



UKRAINE-RUSSIA CONFLICT

Ukraine: Sanctions on Kremlin-backed outlets Russia Today and Sputnik: The complex situation in Ukraine triggered by the Russian invasion has made the EU take extreme measures towards the latter. In its last intervention, Commission's President von der Leyen addressed the issue of disinformation and manipulation coming from Russia's media outlets to Europe. In this regard, the EU has now suspended the activities of the two main outlets, Russia Today and Sputnik, to preserve the freedom and independence of Ukraine and the EU as a whole. In the words of von der Leyen: "We will not let Kremlin apologists pour their toxic lies justifying Putin's war or sow the seeds of division in our Union."

EU explores measures to shelter economy from Russia sanctions blowback: The European Commission is looking for different options in case there is blowback from the sanctions imposed on Russia given the invasion of Ukraine. Measures are still being discussed but could include repurposing loans, fresh debt for loans in case of energy price spikes, and new guidance on fast-track approval of state subsidies. Even if the Member States have not yet been consulted, the overall opinion seems favourable towards the Commission's initiative. Ideas such as creating an Ad Hoc temporary framework for state aid similar to that of COVID-19 are on the table; however, the Commission has not commented on any measures yet.

ECONOMY

Towards a green, digital and resilient economy: our European Growth Model: The European Commission has presented the European Growth Model, a compilation of the objectives of both the Union and the Member States regarding the digital and green transitions given the unprecedented situation that Europe is living in nowadays. The communication includes critical requirements for achieving common objectives and effectively carrying out a joint action. It also focuses on developing a green, digital and resilient economy through ongoing efforts like the "fit for 55" package or the digital compass. The Commission also highlighted the need for actions at all levels that are inclusive and fair.

INDUSTRY

Remarks of Kadri Simson in the Industry Committee of the European Parliament on the energy situation in Europe: In the framework of Ukraine's situation, Commissioner Kadri Simson addressed the energetic issue that streams from it, which concerns Ukraine and the EU as a whole. He stated that work is being done to assure energy and gas supplies to Ukrainian cities and allow energy diversification and autonomy from Russia. Concerning EU energy markets, Simson acknowledges the tightness of the European market due to the sanctions imposed on Russia. She affirmed that Europe's preparedness relied on diversifying and filling gas storage before next winter. In terms of LNG, the Commission explores all possible alternatives with different partners. Last but not least, Simson addressed the price issue regarding which she announced a communication coming next week presenting measures for the short and medium-term.

HEALTH

EU calls for stronger cooperation to fight rare diseases: During the World's Rare Disease Day, commissioner Kyriakides called for strengthening the Union's action in the matter and was backed by health ministers from the Member States. One of the EC's main statements emphasised that the European Health Union should include every European citizen. Those suffering from rare diseases should have access to the needed care and treatment. To see improvements in this sector, the EU has high hopes for European Reference Networks in cooperation, knowledge, and expertise sharing. This network is a significant step but still needs improvements at many levels. Another Commission's essential step resides in the European Health Data Space. Even if limited, it provides the perfect tool for research, understanding and development in the field.

INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Ukraine applies for EU membership, EU hesitant: Ukraine's President, Zelensky, has signed the country's application for EU Membership amidst the current complex situation. Zelensky did this after a conversation with European Commission's President, Ursula von der Leyen, after which von der Leyen stated her willingness to have Ukraine in. 8 Member States are supporting this petition and pushing for a fast-track procedure which is not foreseen in the Union's Treaties and mechanisms for accession. It is, in fact, a long way procedure and needs of high levels of acceptance among EU institutions and national governments. Ukraine's petition has raised a variety of opinions in the EU institutions and is now the turn of the french presidency to deal with it.