

Switzerland's turn of 28 February 2022

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In the first days after the Russian invasion of Ukraine on 24 February 2022, the Swiss government hesitated. It adopted measures to prevent the circumvention of European sanctions but did not adopt the sanctions themselves. The hesitation provoked criticism at home and abroad: demonstrators gathered in Bern while foreign governments made their displeasure known. On 28 February 2022, the Federal Council decided to adopt the sanctions of the European Union against Russia in full.¹ While the President of the Confederation, Ignazio Cassis, explained that the decision was compatible with Swiss neutrality, the international press described it as a historic break with Swiss tradition.

The legal basis was the Embargo Act, which allows the Federal Council to adopt sanctions decided by Switzerland's main trading partners. The Federal Council amended the Ordinance on Measures in connection with the Situation in Ukraine and has since adopted each new European sanctions package, usually with a delay of a few days or weeks.² The State Secretariat for Economic Affairs, known as SECO, is responsible for implementing the sanctions, publishing the lists of sanctioned persons, granting exemptions and supervising compliance.

1 Notes

1. Federal Council, press release "Switzerland adopts EU sanctions against Russia", 28 February 2022, admin.ch (msg-id-87386): adoption of the EU sanctions packages of 23 and 25 February 2022 and immediate freezing of the assets of listed persons and companies. ←

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2. Ordinance of 4 March 2022 on Measures in connection with the Situation in Ukraine, SR 946.231.176.72, original version AS 2022 151, fedlex.admin.ch: in force since 4 March 2022, 18:00. The later amendments following each EU package are not listed individually here. ↩

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