

# *Cuba and European Union to Hold Fresh Round of Talks to Normalize Relations*

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Havana, March 4 (RHC) — Cuba and the European Union will hold a third round of negotiations on Wednesday and Thursday in a bid to normalize relations. "Our agenda is focused on cooperation with the ambition to start dealing with the two other major topics -- trade and political dialogue -- and set the stage for the next steps," a EU source said.

European chief negotiator Christian Leffler and Cuban Deputy Foreign Minister Abelardo Moreno will lead the negotiations. The EU and Cuba have not had normal diplomatic relations since 2003, however Cuba enjoys friendly ties with most of the 28 members of the bloc.

EU member states voted last year for the opening of discussions aimed at achieving an "agreement on political dialogue and cooperation."

The EU and Cuba held the two previous rounds of talks in Brussels in August 2014 and in Havana in April last year.

A potential agreement between the two sides will facilitate bilateral trade. According to the latest Cuban government figures, the EU is Cuba's second biggest trading partner behind Venezuela, with exchanges

valued at \$3.7 billion in 2012.

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