

Ban European flights and car use in cities to hurt Putin, report urges

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Strong measures by Europe could quickly deprive Russia of oil and gas income worth billions, experts say

Flights should be banned in continental [Europe](#) and car use banned in city centres to save energy and prevent Vladimir Putin profiting from fossil fuel sales, campaigners have said.

It would be possible for Europe to quickly [end its reliance on oil and gas from Russia](#) by taking strong measures, [according to a report](#) by the climate adviser Mark Lynas, energy analyst Rauli Partanen, and energy and sustainability installations specialist Joris van Dorp.

Policies include rationing, with everyone in Europe allowed the same minimum amount of energy to use, and limiting thermostats to 18C in winter.

“The biggest problem is gas. In total last year Europe imported 155 billion cubic metres of gas from Russia,” the authors said. Critics of the EU’s oil and gas policy have pointed out that hydrocarbon sales are financing the war in [Ukraine](#).

Even the EU’s top diplomat, Josep Borrell, said recently: “We’ve given Ukraine nearly €1bn. That might seem like a lot but €1bn is what we’re paying Putin every day for the energy he provides us with. Since the start of the war, we’ve given him €35bn [£29bn], compared to the €1bn we’ve given Ukraine to arm itself.”

The report’s authors said: “We conclude it is possible to eliminate Russian gas imports starting immediately in Europe. This will require an unprecedented level of European solidarity, a combination of a Marshall plan and a Berlin airlift to redistribute energy around the continent as needed and support the transition.”

The International Energy Agency recently released a 10-point plan to reduce demand for oil use in member countries of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, with suggestions including subsidised public transport, lower speed limits and a reduction in business flights. The authors of [the latest report](#) from the RePlanet Research Institute, however, say such measures would reduce demand by 2.7m barrels a day in advanced economies, still substantially less than Russian oil exports to Europe.

The authors argue that we need to go further, and say they have worked out how to eliminate 25% of all oil use in Europe.

“We propose bans on all business flights, private jets and internal flights within Europe to save oil, and bans also on car use within cities,” they said. “This should be combined with free public transport. While the impacts of this are not easily quantified, we believe this could double the reduction in oil use beyond that proposed by the IEA.”

To replace the gas Europe buys from Russia, the authors recommend measures including stopping the nuclear phaseout in Germany, Sweden and Belgium, reducing heating in buildings by 4C, and a fast-track deployment of additional solar and wind generation.

These policies could be popular in Europe. New polling conducted by Savanta ComRes found that 41% of people polled in the UK, Germany Poland, France, Sweden and the Netherlands said they “strongly agreed” that their country should immediately stop buying Russian oil and gas. Only 6.4% strongly disagreed.

Just over 40% said they would be prepared to accept energy rationing to manage demand, and 52.7% that they would eat less meat to reduce demand on Ukrainian exports.

“Europe is sending over €500m every day directly to the Kremlin because we continue to import vast quantities of Russian oil, gas and coal. This situation cannot continue,” the authors of the report said.

“It is morally and politically untenable for Europe to fund Putin’s war machine – paying for the same missiles and bombs that are raining down on Ukrainian schools and hospitals – at the same time as supposedly uniting to stop Putin through sanctions. There is only one solution. We must cut off this torrent of money we are sending to the Kremlin by immediately stopping our imports of Russian fossil fuels.”

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