

Russian Regions to Become Single Federal Subject in Decade-First

May 13, 2020



The Arkhangelsk region near the Arctic will combine with the neighboring Nenets autonomous district.
Alexander Ryumin / TASS

Two Russian regions will merge into a single federal subject, the first such move in more than a decade, the state-run TASS news agency [reported](#) after their governors signed a memorandum of intent Wednesday.

The Arkhangelsk region and the Nenets autonomous district in northwestern Russia near the Arctic could send a petition to President Vladimir Putin as soon as June 10, according to the [Znak.com](#) news website.

"The memorandum has been signed," Arkhangelsk region Governor Alexander Tsybulsky's press service told TASS.

"It's not fake, integration processes are indeed underway," Nenets autonomous district Governor Yury Bezdudny [confirmed](#) to the Govorit Moskva radio station earlier Wednesday.

The Nenets autonomous district is currently Russia's least populous subject with 44,000 residents compared to the Arkhangelsk region's 1.1 million people. While the Nenets autonomous district is technically an independent federal subject of Russia, it is also under the Arkhangelsk region's administrative jurisdiction.

The RBC news website [reported](#) on the upcoming merger late Tuesday. Signs of the so-called "matryoshka regions" becoming a single entity emerged in early April, when Tsybulsky and his deputy Bezdudny were named acting governors of the neighboring regions amid the coronavirus outbreak, the outlet previously [reported](#).

The regions' officials could take two months to hammer out a "merger concept" before holding a referendum on the merger later this year, Znak.com reported.

The merging process could take two to three years, an unnamed presidential administration source told Znak.com.

It holds economic value for both regions against the background of low oil prices, RBC cited an unnamed source close to the Arkhangelsk region's administration as saying. Oil and gas-dependent Nenets autonomous district is in particular reeling from the price drop, the source was cited as saying.

In the most recent regional merger, the Chita region and the Agin-Buryat autonomous district in Siberia became the Zabaikalsky region in 2008, a year after more than 90% of residents backed it in a referendum.

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