The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Russia Scraps Criticized Restrictions on Scientists' Foreign Contacts

February 10, 2020



Russia's Education and Science Ministry had advised government-affiliated scientists to seek formal approval before meeting foreign colleagues. **Mikhail Pochuyev / TASS**

Russia has scrapped highly criticized restrictions on its scientists a year after issuing them, the Education and Science Ministry's newly appointed chief was quoted as saying Monday.

The February 2019 order that was made public months later had advised government-affiliated scientists to seek formal approval before meeting foreign colleagues and to bring companions to such meetings. The Education and Science Ministry had said the rules should be seen as recommendations, while the Kremlin said that it was concerned about foreign espionage.

Related article: Kremlin Warns of Foreign Espionage as Scientists Criticize New Restrictions

"That order is canceled," Education and Science Minister Valery Falkov, one of several newcomers after last month's cabinet reshuffle, said at a press conference, according to

Interfax.

“We’re interested in pursuing cooperation based on the principles of open science,” the state-run RIA Novosti news agency quoted Falkov as saying.

The scrapped directive had urged scientists to inform their superiors in advance of plans to meet foreign scientists and also to report back on what was discussed.

It also largely banned foreign scientists from using cellphones, cameras and other recording devices inside government agencies.

Critics of the order said it would fail to improve Russia’s security and would only increase the country’s isolation.

It had been enacted at a time of increased tension between Russia and the West, as well as treason charges leveled against a number of Russian scientists for handing over secret documents to foreigners. Kremlin critics have called the charges unfounded.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2020/02/10/russia-scraps-criticized-restrictions-on-scientists-foreign-contacts-a69220