

Putin Makes Appearance at Austrian Foreign Minister's Wedding

By [Reuters](#)

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Roland Schlager / Pool/ TASS

Russian President Vladimir Putin will meet German Chancellor Angela Merkel on Saturday for talks about the conflicts in Ukraine and Syria, as well as the Nord Stream 2 gas pipeline project that has drawn U.S. ire.

Putin arrives in Germany after a stop at an Austrian vineyard to attend Foreign Minister Karin Kneissl's wedding to entrepreneur Wolfgang Meilinger.

Embed:

Screenshots for the ages [#KneisslHochzeit pic.twitter.com/7w763SoKTJ](#)

— Ralph Janik (@RalphJanik) [August 18, 2018](#)

Merkel warned on Friday against expecting too much from her discussions with Putin at the government's Meseberg palace, but said the two countries needed to remain in "permanent dialogue" on the long list of problems they face.

"It's a working meeting from which no specific results are expected," she told reporters. The two leaders last met in Sochi in May and struggled to overcome differences.

But both Juergen Hardt, foreign policy spokesman for Merkel's conservative bloc, and Achim Post, a senior member of the Social Democrats (SPD), junior partners in the coalition government, were more upbeat.

"We can be cautiously optimistic," Hardt told the Stuttgarter Zeitung and Stuttgarter Nachrichten newspapers in an interview published on Saturday. "The Russian president has manoeuvred himself into a dead end on Syria and eastern Ukraine, and needs international partners. For that he has to move."

A senior German official told the papers: "There has been some movement," but gave no details.

Post said in a statement that he expected both Merkel and Putin to look for pragmatic solutions based on common interests.

"In a world that is increasingly uncertain, we must speak particularly with difficult partners like Russia," he said.

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Russia and the West remain at loggerheads over Moscow's annexation of the Crimea region of Ukraine in 2014 and the ensuing conflict between Russian-backed separatists in the country's east and the Ukrainian army.

On Syria, Germany wants Putin to finalise a lasting ceasefire there in agreement with the United States. Merkel on Friday said a four-way meeting on Syria involving Germany, Russia, Turkey and France was possible.

Germany is also under strong pressure from the United States to halt work on the planned Nord Stream 2 pipeline that will carry gas from Russia to Germany under the Baltic Sea.

The United States says it will increase Germany's dependence on Russia for energy. Ukraine fears the pipeline will allow Russia to cut it off from the gas transit business. Germany's eastern European neighbours, nervous of Russian encroachment, have also raised concerns about the project.

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