

# Ukraine-Russia

## *Factual update on international response*

*This document intends to provide an overview of official EU and international government measures taken in response to the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Among a lot of commentary and speculation on the crisis, this report focuses on official sources. H+K Brussels will share daily updates as long as the situation demands it.*

- The European Commission released a guidance document answering Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on export-related restrictions due to EU sanctions relating to the Russia-Ukraine conflict.
- Spanish Prime Minister Pedro Sánchez is meeting with European leaders throughout this week, in view of the European Council summit on 24-25 March, to promote EU energy reform that will reduce the EU's dependency on Russian energy sources.
- A “resilience plan” was introduced in France to help industries and companies cope with the imposed sanctions and provide aid in certain sectors, such as agriculture.

## EU and European measures

### EU Council

On 17 March, the Council adopted a decision on the signing of a status agreement between the EU and the Republic of Moldova regarding operational activities carried out by Frontex (the EU's outside border control agency). The Council also agreed to send the draft decision on the conclusion of the agreement to the European Parliament, which needs to give its consent for the final conclusion of the agreement.

The decision will allow Frontex to assist Moldova in border management, through the deployment of teams which can support Moldovan authorities in tasks such as registration and border checks. Following Russia's invasion of Ukraine over 300,000 refugees have entered Moldova and the number continues to grow.

### European Commission

On 16 March, the European Commission released a guidance answering Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) on export-related restrictions caused by sanctions in view of Russia's military invasion of Ukraine. The guidance aims at supporting national competent authorities and stakeholders in the EU towards the implementation of the new export restrictions, including an explanation of what is covered by the EU Sanctions Regulation, interpretation of contracts with Russian companies and what constitutes an exemption or derogation.

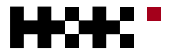
On 17 March, European Commission Executive Vice-President and Trade Commissioner Valdis Dombrovskis stressed that, during a visit to the College of Europe in Bruges, the EU should rely on “positive dependencies” to diversify the sources of its raw-materials supply. In his keynote address, he was referring to Russia's invasion of Ukraine, which has showcased the EU supply chain's overdependence on Russia. Dombrovskis also said there would be an economic price to pay for Western sanctions and Russian retaliation measures, as growth will be hit.

### Council of Europe

The Committee of Ministers in the Council of Europe (Europe's leading human rights organisation) suspended on 17 March all relations with Belarusian authorities. It will also cease all technical cooperation with Belarus.

### EU Member States

On 17 March, the **Spanish Prime Minister** Pedro Sánchez met Slovakian Prime Minister Eduard Heger to discuss the European Commission initiative REpowerEU, which is aimed at making Europe independent from Russia fossil fuels before 2030. The meeting is part of Sánchez's trip throughout Europe, during which he will meet other European leaders to discuss the need for EU energy market reform to help diversify energy supply resources and reduce Europe's dependency on Russian gas. Sánchez will later travel to Croatia, Romania, Italy,



Greece, Portugal, Germany and Ireland in preparation of the European Council scheduled for 24 and 25 March. The Spanish Agency for International Development (AECID) is going to [send](#) a new humanitarian aid package of 23 million euros to Ukraine.

On 17 March, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky [told](#) German MPs that a new type of Berlin Wall is being built due to the military conflict in Ukraine which will divide Europe between freedom and oppression. He thanked **Germany** for its support during Russia's invasion but was critical of German energy policy and business interests for what he said was contributing to that wall of division. "Dear Mr Scholz, tear down this wall," he demanded of the German chancellor.

**Lithuania** [will look](#) for "complex solutions" to solve increasing fuel costs according to Prime Minister Ingrida Šimonytė on 16 March. She ruled out setting a price cap as she feared that the price of fuel might exceed the cap and leave the Lithuanian government to cover the difference. She noted that Lithuania already has one of lowest rates of excise duty on fuel in the EU and will be "giving complex solutions rather than offering scattered solutions individually for gasoline, gas". She also referred to the volatility in oil prices as they dropped 20%, adding that "introducing a good solution today seems like catching falling knives" and that it would be very important to see "further dynamics" before her mooted "complex solution" could be delivered.

The [annual St. Patrick's Day trip](#) of Prime Minister Micheál Martin to meet US president Joseph Biden – where they were planned to discuss the Ukraine conflict – was rescheduled to take place virtually due to Martin testing positive for COVID-19. During the virtual meeting that took place 17 March, President Biden praised Ireland's response to the Ukrainian crisis, notably in the taking in of 7000 Ukrainian refugees. Martin expressed Ireland's commitment to the "humanitarian front" as well as to the "broadest and widest sanctions possible" to help end the conflict.

On 15 March, The Deputy Prime Minister of **Poland**, Jaroslaw Kaczynski, [called for](#) a NATO peacekeeping mission to be sent to Ukraine.

On 16 March, **Denmark's** Defence Minister Morten Bødskov supported humanitarian efforts relating to Ukraine with a [new Danish law](#) mirroring the EU Temporary Protection Directive, granting residence in Denmark to certain groups of Ukrainian refugees.

A **French** "[resilience plan](#)" to cope with the sanctions issued against Russia was announced by Prime Minister Jean Castex on 16 March. Among the cross-cutting measures proposed to all sectors, and in addition to the nearly €20 billion of aid deployed last September, the government announced it would reimburse 15 cents per litre of petrol as of 1 April. To avoid bankruptcies and preserve employment, new aid will also be created for companies whose energy costs amount to 3% of their turnover. The state is committed to covering half of the additional costs associated with this increase. Fishermen who cannot afford fuel for their boats will also be given 35 cents per litre. The government will further provide €400 million for farmers, and in particular livestock farmers who are suffering from increasing animal feed costs. Castex also pledged that France will no longer import Russian gas and oil by 2027. The development of renewable energies, technological, industrial and food sectors will be priorities and coordinated with other EU countries, Castex added.

## International measures

### United States

On 16 March President Biden announced [\\$800 million](#) in security assistance for Ukraine. The aid package includes 800 Stinger anti-aircraft systems, 100 drones, over 20 million rounds of small arms ammunition and grenade launcher and mortar rounds, 25,000 sets of body armour, 25,000 helmets, 100 grenade launchers, 5,000 rifles, 1,000 pistols, 400 machine guns, 400 shotguns, as well as 2,000 Javelin, 1,000 light anti-armour weapons, and 6,000 AT-4 anti-armour systems. Biden said the US will continue to provide Ukraine with defensive military equipment to defend itself through the difficult days ahead on top of the humanitarian assistance.

Biden further [labelled](#) Putin as a "war criminal" following a press conference he held at the White House on 16 March. Press secretary Psaki later [clarified](#) that the President Biden was speaking from his heart based on what he has seen on television about the war in Ukraine.

On 16 March the representatives of US Treasury Department and their counterparts from Australia, Canada, Germany, France, Italy, Japan, the United Kingdom, and the European Commission jointly [launched](#) the Russian

Elites, Proxies, and Oligarchs (REPO) multilateral task force. The task force consists of Finance Ministry and Justice or Home Ministry of each member country and will identify sanction evasion and related criminal conduct.

The Democratic caucus of the US Congress [reaffirmed](#) its support for Ukraine, including aid and military assistance. The public display of support follows Democrat Majority Leader Chuck Schumer's pledge to pass bipartisan legislation suspending trade relations with Russia.

## Australia

On 16 March Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison [said](#) the world economy and stability is going through uncertain times because of Russia's illegal, unjustified and unprovoked invasion of Ukraine. He further noted that Australia stands with Ukraine because its invasion is an unconscionable assault on freedom and national sovereignty and a rules-based order that favours freedom.

Morrison added that in the coming days Australia will [announce](#) further sanctions to ensure that Russia pay a heavy price for the illegal war in Ukraine.

## Japan

During a 17 March [press conference](#) Japanese Chief Cabinet Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno welcomed the new US security aid package to Ukraine and said Russia's indiscriminate attacks on facilities that house civilians – such as hospitals, schools and theatres – are unacceptable. He called on Russia to “immediately stop these atrocities.”

## China

At a 17 March [press conference](#) Chinese foreign ministry spokesperson Zhao Lijian said that Japan is using the situation in Ukraine as a pretext to build up stronger military forces and capability that stirs security concerns among its Asian neighbours. He further said that China has an independent view of the Russia sanctions, but it has been promoting dialogue for peace and making efforts for peacefully resolving the Ukraine crisis.

## Russian retaliation measures

On 17 March, Russia said it has completed a closely watched bond payment and ordered the interest payments it owes to be sent to investors, attempting to avoid its first default on foreign debt obligations in more than a century. Russia had previously touted the idea of defaulting on its government debt in response to the imposition of Western sanctions, but [issued](#) a European coupon payment on the Russian Federation's external bond loans – in the total amount of \$117 million – to a foreign correspondent bank, claiming no problems with state debt servicing.

Russia has also rejected an International Court of Justice ruling that they must cease all military operations in Ukraine, according to a [statement](#) from state-controlled news agency TASS. When asked by journalists about the decision of the UN court on the suit of Ukraine, press secretary of the head of state Dmytro Peskov replied: "No, we cannot take this decision into account. The International Court of Justice has such a thing as 'consent of the parties'. There can be no agreement here."

## Upcoming meetings

### 17 March – [European Parliament](#) (agenda can be found [here](#))

- Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development will have an exchange of views with Commissioner Wojciechowski about the current situation on the EU agricultural markets following Russia's invasion of Ukraine.
  - Kick-off (9:00 local time, Brussels)
  - End of meeting (12:00 local time, Brussels)
  - This meeting will be livestreamed [here](#)

### 17 March – [European Parliament](#) (agenda can be found [here](#))

- Parliamentary Committee on Employment and Social Affairs will have an exchange of views with Nicolas Schmit (Commissioner for Jobs and Social Rights) on the impact of the ongoing war in Ukraine on the labour market in the EU and possible actions to be taken.
  - Kick-off (9:15 local time, Brussels)
  - End of meeting (10:15 local time, Brussels)



- This meeting will be livestreamed [here](#)

**21 March – Council** (agenda can be found [here](#))

- Exchange of views of the EU Ministers of Foreign Affairs on Russia’s aggression against Ukraine and the humanitarian aspects. The Council will also discuss the Strategic Compass.
  - Kick-off (9:30 local time, Brussels)
  - End of meeting (TBC)
- This meeting will be followed by another Council meeting with the EU Ministers of Defence
- The Agriculture and Fisheries Council will meet and will be discussing the market situation in light of the conflict in Ukraine.
  - The Commission non-paper on the subject can be found [here](#)

**24 March – NATO** (announcement on 15 March by U.S. Press Secretary Psaki can be found [here](#))

- Extraordinary meeting with the NATO leaders, inclusive the visit of U.S. President Joseph Biden.
  - Kick-off (TBC, Brussels)
  - End of meeting (TBC)

**24-25 March – European Council** (agenda can be found [here](#))

- Meeting of EU heads of state or government.
  - Kick-off (TBC, Brussels)
  - End of meeting (TBC)