

EU Makes New Bid for Deal on Tymoshenko

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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KIEV — European Union mediators resumed a push Tuesday to secure the release of jailed Ukrainian opposition leader Yulia Tymoshenko, with EU politicians warning that time was running out before the signing of a landmark trade agreement next month.

The deal on association and free trade, to be signed at an EU-Ukraine summit Nov. 28, offers the former Soviet nation the chance of a historic shift to the west, away from Russia.

But the signatures hinge on the release of ex-Prime Minister Tymoshenko, a fierce opponent of President Viktor Yanukovich. She was jailed in 2011 for seven years for abuse of office after a trial that the EU says was political.

Her case has become symbolic for the 28-member EU what it calls "selective justice" in Ukraine, which it wants ended before the summit in Vilnius, Lithuania.

Last week, EU ministers warned Yanukovych that the clock was against him for reaching a deal that could ensure the signing.

Irish politician Pat Cox and former Polish President Aleksander Kwasniewski, who have shuttled in and out of Ukraine for more than a year and a half in an effort to nail down a deal, arrived in Kiev on Tuesday and met Andrei Klyuyev, a close aide of Yanukovych.

A statement from Klyuyev's office said only that they had discussed preparations for the signing in Vilnius.

The envoys are focusing attention on a compromise under which Tymoshenko, 52, can travel to EU member Germany to receive medical treatment for spinal problems.

Yanukovych has balked at granting her a pardon but says he will sign into law any draft from parliament that would allow her to take a break from prison and go abroad for treatment.

Her supporters are still pressing for a "full amnesty" so she can be cleared of her jail sentence and be free to return to politics one day. She said Friday, however, that she would accept any compromise agreeable to the two-man mediation mission.

"We are determined to do everything we can to encourage the Ukrainian authorities to find the solution acceptable to all sides in Ukraine and acceptable to any host state in the EU that would receive Mrs. Tymoshenko for treatment if she is released on humanitarian grounds," Cox said in Lithuania on Monday.

"This remains the core objective of our mission, and we are determined to do everything we can to make it succeed."

EU foreign ministers are due to give an assessment of Ukraine's record at a meeting Nov. 18 and decide whether it has met the key criteria, including ending "selective justice," to allow the signing to go ahead.

The EU is split between states, such as Poland, that stress the need to prize Ukraine away from Russia's embrace and those, like Sweden and the Netherlands, that insist the bloc should not compromise principles of civil rights and justice.

Cox and Kwasniewski may meet Yanukovych himself during their stay. They were also due to go to the northern town of Kharkiv to see Tymoshenko, who is in hospital under prison guard there.

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