

No Time Change This Fall

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When Europe turns its clocks one hour back this Sunday, two countries are going to have it their own way: Russia and Belarus will move out of step with much of the northern hemisphere by sticking with "eternal summer time," introduced last year by then-President Dmitry Medvedev.

Despite attempts by the State Duma to turn the clocks back again to winter time, the government is adamant on keeping summer time.

Prime Minister Medvedev's spokeswoman, Natalya Timakova, said Thursday that there are no plans to change the status quo. "The Duma bill has been recalled, and the government will not initiate any change in the law," she told The Moscow Times.

Medvedev announced in February 2011 that the country would abolish daylight-saving time by keeping clocks permanently set one hour forward across its nine time zones from Vladivostok to Kaliningrad. Belarus followed suit soon after.

While the twice-yearly switch had been unpopular in the country, the reform has not proven popular either, especially because it introduced an extra hour of darkness during winter mornings in northern regions.

A [poll](#) released earlier this month by the state-run VTsIOM agency found that 30 percent of respondents approved the reform, 29 percent said they favor permanent winter time, and 24 percent said they would like to return to the previous system of switching twice a year.

The opt-out from daylight-saving time also creates headaches for travelers and anybody with international ties because the country's time difference changes twice a year.

From Sunday onward, Ukraine and the Baltic states will be two hours behind Moscow time instead of one, most of Western Europe three hours instead of two, while Britain and Portugal will be four hours behind.

U.S. states that observe daylight-saving time will shift on Nov. 4.

The Duma created considerable confusion last month when United Russia, the party headed by Medvedev, backed a bill that would move clocks backward once more — preferably this Sunday together with the rest of Europe.

The move was also seen as another blow to Medvedev, whose liberal reforms are currently being taken apart by lawmakers and the Kremlin. President Vladimir Putin had indicated that it was OK to move back the clocks if people felt the reform was a mistake.

But United Russia then changed tack, saying that instead of a Duma bill the government should introduce the change by decree. The bill's sponsor, Health Committee chairman Sergei Kalashnikov, quickly withdrew the draft.

Kalashnikov, a member of the nationalist Liberal Democrat party, has seemingly not given up. He told RIA-Novosti earlier this week that the country might reintroduce winter time before the end of the year. "The date for this need not be this Sunday because that is only a provisional date," he was quoted as saying.

But government spokeswoman Timakova made it clear that a new Duma bill was not enough. "There also needs to be a public discussion," she said.

Kalashnikov was not available for comment Thursday.

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