

Press release

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Forsa survey on the partnership between the EU and Russia: Clear majority wants closer relations

- **62 percent want more intensive cooperation between Russia and the EU, but only 32 percent currently see a chance for it**
- **Cooperation in the energy sector continues to be assessed very positively**
- **75 percent reject US sanctions against Nord Stream 2**
- **Positive attitude towards the Russian vaccine Sputnik V**

Most German citizens would like to see closer cooperation between the European Union (EU) and Russia: two out of three Germans (62 percent) would like to see more intensive relations between the EU and Russia. These are the results of a representative survey conducted by the forsa Institute for Social Research and Statistical Analysis, on behalf of the German Eastern Business Association (Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft) and supported by Wintershall Dea.

"If it were up to the German people, the EU and Russia could significantly expand their relations in many fields," commented Oliver Hermes, Chairman of the German Eastern Business Association. "The economic and energy relations score well with the Germans. A vast majority can imagine a common European economic space including Russia. A large proportion of respondents want the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project to be completed and are in favour of cooperation with Russia on the subject of hydrogen. The Germans also support more travel freedom for Russian young people and many are open to the Russian vaccine Sputnik V."

According to Hermes, this positive agenda provides a good foundation to build on. However, the political conflicts of recent years have resulted in both sides being less and less able to tap this great potential: "Hopes that good relations between the EU and Russia will be revived in the next few years are alarmingly low: 60 percent assume that cooperation will be kept to a minimum," said the Chairman of the German Eastern Business Association. "But the basic willingness to cooperate with Russia is very high. This encourages us on the part of the business community to continue to count on this cooperation." Hermes appeals to the current and future German government to take the majority opinion of the population into account and to work towards improving relations. Russia, however, would also have to make its contribution.

The growing pessimism about the political future is also reflected in the respondents' views on the EU economic sanctions introduced following Russia's actions in Ukraine. With 49 per cent, almost a majority of respondents are in favour of maintaining (34 per cent) or extending (15 per cent) the sanctions, while 44 per cent want to reduce or completely abolish them. There is no sympathy for additional US sanctions against the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, which are rejected by 75 percent of the respondents. Only 17 percent still want to stop the nearly finished project. Even a solid majority among voters of the FDP (82 percent) and the Greens (69 percent) want the pipeline to be completed. The Chairman of the German Eastern Business Association, Oliver Hermes, feels vindicated by the survey results: "While there is still headwind from some parties against the Nord Stream 2 pipeline project, even though it is legally approved and almost completed, German voters show no understanding for blockades."

German-Russian energy partnership also in the field of hydrogen

Following Germany's decision to phase out coal and nuclear power, natural gas is seen as a "bridge fuel" towards a more climate-friendly energy era, in which hydrogen is also expected to play a greater role. In order to accelerate this transition, the use of hydrogen produced from natural gas and the storage of the climate-damaging carbon dioxide produced is currently being strongly considered. 58 percent of respondents would be in favour of importing hydrogen produced from natural gas from Russia, 30 percent cannot imagine this. "Decarbonising the economy is one of the major energy policy challenges. Protecting the

climate and securing the energy supply at the same time – this is what the use of hydrogen from natural gas is offering as an important pillar for an emission-free future, and this is possible with energy from Russia. This is possible with energy from Russia," says Mario Mehren, spokesperson of the Russia working group at the German Eastern Business Association and Chairman of the Board of Wintershall Dea.

The German population also views the German-Russian energy cooperation more positively than is often claimed: compared to a forsa survey from 2020, Russia has gained significantly in trust as an energy supplier: 51 percent of respondents currently consider the country to be a reliable energy partner (2020: 41 percent). As a result, Russia ranked third after Canada (52 percent) and Norway (78 percent). The US is well behind in fourth place. However, under the new Biden administration, the US improved its scores considerably from ten to 31 percent.

Respondents are more sceptical about the supply of renewable energy such as wind or solar power from Russia. While 52 percent would be in favour of importing renewable energy from Russia, 43 percent are against it. "So far, Russia is not given much credit for the production of green energy. Yet, due to its size and natural conditions, the largest country on earth has enormous potential to produce climate-neutral and green energy in large quantities," says Mehren.

"If we want to advance climate protection worldwide, there is no way around cooperation with Russia in this area," says Oliver Hermes, Chairman of the German Eastern Business Association. This cooperation was also a major topic at today's "Business Day Russia" in Rostock. "At the conference, we proposed to further develop the successful German-Russian energy cooperation into an energy and climate alliance," Hermes said.

Not only East Germans would use Sputnik V

Cooperation with Russia to combat the Corona pandemic is viewed very positively in Germany: A total of 60 percent of those surveyed would use the Russian vaccine Sputnik V if they had the opportunity. With 71 percent approval, the numbers here are considerably higher in East Germany, but there is also a solid majority in West Germany with 58 percent

of respondents. 38 percent of the respondents, however, said they would not want to use Sputnik V.

The forsa survey commissioned by the German Eastern Business Association and Wintershall Dea was carried out between 29 April and 10 May. The group of respondents consisted of 1,001 representatively selected Germans aged 18 and over. The complete survey evaluation is attached to this press release and can be viewed on our website www.ost-ausschuss.de.

About the German Eastern Business Association:

The German Eastern Business Association (Ost-Ausschuss der Deutschen Wirtschaft e.V.) (founded in 1952) promotes the German economy in the 29 countries of Central, Eastern and South-Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and Central Asia. German trade with Eastern Europe accounts for around one-fifth of Germany's total foreign trade, making it more important than trade with the US and China combined. The German Eastern Business Association has around 350 member companies and associations and is supported by six leading associations of the German economy – BDI, BGA, Bankenverband, DIHK, GDV and ZDH.

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