



EUROPEAN UNION

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## **The EU and Russia hold human rights consultations**

On 20 July 2012, the European Union and the Russian Federation held their fifteenth round of human rights consultations in Brussels. The consultations were held in an open atmosphere. The EU and Russia focussed in particular on the work of civil society in light of the recent legal developments in Russia affecting NGOs receiving foreign funding, tightening rules on freedom of assembly, reinstating slander as a criminal offence as well as the strengthening of the state control over the internet. The EU and Russia also discussed developments in the rule of law, notably the investigation into the death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky in 2009, the reform of the judiciary and the implementation of European Court of Human Rights judgements. As usual, both sides also explored ways to improve their cooperation in international fora (UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council; OSCE and Council of Europe).

The EU raised a number of concerns related to specific human rights issues in the Russian Federation, including issues pertaining to freedom of expression and freedom of the media including online media, LGBT rights, freedom of religion or belief (notably the implementation of anti-extremism legislation), as well as continuing intimidation and impunity, especially regarding cases involving human rights defenders (e.g. Natalia Estemirova), journalists (e.g. Anna Politkovskaya) and lawyers in the Northern Caucasus. Both sides agreed to provide further clarification on individual cases of concern.

In line with established practice and so as to incorporate the views of civil society into the consultations, the EU met representatives of Russian NGOs in Moscow and St Petersburg on 24-27 April and international NGOs in Brussels on 19 June.

**P R E S S**

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The next round of EU-Russia human rights consultations should take place in autumn 2012. The EU has restated its wish to hold the next round in Moscow, as these consultations have so far only been organised in the European Union.

Previous Human Rights Consultations:

[29 November 2011](#)

[4 May 2011](#)

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