



# OPEN EUROPEAN DIALOGUE

## Highlights

MP Open Call #14

Your Direct Line to Europe's Policymakers

**8 February 2022**

The OED is committed to strengthening dialogue between policymakers across Europe by providing a neutral, informal, and accessible space for conversation. Our monthly, online MP Open Calls grew out of this mission and are a space for parliamentarians to set the agenda, discuss pressing national and European issues, and support each other by sharing best practices and concerns.

Our call was joined by nine parliamentarians from Belgium, France, Hungary, Germany, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Slovenia, Spain, and Sweden. **Nona Mikhelidze**, head of the Eastern Europe and Eurasia program at the Istituto Affari Internazionali (IAI) in Rome, joined the call as an expert and shared additional insights on the Russian Ukrainian crisis from the Russian perspective and to give participants a further understanding of Europe's involvement.

## HIGHLIGHTS FROM THE CONVERSATION

- **Internal Drivers of Russia's Action**
  - Russia's actions are believed to be driven by the mentality that they are still the Soviet Union, and have been trying to get back to this status for years.
  - Two pertinent crisis that Russia face, economic and demographic, are the key behind Russia's intentions to claim Ukraine again. Their GDP has continued to fall over the years, where as Ukraine's economy status has began to advance based on the Eastern Partnership agreement with the E.U.
  - Russia believes that Ukraine does not have a separate identity from them and therefore Ukraine is part of their country.

- **China and Russia: A tactical rather than practical partnership**
  - China and Russia have strategically worked to be seen in public as allies, one example being their meeting at this year's Beijing winter games.
  - However, this relationship is more tactical than practical, in the sense that nothing besides promoting the same rhetoric in public has come out of this relationship.
  - **There are limitations to this relationship which block them working together:**
    - Russia does not recognize Taiwan and part of China and China does not recognize Crimea as part of Russia
    - Russia does not want to be China's junior partner and because economically China is a leader in the world order, Russia would become the weaker of the two
    - China did not support Russia's involvement in Syria
    - China continues to partner with E.U. countries economically
- **NATO, U.S., and E.U. are threats to the Russia government structure and advancement**
  - The partnerships that have formed in the West are seen as threatening to Russia and their advancement.
  - Russia particularly does not like that western countries have continued to partner with former Soviet Union countries and have offered them membership into NATO and the E.U.
  - Russia's ultimate strategy is to separate these alliances.
- **E.U. growth towards a united approach to Russia**
  - Over the years countries in the European Union have had different reactions and policies to Russia, sanctions being one of the most controversial policy. This is true in particular for eastern countries who have problems with democracies.
  - It is clear that Russia sees this as a weakness and exploits it as much as it can, mainly through creating bilateral partnerships with countries.
  - In 2014 and 2018 the European Union was significantly divided, however recently the European Union has been united when it comes to rhetoric towards the actions of Russia. Additionally, countries who were usually taken as a backseat have stepped up in support of Ukraine. For example Spain, a country usually focused on Mediterranean affairs, has recently added Russia as a priority in its foreign policy and sent arms support to Ukraine to help defend themselves.

## RESOURCES

- OED Network Experts on Russia Policy

- Relevant articles published by featured expert:

**Nona Mikhelidze**

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- <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/ukraine-russia-war-navalny-case-how-deal-kremlin>
- <https://www.iai.it/en/pubblicazioni/eu-global-strategy-resilience-east-european-societies-and-russian-challenge>



## PARTICIPANTS



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KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

The Open European Dialogue is a network driven by MPs. We look forward to hearing from you and helping you as best we can to connect and work with your colleagues from across Europe in these challenging times.

Keep in contact with your colleagues! Please know that you can always find the contact details of all OED members on the [members-only area of the website](#). Should you have issues logging in, you can contact Jo Coenen at [JCoenen@gmfus.org](mailto:JCoenen@gmfus.org)

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