

EU Summit May Discuss Tougher Russia Sanctions – German Minister

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European Union leaders may use their summit next week to discuss the issue of further sanctions against Russia in the context of a deteriorating situation in Ukraine, German Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier said in the Baltic states on Tuesday.

"That might be a debate to be continued at the next meeting of the European heads of state and government," Steinmeier told a news conference in the Estonian capital, Tallinn, after talks with the foreign ministers of Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania.

The EU has set clear conditions for ratcheting up economic and diplomatic sanctions against Moscow, Steinmeier said, but he and the Baltic ministers had not reached a clear view in their talks on whether that point had already been reached.

"If Russia is responsible for a lasting destabilization of Ukraine, then further decisions will become unavoidable," said Steinmeier. "We have not conclusively discussed whether we are now in that situation."

The failure of EU-mediated talks on the gas dispute between Kiev and Moscow at the weekend demonstrated that "we are far from a political solution to the Ukraine crisis", he said.

This and the shooting down of a Ukrainian army transport plane by pro-Russian rebels constituted a "real setback for efforts to defuse the crisis", the German minister said.

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