

The European response to the Ukrainian War

25 April 2022

I/ Introduction

After two months of war instigated by Russia invading Ukraine, over 5 million Ukrainians have left the country as refugees in search of protection and support, according to UN figures. Neighbouring countries have experienced an influx in Ukrainian refugees: particularly Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, and Moldova. An estimated 90% of them are women and children.

Thus far, the refugee crisis has spurred waves of solidarity and mobilisation throughout Europe, with the EU and its Member States providing emergency relief to the displaced, as well as support to the countries bordering Ukraine.

In this article, we would like to provide you with an overview of the **actions** taken at different levels **by the European Union**, in light of the current situation.

First of all, it is important to distinguish between actions taken **in support of the Ukrainian population and Ukraine**, and **retaliatory measures against Russia**, the country responsible for the conflict, and the latter's allies.

II/ EU Actions in favour of Ukraine

Humanitarian Aid

The President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, announced an emergency package of nearly **€550 million** from the EU budget to deal with the humanitarian consequences of the crisis.

As part of this, €93 million are being made available for humanitarian aid programmes to help civilians affected by the war in Ukraine, providing them with food, water, shelter, and healthcare; €85 million have been earmarked for Ukraine and €8 million for Moldova, respectively.

Incidentally, €330 million of the total will go to an emergency support programme that will help to secure access to basic goods and services, as well as the protection of the population, both internally displaced people and their host communities. Another important goal will be to reconstruct civilian small-scale infrastructure, ensure energy security, and strengthen cyber security, media freedom, and actions against disinformation.

EU Civil Protection Mechanism

Via the EU Civil Protection Mechanism, the EU is channelling aid to Ukraine with assistance from 29 countries – the 27 EU Member States, Norway, and Turkey. This includes items such as first aid kits, tents, and protective clothing. The Commission is also coordinating civil protection assistance for Poland, Slovakia, and Czechia to help Ukrainian refugees.

Emergency logistical hubs and rescEU aid

As needs have grown exponentially, further assistance has been provided to Ukraine via the rescEU medical stockpiles based in Germany, Hungary, and the Netherlands. With a total financial value of over **€10 million**, the rescEU support includes ventilators, infusion pumps, patient monitors, masks, gowns, ultrasound devices and oxygen concentrators.

Furthermore, the Commission has established civil protection logistical hubs in Poland, Romania, and Slovakia, to distribute required aid to Ukraine as quickly as possible. These hubs will help channel the assistance being delivered via the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism.

Temporary protection mechanism

As of 4 March 2022, the EU agreed to activate the Temporary Protection Directive according to which any person fleeing the conflict must be granted access to the EU. Under this Directive, those eligible will be granted temporary protection in the EU, meaning that they will be able to stay in the EU for at least one year and will be given a residence permit, and access to education and the labour market.

Macro-financial assistance and budget support

The EU has stepped up its support for Ukraine's overall economic and financial resilience, keeping the Ukrainian government functional and capable of covering basic expenses. Out of the EU's emergency macro-financial assistance of €1.2 billion, €600 million were already paid out to the Ukrainian budget in March. The EU is providing additional grant support of €120 million to help state and resilience-building. As part of the third sanctions package approved by the EU Council on 28 February 2022, a €500 million support package to finance equipment and supplies to the Ukrainian armed forces has also been made available.

In addition, on 4 April 2022, the EU Council [adopted](#) the regulation on Cohesion's Action for Refugees in Europe (CARE), making it possible for Member States to redirect resources from cohesion policy funds and the Fund for European Aid for the Most Deprived (FEAD) to assist the refugees escaping the Russian military aggression against Ukraine.

EU Accession Process

On 28 February 2022, Ukraine applied for membership of the EU. Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy requested immediate admission under a "new special procedure," and the presidents of eight central and eastern EU states [called](#) for an accelerated

accession process. Commission president Ursula von der Leyen stated that she supports Ukrainian accession, but that the process would take time. On 1 March 2022, the European Parliament [recommended](#) that Ukraine be made an official membership candidate. On 8 April 2022, von der Leyen presented Zelenskyy with a legislative questionnaire, which Ukraine responded to on 17 April.

In the meantime, Georgia and Moldova have also submitted formal applications. The decision over further enlargement is a difficult one, involving strategic considerations and complex interlinkages between different Member States with a varied set of interests. However, this confirms the perception of the European Union as a safe harbour where the ideals of democracy and peace are guaranteed.

III/ EU Actions against Russia

In response to Russia's unprecedented military attack on Ukraine, the European Union has decided to intervene through the adoption of five packages of sanctions on the Russian economy and individuals close to the Russian Government.

The **first package** of sanctions was adopted on **23 February 2022** to respond to the decision by the Russian Federation to recognise the regions of Donetsk and Luhansk in Ukraine as independent entities, and the ensuing decision to send Russian troops into those areas.

The agreed package includes:

- **targeted sanctions** against the members of the Duma and an additional 27 individuals,
- restrictions on **economic relations** with the Donetsk and Luhansk oblasts,
- restrictions on Russia's **access to the EU's capital and financial markets** and services.

On **25 February 2022**, the **second round** of sanctions was announced. The EU has decided to freeze the assets of **Vladimir Putin**, President of the Russian Federation, and **Sergey Lavrov**, Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation. In addition, it has imposed restrictive measures on the members of the **National Security Council** of the Russian Federation and on the remaining members of the **Russian State Duma** who supported Russia's immediate recognition of the self-proclaimed Donetsk and Luhansk 'republics.'

The Council has also agreed on a **further package of individual and economic measures**. These sanctions cover the finance, energy, transport and technology sectors, as well as visa policy.

On **28 February 2022**, the **third package** of sanctions was published. The new measures include:

- a ban on transactions with the **Russian Central Bank**,
- a ban on **overflight over EU airspace** and on access to EU airports by Russian carriers,
- **new sanctions** on an additional 26 persons and one entity.

The agreed package includes a series of measures intended to reinforce pressure on the Russian government and economy, and to limit the Kremlin's resources for the aggression.

As part of the same package, on **2 March 2022**, the EU excluded seven Russian banks from SWIFT. This will ensure that these banks are disconnected from the international financial system and **harm their ability to operate globally**.

The EU has also introduced a ban on:

- investing, participating or otherwise contributing to future projects co-financed by the Russian Direct Investment Fund,
- selling, supplying, transferring or exporting euro banknotes to Russia or to any natural or legal person or entity in Russia.

On the same day, the EU approved the **suspension of the broadcasting activities** of the outlets Sputnik and Russia Today **in the EU** until the aggression against Ukraine is brought to an end and until the Russian Federation and its associated media cease conducting **disinformation and information manipulation** campaigns against the EU and its Member States.

Sputnik and Russia Today are under the permanent direct and/or indirect control of the Russian authorities and are key to promoting and supporting the military aggression against Ukraine and to destabilising its neighbouring countries.

On **15 March 2022**, the **fourth package** of sanctions was released. The new measures include a ban on:

- all **transactions** with certain state-owned enterprises,
- the provision of **credit rating** services to any Russian person or entity,
- new **investments** in the Russian energy sector.

The EU also introduced:

- **trade** restrictions for iron, steel and luxury goods,
- sanctions on an additional 15 **individuals** and 9 **entities**.

On **8 April 2022** the Council adopted its **fifth package** of sanctions against Russia, entailing a ban on:

- imports from Russia of **coal** and other solid fossil fuels,
- all Russian vessels from accessing **EU ports**,
- Russian and Belarusian **road transport** operators from entering the EU,
- **imports** of other goods such as wood, cement, seafood and liquor,
- **exports** to Russia of jet fuel and other goods,
- deposits to **crypto-wallets**.

In parallel, the EU sanctions regime concerning Belarus has been expanded in response to the country's involvement in Russia's aggression against Ukraine. This sanctions regime consists of an array of financial, economic, and trade measures.

IV/ Conclusions

The European Union's response to Russia's unprecedented attack on the democratic and sovereign state of Ukraine is wide in its scope and effects. The European Union values democracy, respect for human rights, and peace, and the actions taken thus far in support of Ukraine and to the detriment of Russia reflect the pursuit of such values.

During his meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv on 20 April 2022, the European Council President, Charles Michel, [expressed](#) Europeans' continued support for the promotion of peace in Ukraine and stated that the European Union is determined to do everything necessary to support the country under attack.

We can therefore foresee further cooperation across the Member States and non-EU countries to mobilise funds to provide the Ukrainian military with adequate resources for defence and humanitarian purposes.

Additionally, we expect the EU Council to build on its existing sanctions packages on Russia and Belarus to effectively thwart Russia's ability to continue the aggression.

In relation to Ukraine's request of joining the EU, this will most probably not be immediate, as many western Member States have expressed concerns over Ukraine's fulfilment of the criteria for accession.

Indeed, it is known that the process for EU membership is complex, and involves several steps, conditions, as well as deeply-rooted reforms for the candidate country. However, we anticipate that Russia's neo-imperialistic approach will increase Eastern European countries' sense of urgency to become EU members, in the hopes of guaranteeing their independence, security and sovereignty as nation-states.

Resources

[Refugees fleeing Ukraine \(since 24 February 2022\), UNCHR](#)

[The EU response to the Ukraine refugee crisis, European Parliament](#)

[EU restrictive measures against Russia over Ukraine \(since 2014\), European Council](#)

[Remarks by President Charles Michel at the press conference following his meeting with President Volodymyr Zelenskyy in Kyiv, European Council](#)

[Support of Ukraine's swift candidacy to the EU, The official website of the President of the Republic of Poland](#)

[Russian aggression against Ukraine, European Parliament](#)