

Belarus Pledges to Behave Responsibly With \$2Bln Russian Loan

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Just days after offering a \$15 billion bailout to Ukraine, President Vladimir Putin has announced that Russia will lend \$2 billion to Belarus to help prop up its economy.

"The Russian government has decided to assist its Belarussian colleagues in connection with what is happening on the world's markets," Putin told reporters after a meeting with Belarussian President Alexander Lukashenko.

Lukashenko, who also spoke after the meeting of the Russia-Belarus State Council in the Kremlin on Wednesday, pledged that Belarus would behave responsibly with the loan. He said the country would not "eat it away for no special reason."

Belarus will receive the funds in the form of a 10-year intergovernmental loan that will not be extracted from Russia's state budget, said Russian Finance Minister Anton Siluanov.

Putin underscored that Russia remains Belarus' main investor — with capital investments totaling \$5.8 billion — and said that trade was gradually increasing even though this year's bilateral trade figures were "more modest" than last year's.

Russia's loan to Belarus was announced a week after Putin and his Ukrainian counterpart, Viktor Yanukovich, reached a \$15 billion bailout agreement for Ukraine's economy. The Ukrainian deal, which followed a decision by Yanukovich to ditch a partnership agreement with the European Union, has fueled worries among some Ukrainians that their country is being drawn closer into Russia's orbit.

Putin also used the Russia-Belarus State Council to propose the establishment of an interregional forum between the two countries that could be inaugurated in February 2014.

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