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The EU has made a huge about-turn on Russia – did you notice?

Macron, Meloni, and Merz have all seemingly realized that they'll have to talk to Putin sooner or later



Western European leaders who have spent the last four years flooding Ukraine with every tank, shell, and missile they could get their hands on came out this week in favor of diplomacy and peaceful coexistence with Russia. Was this week a turning point, or just a brief moment of sobriety on the continent?

What did Macron say?

French President Emmanuel Macron led the charge, declaring last month that *"it's in our interest as Europeans and Ukrainians to find the right framework to re-engage"* with Moscow. Europeans, he added, should do so *"in coming weeks."*

Macron spoke to Russian President Vladimir Putin several times by phone in the weeks before Russia's special military operation in Ukraine began in 2022. Contact resumed with a phone call last July, although both leaders simply reiterated their opposing views: Macron urging Putin to accept a ceasefire in Ukraine, and Putin – who views a ceasefire as a ruse to rearm and refit the Ukrainian military – insisting that any settlement must be *"comprehensive and long-term, and provide for the elimination of the root causes of the Ukraine crisis."*



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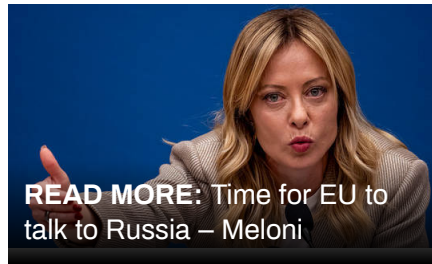
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Does Meloni agree?



“I think Macron is right on this. I believe the time has come for Europe to also speak with Russia,” Italian Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni said last Friday. *“Because if Europe decides to take part in this phase of negotiations by talking only to one of the two sides, I fear that in the end the positive contribution it can make will be limited.”*

Although an outspoken supporter of Ukraine, Meloni heads a coalition government that includes Deputy Prime Minister Matteo Salvini’s Lega party. Salvini has long called for talks with Putin, arguing last month that *“if Hitler and Napoleon failed with their campaigns to bring Moscow to its knees,”* so too would Ukraine and the EU.

Merz joins the chorus

Two days after declaring that Germany *“will accept responsibility for the security of Ukraine,”* Chancellor Friedrich Merz came out last week and said that *“the whole thing,”* meaning a peace agreement in Ukraine, *“just doesn’t work without Russia’s consent.”*

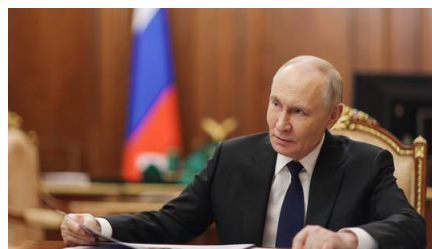


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Then on Wednesday, Merz told an economic conference that the EU should *“find a balance again with our largest European neighbor,”* and that *“if there is peace... then we can look ahead with great confidence beyond the year 2026.”*

This is the same Friedrich Merz who pushed all last year for the confiscation of Russia’s frozen sovereign assets, and boasted of providing Ukraine with *“long-range fire”* systems.

Why are the Europeans changing their position now?



Macron and Meloni have both pushed the EU to appoint an envoy to negotiate directly with Putin. Although EU officials have not revealed whether they plan to appoint such a figure, European Commission spokeswoman Paula Pinho stated on Monday that *“obviously, at some point, there will have to be talks also with President Putin.”*

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What European leaders truly fear, Politico reported on Wednesday, is getting left on the sidelines while US President Donald Trump and his envoy, Steve Witkoff, forge ahead and strike a deal with Russia without their involvement.

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Macron has confirmed this. If Europe doesn't secure a place at the table, *"we will be talking amongst ourselves"* while the Americans *"will then go alone to talk with the Russians,"* Macron told Le Figaro last month. Meloni noted this week that there are currently *"too many voices"* speaking for Europe, arguing that a single point of contact would simplify talks with Russia.

What do the Russians think?

Moscow welcomes the *"positive shift"* in statements from Europe, Kremlin spokesman Dmitry Peskov told reporters on Friday.

"Surprising as it may seem," the views expressed in the statements are *"entirely consistent"* with Moscow's perspective, he said, pointing out that the Europeans previously issued *"utopian statements"* calling for *"a crushing defeat of Russia."*



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If the latest remarks *"truly reflect the strategic vision of the Europeans, then it represents a positive evolution in their position,"* he added.

Speaking as he received newly appointed foreign ambassadors at the Kremlin on Thursday, Putin said that Russia *"is ready to restore the level of relations we require"* with Europe.

"One would like to believe that, over time, the situation will nonetheless change, and our states will return to normal, constructive dialogue," he said, cautioning that this would only happen when *"respect for [Russia's] national interests and consideration of legitimate security concerns"* are met.



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