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SPORTS, 1B

# Burlington Free Press

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## EU seeks long-term freeze of Russian assets



Delegates from European countries attend an informal meeting of European Union ministers of European affairs on Dec. 11 in Lviv, Ukraine. ROMAN BALUK/REUTERS

### Bloc plans to provide loan to assist Ukraine

Jan Strupczewski  
REUTERS

BRUSSELS – European Union governments want to agree on Dec. 12 to freeze Russian central bank assets immobilized in Europe for as long as necessary, replacing the need for a vote to renew the freeze every six months, EU diplomats said.

The move is the basis for the EU’s plan to use the Russian sovereign assets in the EU for a loan to Ukraine that would keep it financed in 2026 and 2027, allowing the country to continue to defend itself against Russia’s invasion.

The European Commission has proposed using a provision of the EU treaty, Article 122, to keep the assets frozen indefinitely.

The provision gives EU governments a free hand to adopt whatever measures they see necessary, by qualified majority, to address a difficult economic situa-

tion in the EU.

One EU diplomat said the plan was for ambassadors from the bloc’s member states to agree on launching a written procedure to approve the use of Article 122 of the EU treaty “by tomorrow.”

The European Commission said last week that using this legal option was justified in the case of the Ukraine loan to preserve the stability of the economy affected by Russia’s war in Ukraine and the hybrid warfare of Russia against EU countries.

“The [EU] economic situation could be further destabilized if the security context was to further deteriorate, as a result of Russia’s intervention in Ukraine or in the Member States,” the commission said, arguing that if Ukraine ran out of money and could no longer defend itself, the EU’s economic situation would become much worse still.

An agreement to freeze the Russian assets indefinitely would eliminate a

key risk to the plan of using them to finance Ukraine because Moscow-friendly Hungary and Slovakia would no longer have the power to veto an extension of the freeze every six months as they do now.

While the freeze of the assets would be reviewed annually, the money would stay immobilized until there was no longer “an immediate threat to the economic interests of the union.”

Belgium, which holds \$217.4 billion of the total \$246.8 billion of Russian sovereign assets frozen in Europe, has been skeptical of the Reparations Loan plan.

One of its worries has been that it would have to refund Moscow if the sanctions were lifted and the money had already been loaned to Ukraine.

However, Belgium is worried Russia could launch successful legal action against it for the return of the money.

To address that, EU governments are preparing guarantees for Belgium, under which they would step in to cover

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### DENGUE FEVER

## UVM scientists help create vaccine for disease

Beth McDermott  
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A new vaccine and an antiviral treatment for dengue fever are being hailed as breakthroughs in the global fight against the mosquito-borne disease.

The one-dose vaccine, which has been approved for use in Brazil, and the antiviral medication, which has shown promising results in clinical trials, were developed with significant contributions from the University of Vermont Vaccine Testing Center, according to an announcement from the college.

Dengue fever is the leading cause of mosquito-borne viral disease worldwide, with over 100 million cases reported annually. The virus can cause high fever, severe muscle and bone pain and, in severe cases, shock, bleeding and death.

“These milestones represent a turning point in global dengue prevention and treatment,” said Beth Kirkpatrick, founder of the Vaccine Testing Center and chair of the Department of Microbiology and Molecular Genetics at the Robert Larner College of Medicine. “We are proud of the role UVM has played in advancing science that will save lives worldwide.”

The new vaccine, called Butantan-TV, will be incorporated into Brazil’s national immunization program. Brazil recorded 5.9 million cases of dengue and more than 6,000 deaths in 2024. Additional global approvals are expected as the vaccine is developed through partnerships with pharmaceutical companies including Merck and the Serum Institute of India.

Kirkpatrick served as principal investigator for the research funding that supported early-stage clinical trials and immunology research on the vaccine. She and her colleagues began studying the vaccine candidate in 2009 in collaboration with Anna Dur-

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## Donate fabric or volunteer to help breast cancer patients

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You can support breast cancer patients recovering from surgery in sewing workshops hosted by Generator Makerspace this weekend.

The workshops are scheduled for 10 a.m.-2 p.m. on Dec. 13 and 14 at 40 Sears Lane in Burlington, according to an announcement.

The goal is to produce shower bags for patients at the University of Vermont Medical Center’s oncology unit. The bags help patients shower hands

free while managing post-surgical drains.

The project is led by Lyn Coupal, a two-time breast cancer survivor. After her second surgery, she received a shower bag that allowed her to bathe safely and independently. The experience inspired her to ensure other patients have access to the bags.

“These small items make a big difference during recovery,” Coupal said in the announcement. “I wanted to help make sure others have what they need.”

The initiative has received support from April Cornell and several experienced sewing aficionados in the area,

according to the announcement. Generator is inviting community members to donate materials and join the workshops. No sewing experience is required.

“Every stitch represents care and compassion from our community,” Veronica Newton, senior director of programs and partnerships at Generator Makerspace, said in the announcement. “We’re thrilled to bring people together around a project that will make a significant impact in the lives of others.”

Donations can be dropped off through Dec. 12. Requested materials include 100% cotton fabric or remnants

(any color or pattern, no synthetics), thread (any color), 1/4-inch ribbon (for tying) and sewing machine needles.

For more information or to register as a volunteer, visit [bit.ly/showerBags](http://bit.ly/showerBags) or contact [communications@generatortv.com](mailto:communications@generatortv.com).

For questions about donations, contact [lucy@generatortv.com](mailto:lucy@generatortv.com).

*This story was created by reporter Beth McDermott, [bmcdermott1@usatodayco.com](mailto:bmcdermott1@usatodayco.com), with the assistance of Artificial Intelligence (AI). Journalists were involved in every step of the information gathering, review, editing and publishing process. Learn more at [cm.usatoday.com/ethical-conduct](http://cm.usatoday.com/ethical-conduct).*

