

United Russia Conference Lauds Results of Party's Work

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The ruling United Russia party kicked off a massive two-day forum with members from regional branches in Moscow on Friday, where it lauded its social and infrastructure projects, some three months before September regional and municipal elections.

Raising the forum's profile, Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev, who chairs the party, addressed the convention on Saturday, joining the chorus of praise for the party's activities.

He set several tasks for the party ahead of the elections, including to support healthcare, education, childcare, housing, elderly Russians, small business and agriculture, as well as to build new roads and to promote all of its projects to the community.

According to the party's website, the party is implementing 45 national and 439 regional projects, including both infrastructural and social projects.

The [projects](#) will serve as the basis for the party's campaigning ahead of September elections, along with President Vladimir Putin's first seven decrees issued after his inauguration last May regulating social and economic policy, healthcare, education and science, housing and utilities, Kommersant reported Saturday.

The party's work so far on the projects "overall looks quite commendable and, most important, it is bringing about definite results," Medvedev said, according to a transcript on the government's [website](#).

The prime minister praised the party for contributing to the modern equipping of medical facilities and the modernization of regional healthcare programs; for achievements in education reform; for lifting bureaucratic barriers for people seeking to adopt children; and for proposing to spend an additional 42 billion rubles (\$1.3 billion) on the agricultural industry, a move which Medvedev himself voice strong support for.

"I am sure that we have all the possibilities and all the grounds to claim victory and win [in September], but the result depends on our work," Medvedev [said](#).

Gubernatorial [elections](#) are set to take place on Sept. 8 in seven regions, including the Moscow region; 16 regions will elect their legislative assemblies; eight regional centers will vote for their mayors; and 12 regions will elect municipal deputies.

In November, United Russia will hold a national congress to sum up the results of this year's work and draw up plans for next year, Interfax reported Saturday.

"I hope that when we meet at the congress, we will be able to congratulate one another on our victory," Medvedev told the forum.

He also defended the party against criticism for spending state money on its projects, saying its status as the ruling party gave it the right to do so.

United Russia is formally referred to as the ruling party and a number of government ministers are members, but the party doesn't form the government, which, in accordance with the [Constitution](#), is appointed by the president by proposal of the prime minister.

Many officials join the party only after being elected.

At a United Russia convention in December, Medvedev ordered the party to revise its projects so that they would "correlate with the current possibilities and plans for the country's development," the prime minister's [website](#) reported at the time.

As the result, by the weekend's forum, United Russia had decided to cut the number of its federal projects from 45 to 43, and the number of its regional projects by about 100, Olga Batalina, deputy secretary of the party's general council and a State Duma deputy, told [Vedomosti](#) on Thursday.

The party has seen its membership growth decline in recent years, from 40,000 applicants per month in 2007 and 2008 to about 80,000 people over a year and a half period since the 2011 State Duma elections, which brought victory to the party, [Kommersant](#) reported Friday.

Among Russia's population of 143 million, more than 2 million are United Russia members, according to data from the [Justice Ministry](#).

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