

No Plans to Revise \$15Bln Ukraine Loan, Putin Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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BRUSSELS — President Vladimir Putin has said his country will stick to its commitments to lend debt-strapped Ukraine \$15 billion and reduce natural gas prices even if Ukraine's new Cabinet of ministers is filled with opposition politicians.

"We will stand by our partners in Ukraine no matter who leads the Ukrainian government and holds a dialogue with us," Putin told journalists Tuesday after talks with European Union leaders in Brussels.

Hours after Ukrainian Prime Minister Mykola Azarov announced his resignation on Tuesday, a senior official told The Wall Street Journal that Russia could reconsider its multibillion-dollar bailout offer to Ukraine.

The deal marked a decisive restoration of ties between Ukraine and Russia that had been strained by Kiev's previously stated intention to seek a closer economic relationship with

the EU.

First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, however, told reporters that Russia could revise its agreements with Ukraine should the new government announce "another agenda."

"It is important to, together with the Ukrainian government, restore economic opportunities and all the cooperation projects that have been announced lately. We need to start fulfilling them," Shuvalov said. He asked reporters not to speculate on the issue.

Putin told journalists that Russia's economic assistance was not designed to support a particular government but was an act of brotherly love for the people in neighboring Ukraine.

"You know, there is such a saying that when masters fall out, their men get the clout — this means that common people suffer. We want a minimal burden on citizens," the Russian president said.

Putin said crisis-hit Ukraine had asked Moscow to delay the payment for the gas it received on reduced prices this year. Ukraine owes Russia \$2.7 billion for supplies of natural gas last year, Gazprom said.

"We agreed that this debt will be paid off. ... This is still not happening," he said, adding that the nonpayment was creating financial problems for energy giant Gazprom.

Russia will be monitoring the economic situation in Ukraine because it wants guarantees that it will get the money back.

"Therefore, it is important for us what economic policy they are planning to apply regardless of what political forces will lead the government," Putin said.

Speaking about ways to resolve the deepening political crisis created by protests in the former Soviet nation, Putin said the Ukrainian people could manage without any foreign mediators.

"In any case, Russia will never interfere in this," he said.

Putin said he could not imagine how European partners would react if a Russian foreign minister came to crisis-hit Greece or Cyprus and addressed a crowd of protesters there.

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