



European Parliament

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OPEN LETTER

Luxembourg, October 1st, 2026

Dear Madame President,

On 19 September 2026, I received a letter from the Parliament's "Advisory Committee" asking for clarifications regarding my relations with Russia. That letter follows another letter that you sent to Mr Gilles Boyer on 11 June 2026, that was not shared with me, but that was leaked to the media.

In that letter you describe the European Parliament's policy towards Russia in the following terms:

"Our Institution has repeatedly and unequivocally condemned Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine and has consistently expressed its full solidarity with Ukraine and its people. Furthermore, the European Parliament has officially ceased cooperation with the State Duma, no official delegation has been sent to Russia since the start of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine, and the Conference of Presidents has specified that this position should not be circumvented by individual meetings, in any format, with Russian counterparts subject to EU restrictive measures."

I wish to outline my position regarding that policy, as it runs to the very heart of my work to foster dialogue and hopefully contribute modestly to bringing peace back to the European continent. Throughout my professional career as a military officer, diplomat and politician, I have seldomly seen a more irrational and counterproductive policy relating to international relations than the one currently held by the European Parliament and other EU institutions vis-à-vis Russia.

The European Union is the only international entity that has for years refused to talk to one of its most important neighbours. Meanwhile, other States and organisations around the world continue to pursue relations with Moscow in a more or less normal fashion. Even the United States, which under the Biden administration initiated the policy of isolation, has changed its position and entertains regular political and diplomatic contacts with Russia, including at the highest level of government.

This policy of isolation upheld by the European Union is a uniquely anti-diplomatic curiosity (“we don’t like your policy, so we don’t talk to you!”), and, quite logically, it has been a total failure. Rather than convince other countries to cease all ties with the Russian Federation, the EU now stands alone with this policy.

Just this month President Putin met with important international leaders from China, India and many other countries. President Trump and President Putin again recently held a telephone conversation. President Putin is also invited to the next G20 summit in Florida.

In the meantime, we have witnessed a number of unsuccessful attempts to restart a dialogue with Russia by the President of the European Council, several Heads of State and Government of EU Member States, as well as other important representatives from Western and EU States.

Until now, no EU-wide initiative has been possible given the lack of agreement on persons and modalities. Nevertheless, it is important to note that more or less all members of the European Council have now publicly stated the necessity to reconnect with Russia.

Former Hungarian Prime Minister Victor Orban and Prime Minister of Slovakia Robert Fico have shown the importance of keeping up relations with Russia. Last week, German Foreign Minister Waidephul asked for a meeting with Minister Lavrov in New York, which was then arranged on short notice. Evidently, other EU foreign ministers will now follow suit. The policy of isolation is dead. This is the indisputable conclusion we can draw from these recent developments.

Inexplicably, the European Parliament nevertheless continues to seek to uphold and impose a failed and obsolete policy on its members. This is incomprehensible. If ministers can have contacts with Russia, why are Parliamentarians not afforded the same right? This appears especially bizarre when one acknowledges that there remains no doubt that dialogue with Russia is essential to resolve a broad range of issues.

Instead of trying to uphold and enforce such a nonsensical policy of self-isolation, the European Parliament should be exploring credible and timely ways to restart parliamentary diplomacy with Russia. Parliamentarians cannot stay isolated, straightjacketed by a now defunct and failed policy, imposed by politicians now languishing in the polls. Unfortunately, the delegation responsible for EU-Russia

relations in the European Parliament, which could, in theory, provide a constructive forum to rebuild relations, is instead totally useless, in its current state at least.

Frankly, I reject this failed policy of isolation and refuse to participate in the enforcement of such irrational rules. I will continue efforts to maintain a dialogue with members of the State Duma while waiting for common sense to prevail.

I am proud to have organised an informal dialogue (both online and in-person) between interested Members of the European Parliament and the International Affairs Committee of the State Duma. Hopefully, this modest initiative can serve as one of the starting points for a new dialogue. It has also shown partners around the world that some members within the European Parliament still understand the importance of diplomacy; that we can work towards peace rather than reasoning in terms of sanctions and escalation.

Dialogue permits mutual understanding and constructive exchanges. Let me be categorical: in all our meetings with members of the State Duma, the participants were always fully aware of their informal character, especially as the official isolationist position of our Parliament was a recurring topic of discussion during the dialogues.

I am troubled by attempts to restrict my right to act as I deem necessary in the exercise of my functions as an MEP. No such measures ever infringed on my freedoms as an MP in Luxembourg. As a parliamentarian I have the freedom to carry out my mandate in the way that I choose. This freedom of one's mandate is an internationally recognised and fundamental right of elected parliamentarians in any democratic system. I am responsible for my actions before my electorate and nobody else.

Indeed, I have been elected i.a. on a promise to improve international relations and reestablish dialogue. Neither the European Parliament nor its "Conference of Presidents" can oblige me not to keep the promises I made to my voters. Of course I will keep this promise. It is also important to remember that the purpose of a Conference of Presidents is to organise the work of the Parliament and not to attempt to restrict the rights of its members.

The European Parliament, like the EU more broadly, has a growing problem with its narrative on the Ukraine conflict. Even the United States has largely dropped the language of an "unprovoked and unjustified war of aggression," for the simple reason that it knows the description is not true. As a diplomat and a politician, I have followed events in Ukraine for decades and know this conflict's history well. I remember the Bucharest Summit and the attempts to bring Ukraine and Georgia into NATO—the "reddest of all red lines," as former US Ambassador to Moscow William Burns put it. I remember how Russia was treated during the negotiations on Ukraine's association agreement, the Maidan events, the repression of the Russian-speaking minority, Western politicians' betrayal of the Minsk agreements, and much else besides.

In the West, a significant number of books and scholarly studies on this subject are now being published, and more and more scholars are speaking out against the one-sided, Russophobic narrative adopted most notably by the EU. Public opinion in many Member States does not accept that narrative either, despite the considerable propaganda carried by the media in its favour.

This is reflected in electoral results. The EU—a body that claims to combat disinformation and fake news—is itself engaged in repressive policies to protect its own narrative. The sanctions imposed on Jacques Baud, Xavier Moreau, Xenia Fedorova and many others are shameful and should be lifted immediately. The truth cannot be repressed for long. Those responsible for that repression, and those who seek to restrict free speech, will undoubtedly be condemned by History.

Only a few days ago, the European Parliament tried to prevent Ms Yulia Mendel, Mr Zelenskyy's former press spokesperson, from addressing MEPs. Her message was clear: the people of Ukraine want a negotiated peace as soon as possible, and Mr Zelenskyy is an obstacle to it. "Standing with Ukraine" can now only mean negotiating with Russia. It cannot mean sacrificing the people of Ukraine. Many Ukrainians now understand that they are being used for grand geostrategic goals dictated from foreign capitals. They have understandably lost patience with serving as fodder for the West's failed foreign-policy projects.

All the actions and initiatives I take are entirely public. I publish them on my social media channels, enter them in the Parliament's transparency register, and publicise them as widely as I can. There is no lack of transparency: I want everyone to know that I actively engage with Russian politicians, diplomats, academics, journalists and others, and I will of course continue to do so.

Let me comment on one of the questions put to me by the Advisory Committee, which I find particularly repellent. They ask me to name the others who took part in the meetings. In other words, under threat of potential sanctions and penalties, they are asking me to denounce my colleagues. I shall of course never do such a thing.

Such questions remind me of a particularly dark period in the history of the United States, when Senator Joseph McCarthy launched a witch-hunt to identify and punish so-called communists. He and his henchmen also demanded names and denunciations. I consider this profoundly immoral and wholly unworthy of the EU.

Let me also underline that the European Parliament has no right whatsoever to interfere in any way in bilateral relations between Member States and third countries. Luxembourg and Russia have enjoyed an altogether friendly relationship for more than 200 years. There have of course been difficult moments, for instance during the Cold War and now in the context of the Ukraine conflict. But one would hardly find any serious or widespread Russophobia in Luxembourg. On the contrary, politicians and media that support policies of military escalation find little sympathy with the public.

Without Russia's support in the nineteenth century, it is likely that my country would have been swallowed up by one of its larger neighbours. As a Luxembourgish diplomat, now retired, I fully understand this historical context, and my wish is to continue and deepen that friendship beyond the present difficulties. The issues concerning Ukraine must evidently be resolved through negotiation. At the same time, we must define a new European security architecture together with Russia, not against it, so that the relationship can be restarted in a spirit of good neighbourliness.

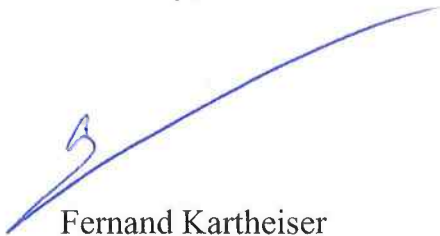
I understand that you may worry that my actions could lead to a misunderstanding of the European Parliament's policy towards Russia. Let me reassure you that, around the world, the EU's policy on Russia is known and understood. Many countries indeed share my own analysis of that policy: it is foolish, counterproductive, inefficient and by now obsolete. I would never pretend to be a representative of such a folly.

In my case specifically, there can be no misunderstanding. My former political group, the ECR, expelled me in June 2025 after my visit to Moscow. Your own letter, which was leaked to the press, is further proof of the Parliament's position and of my strong opposition to it.

Dear Madam President,

It is time to change our policy on Russia. Instead of a sterile confrontation, we must return to constructive dialogue. This applies also to the European Parliament.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a stylized 'F' followed by a long, sweeping horizontal line that curves upwards at the end.

Fernand Kartheiser