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Russia Bans EU-Russia Civil Society Forum as 'Undesirable' Org

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Moskva News Agency

Updated to add the EU-Russia CSF's statement.

Russian authorities on Tuesday banned the EU-Russia Civil Society Forum (CSF), an organization created to foster cooperation between Russian and European NGOs, as an "undesirable" organization.

The Prosecutor General's Office said the Berlin-based organization's activities, which include conferences it organizes and information it publishes, have a common aim of "discrediting the leadership of the Russian Federation."

It accused the EU-Russia CSF of "collecting information about internal processes" in Russia and "establishing contacts with Russian political emigrants" in order to "undermine Russia's interests."

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The Tuesday decision, according to the Prosecutor General's Office, was also influenced by the fact that the organization continues to cooperate with individuals designated as "foreign agents" by Russian authorities and other "undesirable" organizations.

The EU-Russia CSF called the Russian authorities' decision "unconstitutional" and standing in violation of international legal norms, but confirmed that the organization will "discontinue cooperation with partners from Russia" in accordance with its new designation.

"Civil society cooperation beyond borders and people-to-people contacts can only be desirable...In solidarity, we prevail," said the statement released late Tuesday.

Organizations labeled as "undesirable" must disband within Russia, and individuals who cooperate with "undesirable" groups run the risk of felony charges.

The number of NGOs and media organizations that have been labeled "undesirable" by Russia has grown since the invasion of Ukraine brought about a sweeping crackdown on dissent, independent media and civil society.

Recent additions to the "undesirable" list include Transparency International Russia and the popular independent Russian-language news website Meduza.

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