

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 Council of the EU approved the Strategic Compass, giving the EU an ambitious plan of action for strengthening the EU's security and defence policy by 2030.
- The Commission, EU national competition authorities as well as the European Competition Network have published a joint statement on the application of competition law in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- Prime Ministers for Italy, Spain, Greece and Portugal will propose energy reform measures at this week's European Council summit aimed at reducing Europe's dependency on Russian oil.
- The Australian Government has imposed an immediate ban on Australian export of alumina and aluminium ores to Russia. They will also donate 70,000 tonnes of thermal coal to secure Ukraine's energy supplies.
- A minority party in the lower house of Russia's Federal Assembly (the *Duma*) has proposed a bill to end Russia's membership in the World Trade Organisation.

EU measures

Council of the EU

On 21 March, the Council of the EU [approved](#) the Strategic Compass, giving the EU an ambitious plan of action for strengthening the EU's security and defence policy by 2030. According to the press release, this is all the more important at a time when war has returned to Europe, following the Russian aggression against Ukraine, as well as major geopolitical shifts.

European Commission

On 21 March, the European Commission [launched](#) a special call under the [Technical Support Instrument \(TSI\)](#) to support member states welcoming refugees from Ukraine and the scaling back of Russian energy dependencies. Following this call, member states may immediately send requests to the Commission for technical support in the following areas: (1) building institutional and operational capacity to welcome people fleeing the war in Ukraine; (2) enhancing the social and economic integration of refugees from Ukraine; (3) making the best use of available EU funds to provide accommodation for families or unaccompanied children; and (4) phasing out of the member states' reliance on fossil fuels from Russia.

On 21 March, the European Commission, EU national competition authorities as well as the European Competition Network (ECN) have [published](#) a joint statement on the application of competition law in the context of the Russian invasion of Ukraine. According to the statement, cooperation between companies affected by the crisis might be allowed under EU antitrust rules. The ECN said it would not take action against strictly necessary and temporary initiatives that are intended to avoid disruptions caused by the war and sanctions.

EU Member States

Prime Ministers Mario Draghi (**Italy**), Pedro Sánchez (**Spain**), Kyriakos Mitsotakis (**Greece**) and Antonio Costa (**Portugal**) [met in Rome](#) on 18 March to agree on a common approach for the European Council summit to be held on 24-25 March. Their meeting predominantly focused on energy reform for Europe to help minimise Europe's energy dependency on Russia, such as decoupling electricity prices from gas, limiting prices, diversifying energy sources and working on energy infrastructure connections.

Bulgaria declared ten Russian diplomats as persona non grata on 18 March. Bulgaria claimed their activities to be incompatible with the Vienna Convention but did not elaborate further.

France has frozen EUR 22 billion worth of Russian Central Bank assets according to French Economy Minister Bruno Le Maire. The French government has also seized property totalling half a billion euro from Russian individuals, including two yachts.

International measures

United Kingdom

In a phone call with Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy on 18 March and 20 March, UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson stated he will continue to exert pressure at all levels to oppose Putin and confirmed additional defensive aid. Both President Zelenskyy and Prime Minister Johnson agreed to step up their direct communication even further in the days to come.

On 19 March the UK Department of Health and Social Care and UK National Health Service donated 2 million medical items to Ukraine. These items include vital medicines, wound packs, intensive care equipment and pain relief. This action is part of a wider humanitarian response such as the £200 million life-saving humanitarian aid.

United States

On 18 March US Secretary of State Antony Blinken called the Ukrainian Foreign Minister Dmytro Kuleba. Blinken reaffirmed the United States' steadfast commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity. He also reiterated support to Ukraine through security, humanitarian, and economic assistance in the light of the \$800 million package announced on 16 March.

Australia

On 20 March, the Australian Government announced it will expand its support to Ukraine and impose further sanctions on Russia. Prime Minister Scott Morrison and Minister of Defence Peter Dutton have developed an additional \$21 million military assistance package that will bring the total Australian military assistance up to \$91 million. Additionally, the Government decided to upscale the emergency humanitarian assistance with another \$30 million and to contribute \$10 million to the World Food Programme.

The Australian government has also imposed an immediate ban on Australian exports of alumina and aluminium ores to Russia. This will have a significant impact on Russia, which depends on Australia for nearly 20% of its alumina. Australia will also donate 70,000 tonnes of thermal coal to secure Ukraine's energy supplies. To help Ukrainians forced to flee, they will make available a temporary humanitarian visa, which will be valid for three years and allow people to work, study and access Medicare.

China

The Chinese government has decided to provide additional humanitarian assistance of 10 million yuan's worth of supplies to Ukraine. The Spokesperson stated that China will continue to play a constructive role in helping deescalate the situation in Ukraine and stands ready to contribute to overcoming the humanitarian crisis.

Russian retaliation measures

Starting 18 March, all restrictions on movement within Russia and Belarus are lifted. The corresponding directive follows the agreements reached by Russian Prime Minister Mikhail Mishustin and Belarusian Prime Minister Roman Golovchenko who met in Moscow on 14 March. Personal trips from Russia to Belarus and back have been strictly regulated since 2020. Only trips for family visits, medical treatment and studies were permitted.

On 21 March, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs imposed retaliation sanctions against Japan for its unilateral restrictions towards Russia in light of the Ukraine crisis. Under the current measures being taken, Russia decided to: (1) stop visa-free travel for Japanese citizens; (2) withdraw from any dialogue with Japan on the establishment

of joint economic activities in the southern Kuril Islands; and (3) block the extension of Japan's status as a partner of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization.

On 21 March, a Russian court has banned Facebook and Instagram in the country after finding parent-company Meta "extremist," Russian state-owned media outlet TASS [reported](#). The decision is based on Meta's announcement that it would allow general calls for violence against the Russian forces invading Ukraine and against Russian President Vladimir Putin. The ban does not apply to Meta's WhatsApp messenger.

On 21 March, a bill to end Russia's membership in the World Trade Organisation – titled A Just Russia – For Truth – was [proposed](#) by a minority party, Just Russia, in the lower house of the Russian Federal Assembly (the Duma). Just Russia party chairman Sergey Mironov [suggested](#) the bill was prompted by the West's punishment of Russia for carrying out its operation in Ukraine, and that "there has been no point in being in this organization for a long time".

Upcoming meetings

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](#)

21-24 March – [European Parliament](#) (programme can be found [here](#))

- The European Parliament organises "The Ukrainian Solidarity Days" which includes several activities taking place in the Parliament at different levels demonstrating solidarity with Ukrainian partners.
 - Kick-off (Monday 16:45 local time, Brussels)
 - End (Thursday 15:30 local time, Brussels)

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

- MEPs will discuss in Plenary the need for an urgent EU action plan to ensure food security inside and outside the EU in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
- Parliament will also have a debate on the fight against oligarch structures, protection of EU funds from fraud and conflict of interests.
 - Kick-off (15:00 local time, Brussels)
 - End of meeting (23:00 local time, Brussels)

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

- In Plenary a joint European action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy will be discussed as a result of the Commission strategy presented on 8 March. This strategy is designed to make Europe independent from Russian fossil fuels well before 2030, starting with gas.
 - Kick-off (09:00 local time, Brussels)
 - End of meeting (11:20 local time, Brussels)

24 March – [G7](#) (formal announcement TBC)

- The G7 leaders will meet in Brussels to discuss the Russian invasion of Ukraine.
 - Kick-off (TBC, Brussels)
 - End of meeting (TBC, Brussels)

24 March – [NATO](#) (announcement 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)
 - The public components of the meeting will be livestreamed [here](#)

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)

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

- Extraordinary Justice and Home Affairs Council. EU ministers will discuss a European coordination for Ukrainian refugees.
 - Kick-off (14:30 local time, Brussels)
 - End of meeting (TBC)