

Former European and Russian Officials Held Secret Talks in Austria – Bloomberg

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Simon Walker / No 10 Downing Street

Former diplomats and national security officials from Europe and Russia met secretly in Vienna last month to explore potential terms for holding peace talks with Ukraine, Bloomberg [reported](#) Wednesday, citing sources familiar with the matter.

The Western figures included former British national security adviser Tim Barrow, former German State Secretary Markus Ederer and veteran French diplomat Pierre Vimont. The former Russian official's identity was not disclosed.

The Kremlin has not commented on the reported meeting.

Ederer and Vimont sit on the board of the Swiss-based conflict resolution group Center for Humanitarian Dialogue, which was said to have organized the talks.

In a statement to Bloomberg, the group said it “often operates quite discreetly to protect

dialogue initiatives as they are often run independently without any official involvement.”

Germany’s foreign ministry said it was “not aware of the discussions mentioned” and denied the involvement of its foreign office. A British government spokesperson said London “supports efforts to secure a just and lasting peace for Ukraine” without commenting on former officials, while France’s foreign ministry declined to comment.

Despite official distancing, Bloomberg reported that French officials were aware of the meeting, while Britain welcomed the gathering.

Related article: [Azerbaijan Hosted Secret Russian–German Talks, President Aliyev Says](#)

Vienna is one of two locations believed to have hosted undisclosed meetings between former European and Russian officials in recent months.

In July, Azerbaijan’s President Ilham Aliyev [revealed](#) that Baku was the site of similar secret talks between former German and Russian officials amid Europe’s efforts to resume the peace process in Ukraine.

Russia’s former prime minister and current Gazprom board chairman Viktor Zubkov and current presidential human rights chief Valery Fadeyev were said to have attended the meeting in Baku last month.

While European leaders have spent weeks floating the possibility of direct talks with Russia, the Kremlin has [dismissed](#) the idea of the EU as a possible mediator in Ukraine peace negotiations.

According to Bloomberg, Europe’s broader attempts to open diplomatic channels with Russia involved a senior adviser to European Council President António trying to create a direct backchannel to the Kremlin, though those efforts have “yet to yield progress.”

Former senior U.S. national security officials and high-ranking Kremlin officials held similar secret diplomatic talks in 2023, sources previously [told](#) The Moscow Times.

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