

**November 2023**

*Restrictive measures, or sanctions, are one of the EU's tools to promote the objectives of its common foreign and security policy (CFSP). EU sanctions seek to bring about a change in the policies or activities of particular governments of non-EU countries, non-state entities and individuals. There are currently **49 sanctions programmes** in place, targeting 33 jurisdictions. These comprise three types of sanctions: (a) sanctions imposed by the UN Security Council and transposed into the EU law, (b) complementary measures imposed by the EU in addition to those decided by the UN, and (c) fully autonomous EU sanctions regimes. The majority of those sanctions are geographic in scope, targeting a specific country or persons in that country. The EU has also adopted four thematic (horizontal) sanction regimes, allowing it to designate individuals or entities involved in terrorist activities, **human rights violations or abuses**, **cyberattacks** threatening the EU or its Member States, or the use and proliferation of chemical weapons. **Moves** are also under way to set up a new dedicated global sanctions regime for corruption.*

*EU sanctions can include prohibitions on the export of arms and related equipment, restrictions on admission, economic measures such as restrictions on imports and exports, and freezing of funds and economic resources owned by targeted individuals or entities. These restrictive measures are preventive and non-punitive instruments, used as a part of an integrated and comprehensive policy approach, involving political dialogue, complementary efforts and the use of other instruments. EU sanctions do not have extra-territorial application and, as the EU underlines, are fully in line with international law, including international humanitarian law. They are designed to have **minimal impact** on the civilian population, and contain **exceptions** (exemptions and derogations) to the prohibitions. However, there have been **accounts** of the unintended 'side-effects' of the sanctions in numerous jurisdictions.*

*The **eleven packages** of comprehensive wide-ranging sanctions that the EU has so far imposed in response to Russia's aggression against Ukraine have once again brought this CFSP **tool** into the spotlight. They have also triggered a number of legislative initiatives aimed at ensuring their proper application and enforcement, are essential to maximise the impacts of the measures.*

## Legislative trains

**Adding corruption to the crimes covered by the EU human rights sanctions mechanism**

**Amendment to the Blocking Statute Regulation**

**Proposal for a directive on the definition of criminal offences and penalties for the violation of Union restrictive measures**

**Revision of the Directive on the freezing and confiscation of the proceeds of crime**

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## Thematic/horizontal sanctions regimes and measures

### Addressing ship reflagging to avoid sanctions

'At a glance' note by Frederik Scholaert and Karin Smit Jacobs, EPRS, March 2023

Reflagging to a flag of convenience is legal in principle, but is often combined with illegal practices, including the circumvention of sanctions. The International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the EU are trying to tackle abusive reflagging.

### Peace and Security in 2023: Overview of EU action and outlook for the future

Study by Elena Lazarou and Eric Pichon, EPRS, July 2023

The EPRS Peace and Security Outlook seeks to analyse and explain the EU's contribution to the promotion and restoration of peace and security internationally, through its various external policies. Its section on sanctions provides a brief overview of the EU restrictive measures and presents the EU sanctions against Russia.

### Towards an EU global sanctions regime for corruption

Briefing by Ionel Zamfir, EPRS, February 2023

The approach to impose sanctions to target corruption globally could involve creating a horizontal sanctions framework (by expanding the scope of the existing human rights sanctions mechanism or by setting up a new dedicated regime), or introducing case-by-case country-specific sanctions regimes.

### Global human rights sanctions – Mapping Magnitsky laws: The US, Canadian, UK and EU approach

Briefing by Russell Martin, EPRS, November 2021

This briefing compares four new generation of human rights sanctions programmes: the US Global Magnitsky Act, Canada's Sergei Magnitsky Law, the UK's Global Human Rights and Anti-Corruption Regulations, and the EU's restrictive measures against serious human rights violations and abuses.

### EU cyber sanctions: Moving beyond words

'At a glance' note by Tania Lațici, EPRS, September 2020

Offensive cyber-attacks by malicious actors require concrete dissuasive measures. In July 2020, the EU Member States decided for the first time to use the 'teeth' rooted in the EU cyber-diplomacy framework and to bite back with sanctions. This precedent has helped reinforce the EU's cyber policy action.

### Updating the Blocking Regulation: The EU's answer to US extraterritorial sanctions

Briefing by Beatrix Immenkamp, EPRS, June 2018

The Blocking Regulation forbids EU persons from complying with extraterritorial sanctions, allows companies to recover damages arising from such sanctions, and nullifies the effect in the EU of any foreign court judgment based on them.

### Counter-terrorist sanctions regimes: Legal framework and challenges at UN and EU levels

Briefing by Carmen-Cristina Cîrlig, EPRS, October 2016

The EU implements all UN Security Council-imposed sanctions and has also instituted its own autonomous counter-terrorist restrictive measures regime. However, both the UN and EU sanctions regimes have been criticised for infringing key fundamental rights. Legal challenges before national courts prompted a series of procedural reforms, but critics still consider the regimes to fall short of accepted standards.

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# Sanctions with a geographic scope

## Sanctions imposed in the context of Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine

### EU sanctions on Russia: Update, economic impact and outlook

Briefing by Anna Caprile and Angelos Delivorias, EPRS, September 2023

The real impact of sanctions on Russia's economy has been widely researched. Despite the challenges, analysts consider that sanctions have already met three important objectives: they have sent the Kremlin a strong signal of Western resolve and unity, they have permanently degraded Russia's military capabilities, and they are asphyxiating its economy and energy sector, with long-term consequences. This briefing updates and complements a previous [briefing](#) published in March 2023.

### Russia's war on Ukraine: US sanctions

Briefing by Marcin Szczepański, EPRS, February 2023

The US has been imposing sanctions on Russia since its illegal annexation of Crimea in 2014. Since February 2022, these sanctions have become increasingly far-reaching. While often identical or similar, the US and the EU sanctions regimes differ in terms of the activities covered and persons and entities targeted.

### Sanctions on the Russian digital sector: How effective are they?

'At a glance' note by Michael Adam with Sanne Keijer, EPRS, February 2023

The heavy sanctions imposed by the West on Russia over its war against Ukraine have had a considerable impact on the Russian digital sector. Russia has made efforts to circumvent the sanctions; counteracting these efforts requires consistent implementation and enforcement.

### Russia's war on Ukraine: Sanctions targeting Belarus

'At a glance' note by Jakub Przetacznik with Simona Tarpova, EPRS, May 2022

Belarus's involvement in Russia's invasion of Ukraine has triggered EU sanctions targeting over 700 individuals and 50 entities, as well as critical economic sectors and products in this country.

### Russia's war on Ukraine: Cutting certain Russian banks off from SWIFT

'At a glance' note by Carla Stamegna and Lasse Boehm, EPRS, March 2022

As a system for standardised payment instructions and messaging services, SWIFT has become the basis for most global financial transactions. On 2 March 2022, the Council decided to cut seven Russian banks from the SWIFT network, as part of a wider sanctions package, including sanctions against Russia's central bank.

## Other sanctions

### Impact of sanctions on the humanitarian situation in Syria

Briefing by Gabija Leclerc, EPRS, June 2023

Since 2011, the EU has been imposing sanctions on members and supporters of Bashar al-Assad's regime and sectors of the economy benefiting the regime. The sanctions are designed to have minimal impact on the civilian population, and contain exceptions (exemptions and derogations) to the prohibitions, to avoid impeding the delivery of humanitarian assistance to and inside the country. Nevertheless, humanitarian operators report that unintended 'side-effects' of the sanctions have complicated their activities.

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## EU relations with Iran

Briefing by Beatrix Immenkamp with Julie Claustre, EPRS, January 2023

In the context of worrying developments in Iran, the EU has imposed restrictive measures on an increasing number of high-ranking Iranian individuals and entities under four EU sanctions regimes. Sanctions include an asset freeze and a prohibition on making funds and economic resources available to the listed individuals and entities; individuals are also banned from travelling to the EU.

## New sanctions against North Korea: The challenges of implementation and China

Briefing by Gisela Grieger, EPRS, July 2016

In January 2016, North Korea conducted its fourth nuclear test, exposing the inability of UN sanctions to prevent the reclusive regime from gradually enhancing its ballistic missile capabilities and miniaturising a nuclear warhead. Despite China's past principled reluctance to agree to UN economic sanctions against its military ally, and its selective implementation of the previous sanctions scheme, which has been widely perceived as the major cause of its ineffectiveness, in March 2016 China endorsed UN Security Council resolution 2270(2016). The latter expands significantly the scope of previous sanctions against North Korea.

## Policy podcasts and videos

### EU sanctions on Russia explained

In focus video by Anna Caprile, EPRS, June 2023

### Global human rights sanctions – Mapping Magnitsky laws

Policy podcast by Martin Russell, EPRS, December 2021

Adopted by the US in 2016, the Global Magnitsky Act was the first of a new generation of human rights sanctions programmes, which, in contrast to traditional sanctions targeted at individual countries, can be flexibly applied to perpetrators from all over the world, regardless of their geographical location. The podcast focuses on the rise of global human rights sanctions and compares how the US, Canada, the UK and the EU deal with human rights violations and abuses worldwide.

### EU human rights sanctions: Towards a European Magnitsky Act

Policy podcast by Martin Russell, EPRS, January 2021

The EU adopts restrictive measures – mostly in the form of travel bans and asset freezes – against individuals and organisations responsible for some of the worst human rights violations. Until now, the EU has mostly adopted sanctions targeted at individual countries. However, the EU is now shifting to a more thematic approach, under which sanctions focus on a particular type of problem rather than on a country.

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