

13th of September 2023,
Strasbourg

TO : Mr. David O’Sullivan
EU Sanctions Envoy

Dear Mr. O’Sullivan,

EU’s solidarity and impressive stance for its values for peace, democracy, rule of law and respect for human rights on the European continent have proven to be without precedent ever since Russia has been militarily aggressing Ukraine. The massively imposed sanctions against Russia speak loudly of EU Member States’ capacity to act united, with one voice, when the continent is under threat. **Yet, it is regrettable that in historical times of crisis, this unity has been jeopardised by a few number of Member States, such as Austria.**

Therefore, I am addressing you this letter, since the EU external action with its partners must credibly reflect the reality of the internal European collaboration. And - in the case of properly implementing the sanctions against Russia, the EU is falling short at home because of Members like Austria. It is high time to act internally and externally in alignment with the principles that govern our Union.

Recent Eurostat data¹ proves that although the general trend at EU level is to significantly reduce trade with Russia, the case of Austria falls into a completely different reality. While between February 2022 and March 2023, the value of EU imports from Russia fell by 82 %, statistics show that Austria has massively increased its trade with Russia.

Thus, the value of products imported by Austria from Russia during the last years are as follows:

- In 2019: **2,078,626,366 EUR**
- In 2020: no official Eurostat data
- In 2021: **3,692,264,161 EUR** (an increase of 77.6%)
- In 2022: **7,333,072,139 EUR** (an increase of 252% compared to 2019 and 98.53% compared to 2021).

The conclusion is that **Austria has doubled its economic exchange with goods imported from Russia since the beginning of the war. Vienna continues to supply the criminal regime in Moscow with more than 20 million euros per day, ignoring the EU's sanctions policy.**

¹ <https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?oldid=558089>

Furthermore, while most European countries reduced their dependence on Russian gas, including both small countries such as the Czech Republic and Bulgaria, and large countries, such as Germany (previously massively dependent on Moscow's energy supply) - Austria, a prosperous nine million country, continued to import more than 70% of its total gas from Russia back in December 2022, only to return to the pre-invasion import levels to date. Thus, today, Austria imports Russian gas at maximum capacity bringing a key profit to Moscow, and fuelling the war in Ukraine. Vienna's behaviour is aligned with the official commitment it stroke with Putin in 2018, when it committed itself to Russian gas until 2040 and doubled its supply volumes. Thus, by 2040, OMV, a partially state-owned Austrian energy company, will have successfully imported Russian gas for 72 years. Finally, the ministry of Energy declared that Austria has imported 7 billion euros worth of gas from Russia since Ukraine's invasion in February 2022.

With this reality transformed into numbers, merely criticising Austria is no longer enough. Vienna's policy casts a shade over EU's ability to face conflict and crisis in a coordinated manner.

With the adoption of the 11th package of sanctions against Russia, the EU has clearly reached a critical moment when it possesses the necessary tools to act in force to weaken Russia's economy and reduce its ability to further wage the war against Ukraine but it must urgently step up the overall system of sanctioning the circumvention of these measures. While the Council has settled for an EU law that introduces criminal offences and penalties for the violation of the restrictive measures against Russia - thus, officially considering this circumvention a crime under EU law - it is high time for the EU to practice what it preaches. Circumventing entities, including European companies and individuals, should face the consequences of sabotaging the embargo against Russia. Austria's lack of solidarity with the European cause speaks loudly about where the loyalty of the its policy-makers and companies lays.

Mr. O'Sullivan, I am urging you to take concrete actions and launch an investigation against Austria in order to analyse the extent to which this Member States fails to comply with the implementation of the EU sanction packages against Russia. The Government in Vienna must be hold accountable for its choice to fraternize with Russia while sabotaging the European Union. The credibility of the European endeavor to secure peace on the continent cannot keep on being questioned on the account of actors that do not fear there might be consequences of their disloyal actions.

Respectfully,

MEP Eugen Tomac

MEP Vlad-Marius Botoș