



EUROPEAN UNION

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The European Union – Russian Federation human rights consultations

On 17 May 2013, the European Union and the Russian Federation held their seventeenth round of human rights consultations in Brussels, allowing the EU to raise its growing concerns on the developments affecting human rights in the Russian Federation.

Both sides discussed at length the worrying situation of civil society in the Russian Federation, in particular the wave of restrictive legislation, the recent checks conducted on the basis of the “foreign agents” law and the ongoing court cases. In that context, the EU confirmed its intention to continue to follow closely developments affecting NGOs as a whole in the Russian Federation and expressed among others its concerns at the fining of election monitoring organisation GOLOS and at the charges brought against ADC Memorial in St Petersburg. Russia expressed openness in providing detailed clarification as to the implementation of that law and to pursue this dialogue in more depth on the basis of specific EU observations with the Ministry of Justice in Moscow.

The EU raised a number of specific human rights issues in the Russian Federation, enquired about the impact of Russia's efforts to fight against torture and to foster the independence of the judiciary in light of the recent visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on the independence of judges and lawyers. The EU asked Russia to ensure that defence lawyers are able to work freely, in particular in the Northern Caucasus. The EU also called on Russia to refrain from adopting a federal legislation on “homosexual propaganda”, which it believed could increase discrimination and violence against LGBTI individuals. Russia shared its concerns on the situation of non-citizens in the European Union and on the legislation regulating the use of minority languages in education systems.

P R E S S

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The EU enquired about several ongoing judicial processes, including the posthumous prosecution of Sergei Magnitsky, the trial of Alexei Navalny and the situation of the people criminally charged related to events on Bolotnaya square in May 2012.

The EU and Russia took the opportunity of the consultations to reaffirm the importance of the human rights system both at UN and regional levels. They exchanged their views on the on-going priorities and discussed ways to improve their understanding and cooperation in international fora (UN General Assembly and Human Rights Council; OSCE and Council of Europe). The importance of taking into account recommendations and best practices of international human rights bodies and mechanisms on recent legislation and forthcoming initiatives was well noted. Satisfaction was expressed at the conclusion of the negotiations of the EU accession to the European Convention on Human Rights.

Stepping up of cooperation at the bilateral or multilateral levels on issues such as gender, notably violence against women, violence against children or fight against corruption were considered promising. Practical cooperation could be sought on anti-discrimination issues.

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 on 26 April and international NGOs in Brussels on 17 April.

The next round of EU-Russia human rights consultations should take place in fall 2013. The EU has restated its wish to hold the next round in Moscow, where it would benefit from the participation of relevant line ministries and agencies, as these consultations have so far only been organised in the European Union.

Previous Human Rights Consultations:

7 December 2012

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/134146.pdf

20 July 2012

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/132000.pdf

29 November 2011

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/126510.pdf

4 May 2011

http://www.consilium.europa.eu/uedocs/cms_Data/docs/pressdata/EN/foraff/121874.pdf