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Putin Calls for Purer Russian Language, Free of Foreign-Derived Words

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President Vladimir Putin advocated the preservation of the Russian language on Tuesday, criticizing the use of foreign-based words online and on television.

Speaking at a joint meeting of the Council for Interethnic Relations and the Council for Russian Language, Putin said that there are evident problems in the overall state of the Russian language.

He urged the imperative of striking a "balance between preserving traditional values and identity on the one hand and avoiding isolation from the global cultural processes on the other."

The overall language environment "is now formed primarily by the media, the Internet

and television, where language norms and elementary grammar rules are being ignored ever more frequently and linguistic borrowings from other languages are used excessively, often without any obvious need," Putin told several dozen government officials, writers and education managers, who participated in the meeting.

In order to improve the situation, the government has launched a number of initiatives, including by declaring this year Russia's Year of Literature.

In an obvious referral to Ukraine and the Baltic states, Putin said that "other countries ... ignore or limit the right of significantly large ethnic groups to use their native language, [in order] to conduct a tough, aggressive policy of linguistic and cultural assimilation."

"We see what this may lead to: the division of society into 'full-fledged' citizens and 'inferior' ones, into 'citizens' and 'non-citizens' and even to outright tragic internal conflicts," Putin warned.

According to Putin, Russia is home to 193 ethnic groups and nationalities that speak almost 300 languages and dialects. Despite the country's linguistic diversity, more than 96 percent of people in Russia speak Russian, he said.

Many Russian regions have several state languages. Putin specifically mentioned the republic of Crimea, which was annexed by Russia last year and since then has had three official state languages — Russian, Ukrainian and Crimean Tatar.

Russia will spend 20.5 million rubles to educate 1,500 Russian language teachers in Crimea, RIA Novosti reported on Tuesday.

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