

Reform Quickly or Lose Deals, EU Tells Ukraine

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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KIEV — The European Union warned Ukraine on Thursday that time was running out to revive shelved deals on free trade and political association by meeting the bloc’s concerns over the jailing of opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko and bringing in reforms.

A senior EU official also made it clear the agreements would fall through if Ukraine joined the Russia-led customs union.

“We have a window of opportunity. But time is short,” Stefan Fuele, the European commissioner for enlargement and European neighborhood policy, said on a visit to Ukraine.

Brussels put off signing the landmark agreements after a Ukrainian court jailed former prime minister Tymoshenko, President Viktor Yanukovich’s main opponent, on an abuse-of-office charge in October 2011.

The EU says the Tymoshenko case and those of other prosecuted opposition politicians are examples of selective justice and are a barrier to Ukraine's ambition of European integration.

Two other issues raised by the bloc are related to the electoral system, which came under fire from Western observers following the parliamentary election in October, and legal reforms needed to bring Ukraine closer to EU standards.

Fuele, whose visit may set the tone of a Feb. 25 EU-Ukraine summit, said the two agreements could be signed at the EU's Eastern Partnership summit in November if Ukraine met the bloc's conditions.

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