

RUSSIA-UKRAINE-EU: PROSPECTS MUTUAL RELATIONS – Round Table

The Gorshenin Institute held a round-table discussion Russia-Ukraine-EU: Prospects for Mutual Relations on 17 February 2011 in the framework of the Project “Viktor Yanukovich’s First Year of Presidency. Conclusions”.

The member of the European Parliament, co-chairman of the joint parliamentary committee on EU - Ukraine cooperation, Pawel Kowal, in his written comments to Gorshenin Institute said that the recent events in Ukraine do not move the country closer to the EU. Kowal said that the EU and especially some members of the European Parliament are particularly concerned watching the developments in Ukraine. Kowal said that a lot of information appeared recently showing Ukraine’s drift towards the Russian model of “sovereign democracy”. He did not rule out that the serious work and achievements that Ukrainians have made over the past few years may be ruined. In particular, Kowal told about European politicians’ concerns and disappointment with the Ukrainian Prosecutor-General’s Office ban to the leader of the Batkivschyna party, Yuliya Tymoshenko, to visit Brussels. “Lack of credibility may pull down Ukraine to lower league of countries which are subject of constant worry from the UE side. We already had a yellow light: Freedom House rated Ukraine as a partly democratic country” – Kowal said.

Nico Lange, the head of office of Konrad Adenauer Foundation in Kiev, said that Ukraine-EU relations have passed three phases over the last year. First phase was the expectation that the President will proceed with the course for European integration. “The new government had a huge credit of trust”, Lange said. On the second phase, Lange said, EU realized that declamations made by the Ukrainian government do not fit with its actions. Lange said that having the pro-presidential majority in the parliament would allow to solve fairly quickly a number of issues that now hamper Ukraine’s integration with EU. This is the very phase when European politicians started making their judgments about Ukraine. Lange also said that as of today the relations between Ukraine and the EU passed to the third phase which is the most dangerous. Today, European politicians start speaking openly about the problems with democracy in Ukraine and this fact adversely affects the process of integration. Lange stressed that no-one knows about the future now, but it is absolutely clear that one year ago many politicians in Europe expected a better situation than what we have know.

The senior advisor of the Russian embassy in Ukraine, Viktor Kochukov, called on Ukrainians to stop dreaming about European integration but rather integrate with Russia. Kochukov said this was clear that the issue of Ukraine’s accession to EU is not on the agenda for the next 10-20 years. “This is the fact, and all the rest is fantasies”, - Kochukov said. Kochukov said, however, that Ukraine has to decide for itself, as the world becomes global and united. He called on treating the issue from the standpoint of rationalism. “Either we start integrating with Russia or we continue dreaming of entering the EU in some 10 or 20 years”, - Kochukov said. He added that the EU is interested in Ukraine’s agricultural sector, while Russia is more interested in Ukraine’s industrial sector. That is why Kochukov considers ties with Russia to be more beneficial to Ukraine. “Ukraine’s industrial future, if it ever happens, only becomes possible in integration with Russia”, - Kochukov said adding that both Russia and Ukraine have to develop mutually beneficial ties with the EU. Kochukov is certain, however, that it is better to combine the efforts. “If Ukraine were together with Russia, the negotiations would be absolutely different. They are trying to impose own position on a weak partner while trying to reach a deal with a stronger partner, - the Russian diplomat said.

Razumkov Centre Deputy Director General Valeriy Chalyy says Ukraine will not change its foreign politics course towards European integration. "The process of the European integration is irreversible. It may be long and painful, but it is irreversible", - he said. Chalyy stressed that the course to European integration is clearly expressed in the Ukrainian legislation and international agreements, so today we can only speak about the timeframes and ways for Ukraine's European integration. Chalyy said that the Ukraine - EU relations agenda was established by the former Ukrainian government. "What was defined in 2007-08, now it is being implemented", - Chalyy said. He also said that the association agreement will be signed in 2011 during Poland's presidency in the EU. "This will still take several years, but the implementation period will bring us closer to the EU",- Chalyy said.

Assistant Professor of Kiev Institute of International Relations Serhiy Kozyakov supported the opinion that the problems on Ukraine's way towards the EU are predominantly of technical nature. Kozyakov said that there are very few people in Ukraine who know for sure what the Free Trade Area and World Trade Organization are. "There are maybe 20 people like that", - he said. Kozyakov said that the issue of signing the free trade agreement with EU is managed by Deputy Minister of Economic Development and Trade **Valeriy Pyatnytskyy**, who previously was in charge of Ukraine's accession to WTO.