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Most Russians Prefer Council of Europe Membership – Polls

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ECHR

A majority of Russians support their country's membership in the Council of Europe (CoE) human rights watchdog, according to two surveys published Monday.

Russia was suspended from the CoE parliamentary assembly in 2014 in protest of Moscow's behavior toward Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. In response, Russia halted annual payments to the France-based human rights body — a contribution of approximately 7 percent of the CoE budget.

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Fifty-eight percent of Russian respondents viewed Russia's membership in the CoE positively, according to a phone survey conducted by the independent pollster Levada Center.

This view was shared by 84 percent of respondents to an online survey conducted by human

rights organizations including Public Verdict and Moscow Helsinki Group.

Respondents of both surveys were more likely to say the CoE is useful to Russian citizens than it is harmful, at 33-to-10 percent for phone polls and 64-to-5 percent for online polls.

The margins were even wider — 66-to-28 percent for phone respondents and 88-to-9 percent for online respondents — when asked if filing cases with the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) is important for Russians.

The results were scheduled to be presented at the opening day of the parliamentary assembly's spring session on Monday, the RBC news website reported.

Levada conducted the phone interview among 1,010 respondents between Feb. 28 and March 7. Public Verdict and the Russian Presidential Academy of National Economy and Public Administration (RANEPA)'s Laboratory for Social Research Methodology conducted the online poll among 3,737 respondents in the same timespan.

Reuters contributed reporting to this article.

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