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Negotiations on Visa-Free Travel Lumber On

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Russia and the EU again agreed to continue working on waiving visas at last weekend's Russia-EU summit in Nizhny Novgorod.

For Russia, visa-free travel is a matter of national prestige. It has already simplified visa regimes with several EU countries that have agreed to grant long-term multi-entry visas to Russians.

There are still several new EU states who would welcome the economic boost Russian tourists could provide. But even as this group tries to push negotiations forward, more affluent EU countries remain cautious about relaxing visa regimes.

Concerns about a possible influx of immigrants from the CIS and the tumultuous North Caucasus region remain a major sticking point. Policymakers are also afraid of giving Russian criminal groups access to the EU's vast resources.

If Russia wants to attract more wealthy European travelers, it needs to simplify its visa

requirements and relax internal administrative barriers. As Brussels has said, travelers in Russia should be as free of red tap-free as travelers in the EU.

The bottom line is that Russia still doesn't command trust from its EU partners. Until this changes, there can't be any real progress.

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