

EU adopts sanctions against Venezuela

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The EU has adopted a range of targeted sanctions against Venezuela, including an arms embargo and a ban on exports of equipment which could be used for internal repression and surveillance, as well as setting up a legal framework for subjecting certain persons to travel bans and asset freezes.

On 13 November, the Council of the EU adopted a number of measures sanctioning Venezuela in response to recent regional elections in the country and the establishment of a powerful Constituent Assembly, both of which followed an electoral process with serious reported irregularities.¹ The Council also expresses alarm at the ongoing human rights violations taking place in the country, as highlighted in a recent report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights.² Unlike the United States, which already has extensive sanctions in place against Venezuela,³ the EU had not previously taken such steps.

These new measures, unanimously agreed upon by the Foreign Ministers of all the EU's Member States, and incorporated in a directly enforceable EU Regulation,⁴ involve:

- An arms embargo;⁵
- A ban on the supply of material which might be used for internal repression;⁶
- A ban on the supply of equipment, technology, or software which could be used for intercepting and monitoring communications;⁷ and
- Creating the legal framework for the placing of individuals and entities on a list of persons who are to be banned from travelling to the EU and have their assets frozen.⁸

¹ Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2074 of 13 November 2017 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela, [available here](#). The Council's conclusions of 13 November 2017 on Venezuela are available [here](#).

² Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), *Human rights violations and abuses in the context of protests in the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela from 1 April to 31 July 2017* (Geneva, August 2017)

³ [See our previous alert](#), US Imposes Sanctions Targeting Debt, Equity, and Securities of the Venezuelan Government and PdVSA (September 2017).

⁴ Council Regulation (EU) 2017/2063 of 13 November 2017 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela, [available here](#).

⁵ See Article 1 of Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2074 of 13 November 2017 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela.

⁶ See Article 3 of Council Regulation (EU) 2017/2063 of 13 November 2017 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela.

⁷ See Article 6 of Council Regulation (EU) 2017/2063 of 13 November 2017 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela.

Under the EU asset freeze, all funds and economic resources belonging to, or controlled by, the listed parties and that fall under EU jurisdiction (e.g. are held by EU banks) are frozen. Furthermore, no funds or economic resources (in the broad sense) may be made available - directly or indirectly - to or for the benefit of the listed persons by parties falling under EU jurisdiction. To date, no persons or entities have been listed, but it is envisaged that these could include natural or legal persons, entities and bodies responsible for serious human rights violations or abuses or the repression of civil society and democratic opposition in Venezuela; or whose actions, policies or activities otherwise undermine democracy or the rule of law in Venezuela, or persons or entities associated with the above.

These measures are intended to support the EU's political and diplomatic efforts to find a negotiated solution to Venezuela's political crisis. In its accompanying statement,⁹ the Council warns that the measures can be expanded to target those involved in human rights violations and breaches of democratic principles. They can also be reversed if the situation progresses, notably through the holding of meaningful negotiations, the freeing of political prisoners, the announcement of new elections, and the respect of democratic institutions generally.

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⁸ See Articles 6 and 7 of Council Decision (CFSP) 2017/2074 of 13 November 2017 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela; article 8 of Council Regulation (EU) 2017/2063 of 13 November 2017 concerning restrictive measures in view of the situation in Venezuela.

⁹ Council Conclusions of 13 November 2017, available [here](#).