

EU Plans to Conclude Gazprom Investigation by Spring

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The European Commission expects to wrap up an investigation by the spring into suspected anti-competitive market practices by Russian gas export monopoly Gazprom, the European Union energy commissioner said.

The Commission's action against Gazprom is likely to ratchet up the tension between Europe and Russia, which has criticized EU attempts to boost competition in the energy market and reduce its reliance on Russian supplies.

"I would say spring next year. We need some more months for investigation on an expert level," European Energy Commissioner Gunther Oettinger told journalists in Lithuania's capital Monday when asked about the deadline to complete the investigation.

Gazprom has said the investigation is a politically motivated attempt to bring down EU gas prices.

"It is an investigation by our experts, and it is an objective investigation and not a political investigation," Oettinger said.

EU Competition Commissioner Joaquin Almunia, who is in charge of the investigation, said in October that the EU's executive was preparing a charge sheet against Gazprom, known as a statement of objections.

The commission sets out its concerns and whether it intends to levy a fine in the charge sheet. Companies are usually given one to two months to reply.

Unless the two sides reach a settlement, EU regulators would then typically take a further six months at least to make a decision.

Officials in Lithuania, which holds the EU's rotating presidency, said the Commission might present the statement of objections to Gazprom this month.

The Commission has the power to fine companies up to 10 percent of annual turnover if they are found to be in breach of EU competition rules.

It has fined Microsoft Corp more than 2.2 billion euros (\$3 billion) in the past decade for anti-competitive behavior.

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