

Putin Holds First Meeting of Economic Council

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Former Finance Minister Alexei Kudrin, brimming with enthusiasm about breathing life into the gasping Russian economy, returned to the Kremlin's policy-making table on Friday for an inaugural meeting of President Vladimir Putin's economic council.

The meeting, which lasted about four hours, did not produce any specific recommendations and was predominantly academic in nature, Economic Development Minister Alexei Ulyukayev said in a statement published on the Kremlin's website.

Participants also did not discuss specific issues, whether it be the revocation of Master Bank's license by regulators on Wednesday or a new policy regarding the initiation of tax-related criminal cases, Ulyukayev said, according to Vedomosti.

Ulyukayev said the advisory body, which Putin created in July 2012, would use future meetings to hammer out practical recommendations that Putin could use to make specific orders.

But the meeting did cast the spotlight on Kudrin, fired for insubordination by then-President Dmitry Medvedev in September 2011, and promised to renew talk about his possible return to government.

Kudrin, a widely admired economist once considered the third most powerful person in the Kremlin, lost his job amid pre-election angling for the post of prime minister. The position ended up going to Medvedev, and Kudrin took a job as a dean and professor at St. Petersburg State University. Speculation has quickened in recent months that Putin might ask Kudrin to replace Medvedev, who is struggling to resuscitate Russia's lackluster economy.

After Friday's meeting, Kudrin applauded the economic council's role in developing economic policy and said it should help Putin form an economic agenda "aimed at remaking the model for economic development and resuming economic growth."

Medvedev was notably absent from the meeting, having not been invited by Putin, the council's chairman, to become a member of the presidium. Putin will be responsible for deciding whether to invite Medvedev to participate at future meetings, Kudrin said.

Other government officials are represented on the council, including First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov, Central Bank chief Elvira Nabiullina, Finance Minister Anton Siluanov and Audit Chamber head Tatyana Golikova.

"They all are experienced people," Kudrin said.

Kudrin took his first step back toward state service in September when Sberbank chief German Gref announced that he would lead the bank's strategic committee, replacing Ulyukayev.

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