



Ukraine's PM Yulia Tymoshenko: "I cannot see any alternative to Europe"

Ukraine's Prime Minister Yulia Tymoshenko took her anti-corruption and pro-reform message to MEPs on the Foreign Affairs committee and Ukraine Delegation Monday. She thanked them for their support during the "Orange Revolution" and said she considered integration with the EU "a priority" and that a "free trade zone was very important". On energy issues and relations with Russia she said she would strive for good relations with the Kremlin but energy independence would be Kiev's goal.

Jacek Saryusz-Wolski, the Polish EPP-ED Member who chairs the Foreign Affairs Committee, welcomed her saying that Ukraine is an important, crucial strategic partner for the EU and that a report by the Committee strongly advocates Ukraine's integration into the Union.

Romanian MEP Adrian Severin - the Socialist chair of Parliament's delegation to the Ukraine, said that the last elections there could be interpreted as "the will of Ukrainians to see democratic progress and to come closer to European structures and institutions".

Both stressed the need for economic, social, constitutional and judicial reforms.

Fighting corruption key to her mandate

Ms Tymoshenko told MEPs that she would make greater transparency and the fight against corruption the centrepiece of her mandate. She said that "power should become open" and that she will take concrete steps to combat corruption including a list of suggestions from businesses.

She also pledged to simplify the tax system and encourage the creation of small and medium size enterprises to boost employment and ease inequality.

On the political state of Ukraine she reassured MEPs that the emergency election was a sign of democracy, not a sign of dysfunction and that the next Presidential elections would be in two years time.

Orange Ties in Kiev

Ms Tymoshenko was fulsome in her praise of the Parliament. She told MEPs, "I remember well the MEPs wearing orange ties in Kiev supporting the orange revolution" and that "only we and the EP believed in the success of the early elections".

"We are historically a European country"

The Ukrainian premier was clear about where she thought her country should be orient-

ated: "We are historically a European country" and "I cannot see any alternative to Europe."

She said that she would devote a lot of her time to EU policy and a lot of the government's policies would be "filled with EU aspirations". She asked for cooperation from the EU in electronic measures to control smuggling as well as for the EU to be Kiev's "strategic partner on security".

On energy policy she told MEPs she would like to see one energy market shared with the EU and would like to see more foreign investment. On Russia Ms Tymoshenko said, "we will do our best to have the best relations with Russia, but Ukraine's national interests will be upfront, and energy independence will be important for us". She finished by saying "for my team the Orange Revolution is a principle for life".