

***Lithuania supports Polish veto of EU-Russia negotiations - Lithuanian PM***

VIENNA. APRIL 23. INTERFAX CENTRAL EUROPE - Lithuania supports the Polish veto to negotiations on a new partnership and cooperation agreement between the EU and Russia, but has no preconditions of its own, Prime Minister Gediminas Kirkilas told Interfax Central Europe on the sidelines of the Europe-Russia Forum in Vienna Monday.

"There are no preconditions from us," Kirkilas said. "I think we have time to find [a] solution."

Poland lodged its veto in November last year, when the European Commission was scheduled to start talks with Russia, demanding that Moscow drop its embargo on food imports from the country, imposed a year earlier amid claims of a failure to meet Russian phytosanitary standards. Poland has rejected the claims from the outset, while the commission has said, following joint inspections of meat plants, that Russian concerns had been adequately addressed. The Kremlin dismissed the European Commission's findings as "unsatisfactory" and called for fresh inspections.

Lithuania has been the one EU member state to openly support the Polish position on the issue and, at one point, threatened to impose its own veto, in case Poland loosens its stance.

While Kirkilas sounded a more conciliatory note Monday, he also said Lithuania expects Russia to resume crude-oil deliveries via pipeline to Mazeikiu Nafta, a refiner. Transneft, Russia's pipeline operator, halted deliveries last year, after Lithuania agreed to sell the company to Poland's PKN Orlen. The stoppage was blamed on a pipeline leak.

"We believe the obstacles to EU-Russian negotiations will soon be removed and negotiations will begin," Kirkilas said. "We also believe oil transport by pipeline to the Mazeikiu refinery will be resumed before negotiations begin. We strongly believe in solidarity and cooperation of all European Union partners."

AN/JT

For further information please e-mail [newsroom@interfax.pl](mailto:newsroom@interfax.pl) or phone (+48) 22 630 83 88.