

EU Lawmakers Slam Russia, Demand to Continue Sanctions

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The EU Parliament building

The European Parliament passed a resolution on Thursday calling on EU governments to maintain sanctions on Russia over its action in Ukraine, the second such critical vote in the EU legislature in as many days.

Though the votes, on resolutions proposed by individual lawmakers, are not binding, they underline anger at Moscow among the European mainstream but also division in the West, with far-right and far-left groups opposing both motions.

"The European Parliament ... calls on EU member states to remain firm and united in their commitment to the agreed sanctions against Russia," the eight-page text read.

Russia's diplomatic mission to the EU declined comment.

Highlighting concerns for security in the Black Sea region raised by a Romanian member, it called for relations with Moscow to be "cooperative rather than confrontational in the long

run" but said trust could not be restored until Russia reversed last year's annexation of Ukraine's Crimea peninsula and fulfilled this year's Minsk peace accords concerning eastern Ukraine.

EU leaders are expected to renew trade and personal sanctions linked to the conflict by the end of this month.

The motion was carried by 356 votes to 183, with far-left legislators joining right-wing Eurosceptics including the UK Independence Party and France's National Front in opposition.

A similar divide was apparent in a vote on Wednesday when a resolution proposed by a Lithuanian member was passed.

It read: "Russia, because of its actions in Crimea and in eastern Ukraine, can no longer be treated as ... a strategic partner."

Calling for the EU to tackle Russian propaganda aimed at the West, that motion also took a dig at Russian bank loans to Marine Le Pen's National Front and other alleged or confirmed support from Moscow for nationalists elsewhere in Europe.

James Carver of UKIP spoke against the motion, saying Russia shared blame with the EU for new insecurity in Europe and criticizing Brussels for engaging in "EU neo-imperialism" at the expense of a diplomatic approach to engaging with Moscow.

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