

A diplomatic scandal between Berlin and Kyiv

Nico Lange, head of the Ukrainian branch of the Konrad Adenauer Foundation, was detained on 26 April at Kyiv–Boryspol airport and was not allowed to enter Ukrainian territory. According to Mr. Lange, his detention was ordered by the Security Service of Ukraine (SBU). Following an intervention from the German authorities, Lange was released, and the incident was called a misunderstanding. It is possible that Lange's detention was an effect of his critical reports on policies pursued by the Ukrainian authorities. The incident will have a negative impact on relations between Berlin and Kyiv before President Viktor Yanukovych's visit to Germany scheduled for this August.

The Konrad Adenauer Foundation is one of the largest political foundations linked to the CDU party. Its Ukrainian branch has the mission of supporting political, economic and social changes and of 'political education.' In fact, it supports the efforts of German diplomacy, keeps a network of contacts with Ukrainian elites and provides German politicians (mainly those from the CDU) with information on home and foreign policy in the form of briefings and analyses. Nico Lange has criticised the activities of the new Ukrainian authorities, such as diminishing the role of parliament, putting pressure on the opposition and media and establishing closer relations with Russia. He has also appealed for Germany's and the EU's greater engagement in Ukraine. It can be speculated that Lange with his activity has fallen foul of the new head of the SBU, Valery Khoroshkovsky, who is at the same time the owner of the largest media consortium in Ukraine.

The detention of the foundation's head will not result in a limitation of its activity in Ukraine. However, it may be used as a warning for those who criticise the Ukrainian authorities' actions and prove that the activity of Ukrainian and foreign NGOs is being restricted. The incident will have a negative effect on the atmosphere of German-Ukrainian relations, especially in the context of Yanukovych's planned visit to Berlin; the spokesman for the German government has expressed the German government's dissatisfaction with the incident and has appealed to Ukraine to refrain from impeding the foundation's activity in the future. <jus>