

# FIFA Could Exclude Two Russian Cities From World Cup 2018

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Russia's President Vladimir Putin (2nd L) talks to people as he visits a construction site of the stadium which is expected to host soccer matches of the 2018 World Cup in the city of Samara.

FIFA has encouraged Russia to reduce its number of World Cup host cities from 11 to nine, Russian Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko said Tuesday in comments carried by Interfax.

FIFA has voiced a preference for the 2018 World Cup to be held in 10 stadiums across nine Russian cities, leaving two planned host cities and two stadiums out of the equation, Mutko said, adding that a final decision regarding the host cities' fate has yet to be made.

"We will once again tour the 11 cities [that are currently set to host World Cup matches], and then a decision will most likely be made," Interfax quoted Mutko as saying. "Everything will depend on how things move along and how the cities view the post-tournament [development] program."

Without providing a timeline for a decision, FIFA reiterated that the proposed exclusion of two of Russia's World Cup host cities was still under discussion.

FIFA president Sepp Blatter met with President Vladimir Putin and sports officials in Sochi over the weekend to discuss "a possible reduction of the number of venues for the 2018 FIFA World Cup," according to a statement released by the association on Monday. The statement did not go into specifics about which cities might be excluded.

At the closing news conference of the 2014 Brazil World Cup in July, Blatter said FIFA would hold meetings in September to discuss a reduction of the number of stadiums to be used for Russia's tournament, an announcement that had stunned Russia's World Cup organizers who had outlined their plan to host in 12 stadiums across 11 cities — including Moscow, St. Petersburg and Kazan — two days earlier.

Amid uncertainties regarding the construction of some of Russia's World Cup stadiums, Mutko announced earlier this month that 64 training facilities and 102 training pitches would need to be built to accommodate the 32 teams that will participate in the tournament.

Kommersant reported in July that the cities of Volgograd, Kaliningrad and Yekaterinburg would be the most likely candidates to be cut from Russia's World Cup experience in light of issues regarding the construction of stadiums, insufficiently developed transportation infrastructure and the scarcity of hotel rooms.

Meanwhile, the Rostov region announced Tuesday that the construction of a World Cup stadium in Rostov-on-Don would cost an estimated 21.2 billion rubles (\$586 million), Interfax reported.

Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev urged officials earlier this month to keep World Cup spending in check. In June, Medvedev said that the 2018 World Cup would cost \$20 billion, including \$13 billion from the federal budget. The most recent cost estimate is twice the amount that originally had been estimated when Russia bid for the tournament in 2009.

**See also:**

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