



The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

May 21, 2021

Dear Mr. President:

The Central and East European Coalition (CEEC), representing over 20 million Americans of central and eastern European heritage, is writing to express our grave concern over the waivers issued this week of sanctions on entities involved with the construction of the Nord Stream 2. We feel that Secretary of State Blinken's basis for his determination to issue the waivers is contradictory and confusing.

Secretary Blinken's May 17th Report to Congress states that "the application of sanctions under PEESA on [these entities] would negatively impact U.S. relations with Germany, the EU, and other European allies and partners." We argue that many of the nations, whose diaspora interests the CEEC represents, fall into the categories of EU members or European allies and partners, and that U.S. relations with these nations are negatively impacted by the waivers. We see an implication that relationships with CEE partners take a second-tier priority to relations with Germany and EU member nations that have fewer objections to the pipeline.

The report also cites the importance of cooperation with European allies and partners to the success of several U.S. efforts in the region, including "defend[ing] our democracies against authoritarianism [and] counter[ing] malign behavior by Russia..." The irony here is that the NS2 project itself is a direct threat to democracy in Ukraine, Poland, and elsewhere, and it is a clear example of the Kremlin's malign influence in Europe.

We have noted bipartisan criticism of the waivers, with statements published from Senate Foreign Relations Committee Chair Menendez and Ranking Member Risch, among others. We echo Senator Menendez's questions about what Germany will now offer in the way of support for Ukraine in its struggle against Kremlin aggression and what the Administration will do to bolster the U.S. relationship with Kyiv.

The CEEC is grateful for our recent interactions with your Office of Public Engagement and its offer to coordinate a meeting with your staff that handles policy for the CEE region. Our request for a discussion prior to your upcoming meeting with President Putin is even more urgent given this week's developments. We also hope a meeting after the June summits will be possible.

We thank you for your consideration of this request. The CEEC can be contacted at ceecoalition@gmail.com with any questions or comments. The CEEC and our member organizations listed below respectfully appreciate your prompt attention to this matter.

With highest regards,

The members of the Central and East European Coalition

Cc: The Honorable Antony J. Blinken, Secretary of State
The Honorable Jacob J. Sullivan, National Security Advisor

American Hungarian Federation • American Latvian Association in the U.S. • Armenian Assembly of American • Belarusian-American Association • Bulgarian Institute for Research and Analysis • Congress of Romanian Americans • Washington Chapter Czechoslovak National Council of America • Estonian American National Council • Georgian Association in the USA • Hungarian American Coalition • Joint Baltic American National Committee • Lithuanian American Council • Lithuanian American Community • National Federation of American Hungarians • Polish American Congress • Slovak League of America • Ukrainian Congress Committee of America • Ukrainian National Association