

Putin Suggests Vienna Could Host Ukraine Peace Talks

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Austrian Social Democratic Chancellor Werner Faymann addresses a news conference after a cabinet meeting in Vienna, Austria.

President Vladimir Putin suggested in a telephone call with Austrian Chancellor Werner Faymann that Vienna could host possible peace talks to resolve the crisis in Ukraine, Faymann's office said on Friday.

The idea came up in a 20-minute call on Thursday in which the leaders discussed the situation in Ukraine and European Union efforts to resolve a conflict involving a pro-Moscow separatist movement there, the Oesterreich and Heute newspapers reported.

In an interview with Oesterreich, Faymann was quoted as saying the two men had moved a step closer.

"It looks better now than it did the last time I spoke with him, but we are not yet at the finish line. He praised neutral Austria's active peace efforts and sees Vienna as a good place to hold potential peace talks with Ukraine," he said.

Faymann's spokeswoman confirmed the reports.

Austria has walked a careful line between solidarity with its European Union peers on using sanctions to punish Russia for its alleged role in fomenting the revolt in Ukraine and keeping lines of communication open with Moscow.

Faymann's government has taken a harder line on Russia's suspected role, but much of Austria's commercial community remains firmly on the side of business as usual with Moscow.

Putin visited Austria in June, getting a warm welcome from the country's business elite despite the frosty EU ties to Russia.

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