

EU – Russia Relations: A troubled strategic partnership?

*Conference, 27th February 2008 – Palais d'Egmont,
Place du Petit Sablon, 1000 Brussels*

EGMONT - the Royal Institute for International Relations and the EU-Russia Centre are organising a half-day conference to analyse the recent history of EU-Russia relations and prospects for the future.

Agenda

14.00-14.15 Arrival and Registration

14.15-14.30 Welcome : Claude Misson (Director General EGMONT Institute) & Fraser Cameron (Director EU-Russia Centre)

14.30-15.45 **Session I - Lessons drawn: Where did we go wrong and why?**

Chair: Pierre-Etienne Champenois, EGMONT Institute

Panel:

- Michael Emerson, Senior Research Fellow, CEPS
- Dr. Günther Burghardt, Vice President of the EU Russia Centre and former Director General, DG Relex
- György Schöpflin MEP

15.45-16.15 Coffee break

16.15-16.45 **Prospects for the Medvedev/Putin 'dream team'**

Chair: Sami Andoura, EGMONT Institute

- Georgy Bovt, Independent journalist and columnist for Russia Today, Moscow

16.45-18.15 **Session II - The way ahead: prospects for EU-Russia relations**

Chair: Fraser Cameron, Director, EU-Russia Centre

Panel:

- Gunner Wiegand, Acting Director, DG External Relations European Commission
- Nadia Arbatova, Senior Fellow, Institute for Europe, Moscow
- Professor Marie Mendras, CERI – Paris

18.15 Closing remarks Pierre-Etienne Champenois & Dr. Günther Burghardt

18.30-19.15 **Reception - Salle des Glaces, Palais d'Egmont**

Conference Rationale

Russia has over the last ten years, become closely associated with the broad Euro-Atlantic institutional architecture through its partnership with the EU, the NATO-Russia Council, its membership in the Council of Europe, and the OSCE.

The establishment of such an unprecedented cooperative network carried with it great expectations on both sides. But the optimism of the early 1990s has been replaced by a feeling of mistrust and mutual incomprehension.

Why did things go wrong? The first panel will look back at the past decade and seek to assess why the EU (and NATO) and Russia took different positions on key issues – democracy, human rights, Kosovo, the common neighbourhood, NATO enlargement, CFE treaty, Iran threat, etc. Could different Western policies have produced different results in Russia? Is Russia, as some argue, not ready for Western-style democracy? Did the West do enough to convince Russia it wanted a real partnership? What set Russia off in a different path? How durable is Russia's 'sovereign democracy'?

How will EU-Russia relations develop with the 'dream team' in situ in Moscow? Vladimir Putin is likely to provide some continuity but Dimitri Medvedev will wish to make his own mark. It seems that some Russian leaders recognise that the recent aggressive stance in foreign policy could damage Russia's economic interests. The Poles seem ready to lift their veto on opening negotiations for a new EU-Russia strategic partnership. But when will these talks start? How long will they last? What will be the main difficulties? Will Moscow continue to find it easy to divide EU member states by offering bilateral energy deals? In the meantime, how useful are the four common spaces in providing a framework for EU-Russia relations? These are some of the issues that will be discussed in the second panel.