

EN

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Answer given by Ms Albuquerque
on behalf of the European Commission
(12.5.2025)

To counter the shadow fleet, the EU has power to designate vessels subject to a port access ban and a ban on provision of services. 153 vessels have so far been designated¹. In addition, the 16th sanctions package adopted on 24 February 2025² enables the EU to designate individuals and entities that own or operate shadow fleet vessels.

EU restrictive measures against Russia have restricted the sale by EU operators of oil tankers. Sales to Russia or for end-use in Russia are prohibited (with a derogation possible) while sales to third countries are subject to a notification³.

As part of the recently adopted EU Action Plan on Cable Security⁴, the High Representative and the Commission indicated the need to reinforce the Union's actions against the shadow fleet, with the view to enhance capacities to reduce its impact. In particular, it calls on working with partners to align the listings of prohibited vessels and on further outreaching to flag and port states to increase accountability and responsibility. It calls also on making best use of the existing sanctions regimes to enhance the capacity to 'hold malicious actors accountable'.

In addition to the sanctions framework, the use of commercial vessels to undertake so-called hybrid activities may also fall under the maritime safety and where relevant criminal enforcement frameworks. Concerning suspicious maritime activities including shadow fleet operations, relevant measures can be taken such as inspection, detention and interdiction of vessels. Concerning criminal wrongdoing relating to the violation and circumvention of EU restrictive measures, Directive (EU) 2024/1226⁵ will ensure common basic standards for penalties in all EU Member States, closing existing legal loopholes.

¹ Annex XLII of Council Regulation (EU) 833/2014: <https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/HTML/?uri=CELEX:02014R0833-20250225>

² https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_25_585

³ Article 3q of Regulation n°833/2014.

⁴ JOIN(2025) 9 final: <https://digital-strategy.ec.europa.eu/en/factpages/joint-communication-strengthen-security-and-resilience-submarine-cables>

⁵ Directive (EU) 2024/1226 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 April 2024 on the definition of criminal offences and penalties for the violation of Union restrictive measures and amending Directive (EU), 2018/1673 OJ L, 2024/1226, 29.4.2024.