



The future of the Ukraine-EU relationship

An Austro-French Dialogue on Ukraine

12 October 2021

17.00 - 18.15

Zoom

Coordination

Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe (ÖFZ/CFA), Vienna
Institut Montaigne, Paris

Context and Objectives

Since 2013 and the start of the Euromaidan movement, Ukraine has been plagued by violent protests and armed conflicts, while coming closer to the European Union. The escalation of tensions with the 2014 Ukrainian revolution, the annexation of Crimea and the war in Donbass have certainly opened a new page in the country's history. Once considered as a "buffer" country between the Russia and the West, Ukraine now endeavours to trace its own route, but it continues to face major external challenges, and can only count on a limited support from the European Union in this respect.

The conclusion of an Association Agreement with the EU in 2014 and liberalization of visa regime in 2017 do illustrate the country's rapprochement with the EU, but this rapprochement, to date, does not clearly imply that Ukraine should be granted accession perspectives. Positions on this topic diverge from one another among the Member States, as does their understanding of what actions should be taken to turn the EU into a more geopolitical actor. Ukraine, meanwhile, continues to cope with a series of internal challenges related to its pro-European transformation, some of them rather successfully (e.g. decentralization reform). But the road is fraught with difficulties, making it also complicated for the EU to sharpen its strategic approach towards the country.

Perspectives of France and Austria are interesting in this respect due to their respective understanding of the Ukrainian conflict, relations to Russia and interest for geopolitics in the East. The objective of this Franco-Austrian conference is to shed light on Ukraine's aspirations in its relationship with the European Union, but also to understand the role the EU has in this partnership. More specifically, it is to lay the groundwork for the future relationship between Ukraine and the European Union, in a world where post-Covid European solidarity, Russian conflictual tendencies but also the aspirational black sea power Turkey and growing influence China, have never been more meaningful and important.

Opening

- **Michel Duclos**, former Ambassador, Special Advisor, Institut Montaigne
- **Dietmar Schweisgut**, Secretary General, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe

Presentation of country's positions

- **Gerhard Sailer**, Deputy Director General, Political Affairs/ Director of the Department II.3 (Russian Federation; Eastern Europe and South Caucasus, Eastern Partnership, Turkey and Central Asia, Arctic), Austrian Federal Ministry for European and International Affairs
- **Marie Dumoulin**, Deputy Director for Russia and Eastern Europe, French Ministry of Foreign Affairs

Debate:

- **Alexandra Goujon**, Professor, University of Burgundy/ Lecturer, Sciences Po, Dijon
- **Michel Duclos**, former Ambassador, Special Advisor, Institut Montaigne
- **Thomas Mayr-Harting**, former Managing Director for Europe and Central Asia in the European External Action Service

Moderation

- **Magda Stumvoll**, Research Fellow, Austro-French Centre for Rapprochement in Europe