

Enforcement and prosecution

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The enforcement of the sanctions requires both administrative supervision and criminal prosecution. The Embargo Act makes violations a criminal offence, with intentional violations punishable by a custodial sentence of up to five years in serious cases.¹ SECO investigates suspected violations and can refer them to the Office of the Attorney General. The number of proceedings has increased since 2022 and includes cases of prohibited exports of goods to Russia, transactions with listed persons and the circumvention of the sanctions through third countries.²

The prohibition on exports of dual-use and other sensitive goods to Russia has become a particular focus. Swiss industrial goods, such as machine tools and electronic components, have been found in Russian military equipment, having often reached Russia through intermediaries in third countries such as Turkey.³ The European Union has introduced the obligation for exporters to include a "no Russia" clause in their contracts, which Switzerland adopted as well.⁴ Advisers in export control, a field in which the author is certified, have seen a considerable increase in the demand for compliance advice among Swiss exporters since 2022.

1 Notes

1. Federal Act of 22 March 2002 on the Implementation of International Sanctions (Embargo Act, EmbG), SR 946.231, original text, fedlex.admin.ch: Art. 9 (intentional offences: imprisonment up to one year or fine up to CHF 500,000; in serious cases imprisonment up to five years, which may be combined with a fine of up to CHF 1 million) and Art. 10 (contraventions: fine up to CHF 100,000). ↩
2. SRF, "Gesperrte Vermögen sanktionierter Russen in der Schweiz gestiegen", 2025, srf.ch, citing SECO: 615 reports of suspected sanctions violations since the invasion; 68 administrative criminal proceedings opened and 59 concluded (24 convictions, 35 dismissals). ↩

Enforcement and prosecution

3. swissinfo.ch, "Swiss manufacturing 'contributes to Russian war machine'", 6 March 2025: more than one hundred machine tools from Swiss manufacturers have reached Russia since the invasion, e.g. through a Turkish shell importer in 2023; swissinfo.ch, "Criminal proceedings filed over Swiss components in Russian weapons", 17 July 2024: components of Swiss companies found in Russian armaments; SECO had opened 56 administrative criminal proceedings. ↩
4. Germany Trade & Invest, "Chronologische Übersicht über EU-Sanktionen gegenüber Russland", gta.de: "No Russia" clause under Art. 12g of Regulation 833/2014, applicable from 20 March 2024 to goods in Annexes XI, XX, XXXV and common high-priority items. Swissmem, "Russland-Sanktionen: Vertragspflicht zur Verhinderung der Wiederausfuhr", 22 March 2024, swissmem.ch: Switzerland adopted the obligation in Art. 14f of the Ukraine Ordinance (SR 946.231.176.72), in force since 20 March 2024, for goods in Annexes 3 and 19 and high-priority goods in Annex 31. ↩

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