

Russia's War Against Ukraine: European Union Responses and U.S.-EU Relations

Updated March 30, 2023

The 27-member European Union (EU) has implemented a wide range of policy responses to Russia's war against Ukraine, launched in 2022. [EU actions](#) and [coordination with the United States](#) are of interest to Congress given the EU's role as an important [U.S. partner](#). (Also see CRS In Focus IF12277, *Russia's War on Ukraine: U.S. Policy and the Role of Congress*.)

Key EU Responses

Sanctions

The EU has imposed [10 packages](#) of sanctions—or *restrictive measures*—intended to cripple Russia's ability to finance the war against Ukraine, enact costs on Russia's elites, and diminish Russia's economic base. Imposing sanctions requires unanimity among EU members.

To date, [EU sanctions](#) on Russia's government and financial, business, defense, technology, and media sectors include

- [Freezing the assets](#) of 205 entities (including key banks) and 1,473 individuals (primarily Russian officials and elites), to whom travel bans also apply.
- Imposing debt and equity restrictions on certain banks and companies.
- Restricting transactions with [Russia's central bank](#) and blocking access to its reserve holdings.
- Banning transactions with certain Russian state-owned [military-industrial enterprises](#).
- Disconnecting 10 leading Russian financial institutions—including [Sberbank](#), Russia's largest bank—from [SWIFT](#) (the world's dominant international financial messaging system).
- Broadening export controls on dual-use goods and technologies.
- Banning certain exports in the aviation, maritime, and technology sectors (e.g., semiconductors) and the export of [drone engines](#) and [luxury goods](#) to Russia.

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

IN11897

- Prohibiting imports of [steel](#), [spirits](#), [seafood](#), [gold](#), [asphalt](#), and [synthetic rubber](#) (among other items) from Russia.
- Closing EU airspace, seaports, and roads to Russian aircraft, ships, and freight operators, respectively.
- Suspending broadcasting activities of nine Russian state-owned [media outlets](#) (including subsidiaries).

[EU energy dependence on Russia](#) has made [targeting](#) its energy sector [challenging](#), but the EU has approved progressively tougher sanctions, including

- Prohibiting most imports of Russian [crude oil and petroleum products](#), with an exemption for crude oil delivered by pipeline. The EU expects these sanctions, which began taking effect in December 2022, to apply to [around 90%](#) of Russian oil imports.
- [Banning oil transport services](#). An [exemption](#) finalized in December 2022 allows EU companies to provide such services for [Russian crude oil](#) sold to non-EU countries at or below a price cap of \$60 a barrel. In February 2023, the EU set price caps for [Russian petroleum products](#). EU caps are established in [cooperation](#) with the [Group of Seven \(G7\) price cap coalition](#) (aimed at reducing Russia's oil revenues while keeping global energy markets stable).
- Banning EU exports of [oil refining technologies](#).
- Prohibiting [Russian coal imports](#).

Although the EU has not prohibited Russian natural gas imports, it is working to end its reliance on Russian energy (see below). The EU also is considering using [frozen Russian assets](#) to [support Ukraine](#). (Also see CRS Insight IN11869, *Russia's War Against Ukraine: Overview of U.S. Sanctions and Other Responses*.)

Military Assistance

Through its [European Peace Facility \(EPF\)](#), the EU has committed [€3.6 billion](#) to date in military assistance financing for Ukraine, including for lethal equipment (€3.1 billion) and nonlethal supplies (€380 million). Member states may be reimbursed from the EPF for assistance provided. In March 2023, the EU agreed to provide Ukraine with 1 million rounds of [ammunition](#) within a year, either from existing stocks or through joint procurement (a package worth [€2 billion total](#)). The EU also has established a [training mission for Ukraine's armed forces](#). The EU estimates that members' [bilateral military support](#) to Ukraine is over €8 billion.

Financial and Other Aid

As of [March 2023](#), the EU, its member states, and European financial institutions have [collectively mobilized €37.8 billion](#) in financial, humanitarian, and emergency assistance for Ukraine, including

- €11.6 billion provided or guaranteed by the EU budget in 2022;
- €18 billion in EU [financial assistance](#) for 2023 (in the form of [favorable loans](#)); and
- €7.8 billion from member states.

The EU also coordinates the delivery of [in-kind emergency supplies](#) to Ukraine. A [temporary protection mechanism](#) provides Ukrainian nationals who have fled with immediate residency rights and access to benefits throughout the EU. (Also see CRS Insight IN11882, *Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis in Ukraine*.)

Addressing Energy Dependence

Russia's war in Ukraine has heightened long-standing concerns about EU dependence on Russian energy imports, particularly natural gas. Russia [substantially reduced](#) gas pipeline [deliveries](#) to the EU in 2022. By the end of 2022, pipeline gas from Russia accounted for [roughly 9%](#) of EU gas imports ([down from 40%](#) in early 2022), although EU imports of Russian liquefied natural gas (LNG) [increased](#) somewhat during the same period. The EU has pledged to phase out Russian [fossil fuel imports](#) before 2030.

U.S.-EU Cooperation and Congressional Interests

The United States and the EU have cooperated closely in responding to Russia's aggression against Ukraine. Many [sanctions](#) are identical or substantively similar. The two partners have worked together on [enforcing sanctions](#), suspending [Russia's preferential trade treatment](#) under World Trade Organization rules, and [formulating the G7 price cap on Russian oil exports](#). The United States also has [committed](#) to help the EU reduce its [dependency](#) on Russian gas, in part by boosting LNG shipments to the EU.

Although U.S.-EU unity on Ukraine [remains strong](#), energy costs and ongoing [economic challenges](#) could put [pressure](#) on EU policies in the longer term—potentially affecting sanctions on Russia, increasing calls for negotiations, or impeding EU financial support to Ukraine. [EU financial aid disbursements](#) faced [some delays](#) in 2022, but disbursements appear [on schedule](#) in 2023. Some in Congress may be [interested](#) in monitoring the extent of EU assistance to Ukraine and U.S.-EU coordination.

Russia's war against Ukraine also has implications for several EU initiatives of possible interest to Congress:

- **Security and Defense.** The war has [prompted](#) debate on EU efforts to improve its military capabilities and could [strengthen](#) the [NATO-EU partnership](#).
- **Energy and Climate Policies.** Russia's actions could accelerate the EU's energy transition, [bolster](#) the [European Green Deal](#), and present opportunities for U.S.-EU clean energy cooperation. The EU worries, however, that [new U.S. subsidies for green technologies](#) could divert trade and investment [away](#) from the EU. A [U.S.-EU task force](#) is seeking to [address EU concerns](#).
- **EU Enlargement.** Traditionally, strong bipartisan support has existed in Congress for [EU enlargement](#). The EU declared [Ukraine](#) and [Moldova](#) official candidates for membership in June 2022 (six other countries are recognized as official candidates also). Joining the EU typically takes many years.

Author Information

Kristin Archick
Specialist in European Affairs

Disclaimer

This document was prepared by the Congressional Research Service (CRS). CRS serves as nonpartisan shared staff to congressional committees and Members of Congress. It operates solely at the behest of and under the direction of Congress. Information in a CRS Report should not be relied upon for purposes other than public understanding of information that has been provided by CRS to Members of Congress in connection with CRS's institutional role. CRS Reports, as a work of the United States Government, are not subject to copyright protection in the United States. Any CRS Report may be reproduced and distributed in its entirety without permission from CRS. However, as a CRS Report may include copyrighted images or material from a third party, you may need to obtain the permission of the copyright holder if you wish to copy or otherwise use copyrighted material.