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Kudrin Creates Committee of Civil Initiatives

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Former Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin **Andrei Makhonin**

Former Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin said Thursday that he will lead a civil society organization of talented professionals that will try to influence government policy with new ideas.

The newly formed group, the Committee of Civil Initiatives, will be a "community of citizens," Kudrin told reporters.

He said that the committee would bring together professionals working in key areas — the economy, science and education — on a non-party basis and create an infrastructure to support civic initiatives.

"Society wants to influence the government's decisions," he said. "We must help with the implementation of this task."

The first issues that the group plans to tackle are ways to support an independent judicial

system, tranparency in the budget drafting process, and public access to quality medications.

Kudrin said the organization would attempt to create new solutions to existing problems.

"Most likely our reports will be an alternative" to the government's measures, Kudrin said.

He said the group was not created with the authorities' approval and could potentially support candidates in regional elections. Financing of the organization will be handled through a fund that Kudrin announced earlier.

Several public figures have expressed support for the initiative, including Kirov Governor Nikita Belykh, former Union of Right Forces co-leader Leonid Gozman, and a number of economists, political analysts and prominent media figures, including Vladimir Pozner.

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