

# 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.*

- On 8 March, the European Commission proposed to develop a REPowerEU strategy, which aims to reduce the EU's dependence on Russian fossil fuels. This will aim at diversifying gas supplies, as well as reducing the use of fossil fuels in the EU.
- On 8 March, US President Joe Biden announced the US will ban all imports of Russian oil and gas, and encouraged Europe to follow suit.
- On 8 March, UK Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng indicated that the UK is considering gradually phasing out the import of Russian oil by the end of 2022.

## EU measures

### Developments in EU institutions

On 8 March, the European Commission [proposed](#) to develop a strategic **REPowerEU** plan to make the EU independent from Russian fossil fuels before 2030 as a consequence of Russia's invasion of Ukraine. The strategy will increase the resilience of the EU-wide energy system based on two pillars: (1) **diversifying gas supplies**, via higher Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) and pipeline imports from non-Russian suppliers, and larger volumes of biomethane and renewable hydrogen production and imports. The aim is to reduce gas imports by 2/3 by the end of the year; and (2) reducing the use of **fossil fuels** in Europe by boosting energy efficiency, increasing renewables and electrification, and addressing potential infrastructure bottlenecks.

### EU Member States

**Hungary** will allow NATO troops to deploy in western Hungary and shipments of weapons to cross its territory to other NATO member states, according to a [government decree](#) published on 7 March. The decree also doubles down on Hungary's decision not to allow any arms shipments from the country to Ukraine. Until now, Hungary sounded reluctant to host any more foreign troops. On 4 March, the country's Minister for Foreign Affairs Péter Szijjártó [said](#) that Hungary could protect its own southeastern flank and did not need extra NATO forces to be deployed there, making this decree a backtrack on those comments. Of all EU leaders, Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban is generally considered to be closest to Russian President Vladimir Putin and there was speculation that Hungary's previous reluctance to host any additional NATO forces was to avoid further damaging the relationship.

**German** Chancellor Olaf Scholz has [admitted](#) that "Europe has deliberately exempted energy supplies from Russia from sanctions," in a statement published on 7 March. "At the moment, Europe's supply of energy for heat generation, mobility, power supply and industry cannot be secured in any other way. It is therefore of essential importance for the provision of public services and the daily lives of our citizens," he added amid increasing pressure on European leaders to stop flows of oil and gas from Russia.

**Belgian** Energy Minister Tinne van der Straeten has [said](#) on 7 March that Belgium should keep an open mind when it comes to nuclear power. The country has two nuclear plants, one on the Dutch border in Doel, and another in the east, in Tihange, close to the country's border with Germany. She called for a reassessment of plans to close them that were announced last December.

Together, **French** President Emmanuel Macron and **German** Chancellor Olaf Scholz held a [video conference](#) call with **Chinese** President Xi Jinping on 8 March. During the call they discussed EU sanctions on Russia, with Xi Jinping telling both leaders that China supports their calls for a ceasefire.

**Dutch** Prime Minister Mark Rutte met with his **British** and **Canadian** counterparts, Boris Johnson and Justin Trudeau, on 7 March. The three leaders published a [joint statement](#) where they accused Russia of committing war crimes in Ukraine, adding that they would "continue to impose severe costs on Russia" and "to bring in further packages of defence support to Ukraine".

## International measures

### United Kingdom

On 7 March, the UK, Canada and the Netherlands [announced](#) that they will set up 'the International Ukraine Support Group' to mobilise partners and international allies for strong political, humanitarian, economic and defence support for Ukraine. The countries will also encourage other states to join the initiative.

On 7 March, Prime Minister Boris Johnson [spoke](#) with French President Emmanuel Macron and US President Joe Biden. The leaders condemned Russia's actions in Ukraine and agreed to maximise pressure on Russia by imposing more sanctions.

On 8 March, Business Secretary Kwasi Kwarteng [said](#) that the UK is not reliant on Russian oil but vulnerable to rising oil prices. He tweeted that the UK is considering gradually **phasing out the import of Russian oil** by the end of 2022.

### United States

On 6 March, US Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin [ordered](#) the deployment of US military assets in different parts of Europe to strengthen the defence of NATO allies in the face of Russian aggression in Ukraine. This includes 500 troops, an unknown number of KC-135 refuelling aircrafts to Greece, air support operation centres in Poland and Romania, and an ordinance company and a maintenance company to Germany. Pentagon spokesman John Kirby said that these forces were purely defensive and that the US will not send its troops to Ukraine.

On 7 March, during his visit to Latvia the US Secretary of State Blinken [underlined](#) that thousands of civilians in Ukraine have lost their lives in relentless Russian attacks. Over 1.5 million have migrated to neighbouring countries and many more are internally displaced. Blinken and the Latvian foreign minister agreed to cooperate on identifying the assets of powerful Russian citizens for further sanctions. Blinken said the US and Latvia will continue their bilateral and NATO cooperation to bolster shared defence and to address any threat.

On 8 March President Biden [banned \(press briefing\)](#) all oil and gas imports from Russia saying that Russian oil and energy products will no longer be accepted on US soil. Biden said that this step is taken after consultations with Congress and international partners and encouraged European countries to follow suit by gradually reducing their dependency on Russian oil and gas. Biden further stressed that he is in close contact with European allies to provide economic and humanitarian aid to Ukraine.

### Australia

On 7 March, Australian Prime Minister Scott Morrison [said](#) President Putin had overestimated his military capacity in invading Ukraine, where it is faced with severe resistance. Morrison further noted that countries participating in sanctioning Russia should not stand down.

On 8 March, Australia [imposed](#) further restrictions on Russia that include a financial ban on its military for spreading the false narrative of "de-nazification" of Ukraine. Australia also imposed financial sanctions and a travel ban on 10 people for their role in the war and targeted 11 financial and economic institutions, including the Central Bank of Russia. Australia said it will continue to work with its partners to paralyse Russia's ability to continue its war in Ukraine by imposing severe sanctions.

### Japan

On 7 and 8 March, Japan imposed further sanctions on Russia and Belarus that include freezing assets held by their government officials and other entities. Japan will also ban the export of oil refining equipment to Russia and dual-use products (for civil and military use) to Belarus. Japan further added 32 Russian and Belarusian government officials and businesspersons, along with 12 entities including military-related companies. In addition, Japan has designated the Belarusian Defense Ministry and a Minsk-based military semiconductor maker as subject to sanctions, banning the receipt of payments from them by Japanese exporters as of March 15.

Secretary Hirokazu Matsuno held a press conference saying that Japan will continue collaborating with its partners and the international community to pressure Russia and maximise assistance to Ukraine ([here](#) and [here](#)).

## Switzerland

On 7 March, Switzerland said it has [set up](#) rapid response hubs in Poland and Moldova to help the people of Ukraine. These hubs will transport urgently needed medical supplies and winter-proof emergency shelters to Ukraine as soon as possible. The groups will supply hygiene products and small daily use items.

Switzerland also provides financial support to the people of Ukraine through the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), World Health Organisation (WHO) and the UN High Commissioner for Refugees.

## China

On 8 March, Chinese President Xi [spoke](#) virtually with Chancellor Olaf Scholz and Emmanuel Macron. Xi discussed the ongoing situation of Ukraine with his counterparts and emphasized the need for a diplomatic solution of the conflict. The leaders also agreed to maintain close contact on the fluid situation in Ukraine.

## Upcoming meetings

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

- Plenary session:
  - MEPs will debate with Prime Minister of Estonia, Kaja Kallas, about the EU's role in a changing world and the security situation of Europe following the Russian aggression and invasion of Ukraine.
  - Kick-off (+/- 10:30 local time, Strasbourg)
  - End of meeting (TBC, Strasbourg)
  - The Plenary will be livestreamed [here](#)
- [European Commission's](#) proposal for a Joint European Action for more affordable, secure and sustainable energy

### 10-11 March – [European Council](#) (announcement can be found [here](#))

- Informal meeting of EU heads of state or government.
  - Kick-off (TBC, Versailles, France)
  - End of meeting (TBC)

### 16 March – [NATO](#) (announcement can be found [here](#))

- Defense Ministerial meeting with the Ministers of Defense from every NATO member state.
  - Kick-off (TBC, Brussels)
  - End of meeting (TBC)