COURT OF JUSTICE
OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

Judgment of the General Court in Case T-535/24 | Russian Maritime Register of Shipping v Council

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War in Ukraine: the General Court upholds the bulk of the restrictive measures taken by the Council against the Russian Maritime Register of Shipping

However, it annuls the measure withdrawing that entity's recognition as a ship inspection, survey and certification organisation, which had been granted to it by the European Union

Based in Saint Petersburg (Russia) and wholly owned by the Russian State, the Russian Maritime Register of Shipping (RMRS) is a non-profit organisation engaged in the classification, inspection and certification of ships flying both Russian and foreign flags. In 1998, it was included on the list of organisations recognised at EU level which Member States could authorise to conduct, on their behalf, inspection, survey and certification activities for ships flying their flag.

In 2014, in response to the situation in Ukraine, the Council of the European Union adopted restrictive measures against Russia, including in the financial sector. [1] Following the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian armed forces on 24 February 2022, the Council extended those financial restrictions to the RMRS, adding it to the list of entities subject to an investment ban. It also prohibited all transactions with that organisation, withdrew its recognition at EU level and required Member States to revoke any authorisations they had granted to it. Lastly, the Council prohibited ships certified by the RMRS from accessing ports and locks in the territory of the European Union. [2]

The RMRS brought an action before the General Court of the European Union seeking the annulment of a number of provisions imposing those restrictive measures, which had been successively extended until 31 July 2026. [3]

The General Court dismisses, for the most part, the action brought by the RMRS and upholds the bulk of the restrictive measures concerning it, including the investment ban and the transaction ban.

First of all, the General Court declares the action to be inadmissible in so far as it seeks the annulment of **the prohibition** preventing ships certified by the RMRS **from accessing ports and locks in the territory of the European Union**. That ban applies directly to ships certified by the RMRS, but affects the legal position of that organisation only indirectly.

Next, the General Court finds that the Council fulfilled its obligation to state reasons, since the RMRS was able to ascertain both the general context of the restrictive measures taken against it and the actual and specific reasons justifying their adoption and maintenance. It was thus able to understand why the investment ban had been extended to the maritime sector and also understand that its inclusion on the list of entities subject to the transaction ban and the withdrawal of its recognition to provide services in the European Union were motivated by the fact that it was wholly owned by the Russian State.

As regards whether the Council was competent to withdraw that recognition, the General Court points out that the EU Treaty empowers the Council to adopt, within the framework of the common foreign and security policy (CFSP), decisions **defining the approach of the Union** to a particular matter of a geographical or thematic nature, even where those decisions are capable of directly affecting the legal position of individuals. **That is the case of the decisions concerning the withdrawal of the recognition in question**, which, whilst not of an operational nature, seek to preserve international peace and security in response to Russia's destabilisation of Ukraine and, in so doing, **pursue objectives of the CFSP.**

Similarly, although it is true that the withdrawal of that recognition in order to avert threats to maritime safety falls within

the competence of the European Commission, that does **not, however, cast doubt on the Council's competence to withdraw recognition on the basis of the provisions relating to the CFSP.** In that connection, the General Court recalls in particular that **the principles of conferral and of institutional balance apply in the area of the CFSP and that the competences under the CFSP and under the Union's policies and internal actions are not mutually exclusive but complementary, each having its own scope and aiming to achieve different objectives**. In the present case, the withdrawal of authorisation as decided on by the Council pursues an objective specific to the CFSP and is therefore not intended to ensure maritime safety and the protection of the environment.

Concerning the proportionality of the measures at issue, the General Court finds that, in so far as they target an entity wholly owned by the Russian State which carries on activities in the maritime sector, **they are capable of contributing to the attainment of the objective pursued by their adoption,** namely to exert pressure on that State to put an end to its aggression against Ukraine.

However, the General Court considers that **the withdrawal of the RMRS's recognition is disproportionate**, since a less onerous measure – namely, the suspension of its recognition – could also have achieved the objective pursued. In that context, the General Court explains that, if the contested restrictive measures are lifted, the recognition in question cannot be automatically reinstated, with the result that the RMRS will have to go through a new recognition procedure. The outcome of such a procedure is uncertain, as the RMRS has neither a right of initiative in that procedure nor a right to be awarded such recognition.

In those circumstances, the General Court **annuls the Council's decision containing the contested restrictive measures in so far as it provides for the withdrawal of the recognition granted by the European Union to the RMRS.**

NOTE: An action for annulment seeks the annulment of acts of the institutions, bodies, offices and agencies of the European Union that are contrary to EU law. The Member States, the European institutions and individuals may, under certain conditions, bring an action for annulment before the Court of Justice or the General Court. If the action is well founded, the act is annulled. The institution concerned must fill any legal vacuum created by the annulment of the act.

NOTE: An appeal, limited to points of law only, may be brought before the Court of Justice against the decision of the General Court within two months and ten days of notification of the decision.

Unofficial document for media use, not binding on the General Court. The presentation of the facts and the legal context refers to the relevant period and is based on the case file.

The full text and, as the case may be, an abstract of the judgment is published on the CURIA website on the day of delivery.

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[1] Council Decision 2014/512/CFSP of 31 July 2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine. That same day, the Council adopted, on the basis of Article 215 TFEU, Council Regulation (EU) No 833/2014 of 31 July 2014 concerning restrictive measures in view of Russia's actions destabilising the situation in Ukraine, which contains more detailed provisions to give effect, both at EU level and in the Member States, to the requirements laid down in that decision.

[2] Those restrictive measures, taken after 24 February 2022, were adopted by means of amendments to Decision 2014/512 and Regulation (EU) No 833/2014.

[3] See Council Decisions (CFSP) 2024/2026 of 22 July 2024, (CFSP) 2025/175 of 27 January 2025, (CFSP) 2025/1320 of 30 June 2025 and (CFSP) 2025/2648 of 22 December 2025.