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Gay Marriage Threatens Adoptions to Britain, France

By Jonathan Earle

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A woman proposing marriage to her civil partner Tuesday in London. **Luke MacGregor**

Adoptive parents in France and Britain could find it more difficult to adopt Russian orphans now that parliaments in both countries have approved same-sex marriage, the Foreign Ministry's human rights ombudsman said Wednesday.

"The legalization of same-sex marriage in Britain and France reduces the opportunities for citizens of these countries to adopt Russian children," Konstantin Dolgov wrote on his Twitter blog.

Gay marriage is illegal in Russia, and officials have said same-sex couples should not be allowed to adopt children, a position that was reiterated by children's ombudsman Pavel Astakhov in an interview published by Rossiiskaya Gazeta on Monday.

"The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child says every child has the right to a mom

and dad. Adults don't have the right to a child," he said.

In fact, the convention, which entered into force in 1990, does not contain the words "mother" or "father" — except a clause about pre- and post-natal care for mothers — and refers only to "parents" and "legal guardians" without specifying their gender.

The prospect of same-sex marriage in France has also caused some Russian lawmakers to question the future of a bilateral adoptions agreement between the two countries signed in November 2011.

State Duma Speaker Sergei Naryshkin said officials were discussing whether it would be necessary to conclude a "more comprehensive" agreement on "family issues," Interfax reported late Tuesday.

Officials are discussing amendments to the existing agreement, not a new agreement, Deputy Yelena Mizulina, head of the Duma's Family, Women and Children Committee, told Interfax on Wednesday.

France was the fourth-most-popular destination for outgoing Russian orphans in 2011, with French parents adopting 283 and British parents taking in 48 of the 3,400 Russian children adopted by foreigners that year, according to government statistics.

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