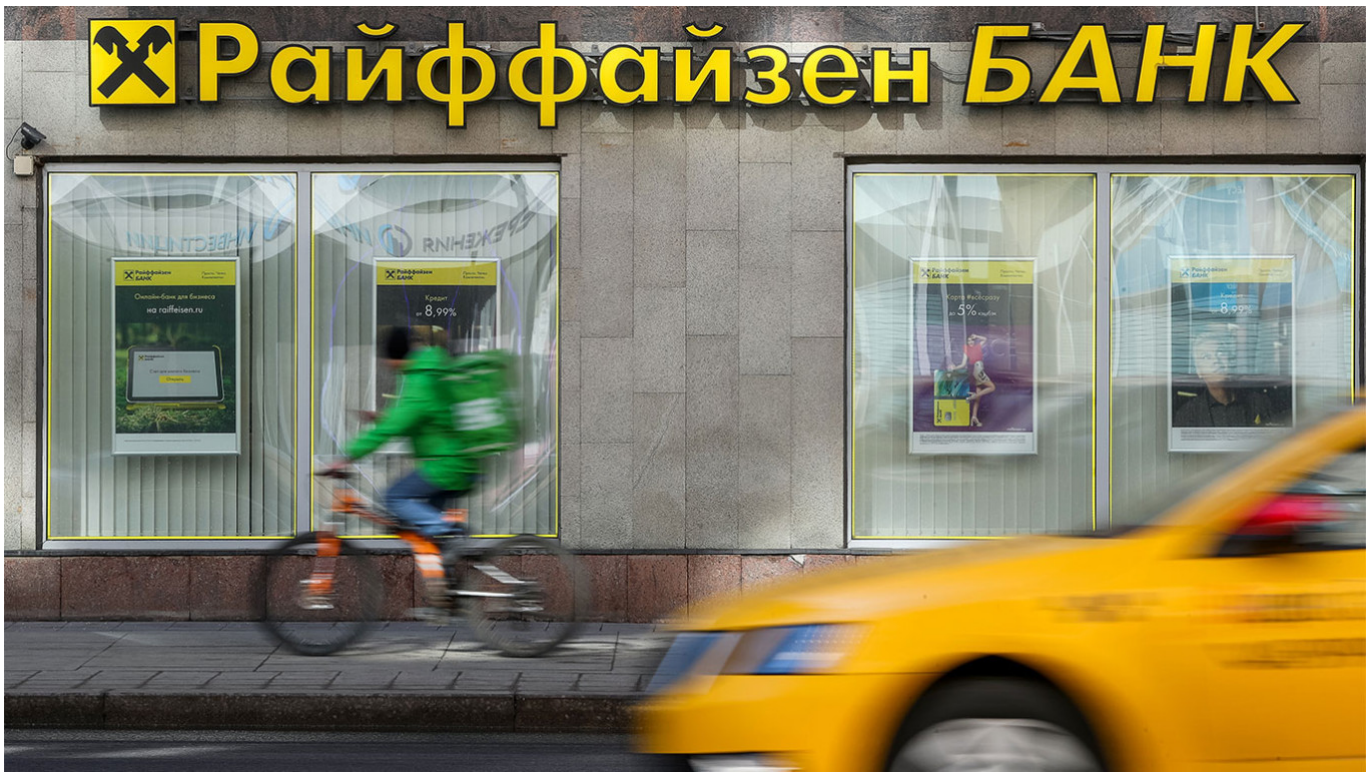
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European Central Bank Asks Raiffeisen to Scale Back Russian Operations

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Vladimir Gerdo / TASS

The European Central Bank (ECB) has called on Austria's Raiffeisen Bank to scale down its operations in Russia, Reuters reported Friday, citing sources familiar with the matter.

The news comes just a day after Ukraine's National Agency for the Prevention of Corruption (NAPC) added the Austrian banking group to its list of international sponsors of the war.

The Ukrainian government watchdog cited Raiffeisen's continued presence in Russia among the key reasons for the decision, while also accusing the bank of recognizing Moscow-backed separatist governments in the Donetsk and Luhansk regions.

"The National Bank of Ukraine notes the lack of progress in the decision-making regarding the bank's withdrawal from the Russian market," NAPC said in a statement issued Thursday.

"In addition, the bank is playing along with Russian propaganda, calling the war a 'special military operation,'" the agency added.

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The ECB's petition was likely prompted by concerns among U.S. sanctions authorities over Raiffeisen's operations in Russia.

The U.S. Treasury Department's Office of Foreign Assets Control in February launched a probe into Austria's second-largest bank, according to sources quoted by Reuters.

"We have been asking banks to keep closely monitoring the business in Russia, and ideally, reduce it and wind it down as much as possible," an ECB spokesperson said.

Raiffeisen is among a handful of Western companies that continued to operate in Russia after Moscow launched its invasion of Ukraine. The bank currently processes around one-quarter of all euro-denominated financial transfers bound for Russia, according to Reuters.

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