

Greece Has Not Asked Russia for Aid — Official

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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People walk past the parliament building in central Athens.

Greece has not asked Russia for financial aid and wants to resolve its debt problems within the European Union, a Greek government official said on Wednesday.

"We have not asked for financial aid," the official said before talks in Moscow between Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras and Russian President Vladimir Putin. "We want to solve our issues of debt... within the Euro zone."

The Greek government official said the two leaders would discuss economic cooperation and bilateral investment and exports, but made clear that Greece would do so within the framework of the EU.

"Greece knows what to do within the EU framework but every country also has the sovereign right to look after and improve its bilateral relations," the official said.

European Parliament President Martin Schulz warned Tsipras before the visit not to break with the EU line on sanctions towards Russia over its role in the Ukraine crisis.

Tsipras's government also said before the visit that it would not seek aid from Moscow at the meeting, but has failed to reach a deal with its EU/IMF creditors to unlock fresh funds.

The Greek official expressed optimism that the Euro Working Group, which prepares meetings and decisions of euro zone finance ministers, would pave the way for a positive outcome at a coming Eurogroup meeting.

Russia's agriculture minister said on Tuesday that Moscow could consider removing Greece, Hungary and Cyprus from its ban on most Western food imports, imposed in retaliation for the Western sanctions over Ukraine.

Russian business daily Kommersant also reported Tuesday, citing a source in the Russian government, that Moscow may offer Greece a discount on gas deliveries and new loans.

Russia's state-controlled gas producer Gazprom and the Energy Ministry declined comment on the report.

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