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Russia Considers Japan-Style Fine for 'Excessively Large' Waistlines

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Russia's health and consumer rights watchdog is considering drawing on Japan's experience in tackling obesity, including fining citizens for large waistlines.

Japan made it illegal in 2008 for citizens between 40 and 74 years old to exceed the state-prescribed limit of 85 centimeters for male waistlines and 90 centimeters for female waistlines. Russia is on a drive to reduce obesity and improve nutrition as part of President Vladimir Putin's national goals signed after his inauguration in May 2018, which included calls to ensure sustainable natural population growth.

The plan's health and demography targets are partly overseen by health and consumer watchdog chief Anna Popova.

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“We’ve studied the experience of countries with the highest life expectancy very carefully,” Rospotrebnadzor’s Popova told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency on Thursday, pointing out Tokyo's experience with waistline reduction, colloquially known in Japan as the “Metabo-law.”

"The applicability [of the practice] to Russia and Russian citizens is a question that will be discussed over our first year of work on the national goals," she said, adding that studies currently being conducted would help reach a conclusion.

Update: Later on Thursday, the watchdog's press service denied that a fine was being considered.

"It was just an example of how it's done in other countries," a spokeperson was cited as saying about Popova's comments by the Govorit Moskva radio station.

"No fines are being considered, of course. We're just studying practices from abroad."

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