

New CER pamphlet

THE EU AND RUSSIA

Strategic partners or squabbling neighbours?

By Katinka Barysch

The EU and Russia may finally have struck a deal on Russia's WTO accession, but the two sides appear unable to improve their overall relationship. Negotiations on other key issues – such as energy supplies, visas, or the common neighbourhood – have stalled. Russia and the EU talk about a 'strategic partnership' but bilateral dealings are tarnished by mutual suspicion and mistrust.

The poor state of EU-Russia relations is puzzling. The two sides share a multitude of interests and objectives. The EU is Russia's largest export market, and Russia is one of the EU's main energy suppliers. The EU wants a Russia that is stable, prosperous and democratic – in short, a Russia that looks more like the EU. But Russians find EU policy arrogant and intrusive. EU enlargement and rising Russian nationalism could further harm bilateral relations.

This pamphlet explains why the EU and Russia find it so difficult to work together and traces their differences and disagreements through the key areas of co-operation, including trade, energy, and internal and external security. It argues that badly designed institutions, poorly trained bureaucrats and narrow-minded national leaders are making matters worse. And it proposes a number of steps that the EU and Russia should take to develop a more constructive partnership.

Notes for editors:

1. Katinka Barysch is chief economist at the CER, where she also runs the CER Russia programme.
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