularly between Russia and the EU. 84 percent of Russians and as many as 95 percent of Germans consider it important or very important that Russia and the EU develop closer political relations during the coming years. Interestingly, when asked whether they believed German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Russian President Vladimir Putin, French President François Hollande, or the EU High Representative, Federica Mogherini, was most likely to contribute towards improved relations between Russia and the EU, more than three-quarters of Russians opted for Putin, with nearly 60 percent of Germans choosing Merkel.

Solving the Ukraine crisis is not a priority

Strong differences of opinion were expressed when it came to deciding which issues should constitute the focus of cooperation between Russia and the EU. When respondents were only allowed to name one issue, 35 percent of Russians chose the fight against terrorism, 29 percent opted for economic relations, and a mere 14 percent prioritized a solution to the Ukraine conflict. A large majority of Germans, in contrast, viewed solving the conflict in Syria as the most important issue (49 percent), followed by the fight against terrorism and ending the Ukraine conflict (both 13 percent). Whereas Germans are most likely to view Russia as a “competitor” to the EU, a majority of Russians see the EU simply as a “neighbor.” Significantly, hardly anyone in either country describes relations between Russia and the EU as based on “friendship.”

What is your opinion on closer relations between Ukraine and the EU?

In which areas should Russia and the EU cooperate?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Area</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Russia</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Solving the Syrian conflict</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting terrorism</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solving the Ukraine conflict</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>13%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic relations</td>
<td>10%</td>
<td>25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dealing with the refugee crisis</td>
<td>8%</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fighting against organized crime</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Relations should not be allowed to collapse due to the Ukraine conflict

From conflict to renewed cooperation

37% of Germans view Russia and the EU as a “competitor,” whereas a third of Russians prefer the term “neighbor.”
Russia and Germany demonstrate strong levels of both approval and rejection on the issue of whether Russia belongs to Europe. A focus on age distribution, however, provides an interesting result: a majority of over 60s in both countries consider that Russia does indeed belong to Europe. In contrast, only a minority of people aged between 30 and 44 from both populations agree with this statement. The most common reason given for that by Russians and Germans was the perceived lack of shared values. However, respondents who believe that Russia belongs to Europe tend to provide objective reasons in support of their position: Russians mainly point to geographical proximity, whereas Germans, in addition to this argument, emphasize economic interdependency.

Younger generations do not believe that Russia belongs to Europe

Ambivalent attitudes were expressed towards belonging again, this ambition was particularly strong among younger generations and people with higher levels of education.

The events that occurred between 1989 and 1991 strongly influence current relations

Although the turning point represented by the events that occurred between 1989 and 1991 plays an essential role in the historical consciousness of both populations, there were differing views on exactly which event was most significant. Whereas Germans were more likely to mention reunification and the fall of the Iron Curtain (38 percent), Russians viewed the collapse of the Soviet Union (53 percent) as far more consequential for bilateral relations. The Second World War was seen as playing a subordinate role, at least with regard to current relations, and came second place by a wide margin. However, in both Germany and Russia, a clear majority favored organizing joint commemorations between Russia and other European countries to mark the end of the Second World War.

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Germans and Russians frequently emphasized that a lack of common values explained why, “on balance,” Russia did not belong to Europe. On the abstract level, however, Germans and Russians broadly concur on what constitutes European values. In addition, although support for these values was consistently higher in Germany than in Russia, both populations accepted that they include freedom of expression, democracy and human rights. On a more practical level, there were significant differences between the two countries in terms of democracy and society. Whereas in Russia more than three-quarters of respondents agreed that the media should support the government, only one-third of Germans did so. At the same time, more than one-half of Russian respondents were in favor of banning strikes and demonstrations as they were said to endanger public order; the overwhelming majority of Germans rejected this view. There were also very clear differences in attitudes towards homosexuality. Whereas only 20 percent of Germans agreed that love and partnerships should only be permitted between a man and a woman – and not between people of the same sex. Strikes and demonstrations jeopardize public order and should be banned. 11% 89% 34% 60% Germans and Russians also provided different answers when it came to the question of whether they believed the opposing country represented a threat. Whereas around half of Germans believe that Russia constitutes a threat, only one-quarter of Russians view Germany in the same terms. However, Germans also demonstrate a clear East-West divide on this issue: although more than half of the respondents from the old Federal Republic believe that Russia poses a threat to Germany, only one-third of the population living in the new federal states agrees with this statement.

## What unites Germany and Russia?

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<thead>
<tr>
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<td>69%</td>
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<td>25%</td>
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<td>17%</td>
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<td>2%</td>
<td>11%</td>
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Remaining data up to 100%: Tend to disagree / Completely disagree / Don’t know / No answer
Each question was posed separately; only one answer was possible

## Russia and Europe do not constitute a community of values

Democracy is understood very differently

Remaining data up to 100%: Tend to disagree / Completely disagree / Don’t know / No answer
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<td>There is no place for xenophobia in modern society.</td>
<td>88%</td>
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<td>The task of the media is to support the government’s work and to comply with its decisions.</td>
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## Germany is... 48% of Germans believe that Russia represents a threat, but only one-quarter of Russians believe that Germany poses a threat to their country.

Russia and Europe do not constitute a community of values. When asked which states their own country should work more closely with, 89 percent of Germans mentioned France, 81 percent opted for Russia, and 59 percent favored the United States. In Russia, 62 percent of respondents chose Germany, 61 percent China and France, and 43 percent selected the United States.

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Focus:
Russia in Europe

Since the beginning of the Ukraine conflict, relations between Russia and the majority of its European neighbours have been in serious crisis. Dialogue and understanding with Russia have been a major part of the Körber Foundation’s work over many decades.

The Körber Foundation is convinced:
- that Russia belongs to Europe;
- that many political, social and economic challenges in Europe can only be met together with Russia;
- that it is important for Russia and the other countries of Europe to continue the path of rapprochement and reconciliation in the context of the historical experiences of the 20th century.

Therefore, with its focus on “Russia in Europe”, the Körber Foundation devotes to the rejuvenation of an open, critical and constructive dialogue between Russia and its European neighbours.

The Foundation’s topics are the historical roots of current conflicts, questions of identity and values, current challenges of foreign and security policy and perspectives of civil society cooperation. Its partners in this dialogue are social thinkers, (foreign)political decision-makers and multipliers of cross-border understanding. It is especially important for the Körber Foundation to involve representatives of the next generation in the exchange.

The goal of this dialogue work is both to identify different perspectives and also to identify similarities. The Foundation wants to strengthen actors in politics and society who are prepared to build bridges across the borders and divides between cultures. This is the Körber Foundation’s contribution to international dialogue with Russia.

Find out more about “Russia in Europe”
on our website at:
www.koerber-stiftung.de/russia-in-europe

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Unraveling the Russian enigma with
Irina Scherbakowa and Karl Schlögel

In the shadow of Putin: the Russian civil rights activist Irina Scherbakowa and the German and Eastern European historian Karl Schlögel discuss their experiences of the period stretching from the Cold War to the Ukraine conflict. And fervently fight for the right to freedom of speech.

“A debate about the German-Russian relationship: moving, clever – and mournful. Because the crisis continues.”
Der SPIEGEL, LiteraturSPIEGEL, Tobias Kapp

Available at bookstores (only in German) and at www.edition-koerber-stiftung.de
Also available as an e-book via your online provider.
Körber Foundation

Social development calls for critical reflection. Through its operational projects, in its networks and in conjunction with cooperation partners, the Körber Foundation takes on current social challenges in areas of action comprising demographic change, innovation and international dialogue. At present its work focuses on three topics: “New Working Lifetime”, “Digital Literacy” and “Russia in Europe”.

Inaugurated in 1959 by the entrepreneur Kurt A. Körber, the foundation is now actively involved in its own national and international projects and events. In particular, the foundation feels a special bond to the city of Hamburg. Furthermore, the Foundation holds a site in the capital of Germany, Berlin.

International Dialogue

For over 50 years, the Körber Foundation has been committed to international understanding and dialogue across political, national and religious boundaries. It helps to overcome the absence of discussion, to build bridges and to initiate debate.

The foundation strengthens constructive dialogue with dialogue formats, competitions, encounters and networks – open-ended, on equal terms and transparently. In doing so, it focuses on diversity. In keeping with the motto “Talk to, not about each other” the goal is to bring as many of the relevant actors to the table as possible. The Körber Foundation sheds light on the historical aspects of current conflicts and highlights perspectives for overcoming them. It examines different identities and promotes a culture of mutual recognition. It sounds out the scope for political action and shows practically orientated ways of working together. In this way the Körber Foundation contributes to the identification of common values and interests and to the building of trust.

The target groups of the Körber Foundation are social thought leaders, (foreign)political decision-makers and multipliers of international understanding. It places particular emphasis on strengthening the capacity for dialogue of decision-makers in the next generation.

The programmes of the Körber Foundation concentrate geographically on Eastern Europe and the role of Russia in the European context, as well as the regional conflicts in the Middle East and China as a global player.

Imprint

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