The Moscow Times
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EU Renews Russia Sanctions After Hungary Stalling

By AFP

January 27, 2025



Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban. **Petr David Josek / AP / TASS**

The European Union on Monday agreed to extend its sanctions against Russia over the war in Ukraine, after Hungary agreed to the move following weeks of stalling.

"EU foreign ministers just agreed to extend again the sanctions on Russia. This will continue to deprive Moscow of revenues to finance its war," the bloc's foreign affairs chief Kaja Kallas wrote on X.

The EU's 27 states have to agree unanimously to extend the sanctions every six months and the next deadline was looming on Jan. 31.

Hungary — one of the friendliest countries to Russia in the EU — had left other member states fuming by refusing to greenlight the latest rollover.

Budapest at first said it wanted to wait for new U.S. President Donald Trump's inauguration to

sign off.

Once that passed, Prime Minister Viktor Orban then insisted Brussels push Ukraine to reopen a gas pipeline running to Central Europe.

To win Budapest over, the European Commission put out a statement saying it was willing to involve Hungary and Slovakia in talks with Kyiv on gas supplies to Europe.

The EU's executive added that it would "approach Ukraine to request assurances regarding the maintenance of oil pipeline transfers to the EU."

"Hungary has received the guarantees it has asked for on the energy security of our country," Hungarian Foreign Minister Peter Szijjarto said in an online post.

Ukraine allowed a gas transit agreement with Russia to lapse on New Year's Day as it tries to starve Moscow of revenues used to fund the war that the Kremlin launched in February 2022.

Orban has repeatedly delayed previous decisions on EU sanctions on Russia over the invasion of Ukraine before eventually approving them.

Officials warned that if Hungary allowed the sanctions to lapse it would see Kyiv's western backers lose major leverage over Moscow ahead of any potential peace talks.

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