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Russia to Expand Legal Concept of Bribery

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Anton Vaganov / TASS

Russia's Justice Ministry is planning to expand the legal concept of bribery in order to include favors and non-material benefits, the Vedomosti business daily reported Friday.

The Ministry plans to amend the relevant articles in both the Criminal and Administrative codes, the report said. Respective legislative initiatives will be revealed to the public no earlier than April, according to the Ministry officials.

The changes were recommended by the Group of States Against Corruption (GRECO), an international anti-corruption organization founded by the Council of Europe. Russia has been a member of GRECO since 2007. The organization evaluated the country's anti-corruption legislation in 2011 and found that it didn't cover favors and non-material benefits, the market value of which cannot be measured – such as promotions, sexual favors, positive press reviews and others.

Russia has started to work on implementing these recommendations in 2012, spokesman of the Prosecutor General's office Alexander Kurennoy told Vedomosti. Proposals for legislative changes were discussed by all the relevant government bodies and experts, he said, and submitted to the Justice Ministry.

Implementing those measures in reality might run into difficulties, Ilya Shumanov, deputy head of Transparency International Russia, told Vedomosti: It will be hard for law enforcement to prove that there is a non-material benefit. Yet, it is still worth implementing, Shumanov says.

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