



EUROPEAN UNION

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The European Union-Russian Federation human rights consultations

On 29 November 2011, the European Union and the Russian Federation held their fourteenth round of human rights consultations in Brussels. The consultations were held in a frank and open atmosphere. The EU and Russia focussed in particular on the working of civil society, notably in the context of the forthcoming elections in Russia, rule of law, as well as cooperation in international fora and the fight against discrimination.

Russia presented the legislative changes introduced over the last months and the ongoing modernisation of the legal environment aiming at improving transparency, increasing public scrutiny and strengthening the rule of law across Russia. Russia stressed its commitment to increase the protection of journalists and human rights defenders, and in response to the EU's concerns on the situation in detention facilities, outlined the ongoing reforms in the penitentiary system.

The EU raised a number of concerns related to specific human rights issues in the Russian Federation, including issues pertaining to the situation of Roma, LGBT rights, stateless persons, the freedom of association, expression and assembly as well as continuing impunity, especially regarding cases involving human rights defenders and journalists. Regarding the Northern Caucasus, the EU touched on the issues of abductions and enforced disappearances, forced evictions and women's rights.

Both sides provided clarifications on individual cases of concern in the EU and Russia, notably on the probe into the death of lawyer Sergei Magnitsky in 2009. There was an exchange on how the EU and Russia could increase their practical cooperation in a number of areas, including the development in Russia of a broad anti-discrimination legislation. The EU and Russia further discussed their cooperation with international human rights bodies, and agreed to strengthen their exchange of views in international fora.

P R E S S

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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 prior to the consultations.

The next round of EU-Russia human rights consultations should take place in spring 2012. The EU hopes to be able to conduct the next round of its human rights consultations in Moscow as these consultations have so far only been organised in the European Union. The EU also hopes it will be able to meet, in that context, with a wider Russian delegation, as whereas the EU delegation is composed of relevant officials from the European External Action Service and from the Directorates General for Home Affairs and Justice of the European Commission, the Russian delegation is currently limited to the representatives Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs.
