Facts and figures about
EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS

The European Union (EU) and Russia remain closely interdependent despite strained relations since the 2014 illegal annexation of Crimea and the city of Sevastopol by Russia and its destabilising actions in eastern Ukraine. The EU has also imposed **restrictive measures**, including sectoral sanctions, **as a result of Russia's actions in Ukraine**, while formats such as regular high-level dialogues and cooperation remain suspended in the absence of the full implementation of the Minsk agreements by Russia. A number of additional issues affect bilateral relations, including Russia's actions in the EU's Eastern Neighbourhood, Syria, Libya and elsewhere, and repeated malign activities including disinformation campaigns. Nonetheless, Russia and the EU share longstanding historical, cultural and economic ties and the EU continues to engage Russia in selected areas of EU interest. The EU's approach to Russia is **guided by five principles** agreed in 2016 and reaffirmed, most recently, by EU Foreign Ministers in October 2020.

THE FIVE PRINCIPLES GUIDING THE EU'S POLICY TOWARDS RUSSIA

Full implementation of the **Minsk agreements** as a key condition for any substantial change in the EU's relations towards Russia.

The EU is **strengthening relations with its six Eastern Partners** (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and other neighbours, including in Central Asia.

The EU is **strengthening its resilience** in areas such as energy security, hybrid threats and strategic communication.

Selective engagement with Russia on issues of clear EU interest.

The EU is fostering **people-to-people contacts** and supporting **Russian civil society**.

EU-RUSSIA RELATIONS IN FIGURES

1st The EU is Russia's **1st trading partner**

In 2019, more than **4 million Schengen visas** were issued in Russia

1st Russian students are the **1st beneficiaries of Erasmus+** university exchanges

A **€13-million EU programme** supports vulnerable groups and people most affected by COVID-19 in Russia

500 The EU has supported more than **500 human rights and civil society projects** in Russia since 1997

EU SANCTIONS

- **Restrictive measures** were introduced in 2014 in response to Russia's destabilising actions against Ukraine and have been extended ever since.

- **Economic sanctions** target the financial, energy and defence sectors as well as the areas of dual-use goods and sensitive technologies. They limit access to EU capital markets for certain Russian banks and companies. They also include a ban on arms trade. They were last rolled over in December 2020 until 31 July 2021, with the possibility of extension.

- A **travel ban and asset freeze** target 177 people and 48 entities. These measures are in force until 15 March 2021, with the possibility of extension.

- EU **restrictions on economic relations** with Crimea and the city of Sevastopol are in force until 23 June 2021, with the possibility of extension.

- The EU also imposes **horizontal, non-country specific sanctions regimes**. One regime is related to the use of **chemical weapons** and targets, among others, 10 individuals and one entity linked to Russia for their role in the poisoning of former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter and the poisoning of Russian opposition politician Alexei Navalny. Another regime is related to **cyberattacks** and targets, among others, six individuals and two entities linked to Russia.

ECONOMIC AND TRADE RELATIONS

- The EU is Russia's **first trading partner** and Russia is the EU's fifth trading partner. In 2019, EU imports from Russia reached €144 billion and EU exports to Russia €88 billion.

- There is a lot of **potential to strengthen trade relations**, currently affected by Russia's protectionist policies and its partial ban on EU agricultural food products. This ban was ostensibly introduced as a countermeasure to EU sanctions that were carefully calibrated not to harm the Russian population and target very specific sectors.

ENVIRONMENT AND CLIMATE CHANGE

- With common borders and interconnected biosystems, there is a need for **joint action to address environmental** issues. The EU and Russia implement a number of joint projects, both bilaterally and in a regional context, in the areas of environmental protection, climate action and energy efficiency.

- The EU supports a number of **cooperation projects** to improve environmental standards and raise awareness of climate change in Russia. Environmental projects are also conducted as part of EU-Russia cross-border cooperation, for example the modernisation of heating systems in schools and hospitals or the promotion of sustainable transport.

- Under the **Northern Dimension Environmental Partnership**, the EU, Russia and other countries in the region work together to **protect the Baltic Sea region and the Arctic** from pollution and contamination.

CIVIL SOCIETY AND MEDIA

- The EU is strongly committed to **promoting human rights, fundamental freedoms and the rule of law** in Russia and supports organisations that work to promote universal values.

- A **free and pluralistic media environment** is a key pillar of democracy. The EU supports a variety of media projects as well as initiatives aimed at strengthening media literacy in Russia.

- The EU **supports civil society organisations** in the implementation of social projects for the benefit of vulnerable groups such as people living with disabilities, children without parental care and women in difficult situations.

EDUCATION AND PEOPLE-TO-PEOPLE CONTACTS

- The EU promotes **good relations between EU and Russian citizens** in a number of areas including education, research, science, culture, the environment and cross-border cooperation.

- Among the 130 countries participating in the Erasmus+ programme, **Russia ranks first for short-term university exchanges**. Many EU citizens also benefit from Erasmus+ grants to study, work or volunteer in Russia.

- The EU funds programmes that facilitate the **mobility of researchers between the EU and Russia** and promote close EU-Russia cooperation in research and innovation. These include the Horizon 2020 programme and the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions.

- Russian citizens have long been **the top recipients of Schengen visas**. In 2019, more than 4 million Schengen visas were issued to Russian citizens, 83 % of which were multiple-entry visas. The EU seeks to facilitate the issuing of Schengen visas to Russian citizens, with streamlined procedures and easier access to multiple-entry visas.

COVID-19 SUPPORT

- The EU shows **international solidarity in the fight against the pandemic** and its socio-economic impact. The EU has earmarked over €13 million to support vulnerable groups in Russia most affected by the pandemic. These include the elderly, women and children affected by domestic violence, people living with disabilities and migrants.

- As well as short-term assistance, the EU's funding will go towards **long-term support to help Russian society recover** from the COVID-19 crisis, generate income in disadvantaged communities and increase employment opportunities in the regions.