

Russia Ranked Least Prosperous Country in Europe

November 04, 2014



A global index of wellbeing and prosperity released by a London-based firm has ranked Russia the least prosperous European nation this year, placing it 68th among 142 of the world's countries.

Russia fell eight places from last year in the 2014 edition of the Legatum Institute Prosperity Index — a yearly rating of countries' performance across several categories of wellbeing, including economic indicators such as gross domestic product, but also levels of safety, freedom, health and happiness.

This year, Russia ranked the lowest in Europe and lagged substantially behind Belarus — a country that has been dubbed the last dictatorship on the continent and placed 53rd this year.

Russia also did worse than former Soviet countries in Central Asia — Kazakhstan, which ranked 55th, and Uzbekistan, 57th.

Russia's highest ranking came in the education category, where it scored 37th in the world — a drop from 26th place last year.

It scored lowest — 124th — in the personal freedom category, which rated countries on such issues as civil liberties and freedom of choice. Last year, Russia scored 114th in that category.

Another category in which Russia ranked low was governance, which rated countries on such issues as the rule of law and inhabitants' confidence in the fair elections and transparent military and government agencies. Russia came in 113th, a slight improvement from its 115th place last year.

Other categories included economy, entrepreneurship and opportunity, health, safety and security, and "social capital" — people's readiness to commit acts of kindness such as helping strangers or donating to charities.

Norway topped the list as the most prosperous of the 142 countries surveyed, and the Central African Republic came in last. Ukraine ranked 63rd, the UK was 13th, and the U.S. 10th.

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