

Putin Signs Off on Return of Soviet Fitness Standards

October 06, 2015



Under the new law, modern standards will be established by the Sports Ministry.

President Vladimir Putin signed a law Tuesday that reintroduces Soviet physical training standards known as “Ready for Labor and Defense” (“Gotov k Trudu i Oborone,” or GTO, in Russian), the TASS news agency reported.

In Soviet times, the GTO established standards in running and jumping, gymnastics, discus and javelin throwing, swimming, skiing and bike racing. For some school and first-year university students the GTO tests were mandatory. Those who passed received a silver or golden pin, while those who took the test but failed to meet the standards didn't face any negative consequences.

Under the new law, modern standards will be established by the Sports Ministry. There will be three levels of testing, and those who pass them will receive a bronze, silver or golden GTO pin.

Municipal authorities will be authorized to set up specialized centers for people who want to

give the GTO a shot. Testing will also be available at state educational institutions and sports-related NGOs. Implementing the law will cost 1.2 billion rubles (\$18 million), TASS reported.

It was not immediately clear whether testing will be mandatory for anyone and what benefits, if any, a person who passes the test will get, but some officials earlier suggested that passing the GTO should be added as a bonus to results of the unified exam that school-leavers take, and on whose basis university places are allocated.

Sports Minister Vitaly Mutko also suggested that employers should offer additional paid vacation days to those who pass the GTO.

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