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EU Extends Sanctions Against Russia Over Ukraine

By The Moscow Times

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European Union flags flutter outside the EU Commission headquarters in Brussels.

The European Union has prolonged economic restrictions imposed on Russia over its role in the Ukraine crisis until Jan. 31 2017, the European Council said in a statement Friday.

In response to the move, Russian Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev signed a decree Friday on the extension of a ban on the import of a range of food products from Western countries — Russia's counter-measure against EU sanctions.

The ban will stay in place until Dec. 31 2017, according to a document published on the government's website.

The anti-Russian sanctions were initially imposed by the EU for a year on July 31, 2014 in response to Russia's annexation of the Crimean peninsula from Ukraine and Russian military presence in the east of the country.

The sanctions have already been extended several times. The restrictions against Russia include a visa ban and an asset freeze on a number of Russian individuals and entities as well as various economic restrictions.

The EU links the lifting of the sanctions against Russia with a full implementation of the Minsk agreements, aimed at a peace settlement in eastern Ukraine. The agreement provides for a complete cease-fire, withdrawal of heavy weapons and the return of border control to Ukraine.

Last month, the EU also extended sanctions against Crimea.

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