

EU closes its airspace to all Russian air companies

Bans access to Russia Today and Sputnik

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USPA NEWS - The European Union closes all its airspace to all Russian air companies, as announced this Sunday by the President of the European Commission. Ursula von der Leyen also announced that the EU will ban de access to Russia Today and Sputnik news agency, the both media financed by the Russian State. This measures are in addition to the sanctions approved on Saturday, aimed at choking the Russian economy.

"As the war in Ukraine rages on, and Ukrainians fight bravely for their country, the European Union steps up once more its support for Ukraine and the sanctions against the aggressor – Putin's Russia. For the first time ever, the European Union will finance the purchase and delivery of weapons and other equipment to a country that is under attack. This is a watershed moment," said the President of the European Commission in a statement.

At the same time, explained Ursula von der Leyen, "we are strengthening once more our sanctions against the Kremlin and its collaborator, Lukashenko's regime. First, we are shutting down the EU airspace for Russians. We are proposing a prohibition on all Russian-owned, Russian registered or Russian-controlled aircraft. These aircraft will no more be able to land in, take off or overfly the territory of the EU. This will apply to any plane owned, chartered or otherwise controlled by a Russian legal or natural person. So let me be very clear. Our airspace will be closed to every Russian plane – and that includes the private jets of oligarchs."

As second step, added Von der Leyen, "in another unprecedented step, we will ban in the EU the Kremlin's media machine. The state-owned Russia Today and Sputnik, as well as their subsidiaries will no longer be able to spread their lies to justify Putin's war and to saw division in our Union. So we are developing tools to ban their toxic and harmful disinformation in Europe."

"Third, we will target the other aggressor in this war - Lukashenko's regime. Lukashenko's regime is complicit in this vicious attack against Ukraine. So we will hit Lukashenko's regime with a new package of sanctions," announced the President of the European Commission. "We will introduce restrictive measures against their most important sectors. This will stop their exports of products from mineral fuels to tobacco, wood and timber, cement, iron and steel. We will also extend to Belarus the export restrictions we introduced on dual-use goods for Russia. This will also avoid any risks of circumvention of our measures against Russia. In addition, we will sanction those Belarusians helping the Russian war effort."

All these measures "come on top of the strong package that I presented to you yesterday, agreed by our international partners." Under this package, important Russian banks will be excluded from the SWIFT system. "We will also ban the transactions of Russia's central bank and freeze all its assets, to prevent it from financing Putin's war. And we will target the assets of Russian oligarchs. We continue to coordinate closely with partners around the globe. And we remain in close contacts with our Ukrainian friends," said Ursula von der Leyen.

And concluded: "President Zelensky's leadership and his bravery and the resilience of the Ukrainian people are outstanding and impressive. They are an inspiration to us all. We welcome with open arms those Ukrainians who have to flee from Putin's bombs and I am proud of the warm welcome that Europeans have given them. We are mobilising every effort and every euro to support our Eastern Member States – to host and take care of these refugees. We will do this in full solidarity."

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