

Germany, France and Russia on deepening cooperation between the EU & Russia

On 18 and 19 October, Deauville, France saw the first trilateral meeting of the leaders of Russia, Germany and France since 2006. After a meeting a joint statement was issued, and the Russian president Dmitri Medvedev announced that he would participate in the NATO/Russia summit which will take place this November during the NATO summit in Lisbon. The desire to deepen cooperation between EU & Russia in the economic field, foreign policy and security was declared. However, the meeting did nothing to minimise the existing differences of opinion between the EU & Russia, and there was no progress on the matter of a joint economic zone; Russian membership of the WTO, which is still not certain, is essential for this. Moreover, the French and German statements on far-reaching and deeper cooperation with Moscow do not have full support among the other EU & NATO member countries.

The joint Franco-German-Russian statement emphasised a desire to deepen the EU & Russia's strategic partnership by taking joint steps towards introducing a visa-free regime, by realising the Partnership for Modernisation, and deepening cooperation in foreign and security matters. France, Germany and Russia also demand closer cooperation in the security field between Russia & the EU and Russia & NATO. This would allow progress in resolving conflicts such as the 'frozen' conflict in Transnistria.

The summit, which was held at France's initiative, demonstrated the determination of France and Germany, which to a greater degree than the other NATO & EU members favour deepening cooperation with Russia within these organisations. It also showed Russia's ability to divide the EU and exploit yet untested mechanism of the EU's post-Lisbon Treaty foreign policy. Moscow is also exploiting the ambitions of the largest European states and their hidden rivalry – with EU bodies and with each other – for the privilege of forming ?EU external policy. <MaK, jus>