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## Kiev Starts to Get Frustrated With Europe

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The April 27 Ukraine-EU summit in Kiev frustrated the hosts. The joint declaration was turgid enough praising bold plans for reforms and condemning Russia's «aggressive actions» on Ukrainian soil. It is clear that Brussels has no real intention to shoulder any serious responsibility. So Ukraine got nothing but promises, no matter the whole political philosophy and strategy of Kiev regime is centered on «European prospects».

The European leaders had tried to bring down the Kiev expectations even before the meeting started. Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission, and Federica Mogherini, High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission, had cancelled visits to Ukraine promising to take part in

the EU-Ukraine summit instead. It became known before the meeting that Mogherini would not come again. It was reflection of the fact that the European Union had nothing to offer and the event would have no practical results. Donald Tusk, President of the European Council, who normally positions himself as the main Ukraine's ally, had thrown a damper on his «friends» saying there were no great expectations related to the summit, especially talking about concrete decisions - things like visa-free travel or a special peacekeeping mission. Political analyst of the Institute of Euroatlantic Cooperation Vladimir Gorbach said Ukraine expected more than the European Union was ready to even consider.

Public opinion kept in mind, President Poroshenko tried hard to make Europeans take the steps aimed at bringing Ukraine closer to Europe, the steps that had been promised since a long time ago. He wanted Europe to say openly that Ukraine had prospects to join the European Union. He also wanted it to say it was ready to introduce a visa-free regime and take a decision on sending a peacekeeping mission to the Donbass. To impress guests, he said in his welcoming address, that English sounded more often than Russian at the sessions of Ukraine's cabinet of ministers. No go. Jean Claude Juncker said the EU membership was not on the agenda. Johannes Khan, the Commissioner for European Neighbourhood, said on April 22 there would be no EU expansion in 10 years. It means Ukraine's membership is out of question. According to him, no EU member supports the idea of expansion.

Speaking at a news conference on the results of the EU-Ukraine summit in Kiev, Tusk said that the only option on the agenda so far had been sending a civilian mission to crisis-hit Ukraine. The attempts of Poroshenko to paint Ukraine as the country doing its utmost to reach the goal of European integration looked unconvincing. He explained that the reforms were stalled because snap election took place in October last year. Not much time has passed and we have taken the first steps in the right direction, said Poroshenko. The President could not hide his exasperation when an American journalist mentioned the slow pace of economic and constitutional reforms in the country. The Ukrainian leaders have their own way of treating journalists. Poroshenko asked him to avoid affirmations when asking questions.

The joint declaration contained criticism of Russia but differed by far from what Kiev had expected. The EU leaders said in unambiguous terms that they were expecting the Minsk accords to be adhered to. A day before the summit the British Financial Times reported that Berlin, Paris and London increased pressure on Ukraine to make it observe the agreement. According to the newspaper, German diplomats wanted Ukraine to be more «pliant». Stefan Meister, Head of Program for Eastern Europe, Russia and Central Asia at the Robert Bosch Center for Central and Eastern Europe, Russia, and Central Asia of the German Council on Foreign Relations, said if Ukraine did not comply with its obligations, Russia would always have a chance to restart the conflict.

Tusk said at the summit, that the fulfilment of Minsk accords is the best way to tackle the situation. Jean Claude Juncker said the Minsk accords were to be complied with. The revision of the document signed in Minsk was in stark contrast with the assurances of Ukrainian leaders that they stuck by the Minsk agreement provisions. Europeans are not excessively insistent but the facts of non-compliance are too evident to be rejected at the meeting with the representatives of Russia. The EU's decision to grant 1, 8 billion euros to Ukraine was presented as an

achievement. But Kiev had asked for 2, 8 billion euros, as Jean Claude Juncker said. Last year the EU granted 2, 15 billion euros. The trend is obvious; the European Union does not want its financial aid to go down the drain.

Another «breakthrough» result of the summit is the decision to launch a free trade zone starting from January 1, 2016. Yatsenyuk rushed to say the decision is an achievement of the government he leads. In reality the step does not bode well for Ukraine. It enjoyed the advantages of being free from customs duties for the whole year. The economic collapse prevented any tangible gains. Next year European goods will move freely too. It may be the end for what has been left of Ukrainian economy. The EU turns a blind eye on violations related to agricultural exports from Ukraine. It will not be the case after the free trade zone is introduced. Ukraine is not ready for that. Europeans understand that with perks over Ukraine will suffer. But Europe has its own interests. Jean Claude Juncker said, it is important to make the association agreement implemented since the start of the new year. It is impossible to delay it further.

The only solace for Ukraine is the declared intention of EU to keep anti-Russia sanction in force till the Minsk agreement is fulfilled. Donald Tusk said no new restrictive measures were discussed.

The EU-Ukraine relationship will be discussed at the summit in Riga (May 21-22) to evaluate the progress made in the relations between the EU and the eastern partners since the last summit in Vilnius in 2013. The visa free regime and «European prospects» will never leave the agenda. Perhaps the results of meeting will be zilch. One should try to change himself before trying to change the world.