

EU Says Russia Aims to ‘Integrate’ East Ukraine – Bloomberg

May 13, 2021



Moscow has previously denied takeover plans of the Donbass, which is held by pro-Russian rebels.
Friedemann Kohler / dpa / TASS

The European Union claims Russia is seeking “de facto integration” with separatist-held eastern Ukraine through its actions, Bloomberg [reported](#) Wednesday, citing a document shared with member states.

Kiev has been at war with pro-Russia rebels in the eastern breakaway region called Donbass since 2014, when Moscow annexed Crimea. Tensions flared this year with a spike in deadly violence, massive Russian troop buildup near the Ukrainian border and tit-for-tat diplomatic expulsions.

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The EU paper cited by Bloomberg lists Russia's alleged organizing of [local elections](#) and issuing of Russian [passports](#) to Donbass residents “aimed at de facto integration of Ukraine’s

non-governmental-controlled areas into Russia.”

Moscow has previously denied takeover plans of the Donbass, a point the Kremlin [reiterated](#) Thursday.

The reported EU paper offers several options to bolster its support for Ukraine, including improving efforts to deny recognition of Russian passports issued to Crimean and Donbass residents.

Moscow said this month that more than half a million Donbass residents have been granted Russian citizenship since 2019. Last year, they were allowed to vote on a set of constitutional reforms that allow President Vladimir Putin to extend his rule; this fall, they will be allowed to vote in key parliamentary elections.

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Other EU options, according to Bloomberg, include lowering Ukraine’s energy dependence on Russia and helping Kiev tackle cyber threats and disinformation. Another of the paper’s options included allowing Ukraine to participate in certain EU security projects.

Bloomberg added that the EU, which has faced criticism for falling short of the United States in sanctioning Russia, said in the paper that penalties depend on “further grave deterioration” in Ukraine’s “sovereignty, independence and territorial integrity.”

The paper split the ambassadors of the EU’s political and security committee in their views, according to a separate memo Bloomberg said it had seen.

One group reportedly backed the proposed options while another criticized them for lacking reforms, including anti-corruption measures, that Ukraine should adopt itself.

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