Thursday 16 September 2021

RECOMMENDATIONS

EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT

P9_TA(2021)0383

Direction of EU-Russia political relations

European Parliament recommendation of 16 September 2021 to the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy on the direction of EU-Russia political relations (2021/2042(INI))

(2022/C 117/18)

The European Parliament,

— having regard to its previous resolutions on Russia, in particular those of 18 September 2014 on the situation in Ukraine and the state of play of EU-Russia relations ([1]), of 11 June 2015 on the strategic military situation in the Black Sea Basin following the illegal annexation of Crimea by Russia ([2]), of 16 March 2017 on the Ukrainian prisoners in Russia and the situation in Crimea ([3]), of 14 June 2018 on Georgian occupied territories 10 years after the Russian invasion ([4]), of 23 November 2016 on EU strategic communication to counteract propaganda against it by third parties ([5]), of 12 March 2019 on the state of EU-Russia political relations ([6]), of 19 September 2019 on the importance of European remembrance for the future of Europe ([7]), of 19 December 2019 on the Russian 'foreign agents' law ([8]), of 17 September 2020 entitled 'the situation in Russia: the poisoning of Alexei Navalny' ([9]), of 21 January 2021 on the arrest of Aleksei Navalny ([10]), of 29 April 2021 on Russia, the case of Alexei Navalny, the military build-up on Ukraine's border and Russian attacks in the Czech Republic ([11]), of 10 June 2021 on the listing of German NGOs as 'undesirable organisations' by Russia and the detention of Andrei Pivovarov ([12]),

— having regard to the UN Charter, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and the Council of Europe Convention for the Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms,

— having regard to the Russian Federation's membership of the Council of Europe and the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), and its consequent commitments and obligations,

— having regard to EU restrictive measures in response to the crisis in Ukraine, which have been in force since 2014,

— having regard to the package of measures for the implementation of the Minsk Agreements, which was adopted and signed in Minsk on 12 February 2015 and endorsed as a whole by UN Security Council resolution 2202 (2015) of 17 February 2015 thereon,

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([1]) OJ C 234, 28.6.2016, p. 14.
([2]) OJ C 407, 4.11.2016, p. 74.
([3]) OJ C 263, 25.7.2018, p. 109.
([4]) OJ C 28, 27.1.2020, p. 97.
([5]) OJ C 224, 27.6.2018, p. 58.
([6]) OJ C 23, 21.1.2021, p. 7.
([7]) OJ C 171, 6.5.2021, p. 25.
([8]) OJ C 255, 29.6.2021, p. 54.
([9]) Texts adopted, P9_TA(2020)0232.
([10]) Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0018.
([11]) Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0159.
([12]) Texts adopted, P9_TA(2021)0291.

— having regard to the results of the EU Foreign Affairs Council of 14 March 2016, specifically the agreement on the five guiding principles of the European Union's policy towards Russia, and to the conclusions of the European Council of 24 and 25 May 2021 on Russia, and of 24 June 2021 on external relations,

— having regard to the joint communication of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 16 June 2021 entitled 'EU-Russia relations — Push back, constrain and engage' (JOIN(2021)0020),

— having regard to the joint communication of the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy of 10 June 2020 entitled 'Tackling COVID-19 disinformation — Getting the facts right' (JOIN(2020)0008),

— having regard to the joint declaration of the International Crimea Platform of 23 August 2021;

— having regard to Rule 118 of its Rules of Procedure,

— having regard to the report of the Committee on Foreign Affairs (A9-0259/2021),

A. whereas Russia is an integral part of the European continent and the largest neighbour of the Union, and whereas there are strong historical interdependencies, as well as cultural and human ties between Russia and EU Member States; whereas developments in Russia, in terms of its policies and the characteristics of its authorities, are directly affecting the EU and its immediate neighbourhood; whereas despite the barriers imposed in 2014, the EU is still Russia's largest trading partner and Russia is the EU's fifth biggest one; whereas the EU is the largest investor in Russia;

B. whereas Parliament distinguishes between the Russian people and President Putin's regime, which is a stagnating authoritarian kleptocracy led by a president-for-life surrounded by a circle of oligarchs; whereas critical actions proposed in this recommendation are hence directed towards President Putin's regime and its criminal actions and anti-democratic policies, while stressing the urgent need to reach out to Russian citizens to show them that the European Union is ready to address their concerns;

C. whereas the main interest of the EU is to maintain freedom, stability and peace on the European continent and beyond, which are being threatened by the aggressive policies of the Russian authorities, which represent one of the main challenges to the EU's strategic and foreign policy agenda;

D. whereas Russia can have a democratic future; whereas like all people, Russian citizens aspire to the universal values of freedom and democracy; whereas the EU should present the Russian people with concrete proposals for mutually beneficial cooperation;

E. whereas the EU strategy towards Russia needs to combine two major objectives: first, to stop the Kremlin's external aggression and domestic repression, and second, to engage with the people of Russia and assist them in building that alternative future, which would benefit all the peoples on the European continent, including the Russian people;

F. whereas the EU's relations with the Russian Federation are based on the principles of international law, the OSCE's founding principles, democracy, the peaceful resolution of conflicts and good neighbourly relations; whereas the current Russian Government has shown contempt for these principles despite having committed to them; whereas Russia misuses international institutions, primarily the UN and the OSCE, to prevent justice and conflict resolution worldwide;

G. whereas Russia rejoined the Council of Europe in 2019, but its extensive violations of human rights continue, as well as its refusal to comply with the decisions of the European Court of Human Rights;

H. whereas President Putin's foreign policy is clearly aggressive and revisionist, as he wants to be seen as the defender of Russian interests and is trying to gain control over territories he considers were lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union and beyond; whereas the goals of President Putin's regime also include the following: to assert its authority as a great power; to consolidate the regime's interference in post-Soviet countries and beyond; to place the sovereignty of powerful states above the right to sovereignty of other states; to use the concept of protecting ethnic Russians abroad as a justification for hybrid war and disinformation; to use frozen conflicts areas as a strategic element for interfering in the affected countries and preventing them from moving closer to the EU and NATO; to use energy resources and illicit money laundering practices as tools for manipulation and blackmailing; to undermine the model of liberal

democracy and portray Russia as morally superior, and the West as morally inferior; to supress democracy, democratic opposition and the right for the people to express their free will in Russia; whereas President Putin's regime in particular rejects multilateralism and the rule-of-law-based international order, disregards international law, including the principles enshrined in the UN Charter, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act and the 1990 OSCE Charter of Paris, as demonstrated *inter alia* by the 2020 constitutional amendments, whose adoption process have been deemed by the European Commission for Democracy through Law (the 'Venice Commission') as 'clearly inappropriate' and violated both the Russian law and its OSCE obligations; whereas Russia has failed to implement more than a thousand judgments of the European Court of Human Rights;

I. whereas the current Russian regime is threatening peace and security in Europe by continuing with systemic human rights violations against its people and aggressive behaviour in its foreign policy, including but not limited to: large-scale military exercises and military build-ups; the illegal and violent occupation and annexation of Crimea; the violation of the territorial integrity and the destabilisation of Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova; support for frozen conflicts and its failure to respect ceasefire agreements in Georgia and Ukraine; alleged acts of terrorism on the territory of EU Member States such as Czechia; cyberattacks and attacks on sensitive infrastructure in EU Member States; violations of international law; election interference; and violations of the sea and air space of countries in the Baltic Sea and in the Black Sea regions; whereas the EU's failure to respond adequately to the various Russian aggressions since the one against Georgia in 2008 prompted Russia to continue aggressive military and political campaigns, both in its neighbourhood and beyond, thus weakening and undermining the rules-based international order and stability in Europe and elsewhere;

J. whereas the Russian administration continues to stockpile offensive weapons and station troops close to the EU borders in the Kaliningrad enclave;

K. whereas under its current regime, Russia is a long-term threat to European security according to the recent assessment of NATO Reflection Group; whereas Russia has established new military bases and modernised old military bases in the north of the country; whereas Russia has upgraded its Northern Fleet to the status of a military district, scaled up different branches of its armed forces and revived the bastion defence concept aimed at protecting its strategic capabilities; whereas NATO's Enhanced Forward Presence on the Eastern Flank has played a crucial role in deterring Russia from carrying out destabilising activities, including military build-up in the Western Military District; whereas the collapse of arms control with Russia (e.g. its withdrawals from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty and the Treaty on Open Skies) and the lack of progress on nuclear disarmament under the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as Russia's rejection of the new Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is of great concern for the security of European citizens; whereas this is coupled with a dangerous modernisation of Russian nuclear and conventional arsenals and their means of delivery and the introduction of destabilising technologies (hypersonic nuclear-capable missiles, torpedoes, etc.);

L. whereas in March and April 2021 in particular the Kremlin regime substantially increased its military presence on Ukraine's eastern and northern border with Russia, which is the biggest concentration of Russian troops since 2014; whereas the Kremlin regime suspended the right of passage for warships and commercial vessels of other countries through part of the Black Sea in the direction of the Kerch Strait, which is a violation of navigation rights guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea, to which Russia is a party;

M. whereas Russia is providing consistent political and economic support to the illegitimate and reprehensible regime of Aliaksandr Lukashenka in Belarus; whereas President Putin's political and economic investment in the survival of the illegitimate regime of Mr Lukashenka is the only reason why he is still able to continue his brutal persecution of the Belarusian people, who are demanding respect for human rights, free and transparent elections, rule of law and justice; whereas recent political developments in Belarus and Russia have many common features, and the processes in both countries are very significantly influencing each other; whereas the protests against the authoritarian regime and demands for change in Belarus are inspiring similar demands by people in Russia; whereas the Kremlin authorities are increasing repressions of political opposition before the forthcoming Duma elections in September 2021, limiting and denying the possibility to participate and preventing certain opposition politicians from standing for election, and in such a way are destroying political competition by stealing the opportunity of fair elections, as was done by the dictatorship in Belarus in August 2020;

N. whereas President Putin's Russia continues its efforts to destabilise EU candidate and associated Eastern Partnership (EaP) countries with the goal of creating obstacles or stopping the process of their Euro-Atlantic integration; whereas a 'passportisation' policy is being used to boost the numbers of Russian compatriots and de facto to extend Russian jurisdiction over territories occupied by it and breakaway territories, notably Transnistria, South Ossetia, Abkhazia, Donbas and the Crimean Peninsula; whereas these actions are a violation of international laws;

O. whereas the 2020 Russian constitutional reforms revised the history of World War II, cleansing Soviet history and naming Russia as a successor of the Soviet Union, introduced the right to intervene internationally in defence of Russian compatriots and outlawed discussions about returning lands claimed by Russia to foreign countries;

P. whereas the EU should closely monitor Russia's position and involvement in Afghanistan, as Russia is seeking to exploit the withdrawal of the West to its advantage and fill the resulting power vacuum;

Q. whereas the EU Member States that allow dual citizenship are exposed to Russia's passportisation policy; whereas the EU Member States which adopted so-called golden passport regimes enable Kremlin loyalists to enjoy a European quality of life with money stolen from the Russian people and to spread corruption into the EU;

R. whereas Russia is implementing a hostile 'Russian World' concept to prepare the ground for its interference in foreign countries in defence of Russian compatriots; whereas the 'Russian World' is being promoted by state-owned media outlets such as Russia Today and Sputnik in the native languages of the EU Member States; whereas the COVID-19 pandemic is being used by the Kremlin's propaganda machine to enhance division among EU Member States, portray the EU as unable to cope with the pandemic, spread doubts about the vaccines approved by the European Medicines Agency, discourage people in the EU from getting vaccinated, and rehabilitate Russia's image in the eyes of the EU population, particularly via the promotion of the Sputnik V vaccine;

S. whereas numerous local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and radical groups, including political movements, receive Russian funding;

T. whereas Russia remains engaged in several parts of the world, including the Western Balkans, Central Asia, the Middle East, North Africa, sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and the Arctic; whereas the Russian Government uses paramilitary units (the 'Wagner Group') to support dictatorial regimes around the world and undermine the EU and the international community's efforts to mitigate conflicts, build peace and ensure stability; whereas the Western Balkans region, which includes potential new EU member states, is characterised by a strong Russian presence, particularly in Serbia; whereas in 2016 in Montenegro, the Russian military intelligence agency (GRU) was involved in attempts to overthrow the country's parliament, to assassinate the prime minister and to install a pro-Russian and anti-NATO government, to prevent Montenegro's accession to NATO;

U. whereas, as far as the EU is concerned, the Kremlin's regime allegedly involved Russian active-duty intelligence officers in two ammunition depot explosions in 2014 in which two Czech citizens were killed and extensive material damage was caused; whereas the same GRU agents were also responsible for the attempted murder of Sergei and Yulia Skripal in the United Kingdom in 2018 using a military-grade Novichok nerve agent; whereas GRU agents were also charged with the attempted murder of Emilian Gebrev, the owner of an arms factory, and two other people in Bulgaria in 2015, as well as Zelimkhan Khangoshvili, assassinated in Berlin in 2019 by Russian operatives; whereas illegal actions by the Kremlin regime on the territory of Czechia, Bulgaria and many other Member States, the United Kingdom and EaP countries constitute a critical violation of their sovereignty; whereas the Kremlin regime is non-cooperative in investigating those crimes and is sheltering key suspects;

V. whereas it is deplorable that the Russian authorities are willingly or unwillingly locking their country into dependency on China, which can only weaken the Russian Federation and the entire European continent and, in particular, enable the Chinese authorities to expand their presence and influence in Central Asia and Siberia;

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W. whereas the Kremlin is continuing its disinformation, propaganda and hybrid interference into the EU's domestic politics and democratic processes, which pose a threat to the fundamental values of the EU — i.e. respect for democracy, equality, the rule of law and human rights — and are able to undermine policies of national governments, spread defamation and convey an image of the West as an enemy, promote hatred, intolerance and Soviet nostalgia, rewrite the history of Soviet crimes, and ultimately deepen the rupture between Russia and Europe, particularly with the countries formerly belonging to the communist bloc; whereas the EU and the Member States' institutions, as well as objects of strategical importance and democratic processes such as elections, are the constant target of Russian cyberattacks; whereas the highest hierarchy of the Russian Orthodox Church supports the Putin regime; whereas Russian laws allow the repression of religious groups that are deemed extremist; whereas recent findings about the close and regular contacts between Russian officials, including members of the security service, and representatives of a group of Catalan secessionists in Spain require an in-depth investigation; whereas this could turn out to be yet another example of Russian interference in Member States and the constant attempts by Russia to exploit any matter it can to promote internal destabilisation in the EU;

X. whereas the combination of Western sanctions on Russia, a decrease in revenue from fossil fuel exports, an uncompetitive economy, high military expenditure and domestic social transfers has caused Russia to face financial difficulties; whereas Russia ranks 129th out of 180 countries in the 2020 Corruption Perceptions Index, as massive state-level corruption affects the quality of public services for Russian people, which remain underfunded, including public healthcare, which is of particular importance during the pandemic; whereas nearly 19 million Russians live under the poverty line;

Y. whereas the Russian Government imposed sanctions *inter alia* on Parliament President David Sassoli, Commission Vice-President Věra Jourová and six other Member State officials and whereas those sanctions are unacceptable and baseless because they lack any legal justification; whereas the Russian Government also approved a list of 'unfriendly countries', which includes Czechia and the United States;

Z. whereas in 2019, more than 60 % of EU imports from Russia were energy products; whereas the EU should reduce the dependency of its economy, especially in the energy sector, on Russian gas supplies to EU markets, which now stands at 48 %, and is likely to increase; whereas the European Green Deal (EGD) is a major instrument for ensuring the EU's geopolitical security and whereas according to the Commission's forecasts, if the EGD is implemented, the EU's oil and natural gas imports after 2030 are expected to shrink dramatically, with oil imports dropping by 78-79 % and natural gas imports by 58-67 % compared to 2015 figures;

AA. whereas European gas consumption has peaked and the capacity of the current Nord Stream pipeline is not fully used at the moment; whereas the divisive decision by some Member States to build Nord Stream 2 is incompatible with the values of solidarity and trust of the Energy Union; whereas Nord Stream 2 is incompatible with the goals of the EGD of reducing EU greenhouse gas emissions by at least 55 % by 2030 and achieving no net emissions of greenhouse gases by 2050;

AB. whereas the EU should call on Russia to guarantee free and unhindered access to the so-called trophy archives, which were transferred to Moscow in 1944 and 1945 from territories occupied by the Soviet Union, as well as to historical archives and artefacts that were taken from European countries by the Russian Empire and are currently kept in Russia;

AC. whereas the rule of law, an independent judiciary and a free press are at the core of resilient democratic societies;

AD. whereas the Russian Federation poses not only an external threat to European security, but is also repressing its own people; whereas the situation in Russia is deteriorating dreadfully because of President Putin's increasing repression of democratic forces, the aim of which is to silence his domestic critics, the political opposition and anti-corruption activists, limit their freedom of assembly and obstruct their activities and those of the Russian civil society, as demonstrated by the detainment of more than 11 000 peaceful demonstrators by Russian authorities just two weeks after the arrest of Alexei Navalny, bringing the total number of Russians detained since January 2021 to more than 15 000; whereas Russia has continued to unlawfully detain its citizens and target opposition leaders, independent journalists, protesters and human rights activists; whereas the prison conditions in Russia remain dreadful and whereas those imprisoned are subject to torture, harassment and physical attacks;

AE. whereas by adopting laws on 'foreign agents' and 'undesirable organisations', the Kremlin's regime is allowing individuals, associations and media outlets to be stigmatised, thereby violating their human rights and freedom of expression and association, restricting the citizens' rights to commit and contribute to Russian civil society and putting their personal safety at risk; whereas the Kremlin's regime further enhanced those laws by extending restrictions to persons or entities supporting 'foreign agents' and 'undesirable foreign organisations', thus systemically barring active members of civil society, human rights NGOs and the opposition from participating in the 2021 parliamentary elections in Russia; whereas, in particular, new pieces of legislation adopted in December 2020 and January 2021 expanded the scope of individuals and groups that can be designated 'foreign agents', the definition of 'foreign funds', and the requirements for labelling materials; whereas new draft bills proposed in May 2021 aimed at expanding the impact of the law on 'undesirable' organisations and imposing bans with retroactive effect on potential candidates for the Russian Parliament; whereas Russian authorities continue to prosecute people over alleged affiliation with groups designated extremist under Russia's overly broad counter-extremism law; whereas the Russian authorities' decision to declare the Anti-Corruption Foundation headed by Alexei Navalny an extremist organisation is baseless, discriminatory and has been adopted with the single goal of destroying the opposition's possibilities to effectively participate in election campaigns;

AF. whereas, according to the Memorial Human Rights Centre, the Russian authorities are currently holding nearly 400 political prisoners, in violation of the Russian Federation's obligations under Article 5 of the European Convention on Human Rights, Article 9 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and Article 23 of the concluding document of the Vienna Meeting of 5 January 1989 of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe;

AG. whereas over the past two decades, there have been a number of attempted or successful assassinations of regime opponents and independent journalists, either within Russia itself or on foreign soil, including those of Anna Politkovskaya, Boris Nemtsov, Alexander Litvinenko, Sergei and Yulia Skripal, Sergei Protazanov, Pyotr Verzilov, Vladimir Kara-Murza, Alexei Navalny, Zelimkhan Khangoshvili and others; whereas the organisers of those crimes remain unidentified and unindicted because the ongoing repression of social dissent is reinforced by the impunity of police and security forces and by the unwillingness of the judiciary to persecute the real perpetrators of those crimes; whereas representatives of the opposition are systematically subjected to verbal attacks, ad hominem campaigns and dehumanisation by the government or pro-government media; whereas the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's report on the murder of Boris Nemtsov concluded that 'the main issue for addressing impunity is not the capabilities of the Russian law enforcement, but political will'; whereas the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly's report also notes that a full investigation into the assassination 'would be a first step to address the climate of impunity' in Russia;

AH. whereas the illegal constitutional amendments, in addition to giving President Putin a waiver from presidential term limits in 2024, further eroded the right to a fair trial in Russia, including by giving the president the power to nominate the judges of the Constitutional and Supreme Courts and initiate the appointment of all federal judges and the dismissal of senior federal judges;

AI. whereas media freedom in Russia is rapidly deteriorating as the Russian Government has accelerated its years-long campaign to stamp out civil society and the independent press, threatening organisations such as Meduza, Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, VTimes, For Human Rights, the European Endowment for Democracy and Open Russia with onerous legislative, regulatory and bureaucratic burdens, choking off access to all sources of funding not under the control of the government and its allies, tarring them with epithets such as 'foreign agent' or 'undesirable', which serve to discredit these groups and the high journalistic and human rights principles they represent, without which Russia cannot be democratic, prosperous and free; whereas the media space in Russia is controlled and owned by the state, there is no public broadcaster, the remaining few independent media sources struggle financially and face persecution, including physical attacks and the imprisonment of their workers; whereas since 1992, 58 journalists have been killed in Russia; whereas the 'sovereign internet' law enables the government to block any unwanted internet content; whereas the free and independent work of civil society organisations and the media is a cornerstone of a democratic society based on the rule of law;

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AJ. whereas opportunities for impartial election observation have been shrinking steadily in Russia over the past decade, as the absence of provisions for direct accreditation of election-observing citizens forces them to act on behalf of contestants or media outlets and therefore contradicts the very idea of independent election scrutiny by civil society and is also at odds with international standards; whereas the Freedom in the World 2021 report placed Russia in the category of 'not free' countries; whereas citizens' fundamental freedoms are limited in Russia and the election environment is controlled, Russian people are discouraged from participating in public protests by the burdensome bureaucratic procedures established in order for citizens to receive permission and by police violence during peaceful protests;

AK. whereas those domestic developments will foreshadow possible further deteriorations in the run-up to the September 2021 parliamentary elections in Russia, and could lead to further repression of the political opposition in Russia, including severe human rights violations; whereas the Russian authorities are holding the key opposition players of the parliamentary election campaign in prison or under home arrest; whereas continuing repression of opposition candidates by the Russian authorities by abusing the registration procedures and selectively targeting political opponents and civil society organisations in the streets and courts under fabricated cases will make it simply impossible to speak about fair parliamentary elections in September 2021, as the regime in Russia is destroying political competition and pluralist democracy through those actions;

AL. whereas there are therefore legitimate doubts that the forthcoming parliamentary elections will be free and fair;

AM. whereas on numerous occasions Parliament has expressed its concern over the state of democracy, the systematic failure to uphold the rule of law and respect for fundamental rights and principles, the shrinking space for independent and dissident actors, and the attack on media freedom in Russia; whereas the endlessly increasing systemic oppression by the Kremlin of the opposition in Russia is an eye-opener for the whole international community and whereas the EU must be ready to face it and develop a coherent response strategy; whereas, in particular, the EU should build increasing pressure on the Kremlin regime in the run-up to the 2021 parliamentary elections and in its aftermath in order to defend the right for the Russian people to have free elections in which all political parties should have equal access and equal chances;

AN. whereas the LGBTI+ community in various parts of the Russian Federation faces extensive discrimination, including harassment, torture, imprisonment and killings and whereas the situation is particularly dangerous in Chechnya, which in 2017 started its purge of LGBTI+ people, detaining and torturing dozens and killing at least two, leading to many people seeking safe refuge abroad; whereas existing laws prohibit any public discussion on 'non-traditional sexual relationships'; whereas following illegal constitutional changes, legislation that negatively affects LGBTI+ people's rights, including the rights to marry and raise children, has been adopted;

AO. whereas serious gaps in the official response to widespread gender-based violence and domestic violence continue to exist in Russia, including a lack of sufficient protection and means of redress for victims; whereas the draft law on domestic violence, which was proposed in November 2019, fell short of providing a comprehensive definition of domestic violence; whereas in early 2020, Parliament deprioritised the draft law's review, which remains pending; whereas Russia's ombudsperson noted that domestic violence spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic, with reported cases more than doubling during the spring lockdown; whereas the EU strategy on Russia should consequently tackle growing discrimination and gender inequality as well as women's rights, LGBTI+ and other minorities' rights in Russia;

AP. whereas the democratic transformation of Russia is a major geopolitical security interest of the EU and whereas President Putin's Russia remains the biggest challenge for European security;

AQ. whereas in its resolutions of 17 September 2020, 21 January 2021 and 29 April 2021, Parliament called on the Vice-President of the European Commission / High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, Josep Borrell, to perform a review of the EU's policy vis-à-vis Russia, including the five guiding principles agreed in 2016, emphasising that future EU relations with Russia would depend on the pace of Russia's democratic transformation (or lack thereof); whereas it also called for the EU institutions to devise a new

comprehensive strategic approach assuming that any dialogue with Russia must be based on respect for international law and human rights;

AR. whereas the updated EU strategy should take into account different scenarios, possible developments and clear responses to Russia's infringements of international law and human rights, including effective instruments against Russia's interference and spreading of disinformation, as well as instruments for selective engagement, where possible; whereas Parliament has also asked the Council to immediately start preparations and adopt an EU strategy for future relations with a democratic Russia, including a broad offer of incentives and conditions to strengthen domestic tendencies towards freedom and democracy;

AS. whereas the five EU guiding principles for relations with Russia have contained further aggression against Ukraine by the Kremlin regime, but are silent with respect to containing President Putin's repression against the people of Russia; whereas the five EU guiding principles for relations with Russia remain valid as a functional framework, but must be paired with an actual strategy aiming to achieve the EU's goals in its relations with Russia, including *inter alia* by countering the Kremlin's current hostile policies and deterring further aggression against its neighbours and by making the consequences for military actions in foreign countries more serious, including actions by proxies and mercenaries; whereas given that there are no prospects for significant positive developments with the current Russian leadership, the five principles should be complemented in order to contain President Putin's repression of the Russian people and the Kremlin's broader destabilising activities;

AT. whereas the new EU strategy should be centred on the 'push-back, contain and engage' principles, which are aimed at strengthening the EU's capacity to combat the Kremlin's threats, especially in the EaP region, including Belarus, as well as in Russia itself, by defending human rights and assisting Russia's transformation into a democracy in accordance with the 'democracy first' principle; whereas the EU's overarching key objective should be to shape relations with the Russian Federation in such a way that the peace, stability, security, prosperity, sovereignty and territorial integrity of all countries in the EU and its neighbourhood are preserved, international law is respected and human rights and the rule of law remain the guiding principles; whereas the latest developments in Russia have shown that the EU's strategy on Russia should be much more proactive and have a clearly defined 'engagement' objective, which should focus not only on traditional so-called selective engagement with the Kremlin, but rather on 'strategic' engagement with Russian civil society in order to assist in the transformation of Russia towards democracy;

AU. whereas the EU strategy on Russia should have support for freedom and democracy at its core; whereas such a strategy should be in the security interests of the EU and offer Russia a constructive dialogue; whereas a constructive relationship would still be in the interests of both the EU and Russia and their peoples; whereas there is still a possibility of collaborating to share common interests, solve problems and address strategic challenges, such as climate policy or counter-terrorism, while promoting the values of human rights, the rule of law and democracy, and ensure that a future strengthening of bilateral relations will be dependent on the Russian Federation's fulfilment of its own commitments to human rights and democracy in accordance with its constitution and its international obligations;

AV. whereas, at the same time, the EU must focus on saving its credibility concerning its value-oriented behaviour internally, by upholding the rule of law and fundamental rights much more directly and honestly, as police violence, antiquated criminal laws and resistance to gender equality and diversity in some Member States damage its reputation and credibility abroad; whereas the EU must also communicate comparable expectations vis-à-vis all partners, by denouncing violations of international law, consistently taking harsh consequential measures and refraining from applying double standards when assessing such violations;

AW. whereas unity among the EU Member States is the best policy to deter Russia from carrying out destabilising and subversive actions in Europe; whereas when determining how to coordinate its updated strategy — in particular in strategic areas such as the European Defence Union, the European Energy Union, cyber defence, cyberterrorism and strategic communication tools — the EU should therefore be more unified since Russia's policy towards it has for a long time been to sideline EU institutions in favour of bilateral relations with Member States, in an attempt to expose and increase the EU's internal divisions; whereas a constructive dialogue with the Russian authorities would require closer coordination, cooperation and unity between the Member States and more strength and firmness in their

response to any provocation and aggression from Moscow, so as to strike a balance between firmness and openness to dialogue on issues of common interest;

AX. whereas the EU strategy on Russia should support Russia on its path to becoming a democratic country by (i) pushing back and targeting punitive sanctions at those within and close to the Kremlin, who are prepared to steal elections or hand out bribes to win them or commit other major crimes against human rights and democracy values, both inside Russia and in the EU's immediate neighbourhood, (ii) providing assistance to EaP countries by offering an ambitious EU integration policy and developing the EU's strategic responsibility and geopolitical leadership capacities needed to implement such policies; and (iii) having a strategy of engagement with pro-democratic society in Russia to set a path for future relations with democratic Russia;

AY. whereas a successful, prosperous and democratic EU Eastern Neighbourhood is considered by the Kremlin as a threat to the stability of President Putin's regime, because it may provide 'soft power' inspiration to ordinary people in Russia; whereas the democratisation of the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood is therefore in the interest of those countries and the EU and has crucial importance for the future democratisation of Russia; whereas the Kremlin's true aim regarding conflicts in this region is to delegitimise democratic change as a means of transferring power, to prevent the successful development of these states, to discredit liberal democracy and to export Russia's own system of power;

AZ. whereas the EU should pursue a long-term strategy on Russia, based on the assumption that — like Ukrainians and Belarusians — the people of Russia can aspire to transform their country into a democracy; whereas the transformation of Russia back into democracy will depend on the willingness of the Russian people; whereas the EU must be ready to assist Russians in their wish to live in a democratic country;

BA. whereas the role of the EU as a global actor and the foreign policy competences of the EU institutions should be strengthened;

1. Recommends that the Council, the Commission and the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (VP/HR) review, together with the Member States, the EU policy vis-à-vis Russia, including the five guiding principles, and develop a comprehensive EU strategy towards Russia based on the following principles and actions:

Deterring the Russian threat — pushing back against the security threat

(a) the EU must fundamentally reform its foreign policy in order to credibly demonstrate its ambition as an influential global player and its capacity to make timely decisions and take determined action in the field of foreign policy, including by extending the competences of the European External Action Service and the VP/HR acting on behalf of the EU, repealing unanimity in foreign policy matters, and enhancing its capacities for strategic foresight and action; moreover, the EU should strengthen its role as a global player, as well as the capacities of the EU institutions, in order not to allow Russia to continue the so-called bilateralisation of relations with the EU, as Brussels should be the only capital where key decisions about EU-Russia relations are taken;

(b) the EU, together with NATO and international partners, should deter Russia in order to maintain peace and stability in Europe and beyond, including by strengthening its own defence capabilities and by pressing the Russian authorities not to interfere in the EU's Eastern and Southern Neighbourhoods; in particular, the EU should demand — including before EU and international organisations such as the OSCE or the UN — that Russia commits to the resolution of the ongoing conflicts and to the prevention of any future conflicts, starting by returning the occupied and illegally annexed territories in the EaP region according to their internationally recognised borders and by respecting countries' EU, Euro-Atlantic and democratic choices;

(c) the EU, and in particular its Member States, should deliver on their commitments to collective defence made as members of NATO; recalls that the EU and NATO share common security challenges, common defence interests and the same increasingly challenging security environment and that a strong transatlantic security and defence partnership through NATO is therefore indispensable, while the EU is at the same time pursuing a path towards strategic autonomy;

the EU must step up its efforts to establish a genuine European defence force as part of a strengthened NATO in order to be able to contribute more effective, deployable, interoperable and sustainable military capabilities and forces, so as to project itself as a strong and confident international actor capable of maintaining peace;

(d) the EU should address the newest National Security Strategy of the Russian Federation, which formally acknowledges the anti-Western vector of Russian foreign policy and underlines the fundamental and systemic incompatibility of the socio-political systems of Russia and the West;

(e) the EU must strengthen cooperation between the intelligence services of its Member States in order to systematically expose, attribute and discredit Russian hostile actions, in particular so as to be more effective in preventing Russian special services from conducting their operations on EU territory, and must work further with its strategic partners on new measures to counter the Kremlin's sponsored terrorism; furthermore, the EU should invest in projects to strengthen its security and its joint military, cyber and energy capacities, as well as the coordination of the counter-espionage efforts of the Member States;

(f) the EU should be ready to use its leverage and call for the exclusion of Russia from the SWIFT payment system to deter Russian authorities from engaging in further aggressive behaviour and should be prepared to phase out its imports of oil and gas from Russia if the Russian authorities continue their threats against Member States and military action against EaP countries in the neighbourhood;

(g) the EU must also proceed with the full synchronisation of all Member States' electricity grids with the synchronous grid of continental Europe as the best long-term response to the problem of Europe's strategic energy dependency on Russia, and should also oppose any new expansion of Russia's nuclear energy sector towards the EU and adopt measures to avoid selling in the EU market electricity produced in the Rosatom-built Astravets nuclear power station and other future projects, such as the Baltic Nuclear Power Plant (Baltiyskaya NPP);

(h) in line with the EU's energy policy and interests, the EU needs to draw up and implement a clear strategy on how to end its dependency on Russian gas and oil and other raw materials (notably iron/steel, aluminium and nickel), and increase its own energy autonomy, at least while President Putin is in power; in this regard, the EU should uphold an ambitious and resolute green agenda and should have as a major geopolitical priority the rapid implementation of the EGD package, which includes measures such as the EU carbon leakage tax and decarbonisation initiatives with development of green hydrogen industries; the EU also needs to immediately implement new physical measures, such as reverse flow capabilities and additional cross-border infrastructure between Member States; the EU furthermore needs to diversify its energy supply, including by developing new capacities for liquefied natural gas imports, the energy transition and decarbonisation initiatives, which are rapidly gaining traction and could lessen demand for fossil fuels, thereby ending Russia's energy dominance on the European continent; against this framework, the construction of the Nord Stream 2 pipeline, which goes against European solidarity and risks increasing Russia's dominance and the EU's dependence on Russian gas and exposing Ukraine to Russian malevolence, should be immediately halted and should not be put into use under the current circumstances even if its construction is completed;

(i) the EU and its Member States must accelerate the implementation of the EGD, considering Russia's most recent energy strategy for 2035 envisions an increase in gas export capacity through pipelines in the western direction;

Countering the current Russian threat — fighting Russian interference in the EU and Eastern Neighbourhood countries

(j) the EU must continue to uphold the EaP countries' independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity within their internationally recognised borders and condemn Russia's direct and indirect involvement in armed conflicts and military build-ups inside the borders of or on its borders with the EaP region, its illegal occupation and annexation of Crimea and the de facto occupation of certain parts of the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk, and the human rights and international law violations it carries out in territories it has occupied or annexed, as demonstrated by the recent detentions of the first deputy chair of the Crimean Tatar Mejlis, Nariman Celâl, and four other Crimean Tatar leaders: Aziz and Asan Akhtemov, Shevket Useinov and Eldar Odamanov; the EU should make it clear that a return to 'business

as usual' cannot be envisaged until Russia halts its aggressive policy and hybrid warfare against the EU, its Member States and the EaP countries, and the territorial integrity of Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine is restored within their internationally recognised borders; the EU should therefore ensure that sanctions remain in place until Russia fulfils the respective conditions for their lifting and should also consider extending them for a period of 1 year, instead of 6 months as is currently the case;

(k) the EU should further contribute to the development of the consultation and coordination format of the international Crimea Platform, with the aim of peacefully ending the Russian Federation's temporary occupation of the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol and of restoring Ukraine's control over the territory, with full respect for international law;

(l) the EU must recognise the European aspirations of its neighbouring countries and reject Russia's policy of spheres of influence; in addition, the EU should acknowledge that it bears a strategic responsibility for stability and development in its neighbourhood, especially in the EaP region, and should keep demanding that Russia engages constructively in the Normandy Process and implements its international obligations, particularly under the Minsk agreements and the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea; the EU should continue its involvement, including through the relevant EU Member States involved in the Normandy Format, in the full implementation of the Minsk agreements and explore possibilities for transatlantic cooperation on this matter; the EU should also broaden the scope of its sanctions to cover 'passportisation' and the organisation of illegal elections in Crimea and to increase the price Russia pays for blocking the implementation of the Minsk agreements and the Normandy Format talks; the EU should coordinate these measures with the US, the UK, Canada, Japan and other partners in order to expand their scope or increase their effectiveness;

(m) in addition, the EU should take resolute measures to deter Russia from circumventing existing EU sanctions; to this end, the EU should review and update its applicable regulations to close multiple loopholes in order to render sanctions more efficient and make Russia pay a genuinely higher price for its hybrid aggressive action;

(n) the EU needs to exert pressure on the Russian Federation to unconditionally fulfil all the provisions of the EU-mediated ceasefire agreement of 12 August 2008, in particular the commitment to withdrawing all its military forces from the occupied territories of Georgia;

(o) in order to contain President Putin's revisionist conduct towards his neighbours, with the aim of strengthening the resilience of the institutions, economies and societies of the EaP countries and deepening their political association and economic integration, and to intensify its work toward the *rapprochement* of these countries with the EU, the EU should propose a new clear strategy for long-term engagement to the EaP countries;

(p) the EU's solidarity with the EaP countries should be aimed at strengthening trust in the EU as a reliable partner on security issues, such as by getting more involved in peaceful conflict resolution; the EU should make sure that the security dimension of the EaP countries is also properly reflected in the EU Strategic Compass and should also consider launching a series of security compacts — frameworks for increased investment and assistance in security, military, intelligence and cyber cooperation — with select countries in the EU's neighbourhood, such as Ukraine, Moldova and Georgia, in order to strengthen their resilience; the EU should not see security coordination with these countries only through the prism of NATO enlargement, but should be ambitious when assessing the security challenges on the ground, and, in coordination with international partners, consider providing friendly EaP countries with defensive equipment, in line with Article 51 of the UN Charter; the EU should also strengthen cooperation with friendly EaP countries through the European Defence Agency and in areas such as informational and cyber-resilience and intelligence-sharing, and should step up joint military exercises;

(q) the EU should engage with NATO and leverage and expand current engagements in the Black Sea region and specifically further engage with EaP countries through a whole-of-society approach in order to ensure a secure and stable Black Sea region;

(r) the EU should also be concerned about the role Kremlin is playing in the Western Balkans, which includes state-backed disinformation and building political and military ties to the regional political elites; the EU should be aware that the Kremlin's interference in elections and support of anti-democratic forces in the Western Balkan region remains an issue, notably in the countries which are also members of NATO;

(s) the EU also needs to respond to the fact that President Putin openly supports Mr Lukashenka's regime and its brutal repressions against the people of Belarus and collaborates with Mr Lukashenka on hybrid attacks against the democratic forces of Belarus; the EU therefore needs to acknowledge that in this way the Kremlin is posing a direct threat to the sovereignty and democracy efforts of Belarus, and has to make it clear that, if Russia continues its current policy on Belarus, the EU will have to introduce additional harsh containment and deterrence measures, because by defending democracy in Belarus, the EU also supports democracy in Russia; the EU should expose Russia's involvement in the hybrid actions of Lukashenka's regime against the EU, including the use of migrants as a tool to destabilise the West, and hold the Kremlin accountable for such hostile and barbaric actions;

(t) the EU has to clean its own house of the Kremlin's hybrid interferences and money laundering practices, which are having an impact on EU political and business elites, if it wants to be effective in assisting the Russian people on their path towards democracy;

(u) the EU and its Member States should make it clear that they will not accept any attempts to incorporate Belarus into Russia, as these would be made against the will of the Belarusian people and negotiated by an illegitimate leader;

(v) notes that an increasing number of international actors, among them Russia, implement strategies of hybrid warfare, including against the EU and its Member States; underlines that these acts are of a particularly destabilising and dangerous nature as they blur the lines between war and peace, destabilise democracies and sow doubt in the minds of target populations; therefore, in coordination with NATO and its partners — including EaP countries, which possess unique experience and knowledge in this respect — the EU and its Member States should strengthen the monitoring and analysis of Russian hybrid warfare activities (including manipulative disinformation campaigns, cyberattacks, espionage and interference in elections); in particular, they should urgently ensure that sufficient resources, staffing and instruments able to identify, analyse, prevent, counter and eliminate Russian hybrid threats and interferences are deployed; the above is particularly important with regard to attempts to undermine the European project, polarise and divide democratic societies through disinformation, and support and finance anti-democratic, populist, extremist, mostly right-wing or radical-leftist parties, movements and NGOs or political separatist forces across Europe, including in cyberspace and through social media and media outlets such as Russia Today and Sputnik; political parties in the EU that willingly profit from financial resources provided by the Russian Federation in exchange for political and other types of support offered by Parliament and other organisations for Russian policies and aims to the detriment of EU interests and values have a moral and political responsibility;

(w) in this respect, the EU must devise a coordinated and holistic containment strategy, including measures to protect its own media landscape and systematically monitor content offered by Russian and Russian-affiliated media and internet providers (whether in Russian or any other language), without restricting press freedoms; as part of its strategy, the EU should call out Russia each time it carries out hybrid attacks against the EU and the Member States, increase resilience to cyberattacks and expand the capacities of the East StratCom Task Force, as there is a need to also cover disinformation in the EU's space; the EU and its Member States should implement bolder and more coordinated, proportionate responses to counter such attacks, for instance by expelling Russian diplomats at the EU level in response to the expulsion of diplomats of individual Member States by the Russian authorities;

(x) finally, the EU should ensure the incoming proposals of the European Parliament Special Committee on Foreign Interference in all Democratic Processes in the European Union, including Disinformation are swiftly implemented;

Engagement and selective dialogue with the Kremlin to prepare Russia's transition, including sectoral cooperation

(y) in its engagement with Russia, the EU should move in two directions: on the one hand, conditional selective dialogue with the Kremlin authorities and regional governments, and on the other hand strategic engagement with Russian civil society, which is striving for democracy in Russia, as well as independent cooperation with regional and local actors; the EU strategy towards Russia should not preclude engaging with the authorities where it is in the interests of the EU and does not undermine the EU's commitments to human rights and democracy goals, as it is still important for the EU to find ways to de-escalate current tensions by identifying measures to increase transparency and reduce the risk of misunderstandings and miscalculations;

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(z) in particular, the EU should continue institutional cooperation with Russia through international organisations and multilateral treaties such as the UN, the OSCE, the Arctic Council or the Council of Europe in order to address urgent regional and global issues, engage on the issue of conflict prevention and resolution, and promote complementary or common interests, for example on environmental issues and the green transformation of both Russia and the EU, on the Treaty on Open Skies, on nuclear disarmament, arms reduction and arms control, on Arctic issues, on the implementation of the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (the Iran Nuclear Deal), and on the situation in the Middle East, Libya and Afghanistan; the EU should use its selective engagement with Russia on regional and global issues to firmly anchor Russia in multilateral cooperation and the rules-based international order, thereby discouraging it from threatening security and prosperity, including in the EU and the European neighbourhood; more specifically, the EU should use the EGD and its climate objectives to work with Russia towards its green transition, in particular in order to accelerate decarbonisation, lower Russia's CO_2 emissions (which are still growing despite its ratification of the Paris Agreement), increase energy efficiency and extend the use of renewables, for which there is huge potential in Russia; the EU can also help to raise awareness of climate change, which is spreading at a very low pace across Russia;

(aa) the EU, its Member States and Russia should keep a good record of cooperation in the Arctic in the context of the Northern Dimension policy as it is of major importance that they continue to cooperate constructively to fight the consequences of climate change in the Arctic and avoid the region becoming another subject of military tensions;

(ab) however, cooperation in certain specific fields should not lead to any concessions regarding values, and the EU should never disregard the geostrategic implications and interests of its partners; indeed, the EU must ensure that any further engagement with the Kremlin will depend on the latter's promise to end its domestic aggression against its own people, to stop systemic repressions of the opposition and intimidation and torture of political prisoners, to repeal or amend all laws that are incompatible with international standards, such as the ones on 'foreign agents' and so-called extremist or undesirable organisations, to stop the repression of civil society organisations, in particular the ones fighting corruption and defending human rights in Russia, and to end its external aggression against neighbouring countries; as part of this, the EU must also remind Russia that detention of political opponents is against its international commitments and insist that the judiciary is de-politicised and the right to a fair trial and access to legal counsel are ensured; in other words, in attempting to engage with the Kremlin, the EU must have clearly defined red lines including full respect for the sovereignty and territorial integrity of partner countries, and must refrain from pursuing cooperation with Russia only for the sake of maintaining dialogue channels open; the EU should not seek any grand bargain with the Kremlin if the latter seeks a free hand at home and in its declared zone of privileged interests (Ukraine, Belarus, etc.); the EU must make it absolutely clear that it will not sacrifice the interests of other countries for better relations with Moscow;

(ac) in addition, the EU should urge the Russian Federation to address the urgent questions raised by the international community and provide immediate, full and complete disclosure of its Novichok programme to the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons; the EU should also condemn the role of Russia in the downing of flight MH17 in 2014 and call on the Russian Federation to cooperate fully with the investigation of major international crimes, incidents and tragedies, such as the downing of Malaysia Airlines Flight MH17, as well other recent incidents involving the Russian intelligence services in the territory of EU Member States and EaP countries, including Belarus;

(ad) the EU should reiterate its call on the Russian authorities, which has been made on numerous occasions, to return the wreckage and black boxes of the Tu-154 Polish Government aeroplane to Poland, which crashed near Smolensk in April 2010;

Engagement to support democracy — pushing back with sanctions, financial controls and international investigations

(ae) the EU must strengthen its cooperation with the US and other like-minded partners and establish an alliance to defend democracy globally and propose a democracy defence toolkit, which should include joint actions on sanctions, policies to counter illicit financial flows, rules on the conditionality of economic and financial assistance, international investigations, and an ambitious agenda to support freedom and democracy, human rights activists and defenders of democracy; in addition, the EU's agenda should counterbalance the efforts of Russia and China to weaken democracy worldwide and destabilise the European order;

(af) the EU should establish a centralised framework to counter illicit financial flows, further strengthen its anti-money-laundering framework and ensure its consistent implementation, facilitate increased cooperation between competent authorities and establish an EU authority for financial controls to improve the protection of the EU and its Member States from illicit financial practices and interference from Russia and other authoritarian regimes, which are being used for subversive political purposes and therefore constitute a threat to the security and stability of Europe;

(ag) in particular, the EU must consider including Russia in a list of non-EU countries with a high risk of money laundering, which should be instrumental to having stronger EU control of all suspicious financial flows originating from the Russian regime and its proxies; furthermore, the EU should also strengthen its banking system and establish a regulatory framework to fight Russian financial interference in the EU's and Member States' democratic processes, including its strategy of elite capture and the technique of co-opting top-level civil servants and former European politicians; such a framework should increase the transparency of the Russian elite's funds deposited or spent in the EU and help to respond to and prevent the funding by Russian actors of political parties, political movements and political campaigns as well as investments in strategic infrastructure and bodies, including universities and political think tanks, which risk creating or reinforcing the dependency of certain economic sectors on Russia and can serve as entry points for Russian espionage and security threats; in this respect, the EU should also penalise Russian assets used directly and indirectly to interfere in its democratic processes, as well as those of Member States and EaP countries; in parallel, national governments and international organisations should conduct inquiries into the hidden patrimony of the main Russian leaders and oligarchs and publicise those figures;

(ah) the EU should create effective legal means to counter trans-border corruption and related money laundering as soon as possible, especially when it concerns corruption and illicit financing practices coming from Russia, and apply the non-conviction-based confiscation much more extensively to deal effectively with the Kremlin kleptocracy; in this respect, Russian civil society organisations and NGOs should not be systematically deprived by the Russian authorities of the means to fight corruption; moreover, the EU should build capacity to expose and stop flows of dirty money from Russia and to expose the hidden treasures and financial assets of the Russian regime's autocrats and corrupted oligarchs in the Member States; the EU institutions should report periodically on these cases at semi-annual hearings in Parliament on the state of democracy in Russia; these reports should include the names of the most important members of President Putin's entourage;

(ai) the EU, while fighting to stop illicit money flows from Russia, should pay special attention to financial flows from Belarus, since autocrats and corrupted oligarchs are interconnected; the EU institutions' special reports to Parliament should address the issue of Russia's financial interference in Belarus, including in strategic sectors, and include information about assets of Aliaksandr Lukashenka's entourage and corrupted oligarchs;

(aj) the EU should address Russia's manipulation of information and attempts to interfere in democratic processes at EU level and in its Member States by examining and putting in place the necessary instruments to oppose and tackle them;

(ak) in line with the 'democracy first' principle, the EU should strengthen the requirement of conditionality in its relations with Russia by pursuing a dialogue or agreement with Russia on measures aimed at protecting human rights, media freedom and the holding of free elections as a stronger requirement for dialogue; the EU and its Member States should also revise their investment support and economic cooperation projects (such as Nord Stream 2 and the nuclear power plants built by Rosatom), and should increase efforts to curb the Kremlin's strategic investments, which often stem from Member States through the financial flows of Russian oligarchs and companies set up to fund Russia's malign interference and spreading of corruption in the EU; in this regard, the EU should pay special attention to the legal institution of dual citizenship and insist that Bulgaria and Malta abandon their 'golden passport' regimes; moreover, the EU should not implement joint transactional or business projects without prior political due diligence regarding transparency, corruption and political implications, as such projects should not jeopardise solidarity among Member States or with EU neighbours, should not benefit systems of corruption either in Russia or in the EU, and should not have a negative impact on human rights or the environment;

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(al) at the same time, the EU should also apply the 'democracy first' principle in its reassessment of the financial support programmes for Russia and investments in Russia, which among other measures should include a revision of the lending mandates of the EU's financial institutions; in the same spirit, the EU should evaluate its cooperation with Russia in various foreign policy formats and review Russia's compliance with its commitments to the Council of Europe;

(am) the EU should create new means to be more effective in demanding the release of political prisoners; the EU should demand that the Russian authorities release all those unjustly imprisoned for political reasons, including Alexei Navalny, Alexei Pichugin, Yuri Dmitriev, and all the others designated by the Memorial Human Rights Centre as 'political prisoners' in accordance with the criteria established by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe in Resolution 1900/2012; the EU must use every opportunity to bring these and other violations in the area of the freedom of expression to the attention of Russian authorities, in particular with regard to the harassment and prosecution of and physical attacks against political and civil society activists, journalists and human rights defenders in Russia; the EU should strongly demand that those violations stop and that they are investigated and urge Russia to hold those responsible to account;

(an) the EU institutions must regularly report back in Parliament hearings on the situation of political prisoners in Russia, build close contacts with and enhance financial support to Russian dissidents, NGOs, civil society organisations, human rights defenders and independent media outlets and be constantly aware of the names and the conditions of imprisonment of political activists in Russia; in addition, the Members States should refrain from allowing or enabling deportations and extraditions of political opponents and asylum seekers to Russia, where their life or physical integrity would be in danger; moreover, the EU should, where appropriate, facilitate the issuing of emergency visas and provide temporary shelter in its Member States;

(ao) furthermore, the EU should closely monitor the human rights situation in Russia, including through the monitoring of court cases of civil society organisations, opposition politicians and activists by the EU Delegation to Russia and the embassies of the Member States; the EU should also expand the EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime and apply it to human rights abuses committed in all territories affected by frozen conflicts or illegally occupied regions of the EaP countries; in parallel, the EU should implement its commitment to gender mainstreaming in all external action and must support fundamental human rights, including by fighting gender-based violence, racism, xenophobia, hate crimes, police brutality and other forms of discrimination and by championing gender equality, women's rights, LGBTI+ rights and minority rights in Russia; the EU should, wherever possible, help oppressed residents in Russia, especially those who face discrimination on the basis of age, religion, race, ethnicity, linguistic or social group, sexual orientation, gender expression, gender identity, sex characteristics, or on any other grounds; the EU should also engage with Russia on the treatment of women's rights defenders, women's representation in politics and public administration, women's opportunities in the labour market, and sexual and reproductive health and rights in Russia; the EU should further condemn the persecution, arbitrary detention and torture of LGBTI+ persons in many parts of the Russian Federation, stress the continued need for investigations and call for the immediate release of all prisoners in such situations, in particular in Chechnya; the EU should further put an emphasis on the Russian Government's continued use of the 'gay propaganda' ban to justify criminal prosecutions; the EU should, with the support of the Member States, simplify asylum request procedures for such victims in accordance with EU and national law;

(ap) the EU should increase its ability to prepare and adopt sanctions against the Russian authorities, Russian oligarchs, President Putin's acolytes and members of their families for human right violations or systemic repression of democratic forces, minorities, religious and LGBTI+ groups in Russia; to that end, it should centralise its decision-making by rendering the adoption of sanctions automatic in cases of grave violations of human rights and consider introducing a qualified majority voting rule in the Council for other human rights abuses; the EU should also urgently adopt an EU anti-corruption sanctions regime, possibly by following the example of the UK's Global Anti-Corruption Sanctions regime, in order to complement the current EU Global Human Rights Sanctions Regime and, in the event of further escalation, it should also consider sanctions that target the financing of intelligence services and the military, and the oil and gas sector; should that happen, the EU should prepare a new sanctions mechanism whereby the continuation of hostile acts perpetrated by the Russian Federation would trigger an EU-level reduction of energy imports from Russian-based suppliers by a certain percentage while at the same time assisting Member States in filling the gap through measures that are consistent with the EGD; stresses that the reduction should automatically increase by the same percentage on an annual basis until the Russian Federation reverses its hostile acts;

(aq) the EU should carry out consultations with NGOs to gather useful information for its sanctions policy so that these organisations can assist it in preparing and investigating cases in a comprehensive way; recommends that the Member States enhance counter-intelligence cooperation and information-sharing without delay with a view to exposing and thwarting Russia's clandestine networks in the EU;

(ar) the EU should initiate and contribute to international investigations into crimes committed by President Putin's regime against the people of Russia and the crimes committed by Mr Lukashenka's regime in Belarus, through an impunity platform and an EU justice hub; in the context of those investigations, the EU should establish a task force of advisers to assist with national and international investigations, trials and the setting up of EU tribunals, and to report periodically to Parliament on the state of political freedom in Russia;

(as) moreover, the EU should encourage and support efforts in national and international jurisdictions to launch criminal proceedings to hold Russian military and paramilitary groups accountable for violations and crimes, including war crimes, committed against civilians during operations in multiple countries, such as Syria, the Central African Republic and Libya;

(at) the EU should also demand an independent and impartial investigation into the assassination of opposition leader Boris Nemtsov and bring the perpetrators to justice, in line with the recommendations of the OSCE and the Council of Europe;

(au) moreover, the EU should condemn in strongest terms unjustified sanctions against EU officials and call on the Russian authorities to withdraw them without delay;

(av) the EU must be prepared not to recognise the Parliament of Russia and to consider asking for Russia's suspension from international organisations with parliamentary assemblies, in particular the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe, if the 2021 parliamentary elections in Russia are recognised as fraudulent and having been conducted in violation of democratic principles and international law; additionally, the EU should condemn any attempt by President Putin to remain in office beyond the end of his current and final presidential mandate on 7 May 2024 on the basis of the 2020 constitutional amendments, which Parliament has assessed as 'illegally enacted';

(aw) the EU should call on the Russian Government and State Duma to revise the legal framework for elections, including on election observation, in order to facilitate pluralism and free and fair elections according to international standards and create a level playing field for opposition candidates;

(ax) at the same time, the Member States should take all possible measures to prevent their citizens from acting as international observers during the 2021 parliamentary elections in the occupied Crimea, which are being illegally organised by Russia; in this context, Parliament and the national parliaments should avoid and introduce sanctions for all activities which may be falsely claimed to constitute international observation; moreover, the EU should condemn and refuse to recognise the illegal organisation by Russia of these and further elections in occupied Crimea, as well as the occupied areas of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions;

Engagement to support democracy — supporting a pro-democracy society in Russia

(ay) the EU should express its will to improve its relations with the people of the Russian Federation through the adoption and the publication of an 'Address to the Russian people';

(az) the EU should take into account different possible developments in EU-Russia relations as well as within Russia; in particular, the EU should have a vision and a strategy on the future of EU relations with a free, prosperous, peaceful and democratic Russia, which will be fully committed to the international law, its international obligations and principles of good neighbourly relations; such a strategy should include a broad offer with conditions and incentives such as visa liberalisation, free trade investment and modernisation programmes, and a strategic partnership aiming among other things to ensure the stability of the continent and full respect for its international borders; the EU should also convey the potential benefits that it is willing to offer in return for a democratic transformation of Russia into a cooperative and fully fledged democratic system of governance, which respects human rights, fundamental freedoms, international law and the international rules-based order, as well as for a fundamental change of its current foreign policy and international behaviour;

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(ba) the EU should support Russian civil society and foster people-to-people contacts between the EU and Russian citizens, particularly as Russian citizens are the biggest recipients of Schengen visas in the world, most of which are multiple-entry and multiannual; hence it should consider reducing visa fees and barriers for Russian citizens and lead an effective information campaign to show that the EU welcomes the Russian people; the EU should also broaden its school, university, scientific and cultural exchange programmes with Russia, and consider offering traineeship and direct recruitment opportunities for both high-skilled and low-skilled workers from Russia; the EU must create and widen alternatives for politically motivated immigrants from Russia to be able to live in the EU under safe and legally certain conditions; moreover, the EU should substantially increase its financial and technical assistance for trade unions, independent media outlets, non-governmental and civil society organisations and civic sector capacity building measures in Russia; in addition, the EU should financially support humanity studies programmes in EU universities, which would prepare Russian people, and students in particular, to engage in a democratic transformation of their country;

(bb) the EU should adopt a comprehensive list of all available instruments for engaging with democratic society in Russia, which may include proposals drawn up by many Russian civil society organisations;

(bc) the EU should confront the Russian-language propaganda and disinformation campaigns of President Putin's regime in the EU, the EaP countries and Russia itself, by supporting and strengthening independent journalists and media outlets that offer an alternative to the Kremlin's disinformation, and support the establishment of a Free Russia Television with 24/7 airtime; the EU should further support independent media outlets, journalists and bloggers in Russia in order to strengthen alternative sources and channels that are not controlled by the Kremlin;

(bd) the EU must counter the pressure on independent media outlets, including by establishing an EU democratic media fund to support independent media outlets around the world, including in Russia; the EU must also do more to support and strengthen independent journalists and media outlets that offer an alternative to the Kremlin's disinformation, without which Russia cannot be democratic, prosperous and free; in this regard, the EU should support independent media outlets, such as Meduza and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, in the light of the onerous and impractical so-called foreign agent laws enacted by the Russian authorities to suppress free speech and independent journalism;

(be) Parliament's Delegation to the EU-Russia Parliamentary Cooperation Committee should take on the task of identifying persons of interest who play a leading role in Russian society and would be open to establishing a constructive and uninterrupted dialogue and setting up a schedule for public contact with Russian civil society, universities, major scientific and cultural institutions, NGOs, political movements and artistic and intellectual circles;

(bf) the EU must take into account that approval of Joseph Stalin among the Russian population has surged to the highest ever level in Vladimir Putin's era, with 70 % of society believing that Stalin played a positive role in Russian history; the EU should recognise that this is caused by Putin's policy of 'Stalinisation of mass consciousness' and repression of independent historians; the EU must insist that Soviet archives be opened to scholars and researchers and that details of the genocidal acts of Stalinists against Russians and other nations of the Soviet Union and its satellite states be made public, including files relating to the criminal Augustów Roundup military operation;

(bg) the UN has declared internet access a human right and in this regard the EU should condemn the Kremlin's attempts to block, control, censor and even isolate the Russian people from access to the internet; the EU must call on the global IT companies to take these undemocratic efforts into account while considering operations in the Russian market;

(bh) finally, the EU should establish a binding legal framework enabling it to react strongly to campaigns aimed at undermining democracy or the rule of law, including through targeted action against those responsible for such campaigns; the EU should also develop effective strategies in the field of digital policy in order to use technological standards and the open internet to support free spaces and restrict oppressive technologies; the EU should therefore support open-source technologies, services for secure communication, decentralised platforms and new low-threshold and privacy-protected, attractive social media platforms for the Russian population, while at the same time expanding global technological standards relating to privacy, creating ethical and legal standards that have a signalling effect to

promote fundamental rights protection, working toward an international ban on mass surveillance technologies and invasive social scoring systems, and insisting on autonomous weapons systems being banned;

Engagement to support the Russian people and democracy — EaP success as an inspiration for the people of Russia

(bi) the EU should continue to enhance the EaP with the goal of promoting democracy, the rule of law, fundamental freedoms, human rights, regional cooperation and good neighbourly relations; in particular, the EU could propose in the forthcoming Conference on the Future of Europe an enhanced cooperation strategy to prepare for the new momentum of the European integration of the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood and to support the successful development of EU-oriented EaP countries, which would serve as a good example and would incentivise the Russian people to support democracy; accordingly, the EU should uphold a realistic perspective towards EaP countries' EU membership, thus keeping their motivation to carry out further reforms;

(bj) the EU should continue to support the fulfilment by Ukraine, Georgia, Moldova, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Belarus of the political, democratic, social and legal criteria of the EU on which the EU Treaties and the Charter of Fundamental Rights of the European Union are based;

(bk) finally, the EU should push for a more ambitious strategy for the integration of EaP countries that have an association agreement with the EU; the EU, in this way, will motivate the EU-associated EaP countries to carry out EU reforms, including by offering them a model based on the 'everything, but the institutions' model, giving them full benefits of EU integration, such as access to EU common policies, EU financial resources and EU jurisdiction, while keeping the door to future EU membership open;

2. Instructs its President to forward this recommendation to the Council, the Commission, Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the governments and parliaments of the Eastern Partnership countries and the G7 countries, the Council of Europe, the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe, and the President, Government and Parliament of the Russian Federation.