# Slovakia’s Robert Fico faces EU backlash after attending Russia’s Victory Day parade



Slovakia's Prime Minister Robert Fico has underscored a contentious stance within the European Union by attending Russia's 9 May Victory Day parade, becoming the only EU leader present at an event marked by Moscow's ongoing military actions against Ukraine. Fico's visit to the Kremlin included a handshake with President Vladimir Putin, aiming to commemorate the defeat of Nazi Germany while sparking outrage among EU officials.

The backdrop of the parade, which celebrated the 80th anniversary of this historic event, was fraught with irony. At the same time that Fico was in Moscow, EU foreign ministers convened in Lviv, Ukraine, to endorse a special tribunal aimed at prosecuting Russian war crimes. The EU's chief diplomat, Kaja Kallas, vocally condemned Fico's attendance, asserting that those genuinely committed to peace should be supporting Ukraine rather than standing alongside Putin. “All those who truly support peace cannot stand side-by-side with Putin,” she remarked, highlighting the discord between Fico's actions and the stance of the EU's leadership.

Fico's decision to attend was not without complications; he faced airspace restrictions imposed by the Baltic states, which culminated in a longer journey to Moscow that included flying over Hungary and Romania. In defending his trip, the Slovak Prime Minister framed it as an opportunity to honour the Red Army troops who liberated Slovakia during World War II. His remarks, however, underline a broader trend of his administration's alignment with pro-Russian sentiments, which include halting military aid to Ukraine and criticising EU sanctions against Moscow.

The wider implications of Fico's attendance reflect divisions within the EU regarding relations with Russia. Some officials, including Poland's Donald Tusk, denounced the decision, viewing the participation in the military parade as a betrayal of the values upheld by the EU during the ongoing conflict in Ukraine. Tusk's critical stance was echoed by other EU leaders who have expressed similar disdain for any engagement with a regime currently at war, emphasising the need for unity in the response to Russia’s aggression.

Further complicating the geopolitical landscape is Serbia's President Aleksandar Vučić, who also attended the Moscow celebrations. This joint appearance by leaders from Slovakia and Serbia has sparked protests in Slovak cities, where demonstrators express resentment towards Fico's perceived deflection from EU solidarity. Slogans such as "We've had enough of Fico" were prominent, channeling public frustration related to Slovakia's foreign policy trajectory under his leadership. Opposition figures within Slovakia have branded the visit a national embarrassment, pointing to a growing movement against Fico’s pro-Russian stance.

Concurrently, the EU is advancing initiatives to assist Ukraine, with announcements of significant military aid and plans for a tribunal to bring justice to those responsible for war crimes. These developments underscore the stark contrast between the actions of Fico and Vučić, and the unified approach being adopted by most EU members in response to Russia's military actions. Tensions have escalated as European leaders reaffirm their commitment to Ukraine, further isolating figures like Fico who challenge the consensus.

As Slovakia navigates these turbulent waters, Fico’s pro-Russian inclinations only amplify the existing divisions among EU members regarding their engagement with Russia. The geopolitical stakes are high, with fundamental values and alliances being tested amidst a backdrop of war and historical commemoration.

### Reference Map

1. Paragraph 1: [[1]](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/09/slovakia-serbia-leaders-defy-eu-russian-military-parade-victory-day)
2. Paragraph 2: [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/cb419871-07af-495d-ab23-09e4ba0d8ad1), [[5]](https://apnews.com/article/58a89d1e4957dca84f8857d2dbeef0e1)
3. Paragraph 3: [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/slovak-pm-derides-eu-attempts-keep-him-moscow-war-commemorations-2025-05-09/)
4. Paragraph 4: [[3]](https://apnews.com/article/139e5c80e291e281ae11db8de1296080), [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/5828ccfa1cbde78f26753d6195e25829)
5. Paragraph 5: [[4]](https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/slovak-pm-derides-eu-attempts-keep-him-moscow-war-commemorations-2025-05-09/)
6. Paragraph 6: [[6]](https://apnews.com/article/5828ccfa1cbde78f26753d6195e25829)
7. Paragraph 7: [[2]](https://www.ft.com/content/cb419871-07af-495d-ab23-09e4ba0d8ad1), [[5]](https://apnews.com/article/58a89d1e4957dca84f8857d2dbeef0e1)

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2025/may/09/slovakia-serbia-leaders-defy-eu-russian-military-parade-victory-day> - Please view link - unable to able to access data
* <https://www.ft.com/content/cb419871-07af-495d-ab23-09e4ba0d8ad1> - On May 9, 2025, EU foreign ministers convened in Lviv, Ukraine, to endorse the creation of a war crimes tribunal to prosecute atrocities committed by Russian forces during their invasion of Ukraine, which began in February 2022. The tribunal, to be established by the Council of Europe, represents a significant step in Ukraine's efforts for post-conflict justice. Concurrently, Russia held its annual Victory Day military parade in Moscow, attended by key international figures including Chinese President Xi Jinping, Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, and Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico, drawing sharp criticism from EU leaders. EU chief diplomat Kaja Kallas condemned attendance at the Moscow parade, asserting that genuine peace supporters should stand with Ukraine. The EU also announced €1 billion in financial aid for Kyiv, funded by frozen Russian assets. In other news, EU lawmakers voted to reduce wolf protection status amid rising tensions between rural communities and animal rights advocates, reflecting broader concerns about Europe's rural-urban divide. Meanwhile, Portugal faces a surge in electricity prices due to limited imports from Spain, and Germany’s new Chancellor Friedrich Merz was set to meet EU and NATO officials in Brussels.
* <https://apnews.com/article/139e5c80e291e281ae11db8de1296080> - On May 9, 2025, Russia celebrated the 80th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany with a large Victory Day parade in Moscow, led by President Vladimir Putin. The grand event featured over 11,500 troops, 180 military vehicles, and displays of nuclear-capable missiles and drones. It also drew over two dozen world leaders, the highest attendance since Russia’s 2022 invasion of Ukraine, including Chinese President Xi Jinping and Brazilian President Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva, signaling Russia's continued global ties despite Western sanctions. Putin used the occasion to praise Russian troops fighting in Ukraine and to reinforce national pride. The Soviet Union's immense WWII losses, still deeply significant to Russians, were highlighted. Security was heightened due to recent Ukrainian drone attacks on Moscow, which also caused flight disruptions. Smaller parades took place across Russia, and historical city names were temporarily reinstated. Meanwhile, in Lviv, Ukraine, European officials endorsed a special tribunal to prosecute alleged Russian war crimes. Ukrainian President Zelenskyy and EU leaders stressed accountability and announced further sanctions. The Kremlin dismissed the tribunal initiative and war crime allegations. Despite Putin’s temporary ceasefire for the occasion, combat operations and mutual accusations between Russia and Ukraine continued.
* <https://www.reuters.com/world/europe/slovak-pm-derides-eu-attempts-keep-him-moscow-war-commemorations-2025-05-09/> - Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico expressed a desire to maintain pragmatic relations with Russia, despite significant opposition from the European Union. Fico attended the 80th anniversary of the victory over Nazi Germany in Moscow, meeting Russian President Vladimir Putin after a complicated journey due to EU airspace restrictions. He criticized EU efforts to hinder his trip as trivial and reaffirmed Slovakia's interest in dialogue with Russia. Fico also rejected the EU’s proposed plan to phase out Russian energy, calling it “economic suicide,” and signaled readiness to use Slovakia’s veto power against it. His participation drew criticism from EU leaders, including Estonia’s Kaja Kallas and Poland’s Donald Tusk, who viewed the act as shameful in light of the ongoing war in Ukraine. Fico defended his attendance as a tribute to Soviet soldiers who liberated Slovakia during World War II, asserting that dialogue with other leaders is normal diplomacy. His stance aligns with Slovakia and Hungary’s continued opposition to strict EU measures against Russia, underscoring divisions within the bloc regarding relations with Moscow.
* <https://apnews.com/article/58a89d1e4957dca84f8857d2dbeef0e1> - Russia’s commemoration of the 80th anniversary of Nazi Germany’s defeat has highlighted deepening rifts with the West, largely due to its ongoing war in Ukraine. While President Vladimir Putin hosted leaders from China, Brazil, and Slovakia in a show of strength, the EU and Western leaders marked the occasion separately. The EU announced nearly €2 billion in military aid for Ukraine, funded partly by Russian frozen assets, and supported the creation of a special tribunal to prosecute Russian officials for war crimes. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy echoed these calls, advocating justice akin to post-WWII actions against Nazis. Meanwhile, France and Poland signed a new defense pact, reinforcing European security. In diplomatic efforts, European leaders and Donald Trump discussed a proposed 30-day ceasefire, which Ukraine supports but Moscow has conditional reservations about. Estonia took a particularly strong stand by displaying a banner comparing Putin to Hitler. Despite Western sanctions and efforts to isolate him, Putin touted support from non-Western allies and praised Russian troops in Ukraine during Moscow’s military parade. The stark division between Russia and the West underscores the global tensions sparked by the continued conflict in Ukraine.
* <https://apnews.com/article/5828ccfa1cbde78f26753d6195e25829> - On May 9, 2025, protests erupted in Bratislava and other Slovak cities against Prime Minister Robert Fico's controversial visit to Moscow. Fico, the only European Union leader to travel to Russia for the 80th anniversary of Nazi Germany's defeat, faced backlash for attending the celebrations, which featured Russian President Vladimir Putin praising soldiers fighting in Ukraine. Demonstrators chanted slogans such as "We've had enough of Fico" and "Slovakia is Europe," expressing disapproval of what they see as a pro-Russian stance that alienates Slovakia from its European allies. Opposition leader Michal Šimečka called the visit a national embarrassment and a low point in Slovak foreign policy. The protests are part of a broader movement opposing Fico’s increasingly pro-Russian and anti-American policies. Since returning to power in 2003, Fico has pursued closer ties with Russia, a position that has drawn criticism both domestically and from EU partners. His trip, intended to foster "normal, friendly cooperation" with Moscow, further deepened political divisions in the country and underscored concerns over Slovakia's geopolitical alignment.
* <https://www.ft.com/content/fee55ebc-bea3-49b3-942e-e954df9eed76> - On Saturday, the leaders of France, Germany, Poland, and the UK will visit Kyiv in a show of Western solidarity with Ukraine amid renewed efforts to establish a 30-day ceasefire and encourage peace talks with Russia. This marks the first joint trip to Kyiv for the group since Friedrich Merz recently became Germany’s chancellor. In a joint statement, the leaders supported U.S. President Donald Trump’s call for a peace deal and urged Russian President Vladimir Putin to end the invasion and engage in negotiations. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy affirmed Kyiv’s readiness for a ceasefire, though Russia has yet to agree. Despite pledges of restraint, Russia has continued targeting civilian areas, including recent deadly missile and drone attacks on Kyiv. The U.S., Europe, and Ukraine are reportedly close to finalizing a ceasefire plan tied to potential new sanctions on Russia if it refuses to comply. EU foreign ministers also called for a special tribunal to prosecute senior Russian officials for war crimes. The UK imposed fresh sanctions on Russia’s oil-shipping “shadow fleet.” During the visit, leaders will honor Ukrainian war dead and later discuss support for rebuilding Ukraine’s defenses and ensuring its long-term security.