

Europe Asks Russia to Ease Truck Checks

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia last week introduced cumbersome extra inspections for trucks and goods originating from Lithuania. **Andrei Makhonin**

The European Commission has called on Russia to stop supplementary border checks on Lithuanian truckers and passenger cars imposed in the last month as the countries spar over trade relations with Ukraine.

Russia and the European Union — of which Lithuania holds the rotating presidency — are each trying to convince Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine to join their respective trade blocs.

Russia last week introduced lengthy extra checks on trucks and goods originating from Lithuania, a former Soviet republic that has a large trucking and warehousing industry due to its strategic location between Russia and the EU.

"In our view, there appears to be no justification for such action by the Russian authorities,

which substantially disrupts trade," John Clancy, spokesman for Europe's trade commissioner, Karel De Gucht, said late Tuesday. "In this respect, we expect the Russian authorities to immediately lift such unjustified restrictions."

Russia started subjecting Lithuanian-registered passenger cars to lengthy border checks in August, causing the number of crossings to fall 90 percent.

Lithuania called for European action under World Trade Organization rules in a letter sent to the commission on Tuesday.

"We consider these restrictive measures applied by the Russian Federation absolutely ungrounded, discriminatory and violating commitments of the Russian Federation to the WTO," said the letter signed by Foreign Minister Linas Linkevicius.

Lithuania estimates that its transport firms and traders lose two million euros (\$2.7 million) a day due to the extra checks.

Lithuania is spearheading efforts by the EU to sign a free trade deal with Ukraine, as well as initial cooperation agreements with Moldova and Georgia at the Eastern Partnership summit in capital Vilnius in November.

Aleksandras Kondrusevicius, president of the Lithuanian haulers' association, said no trucks loaded in Lithuania had cleared customs in Russia since Thursday morning last week.

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