

EU Prepares New Sanctions

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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European Union High Representative Catherine Ashton speaks to the media after a quadrilateral meeting between representatives of the United States, Ukraine, Russia and the European Union, about the ongoing situation in Ukraine, in Geneva on April 17.

BRUSSELS — European Union ambassadors have agreed in principle to add about 15 people and several Crimean-based companies to the bloc's list of sanctions against Russia over its annexation of Ukraine's Crimea region, EU diplomats said Friday.

The EU has so far imposed asset freezes and visa bans on 48 Russians and Ukrainians over Moscow's annexation of Crimea but it will be the first time the 28-nation bloc has targeted companies.

The new list will include two Crimean firms active in the energy sector, one EU diplomat said. Other diplomats said four or five Crimean companies or organizations would be targeted.

The final decision on extra sanctions will only be taken by EU foreign ministers on Monday, taking account of developments over the weekend when pro-Russian separatists plan to hold

an independence referendum in eastern Ukraine, the diplomats said.

European Budget Commissioner Janusz Lewandowski told Polish broadcaster TVN 24 BiS on Friday that he expected the EU on Monday to strengthen sanctions against individuals and entities linked to Russia's intervention in Ukraine.

The companies set to be added to the list on Monday are Crimean branches of Ukrainian companies that have been taken over by Russians, one EU diplomat said.

EU diplomats reached a preliminary agreement this week to expand the legal criteria for imposing sanctions on Russia, with the goal of making it easier to freeze the assets of companies involved in the Ukraine crisis.

The new rules say the EU could target entities in Crimea "whose ownership has been transferred contrary to Ukrainian law, or legal persons, entities or bodies which have benefited from such a transfer," according to a text quoted by EU diplomats.

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