

EU Seeks Delay in Air Passenger Data Sharing with Russia

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The European Union will ask Russia to delay the introduction of a decree allowing authorities there to collect data on European airline passengers because of doubts over whether the new rules respect EU law, EU officials said in advance of Tuesday's EU-Russia summit.

European airlines are not supposed to share passenger data without an international agreement setting out which authorities can access the data, for how long and why.

The European Union has signed such agreements with the United States and Australia to share information such as passengers' itineraries to help fight serious crime.

But Russia plans to introduce an airline data-sharing measure on July 1 without a prior agreement with the EU, raising concerns in the 27-nation bloc.

"We cannot have a situation in which European-registered airlines are compelled to do

something that is against EU law," an EU source said.

EU officials will formally ask the Russian government for a moratorium on the entry into force of the measure at an EU-Russia summit in Yekaterinburg, EU sources said. The two-day summit started on Monday evening.

"This could have an extremely damaging effect on travel between Russia and the EU," a second EU source said.

Under the decree, Russian authorities would collect the data of passengers on flights taking off or landing in Russia, or crossing its airspace, another EU official said.

A European Commission spokesman told reporters in Brussels on Monday that the EU executive regretted that Russian authorities did not tell them of their intention to request passenger data from airlines operating between the EU and Russia.

The Commission is not yet aware exactly what the Russian measure would require European airlines to do, which Russian authority would be collecting the information and for how long it would be kept.

"That is why we are worried," a Commission source said.

Passenger data sent by airlines to officials in the United States and Australia can also include ticket information, contact details, the travel company that made the booking and the means of payment, including credit card numbers.

Russian officials have indicated that the measure is aimed at improving their ability to track potentially suspicious travelers for security purposes.

Transportation Ministry officials could not immediately be reached for comment. A spokesman for the Russian mission to the EU said he could not comment.

If Russia agrees to suspend its decree, an EU-Russia data-sharing deal could take years to finalize.

The EU's data-sharing agreements with Australia and the United States were fraught with disagreement because lawmakers in the European Parliament and civil rights organizations campaigned for more restrictive terms such as reducing how long the data can be kept by other countries. A similar agreement with Canada is currently being finalized.

The Association of European Airlines said it would prefer a global treaty on passenger data to overcome any legal uncertainties. "Now we have to deal with this on a country-by-country basis and that is not really efficient," spokeswoman Viktoria Vajnai said.

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