



Wilfried  
**Martens Centre**  
for European Studies

# The Bear in Sheep's Clothing

Russia's Government-Funded  
Organisations in the EU

**Vladislava Vojtišková, Vít Novotný,  
Hubertus Schmid-Schmidfelden and Kristina Potapova**







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The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies is the political foundation and think tank of the European People's Party (EPP), dedicated to the promotion of Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values.

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# About the Martens Centre



The Wilfried Martens Centre for European Studies, established in 2007, is the political foundation and think tank of the European People's Party (EPP). The Martens Centre embodies a pan-European mind-set, promoting Christian Democrat, conservative and like-minded political values. It serves as a framework for national political foundations linked to member parties of the EPP. It currently has 31 member foundations and 3 permanent guest foundations in 24 EU and non-EU countries. The Martens Centre takes part in the preparation of EPP programmes and policy documents. It organises seminars and training on EU policies and on the process of European integration.

The Martens Centre also contributes to formulating EU and national public policies. It produces research studies and books, electronic newsletters, policy briefs and the twice-yearly *European View* journal. Its research activities are divided into six clusters: party structures and EU institutions, economic and social policies, EU foreign policy, environment and energy, values and religion, and new societal challenges. Through its papers, conferences, authors' dinners and website, the Martens Centre offers a platform for discussion among experts, politicians, policymakers and the European public.

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# Executive summary



This paper sheds light on organisations operating in Europe that are funded by the Russian government, whether officially or unofficially. These include government-organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and think tanks. Their number and activities have been growing, but their financing is often complex and hidden from the public eye. Their goal is to shift European public opinion towards a positive view of Russian politics and policies, and towards respect for its great power ambitions. In light of Russia's annexation of Crimea, Russian aggression in Eastern Ukraine and concerns over the militarisation of the country under President Vladimir Putin, the overt or covert support for GONGOs, NGOs and think tanks in the EU must become a matter of concern to the EU.

Russian and Russia-funded GONGOs, NGOs and think tanks belong within the framework of a particular vision of 'soft power'. It is one that relies on coercion more than on attraction, opposes democracy and human rights, offers 'traditional values' and 'a strong leader', and promotes the narrative that the US is a common enemy for Russia and Europe. This paper reveals the broad range of methods and institutions that the Russian government is using to influence decision-makers and public opinion in the EU. The methods range from using anti-Americanism in France and focusing on business ties in Italy to emphasising the common Orthodox faith in the Eastern Balkans.

The different categories of organisation—GONGOs, NGOs and think tanks—serve somewhat different aims in promoting Russia's strategy in the EU. These are described in individual sections of the paper. The GONGOs—for example, the Russkiy Mir Foundation and Rossotrudnichestvo—are based in Russia but can have numerous branches in the EU. They tend to focus on Russian speakers abroad; some of them provide grants to promote the spread of Russian culture and political ideas. These GONGOs are overseen by high-level political figures, such as Konstantin Kosachev, chair of the foreign affairs committee in the Federation Council; Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov; and Vitaly Ignatenko, deputy chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council. This shows how closely these organisations are tied to Russian foreign policy.

Official Russian think tanks, such as the Valdai Discussion Club, are based in Russia; some have branches in the EU. They produce analyses for the government and the president, and their analyses often appear in the Russian media.



Money is also channelled to established European think tanks to influence national political and intellectual elites. The French Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques is a prominent example.

Semi-official Russian think tanks and other organisations are financed in EU countries. The Eurasian Observatory for Democracy and Elections legitimises elections in areas occupied by Russia. The goal of the Berlin-based Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute is to coordinate a network of Russian think tanks worldwide.

Finally, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania are more intensively exposed to the Russian influence than any other part of the EU. Russian secret services control most compatriot NGOs in the Baltic countries.

The EU's politicians and citizens should look at the activities of the Russian GONGOs, NGOs and think tanks as challenges that can help improve national and EU-level decision-making mechanisms, increase transparency in policymaking and deepen the involvement of citizens and civil society organisations in the democratic process. The paper recommends the following measures for the EU and European civil society:

- fostering the EU's own narrative based on human rights, freedom and equality;
- supporting pro-democratic civil society so that Europeans become more resistant to Russian propaganda;
- increasing transparency requirements for NGOs and lobbyists, for example by setting up a mandatory lobbying register at the EU level;
- ensuring that EU-based police and intelligence agencies focus more sharply on underhand Russian activities;
- making further efforts to disseminate, through the media and civil society, the facts on Russian disinformation activities; and
- promoting media and civil society activities to map the changing political statements and voting records of European politicians.



# Introduction





When, in 2007, Kofi Annan—then Secretary General of the UN—called the twenty-first century the era of NGOs,<sup>1</sup> he had little idea of how NGOs and NGO-like organisations would become tools in the struggle between the West and Russia.

NGOs have enjoyed a rise in popularity in recent decades. Today an estimated 40,000 NGOs operate on the international level<sup>2</sup> and probably hundreds of thousands at the national and local levels. NGOs are consulted when new legislation is proposed, they are invited to political debates, and they air their views through the media. They often enjoy respect from the general public, because most people consider them to be honest and meritorious—in contrast to politicians themselves. They also provide expert input into the democratic process. According to the Edelman Trust Barometer Research,<sup>3</sup> which surveys 25 countries around the world annually, 63% of people trust NGOs, whereas only 48% trust governments and 51% trust the media. Globally, think tanks and research institutes are also growing in numbers.

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**Think tanks** are, according to BusinessDictionary.com,<sup>4</sup> research institutes staffed by interdisciplinary groups of experts engaged in the study of policy issues in business and government. Think tanks produce analysis and advice for policymakers as well as the public. However, in many countries there is no legal definition of think tanks as bodies per se. They are registered as NGOs or foundations and anyone can register an organisation that calls itself a ‘think tank’.<sup>5</sup>

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Like other countries, Russia is tapping into the rise of think tanks and NGOs in public life in Europe and beyond. This paper argues that the Russian Federation has taken a specific approach to NGOs<sup>6</sup> and think tanks. On the one hand it not only oversees and strictly regulates NGOs that are active in Russia, but it also represses them and uses anti-extremist legislature against them. This applies to both Russian NGOs and foreign NGOs. On the other hand, NGOs and think tanks based outside Russia play a special role in the

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<sup>1</sup> S. Lang, *NGOs, Civil Society, and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 1.

<sup>2</sup> G. Sgueo, *In-Depth Analysis ‘Financial Accountability of Civil Society Organisations’*, European Parliamentary Research Service (May 2015), 1.

<sup>3</sup> *Edelman.com*, ‘2015 Edelman Trust Barometer Global Results’, 28 January 2015.

<sup>4</sup> *BusinessDictionary.com*, ‘Think Tank’.

<sup>5</sup> F. Rohrer, ‘Just What is a Think Tank?’, *BBC News*, 15 January 2008.

<sup>6</sup> ‘Non-commercial organisations’ (NCOs) is the term that is used in Russian legislation instead of the ‘non-governmental organisations’ (NGO) that is more common in other countries. See Council on Foundations, *Russia* (August 2015), 1.



country's foreign policy. They are used as tools to legitimise policies and manipulate public opinion abroad. To this end, the Russian government has founded so-called government-organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs), which produce government-controlled content and channel money to other organisations abroad.<sup>7</sup>

Studies mapping the Russian GONGOs and their activities are emerging, most recently in a comprehensive paper by Orysia Lutsevych titled *Agents of the Russian World. Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood*, which mainly focuses on the Eastern Partnership region.<sup>8</sup> Nevertheless, a significant information gap still exists with regard to this aspect of Russian foreign policy. The present paper aims to contribute to filling this gap.

Transparency requirements for NGO funding in the EU are a significant factor that must be accounted for when considering the activities of Russia-supported GONGOs, NGOs and think tanks. In general, NGOs in the EU and globally are entitled to access to funding. Nevertheless, states have the right to regulate domestic and international funding for NGOs and they can monitor this funding in response to suspicions of illegal activities.<sup>9</sup>

In September 2015 there were roughly 8,300 organisations registered with the Transparency Register of the European Commission and the European Parliament.<sup>10</sup> The Transparency Register is a voluntary lobbying register, and only registered lobbyists are granted passes to the European Parliament or European Commission. These two institutions also oversee the register (the Council has refused to participate). Registered lobbyists are required to sign a code of conduct which, among other things, obliges them not to mislead officials.<sup>11</sup> However apart from the possibility of being removed from the register and losing access to the Parliament, there are no sanctions for incorrect information: the information held by the register is provided by the organisations themselves.

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<sup>7</sup> Marcel H. Van Herpen, *Putin's Propaganda Machine: Soft Power and Russian Foreign Policy* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2015), 148.

<sup>8</sup> O. Lutsevych, *Agents of the Russian World. Proxy Groups in the Contested Neighbourhood*, Chatham House (London, April 2016).

<sup>9</sup> The Observatory for the Protection of Human Rights Defenders, *Violations of the Right of NGOs to Funding: From Harassment to Criminalisation, Annual Report 2013*, 41.

<sup>10</sup> European Commission, 'Transparency Register, Homepage', 10 June 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Europa, Transparency Register, Code of Conduct; and N. Nielsen, 'EU Lawyers Support Mandatory Lobby Register', *EUobserver*, 6 June 2016.



On the national level, the legal requirements for NGOs vary across the EU. The organisations must be usually registered with some sort of bureau or court, the registries are either made public or not (the data that is made public differs by country), and the NGOs may or may not be obliged to file yearly balance lists and disclose donors. The legal requirements of national transparency registers also vary. NGOs in most European countries do not have to make their financial accounts and yearly balance lists public.

An examination of NGO funding, especially from abroad, thus poses methodological challenges. Research for this paper relied upon publicly available sources and interviews with politicians and experts.

**The Russian  
government's  
approach to soft  
power through  
GONGOs, NGOs  
and think tanks**



Most countries want to be viewed positively. They exert influence through ‘soft power’, shaping the preferences of other countries through appeal and non-coercive means. In addition to foreign policies, soft power may include the financing of educational programmes and civil society initiatives. The EU, for example, is attempting to establish a ‘ring of friends’ in Eastern Europe and North Africa through its Neighbourhood Policy, encouraging countries in these regions to harmonise their policies with those of the EU. As part of this effort, the EU supports civil society organisations and independent media, and finances cultural projects.<sup>12</sup>

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**Soft power** is a term first used in the 1980s by political scientist Joseph Nye, who defined it as ‘the ability to get what you want through attraction rather than coercion or payments. It arises from the attractiveness of a country’s culture, political ideals, and policies.’<sup>13</sup> Soft power is exerted by governmental and non-governmental civil society organisations such as companies, foundations, universities, churches and think tanks. According to Meister and Puglierin, for Russian leaders soft power is not about the attractiveness of its culture, but about imposing its goals by non-military means, often through manipulation, and undermining and weakening the opponent.<sup>14</sup>

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Russia is no exception to the desire to influence global opinion in general and its close neighbourhood in particular. It has some mileage to cover: according to the Pew Research Center, opinions of Russia, and Putin in particular, are largely negative across the world.<sup>15</sup> Positive views of Russia have even declined in traditionally supportive countries such as Germany.

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<sup>12</sup> S. Meister and J. Puglierin, *Perception and Exploitation: Russia’s Non-Military Influence in Europe*, German Council on Foreign Relations (October 2015), 1.

<sup>13</sup> J. S. Nye, Jr., *Soft Power: The Means to Success in World Politics* (New York: Public Affairs, 2004).

<sup>14</sup> Meister and Puglierin, *Perception and Exploitation*, 4.

<sup>15</sup> B. Stokes, *Russia, Putin Held in Low Regard Around the World. Russia’s Image Trails U.S. Across All Regions*, Pew Research Center Global Attitudes and Trends (5 August 2015).



# Suppression of civil society in Russia

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What is distinctive about Russia is that under the reign of President Putin it has become an authoritarian regime.<sup>16</sup> This is manifest in its domestic policies, which refuse to accept European and US soft power on the one hand, and attack independent voices at home on the other hand. The Russian Parliament adopted a Law on Undesirable Organisations in 2015.<sup>17</sup> This followed the 2012 Russian Foreign Agent Law.<sup>18</sup> The former allows the government to declare foreign and international organisations ‘undesirable’ in Russia and close them, without any court action required. Breaches of the law are characterised as crimes. The latter law states that NGOs that receive foreign donations have to register and declare themselves as ‘foreign agents’, with this designation being printed on all of their materials. Fines are prohibitively high and designed to bankrupt the ‘guilty’.<sup>19</sup>

Several foreign organisations (some funded by their governments), including the US-based National Endowment for Democracy, the George Soros’ Open Society Fund and the National Democratic Institute have been forced to leave Russia.

The Russian state refuses to register approximately 8 out of 10 NGOs that apply for registration, and NGO numbers have plummeted. Russian environmental and human rights activists are routinely harassed. State-supported NGOs, including those for war veterans, put pressure on independent NGOs to ‘leave the country’. NGOs are forced to open bank accounts with state banks, which then monitor their finances. An official intention has been announced to establish an all-Russian NGO union to certificate NGOs that are deemed qualified to be active.<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The Economist’s Intelligence Unit, *Democracy Index 2015: Democracy in Age of Anxiety* (2016).

<sup>17</sup> Russian Federation, ‘Федеральный закон от 23.05.2015 № 129-ФЗ “О внесении изменений в отдельные законодательные акты Российской Федерации”’ [Federal Law of 23 May 2015 № 129-FZ ‘On Amendments of Some Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation’]. *Российская Газета* [Russian Gazette], 26 May 2015.

<sup>18</sup> Russian Federation, ‘On Amendments to Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation regarding the Regulation of the Activities of “Non-profit Organisations Performing the Functions of a Foreign Agent”’. See International Center for Not-for-Profit Law, ‘NGO Law Monitor’, 24 March 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Interview with anonymous contributor, 13 February 2016.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*



# Russian understanding of soft power

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These official measures within Russia indicate that, in current Russian understanding, soft power (мягкая сила) does not rely on attraction, as in the original Western version, but on coercion. Within Russia, soft power was first mentioned in the *Foreign Policy Review* in 2007.<sup>21</sup> In October 2008 Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov said in an interview that soft power would be used to develop relations with Russian compatriots living abroad.<sup>22</sup> In the presidential-election campaign in 2012, Putin described soft power as ‘a matrix of tools and methods to reach foreign policy goals without the use of arms but by exerting information and other levers of influence.’<sup>23</sup> According to one interviewee the rise in Russian soft power efforts followed the moral damage to the West caused by the ill-considered military intervention in Iraq, Western difficulties in Afghanistan, the post-intervention chaos in Libya and the lack of plans for rebuilding those countries thereafter. Edward Snowden’s revelations about the US security services’ mass surveillance did not increase the standing of the West in general or of the US in particular. The image of the US as the leader of the free world began to suffer.<sup>24</sup> Furthermore, the narrative of austerity antagonised sections of the European population following the economic crisis of the late 2000s. Thus the West began to lose its traditional dominance in values<sup>25</sup> at the same time that Russia observed pro-democratic revolutions and perceived them as being a result of losing its sphere of influence in the post-Soviet space.

Therefore, in about the mid-2000s the Russian government had decided that the time was ripe to fill the ‘values vacuum’ left by the West with new GONGOs, NGOs and think tanks—as well as with state-produced propaganda. ‘Russia’s power elite saw itself as “only” reacting “with the same means” as the West’ when the latter supported civil society in what Russia perceived to be its sphere of influence.<sup>26</sup> The propaganda

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<sup>21</sup> A. Kudros, ‘“Russian World”—Russia’s Soft Power Approach to Compatriots Policy’, *Russian Analytical Digest* 81 (16 June 2010), 2.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> A. Foxall, ‘The Kremlin’s Sleight of Hand: Russia’s Soft Power Offensive in the UK’, *Stopfake.org*, 8 February 2015.

<sup>24</sup> Interview with anonymous contributor, 12 May 2015.

<sup>25</sup> Lutsevych, *Agents of the Russian World*, 6.

<sup>26</sup> Meister and Puglierin, *Perception and Exploitation*, 1.



message linked rising anti-system attitudes in Europe with a rejection of the EU and a rejection of the European alliance with the US.<sup>27</sup>

## The development of the Russian narrative

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The Kremlin wanted its own narrative that sat in opposition to democratic values and human rights, and its model of the 'Russian world' played its role as an ideological tool to counter the Western narrative. The Russian world incorporates Russian culture, language, history, a shared heritage and Orthodox morals. Aleksandr Dugin, the ideologue of this model, stated that Eurasianism is the opposite of Western civilisation, and that democratic values and liberty are foreign to Russia and should not prevail over the interests of the state. The model of the Russian world is based on conservative values and Russian people are united by the narrative that the US is a common enemy.

To achieve this vision of the world, Russia employed, among other elements, local opposition to societal developments in Europe, such as gay marriage. To counter these developments, it offered 'traditional values' and 'a strong leader', Vladimir Putin, in contrast to the allegedly weak Western politicians. This message was attractive to many Russian speakers. In the EU, it was attractive to sections of the centre-right and right-wing electorate due to their respect for leadership and hierarchy. It was attractive to sections centre-left and left-wing electorate as an alternative to the 'cruel' West, which was allegedly oppressing its population through cuts in public spending.<sup>28</sup>

In the 2010s, any negative developments seemed to foster the Russian understanding of the Western world. Putin stated that the mass protests against the unfair Duma elections at the end of 2011 had been organised by US NGOs in order to overthrow the Russian regime. Ukraine's Euromaidan was seen by Russia as a competition with the West, in which the latter used non-state actors as a foreign policy tool. After the annexation of Crimea by Russia, Putin claimed that the US had initiated the colour revolutions in the post-

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<sup>27</sup> Interview with anonymous contributor 'B', 12 May 2015.

<sup>28</sup> Interviews with anonymous contributors, 12 May 2015 and 13 May 2015.





Soviet region with the aim of imposing American values that contradict local tradition and culture.<sup>29</sup> Russia also proposed nationalist economic policies and territorial revisionism in Georgia and Ukraine. It suggested these not only to please its own population, many of whom approve of the Russian aggression in Georgia<sup>30</sup> and Ukraine<sup>31</sup> but also to appeal to EU citizens.

## Policy tools of the Russian soft power

With regard to policy tools, Russia supports various European organisations that are against NATO or a US military presence. These include, for example, the following Czech organisations: Ne základnám (No to the Bases),<sup>32</sup> a movement against the US missile defence system; Přátelé Ruska (Friends of Russia); and Skuteční přátelé Ruska (True Friends of Russia). Russia also spreads hatred against refugees from Syria, mostly through its state-owned media, which includes Russia Today, Sputnik and the news supplement *Russia Beyond the Headlines*. Also part of the tool box are 'alternative' news websites with hidden ownership, which security services have linked to Russian financing (e.g. aeronet.cz<sup>33</sup>, russia-insider.com<sup>34</sup>, the Baltnews project<sup>35</sup> (baltnews.ee, baltnews.lt and baltnews.lv) and many others.

Through its 'compatriot' policy, Russia also foments the alienation of Russian speakers living abroad from the governments of the countries in which they live in order to create a latent potential for unrest and

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<sup>29</sup> Lutsevych, *Agents of the Russian World*.

<sup>30</sup> *Kommersant*, "Левада-центр": негативное отношение россиян к Грузии снизилось до минимума с 2005 года' [Levada Centre: Negative Perception of Russians Towards Georgia Decreased to Its Lowest Since 2005], 14 June 2016.

<sup>31</sup> D. Volkov., 'Российская социология украинского конфликта: вмешиваться не надо, но все правильно сделали' [Russian Sociology of Ukrainian Conflict: No Need to Intervene but Everything Has Been Done in a Right Way], *Carnegie Moscow Centre*, 26 August 2015.

<sup>32</sup> K. Pacner, 'Radar: Platí Rusové akci Ne základnám? To těžko zjistíme' [The Radar: Are the Russians Financing the 'No to the Bases' Group? It will be Difficult to Find Out], *Neviditelný pes*, 10 January 2008.

<sup>33</sup> O. Kundra, 'Putinův hlas v Česku: Kdo u nás šíří propagandu Kremlu' [Putin's Voice in Czechia: Who is Spreading Propaganda Among Us], *Respekt*, 28 February 2015.

<sup>34</sup> A. Shekhovtsov, 'Is Russia Insider Sponsored By A Russian Oligarch with ties to the European Far Right?', *The Interpreter*, 23 November 2015.

<sup>35</sup> Estonian Internal Security Service, *Annual Review 2014* (Tallinn, 2015).



another possible lever to use.<sup>36</sup> Compatriots are also good disseminators of the false information spread by the Russian media (i.e. Russian TV Channel One, [ruvek.ru](http://ruvek.ru), Sputnik and others). By further spreading misinformation they can create chaos in their home countries.

A case in point is the ‘Lisa case’ in Germany. False information about the rape of a 13-year-old girl by refugees was intended to show the citizens in Russia that Europe ‘cannot handle’ the refugee crisis. Among Russian speakers in Germany, this false news incited demonstrations and social media outrage.<sup>37</sup> The pro-Kremlin NGOs are one tool that Russia employs to justify increasing its activity in Europe, especially in post-Soviet countries. These NGOs undermine the national security of the EU member states, have a negative effect on the integration of society, and damage political transitions and civil society in the Eastern Partnership countries.

## Differentiation of Russian soft power tools in Europe

The overall aim of the Russian government under Putin is to create ‘a pan-European partnership of independent nations based on the axis of Moscow, Paris and Berlin, to replace the NATO and EU. [It is] ideologically based on the alliance of Islam and Orthodoxy—Central Asia included—against Western Catholicism’.<sup>38</sup> Our investigation reveals that in each European country, the Russian government places emphasis on a different soft power tool.

In Western European countries, including the UK, France and Germany, it puts the emphasis mostly on its business ties, because with those countries it has very little in common in other areas.

<sup>36</sup> V. Zakem, P. Saunders and D. Antoun, *Mobilizing Compatriots: Russia's Strategy, Tactics, and Influence in the Former Soviet Union*, CNA Analysis & Solutions (November 2015).

<sup>37</sup> D. McGuinness, ‘Russia Steps into Berlin “Rape” Storm Claiming German Cover-Up’, *BBC News*, 27 January 2016.

<sup>38</sup> Interview with an anonymous contributor, 12 May 2015.



In France the Russian government also taps into latent anti-Americanism (as well as anti-Semitism). There are indications that Russia may be funding the French–Russian Chamber of Commerce and the Analytical Center ‘Observo’ which reports to it. The editor in chief of the journal *Russia in Global Affairs* is Fiodor Loukianov, chair of the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy. In May 2016 the head of the French–Russian Chamber of Commerce organised a meeting between Vladimir Putin and the chief executive officers of major French companies in order to gain their support in pressuring the EU member states’ governments to lift the sanctions against Russia. This Chamber’s seminars, which are seemingly neutral, have one constant message: ‘Do not believe what the media tells you’. Also in France, [some] employees of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs are “archo-Gaulists” and seek “true independence” for France, meaning independence from the US and from Russia. Their goal is to have a balanced relationship with both. This, of course, is a good argument to camouflage a pro-Russian attitude.<sup>39</sup>

In Italy, the focus is also on business ties. Through one of its subsidiaries, the Italian energy company ENI S.p.a. sponsored a think tank that was holding a conference on foreign policy, at which it was stressed that Russia could be an important ally for the EU. ENI buys oil and gas from the state-owned gas company Gazprom, which had asked them to sponsor the think tank as a sign of good faith. However, the people attending the conference were not aware that they were recipients of a Moscow-driven message.<sup>40</sup>

In countries with an Orthodox majority, such as Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece, Russian policy builds on the common religion and uses the Orthodox Church and connected organisations, such as the International Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations (Международный фонд единства православных народов).<sup>41</sup> In Slavic countries, including the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Poland and Bulgaria, it supports the old but still somewhat popular idea of pan-Slavism: Russia pushes the notion that ‘we are all Slavs with the same origin and spirit’. Thus Russia promotes the idea that the Slavs should unite, preferably under the protection of Mother Russia, because Western countries only take advantage of the markets in the East.<sup>42</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> Interview with an anonymous contributor, 13 May 2015.

<sup>40</sup> Interview with an anonymous contributor, 13 May 2015, and subsequent correspondence.

<sup>41</sup> IFUOCN.com, ‘The International Foundation for the Unity of Orthodox Christian Nations’, 2015.

<sup>42</sup> Interview with an anonymous contributor, 13 May 2015



In the Baltic countries the Russian government uses the Russian-speaking minority and compatriot organisations, which have mostly been founded since 2006, to exert influence. These NGOs are predicated on the idea that Russian speakers form one unified civilisation. They also falsify history and offer different versions of events, claiming for example, that Estonia 'voluntarily joined the USSR in 1940'.<sup>43</sup>

Finally, in Austria, Switzerland, Finland and Sweden, Russia places the emphasis on their neutrality.

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<sup>43</sup> Pomerantsev and Weiss, *The Menace of Unreality: How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture and Money*, The Interpreter and the Institute of Modern Russia (New York, November 2014).



# Financing of GONGOs, pro- Russian NGOs and think tanks



An analysis of the financial means that Russia invests in GONGOs, NGOs and think tanks can only be partial because much of the information is not publicly available. It appears that even intelligence agencies in the EU do not have a complete picture of the financial flows and organisations involved.

We can partially estimate the amount that Russia invests in some of its GONGOs based on reports in the media, but these figures come from Russian politicians or the leaders of the organisations, and they cannot be verified. According to their websites: the Russkiy Mir Foundation has an annual budget of €5.12 million,<sup>44</sup> Rossotrudnichestvo (The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation) has €40 million (by 2020 this is expected to increase to €110 million)<sup>45</sup> and the Gorchakov Fund has €660,000.<sup>46</sup> Between 2012 and 2013 the Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad received around €9.1 million from the state.<sup>47</sup> This partial count for the organisations covered in this study totals almost €55 million. Likewise, it is not at all clear what amounts these organisations distribute to other organisations through their grant systems. Authors who have covered a wider range of organisations have suggested that the state spends €115 million on projects worldwide, with a special focus on the post-Soviet and Balkan states. The funding consists of state grants, and funds from state enterprises and private firms that are linked to the Kremlin.<sup>48</sup>

In comparison to the funding of soft power instruments in some European countries, €55 million is quite a small sum. In the budget year 2015–16, the British Council, the official British charity organisation sponsored by the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, received almost €210 million from the government, and its total income in those two years was over €1.2 billion.<sup>49</sup> Likewise, the German culture and language institute, the Goethe Institute, received €213 million from the German Federal Foreign Office in the year 2014–15.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>44</sup> *Russkiy Mir*, 'If We Were Given Big Budgets—The Russian Flag Would Be All Over the World', 31 July 2015.

<sup>45</sup> E. Volkova, 'Бюджет Россотрудничества вырастет почти до 10 миллиардов рублей' [Budget of Rossotrudnichestvo Will Increase to 10 Billion Roubles], *Russkiy Mir*, 5 June 2013.

<sup>46</sup> Russian Federation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Об основных итогах деятельности Министерства иностранных дел Российской Федерации в 2014 году и задачах на среднесрочную перспективу* [The Main Results of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation's Activities in 2014 and the Medium-Term Objectives], 2015.

<sup>47</sup> Lutsevych, *Agents of the Russian World*.

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, 11.

<sup>49</sup> British Council, *Corporate Plan 2015–2017* (London, 2015).

<sup>50</sup> Goethe Institute, *Jahrbuch 2014/2015* [Yearbook 2014/2015], 31 July 2015, 189.



However, official financing is not a major issue. GONGOs are officially established and financed by the Russian government. The problem lies in the lack of transparency about funding and the covert financing channelled via pro-Russian NGOs. Some of these are supported through the grant systems organised by the GONGOs (i.e. Russkiy Mir, the Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, and the Gorchakov Fund), while others are supported through chains of mediators. This system of Russian financing is very similar to the ‘hawala system’ used to finance terrorism. Basically the money is transferred through various informal mediators (hawaladars)—companies or individuals based in tax havens such as Saudi Arabia, the Cocos Islands, the Pitcairn Islands or Nevis—before turning up at a company based in the EU. This company then finances a pro-Russian organisation, individual, event or advertisement. Sometimes the money is also laundered through gambling houses or restaurants.<sup>51</sup> One concrete example of a mediator is Marián Rohály who, according to the Czech weekly newsmagazine *Respekt*, is an administrator of the bank accounts for the pro-Russian conspiratorial website [aeronet.cz](http://aeronet.cz). This steelworker from a poor region, who calls himself a ‘whole-life loser’, is used as a ‘mediator’ because he is easily manipulated and in this activity he finds a ‘life mission’ and fulfilment.<sup>52</sup>

The differentiated picture of NGOs is, to some extent, similar to that of the media. There are official Russian GONGOs that have been founded by governmental bodies (which we can compare to official Russian media, such as Sputnik) and are also financed by them. These GONGOs are aimed mostly at Russian speakers both inside and outside Russia, the so-called compatriots. On the other hand, there are NGOs that have not been officially founded by any Russian governmental body, but evidence points to them receiving financial support from Russia (which we can compare to unofficial pro-Russian media, such as [aeronet.cz](http://aeronet.cz)). We can find warnings about this issue in the reports of security services in the EU.<sup>53</sup> Such entities aim to influence the general public abroad. On occasions, recipients may not be aware that the donations they are receiving originate from the Russian government.

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<sup>51</sup> Interview with an anonymous contributor, 14 December 2015.

<sup>52</sup> O. Kundra, ‘Kdo tu píše pro Putina’ [Who is Writing for Putin?], *Respekt*, 30 April 2016, 19.

<sup>53</sup> S. Jemberga, M. Salu and S. Cerniauskas, ‘Kremlin’s Millions’, Money from Russia Investigations, *Re: Baltica*, 27 August 2015.





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The **hawala system** is a system of money transfers based on trust between people who want to get money into a country and those who need to get it out, minimising the need to formally transfer money across borders. Regardless of the balance, it is always moved in cash.<sup>54</sup>

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Finally in this section, another stream of Russian funding comes through its state companies and their subsidiaries, such as Gazprom or Lukoil. There are several examples of funding coming from oil companies with strong links to the Kremlin. For instance, there are suspicions, so far not confirmed, that the presidential campaign of Miloš Zeman in 2013 was funded by Lukoil.<sup>55</sup> According to one interviewee, mining shale gas in the EU would disadvantage Russia due to its due to its financial dependency on the EU's gas imports. The Russian government has therefore invested €82 million in NGOs whose job is to persuade EU governments to stop shale gas exploration.<sup>56</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> *The Economist*, 'How Hawala Money-Transfer Schemes are Changing', 15 October 2015.

<sup>55</sup> *Baltic Worlds*, 'Miloš Zeman is the New President of the Czech Republic', Centre for Baltic and East European Studies, 31 January 2013.

<sup>56</sup> Interview with anonymous contributor, 12 May 2015.

**Official Russian  
organisations:  
compatriot  
GONGOs**



The organisations that are described in this section are not NGOs in the proper sense because they have been founded by the Russian government, in most cases by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These GONGOs were set up to serve aims in domestic politics (i.e. play the role of ‘independent experts’ in the Russian media); to qualify for financial grants; and to serve as points of contact for Russian compatriots, to whom some of them (Russkiy Mir, the Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Abroad, and the Gorchakov Fund) also provide grants. At the same time, their founders maintain some level of control over personnel, purpose, operations or activities.<sup>57</sup>

Russia has always tried to maintain a close bond with its diaspora<sup>58</sup> living in post-Soviet countries, but since 2006–7, under President Putin’s reign, the interest and finances invested in Russian compatriots have risen dramatically. The policy of the ‘Russification’ (русификация) of Russian compatriots began with the aim of ‘consolidation and unification’.<sup>59</sup> The compatriot policy concept consists of the creation of numerous GONGOs, events, media channels and financial grants for the support of compatriots.<sup>60</sup> The compatriot organisations declare that they serve not only ethnic Russians but everyone who has a commonality of language, history, cultural heritage, traditions and customs with the Russian state. However, since the annexation of Crimea Putin has increasingly referred in his speeches to ethnic Russians. This can be explained by the effort to promote Russian nationalism and the unity of ethnic Russians beyond the borders.<sup>61</sup>

Most Russian GONGOS were created between 2006 and 2011. This was because, according to Lutsevych, Russia viewed US support for Serbian anti-government NGOs in the early 2000s with suspicion, and the ‘electoral revolutions’ in Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Georgia and Ukraine in 2002–5 with even more suspicion. Ukraine’s ‘Orange Revolution’ of 2004–5 seemed to confirm the Russian leadership’s conviction that the West was using NGOs and civil society as tools in foreign policy.

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<sup>57</sup> Wikipedia, ‘GONGO’, 17 April 2016.

<sup>58</sup> There are approximately 25 million ethnic Russians living outside of the Russian Federation.

<sup>59</sup> A. Cheskin, ‘Russia’s Compatriot Policy: The Consolidation and “Rossiification” of Russian Speakers Abroad’, draft chapter in A. Cheskin, *Russian Speakers in Post-Soviet Latvia: Discursive Identity Strategies* (Edinburgh: University of Edinburgh Press, forthcoming), 5.

<sup>60</sup> In July 2010 President Medvedev signed the Federal Law On Amendments to the Federal Law On the Russian Federation’s State Policy Towards Compatriots Living Abroad. The law redefined compatriots as persons who self-identified as Russians and stipulated objectives regarding compatriots, including the support of culture, education, and information and assistance with voluntary relocation to the Russian Federation.

<sup>61</sup> Zakem, Saunders and Antoun, *Mobilizing Compatriots*.



The Russian government replied in kind. In 2006 the Russian Foreign Ministry established the World Coordination Council of Russian Compatriots.<sup>62</sup> This central agency coordinates the activities of Russian organisations abroad and their communications with the Russian government. The cultural organisation Russkiy Mir was established in 2007, the political and economic agency Rossotrudnichestvo in 2008, the civil society and NGO-supporting organisation the Gorchakov Fund in 2010, the Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad in 2011, and the World Russian Press Foundation in 2014. Another cultural and pro-compatriot organisation, the International Council of Russian Compatriots (originally established in 2002)<sup>63</sup> united 140 organisations from 53 countries at the beginning of 2010.

A remarkable feature of the Russian GONGOs is their direct connection to the Russian government and the governing United Russia (Единая Россия) party. One figure stands out as the brains behind the concept of Russian soft power and the system of GONGOs. Konstantin Kosachev is the chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee in the Federation Council (the upper house of the Russian Parliament) and was chair of the State Duma Committee on International Affairs between 2004 and 2011. Kosachev authored a seminal text, 'Russian Foreign Policy Vertical', in 2004.<sup>64</sup> In his texts, Kosachev clearly expresses Russia's discontent with losing its sphere of influence, with NATO's and the EU's enlargement, and over the Baltic countries' policies towards Russian minorities (he even calls them the 'Baltic apartheid').<sup>65</sup> Kosachev sits on the boards of four GONGOs and, until 2015, was also the head of Rossotrudnichestvo. Since 2004 Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov has sat on the boards of four GONGOs. Vitaly Ignatenko, Deputy Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council, sits on three boards. Please see below the composition of the boards of Russian GONGOs.

## Composition of the Boards of Russian GONGOs

### Rossotrudnichestvo

Aleksandr Radkov, *Deputy Director*

Liubov Glebova, *President (replacing Konstantin Kosachev since 2014)*

Dmitry Kvitko, *Deputy Director*

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<sup>62</sup> A. Chepurin, 'Approaching the Far Away', *Russia in Global Affairs* 3, Foreign Policy Research Foundation (2009).

<sup>63</sup> *Sputnik News*, 'Council of Russian Compatriots Gains Associated Status at UN', 19 March 2009.

<sup>64</sup> K. Kosachev, 'Russian Foreign Policy Vertical', *Russia in Global Affairs* 3, Foreign Policy Research Foundation (2004).

<sup>65</sup> K. Kosachev, 'A Dictatorship of Incompetence', *Russia in Global Affairs* 2, Foreign Policy Research Foundation (2006).



## Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad

Konstantin Kosachev  
Sergei Lavrov, *Chair of the Board of Trustees*  
Vitaly Ignatenko  
Aleksandr Radkov  
Natalia Narochnitskaya  
Anatoly Makarov  
Grigory Karasin  
Vladimir Chernov  
Arshba Otari  
Igor Panevkin, *Executive Director*  
Andrey Bystritskii  
Alexander Konovalov  
Vladimir Lukin  
Harry Minh  
Gasan Mirzoyev  
Alexander Sokolov  
Sergey Stepashin  
Vladimir Piligin  
Torshin Alexander  
Jadwiga Yuferova  
Grigory Ivliev  
Alexander Kudimov

Sergei Nikolaev  
Viktor Blazheev

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## The Gorchakov Fund

Konstantin Kosachev  
Sergei Lavrov  
Leonid Drachevsky, *Executive Director*  
Anatoly Torkunov  
Vladimir Yakunin  
Igor Ivanov  
Sergey Prikhodko  
Ruben Vardanyan  
Mikhail Prokhorov  
Igor Zyuzin  
Vladimir Yevtushenkov  
Vagit Alekperov  
Alexander Karelin  
Suleyman Kerimov  
Andrei Kokoshin  
Sergey Ordzhonikidze  
Leonied Melamed  
Alexey Kuzmichev  
Georgy Petrov  
Victor Loshak  
Roman Grishenin,  
*Deputy Executive Director*  
Yevgeny Primakov

Nikolay Tokarev  
Victor Kamyschanov  
Ekaterina Lakhova  
Alisher Usmanov  
Yuri Ushakov  
Sergey Chemezov  
Patokh Chodiev  
Alexander Bessmertnykh

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## Russkiy Mir

Sergei Lavrov  
Vitaly Ignatenko  
Alexander Dzasokhov  
Andrey Fursenko  
Natalia Narochnitskaya  
Vladimir Yakunin  
Ludmila Verbitskaya  
Oleg Dobrodeyev,  
*General Director*  
Vitaly Kostomarov  
Dmitry Livanov  
Vladimir Medinsky  
Mikhail Piotrovsky  
Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk (Grigor Alfeev)  
Vyacheslav Nikonov  
Alexander Gogolevsky



## World Russian Press Foundation (WARP Foundation)

Konstantin Kosachev  
Vitaly Ignatenko, *President*  
Anatoly Makarov  
Grigory Karasin  
Sergey Mamedov  
Vladimir Grigoriev  
Pavel Gusev  
Mikhail Gusman,  
*First Deputy Director*  
Elena Zielinskaya  
Armen Keryan  
Vadim Zolotarev  
Alexander Klein, *Director*  
Leonid Mlechin  
Eduard Sagalaev  
Sergey Naryshkin  
Oleg Budargin  
Vladislav Fronin  
Anton Chichilimov  
Vitaly Saveliev  
Mikhail Seslavinskiy  
Leonid Slutsky  
Anatoly Lysenko  
Sergey Mikhailov  
Andrey Molchanov

Pavel Negoitsa  
Oleg Tabakov  
Andrey Tsybulin  
Mikhail Shvydkoi

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## Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC)

Konstantin Kosachev  
Sergei Lavrov, *Chair of the Board of Trustees*  
Leonid Drachevsky  
Alexander Dzasokhov  
Andrey Fursenko  
Anatoly Torkunov  
Igor Ivanov *President*  
Sergey Prikhodko  
Sergey Mamedov  
Herman Gref  
Aleksandr Dynkin  
Fyodor Lukyanov  
Andrey Kortunov,  
*Director General*  
Mikhail Komissar  
Mikhail Margelov  
Yury Osipov  
Igor Yurgens  
Petr Aven, *Chair of the Board of Directors*

Aleksandr Shokhin  
Vyacheslav Trubnikov  
Aleksey Meshkov  
Dmitry Peskov  
Vyacheslav Trubnikov

*Sources:* Websites of the organisations in question.  
Rossotrudnichestvo: <http://95.163.77.90/en/about/#руководство>; Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad: <http://pravfond.ru/?module=pages&action=view&id=7>; The Gorchakov Fund: <http://gorchakovfund.ru/en/about/trustees/>; Russkiy Mir: <http://russkiymir.ru/en/fund/board-of-trustees/>; World Foundation of Russian Press/World Association of Russian Press (WARP): <http://warp.pro/en/p15.html>; Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC): [http://russiancouncil.ru/en/about-us/board\\_of\\_trustees/](http://russiancouncil.ru/en/about-us/board_of_trustees/)



## Explanatory note to the Composition of the Boards of Russian GONGOs: Names highlighted in bold appear more than once on the boards of the GONGOs in question

Given name	Surname	Additional positions
Vagit	Alekperov	President of Lukoil
Otari	Arshba	Deputy of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
Petr	Aven	Chair of the Board of Directors, Alfa-Bank Banking Group
Alexander	Bessmertnykh	Former Consul Ambassador of the USSR to the USA
Viktor	Blazheev	Rector of the O. E. Kutafina Moscow State Law Academy
Oleg	Budargin	Director-General of Rosseti Public Joint Stock Company
Andrey	Bystritskii	Chair of the Liquidation Commission for 'The Voice of Russia' (now Sputnik)
Sergey	Chemezov	Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of Rostec Corporation
Vladimir	Chernov	Head of the Russian Presidential Administration for Interregional and Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries
Anton	Chichilimov	Head of the Department for Humanitarian Cooperation of Rossotrudnichestvo
Patokh	Chodiev	Co-founder and major shareholder of Eurasian Natural Resources Co., co-founder and shareholder of International Mineral Resources, President of the World Democracy Fund; in 1997 he acquired Belgian citizenship
Oleg	Dobrodeyev	Director-General of the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company
<b>Leonid</b>	<b>Drachevsky</b>	<b>Executive Director of ONEXIM Group, co-chair of the Russian–Polish Public Forum</b>
Aleksandr	Dynkin	Director of the Primakov Institute of World Economy and International Relations of the Russian Academy of Science (IMEMO)
<b>Alexander</b>	<b>Dzasokhov</b>	<b>Deputy Chair of the Commission of the Russian Federation for UNESCO</b>
Vladislav	Fronin	Editor-in-Chief of Rossiyskaya Gazeta newspaper
<b>Andrey</b>	<b>Fursenko</b>	<b>Aide to the President of Russia</b>
Liubov	Glebova	
Alexander	Gogolevsky	Director of the Expert Center of St Petersburg State University
Herman	Gref	CEO and Chair of the Board of Sberbank of Russia
Vladimir	Grigoriev	Deputy Head of the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Media (Rospechat)



Roman	Grishenin	
Pavel	Gusev	Chair of the Moscow Union of Journalists
Mikhail	Gusman	First Deputy Director-General of ITAR-TASS Russian News Agency
<b>Vitaly</b>	<b>Ignatenko</b>	<b>Deputy Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Federation Council, former Director-General of ITAR-TASS, President of the World Association of Russian Press (WARP), UNESCO Goodwill Ambassador</b>
Igor	Ivanov	President of RIAC, Professor at Moscow State Institute of International Relations (MGIMO), Minister of Foreign Affairs (1998–2004), USSR Associate Minister of Foreign Affairs (1983–6)
Grigory	Ivliev	Chair of the Committee on Culture of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
Yuferova	Jadwiga	Deputy Editor of Rossiyskaya Gazeta
Victor	Kamyshanov	President of the International Federation for Peace and Conciliation
Grigory	Karasin Miller	Secretary of State—Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation (Chair of the Management Board)
Alexander	Karelin	Deputy of the State Duma for the United Russia party, former athlete
Suleyman	Kerimov	Member of the Federation Council of Russia, majority shareholder in Nafta Moscv, co-owner of Rostelekom, owner of Anzhi Football Club
Armen	Keryan	Deputy Director of the Russian Press Institute
Alexander	Klein	
Andrei	Kokoshin	Dean of the Faculty of World Politics at Lomonosov Moscow State University, Deputy of the State Duma
Mikhail	Komissar	Director-General of Interfax Information Agency
Alexander	Konovalov	Minister of Justice of the Russian Federation
Andrey	Kortunov	
<b>Konstantin</b>	<b>Kosachev</b>	<b>Former head of Rossotrudnichestvo, Chair of the International Affairs Committee of the Federation Council</b>
Vitaly	Kostomarov	President of the Pushkin State Institute of Russian Language
Alexander	Kudimov	Deputy Chair of the International Union of Lawyers
Alexey	Kuzmichev	Founder of LetterOne Group, Head of Alfa Group Consortium





Dmitry	Kvitko	
Ekaterina	Lakhova	Former State Duma deputy, co-founder of the movement 'Women of Russia'
<b>Sergei</b>	<b>Lavrov</b>	<b>Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation</b>
Dmitry	Livanov	Minister of Education and Science
Victor	Loshak	Former journalist
Vladimir	Lukin	President of the Paralympic Committee of the Russian Federation
Fyodor	Lukyanov	Editor-in-Chief of Russia in Global Politics magazine, Chair of the Presidium of the Council for Foreign and Defense Policy
Anatoly	Lysenko	President of the International Academy of Television and Radio, Director-General of the Public Television of Russia
Anatoly	Makarov	Director of the Department for the Affairs of Compatriots Abroad at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs
Sergey	Mamedov	Member of the Council of the Federation of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
Mikhail	Margelov	Vice-President of Transneft, JSC
Vladimir	Medinsky	Minister of Culture
Leonid	Melamed	Director of Russian Nanotechnologies Corporation, CEO of the holding company Composite
Aleksey	Meshkov	Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the Russian Federation
Metropolitan Hilarion of Volokolamsk (Grigory Alfeev)		Chair of the Moscow Patriarchate's Department for External Church Relations
Sergey	Mikhailov	Director-General of ITAR-TASS Russian News Agency
Harry	Minh	Plenipotentiary Representative of the President of the Russian Federation in the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
Gasan	Mirzoyev	President of the Guild of Russian Lawyers
Leonid	Mlechin	Chair of the Board of the International Academy of Television and Radio
Andrey	Molchanov	Chair of the Board of the Charity Foundation for the Preservation of the Spiritual Heritage of St Sergius of Radonezh
<b>Natalia</b>	<b>Narochnitskaya</b>	<b>President of the Historical Perspective Foundation, Director of the IDC</b>



Sergey	Naryshkin	Chair of the State Duma of the Russian Federation
Pavel	Negoitsa	Director-General of the state-financed institution Rossiyskaya Gazeta
Sergei	Nikolaev	Deputy Director of the Department on Work with Compatriots Abroad, the Russian Foreign Ministry
Vyacheslav	Nikonov	State Duma deputy
Sergey	Ordzhonikidze	Chair of the Russian Public Council on International Cooperation and Public Diplomacy, Director-General of the UN Office in Geneva
Yury	Osipov	Full Member of the Russian Academy of Sciences
Igor	Panevkin	
Dmitry	Peskov	Deputy Head of the Presidential Administration of the Russian Federation and Press Secretary for the President of Russia
Georgy	Petrov	Vice-President of the Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Vladimir	Piligin	Chair of the Committee for Constitutional Law of the State Duma of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
Mikhail	Piotrovsky	Director of the State Hermitage Museum
Sergey	Prikhodko	Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation, Head of the Russian President's foreign policy
Yevgeny	Primakov	Former Prime Minister, former Minister of Foreign Affairs, recipient of the USSR State Prize in 1980
Mikhail	Prokhorov	Owner of investment fund ONEXIM Group; major shareholder in Rusal, Polyus God, Sglasie and RBK-TV; board member of Sheremetyevo Airport and others.
<b>Aleksandr</b>	<b>Radkov</b>	<b>Public officer, former member of Inter-Departmental Commission to regulate the entry and stay of foreign citizens in the Russian Federation</b>
Eduard	Sagalaev	President of the National Association of TV and Radio Broadcasters of Russia
Vitaly	Saveliev	Director-General and CEO of Aeroflot—Russian Airlines Public Joint Stock Company
Mikhail	Seslavinskiy	Head of the Federal Agency for Press and Mass Media (Rospechat)
Aleksandr	Shokhin	President of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs
Mikhail	Shvydkoi	Special Representative of the President of the Russian Federation for International Cultural Cooperation
Leonid	Slutsky	Chair of the Committee on the Commonwealth of Independent States' Affairs, Eurasian Integration and Ties with Compatriots of the State Duma of the Russian Federation



Alexander	Sokolov	President of the Foundation for International Cooperation
Sergey	Stepashin	Chair of the Supervisory Board of the State Corporation 'Fund of assistance for reforming housing and communal services'
Oleg	Tabakov	Artistic Director of the Moscow Art Theatre of Anton Chekhov
Nikolay	Tokarev	President of Transneft, former officer of the First Directorate General of the KGB
Anatoly	Torkunov	Rector of MGIMO, Ambassador, Chair of the Board of Channel One Russia
Alexander	Torshin	First Deputy Chair of the Federation Council of the Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation
Vyacheslav	Trubnikov	Army General, member of IMEMO Directorate
Andrey	Tsybulin	Chief of the Presidential Press and Information Office
Yuri	Ushakov	Assistant to the President, former Ambassador to the US
Alisher	Usmanov	Co-owner of Metalloinvest Holding, owner of Kommersant Publishing Houses, CEO of Gazprominvestholding, co-owner of Mail.ru (stakeholder in Russian social network Vkontakte), shareholder in Arsenal Football Club
Ruben	Vardanyan	President of Vardanyan, Broitman and Partners LLC; has held various management positions with Russian companies and banks (Sberbank, KAMAZ, Sukhoi Civil Aircraft etc.)
Ludmila	Verbitskaya	President of St Petersburg State University, President of the International Association of Teachers of Russian Language and Literature
Vladimir	Yakunin	Former president of Russian Railways, founder and President of forum 'Dialogue of Civilizations'
Vladimir	Yevtushenkov	Owner of Sitronics, majority owner of Sistema
Igor	Yurgens	President of the All-Russian Insurance Association, member of the board of the Russian Union of Industrialists and Entrepreneurs
Elena	Zielinskaya	President of the All-Russian public organisation Mediasoyuz
Vadim	Zolotarev	Doctor of economic sciences, professor
Igor	Zyuzin	Chair of mining and steel group Mechel



In June 2007 President Putin signed a decree establishing the **Ruskiy Mir Foundation (Фонд Русский мир**; website: [www.ruskiymir.ru](http://www.ruskiymir.ru); <http://bit.ly/29xOQw0>, 7900 likes) for the purpose of promoting the Russian language and culture.<sup>66</sup> The foundation is a joint project of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science, and is supported by both public and private funds.<sup>67</sup>

The foundation runs hundreds of Russian centres around the world (34 in the EU and some extra research centres at universities which, according to some, serve as ‘recruitment centres’ for ambitious pro-Russian youths who can be supported in their careers and opinions and will later be used for collaboration).<sup>68</sup> The Russian centres teach the Russian language, and organise cultural events and debates explaining Russian political stances. They also provide grants to non-profit organisations registered in Russia; public and municipal institutions in Russia; groups of any organisational or legal form incorporated outside Russia; and individuals, regardless of their nationality. Among the priorities that are supported are the ‘formation of favourable public opinion about Russia, the spread of knowledge about our home country’ and ‘support of Russian-speaking media and information resources abroad’.<sup>69</sup>

In an interview from July 2015, Vladimir Kochin, the executive director of the Ruskiy Mir Foundation, said that the budget of the Foundation was 427 million roubles (€5.2 million) and that about 2%–3% of this sum comes from private donations.<sup>70</sup> The difference between Rossotrudnichestvo and the Ruskiy Mir Foundation is that the former ‘officially propagandize the Russian political position. [Ruskiy Mir] work with popularizing the Russian language, Russian culture.’<sup>71</sup>

The executive director and the management board, as well as the board of trustees, are directly appointed by the Russian president. The board of trustees includes Sergey Lavrov; the US-blacklisted Vladimir Yakunin; former head of Rossotrudnichestvo, Konstantin Kosachev; and the director of the Paris-

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<sup>66</sup> Russian Federation, ‘Указ Президента Российской Федерации О создании фонда “Русский мир”’ [Presidential decree on creation of the Russian World Foundation], *Российская Газета* [Russian Gazette], 23 June 2007.

<sup>67</sup> Ruskiy Mir, ‘About Ruskiy Mir Foundation’, 4 November 2014.

<sup>68</sup> Ruskiy Mir, ‘Russian Centers of the Ruskiy Mir Foundation’.

<sup>69</sup> Ruskiy Mir, ‘Ruskiy Mir Foundation Grant Provision Statutes’.

<sup>70</sup> Ruskiy Mir, ‘If We Were Given Big Budgets’.

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*



based think tank the Russian Institute of Democracy and Cooperation (IDC), Natalia Narochnitskaya (see below).<sup>72</sup>

**Rossotrudnichestvo (The Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation, Россотрудничество;** website: [www.rs.gov.ru/en/about](http://www.rs.gov.ru/en/about); Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/rsgov>, 6,474 likes) was created in 2008 by then President Dmitry Medvedev, as a means to advance Russia's political and economic interests.<sup>73</sup> To achieve this, the new agency took over the foreign activities of its predecessor, Roszarubezhcenter (Росзарубежцентр), in 77 countries.<sup>74</sup> Since March 2015 Liubov Glebova has been director, succeeding Konstantin Kosachev in the role. However, such organisations sometimes use 'shadow structures', where the formal leaders are people behind the scenes.

Since its creation, Rossotrudnichestvo has received significant financial support from the government. According to a 2013 presidential decree, its budget would increase from 2 billion roubles (€24 million) in 2013, to 9.5 billion roubles (€113.8 million) by 2020. At that point, it will be receiving 0.1% of Russia's GDP.<sup>75</sup> According to the website of Rossotrudnichestvo, its activities vary from international development assistance and public diplomacy to promotion of the Russian language throughout the world. In 2009 cooperation was agreed between the Russkiy Mir Foundation and Rossotrudnichestvo in order to promote the Russian language.<sup>76</sup> The UK Facebook page of Rossotrudnichestvo mostly posts invitations to various cultural events and debates. The problem lies not in the activities that are declared in the organisation's annual reports but rather in its double purpose, which is the consolidation of pro-Kremlin groups and communication of the Kremlin narrative.

**The Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad (Фонд поддержки и защиты прав соотечественников, проживающих за рубежом,** sometimes translated as the Fund to Support and Protect the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad or the Foundation for

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<sup>72</sup> Russkiy Mir, 'Board of Trustees'.

<sup>73</sup> Rossotrudnichestvo, 'About Rossotrudnichestvo'.

<sup>74</sup> Foxall, 'The Kremlin's Sleight of Hand', 6

<sup>75</sup> Ibid., 7

<sup>76</sup> Russian World Foundation, "Россотрудничество" и Фонд "Русский Мир" подписали соглашение [Rossotrudnichestvo and Russian World Foundation Sign an Agreement].



Defence of the Rights of Compatriots Abroad; website: <http://pravfond.ru/>) was established on 25 May 2011 by Presidential Decree no. 678. The founders were the Russian Foreign Ministry and Rossotrudnichestvo.<sup>77</sup> According to Minister Sergey Lavrov the foundation was established as a mechanism ‘for defending the legitimate interests of compatriots and neutralising attempts to discriminate against them, primarily in the Baltic states’.<sup>78</sup> The foundation is funded by the federal budget, ‘voluntary contributions and donations’, and other sources. The budget of the foundation for the period 2012–13 was around €9.1 million.<sup>79</sup>

Apart from providing legal advice to compatriots, the foundation also organises conferences for lawyers specialising in protecting the rights of compatriots;<sup>80</sup> co-organises campaigns about the rights of compatriots,<sup>81</sup> for instance the right to use the Russian language in their countries;<sup>82</sup> and provides grants to individuals and NGOs for ‘the implementation of projects aimed at providing compatriots living abroad with methodical, informational, organisational and legal aid and material support in the protection of their rights, freedoms and legitimate interests in their countries of residence’.<sup>83</sup>

According to the website of the foundation, in 2012 it provided financial support to compatriots totalling in excess of 50 million roubles (€600,000). In the first half of 2013 the foundation approved 48 applications for grants.<sup>84</sup> According to State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigory Karasin, the foundation has carried out and continues to contribute to 273 projects in 42 countries (as of October 2015) and has set up 24 Centres for the Legal Support of Compatriots in 18 countries.<sup>85</sup>

The Executive Director of the foundation is Igor Panevkin. The composition of the board of trustees overlaps with that of Rossotrudnichestvo and the Russkiy Mir Foundation,<sup>86</sup> and includes Sergey Lavrov,

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<sup>77</sup> Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, ‘Часто задаваемые вопросы’ [Frequently Asked Questions].

<sup>78</sup> Russian Federation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, *Federal Law no. 102766-6*, 2015.

<sup>79</sup> O. Lutsevych, *Agents of the Russian World*.

<sup>80</sup> Russkiy Mir, ‘News’, 9 June 2016.

<sup>81</sup> Vashiprava.org, ‘English’.

<sup>82</sup> T. Smirnova, ‘State Policy of the Russian Federation in Respect of Compatriots Living Abroad’, Statement by the Chief Councillor for the Department of Relations with Compatriots Abroad, International Organisation for Migration (2013).

<sup>83</sup> Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, ‘Гранты’ [Grants], 27 March 2012.

<sup>84</sup> Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, ‘Новости Фонда’ [Foundation News], 29 August 2013.

<sup>85</sup> G. Karasin, ‘Григорий Карасин: РФ будет и впредь уделять особое внимание поддержке соотечественников’ [Grigori Karasin: Russian Federation Will Continue to Contribute to the Support of Compatriots], *TASS Russian News Agency*, 28 October 2015.

<sup>86</sup> Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad, ‘Структура’ [Structure].



Grigory Karasin, Natalia Narochnitskaya (head of the IDC and a board member of the Russkiy Mir Foundation) and Konstantin Kosachev.

In September 2015 the foundation was added to Ukraine's sanctions list<sup>87</sup> for inciting the annexation of Crimea and aggression in the Donetsk and Luhansk Republics.<sup>88</sup>

**The Gorchakov Fund (Фонд Горчакова;** website: <http://gorchakovfund.ru/en/about/>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/FondGorcakova/>; 5,404 likes)<sup>89</sup> was set up in 2010 by President Dmitry Medvedev as an instrument for carrying out the objectives of the Russian International Affairs Council (RIAC, see below).<sup>90</sup> The presidential decree stated that the founder was the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and that the budget of the organisation would come from the federal budget, from voluntary contributions and donations, and from other sources in accordance with Russian legislation.<sup>91</sup>

On its establishment, Medvedev's aide Sergei Prikhodko said that the foundation was set up to defend Russia's interests and as an additional platform for cooperation between civil society and the authorities in order to finance those NGOs involved in international research that do not receive financial support for undisclosed reasons.<sup>92</sup> The foundation organises various conferences, including the Baltic Dialogue, the Russian–German Forum on Cultural Diplomacy, and the Dialogue in the Name of the Future for representatives from the Commonwealth of Independent States and the Baltic countries.<sup>93</sup> It also cooperates with *BRICS Business Magazine*.<sup>94</sup> The Fund also supports the mobility of Russian foreign policy academics and short-

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<sup>87</sup> A. Korotayev, 'Russia Not to Stand Discrimination of Compatriots Abroad—Deputy Foreign Minister', *TASS Russian News Agency*, 28 October 2015.

<sup>88</sup> Ukraine, Presidential Administration, 'President Approved NSDC Decision on Sanctions Against Individuals Related to the Annexation of Crimea and Aggression in Donbas', 16 September 2015.

<sup>89</sup> Alexander Mikhailovich Gorchakov was a famous nineteenth-century Russian diplomat.

<sup>90</sup> School of Russian and Asian Studies, 'Kremlin Sets Up Two Nonprofit International Affairs Associations', 10 February 2010.

<sup>91</sup> Russian Federation, 'Распоряжение Президента Российской Федерации от 19.10.2011 г. N 705 - пр' [Presidential Decree no. 705, 19 October 2011], 2 February 2010.

<sup>92</sup> School of Russian and Asian Studies, 'Kremlin'.

<sup>93</sup> Gorchakov Fund, 'Programs and Projects'.

<sup>94</sup> Gorchakov Fund, 'The Gorchakov Fund and *BRICS Business Magazine*: We are Starting Media Cooperation! ', 29 January 2016. BRICS stands for Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa.



term visits to Russia of young Russian-speaking experts, post-graduates and teachers from post-Soviet countries.<sup>95</sup> A group of cooperative alumni participates in its programmes.<sup>96</sup>

The fund also provides grants to NGOs that are ‘holding activities in the field of international relations and mass media’<sup>97</sup>. The applications have to be submitted in Russian.<sup>98</sup> The instructions for the grant applications are almost identical to those for the grants provided by the Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad.<sup>99</sup> The board of trustees includes Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov and Konstantin Kosachev (who also sits on the management board).<sup>100</sup>

The WARP Foundation for Cooperation with Russian-Language Media Abroad (**Фонд сотрудничества с русскоязычной зарубежной прессой**; website: <http://warp.pro/en/>), which has the official English name of the **World Russian Press Foundation**, was established by the Government Commission on the Affairs of Compatriots Abroad in 2014.<sup>101</sup> The purpose of the WARP Foundation is the ‘development of cooperation with the Russian foreign press abroad aimed at the formation of an objective image of Russia’. Some projects of the WARP Foundation are implemented under the World Association of Russian Press (WARP). The latter was established on 24 June 1999 by the First World Congress of Russian Press on [the] initiative of the Russian Telegraphic News Agency (ITAR-TASS).<sup>102</sup> The Foundation is a ‘supportive tool of WARP Association’<sup>103</sup>. While the Association’s aim is to create a unified global Russian-speaking space, the Foundation focuses more on cooperation with the Russian foreign press abroad. The congress has met every year since then. Both organisations share the same website. The president of the association is Vitaly Ignatenko, former director general of the Federal State Unitary Enterprise of ITAR-TASS, who is also the chair of the board of directors of the foundation (he is also on the board of the Russkiy Mir Foundation

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<sup>95</sup> Gorchakov Fund, ‘Short-term Individual Educational Visits to Russia’.

<sup>96</sup> Gorchakov Fund, ‘About Club’.

<sup>97</sup> Gorchakov Fund, ‘Financial Support of Your Projects’

<sup>98</sup> Ibid.

<sup>99</sup> Gorchakov Fund, ‘Рекомендации по подготовке заявок на получение финансовой поддержки Фонда Горчакова (грантов)’ [Guideline for the Preparation and Submission of Applications for the Gorchakov Fund Grants].

<sup>100</sup> Gorchakov Fund, ‘Board of Trustees’.

<sup>101</sup> WARP, ‘About Foundation’.

<sup>102</sup> V. Ignatenko, ‘About Association’, WARP.

<sup>103</sup> E. Volkova, ‘Попечительский совет Фонда сотрудничества с русскоязычной зарубежной прессой возглавил Сергей Нарышкин’ [Board of Trustees of World Russian Press Foundation is headed by Sergey Narishkin], 26 December 2014.





and the Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad). Among the members of the board of trustees are State Secretary and Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Grigory Karasin and Konstantin Kosachev.<sup>104</sup>

The statutes of the foundation do not state who the founders are.<sup>105</sup> According to the website of the foundation, the income of the organisation comes from receipts from the founders, donations, revenues and dividends.<sup>106</sup> Among the activities of the foundation are<sup>107</sup>

- ‘the development of a unified world Russian (Russian-speaking) information space’;
- ‘facilitation of the organization of the journalistic community for free and objective reporting of events in Russia and abroad, the life of compatriots and all native speakers of Russian’; and
- ‘assistance, including financial and technological, to the Russian foreign media . . . public organizations and associations of compatriots abroad’.

The WARP Foundation is located in Moscow. However, the WARP Association has seven seats around the world including two in the EU: one in Riga, Latvia, and one in Prague, the Czech Republic.<sup>108</sup> The Prague branch of the WARP Association is situated in an administrative building from which the Russian-language newspaper *Prague Express* (Пражский экспресс) also operates. The Association’s branch is located within the office of the newspaper and is not listed as residing in the building. The connection between the two entities is not clear.

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<sup>104</sup> WARP, ‘Board of Directors’.

<sup>105</sup> The statutes merely say in provision 1.1 that ‘the foundation was established by decision of the General Meeting of Founders, Minutes no. 1 of 16’. See WARP, ‘Устав Фонда сотрудничества с русскоязычной зарубежной прессой – Фонд ВАРП’ [The Statutes: Foundation for Cooperation with Russian-Language Media Abroad—WARP Foundation], 16 September 2014.

<sup>106</sup> WARP, ‘About Foundation’.

<sup>107</sup> Ibid.

<sup>108</sup> WARP, ‘Contacts’.

**Official Russian  
organisations:  
think tanks**



The think tanks mentioned in this section are mostly active within Russia. They produce studies for the government and the president, and are often cited in the Russian media. They also publish studies and articles in English.

**Valdai Discussion Club (Валдай;** website: <http://valdaiclub.com>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ValdaiClub/>, over 7,300 likes), or rather the think tank/annual conference, was established in 2004 by the agency RIA Novosti and the Moscow-based, state-supported think tank Council on Foreign and Defence Policy.<sup>109</sup>

In 2011 the non-profit Foundation for Development and Support of the Valdai Discussion Club was established by the Council on Foreign and Defence Policy, RIAC, the Moscow State Institute of International Relations and the National Research University—Higher School of Economics. In 2014 the foundation assumed all activities of the Valdai Club.

The main activity of the foundation is its annual conference, which attracts many well-known speakers. Between the conferences the club is quite active on social networks and also organises smaller conferences, and publishes papers and reports.

The annual Valdai Forum attracts many European politicians.<sup>110</sup> However it is difficult to find critics of the Russian regime among them—they are all admirers of President Putin and Russia, and Putin reciprocates the respect and considers them his advisers. Every year, Putin opens the forum with a speech in which he contests the new alliances that have been formed since the end of the Cold War and propagates the notion that these alliances have been formed because of US propaganda. In 2014 he said in his speech:

The Cold War ended, but it did not end with the signing of a peace treaty with clear and transparent agreements on respecting existing rules or creating new rules and standards. This created the

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<sup>109</sup> Foxall, 'The Kremlin's Sleight of Hand', 12.

<sup>110</sup> People who have attended the Forum include former Czech President Václav Klaus; François Fillon, former prime minister of France; Romano Prodi, former prime minister of Italy and former president of the European Commission; and Volker Rühle, a former German defence minister. See *The Economist*, 'Valdai Conference: Russia's Identity and Values', 20 September 2013.



impression that the so-called 'victors' in the Cold War had decided to pressure events and reshape the world to suit their own needs and interests.<sup>111</sup>

**Russian International Affairs Council (Российский совет по международным делам, RIAC;** website: <http://russiancouncil.ru/en>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/RussianCouncilEn/>, over 7,170 likes) is a non-profit academic and diplomatic think tank that was established by a presidential decree of President Medvedev. It was founded by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Education and Science in 2010.<sup>112</sup> RIAC's mission is the organisation of cooperation between Russian scientific institutions and foreign analytical centres.<sup>113</sup>

The think tank produces research on foreign relations issues that are the top priorities for Russian foreign policy. The names on the board of trustees considerably overlap with those on the board of the Ruskiy Mir Foundation: Sergey Lavrov, Konstantin Kosachev and Andrei Fursenko (aide to President Putin).

According to a *Kommersant* article from 2012, RIAC's budget was 100 million roubles (€1.2 million) per year, with another 1 million roubles (almost €12,000) being provided by each corporate member.<sup>114</sup> The think tank does not officially provide any grants.

**Russian Institute for Strategic Studies (Русский институт стратегических исследований, RISS,** website: <http://russiancouncil.ru>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/ru.strategy/>, over 1200 likes) was formed in 1992. However, it gained a more prominent position in 2009 when President Medvedev signed Presidential Decree no. 478, which changed the status of RISS to that of a federal scientific institution financed by the federal budget with the president of Russia as its founder.<sup>115</sup> Unlike other NGOs covered in this paper, RISS is formally a state organisation. Under Presidential Decree no. 479 the director of the

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<sup>111</sup> Russian Federation, Presidential Executive Office, 'Meeting of the Valdai International Discussion Club', 24 October 2014.

<sup>112</sup> Russian Federation, Presidential Executive Office, 'Дмитрий Медведев подписал распоряжение „О создании некоммерческого партнёрства „Российский совет по международным делам“ [Dmitri Medvedev Signed a Presidential Decree 'On the Creation of the Non-Profit Partnership, Russian International Affairs Council']', 3 February 2010.

<sup>113</sup> RIAC, 'What is RIAC? General Information'.

<sup>114</sup> A. Gabuev and E. Chernenko, 'По странам и стечениям обстоятельств [Across Countries and Coincidences]', *Kommersant* 39 (Moscow, October 2012).

<sup>115</sup> A. Kornilov and A. Kononova, 'The Russian Institute of Strategic Studies: The Organizational Dimension', *Bilge Strateji* 6/10 (2014), 16.



institute was replaced by the current director, Leonid Reshetnikov.<sup>116</sup> Reshetnikov is a former Lieutenant-General of the Soviet Committee for State Security, where he was the head of its Information and Analytical Department; he is a member of the Scientific Council of the Security Council of the Russian Federation and the Public Council of the Ministry of Defence of the Russian Federation. He is also a Balkan specialist.<sup>117</sup> In late 2013, he launched a stinging attack on the Serbian Energy Minister, Zorana Mihajlovič, accusing her of attempting to undermine bilateral cooperation on the South Stream project. As a result, she was reshuffled to a different ministerial post.

The website of RISS states, 'The main task of RISS is to provide information support to the Administration of the President of the Russian Federation, the Federation Council, the State Duma and the Security Council as well as to Government offices, ministries and departments'.<sup>118</sup> The Russian president has a decisive role in determining the nature of the state-ordered research carried out by RISS, and monitors the flow and internal distribution of budgetary funds.<sup>119</sup> RISS has 180 employees. The budget of the organisation is not made public. The institute has six centres, one of them being the Centre for the Baltic and Commonwealth of Independent States' Countries. One of the aims of the centre is: 'resisting the falsification of history in the post-Soviet space'.<sup>120</sup>

RISS is quoted quite often by the media, mostly by ITAR-TASS and Sputnik, but also by some foreign media.<sup>121</sup> It has two offices in the EU, one in Paris, headed by Sergey Kapnist; and one in Warsaw, headed by Dmitry Karnaukhov.<sup>122</sup>

One speciality of RISS, which differentiates it from other think tanks, is that it also produces propaganda videos. Some examples include: 'Crisis of the West: America Attacks Europe'; 'Transnistria (Pridnestrovye) as a Western Outpost of Russia'; and 'Divided Serbia, How the West Destroyed the White Movement'.<sup>123</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> Ibid.

<sup>117</sup> Ibid, 17.

<sup>118</sup> RISS, 'About'.

<sup>119</sup> Kornilov and Kononova, 'The Russian Institute of Strategic Studies', 21.

<sup>120</sup> RISS, 'About'.

<sup>121</sup> RISS, 'Media'.

<sup>122</sup> RISS, 'Structure'.

<sup>123</sup> Kornilov and Kononova, 'The Russian Institute of Strategic Studies', 20.

**Russian funding:  
established EU-  
based think  
tanks**



Some EU-based think tanks have received financing from the Russian government or from Gazprom. These organisations do not necessarily promote the Russian government agenda in all of their activities, nor can it be said that all of their staff necessarily support these aims. Nevertheless, receiving accepting finances from the Russian government and its affiliated organisations puts the reputation of a think tank in question. Specific information on two French think tanks follows:

**Institut de relations internationales et stratégiques (IRIS)**, website: <http://www.fr-france.org/en/>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/InstitutIRIS/>; over 37,700 likes) is a Paris-based think tank. According to two interviewees,<sup>124</sup> it is a front for Russian influence in France. Its director, Pascal Boniface, is well known for his support of Putin's Russia and his strong stance against Israel. Arnaud Dubien, IRIS associate research fellow, is the director of the French–Russian Analytical Center 'Observo'<sup>125</sup> and a contributor to the Valdai Club.<sup>126</sup> As well as organising conferences with other pro-Russian associations,<sup>127</sup> in cooperation with 'Observo' and the French–Russian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, IRIS organised an international colloquium at which RIAC representatives and Director General Andrei Kortunov and President of the Valdai Club Sergei Karganov were invited to present their reports.<sup>128</sup> IRIS's funding is not fully transparent. According to *Libération*, a French daily newspaper, the think tank's purpose is to promote a Russian agenda as it is financially dependent on the Kremlin.<sup>129</sup> Importantly, the messages produced are not necessarily in full agreement with the current Russian position. One is instead told that 'we need to hear the other side'. Boniface often proclaims the need 'to be realistic', which for him means accepting the Russian deeds in Ukraine.<sup>130</sup>

**Institut français des relations internationales (IFRI)**, website: <http://www.ifri.org/>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Ifri.Paris.Bruxelles>, over 62 200 likes) is another example of indirect Russian influence

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<sup>124</sup> Interview with anonymous contributors, 12 May 2015 and 13 May 2015.

<sup>125</sup> Analytical Center 'Observo', 'Contacts'.

<sup>126</sup> Valdai Club, 'Arnaud Dubien'.

<sup>127</sup> Interview with anonymous contributor, 13 May 2015.

<sup>128</sup> RIAC, 'International Colloquium "France–Russia: Future Strategic Partnership"', 22 April 2013.

<sup>129</sup> L. Millot and V. Dorman, 'Les sept familles dans la manche du Kremlin' [The Seven Families in the Round of the Kremlin], *Libération*, 24 October 2014.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with anonymous contributor, 13 May 2015.



through funding.<sup>131</sup> IFRI is one of the five most influential think tanks in Western Europe.<sup>132</sup> According to an interviewee, IFRI is financed by Gazprom despite it not being mentioned as a member organisation or a partner in its annual reports. The think tank organises conferences that suit the needs of Gazprom. Putin, Medvedev and former Ukrainian President Yanukovich have attended these conferences, which have also hosted other non-pro-Russian VIPs. The chair of IFRI, Thierry de Montbrial, is well known for his support of Putin's Russia. However, its new director, Thomas Gomart, an expert on Russian affairs, is certainly not a pro-Putin scholar. After Montbrial's departure, IFRI could become independent from Russian influence.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>131</sup> See also: L. Millot, 'Le débat russe, un terrain glissant', *Libération*, 24 October 2014.

<sup>132</sup> J. G. McGann, *2015 Global Go To Think Tanks Index Report*, International and Area Studies Commons, University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia, PA, 2 September 2016).

<sup>133</sup> Interview with an anonymous contributor, 13 May 2015 and subsequent correspondence.





**Unofficial  
Russian  
organisations:  
think tanks and  
'monitoring  
organisations'  
abroad**



Russia covertly financially supports various pro-Russian organisations and think tanks in Europe to advance its foreign policy goals.<sup>134</sup> The financing of these organisations occurs either through the grant systems of some of the above-mentioned GONGOs or through illegal methods similar to the hawala system. In contrast to the obscurity of their financing, high-ranking figures connected with the Russian government openly spearhead these organisations.

**Institute of Democracy and Cooperation (Institut de le démocratie et de la coopération, Институт демократии и сотрудничества, IDC;** website: [www.idc-europe.org](http://www.idc-europe.org)) was founded in 2008 in Paris. (Until 2015 it also had a branch in New York.) According to its website, this think tank wants to be ‘part of the debate about the relationship between state sovereignty and human rights; about East–West relations and the place of Russia in Europe; . . . about the interpretation of human rights and the way they are applied in different countries; and about the way in which historical memory is used in contemporary politics.’

The IDC could have been listed among the GONGOs mentioned above. According to Wikileaks, the institute was established by the Russian government: ‘The Institute is intended to end what the GOR [Government of Russia] sees as the western “monopoly” on defining and reporting human rights abuses and will reportedly seek to discuss human rights in a context detached from cultural influences. It will also endeavor to improve Russia’s image in the West.’<sup>135</sup>

The institute’s head is Natalia Narochnitskaya, a former State Duma member, who from 1982 to 1989 worked at the Secretariat General of the UN in New York. She is also on the board of trustees of the Russkiy Mir Foundation<sup>136</sup> and is the head of the Russian non-profit organisation the Historical Perspective Foundation. This foundation is fighting against ‘the falsification of history’<sup>137</sup> and considers one of its goals to be ‘forming an objective international information space around Russia’.<sup>138</sup> The term ‘falsification of history’ is a popular one among Russian politicians and compatriots. However, it does not mean that there is a search for objective information and a balanced view of historical events, but that an effort is made to preserve the Soviet interpretation of historical events. In this interpretation the Germans are always the ‘bad guys’ and ‘fascists’, and the partisans and Russians are always the only heroes and liberators.<sup>139</sup>

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<sup>134</sup> Pomerantsev and Weiss, *The Menace of Unreality*, 26.

<sup>135</sup> Wikileaks, ‘The Institute for Democracy and Cooperation; Russia’s New Face’, 12 February 2008.

<sup>136</sup> Russkiy Mir, ‘Natalia Narochnitskaya’.

<sup>137</sup> Historical Perspective Foundation, ‘О Фонде’ [About the Foundation].

<sup>138</sup> Historical Perspective Foundation, ‘Задачи Фонда’ [Objectives of the Foundation].

<sup>139</sup> Z. Peterson, ‘The Kremlin Remembers Its Favourite War’, *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 26 June 2012.



The IDC's director of studies is John Laughland, a British Eurosceptic whose views are very similar to those of the Kremlin. He criticises the EU, the US and Ukraine, and has given speeches in the Russian Duma<sup>140</sup> and at the Rhodes Forum organised by Vladimir Yakunin and the Vienna-based organisation Dialogue of Civilisations (see below).<sup>141</sup> When asked about financing, Laughland claimed that the IDC is financed by the Historical Perspective Foundation,<sup>142</sup> which is partially funded by presidential grants.<sup>143</sup>

In June 2016, a new international think tank, **Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute (Dialog der Zivilisationen)**; website: <http://doc-research.org/en/>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/Dialogue-of-Civilizations-Research-Institute-1050655458352266/?fref=ts>; 25 likes), was opened in Berlin. One of the founding members is Vladimir Yakunin, a close ally of Putin and a former president of Russian Railways. Yakunin, who is also on the board of Russkiy Mir, is known for his nationalist, anti-American and homophobic attitudes.<sup>144</sup> The institute appears to be an extension of an existing institute, Dialog der Zivilisationen in German, which operates from Vienna. The Berlin Institute's avowed goal is an ambitious one, to coordinate a network of Russian think tanks worldwide.<sup>145</sup> One observer noted that implying Russia's 'civilisation' is different from the European civilisation, puts into question universal values, including human rights and open societies.<sup>146</sup> Affiliates of the think tank include international figures, including the former Czech president Klaus.<sup>147</sup> The Institute's website gives only vague information about finances, stating that the organisation 'receives no governmental grants or subsidies... [and]... all ... activities are financed from the proceeds of our Endowment, membership fees and sponsorship.'<sup>148</sup>

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<sup>140</sup> IDC, 'John Laughland Addresses Conference Organised by the State Duma in Moscow', 25 November 2014.

<sup>141</sup> BBC, 'Ukraine Crisis: Russia and Sanctions', 19 December 2014; and M. Wehner, 'Achtung, Wladimir kommt!' [Attention, Vladimir Comes!], *faz.net*, 28 June 2016.

<sup>142</sup> N. Kanevskaya, 'How The Kremlin Wields Its Soft Power In France', *Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty*, 24 June 2014.

<sup>143</sup> Lutsevych, *Agents of the Russian World*, 11.

<sup>144</sup> M. Wehner, 'Achtung, Wladimir kommt!' [Attention, Vladimir Comes!], *faz.net*, 28 June 2016.

<sup>145</sup> *Huffingtonpost.de*, "'Dialog der Zivilisationen': Kreml gründet Institut in Berlin' ['Dialogue of Civilisations': Kreml Finds an Institute in Berlin], 26 June 2016.

<sup>146</sup> *Epoch Times*, 'Russlandexperte kritisiert Forschungsinstitut "Dialog der Zivilisationen"' [Russia Expert Criticises the Research Institute 'Dialogue of Civilisations'], 29 June 2016.

<sup>147</sup> *PRNewswire*, 'Global Political, Business and Academic Leaders Convene in Berlin to Mark the International Launch of the Dialogue of Civilizations Research Institute', 1 July 2016.

<sup>148</sup> DOC Research Institute, About us, Funding.



**Eurasian Observatory for Democracy and Elections (Евразийский совет за демократию и выборы, EODE**, website: <http://www.eode.org/>; Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/EODE.org>, 488 likes) is an organisation apparently modelled on the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE ODIHR) whose role is to monitor elections. The role of EODE is to falsely legitimise elections and referendums in post-Soviet countries with pro-Russian separatist movements, such as Crimea, Transnistria, Abkhazia or South Ossetia<sup>149</sup>. The website of the EODE says that it is an NGO under French law, founded in 2006 in Brussels and ‘Kishinev’ (Chisinau) that is working in the areas of election monitoring, the audit of state and political systems and research and analysis. According to its website, the vision of EODE is shared by ‘the current Russian leadership and V.V. Putin.’ The organisation is concerned about the activism of Western NGOs and ‘denounces in particular the way the election monitoring is carried out by these Western NGOs and the monitoring missions of Western international organisations (US Congress, European Union, ...OSCE, etc ...), to destabilize the countries non-aligned on the policy of the United States and NATO in Europe, Africa, Middle East, Asia and Latin America and to support “colour revolutions.”’ The NGO’s website provides a platform for the documentary films of Vladimir Solovyov,<sup>150</sup> a journalist famous for his anti-Western and anti-liberal propaganda.<sup>151</sup> Moreover, EODE has been promoted by Sputnik.<sup>152</sup>

The organisation has strong links to the European far right.<sup>153</sup> The organisation invites members of European extreme-right parties to monitor electoral procedures. It is funded and headed by Belgian neo-Nazi Luc Michel, who is a follower of the Belgian neo-Nazi politician Jean-Pierre Vandermissel. According to Shekhovtsov, EODE is only a drop in the ocean of cooperation between the Kremlin and extreme right.<sup>154</sup> The organisation has offices in Brussels, Paris, Moscow, Sochi and Chisinau. However, it does not state the exact addresses of its offices.

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<sup>149</sup> A. Shekhovtsov, *The Kremlin’s Marriage of Convenience with the European Far Right*, Open Democracy, Russia and Beyond (28 April 2014).

<sup>150</sup> *Eurasian Observatory for Democracy and Elections*, ‘Articles by Languages: Russian’, 2016.

<sup>151</sup> K. Hille, ‘Russian media stir memories of Soviet Era in Propaganda War’, *The Financial Times*, 4 April 2014.

<sup>152</sup> *Sputnik News*, ‘Eurasian Observatory for Democracy & Elections (EODE)’, 17 May 2015.

<sup>153</sup> S. Štefaníková, ‘Politici jeli na Krym s extremisty. Bylo to narychlo, říkají’ [Politicians Went to Crimea with Extremists. It Was Hastily Arranged, They Say], *Aktuálně.cz*, 19 March 2014.

<sup>154</sup> Shekhovtsov, *The Kremlin’s Marriage of Convenience with the European Far Right*.

**Russia just  
across the  
border: NGOs  
and think tanks  
in the Baltic  
countries**



The Baltic states have been subjected to more intensive Russian pressure than other EU countries. Russian secret services control most compatriot NGOs in Latvia, Estonia and Lithuania.<sup>155</sup> According to the head of the Latvian security service, Normunds Mezviets, in the Baltic countries there is a clear link between obscure Russian-funded NGOs and media outlets that spread information with the aim of constructing messages that favour Russian interests.<sup>156</sup>

Many pro-Russian NGOs receive grants from the big GONGOs through their grant programmes. According to Re: Baltica (The Baltic Centre for Investigative Journalism), more than 40 NGOs in the Baltic states have received at least €1.5 million from these organisations in the last three years (this figure could be even higher as not all Baltic countries require NGOs to publish their financial reports).<sup>157</sup> The Baltic security services state that approximately 68% of the grant recipients are connected to pro-Kremlin political parties in the Baltic countries.<sup>158</sup>

The largest recipient of grants is the **Legal Information Centre for Human Rights**, which the Estonian Internal Security Service accuses of being a Russian agent (the centre denies the accusations).<sup>159</sup> The main figures that run pseudo-NGOs are often media professionals, as doing so increases their channels for spreading propaganda messages. The organisation Altmedia runs a website (baltija.eu) that features 'alternative news', and this is, according to the Estonian Internal Security Service, funded via Media Capital Holding BV, a company registered in the Netherlands and controlled by people linked to the state-owned media company Rossiya Segodnya. One of the founders of Altmedia is Vladimir Lepekhin, a pro-Russian activist and director of the Eurasian Economic Community Institute.<sup>160</sup> Another example is the Baltnews news portal that was launched in Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, and is funded by Russia via enterprises in European countries. The magazine *Baltiiski Mir* (Baltic World), which targets Russian speakers in the Baltic countries, is linked to MTU Integratsioonimeedia (Integration Media Group) and funded by the Russian Foreign Ministry. Moreover, according to the Internal Security Service in Estonia, the Impressum NGO, which

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<sup>155</sup> P. Pomerantsev and M. Weiss, *The Menace of Unreality*, 24.

<sup>156</sup> Jemberga, Salu and Cerniauskas, 'Kremlin's Millions'.

<sup>157</sup> Ibid.

<sup>158</sup> Ibid.

<sup>159</sup> Ibid.

<sup>160</sup> Ibid.



organises various events to spread anti-Estonian propaganda, was created by media professionals from Komsomolskaya Pravda v Severnoi Evrope and Komsomolskaya Pravda.<sup>161</sup>

In Lithuania, the Kremlin sponsors the **Independent Centre for Human Rights** and the **Centre for Defence and Research of Fundamental Rights**, which are connected to Lithuania Without Nazism, another organisation funded by Russian compatriot GONGOs.<sup>162</sup> Lithuania Without Nazism is part of the organisation World Without Nazism, which was registered in France by the Russian ex-politician and billionaire Boris Shpigel, who has close ties to the Kremlin.<sup>163</sup>

In Latvia, at least seven organisations have received grants from Russian compatriot GONGOs, which together amount to more than €680,000.<sup>164</sup> The biggest portion of this sum (over €240,000) was received by the **Latvian Human Rights Committee**, which was founded by Latvian Member of the European Parliament Tatjana Zhdanoka (Group of the Greens/European Free Alliance).<sup>165</sup> In Belgium, Zhdanoka established an organisation called **Pour La Future Sans Fascism**, which, according to Latvia's security sources, has received €25,000 from the Foundation for Supporting and Protecting the Rights of Compatriots Living Abroad; this money has since been disseminated among pro-Russian Latvian NGOs.<sup>166</sup> Another important pro-Russian figure in Latvia is Aleksandr Gaponenko who represents several NGOs, one of them being the **European Research Institute**.<sup>167</sup> According to Latvian security sources Gaponenko was behind the failed 2012 referendum on making Russian the second official language in the country.<sup>168</sup> He told al-Jazeera TV that his organisation had received €7,000 from the Russian compatriot foundation. However, the organisation's annual reports say that it received more than €29,000 in 2014 alone from undisclosed sources.<sup>169</sup>

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<sup>161</sup> Estonian Internal Security Service, *Annual Review 2014* (Tallinn, 2015).

<sup>162</sup> Ibid.

<sup>163</sup> Ibid.

<sup>164</sup> Ibid.

<sup>165</sup> Ibid.

<sup>166</sup> Ibid.

<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> Ibid.





Compatriot NGOs often feed the discourse in the Russian-language media. Estonians and the Russian-speaking minority in Estonia live in different information spaces with contrasting content; the latter gets its information mostly from the Russian-language media and places huge amounts of trust in the Kremlin-controlled Russian television channels.<sup>170</sup> For example, in the case of conflicting reports regarding the Russo-Georgian war in 2008, the majority of ethnic Russians in Estonia believed the reports in the Russian media in preference to the Estonian and foreign media.<sup>171</sup> Likewise, concerning the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, the Russian-speaking minorities in Latvia and Estonia lay the blame on the authorities in Kyiv.<sup>172</sup> The spread of propaganda by the Kremlin-controlled media and compatriot NGOs disrupt the cohesiveness in the target country's society.

The Baltic countries are fighting against this infiltration by measures that, inevitably, are harsher than in other EU countries: by imposing travel bans on Kremlin activists, by banning Russian TV stations (in Latvia and Lithuania), by introducing entry bans for Russian journalists (in Estonia), by expelling diplomats who are identified as Russian Intelligence Service officers, and by implementing stricter NGO disclosure requirements, but also by not allowing some organisations, such as Rosstrudnichestvo, to open branches. According to Latvia's Foreign Minister Edgars Rinkevics, 'the goal of these organizations is not to build cultural ties and public diplomacy in its best sense, but rather to serve as a conduit for the Russian foreign policy through the local Russian community as well as the instruments of the political influence'.<sup>173</sup>

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<sup>170</sup> K. Sepper, *Media and Information Space*, Estonian Society Integration Monitoring, Ministry of Culture of Estonia (2015).

<sup>171</sup> *Err.ee*, 'Only Small Fractions of Russian Speakers Trust Estonian Media, Study Finds', 21 November 2014.

<sup>172</sup> A. Lada, *All Quiet in the Baltics? Estonians, Latvians and their Russian-Speaking Minorities: Different Assessments of Current European Issues*, Bertelsmann Stiftung (Gütersloh, December 2015).

<sup>173</sup> Jemberga, Salu and Cerniauskas, 'Kremlin's Millions'.

# European responses



Russian official and unofficial efforts to influence the European publics and decision-makers through GONGOs, NGOs and think tanks (and other means) come at a time of a West-wide revolt against the elites. The June 2016 UK referendum's decision to leave the EU; the rise of the populist Donald Trump in the 2016 US presidential race; and the popularity of eurosceptic parties in Poland, France and other countries seem to part of the same pattern of disaffection with our democratic systems. Like the domestic populist revolts in Europe and the US, Russian aggressive policy is exposing weaknesses in Western democracies. We should therefore look at the hostile Russian propaganda and overt and covert financing and lobbying activities as challenges that help us improve our decision-making mechanisms, increase transparency in policymaking and involve citizens and civil society organisations in the democratic process.

Starting with civil society, churches, NGOs and think tanks need to be encouraged to improve political participation and societal cohesion. Individually and collectively, Russian ethnic minorities in the Baltic countries, Germany, France and elsewhere need to be involved in the democratic process, an idea that has not been fully acknowledged by our political classes since the fall the Eastern Bloc. The overall goal is to increase the cohesion of Western societies without sacrificing their openness. Attempting to create a more active and cohesive civil society should be part of wider efforts to improve the attractiveness of the Western values of human rights, freedom and equality.

As for the 'soft power' of the West, for decades our democracies have engaged the public, including in Russia. This has been done through institutes such as the British Council and the Goethe Institute, as well as through political foundations and civic initiatives. These activities have not prevented the rise of new authoritarianism under Putin, testifying that in Russia, Western 'soft power' has been soft indeed. If the Russian GONGOs and other similar institutes were comparable to the ones financed by the West, the West would have nothing to fear. Unfortunately, the Russian GONGOs and NGOs are organisations of a different kind. They play a part in the larger Russian strategy to regain influence across the former Soviet Bloc and further west through 'soft coercion'.<sup>174</sup> They differ from their Western counterparts in the obscurity of their financing and operations. Their mutual relationships are unclear. Their overall influence is yet to be evaluated, an effort to which the present study aims to contribute.

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<sup>174</sup> Lutsevych, *Agents of the Russian World*.



So far the European responses to Russian compatriot GONGOs and NGOs have not been along the Russian lines—that is, they have not involved oppressing NGOs at home or undermining the Russian government by radicalising the minorities in Russia. This has been a correct response: it is clear that the EU should not answer to these Russian activities in a ‘like for like’ fashion. And correctly, there are no plans for the EU and its members to adopt laws on ‘foreign agents’. Freedom of speech and freedom of assembly are sacrosanct principles that we cannot break in response to our fears of a resurgent Russia. The West cannot and will not replicate Russian punitive policies on NGOs. Western democratic systems thrive on criticism, however unpleasant it may be to the holders of power in any particular situation.

A requirement to increase the transparency of NGOs and their money flows is a more promising course of action in response to attempts to steer the EU’s policy agenda in favour of the interests of the Russian government. The existing Transparency Register for the European Commission and Parliament is a voluntary instrument, in that registration can be avoided by lobbyists of any nationality (arrangements in the member states tend to be similarly loose). An increase in the transparency of the lobbying process at the EU level and a properly enforced code of conduct would ensure that lobbying does not exert undue influence on the decision-making process. This would increase the quality of our democracies in general, not just in relation to lobbying by Russian state-sponsored groups and individuals. One tool to increase transparency would be an EU-level mandatory lobbying register. The Brussels-based Council of Bars and Law Societies of Europe, Transparency International, the office of the European Ombudsman and associations of lobbyists are backing such a mandatory register. This register would be run by a new independent body.<sup>175</sup> If adopted, a lobbying regime enforced by an independent organisation would circumvent an ethical problem with government bodies policing the activities of the non-governmental sector.

In addition, the European public needs better information on Russia-sponsored GONGOs and NGOs. Currently on Wikipedia, for example, the relevant entries are only in Russian, with very little information in other languages. Providing information through the media, through organisations, through politicians or even through simple tools such as Wikipedia about the facts, and exposing the information available about which organisations are supported by the Russian Federation is vital. (In doing that, it should be, however, clear that there are ‘concentric circles’ of Russian influence: an established EU-based think tank that ac-

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<sup>175</sup> N. Nielsen, ‘EU Lawyers Support Mandatory Lobby Register’.



cepts one grant from Gazprom is in a different category from a think tank fully financed in an obscure manner from Russia.)

Another area for improvement is the monitoring of Russian GONGOs and Russian-linked NGOs by police agencies and intelligence services in the EU, which do not seem to be sufficiently focused on Russian subversive activities. Any surveillance must be legally justified and proportionate, and must not extend to harassment of the subjects, however unpleasant their activities may be. This is, of course, different in cases where illegal money flows and direct threats to national security are occurring. However, only courts can criminalise the recipients of illegal transfers.

A related phenomenon is the influence that (pseudo-) NGOs can have on politicians. Suspicion should be raised not only when an NGO, think tank or other entity suddenly appears, hides its sources of finance, and spreads 'alternative information' that is favourable to Russia. Similar caution is needed when a party or a member of parliament suddenly changes his opinions and his voting behaviour in favour of official Russian interests.<sup>176</sup> While there is more and more discussion about Russia's influence through the media at the EU and national levels, Russian-funded NGOs are usually forgotten in this discussion. Media channels can reach a large audience, but face-to-face meetings and conferences organised for journalists and politicians can influence key decision-makers.

Existing free media projects focusing on Russia, like Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty and Belsat TV (which currently mainly broadcasts in Belarus and is mostly financed from Polish sources, but could potentially be extended to Russia), already inform the public in the EU and Russia about the strategies of the Russian state. The European External Action Service's East Stratcom Task Force sends out weekly media disinformation reviews. Several projects, such as the European Values think tank in Prague and the Ukrainian project StopFake.org, also play useful roles in this regard.

As for EU-based think tanks, they must be allowed to operate freely and without official harassment, unless they engage in illegal activities. However, their activities, namely the links between donors and the content of think tanks' output, should be scrutinised. This is the role of the free media and civil society.

The West's main weapon against hostile influence from Russia is information rather than criminalisation.

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<sup>176</sup> In interviews with an anonymous contributor, 12 May 2015, and anonymous contributor 'B', 12 May 2015.

# Recommendations



- The EU should reclaim its own narrative in the EU member states. If the Kremlin's myths are based on the evils of the EU and its failures, the EU's objective should be to foster its narrative, based on EU values and on highlighting the EU as a force for human rights, the rule of law, freedom and equality.
- The EU and its member states should support pro-democratic civil society in order to improve social cohesion and political participation and connect with the audience targeted by Russian propaganda. Cooperation should be improved to share best practice on increasing the coherence of society and enhancing civil society development.
- The media and civil society organisations in the EU (as well as in Russia, to the extent that they can) need to spread the facts about Russian disinformation activities. This includes the activities of EU-based think tanks.
- The EU and its member states need to increase transparency requirements for NGOs and lobbyists, balancing the principle of governmental non-interference in the non-governmental sector against the security needs of our societies. At the EU level, a mandatory lobbying register, policed by an independent body, should be introduced.
- Police and intelligence agencies in the EU need to improve their operations and mutual cooperation, with a view to countering illegal activities by Russia-controlled non-governmental organisations. The focus should be on monitoring financial flows. Judicial action should be taken against those NGOs and associations that demonstrably threaten national security.
- The EU and its member states should support objective information in the Russian language. The audiences include Russian-speaking minorities living in the EU, but also audiences globally.
- The media and civil society should also map the political statements and voting records of politicians. Given its EU-wide decision-making powers, Brussels should be the target of special monitoring.
- Further research and investigation into compatriot organisations and the size of their target audience in the EU member states are needed.

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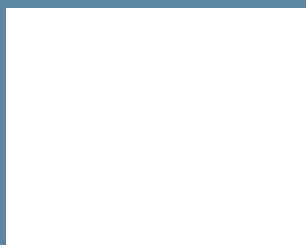
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This paper sheds light on organisations operating in Europe that are funded by the Russian government, whether officially or unofficially. These include government-organised non-governmental organisations (GONGOs), non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and think tanks. Their goal is to shift European public opinion towards a positive view of Russian politics and policies, and towards respect for its great power ambitions. In light of Russia's annexation of Crimea and Russian aggression in Eastern Ukraine, the overt or covert support for these organisations must become a matter of concern to the EU.

The EU's politicians and citizens should look at the activities of the Russian GONGOs and think tanks as challenges that can help improve national and EU-level decision-making mechanisms, increase transparency in policymaking and deepen the involvement of citizens and civil society organisations in the democratic process. The paper recommends, among other measures, fostering the EU's own narrative, which is based on human rights, freedom and equality; supporting pro-democratic civil society so that Europeans become more resistant to Russian propaganda; and increasing transparency requirements for NGOs and lobbyists by setting up a mandatory lobbying register at the EU level.



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