



Brussels, March 2016

FACT SHEET

The EU non-recognition policy for Crimea and Sevastopol

Background – why does the EU have a non-recognition policy?

On 18 March 2014 the Autonomous Republic of Crimea and the City of Sevastopol were illegally annexed by the Russian Federation.

The European Union does not recognise and continues to strongly condemn this violation of international law, which remains a challenge to the international security order. This position is based on the UN Charter, which clearly states that the territory of a State cannot be acquired by another State resulting from the threat or use of force, as well as on the Helsinki Final Act in which the signatories declared their intention to respect the inviolability of frontiers and territorial integrity.

On 27 March 2014, the General Assembly of the United Nations affirmed its commitment to Ukraine's sovereignty, political independence, unity and territorial integrity within its internationally recognised borders, underscoring the invalidity of the 16 March "referendum" held in Crimea.

By a recorded vote of 100 in favour to 11 against, with 58 abstentions, the Assembly adopted a resolution titled "Territorial integrity of Ukraine", calling on States, international organisations and specialised agencies not to recognise any change in the status of Crimea or the Black Sea port city of Sevastopol, and to refrain from actions or dealings that might be interpreted as such.

The EU policy of non-recognition consists of a broad range of measures. The goal is to demonstrate that the EU does not accept the illegal annexation, using tangible measures in addition to regular political and diplomatic action.

The commitment not to recognise the annexation was first made at the European Council in March 2014. Since then, it has been reaffirmed by the Council on multiple occasions:

FOR FURTHER DETAILS:

Maja Kocijancic +32 498 984 425 - +32 2 298 65 70 - Maja.Kocijancic@ec.europa.eu @MajaEUspox

Adam Kaznowski +32 2 29 89359- +32 460 768 088 - Adam.Kaznowski@ec.europa.eu

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[European Council Conclusions \(20 / 21 March 2014\)](#)

[European Council Conclusions \(19 / 20 March 2015\)](#)

Asset freezes and visa bans

Asset freezes and visa bans apply to 146 persons while 37 entities are subject to a freeze of their assets in the EU. This includes persons and entities responsible for action against Ukraine's territorial integrity, persons providing support to or benefitting Russian decision-makers and 13 entities in Crimea and Sevastopol that were confiscated or that have benefitted from a transfer of ownership contrary to Ukrainian law. The ban also includes a prohibition of any payments made to these persons and entities.

Restrictions for Crimea and Sevastopol

As part of the EU's non-recognition policy of the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol, the EU has imposed substantial restrictions on economic exchanges with the territory. These include:

- A ban on imports of goods originating in Crimea or Sevastopol unless they have Ukrainian certificates;
- A prohibition to invest in Crimea. Europeans and EU-based companies can no longer buy real estate or entities in Crimea, finance Crimean companies or supply related services. In addition, they may not invest in infrastructure projects in the following sectors: transport; telecommunications; energy and the prospection, exploration and production of oil, gas and mineral resources;
- A ban on providing tourism services in Crimea or Sevastopol. European cruise ships may not call at the following ports in the Crimean peninsula, except in case of emergency: Sevastopol, Kerch, Yalta, Theodosia, Evpatoria, Chernomorsk and Kamysh-Burun. This applies to all ships owned or controlled by a European or flying the flag of an EU Member State;
- In addition, European operators are - irrespective of the type of ship - banned from making any payments to the Port Authority of Kerch and the Port Authority of Sevastopol. This provision is part of the EU's restrictive measures in respect of actions undermining or threatening the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine;
- Goods and technology for the transport, telecommunications and energy sectors or the exploration of oil, gas and mineral resources may not be exported to Crimean companies or for use in Crimea;
- Technical assistance, brokering, construction or engineering services related to infrastructure in the same sectors must not be provided.

To facilitate compliance with these restrictive measures and other elements of the non-recognition policy, the EU has compiled an Information Note to EU business operating and/or investing in Crimea/Sevastopol.

[Information Note to EU business operating and / or investing in Crimea / Sevastopol](#)

[EUR-Lex – Access to European Union Law – Council Decision 2014 / 386 / CFSP of 23 June 2014 concerning restrictive measures in response to the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol](#)

Guidelines for Schengen visa applications

The consulates and embassies of EU Member States in Ukraine and in the Russian Federation are implementing guidelines on lodging Schengen visa applications by the residents of Crimea and Sevastopol. According to the guidelines, which were issued in May 2014, residents of Crimea and Sevastopol who wish to travel to the Schengen area should in principle obtain their visas at Schengen consulates located in Ukraine.

EU programmes and projects

Crimean public entities are excluded from participation in EU programmes that Ukraine has joined, such as Creative Europe (the EU programme for support for the cultural and creative sectors) and Horizon 2020 (the biggest ever EU Research and Innovation programme). Crimean entities are not eligible to participate in Erasmus+ (the EU programme for education, training, youth and sport). These limitations pertain to entities, not to people. Crimean students, who undertake studies in the EU, are still eligible for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degree scholarships.

The Commission and Member States have in principle suspended all projects in Crimea, with the exception of a few small-scale projects and exchanges aimed at improving people-to-people contacts.

Agreements with Russia

The EU has officially notified Russia that it considers bilateral agreements between the EU and the Russian Federation to be applicable only to the internationally recognised territory of Russia, and thus not to Crimea and Sevastopol.

Political statements

The EU has reconfirmed the non-recognition policy publicly on several occasions:

- in declarations by the High Representative on behalf of the EU of 16 March 2015 and 18 March 2016 at the occasion of the anniversary of the illegal annexation of Crimea/Sevastopol;
- at the European Council of 19 March 2015;
- and at the EU-UA summit on 29 April 2015.

Moreover, whenever Russia refers to Crimea and Sevastopol as part of the Russian Federation in multilateral fora, such as the UN, the OSCE, the Council of Europe and WTO, the EU makes a statement in response to remind the world that it does not recognise the illegal annexation.