

# Netherlands Postpones Trade Mission to Russia Over Ukraine Crisis

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Netherlands has postponed a four-day trade mission to Russia planned for next month because of Moscow's annexation of Crimea and increased tensions in eastern Ukraine.

The three-day mission, scheduled for May 13, had intended to focus on energy and would have brought together high level government officials and corporate executives from both countries.

The Dutch have been looking to expand economic ties with Russia, a big export market where the Netherlands is already a leading investor.

"(The mission) has been postponed. The cabinet made the decision today, based on recent developments in Ukraine, particularly in the east of the country," the Dutch Foreign Ministry said Wednesday in a statement.

It set no new date for the trip.

"The European Union is reviewing its ties with Russia," Dutch Foreign Minister Frans Timmermans said. "A successful mission under the current circumstances is not possible."

The EU imposed travel bans and asset freezes on a group of Russian officials after Moscow's annexation of Crimea and has threatened to expand the sanctions if the crisis escalates.

NATO says Russia has massed tens of thousands of troops on Ukraine's eastern border, though on Wednesday Moscow denied they posed any threat to the country.

The crisis has prompted calls for the EU to reduce its reliance on Russian gas and oil, though that would inflict pain on European consumers, including in the Netherlands.

For the Dutch, long-term cooperation with Russia's Gazprom would secure gas flows as its own natural gas reserves dwindle. The country is expected to become a net importer of gas by 2025.

In 2013, around 18 billion euros worth of energy was purchased from Russia, more than half of it crude oil.

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