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by Emma Phillips

France will respond without weakness to Russia's act of war against Ukraine. This was the message from Emmanuel Macron last night, who was in Brussels at the European Council. The President pledged that Russia could expect tough sanctions that would hit its military, its economy and its energy sector.

Nonetheless, last night saw another dark day draw to a close in Ukraine, with explosions heard throughout the night in Kyiv. In his speech, Macron described Russia's actions as marking "a turning point in the history of Europe". In his televised address, Macron was standing before French, European Union and Ukrainian flags.

With the 27 member states of the European Union having approved sanctions that will hit Russia's financial, energy and transport sectors, the United States is also taking a stand. US President Joe Biden has announced a series of sanctions that intend to make "Vladimir Putin, a pariah on the international stage". The swift retaliation is in order for Russia's invasion of Ukraine to cost the country dearly, economically and strategically.

In the meantime, people across Europe are showing their solidarity and support for Ukraine. Yesterday, around 2,800 people gathered in a vigil at Paris' Place de la République, Ukrainian flags in hand. Paris' Hotel de ville has been lit with the colours of the Ukrainian flag, as is the Brandenburg Gate in Germany. In Russia itself, thousands of people took to the streets of Moscow and Saint Petersburg, pleading with Vladimir Putin to stop the war. At least a thousand Russians were arrested.

The law allowing anyone to change their name was approved yesterday by parliament. The new law will make it easier for adults who wish to change their name or add the name of a parent. Name change requests will be processed by local town halls, with no justifying documents needed. The law will take effect from July 1.

And finally? to football and Marseille won 3-0 against FC Qarabague yesterday, qualifying for the round of 16 of the Europa Conference league. The draw for the French clubs in the Europa Cup, Lyon and Monaco, will take place today.