

# Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: European Union Responses and Implications for U.S.-EU Relations

Updated March 28, 2022

The 27-member European Union (EU) has responded with unprecedented unity and speed to Russia's February 2022 invasion of Ukraine. [EU policy responses](#) and [coordination with the United States](#) are of interest to Congress given the EU's role as a U.S. partner in addressing Russia's aggression.

## Key EU Responses

### Sanctions

The EU has imposed [several rounds](#) 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 include](#)

- Freezing the assets of 62 entities and imposing asset freezes and travel bans on 877 Russian officials, legislators, and other elites (Russian President Vladimir Putin and Foreign Minister Sergei Lavrov are subject only to asset freezes);
- Expanding existing sanctions on Russia's financial sector and key banks, including restricting transactions with Russia's Central Bank and blocking access to its reserve holdings and [cutting seven Russian banks off from SWIFT](#) (the world's dominant international financial messaging system, headquartered in Belgium);
- Expanding existing or imposing new sanctions on Russia's energy, aviation, transportation, and technology sectors;
- Broadening the scope of export controls on dual-use goods to limit Russia's access to crucial technologies, such as semiconductors;
- Banning exports of luxury goods to Russia and certain metals imports from Russia;
- Closing EU airspace to all Russian-owned aircraft; and
- Expanding sanctions on Belarus for supporting Russia's invasion of Ukraine.

Congressional Research Service

<https://crsreports.congress.gov>

IN11897

The EU's [increasingly punitive sanctions](#) are [notable](#) given the bloc's [trade and investment ties](#) to Russia, its [reliance on Russian energy imports](#), and the potential negative economic effects of Russian retaliatory sanctions or Russian threats to cut off energy supplies. Some member states are [critical](#) that the EU has not disconnected Sberbank (Russia's largest bank) or Gazprombank (linked to Russia's energy sector) from SWIFT or [banned](#) energy imports from Russia. (See CRS Insight IN11869, *Russia's Invasion of Ukraine: Overview of U.S. and International Sanctions and Other Responses*; and CRS In Focus IF12062, *New Financial and Trade Sanctions Against Russia*.)

## Military Assistance

The EU has [announced](#) a total of \$1 billion (about \$1.1 billion) in [financing for military assistance](#) to Ukraine through the [European Peace Facility \(EPF\)](#). For the first time, this financing includes funding for lethal equipment, worth €900 million (\$987 million); the remaining €100 million (\$110 million) is for nonlethal supplies. Member states are responsible for delivering equipment and may be reimbursed from the EPF for assistance provided since the start of 2022.

## Helping Refugees and Providing Aid

[Over 3.8 million people](#) have fled Ukraine, with about 60% of refugees arriving in Poland. The EU has adopted a [temporary protection mechanism](#) to provide Ukrainian nationals and other legal residents of Ukraine with immediate residency rights and access to benefits throughout the EU (for one year with extension possible up to three years). [EU assistance to date](#) includes €500 million (around \$548 million) in humanitarian aid for Ukraine and neighboring countries from the EU's budget and €107 million (\$117 million) for emergency supplies through the EU's Civil Protection Mechanism. (See CRS Insight IN11882, *Humanitarian and Refugee Crisis in Ukraine*.)

## Tackling Disinformation

The EU has condemned Russia's disinformation campaign against Ukraine and [suspended broadcasting of Russian state-owned media outlets Russia Today \(RT\) and Sputnik](#) across all platform types (cable, satellite, websites, apps, etc.). The EU also is [addressing disinformation targeting Ukraine](#) through its [EUvsDisinfo](#) project.

## U.S.-EU Cooperation

Russia's war against Ukraine has [strengthened](#) U.S.-EU ties and transatlantic unity. The United States and the EU have moved largely in lockstep in terms of the types and timing of sanctions imposed. Many EU sanctions are identical or substantively similar to U.S. sanctions, including [restrictions on Russia's Central Bank](#) and prohibiting [access to airspace](#). With other partners, the EU and the United States established a [transatlantic task force](#) to ensure effective implementation of sanctions against designated individuals and companies and announced plans to [suspend Russia's preferential trade treatment](#) under World Trade Organization rules.

One [divergence](#) between U.S. and EU sanctions centers on Russian energy imports. The [United States](#) has banned imports of Russian crude oil and certain petroleum products, liquefied natural gas (LNG), and coal. The EU, however, is far [more dependent](#) on Russian energy [than the United States](#). Although [some EU countries](#) reportedly [support](#) banning Russian energy imports, others—including [Germany](#)—remain opposed. The EU has [pledged to decrease its energy dependence on Russia](#), starting with reducing demand for Russian gas by two-thirds by the end of 2022.

While in Brussels on March 24-25, [President Biden](#) committed to [helping the EU reduce its dependency on Russian gas](#) by working with “international partners” to boost LNG shipments to the EU this year and

outlined plans to enable additional annual U.S. LNG shipments through 2030. A [new U.S.-EU task force on energy security](#) is to implement these and other goals. President Biden also announced plans for the United States to [welcome up to 100,000 Ukrainian refugees](#) and noted close U.S.-EU coordination on humanitarian assistance efforts.

## U.S. and Congressional Interests

Russia's invasion of Ukraine has [galvanized debate](#) on [several EU initiatives](#) that could be central to how the EU as an institution and U.S.-EU relations evolve. Among the most prominent of interest to Congress are

- **Security and Defense.** Russia's actions could [prompt](#) greater EU efforts to improve military capabilities and become a more independent global actor (often referred to as [strategic autonomy](#)). Such ambitions could create some U.S.-EU tensions. At the same time, Russia's aggression has [reinforced](#) NATO's importance and could strengthen the NATO-EU partnership (as suggested in the EU's new [Strategic Compass](#) document).
- **Energy and Climate Policies.** Russia's war in Ukraine could accelerate EU energy diversification efforts (long called for by some in Congress), [bolster](#) the [European Green Deal](#) to address climate change, and encourage U.S.-EU cooperation on clean energy technologies and renewables.
- **EU Enlargement.** Traditionally, strong bipartisan support has existed in Congress for [EU enlargement](#). Russia's invasion may be [boosting](#) Ukraine's EU membership prospects, with the EU agreeing to [assess](#) Ukraine's recent membership application. Joining the EU, however, typically takes many years, and some EU members [remain wary](#) about Ukraine's readiness and further antagonizing Russia.

## 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.