

New Ukrainian President Wants Prompt EU Trade Deal

May 29, 2014



Petro Poroshenko speaks during his news conference in Kiev, Ukraine.

Ukraine's newly elected president, Petro Poroshenko, wants to sign a landmark trade deal with the European Union soon after his inauguration as head of state, his office said, after EU officials suggested there might be some delay.

The proposed trade agreement with the EU has been at the heart of Ukraine's political crisis over the past six months since former Moscow-backed president Viktor Yanukovich turned his back on the accord at the last minute.

His decision to jilt the EU and seek a \$15 billion bailout from Russia triggered protests that led to him being ousted.

Poroshenko, a billionaire chocolate factory owner who won an unprecedented first round victory in Ukraine's presidential election on Sunday, has pledged to align his former Soviet republic of 45 million people with the EU.

"Petro Poroshenko considers it essential not to delay the signing of the economic part of the association agreement between Ukraine and the European Union," his office said Wednesday in a statement.

"In his opinion, such a signing could take place immediately after the inauguration of the new president of Ukraine."

No date has yet been set for the inauguration, but it is expected to take place by mid-June.

Earlier Wednesday, an EU official said Ukrainian authorities had indicated to the 28-nation bloc that they would need "a bit of time to see how they want to proceed [with the EU trade agreement]".

EU officials said Poroshenko felt he needed breathing space to deal with Ukraine's internal problems and did not want to appear forced into signing the agreement prematurely.

Military Offensive

But the officials said the issue was about timing, and there was no indication Poroshenko was having second thoughts about signing. "We don't get a sense of foot-dragging," one said.

A statement on Ukraine issued by EU leaders on Tuesday did not refer to the agreement or set a target date for signing.

Since the election, Ukrainian government forces have mounted a major military offensive against pro-Russian separatists in Donetsk in eastern Ukraine who have established a "people's republic" and refuse to accept Kiev's authority.

"The signing and entry into force of the agreement, which in essence is part of a plan for the modernization of Ukraine, and its implementation, would present a possibility to introduce anti-corruption measures and a package of reforms in the near future," the statement by Poroshenko's office said:

"Petro Poroshenko hopes that the EU and its leaders, who have consistently supported the European choice of Ukrainian citizens ... will also support this position," it said.

EU leaders signed chapters of the agreement with Ukraine dealing with political cooperation in March, lending support to Ukraine soon after Crimea was occupied by Russian forces.

They delayed signing the more substantial parts concerning free trade until Ukraine had elected a new president, although they did grant temporary trade benefits.

Some EU officials have expressed hope it could be signed at an EU summit in Brussels on June 27 when Georgia and Moldova plan to sign similar agreements.

See also:

[Ukraine Needs Time to Sign Trade Deal With Europe, EU says](https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/05/29/new-ukrainian-president-wants-prompt-eu-trade-deal-a)

Original url:

<https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2014/05/29/new-ukrainian-president-wants-prompt-eu-trade-deal-a>

