Alona Lebedieva: The EU Must Either Act Decisively or Not Act at All—Otherwise, Sanctions Only Legalize Evasion Schemes

KYIV, UKRAINE, June 27, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- One of the most paradoxical effects of sanctions against Russia is that half-measures sometimes benefit the Kremlin more than they hurt it. This applies both to the oil price cap and to attempts to limit the shadow fleet.


Alona Lebedieva

The European Union is currently preparing a new package of restrictions. But will it become a real economic weapon — or just another compromise aimed at preserving unity within the EU?

Sanctions That "Suit Everyone" Do Not Work

The current situation highlights a simple truth: for sanctions to be effective, they must be painful — both for the aggressor and, to some extent, for those who impose them.

"Sanctions that cause no inconvenience for EU countries, by definition, will not create serious problems for Russia. The price of peace in Europe must be paid — and that is normal," says Alona Lebedieva, owner of the Ukrainian diversified industrial and investment group Aurum Group.

It is precisely due to the reluctance of some European countries (Greece, Cyprus, Malta, and others) to lose revenue from transporting Russian oil that the decision on a new price cap — $30 per barrel — has stalled. Instead, a much softer option of $45 is being discussed, which is unlikely to significantly impact Russia's oil revenues.

Another problem is the lack of sufficient oversight of sanctions evasion.

Today, more than 500 tankers operate in a gray zone. Some of them simultaneously transport both Russian and Iranian oil. As a result, over $16 billion flows into the Russian budget through these schemes — money that would not have reached it otherwise.

“Every half-sanction carries a risk — it legalizes gray mechanisms. If restrictions are not backed by real enforcement and tough action against the shadow fleet, they merely entrench corrupt practices,” Lebedieva emphasizes.

The Economic Impact of Decisive Action Is Clear

Basic calculations show: if the volume of the shadow fleet were reduced by at least half and a real price cap of $30 were introduced, the Russian budget would lose at least $20–25 billion annually. That would be a serious blow to the financing of the war.

Moreover, with current oil prices, there is a growing risk that without a drastic reduction in the cap, the Kremlin could actually increase its revenues — even under formal sanctions. And that runs directly counter to the interests of both Ukraine and Europe itself.

Russia is already on the brink of recession. Further revenue losses in the budget will inevitably lead to the shutdown of several industries and increase social tensions within the country. This is why sustained sanctions pressure is strategically important.

“Half-measures now only create the illusion of action. Europe must either act decisively or honestly admit that the current approach isn’t working. Anything else plays into the hands of the Kremlin,” Lebedieva concludes.

Alona Lebedieva
Aurum Group
email us here
