

Progress Reported in WTO Talks

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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GENEVA — Russia moved closer to joining the World Trade Organization on Friday after reaching an outline deal with the European Union, the most powerful bloc still hesitating about Russia's accession, trade sources said.

EU and Russian negotiators in Geneva have drafted an agreement over Russian rules governing investment in the country's booming auto sector, a trade source with knowledge of the talks said.

EU negotiators will now put the proposal to the bloc's 27 member states, which must approve Russian accession, the source said, with a possible outcome next week.

Economic Development Minister Elvira Nabiullina did not confirm that a final deal with Europe had been reached.

"The talks are continuing," she said. "We can say that there is a deal only when we have a final one."

Russia's \$1.2 trillion economy is the largest outside the WTO.

The EU gave its informal approval to Russian accession last December. Russia's announcement later that month of new rules designed to boost car sector jobs — as well as less sensitive issues such as farm import restrictions — renewed opposition in the EU and delayed agreement.

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