

Russia to Increase 'Soft Power' Budget to Improve Image Abroad

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russia will increase spending on foreign cultural and educational projects as part of the Kremlin-backed 'Soft Power' concept aimed at improving the country's image abroad, a news report said Wednesday.

In May President Vladimir Putin signed an order giving Rosstrudnichestvo responsibility for the spending and sanctioning an increase in its budget from 2 billion rubles (\$62 million) to 9.5 billion rubles by 2020, according to Kommersant.

Currently, most of Russia's funding in this sphere is given to international organizations, such as the World Bank, which then invest the money as they see fit. As a result, Russia does not have control of its funding and doesn't get the credit it deserves, according to a source at the collaboration agency Rosstrudnichestvo.

Last year the Finance Ministry spent more than \$500 million on a "program of international

development assistance" through international organizations.

"In African countries nobody knows that there is donor help from Russia," the source said. "We are investing money in all over the world at the discretion of the international organizations that our money goes."

A grant of \$50 million will go toward financing projects in poor sub-Saharan African countries. Russia also donates \$32 million annually to support educational projects in countries like Mozambique, Vietnam and Angola.

Konstantin Kosachev, head of the collaboration agency, said that supporting professional education in countries that supply migrants to Russia, such as Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan, is among the priorities. "We will try to establish a model that makes use of every ruble to benefit the recipient countries, and Russia's image," Kosachev, a former diplomat, said.

However, Harvard political analyst Joseph S. Nye who invented the term "soft power" in 1990 has recently said that countries like Russia and China do not understand the concept. "China and Russia make the mistake of thinking that government is the main instrument of soft power," he wrote in a recent essay in Foreign Policy magazine published in April. He added that the propaganda should be avoided as it is not perceived as being trustworthy.

Established in 2008, Rossotrudnichestvo is loosely modeled on the United States Agency for International Development and has several branches in 73 countries.

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