

LUKoil Seeks EU's Help Battling Romanian Money Laundering Charges

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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An LUKoil employee works in the control room of the Budennovskaya thermal power plant.

BRUSSELS — LUKoil, Russia's second-largest oil producer, called for the European Commission to help it fight charges of money laundering and tax evasion involving its Romanian refinery, a senior LUKoil executive said on Wednesday.

Last week, Romanian prosecutors seized about 600 million euros (\$657.36 million) worth of fixed assets and inventory belonging to Petrotel, LUKoil's Romanian subsidiary.

LUKoil's vice president for oil refining, Thomas Mueller, said up to 2.2 billion euros (\$2.41 billion) of assets, including bank accounts in the Netherlands and Britain, could be seized.

Mueller, who is due to meet with energy officials from the European Commission in Brussels this week, acknowledged there's "no straight line from the commission to a Romanian municipal court." But he said the Romanian accusations were unjustified.

"We would like to see European involvement in this because we have a small, relatively minor court making huge decisions that impact not only Romanian assets, but now European assets," Mueller said at a news conference. "We don't think that's right."

Mueller said the case is important because of LUKoil's 9 billion euros (\$9.86 billion) worth of assets in the EU and the Balkans.

LUKoil President Vagit Alekperov wrote a letter to Sefcovic last week asking for "a more open investigation, as the stable work of the refinery affects oil products supply in all of the European Union."

The commission confirmed that it had received LUKoil's letter and was investigating the matter, but had no further comment.

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