

Europe Should Stick to "Bitter Path" of Anti-Russia Sanctions, German Finance Minister Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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German Chancellor Angela Merkel and Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble arrive for a debate at the lower house of parliament Bundestag in Berlin.

German Finance Minister Wolfgang Schaeuble said Wednesday that Europe had no choice but to keep up pressure on Russia over the Ukraine crisis via sanctions, though the door remained open to dialogue.

Reiterating the German government's stance that the standoff with Moscow over its annexation of Crimea and support for rebels in eastern Ukraine could not be resolved by military means only, he said: "Therefore only the bitter path of sanctions remains."

But Schaeuble told a business conference in Berlin that the EU would prefer cooperation and its "hand is still outstretched" in the offer of dialogue.

Schaeuble said Vladimir Putin deserved respectful treatment as Russian president, but said he did not share the view of ex-chancellor Gerhard Schroeder, a friend of Putin, who when asked in 2004 if the Russian was a "flawless democrat" replied: "I am convinced he is." The minister did not elaborate.

EU leaders will discuss Russia's currency crisis at a summit on Thursday amid concern about the impact on their economies but they will not relax the sanctions and the EU is expected to widen a ban on investment in Crimea this week.

Russia has responded to EU and U.S. sanctions against its financial, defense and energy sectors by banning most Western food imports, hurting EU farmers and some other sectors.

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