

SANCTIONS November 14

# "Without a strong legal framework, no one will listen to you."

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**William Jully, founder of WJ Avocats**

William Jully is a lawyer practicing in France and the UK, specializing in international and European criminal law. He has participated in numerous extradition cases and assisted clients subject to European and international arrest warrants. Jully also specializes in challenging EU sanctions and unfreezing frozen assets. During the BRICS+ New Economy Legal Forum 2025, he spoke to Pravo.ru about the main challenges in challenging sanctions, how lawyers can work in such cases, and what hope there is.

**Since 2022, the EU has imposed an unprecedented number of sanctions against Russian individuals. What are the challenges and weaknesses in the way new restrictions are introduced and reviewed?**

I think the first problem is scale. Thousands of individuals and companies have been sanctioned, and the EU doesn't have the resources to handle such a volume. This large number of sanctioned individuals raises questions about how they are selected and on what grounds they are included. We see no threshold or clear criteria for selecting evidence for inclusion.

The second problem is that there's no proper communication channel in terms of quality and transparency. If you want to understand what the EU Council expects for removal from the sanctions list, it's very difficult to find someone to talk to, understand the logic, and understand what's expected of you. For example, sanctions are supposed to be temporary measures imposed to change the behavior of a specific individual. But at the same time, it's very difficult to understand what needs to be changed. Only by going to court and starting to exchange documents do you begin to truly communicate with the EU Council. There's also an administrative route to review sanctions, which allows you to appeal directly to the EU Council, but it doesn't respond to requests. There's no real dialogue with the EU Council, so you have to resort to various shortcuts and find other communication options.

The third problem is that judicial review, even if effective in some cases, is a very lengthy process. And another complication is that sometimes, when you

The EU Court of Justice may rule that a person should be removed from the sanctions list, but the EU Council will re-include them without lifting the restrictions. So it's a process that either never ends or is extremely difficult to complete. However, if you're very persistent and patient, there may eventually be hope of being removed from the sanctions list for good, but this takes time and perseverance.

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**The problems you've identified demonstrate that EU mechanisms lack a clear legal framework. This is the view of many sanctioned entities and their lawyers. How can lawyers work effectively in this situation?**

A global strategy is always necessary. This means working with purely legal arguments, because without a strong legal foundation, no one will listen to you. Then you need to work on communications and PR, interacting with governments. You need to talk to people in Brussels, with EU member states, trying to convince them that your arguments and point of view are correct and that the EU Council was wrong to include this or that person on the list. This happens, although not always, but they can be wrong. This often takes time: we're not talking about months; it's usually a matter of a year, or even eighteen months. Furthermore, you need to be persistent and understand what it might take to change the direction of the situation. It's a complex process, but it's entirely doable.

**Do you think European courts are moving towards a clearer balance between state interests, public order and human rights, or vice versa?**

Regarding the EU Court of Appeal, there haven't been many appellate decisions yet in Russian sanctions cases. We're awaiting a key precedent-setting decision, which should be issued in the coming weeks or months. Because of this, we don't yet have a clear understanding of the EU Court of Appeal's approach to the crucial legal issues. One of them is the legality of criterion g. Various bar associations have also filed appeals against the ban on providing legal services, which is also a major issue. We'll see what the EU Court of Appeal says about the first-instance decision on this issue.

The Court of Justice of the EU has issued good decisions at first instance that have changed the Council of the EU's position. This doesn't always happen, as the Council of the EU sometimes amends regulations to adapt them to judicial practice.

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There remains hope that the EU Court of Appeal will uphold the rule of law more fully, as the first-instance court has sometimes done. We hope this will influence overall EU policy and the fate of those removed from