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Schroeder to deliver Dialogue keynote

By Scott Roxborough

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COLOGNE, Germany -- Former German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder will give the keynote address Nov. 22 at the fifth annual European Television Dialogue in Berlin.

The European Television Dialogue is a conference focusing on the development of the media industry in Eastern Europe. This year's key topics include the effects of EU enlargement on the TV industries in member states Bulgaria and Romania, the development of IPTV in Central and Eastern Europe and media investment between Russian and Western Europe.

As German Chancellor from 1998-2005 Schroeder worked to improve ties between Germany and the East. He is a strong supporter, and personal friend, of Russian president Vladimir Putin.

But since leaving office, Schroeder has become a focus of controversy as a negotiator for Russian oil giant Gazprom and chairman of the board of Gazprom's Baltic Sea pipeline project Nord Stream.

Schroeder is currently at the center of a war of words between Russian and the tiny Baltic nation of Estonia.

Estonian Prime Minister Andrus Ansip was scheduled to meet Schroeder on Tuesday but cancelled the meeting, accusing the ex-chancellor of being little more than a spokesman for the Kremlin.

The debate centers on Estonia's decision to remove a monument to Soviet WWII soldiers in the country's capital Tallinn. The Estonians see the monument as a symbol of Soviet occupation while Russians view it as tribute to the soldiers who fought the Nazis.

Schroeder last week came out on the Russia side of the debate, calling the decision to remove the statue "an insult" for Russians.