2013 REPORT ON THE STATE OF CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION
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This annual Report on the State of Civil Society in the Russian Federation was prepared pursuant to Article 22 of the Federal Law No. 32-FZ “On Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation” of April 4, 2005.

The first section of this Report focuses on key institutions of civil society such as non-profit organizations (NPOs) and other public associations, local government, as well as the reasons for and forms of civic engagement. This section provides statistical and sociological data which relate to nonprofit sector of the Russian Federation and describe its economic “portrait” and infrastructure, reviews the relevant legislative initiatives, moral climate, levels of coherence and confidence in the Russian society, and discusses the social preferences of Russian people.

The second section considers the dialogue between civil society and the government, activities of public councils and civic chambers, the development of civic watch and public evaluation system in our country, shows the role of mass media as the institute of civil society.

The third section discusses the main forms of civic engagement and new public initiatives seen in 2013.
INTRODUCTION

Remarkable events of 2013 have highlighted both the commitment of the civil society for self-organization and the availability of considerable potential of efficient partnership between public and government, but at the same time the factors that impede the sound and constructive discussion including those within the civil society itself. The year has demonstrated that the crisis of relations between the government and society is more likely to result from the “growth challenges” than from the stagnation.

The “third sector” appeared more enthusiastic first of all about fighting the consequences of natural disasters. Grassroots organizations and individuals offered active help to those affected. One of the most important examples is provided by the flood in the Far East: thousands people from various regions responded to this disaster by sending money to support their fellow-countrymen in hardship.

Another striking instance of civil consolidation was observed on the single voting day 8 September 2013. Numerous volunteers were watching the procedure at election stations to ensure that the elections run transparent.

The year 2013 has seen some institutional changes. Several legislative instruments introduced changes in the composition of the Russian Civic Chamber, such as an increased number of members (these changes are to take effect from summer 2014). Similarly, new constitutional arrangements were imposed on the public councils of federal executive authorities.

To provide people with greater capabilities of influence on decision-making process, the federal internet based portal Russian Public Initiative was created to accept public requests and proposals as the potential basis for appropriate legislative initiatives.

In 2013 the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was elected a Chairman of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS) that includes the national civil society institutions of 72 countries.

Civic chambers acting in constituent entities of the Russian Federation and other “third sector” institutions were demonstrating an active involvement in public supervision arrangements. For instance, in 2013 NGOs took strong part in cleanup of the housing and utilities sector. Effective oversight was provided during the monitoring of compliance with Directives of Russian President dated 7 May 2012. However these efforts remain of occasional nature. The President of the Russian Federation supports the proposal to pass a federal law “On the Principles of Public Oversight in the Russian Federation”, that has been drafted during several years with participation of Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and the Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights Council under the President of the Russian Federation, which however has not been put in effect thus far.

All of these steps appeared insufficient to avoid social issues and confrontations completely. Some of them developed to a sharper extent, threaten to destabilize the situation in regions and affect the federal policy.

The public opinion was strongly concerned about the changed status of the Russian Academy of Science. Opposing to the revision of funding arrangements and asset management of the Academy, many employees of Moscow and other cities’ research institutes undertook protest actions and sign-in campaign.

Mass street protest in Pugachyov of Saratovskaya Oblast and Biryulevo-Zapadnoye district of Moscow against immigrants having committed crimes ended up with civil disorder and violence.

These bursts of protest have again demonstrated the deficiency of proper arrangements for the cooperation between people and authorities. There is an urgent need in broader room for the dialogue. Additional opportunities are required for earlier identification and prevention of potential conflicts. Partners to the dialogue should become more comprehensible and transparent for each other. These are the key needs which the state policy of the “third sector” relations was centered on in 2013. Its most recent results include a noticeable growth of state funding with concurrent significant enhancement of governmental supervision implemented, for instance, through prosecutor’s inspections and introduction of the Federal Law on “foreign agents”.

At present, our country faces serious challenges on its way of social and economic development. They include both international instability and domestic political issues. The support for the country’s sustainable development should be drawn from general consensus, joint and severable responsibility of governmental authorities, individuals and public organizations. Therefore the building of social bridges between separate professional groups, communities, variety of ethnic and cultural statuses, social experiences, and generations of Russians remains the most crucial issue. This issue can be effectively addressed through communication of the best practices of civil self-organization and engagement, cooperation between institutions of civil society, government and business, and broader involvement of individuals and grassroots organizations in the positive dialogue with our state.

1 The Address of the President of the Russian Federation to Federal Assembly of the Russian Federation dated 12 December 2013.
INSTITUTIONS OF CIVIL SOCIETY

The social basis of civil society comprises people actively involved in activities of nongovernmental nonprofit organizations, community institutions, social initiatives, philanthropic and volunteering arrangements.

Civil society includes a large family of social institutions, formal and informal establishments, along with the state and its political system that support the realization of human rights, concerns and initiatives. Their interrelation and mutual influence produce the amount of civic engagement that reflects the condition of civil society.

Activities of civil society include the protection and implementation of human rights and freedoms. By this reason, the development of civil society depends not only on the efforts of public associations but on the existence of social framework within which those institutions are able to play role of agencies between individuals and the state, with sufficient influence to ensure that lawful rights and interests of people are duly observed. Therefore, the civil society develops as a system of institutions that support the accomplishment of and mutual coordination of civil rights and freedoms with rights of communities and society in general.

1.1 Levels of social cooperation

The level of civic engagement reveals itself through self-organization as a people’s ability to cooperate in terms of achieving consent about socially relevant goals. Self-organization is understood as a form and model for action groups to consolidate their efforts and express collective needs and concerns that are common to significant part of the society and relate to the most topical aspects of their life. Self-organization of civil society is what largely determines the level of life in the country. The most important indicators of a society’s self-organization potential include the ability of people to combine efforts in addressing socially relevant issues, the level of their cohesion and mutual confidence2.

Levels of civic engagement

The social basis of civil society is highly diversified. Its core is represented by 5.4% of adult members of public associations or participants of their activities. According to the results of survey, the majority of Russian citizens (83%) do not belong to any public or nonprofit organizations. 5% told they were trade union members, 3% were affiliated with partnerships of gardeners and cottage owners, 2% belonged to associations of homeowners and sport clubs. Those affiliated with nonprofit associations generally were their members or took part in their initiatives (8%)3.

Almost one forth of adult Russians (24.6%) take no part in NPO activities and civil initiatives but lean towards joining efforts with others for collective action, are generally engaged in philanthropic activities, and have general knowledge of public associations and other nongovernmental nonprofit organizations and civic initiatives4.

The third group comprises 30.3% Russians. They are potentially prepared to joining efforts with others for collective action but abstain from taking part in such initiatives in practice, are not engaged in voluntary donations or work and are not aware enough of how any such entities operate. On its “periphery”, the social basis of civil society includes 34.5% adult Russians who appeared unapt to join efforts with others and pursue common goals, although some of them could have an experience of volunteer work and were quite good informed of public organizations and their activities. Finally, 5.3% Russian citizens are not concerned about joining efforts with others at all, nor do they have any knowledge regarding the available forms of civic engagement5.

Therefore, as the foregoing data clearly show, the civil society in our country has a considerable growth potential.

Drivers of social enthusiasm

Factors that determine the willingness of people to join social activity and the choice of its forms vary between different groups of population. They range from economic and social to legal settings and include the extent of development of those social institutions which are responsible for the regulation of social activity, the requirements of laws, as well as ethnic, cultural and religious background.

The commitment to joining efforts with others for collective action is most often demonstrated by young people between 18 and 30 years old, with university background, citizens of Moscow and small towns, and less often by countryside residents in the age of 60 and above, with less than secondary education. Russian citizens who never used the Internet much less often refer to their being prepared for joining efforts with others for common action. At the same time, those who never took part in volunteer work are mostly represented by Moscow citizens (80% versus 69% Russians from other regions)6.

Based on several national surveys, sociologists have classified social groups in terms of their being set, at least in theory, for any form of civic engagement. The group of “activists” willing to join efforts with other people in order to address relevant public


3 Ibid.

4 Ibid.


7 Ibid.
concerns in any possible forms (including the preparation of various actions, arrangements, direct participation, donations or sign-in campaigns) consists to a great extent of women, people with high levels of education and income, residents of 100 to 500 hundred thousand population cities. In cities with population exceeding one million, people more often feel ready to take part in a civic initiative like a sign-in campaign. Men and residents of megacities prevail among those not concerned about getting engaged in collective actions. The highest level of willingness to civic engagement is demonstrated by people in cities numbering between 100 and 500 thousand7.

Public confidence

The level of public confidence provides an important key to the understanding of the development of civil society and people’s readiness to join efforts. Confidence is what supports the social integration and provides the basis for moral principles and social rules. When non-confidence among ordinary people becomes a prevailing social pattern, in other words, when the society faces a deficit of social capital, the chances for volunteer cooperation and successful pursuance of common goals appear too limited.

The recent studies have shown very low level of confidence among Russians. According to the data received by the Public Opinion Fund, more than three forth of our citizens prefer to be cautious in their relations with others. Only 16% respondents believe the majority of people to deserve trust. This figure has been remaining almost unchanged in recent years8.

The Levada Center uses a somewhat different method of calculation. It consolidates the answers “People almost in all cases deserve trust” and “People usually deserve trust”. With this approach, the level of confidence among Russians appears to have been recently growing at a slow pace from 27% in 2010 to 34% in 20139.

According to the data obtained under the international sociological project “World Values Survey” which focuses on people’s values and beliefs, the level of interpersonal confidence in our country amount to roughly 30% which is lower than in Germany, Great Britain and the USA (and much lower than in Scandinavian countries), although slightly higher as compared to some developed and developing countries such as France, Greece, or Turkey.

The picture radically changes when one’s private environment is concerned. In this case, 59% Russian citizens show the willingness to trust others and 40% do not. Personal trust and knowledge remain the key criteria for Russian respondents when they need integration of efforts to protect their common interests: 49% said the most challenging thing for them was to join those whom they used to hold in distrust, while 22% felt the same difficulty with those whom they did not know closely10.

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10 The Survey was conducted by the Center for Studies of Civil Society and Nonprofit Sector, the National Research University “Higher School of Economics” (HSE) in 2013. Empirical data were collected during the national representative survey by the Public Opinion Fund, with sample size of 2,000.
The level of confidence is directly proportional to educational background and well-being. By conclusions of the RAS Institute of Sociology, groups with higher level of education or even academic degrees show the level of social trust at 29% and 47% respectively

The development of civil society is also hindered by people’s mistrust in key social institutions and the government. By the data of Public Opinion Research Center WCIOM, the evaluations of social institutions in Russia vary to a great extent. The highest appreciation is placed on activities of the Russian Orthodox Church (64%), mass media (60%), Russian Army (58%), while institutions enjoying the lowest appreciation are political parties (31%), trade unions (34%), and courts (35%). The least disapproved entities are law enforcement authorities, legal system and political parties.

Researchers found that in the recent decade the trust in church has been significantly growing. However the share of chapel attendees on regular basis does not exceed 5%.

As regards the deficit of solidarity in the Russian society, several experts attribute its associations of disabled. Business associations, community institutions, ethnic confessions, and lack of trust among people. The index of consolidated trust in civil servants reaches 34.5%, in law enforcement officers 32.5%.

During another survey that concerned the perception of local social institutions, respondents more often tended to show confidence in consumer protection organizations, veteran associations, those of gardeners and cottage owners, trade unions and associations of disabled. Business associations, community institutions, ethnic congregations, ethnic political and informal groups were less often shown by respondents to deserve their trust.

As regards the deficit of solidarity in the Russian society, several experts attribute its reasons to the heritage of Soviet era, while others refer to the commercialization of social sector and difficulties of social adaptation to rapid social transformations.

Social well-being of Russian people

The level of civic engagement also depends on psychological factors and social well-being of people. It represents the extent of cohesion and optimism, an awareness of one’s role in the society. Altruism, clear civic-mindedness and a feeling of economic safety are what drive the social enthusiasm in people.

Today, almost three forth Russians (74%) are of the opinion that disaccord and lack of integration prevail in our nation, while 18% believe accord and integration to prevail.

Negative opinions are more often expressed by those not feeling to be Russian nationals (80%) or dissatisfied with their lives (81%), as well as by advantaged respondents defined as those who may afford personal cars (79%), and Moscow citizens (84%).

An important indicator of social well-being is one’s satisfaction with his/her life. Russian people more often show satisfaction with their families and friends (86 and 84% respectfully). Almost two third Russians report that their health, housing conditions and leisure opportunities are good enough (60% in each case). The percentage of those satisfied with their income is quite low (34%) at the same time, the relations with family and friends generally influence the individual satisfaction with his/her life to a larger extent.

The deep transformations of two recent decades have been changing the stereotypical perceptions. Now Russian people consider enthusiasm, commitment, and initiative the main positive human features which, in their opinion, have strengthened during the recent decades. At the same time 80% respondents report the growth of aggression, almost 75% mention the declined respect of old people, and more than 70% stress malignity, the growing insincerity among people, and the erosion of altruistic motivations.

In the meantime, Russians do not tend to seek ideals in their past. There are only ten percent of those who would wish the pre-revolutionary Russian empire to reinaurnate, and only 14% respondents acknowledge the so-called “developed socialism” as a perfect model of society.

Showing quite high tolerance of many social inequalities (other than the accessibility of high-end medical assistance), Russian people tend to emphasize extreme imbalance of incomes. For many of them (59%), equality means that of opportunities rather than receipts (41%). As an ideal social model, considerable number of respondents refers to the “legal equality of all people” and “insignificant differences between incomes”.

In other words, the choice of society providing equal opportunities to everybody appears to become an invariable social and cultural norm for Russians. However, while a demand for legal equality as indispensable attribute of democracy seems typical to the whole of the first decade of this century, the social justice has been gaining relevance during the recent years only.

Sociologists pay special attention to the interrelation of justice and lawfulness as part of Russian people’s perception of the society. 40% respondents agree that “the most important thing is not whether an act is consistent with law, but rather whether it is just”. A slight lower though comparable percentage disagrees with this opinion and places priority on laws (34%). More than one forth respondents were uncertain (26%).
According to the Levada Center, Russians generally prefer the “orderly state” to “observation of human rights” (see Table 1). Majority of them believe that “in Russia people have enough freedom” (60%), and roughly equal percentages find that “there is too much freedom” (17%) or “there is too little freedom” (15%). The “rule by firm hand” is desired by 63% of Russians, while the number of those believing that at no event should political freedoms be rejected is twice less – 37%. However, a desire of political order or a quest for authoritarianism should not be considered the same things, since the overwhelming majority of Russians prefer the things to be reduced to an order solely by lawful methods and within the framework of laws.

Table 1. What is more important for Russians today: an orderly state or the observation of human rights?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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<th>April 1997</th>
<th>April 2008</th>
<th>July 2011</th>
<th>August 2013</th>
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<tr>
<td>Orderly state</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Observation of human rights</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>38</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uncertain</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5</td>
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1.2 The nonprofit sector in progress

Historically, the nonprofit sector has been considered an institutional foundation of civil society. Nonprofit organizations are engaged in provision of social services to citizens, protection of human rights, and serve as centers of civic watch.

Statistical picture of the “third sector”

The Federal Law No. 7-FZ “On Nonprofit Organizations” of 1996 lists the following 14 legal forms of NPOs:

- public organizations (associations);
- religious organizations (associations);
- communities of indigenous minorities of the Russian Federation;
- Cossack societies;
- nonprofit partnerships;
- autonomous nonprofit organizations;
- social, philanthropic and other foundations;
- associations and guilds including trade unions;
- state-owned companies;
- state-owned corporations;
- state institutions;
- municipal institutions;
- private institutions;
- budget-funded institutions.

The above list demonstrates that the term “nonprofit” applies to variety of entities including those with state and/or municipal participation interest thus complicating the clear understanding of nonprofit sector in statistical terms. The definitions of legal forms both of non-for-profit activities and public associations need to be adjusted accordingly.

As follows from the report “On the Exercise by the Russian Federation Ministry of Justice of the State Supervision over Nonprofit Organizations and the Efficiency of Such Supervision”, as of 1 January 2013 there were 219,688 nonprofit organizations registered in the Russian Federation of which 187,960 were subject to the supervision at federal level, including:

- 104,949 (47.8 %) public associations;
- 25,541 (11.6 %) religious organizations and 5 representation offices of foreign religious organizations established in the Russian Federation;
- 87,028 (39.6 %) nonprofit organizations of other legal forms;
- 54 political parties with 2,082 regional and 20 local units;
- 14 branches of global organizations and nonprofit nongovernmental organizations based abroad.

As of November 2013, the section “Information about the registered nonprofit organizations” on the website maintained by the Russian Federation Ministry of Justice contained details of 418,390 NPOs. This list includes nonprofit organizations with the status “exempted” (193,127) and “registered” (225,263). Also, the list contains details of religious organizations (over 30 thousand), political parties (6 thousand), partnerships of gardeners and cottage owners (25 thousand), and “public organizations” as such - 120 thousand. As of 15 March 2013, 120,024 reports of nonprofit organizations were published in the Information Portal of the RF Ministry of Justice.

The official statistics fail to provide a full picture of nonprofit sector. According to civic chambers operating in RF constituent entities, a major part of formally registered NPOs is inactive. For instance, the Civic Chamber of the Republic of Dagestan reports the real percentage of NPOs registered there to be just about 13% of which 37.8% account for religious organizations, 22% for trade unions, associations and philanthropic funds, 14% are engaged in provision of social and social-psychological support and rehabilitation services, and 7% operate in science, education and consultancy areas. By information from Civic Chamber of Chelyabinskaya Oblast, only approximately one third of NPOs registered in this region operate in their full capacity, and NPOs in rural areas of the region are represented almost exclusively by veteran and women’s associations.

According to the Civil Society Development Fund, the number of individuals employed in the “third sector” amounts to approx. 1.1% of economically active population, or...
more than 828 thousand. During the survey undertaken by the Center for Political Technologies the engagement with NPOs (in various forms) was reported by 8.9% of Russians (of which 3.3% told they were so engaged “more than once”). Siberian and Far Eastern Federal Districts show a slightly higher percentage of people happened to be engaged with NPOs (16.8% and 16.4% respectively), either do the groups with monthly incomes above RUR 40 thousand (11.7%) and men (10.4%).  

**What do Russians think of nonprofit organizations**

The image of the “third sector” strongly depends on how well are people informed of activities carried out by nonprofit organizations. The survey conducted by HSE Center for Studies of Civil Society and Nonprofit Sector revealed that 18% adult Russians have never heard of any public associations, nonprofit organizations or initiatives. 46% respondents were aware of trade unions existing in their cities, towns or countryside settlements, slightly lower percentages (45% in each case) had knowledge of various veteran associations, political parties, partnerships of gardeners and cottage owners, and associations of disabled. A group of 38% respondents has heard of the work conducted by consumer protection organizations in their places, and 36% were informed about the homeowners associations. Housing boards were known to 34%, while sport, tourist associations, guilds of hunters and motorists to 31%. Awareness of activities carried out by religious communities in their cities was reported by 29% respondents, and 26% mentioned cultural, regional studies, and environmental movements. Finally, one forth of respondents (25%) recalled volunteer actions and 23% knew the philanthropic organizations operating in their cities.

In another quantitative research undertaken in July 2013, participants were required to directly answer the question: “Are there any volunteer grassroots, nonprofit organizations in your city or district, and which of them are you able to mention?” 93% respondents were actually unable to mention any specific nonprofit organization. The awareness of NPOs activities was stronger in large cities however there it also reached just 18.4%. Nonprofit organizations most often mentioned by Russians include veteran associations, associations of disabled and environmental organizations (2.1%, 1.3% and 1.0% respectively). In Moscow, 4.2% respondents mentioned the Gift of Life Foundation. The study has shown that many Russian people are lacking any certain idea of the organizations that relate to the “third sector”. There is a lot of public associations (such as trade unions, parties, clubs) never associated by people with NPOs.

**Fig. 3. Distribution of answers to the question: “Have you ever happened to take personal part in activities of any nonprofit organization (other than trade unions, religious organisations or political parties)?”**

Blue: Yes, I have more than twice. Red: Yes, I have once or twice. Green: No, I have not. Purple: Uncertain

**Fig. 4. Distribution of answers to the question: “Are there any volunteer grassroots, nonprofit organizations in your city or district, and which of them are you able to mention?”**

Awareness of NPOs activities. Blue: respondents who mentioned specific organizations. Red: respondents who referred to “other” organizations as well. Green: respondents who said their were some but could not recall which namely. Purple: respondents who said there were no such organizations in their city or district. Light blue: respondents who were uncertain whether there are any

However the recent ten years saw the growing level of Russians’ knowledge of NPOs. In 2012, unlike to 2004, people who never heard of NPOs were not the majority. The percentage of them fell from 58% to 44%.

The growth of knowledge about nonprofit organizations could be expected to imply the growth of trust and approval of their activities. However in the interval between surveys the extent of positive perception of NPOs has decreased.

In particular, thirty percent of Russians do not trust any grassroots organizations. The least trusted are political associations of youth, ethnic communities, diasporas and associations of fellow-countrysmen, movements of nationalist and patriotic nature, as
well as informal groups of young people. Professional associations, those of disabled, school communities, women’s organizations and sport clubs enjoy lower distrust as compared to others. The highest trust is placed on veteran associations, consumer protection establishments, associations of disabled, and trade unions.

The increasing distrust of the “third sector” largely results from the introduction of certain regulations qualifying the NPOs mission as “performing duties of foreign agents”. The adoption of relevant amendments to the existing legislation was accompanied not only by prosecutor’s investigations in spring of 2013 but the negative comments from political leaders and mass media as well. The Russian “third sector” has emerged just recently and its reputation remains uncertain and sensible to external factors.

To the mind of Russian people, NPOs should concentrate their efforts primarily on solution of social issues such as protection of mothers and children, provision of support to socially vulnerable groups, modernization of the housing management and utilities system, development of healthcare and education. In general, the “third sector” manages to meet the public requirements, and majority of NPOs do address the urgent social issues. The services most strongly expected from NPOs are connected with provision of aid in case of illness, disability or environmental concerns, while nonprofit organizations focusing their efforts on protection of human rights or preservation of cultural heritage are considered the least relevant among all options offered in the survey. This structure of preferences results, among other things, from the low level of awareness about human rights advocacy in many people.

Consolidation of Nonprofit Sector

The consolidation of nonprofit sector was broadly discussed from variety of platforms in 2013. Unlike to the business environment, the Russian “third sector” lacks corporate guilds designed to provide internal communications and external representation. The existing associations (guilds and unions) of NPOs are short of strength and influence.

Cooperation between NPOs is mostly sector-based (within specific subject areas such as philanthropy, protection of childhood etc.) or of territorial nature (within a single region). Cooperation is maintained by way of both informal and formal (meetings, conferences) communications. Any broader and deeper connections aiming at consolidation of the sector such as joint projects, alliances focusing on specific issues, or professional associations can be observed much less often. Even of the most active NPOs, 30% to 40% are not involved in the intrasector cooperation, and almost a half of all NPOs (45%) take no part in any formal or informal associations within the nonprofit sector.

At the same time, the overwhelming majority of NPO leaders (90%) who have been ever integrated in “third sector” associations consider this experience valuable. By this reason, the respondents place strong importance on the establishment of organizations designed to consolidate the representatives of the “third sector”. They believe the prospects of various public associations covering the individual segments of the “third sector” to be more promising than the creation of a single body or alliance.

Some regions today create the “infrastructure” organizations focused on the sharing of information, provision of resources and equipment, as well as training programs. For instance, Kemerovskaya Oblast maintains the Kuzbass Board of NPOs that includes 59 organizations.

In 2013, the Civil Society Development Fund proposed to establish a range of nonprofit organizations that consolidate NPOs acting in specific areas. Experts refer to the fact that such “umbrella” facilities exist in many countries of the European Union. They may work as operators of federal grant tenders and competitions. However an important issue not to be disregarded is that monopolization may adversely affect the development of the sector, and that operator NPOs should therefore be selected on competitive basis.

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33 “Representing the Third Sector: Opportunities and Barriers for the Establishment of the “Sector Union”. ZIRCON, 2013.
Financial resources of the “third sector”

The public perception of the “third sector” indicates the instability of Russian NPOs. However the main reason of this instability may deal with persistent underfunding of the sector which becomes an essential trend of its development. This fact is confirmed in particular by NPO leaders more than fifty percent of which attribute the key performance concerns of nonprofit organizations to their being short of funds (60% respondents in 2010 and 56% in 2012)34.

The survey “The Gaining of Financial and Economic Stability by Russian NPOs”35 conducted by the Social Information Agency shows that only 13% nonprofit organizations are satisfied with their financial situation stating that the available funds suffice to implement their plans. 41% NPOs manage to cope with their current concerns only and lack funds for the accomplishment of any new ideas. More than one third nonprofit organizations reported they have to save on qualified staff because of the funds shortage. More than 40% respondents mentioned the financial situation of their organizations has remained unchanged over the recent three years, while 35% reported it to have worsened.

The majority of Russian NPOs is interested in the diversification of funding sources36. However in practice 39% NPOs have just a single source to draw money from, 27% have a couple of sources, 25% have three or four sources, and only 7% NPOs may rely on more than five sources of funding (see Figure 6). During the recent three years, of the most prosperous NPOs focused by the Social Information Agency, only 60% had 3 to 5 facilities in their funding structure, and 12% NPOs had more than five37.

Majority of Russian NPOs rely on key four sources of funding: private donations, membership fees, governmental grants, and proceeds from provision of services or performance of work. Membership fees account for about one fifth of all receipts (20.5%) and may not guarantee the financial stability of NPOs.

For more successful organizations (as reported by the Social Information Agency), the top positions in the list of available sources were held by allowances from regional and local budgets (which have been requested at different times by 52.6% respondent organizations), private donations from individuals (49.5%) and businesses (41.2%) (see Figure 7). The total budget of such NPOs is also formed primarily by external sources.

In general, 70% receipts of the most successful NPOs are derived from external sources. For internal sources, commercial services account for 10.1% of funding at

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34 The Survey was conducted by the HSE Center for Studies of Civil Society and Nonprofit Sector in fall 2012. Empirical data were collected by MarketUp Ltd. via semi-structured interviews with NPO leaders, the sample included 1,005 NPOs from 33 constituent entities of the Russian Federation.


37 “The Gaining of Financial and Economic Stability by Russian NPOs”. Analytical Notes of the Social Information Agency. - M., 2013. - P. 13. The survey covered 98 NPOs of various profile focused on services, infrastructure; information; at various levels and with different budgets. About 43% of enrolled NPOs have annual budget of not more than RUR 500 thousand, and 80% have less than RUR 5 million.
average, membership fees and government orders account for 3.1% each, endowments constitute 1.5%, loan facilities – 0.4%, and bank deposits – 0.1%. Internal sources also include proceeds from sale of goods and provision of services including by way of government orders (at federal or municipal level).

The view maintained by representatives of the “third sector” is that the best funding arrangement would be based on three or four sources. Such organizations are generally among those very highly praised by NPO leaders in terms of their performance.

State funding of nonprofit sector

In recent years, the financial capabilities of NPOs have been adversely affected by two main factors: the decreasing financial contribution of foreign donors and reluctant support from businesses which prefer to fund individual projects rather than daily activities of nonprofit organizations. In these settings, a major part of nonprofit organizations seeks additional funding from federal and local budgets. The state portion of nonprofit sector support has been increasingly growing over the recent years.

The most important forms of state funding include federal allowances (the so-called “presidential grants”), and participation of NPOs as co-performers of regional and local target programs, as well as municipal grants.

“Presidential grants” are provided to nonprofit nongovernmental organizations playing an important role in the development of civil society institutions. Under this program, NPOs have received RUR 94.5 billion in 2013 and more than RUR 15.2 billion in 2012. In accordance with an Order of the RF President “On the Provision in 2013 of the State Support to Nonprofit Nongovernmental Organizations Implementing the Projects of Social Insulation and Contributing to the Development of Civil Society Institutions”38, the government has allocated RUR 2.32 billion in 2013 for the support of NPOs taking part in the development of civil society institutions. The grant operators in 2013 included the Institute of Civil Society’s Issues, the National Philanthropic Foundation, the Russian Union of Youth, the Nation’s Health League, the Znaniiye (Knowledge) Society of Russia, and the Institute for Socio-Economic and Political Research” (the ISEPR Fund) 39.

In 2013, the Russian nonprofit organizations filed 2.5 times more applications for presidential grants as compared to 2012, the total amount of requested funds having exceeded the available grant reserve many times. Operators have processed 5,855 applications and selected 1,087 projects. The average grant size was between 2 and 4 million Rubles. Distinctive features of the tender in 2013 were an active involvement of human rights organizations, large number of projects focused on housing and utilities sector, and the new emphasis on “migration” projects aiming at social adaptation of foreign workforce, provision of them with legal and social assistance, and researches of migration issues40.

The year 2013 has also seen the tender between constituent entities of the Russian Federation for the funding of regional programs designed to support the socially focused NPOs. As a result, 49 constituent entities of the Russian Federation were subsidized in the total amount of RUR 630 million, the tender proposals having been submitted by 69 regions41 (against 53 regions in 2011). In addition, a number of socially focused NPOs were selected on a competitive basis to be granted support directly from the federal budget. In total, RUR 266.5 million were provided for 42 programs (in 2012: RUR 162 million for 48 NPOs). The total number of applications submitted reached 606.

On 19 September 2013, the President of the Russian Federation signed an order for the provision of state support to NPOs contributing to the development of civil society institutions, implementing the projects of social relevance and engaged in the protection of human and civil rights and freedoms42. Such organizations received additional support in the amount of RUR 250 million.

The total state support of NPOs provided in 2012 amounted to RUR 4.7 billion. In 2013, this support is expected to become much higher: the federal budget of the year envisages a spending of RUR 8.285 billion to this end43. However the arrangements of funds distribution between potential operators, and procedures of grants issue would need further adjustment.

The state funding of nonprofit sector in Russia is expanding in spite of the global trend toward the limitation of such expenses, although it still falls behind the developed countries where the state funding of NPOs on consolidated basis reach 4% of their receipts (vs. about 5% in Russia). The demand for such support from businesses which prefer to fund individual projects rather than daily activities of nonprofit organizations playing an important role in the development of civil society institutions is increasing over the recent years, the financial capabilities of NPOs have been adversely affected by two main factors: the decreasing financial contribution of foreign donors and reluctant support from businesses which prefer to fund individual projects rather than daily activities of nonprofit organizations. In these settings, a major part of nonprofit organizations seeks additional funding from federal and local budgets. The state portion of nonprofit sector support has been increasingly growing over the recent years.

The most important forms of state funding include federal allowances (the so-called “presidential grants”), and participation of NPOs as co-performers of regional and local target programs, as well as municipal grants.

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the state support makes them comparable with governmental agencies or for-profit organizations46.

Opportunities for NPOs to improve their financial self-reliability

In general, the available range of potential NPO funding sources is quite extensive but in practice it remains unused to a large extent. Russian NPOs should view themselves as economic actors and treat the social services they offer as a market product, especially given that the state maintains primarily “pragmatic” approach to the “third sector”.

The key receipts accessible to many nonprofit organizations on uncompensated basis are donations and grants. Donations (which mean cash and assets other than excludable goods that are transferred to an organization on charge-free basis for maintenance purposes and its statutory activities) may be accepted by all NPOs falling under the Federal Law “On Nonprofit Organizations”, subject to compliance with requirements to separate accounting and intended use.

NPOs may receive support from businesses under philanthropic initiatives and social investment programs including grant tenders, or as part of corporate volunteer activity, or by way of free (or beneficial) provision with goods and services.

The procedures of government orders at federal or municipal level allow additional opportunities to NPOs for sale of their goods and services under agreement or contract with governmental authorities. By this way, a nonprofit organization can expand the scope of its activities or the range of its services. In this case, it faces competition with other providers, especially small businesses. From 1 January 2014, there will take effect the Federal Law No. 44-FZ of 5 April 2013 “On the Contract System for the Public Purchasing of Goods, Works, and Services” which requires customers to place at least 15% of total annual procurements following the approved schedule with small businesses and socially-focused NPOs. These benefits do not apply to any socially-focused nonprofit organizations founded by the Russian Federation, constituent entities of the Russian Federation or municipal units as well as socially-focused nonprofit organizations recognized as such only under the laws of Russia’s constituent entities or regulations of municipal unit’s representative bodies.

Provision of the proper environment for sustainable funding of NPOs must be combined with the increasing openness and transparency of nonprofit organizations. People have a right to know which funds and for which projects were received by NPOs, and how they were utilized. This is particularly relevant as regards philanthropic funds and the establishments involved in anti-corruption monitoring of state and municipal authorities. NPOs should not only disclose their financial statements to regulators but publish them at their own websites and in information resource centers.

The increasing openness of Russian NPOs became a consistent trend of recent years. A growing number of NPO leaders consider annual publications of their activity reports including financial statements disclosing wages and other remunerations to managers and employees a good practice (72% in 2012 against 64% in 2009)47.

Socially-focused NPOs

The term “socially-focused nonprofit organizations” has been introduced by the Federal Law No. 40-FZ “On Amendments to Several Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation Concerning the Provision of Support to Socially Focused Nonprofit Organizations” dated 5 April 2010. It applies to NPOs whose purposes, in accordance with their constitutional documents, are to address social issues and promote the development of civil society in the Russian Federation. These purposes may include provision of social support and protection to citizens, protection of environment and animals, charity and promotion of philanthropic and volunteer efforts, provision of consultancy, activities in sectors of education, science, culture, arts, health including prevention of diseases, promotion of international cooperation, preservation and protection of identity, cultures, languages, and traditions of ethnic groups represented in the Russian Federation etc. During 2013, the list of eligibility criteria for registration of nonprofit organizations as socially-focused NPOs was expanded. However an unlimited extension of such list may ultimately prejudice the very idea of distinguishing the NPOs which generate significant social values. Also, a challenge for the consideration of socially-focused NPOs is expected to arise from uncertainty of the term “social services” which lacks clear legislative definition.

On 18 September 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has announced the results of the survey of the focus on the commitment of NPOs to provision of social aid48. The survey covered 335 NPO leaders and 25 members of regional and municipal authorities having experience of dealing with nonprofit sector.

The survey has revealed that both authorities and NPOs believe the partial transfer to NPOs of responsibilities for provision of social services to be a timely and reasonable measure. 46% respondents from NPOs told they would take part in the system of social services upon the completion of its modernization. The majority of respondents stand for the provision of social services by NPOs on direct basis.

As regards the most promising areas where NPOs would be capable to provide social services, the overwhelming majority of respondents (83%) mentioned training work and consultancy. By the opinion of nonprofit sector employees, the extension of services range is limited due to the shortage of qualified workforce and additional financial support. A material obstacle is seen in the requirement to amend constitutional documents to reflect new types of services49.

46 The survey was conducted by the HSE Center for Studies of Civil Society and Nonprofit Sector in fall 2012 as part of HSE monitoring of civil society. The data were collected by MarketUp Ltd. via semi-structured interviews with NPO leaders, the sample included 1,005 NPOs from 33 constituent entities of the Russian Federation.

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49 By 10 December 2013, the Ministry of Economic Development should have submitted to the Government the draft “roadmap” for the staged expansion of nongovernmental sector’s involvement in the provision of social services. The Social Information Agency, 16 October 2013, at http://www.asi.org.ru/Object/13718627/ru/1469385.html/
Institutions of Civil Society

The arrangements for participation of NPOs in provision of social services have not been elaborated yet. Although many nonprofit organizations declare their preparedness to undertaking the provision of social services, their capacities of target outreach are still limited. Majority of Russians (57%) are positive about the extension of such capacities. However the respondents are largely not ready to waive services available with state establishments (see Figures 9, 10)\(^50\). This comes from the common view that public institutions are more credible.

Development of NPO legal basis

In 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was monitoring the application of laws concerning the nonprofit sector, for which purpose it referred to the Advisory Committee for Nonprofit Sector Legal Frameworks of the Council of Europe’s Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations.

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The special attention was drawn to the application of the Federal Law No. 121-FZ “On Amendments to Several Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation Concerning the Regulation of Nonprofit Organizations Acting as Foreign Agents” dated 20 July 2012 which has taken effect on 20 November 2012.

In spring of 2013 many NPOs underwent the extensive prosecutor’s investigations following which the Office of General Prosecutor announced that over 2 thousand NPOs in Russia have been funded from foreign sources. More than one thousand of them were inspected. According to the Office of General Prosecutor, since November 2012 to April 2013 the foreign funds in the amount of RUR 30.8 billion were received by 2,226 NPOs of which RUR 6 billion were intended for NPOs founded by governmental authorities (state-owned corporations and companies). Of the organizations inspected, 215 were found to meet formal criteria of “acting as foreign agent”. As soon as the Law took effect, 193 of them stopped either any political activity or their being funded from foreign sources. One of the inspected nonprofit organizations was imposed a fine for the violation of registration procedure as a “foreign agent”. For a number of NPOs, administrative proceedings were terminated by judgment. As of December 2013, there is only one NPO in the list of those “acting as foreign agent” published on the website of the Ministry of Justice.

The defects of the Law were revealed through its application practices. For example, the definition of “political activity” it contains, as follows: “a nonprofit organization other than a political party shall be considered involved in political activity in the Russian Federation if, regardless of its scope and purposes set forth in its constitution, it takes part (including by way of funding) in the preparation and holding of political actions with an aim to cause alteration by governmental authorities of the policy they maintain, as well as in the shaping of public opinion on the issue”. Even during the discussion of the future Law, the Civic Chamber reported that such a loose construction of political activity is its material disadvantage. This definition needs further clarification to ensure that too broad interpretation of rules for application purposes is avoided. The Presidential Council for the Development of Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights also proposes to clarify the term “political activity” and consider the imposition of detailed reporting requirements on NPOs with high percentage of funding from foreign sources – as an alternative to the application of the term “foreign agent”.

According to the data provided by ZIRCON Research Group, a considerable part of Russian people does not question the right of the state to oversee the nonprofit organizations relying upon international financial support. However the very fact of funding from foreign sources does not seem inadmissible to people at large, especially if such funds are utilized for the support of people in hardship, or volunteer work, or other socially valuable purposes.

In June 2013, the Ministry of Justice of the Russian Federation proposed the amendments to the Federal Law “On Nonprofit Organizations” to increase the list of criteria for unscheduled audits of NPOs. Such wider list has been already in existence but repealed in 2011. Today, the Ministry of Justice is entitled to inspect NPOs on unscheduled basis not more than once in three years and subject to agreement with prosecutor’s office and the approved plan. By estimates of the RF Civic Chamber, the adoption of this draft would further prejudice the public confidence in nonprofit sector.

The 2012 Report of Civic Chamber states that during the recent decade the tax laws helped to tackle the main problems that were hindering the development of nonprofit sector. In the meantime, some issues remain unsettled, namely:

- taxation of grants provided at all levels;
- apportionment of expenses between statutory and business activities for the purposes of profit tax payment by NPOs subject to ordinary tax treatment;
- payment of personal income tax on compensations received by NPO beneficiaries for involvement in its activities;
- calculation of VAT on charge-free supply of services, works, and goods.

As the national NPO survey of late 2012 has shown, 48% NPO leaders consider that the existing legal and regulatory framework does not confine the nonprofit organizations, while 39% are of the contrary opinion that statutory regulation restrains activities of NPOs in our country. 86% respondents think the existing NPOs laws require modification. Most of all, NPO leaders recommend to:

- facilitate the procedures for NPOs to obtain tax benefits (35%);
- facilitate the procedures for donors and philanthropists to obtain tax benefits (31%);
- simplify the NPOs registration scheme (30%);
- introduce the “notice filing” of amendments to NPO charter (20%).

1.3 Philanthropy and volunteer work

Volunteer work represents the most important practice of civil society and is considered one of the social development drivers in sectors of education, science, culture, arts, health, and environmental security.

Volunteer efforts are used to various extents by more than 75% Russian NPOs. The general level of engagement in volunteer activities within the nonprofit sector (according to the most recent data - as of 2008) is equal to 3.02% of employable population.

A number of research centers using various methods of sociological studies established that 40% to 60% Russians take part in volunteer activity in variety of forms and
extents. Informal volunteer movement is developed to a higher extent. According to the Public Opinion Fund, 38% Russian people are engaged in non-institutionalized type of volunteer work. They are non-affiliated with NPOs in organizational or legal terms but involved in self-organization arrangements in their communities; other 4% are volunteers participating in activities of various NPOs. In addition, 23% Russian people take no active part in social work but intensely use the Internet and demonstrate social activity there (philanthropy, sign-up campaigns etc.). At the same time, 38% Russians are not engaged in any offline or online volunteer work56.

WCIOM published somewhat different statistical data which tell that during recent three years 58% Russian people had occasions to work without compensation in one form or another including the cleanups of community yards and parks (16%) or rectification of disaster consequences (6%). Both figures are below the average European level of social activity (65 to 70% respondents having taken part in volunteer work) though comparable with it57.

The survey conducted by the HSE Center for Studies of Civil Society and Nonprofit Sector shows that respondent groups with the most extensive experience of volunteer activity consist of wage workers with university background (35%), especially between 31 and 45 years old (35%), as well as businessmen and self-employed individuals (41%). 51% have made cash donations or given money to unknown people in need (including beggars) from time to time14.

Volunteer work in extreme circumstances

In recent years, volunteers have been increasingly often focused both by wide public and mass media, first of all in connection with extreme situations requiring prompt and comprehensive respond to help the affected regions. In December 2012, volunteers came to the aid of drivers who found themselves in a multi-kilometer block on the Moscow-Petersburg highway in Tverskaya Oblast. In 2013, a new wave of mass volunteering efforts was instigated by the flood in the Far East. Many volunteer organizations mobilized efforts and joined them with governmental authorities to confront the disaster. People from various Russian cities were helping to avoid flooding of Mylkinskaya Dam, the key barrier structure in Komsomolsk-on-Amur. Local volunteers took active part in dams building along the shores of Amur and Zeya. Volunteer groups were collecting and distributing humanitarian aid, carrying out preliminary restorative works. Also, they were inquiring about the spot and specific needs of affected people that could not be promptly addressed by the state. These activities appeared to raise particular interest in youth.

According to the Social Information Agency, 67% Russians believe volunteers to have made an important contribution in provision of effective relief to victims of the Far-Eastern flood, and only 7% absolutely disagree with this opinion. 66% respondents consider volunteer efforts are highly requisite regardless of how successful are the disaster recovery measures taken at governmental level; 24% mentioned that their help is only required where the state fails to properly handle the situation. Just fifty percent Russians are of positive opinion about the organization of help in the Amur River Region, while only 6% of respondents are ready to offer their aid as volunteers. Majority of those surveyed would prefer to contribute clothing and other necessary things (48%), as well as money (28%). Almost one forth respondents expressed their willingness to take part in humanitarian aid collection efforts, and 4% were ready to harbor the sufferers59.

Philanthropic activities

To the question of Levada Center “Have you or your family ever provided philanthropic support in the recent five years?”, 76% respondents answered negatively. 7% have made cash transfers solicited during TV or radio campaigns that called people to support a charity action. 9% happened to give clothes or other things as part of philanthropic campaigns. And 22% report that at no circumstances they would be engaged in philanthropic work60.

Volunteer activity consisted of wage workers with university background (35%), especially between 31 and 45 years old (35%), as well as businessmen and self-employed individuals (41%). 51% have made cash donations or given money to unknown people in need (including beggars) from time to time14.

Table 1. Have you or your family ever provided a philanthropic support in the recent five years? If yes, please specify in which form.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I made cash transfers solicited during TV or radio campaign that called people to support a charity action (for medical treatment of a child or surgery etc.)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have experience of volunteer work</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I happened to give clothes or other things as part of charity campaign or when solicited through radio or TV</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I took part in philanthropic events (concerts, auctions etc.) for the benefit of specific institutions needing financial aid ( orphan houses, county schools, hospitals etc.)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I happened to donate blood</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I made considerable contributions for philanthropic purposes</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have never happened to provide philanthropic support</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The most often donations were reported to be in form of clothing or handouts. Where people have no use to directly support people in hardship with their donations, they prefer to act through relatives and friends of those who needed aid (36%). Religious organizations, state and philanthropic institutions are much less often selected to this end (12%, 8% and 5% respectively)61.

59. Twenty five percent of Russian people have provided charity support at least once in recent five years. Levada Center, 5 December 2012, at: http://www.levada.ru/05-12-2012/kazhdyi-chetvertyi-rossiyaNiN-okazyval-blagotvoritelNuju-pomoshch-khotya-za-raz-na-posleDNie/.
In general, respondents prefer to make donations directly. Even if they give money or things to any relief funds, the intent of donors is in vast majority of cases not to fund a nonprofit organization but rather to help specified people. Therefore, the popularity of individual philanthropic donations among Russian people as a form of social activity clearly contrasts to their generally cold perception of nonprofit organizations and organized volunteer efforts.

The willingness to make donations is more typical for people who generally live a fulfilled life. This group includes a relatively higher percentage of those who happened to do something without compensation other than for his/her family or close relatives (57% against 46% for the sample), including those who ever helped such “outsiders” with money (25% against 17%)62.

The survey “Motivation of Philanthropic Activities” conducted by the Tyumen Charity Fund of Development revealed that the leading drivers for philanthropic activities of Russians are education (64%), self-accomplishment (44%), safety considerations (44%), and religious motives (43%)63. While in 2007 the primary drivers of philanthropic activity were self-accomplishment and safety considerations, in 2012 education and faith took the lead64.

Institutional and large-scale private philanthropic donations

Over the recent years, the institutional (unlike to individual) charity has made a strong progress in Russia and demonstrated active development and diversity. It became another distinguishing feature of national philanthropy, which is reflected in the creation of numerous charity funds since late 1990-ies. The total budget of 70 major philanthropic funds is reported by the Donors Forum to exceed RUR 13 billion in 201365.

From 2006 onwards, Russia has been establishing the endowment funds (parts of NPO assets made of donations and placed on trust with managing company for the generation of income and to support the statutory activities of nonprofit organizations). The most of endowment funds are operating in sectors of education, awareness-raising activities and science as well as promotion of healthy living, culture and arts. Historically, this trend comes from the fact that educational institutions were the main initiators of the Endowment Law66, and they have a broad fundraising basis thanks to their graduates. The existing endowments were originally established mostly as sources of support for a specific institution such as university or museum, by which reason almost all of them have similar targets. The development of specialized funds for wider variety of uses remains to be addressed. Meanwhile, there is just a few of such organizations.

The number of endowment funds and their scope are growing slower as compared to analytical projections. By information from the Donors Forum, there are 87 endowments currently on file in Russia with the total wealth of RUR 18 billion. The top three leaders are the Urals Fund, Scotech, and MGIMO Endowment67.

Funds of local communities (i.e. philanthropic funds serving a specific territory) became an important incentive for the people to intensify efforts in their location. The number of such funds shows a growth trend fueled by strong concerns of local administrations about the provision of sound off-budget instruments for the development and support of social sector. The tightening contacts between local funds also contribute to the sharing of social technologies.

There is observed a consistent growth of volunteer private donations to fundraising establishments that raise money for the purposes of medical treatment. The prospering funds intended for the support of ill children represent a remarkable sign of charity development in Russia. Such funds were the first to start attracting people in mass scale, and the largest of them have succeeded to such an advanced extent, including by way of collecting private donations, that the raising of funds for any specific purpose has already turned for them into a mere routine.

Large percentage of philanthropic activities in Russia accounts for corporate initiatives. As shown by the annual survey “Leaders of Corporate Philanthropy in Russia” held by the Vedomosti newspaper (this year, the survey enrolled Russian and international companies with transactions value exceeding RUR 100 million in 2012, which are engaged in philanthropic activities in the Russian Federation), the large Russian companies devote about 1% or 2% of their net profits to philanthropic purposes68. The total money spent by enrolled companies in the support of various charity programs in 2013 amounted to RUR 13.4 billion which is RUR 1.6 billion more as compared to the preceding year.

During the last year, the scope of corporate philanthropy slightly increased and paralleled with the growth of large private donations. Individuals have significantly overrun the funds in scope of contributions. In 2012, individual donors accounted for 71% of reported considerable donations and, just as in 2011, their major part in value terms (89% of total value). In practice however the difference between corporate and individual charity is dissolving as many philanthropists prefer donating through corporate charity programs. For example, in 2011 and 2012 about half of all reported individual contributions were addressed to NPOs.

In 2013, Russia has taken part in international project for the analysis of major individual donations of above USD 1 million. Russia was found to rank the fifth in terms of major individual donations. In 2011 and 2012, the major Russian philanthropists enrolled by the survey have contributed approximately USD 545 million for charity purposes69.

68 The Survey conducted by Coutts and Charles Aid Formation: Millions for the Good: A Study of Individual Philanthropy in Russia 2013. The Human Technologies Center, 12 November 2013, at: http://www.market.com.ua/news/2013/11/12/b6410/ . Also, the Forbes magazine received information from eight of Russia’s 55 richest businessmen showing that their individual philanthropic expenses in 2012 totaled USD 290 million.
The range of areas focused by institutional philanthropy becomes increasingly wider. Each charity fund pursues three or four directions of philanthropic efforts at average. The largest number of funds operates in sectors of education/ awareness-raising activities and social support of vulnerable groups. The cluster of areas ranking third comprises health sector, development of nonprofit sector, as well as culture and arts. Environmental projects appear the least popular in philanthropic activities and social support of aged people was instigated by the volunteers’ group “Old Age IS a Blessing”.

Activities of volunteers and individual philanthropists relieve the funds from necessity to cover specific areas and enable them to redirect resources to other sectors. The topic areas closely addressed by philanthropic funds and NPOs in recent years include provision of aid to people with rare diseases and the palliative support

Major individual philanthropy also has demonstrated its specific nature. In 2012, the amount of donations to universities made by the most prominent philanthropists in six regions of the world reached 37% of total value of gifts (USD7.05 billion). It became popular to support projects in arts, culture and humanities. Major donors in Russia often elect to fund the development of sport club and facilities. Just as donors in other regions, Russian philanthropists are more inclined to support the organizations operating in their native country: their gifts to foreign beneficiaries amount to 5.6% only.

Development of legal framework for philanthropic activities

In 2013, the highest attention of expert community was drawn to the discussion of the draft law “On Volunteer Activity”. This draft law is designed to regulate the public relations in volunteer activities between institutions of civil society, governmental authorities, and communities. In addition, it is expected to introduce general guidelines for volunteers and other stakeholders involved in their activities.

The draft has been repeatedly reviewed by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. Following the submission of the draft to the State Duma, the Civic Chamber arranged the roundtable discussion “The Recent Legislative Initiatives for the Regulation of Civil Society, Philanthropy, and Volunteer Work” (25.07.2013). Recommendations prepared upon the discussion were proposed to the Government of the Russian Federation, State Duma, the Federation Council, Ministry of Economic Development, and to drafters.

The recommendations of Civic Chamber confirm the need for the term “volunteer” to be introduced to the Russian system of law in its broadest sense. Legislative initiatives affecting the volunteer activities should promote the development of volunteer work and encourage it. However the proposed version of law will confine the development of volunteer movement. The registration of volunteer organizations will prejudice the very idea of volunteer work and may complicate the functioning of civil society. An excessive regulation which the draft essentially imposes may turn both volunteers and nonprofit organizations against the volunteer work. The draft fails to facilitate the alignment of legal framework for volunteer activities including cooperation of volunteers with nonprofit organizations.

Instead of adopting a separate law, the Civic Chamber proposes considering the amendments to the existing legal instruments (such as laws on nonprofit organizations and philanthropy) so that to integrate in them the regulations of volunteer work in emergency zones, insurance arrangements for volunteer and other provisions.

Also, the Civic Chamber has discussed the draft federal law “On Patronage” intended to provide support to this specific type of philanthropy, establish procedures for the implementation of benefactor sponsorship and regulate relations between patrons, beneficiaries and the state. However the draft contains very limited definitions of patrons and their aims, leaving the majority of philanthropic initiatives uncovered. Furthermore, the draft omits issues connected with activities of foreign and anonymous benefactors. The proposed range of potential beneficiaries also appears insufficient to define the term “items of patronage” which the law is expected to introduce.

Media coverage of philanthropic and volunteer activities

By information from the Donors Forum, in 2013 the number of mass media reports on philanthropic events (using the words “charity”, “philanthropy”, “volunteer activity”) exceeded that of the preceding year more than twice. The number of articles containing the phrases “philanthropic fund”, “private fund”, “corporate fund”, “community fund”, “relief fund”, or “endowment” reached almost 108 thousand which is more than threefold growth against the previous year. Over fifty percent of all reviewed publications appeared in the Internet, one fifth in mass media, much lower portion comes from information agencies, and just a few announcements were made on radio and TV. At average, in 2012 and early 2013 above 6,900 media texts were posted monthly with use of the words “charity”, “philanthropy”, “volunteer activity” which is almost 2.5 times more as compared to the year before.

Institutional philanthropy was also consistently covered by media and represented in all of their typological groups. The Internet appears to be the main aggregator of content about charitable activity in Russia. The higher is the percentage of materials devoted to philanthropy in online resources, the lower is the share of offline media. The coverage of philanthropy by broadcasting media remains persistently low.

When preparing the publications concerning philanthropy, reporters focus their attention primarily on events or incidents. This trend is observed in the selection of newsworthy information and affects the content of published materials. The review of key messages expressed by reports on philanthropic activities reveals complete miscomprehension of their nature by journalists, and generally mass media still describe charity as a series of spontaneous actions of uncertain agents (“philanthropists”) but not conscious and consistent behavior. Charity is covered by mass media rather fragmentarily which is evidenced in particular by domination of news genre. Mass media

mostly disregard the context of philanthropic activities and fail to reflect on social concerns targeted by philanthropic efforts and possible ways to approach them. The promotion of public philanthropic practices is not focused by reporters at all.

Furthermore, the work of nonprofit organizations with mass media also remains unsatisfactory. They should demonstrate more initiative, offer original information, and provide interesting and comprehensible details of their activities.

1.4 Local government and community development

The year 2013 became a jubilee year of the Federal Law No. 131-FZ “On General Principles of Local Government in the Russian Federation” adopted on 6 October 2003 which provided a starting point for the full-scale modernization of community institutions.

Although there have been already established a certain tradition of local government in our country, we have to recognize that the above law fails to provide guidelines for “independent and responsible decision by communities of their local issues”.

At one point, this is connected with low level of public initiative, widely shared dependant position of people who expect the government to arrange everything, their reluctance to start approaching local issues in any constructive manner. This trend is clearly demonstrated by decreased attendance of elections held in September 2013 which saw a kind of historical minimum attendance in all major cities (below 20%). Nevertheless, the direct elections of executive authorities are indispensable to the development of civic engagement with concerns at local levels. If a local chief is not elected but appointed by imposition from the above, he is not motivated to listen to citizens. It is by no means always the case that city managers in regions can succeed as clearly shown by the recent experience. In the event that popular vote at local level is abolished, people will refer their claims directly to governors.

At another point, those citizens who definitely intend to contribute to the development of their city or countryside do not always have access to necessary levers of influence, their efforts being rarely supported by local authorities. In fact, activists are often perceived not as a useful resource but a drag. Considerable number of municipal leaders still holds that their relations with public are limited to hearing people’s requests and more or less adequate satisfaction of such requests by local authorities. Patterns of genuine partnership of individuals and community with local government are still not widely spread at community level. The monitoring held by Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation in recent years reveals the increasing gap between the growing activity of people and the extent of local government’s willingness to partner with them in consistent cooperation. Communities often lack the practices of coordinating the different social interests and the efficient negotiation arrangements. By this reason, the differences in views on specific concerns are rapidly transformed into political and often personal conflicts which make any compromise impossible.

There is a long range of matters that account for the current difficulties in relations between local government and communities.

First of all, these are the objective historical drivers of the development of Russian society. The mass movement of population to cities from countryside, from towns to megacities involves the destruction of neighbor relations and growing individualism. People are often urged to reside and work in different locations. As a result, their work and travel arrangements take almost all the daytime. The remaining time will just suffice to do chores and sleep. They have neither time, nor chance to contact neighbors. At another point, even rural citizens today increasingly tend to substitute viewing TV or online social networking for face-to-face contacts. All of these factors generate an essentially different reality, new forms of social activity which are not always compatible with conventional patterns of local government.

Inactivity of people directly results from the pattern of municipal government and overall social practice that have been established in recent period.

This crisis is exacerbated by the fact that instead of genuine social activity some municipal units cultivate its show-off and quazi-forms. The majority of civic engagement instruments such as referenda, meetings, conferences, gatherings, public hearings, public surveys, or law-making initiatives often remain unsought or turn from declaration of public will into its imitation.

The existing economical and political systems render contradictory effects on the situation. At federal level, the need in the development of public initiative and public watch is intensely promoted, with active implementation of openness principle by governmental authorities. At the same time, the relations between various levels of power, especially between budgets imply the absence of clear definition of responsibilities which determines the distribution of additional powers and responsibilities. This is particularly relevant as regards the imposition on local governments of responsibility for interethnic conflicts.

At the same time, sociological studies demonstrate that many people would like to create social value and take part in socially relevant projects at the level of their house, community, city or countryside. However such potential activists often lack knowledge and experience to understand how the project in question should be implemented. They cannot follow successful examples of any such activity or prospects for themselves, as the system of “career lift” is virtually inoperative, by which reason it is very difficult to achieve higher social status and deserve public esteem by engagement in social activity.

Fortunately, leaders of many municipal units are able to value the development of civic engagement as a strong resource for the overall progress of their communities. Authorities of Khabarovsk, Novosibirsk, Kirov, Rostov-na-Donu, Ulanovsk, small settlements in Arkhangel’skaya, Vladimirskaya, and Tverskaya Oblast, as well as numerous other cities and villages maintain fair and comprehensive cooperation with local communities and thus buildup their capacities to implement many important projects.
to fulfill the appropriate follow-up systems including the encouraging measures for guidelines to this end. Forms of legislative acts should be imposed, and regions should be allowed to constituent entities of the Russian Federation and that municipal units are generally developed for regional authorities. It is important to ensure that this work is not limited to the scale of the project or its entirety but rather its narrow aspects such as allocation of land for development or approval of the heating supply scheme. Many key issues such as desirability of the project that concerns each member of community or the processes of its development fall behind the attention of citizens. As a solution of this problem, we would recommend the mandatory annual public hearings to take place for the discussions of long-run and short-term development strategies (agendas) of municipal units and the approval of all plans and projects proposed for the implementation. For this purpose, it would be reasonable to support the discussion of social and economic development strategy by reviews of long-run and short-term budgets available to the municipal unit.

Another challenge connected with public hearings is an optional nature of decisions and recommendations they result in. The outcomes of public hearings must not be just “taken a note of” but be considered a key driver for the authorization of municipal unit’s development strategy and approval of specific projects. Tougher requirements need to be introduced for the procedures of public hearings and recognition of their validity (similar to referendum and elections) to this end, with supervision of their proceedings being vested in municipal election committees. Also, the imposition of administrative liability for violation of public hearings procedure should be considered.

Provisions of the Federal Law “On General Principles of Local Government in the Russian Federation” regarding withdrawal of delegates, members of local elective bodies or local elective officials should be revised as well. In particular, the reasons for and procedures of such revocations especially those intended to facilitate any such withdrawal require the working out in detail.

In addition, the appropriate formal arrangements need to be provided to fix the expanded range of community engagement instruments.

First of all we recommend formalize public watch instruments at federal level including the procedures of independent public audits and the related funding arrangements. However public watch is just one of management elements which need proper support by assignment of tasks, planning, and the implementation itself.

The second recommendation is to codify the openness standards for local governments. Today, such standards are adopted at federal level, with instructions already developed for regional authorities. It is important to ensure that this work is not limited to the scale of the project or its entirety but rather its narrow aspects such as allocation of land for development or approval of the heating supply scheme. Many key issues such as desirability of the project that concerns each member of community or the processes of its development fall behind the attention of citizens. As a solution of this problem, we would recommend the mandatory annual public hearings to take place for the discussions of long-run and short-term development strategies (agendas) of municipal units and the approval of all plans and projects proposed for the implementation. For this purpose, it would be reasonable to support the discussion of social and economic development strategy by reviews of long-run and short-term budgets available to the municipal unit.

Achievements of local authorities in promotion of civic initiatives and advancement of partner cooperation with community must be tied with criteria for valuation of local government’s performance both to be undertaken both at federal and regional levels. For this purpose, the relevant Order of the President of the Russian Federation and other federal and regional laws and regulations governing such valuation will require an appropriate revision.

An important role in relations between community and individuals is played today by community councils established almost in every municipal unit. It is probably a right time for them to be legitimized by the Federal Law No. 131-FZ “On General Principles of Local Government in the Russian Federation” of 6 October 2003 as a form of civic engagement and supported by detailed provisions concerning their status, functions, procedures of dealing with representative bodies of municipal units. Responsibilities of municipal community councils are recommended to include public audit of municipal legal instruments. This way, community councils will become a body contributing to the development of public law-making initiative.

The institute of community self-government (CSG) requires further improvement. CSG represents an important or even crucially important form of local community’s self-organization designed to implement its own initiatives of local relevance and support civic activity of people in municipal establishments. Community self-government has a variety of strata (an apartment house or its specific section, a group of apartment houses, residential neighborhood, countryside settlement or other residential estates) and may have a status of legal entity. Municipal units may create associations of CSG. Activities of CSG bodies are mainly focused on social concerns of population which they may tackle with or without use of budget funds. Municipal units should make the provision of suitable environment for community self-government their top priority. Currently, such forms of public self-organization develop in approximately 20% municipal units. The experience of their operation shows CSG to be a significant instrument both for the intensification of civic engagement and the solution of local issues including with the help of off-budget resources and development of volunteer movement. In this regard, we recommend considering the expansion of CSG efforts that address concerns of local relevance.

The increased attention of people to housing sector provides a very important condition and prerequisite for the development of civic engagement at local levels. The concentration of public efforts on urgent issues of apartment house management may and must consolidate citizens and teach them lessons of protecting their collective rights. In this regard, the associations of homeowners and other groups in this sector provide a strong resource for the advancement of self-management skills. However the self-management activity of people in housing and utilities sector remains at poor level.

The increasing involvement of people in management of their apartment houses may result, in addition to higher legal and economic expertise of homeowners, in successful solution of a number of legislative issues, specifically:

- create legal arrangements encouraging the participation of homeowners in decision-making processes at their general meetings and ensuring timely payments for housing and utilities services;
The regional public watch centers will:

• arrange broad public discussions of relevant concerns and possible approaches to them;
• develop proposals for the improvement of regulatory framework of housing and utilities sector.

As part of the project, the parties were monitoring the core operators at regional and municipal levels. The monitoring has confirmed that there are the large number of nonprofit organizations in vast majority of constituent entities of the Russian Federation that operate in housing and utilities sector. The project was aiming at consolidation and support of such NPOs. For this purpose, regional authorities support the establishment of public watch centers which will essentially serve as their key resource then. The appearance of public watch centers will consolidate efforts of governmental authorities and NPOs operating in a constituent entity of the Russian Federation in the development of common action plan and its implementation based on partner cooperation.

The regional public watch centers will:

1. monitor the situation in HUS sector, review the law application practices and provide public audit of proposed laws and regulations, to which end:
   • maintain registers of regional HUS operator nonprofit organizations and consolidate their efforts to address common concerns;
   • arrange broad discussions of HUS issues and ways to approach them in constituent entities of the Russian Federation;
• discuss the proposed regulations and application practices with stakeholders; and
• identify systemic weaknesses and omissions of federal HUS legislation.

2. Consultancy of HUS issues:
• arrange awareness-raising campaigns in mass media of HUS related issues to explain rights and responsibilities of homeowners;
• explain the principles of HUS regulations via community liaison offices and meetings;
• provide training in schools, universities, arrange workshops for homeowners, special courses for pensioners;
• distribute relevant guidelines and other instruments;
• identify and promote the best practices;
• develop and implement comprehensive regional HUS consultancy programs based on government orders.

3. Public supervision:
• protect lawful interests of citizens (provide advice, conduct public discussions, take defense in legal proceedings);
• handle people’s requests;
• follow up the settlement of the region’s most urgent HUS issues;
• reveal violations of civil rights and refer to regulatory and supervisory authorities;
• provide public watch of pricing arrangements (by way of independent audit);
• prepare public ratings of managing companies;
• take part in inspections conducted by housing panels and other regulatory and supervisory authorities.

At present, the public watch centers operate in 54 constituent entities of the Russian Federation. To coordinate efforts of public watch centers, the National Center for the Public Supervision of Housing Management and Utilities Sector “HMU Oversight” was established in a form of nonprofit partnership. Once launched, the centers started demonstrating an enormous potential of civic engagement capable, with minimum support, to successfully tackle the most difficult tasks. The federal system so established allows promptly monitor the condition of HUS sector and keep executive authorities informed of the situation. Furthermore, it makes possible to discuss potential changes with public associations of the industry before they are adopted at federal level. Horizontal links built up between centers of different regions enable the fast and successful implementation of the best practices in areas of HUS consultancy and control.

Regions have accumulated a significant experience in approaching the most urgent concerns of the sector by efforts of grassroots organizations. For instance, the repeated surveys held in Arkhangelskaya Oblast (by People’s Inspectorate Arkhangelskaya Oblast, a regional grassroots organization) and Orlovskaya Oblast (by regional division of “Consumers Association of Russia”) help settling the disputes between homeowners without reference to formal supervisors or municipal administration. The system of cooperation with mass media maintained by HUS public watch centers established in Vladimirskaya, Kaliningradskaya, and Sverdlovskaya Oblasts enables...
to promptly concentrate attention of regional authorities on the sector’s most urgent issues as well as conduct efficient consultancy work in communities. The training and consultancy programs implemented by social activities in Voronezhskaya Oblast (by nonprofit partnership “Voronezh HOA Alliance”, HUS public council under the leader of Voronezh urban district), Samarskaya Oblast (by regional civic chamber), the Udmurt Republic (by Udmurt Republican Center of HUS Development) provide the basis for sharing of HUS related information and knowledge with home leaders, HOA chairmen, house activists. The legal support of homeowners and HOA by grassroots organizations in Kostromskaya Oblast (Kostroma Regional Homeowners and Housing Development Association), Tverskaya Oblast (the “Quality of Life” regional grassroots organization) help owners to successfully defend their rights in disputes with managing and supplier companies.

1.5 Informal engagement and spontaneous self-organization of individuals

The power of civil society largely depends on the willingness of people to participate in social and political life, their commitment to self-fulfillment and altruism motivated by a strong ambition to make things better by joining efforts with associates. This ambition can be expressed not only through engagement with nonprofit organizations, local government or volunteer work, but through variety of informal grassroots initiatives having no relation whatsoever to any registered establishments or state institutions.

The average Russian level of political and social engagement does not grow significantly but demonstrates periodic “bursts” of civic and protest activity. However it changes in terms of quality and becomes more sensible and socially driven.

For instance, according to the monitoring study of WCIOM, over the recent seven years there has been an almost twofold increase in the number of those who report their being involved in political life not for personal interests but for common ideas and values, for the making things better in their cities, villages or countryside.

Along with increased interest in politics, researchers reveal another trend shown by a certain part of the Russian society being the growing favor of participation in the preparation and implementation of election campaigns. 13% Russians appear to be ready for nomination as candidates or appointment to senior positions in local government; 14% would see themselves as members of election committees, and 10% would like to be agitators or collect signatures72.

Grassroots activities in Russia become increasingly often concentrated in informal groups and online communities. The survey entitled “Russian Nonpolitical Activism”73 conducted by the Civic Analysis and Independent Research Center in 2012 shows that there are several generations of activists simultaneously acting within the social space and representing the variety of topical issues and work styles. Their initiatives are hard to analyze in any systematic way; in most cases, they are promoting the complete and unstructured ad-hoc projects. Experts mention the rapid expansion of new civic initiatives in wide variety of areas. As a rule, such groups are unregistered but quite stable and result-oriented.

Informal civic initiatives have started growing in number and becoming increasingly popular since 2010. Experts attribute this effect, inter alia, to mass mobilization of volunteers willing to help people who suffer from natural disasters as well as the public protest actions of late 2011 and early 2012. This grassroots activity then partially developed into a wide range of specific initiatives.

The issues of urgent local relevance and the need in social self-fulfillment became the main reasons for the self-organized groups’ coming up in the public space. Civic initiatives normally arise from a specific concern (the so-called “single claim movement”), offer comprehensible solutions and thus attract active citizens. Today the informal civic engagement is concentrated primarily in the following segments:

- protection of “social areas”: protests again infill construction, diversion of recreation areas etc.;
- social and humanitarian aid to socially vulnerable groups;
- search of lost children;
- city integrity protection groups;
- motorist movements (including protests against flashers, clogs, rough roads, etc.);
- movements of active parents defending the interests of families and children; and
- leisure and subculture groups aiming at “expansion” in the community.

For clarity, informal civic projects can be divided into coalitions “for change” and “against change”. The major part of such initiatives, whichever sector they express themselves in, insist on the preservation of a certain status quo and oppose any change or innovation. However since 2010 this way of behavior demonstrates the new forms that involve more ambitious activity. The main idea is that civic modernization efforts can be focused not only on the government, administrations or bureaucracy but the society itself (including its customs, clichéd opinions, habits and so forth) and first of all on its potentially active groups.

New and developing trends in this area include:

- independent role of Internet-based activity and online communications;
- mass distribution of urban “civic arts”; 
- civic engagement of ideology-driven (politicized) groups; and
- networks mobilizing people in case of disasters.

What are the drivers of informal activism in Russia? Behind the protection of rights, justice and order, there can be found a wide variety of reasons by which people make their way in the public space. Residents of major cities are more interested in creation of comfortable urban environment. People in small towns and countryside often seek places where they will turn their hands to doing interesting or useful things, and fulfill themselves outside their homes and jobs.
In recent years, the watch of election process became an important form of civic engagement. Public watch is not a fresh practice, but it is gaining new scale and means of implementation. For example, today the watchers are recruited primarily through the Internet. In the first turn, the “watchers’ movement” directly results from the burst of public activity following the State Duma elections in December 2011. Immediately before and during the General Voting Day of 8 September 2013, observers had opportunity to watch the nomination process, sign-up campaigns, pre-election campaigns, and the voting itself. Special services were opened to post information on alleged violations. During the General Voting Day in 2013, by expert estimates, more than 250 thousand people have taken part in public watch of elections74. In the national population survey75, answering to the question whether the presence of observers reduces the number of election abuse, 44% respondents were of positive opinion, 39% said the number of election abuses remained unchanged, and 17% were uncertain.

The experience of public participation as election observers in 2013 can be considered successful. For the progress of this activity in quality terms, the Election Watch Taskforce of Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation recommends provide the right of assigning the observers to those public associations the statutory purposes of which include observation, monitoring and public watch of elections, and which have been established at least one year to the election date, as well as to provide it to the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and civic chambers of the country’s constituent entities76.

“Watchers’ Movement”

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The Internet as the platform for civic engagement

The vast majority of grassroots projects from search of lost children to handling a problem of leaking roof are realized with the help of the Internet. A number of initiatives were fully implemented via the Internet (such as various “aid maps”), and completely new online forms of activity arose (e.g. elections monitoring with web-cameras).

The Web projects aimed at crowd sourcing require almost no hierarchical structures and operate in self-regulation mode. The Internet environment is available to variety of activist communities and projects.

Statistical data show the steady growing of Internet coverage and increasing number of social media77.

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Table 2. Distribution of answers to the question: Do you use the Internet (other than email) at home, at work or elsewhere. If yes, please specify how often. (Levada Center, 2001-2008. N=2100; 2009-2010, N=1600)

Top down: I never use it; I use it every day or several times a week; about once a week; 2 or 3 times a month; about once a month; less than once a month.

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<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Никогда</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>15</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 3. Distribution of answers to the question: Do you visit social networking sites in the Internet? If yes, please specify how often (for respondents stating they do use the Internet) (Levada Center, N=1600)

Top down: I visit them every day or almost every day; several times a week; about once a week; 2 or 3 times a month; about once a month; less than once a month; never.

74 The Number of Election Watchers in Russia is going to Become Unprecedented. RIA Novosti, 8 September 2013. // http://ria.ru/politics/20130908/965153476.html/
75 The Survey was conducted by the Center for Studies of Civil Society and Nonprofit Sector, the National Research University “Higher School of Economics” (HSE) as part of HSE monitoring of civil society, with support of the HSE Fundamental Research Program in 2013. Empirical data were collected during the national representative survey by the Public Opinion Fund, with sample size of 2,000 respondents.
The main types of civic initiatives implemented through the Internet include:

- “complaints” handling services which help users to save time that would be otherwise required for off-line petitions, encourage them to refer to competent authorities and offer advanced and simple ways of such reference;
- fund raising services for so-called crowd (i.e. collective) funding;
- availability of open data services, online guides on various subjects; and
- provision of discussion platforms.

Civic activities have access through the Internet to a range of new opportunities and use it as:

- communication channel;
- source of data and statutory instruments;
- tool for recruitment of activists;
- means of addressing a target audience; and
- space for coordination of activities and intergroup communication.

Thanks to the e-government system rapidly gaining widespread in Russia, public monitoring of state procurement contracts becomes one of topline projects.

A “home-based” participation in various projects becomes a common practice. This can include online lodging of petitions, electronic signing-up for various civic initiatives. Experts regard such behavior as having rather psychotherapeutic effect on users and by no means always having to do with civic engagement.

As an example, we would refer to the big stir caused by the news of possible dissolution of Saint Petersburg Hospital No. 31 with oncology department for children. Citizens arranged several pickets and collected above 100 thousand signatures against the restructuring decision which has not passed as a result. February of 2013 saw the wave of social protest caused by increase of rates in housing and utilities sector and the unfriendly environment for small businesses.

According to the Center for Political Technologies, among all forms of protest actions Russians place the highest relevance on “social self-defense” by which they mean the protection of their interests in sectors of housing and utilities, employment and wage, and financial standing78.

![Fig. 11. Opinions about collection actions](image-url)

**Fig. 11. Opinions about collection actions**

Red: actions seen as potentially fruitful; Blue: actions that the respondents would undertake.

Top down: Political protests: against election abuses; against particular actions of government; acting as elections monitor; Nonpolitical activity: participation in parent boards; membership in public organization; joint organisation of leisure; philanthropy; Social protests: against price increase and worsening of people’s material standing; wage and employment related issues; HSE and environment related issues.
CIVIL SOCIETY IN THE CONTEXT OF INTER-SECTOR RELATIONS

As an actor of social and political processes, the civil society interacts with other institutions, first of all governmental authorities and businesses.

The civic activity is inseparable from topical issues of the dialogue between society and the state. The strong civil society exerts pressure on government, articulates and represents social, economic and other interests of various social groups. In its decision-making process, public policy relies on civic engagement. This is the way the “feedback” is procured, lacking which none of modern social and political systems would survive. The infrastructure for these relations is provided by institutions as mediators of state and society dialogue.

In recent years, an important role in the dialogue of civil society with governmental authorities and businesses has been played by the system of public monitoring and watch which involves, through variety of procedures, individuals, public associations, civic chambers and public councils.

Mass media shape the public perception of key social and political processes both at domestic and global scene. The fairness of the picture they provide largely depends on the diversity of mass media institutions which is to guarantee the pluralism of views. Comprehensive coverage of challenges faced by civil society including those connected with development of nonprofit sector, volunteer activity and informal civic initiatives is of crucial importance.

2.1 Platforms for the dialogue between society and state

The involvement of civil society in social and political processes takes variety of forms including public monitoring, public audits, and a wide range of public procedures.

During the recent years, the leading platform for the dialogue between civil society and the government has been often provided by civic chambers and public councils at all levels. Cooperation between civil society and governmental authorities is also focused by the Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights Council under the President of the Russian Federation. The Russian President’s Human Rights Ombudsman serves at federal and regional levels as an agent between the government and civil society. In 2009 and 2012, the offices of Ombudsman for Children and Ombudsman for Businessmen were instituted respectively.

Since 2012, the Government of the Russian Federation maintains the system of Open Government established cooperation in wide range of areas including the modernization of public councils under federal executive bodies.

Civic chambers


Henceforth, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation will consist of 40 Russian citizens approved by the President of the Russian Federation, 83 representatives from regional civic chambers acting in constituent entities of the Russian Federation, and 43 delegates from the nation-wide public associations who will be chosen by way of preferential voting in the Internet. Therefore, the Law is expected to enable each citizen of Russia to take part in election of members to Civic Chamber. The authorities of its current members expire in July 2014, and the formation of new membership will start on January 2014.

The modernized membership procedures involve considerable expansion of regional component and increase the status of regional chambers. The Law contemplates the establishment of civic chambers in all constituent entities of the Russian Federation. Today the relations between Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and regional civic chambers is not of hierarchic nature, since the latter act as independent agencies of civic representation but cooperate and share information with each other. The Board of RF Regional Civic Chambers kept working in 2013 and elected new President. The establishment of civic chambers was launched at the level of federal districts.

There is no coordinated approach to the establishment and activities of regional civic chambers. Upon initiative of Civic Chamber of Kaliningradskaya Oblast in 2013 the regional laws on civic chambers acting in constituent entities of the Russian Federation located in North-Western Federal District were reviewed. The regional laws governing the activities of civic chambers are essentially similar in their provisions regarding purposes and procedures of those activities but differ in terms of formation, number and tenures of membership, organizational support and funding arrangements. Membership of regional chambers is often based on proportional system. For example, the Civic Chamber of Arkhangelskaya Oblast maintains the principle according to which one third of members are proposed by regional leader following the consultations with public associations, another one third is nominated by regional Assembly of Deputies, also upon consultations with public associations. At a final stage, the members of Civic Chamber so approved fill the remaining vacancies by granting membership to nominees from nonprofit organizations. In Kaliningradskaya Oblast, the second third of membership in local Civic Chamber comprises members of national and interregional public associations, while the last third is made of nominees from regional nonprofit organizations. Generally in regional civic chambers the majority of members represent national and regional public organizations and they do not have to be state or municipal officials or members of political parties. In a number of regions, members of civic chambers are still nominated by heads and legislative authorities of the region.

Civic chambers are funded from regional budgets. However the procedures of such funding are not set forth in local laws and thus appear reserved by authorities adopting
the regional budget who may freely determine the amount of support for the relevant civic chamber.

In view of the increasing contribution of civic chambers in cooperation of civil society with governmental authorities and the public monitor system, the activities of civic chambers should be supported by uniform requirements. In 2010, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has drafted a framework act for regional civic chambers. Following the discussions in the plenary meeting of the Public Council of North-Western Federal District in 2013, the Civic Chamber of Kaliningradskaya Oblast proposed a draft federal law “On Key Guidelines for Civic Chambers Acting in Constituent Entities of the Russian Federation”.

Active participation of regional civic chambers in the development of national regulatory base has become a consistent practice during the recent years. Civic chambers of seven Federation’s constituent entities have been already vested a right of legislative initiative. The Civic Chamber of Saratovskaya Oblast used this right to propose more than ten legislative initiatives to regional Duma (assembly) in 2012 and 2013. The Civic Chamber of Khanty-Mansiisk Autonomous District - Yugra took active part in preparation of the draft law “On the Support of Regional Socially-Focused Nonprofit Organizations Acting in Khanty-Mansiisk Autonomous District – Yugra” which was subsequently adopted by regional Duma79.

Regional civic chambers undertake examination of federal and regional laws. For instance, in 2013 Civic Chamber of the Republic of Tatarstan reviewed 90 draft regulatory instruments including 74 draft laws of Tatarstan. Pursuant to the order from Legislative Assembly of Penzenskaya Oblast, the regional civic chamber examined 19 regulatory instruments in 2013, and Civic Chamber of Magadanskaya Oblast completed a comprehensive examination of key projects for economic and social development of the region80.

In 2013, regional civic chambers proposed a range of initiatives such as the program “Social Services of NPOs” in Kemerovskaya Oblast which is implemented with support of the regional civic chamber. The program is to summarize the experience of Siberian NPOs in provision of social services, review the regulatory support of socially-focused NPOs in regions, and develop recommendations for the improvement of arrangements for NPOs participation in the social services sector. Communities of the Chechen Republic organize the Civic Chamber Days on which local CC members meet citizens. The Civic Chamber of Kirovskaya Oblast has conducted a special expert poll which revealed the most widely supported projects of the Chamber namely the “Center for Support of Conscripts and the Army Cleanup”, “The Pit Portal for the Improvement of Motor Roads”, “Addressing the Socialization Concerns of the Disabled” and so forth81.

However not all of regional civic chambers play role of genuine civic engagement centers, since many of them lack funds, machinery and facilities for this work. As a result, a number of civic chambers appeared incapable to take active part in the follow-up of Russian President’s May Orders arranged by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation.

One of the most important recent trends is the establishment of civic chambers (councils) of specific territories, communities and municipal units. Several regional civic chambers consider the consolidation of public councils of municipal units in a single system. For instance, as of 1 November 2013 municipal units of Leningradskaya Oblast were maintaining more than 10 civic chambers and councils, while the organization of others is in process. The Civic Chamber of Leningradskaya Oblast developed the standard “On Municipal Civic Chambers of Leningradskaya Oblast”. Civic chambers were created and keep working in all municipal units of Lipetskaya Oblast which has also introduced a new platform for civic activity – public councils in territorial districts of Lipetsk City.

Procedures for establishment and the legislative framework for operation of such civic chambers (councils) are very dissimilar and sometimes fail to provide conditions for the dialogue between local authorities and civil society. By information from Civic Chamber of Saratovskaya Oblast, the municipal public councils organized in the region comprise mostly the representatives from local administrations. Similarly, in the Republic of Sakha (Yakutia) a number of public councils are governed by leaders of nomad camps. To reverse this trend, the Civic Chamber of Saratovskaya Oblast initiated the development of standard regulations for municipal public boards.

In general, civic chambers at different levels have amassed a considerable experience in coordination of relations between civil society and governmental authorities and in representation of grassroots groups.

Public councils

Public councils attached to various governmental authorities are to take an important part in the system of institutions designed to provide the feedback in relations between civil society and the government. Based on the Order No. 601 of the President of the Russian Federation “On Key Improvement Areas of the State Governance System” dated 7 May 201282, the Government of the Russian Federation has developed new procedures for constitution of public councils under federal executive authorities (Resolution No. 480 of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 6 June 2013 “On Amendments to the Resolution No. 481 of the Government of the Russian Federation dated 2 August 2005”). The most important changes in procedures of public councils include:

- mandatory participation of civic chambers in constitution of public councils in lieu of their constitution by authorities;
- mandatory participation in councils’ activities of independent experts and members of relevant nonprofit organizations;
- the selection of regulatory instruments and other documents drafted by federal executive authorities which may not be adopted without prior discussion by meetings of public councils.

79 Information on activities of Civic Chamber of the Khanty-Mansiisk Autonomous District - Yugra.
Therefore, while previously public councils were constituted by leaders of federal executive authorities, now they are to be constituted jointly with the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. As regards regional ministry or other agency, its public council will be constituted with participation of regional civic chamber.

A broad range of documents including budget proposals, target state programs, draft regulations may not be submitted to the Government of the Russian Federation bypassing the review by public council. Before make a final decision, the Government is to consider both the project and expert findings. The order of the Russian President concerning the development of public watch system83 triggered the drafting of proposal on provision of additional funds for independent examination to be conducted by public councils which is often impossible without involvement of skilled specialists.

The new guidelines for the constitution of public councils have been tested during the elections of public councils for the RF Ministry of Labor and Social Protection and the Ministry of Health. Self-nomination or nomination of other candidate was accessible to each citizen. 284 applications were submitted through the website of the Ministry of Labor, other 57 candidates were nominated by organizations, and 262 applications were received by the Ministry of Health. Upon review of applications by Expert Board of the Russian Government and the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, preferential voting was arranged on websites of two ministries. As experience shows, the provision of unlimited access to the results of Web-based voting (or consulting) may appear unreasonable, since a number of nominees receiving the majority votes may however fail to qualify for membership in terms of other criteria. Online voting is often won by public figures, while skilled specialists receive insufficient number of votes.

In furtherance of the aforementioned Order of Russian President, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation developed the template regulations “On Public Council under a Federal Executive Authority” and submitted them to federal executive authorities. On this basis, appropriate modifications have been made or are made to by-laws and membership procedures of the existing public councils. Public councils were established by the RF Ministry of Sport, RF Ministry for the Development of Far East, the Federal Accreditation Service, and the Federal Labor and Employment Service. The constitution of further 10 public councils under federal executive authorities is in process.

A number of federal ministries and services have not responded to proposals on the establishment of public councils or even denied this idea. For example, the Federal Property Management Agency referred to the fact that it already maintains an establishment of public councils or even denied this idea. A number of federal ministries and services have not responded to proposals on the establishment of public councils. The constitution of further 10 public councils under federal executive authorities is in process.

New cooperation platforms

The year 2013 saw an active coming-up of recently emerged public movements intended to promote the interests of a considerable part of civil society.

The National People’s Front (ONF) became a new influential social force which represents the coalition of social and political organizations. It was established in May 2011 based on proposal of V. V. Putin, then the Chairman of Russian Government, with an aim to make the elections to State Duma more available to candidates representing various groups of Russian citizens including independent supporters of the United Russia party. Goals of ONF include the development towards the society based on values of equality, mutual respect and civic coherence of people representing diverse beliefs, nationalities, generations, and careers84.

In 2013, the National People’s Front was monitoring various directions of social policy. Its regional units concentrated their attention on the protection of disabled persons and orphan children, concerns of housing and utilities sector, urban landscaping, state procurement and cultural policy. Many initiatives were implemented jointly with Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and regional civic chambers. For example, the follow-up monitoring of Orders issued by the President of the Russian Federation on 7 May 2012 was conducted by Civic Chamber with support of ONF representation offices and its activists.

The ONF Forum of December 2013 raised the issue of further cooperation between the Front and the Civic Chamber. The new composition of the Chamber was proposed to include more representatives of socially relevant professions such as doctors and teachers. Members of Civic Chamber were encouraged to actively promote the establishment of public councils under local branches of federal executive authorities as well as the provision of facilities (arrangements) to support activities of public councils.

The modernization of public councils is intended first of all to strengthen the engagement of civil society in management and monitoring of ministries and agencies. However their concerns are not limited to this purpose. The overwhelming majority of applicants for membership in public councils under federal executive authorities still represent Moscow only. Many members of public councils have limited idea of their purposes and activities and no experience in examination of socially relevant projects.

Several constituent entities of the Russian Federation create public councils under regional ministries and services. The Civic Chamber of Ulanovsky Oblast has proposed the Conception for cooperation of Civic Chamber with public councils under executive authorities of the region.

At the same time, the Civic Chamber of Amurskaya Oblast, for example, reports that the constitution of public council under local executive authorities has come to a stop in the last year. Some of public councils created earlier remain just the paper councils, while for others the data are almost unavailable85.

Therefore, while previously public councils were constituted by leaders of federal executive authorities, now they are to be constituted jointly with the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. As regards regional ministry or other agency, its public council will be constituted with participation of regional civic chamber.

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important initiatives concerning thousands or even millions people. These proposals were then announced in the Address of the President to the Federal Assembly.

In November 2013, the Committee of Civic Initiatives (CGI) arranged the National Civic Forum in Moscow. By words of the arrangers, the National Civic Forum provides "an open discussion platform designed for the elaboration of further development strategies for the Russian civil society", therefore the Forum was aiming at formulation of social and political agenda and laying down of new foundation for "communication between civic activists". Participants of the Forum included about one thousand members of NPOs and other civic activists from almost every constituent entity of the Russian Federation.

The main finding of the Forum was that the cooperation between government and society remains weak in Russia. At the same time, the role of society in supervision of the government becomes increasingly expanded.

The Civic Chamber values such initiatives and believes them to have positive impact on the development of civil society. An important purpose for these representative meetings is to consolidate the civil society rather than separate it in two streams pro and against the ruling elite. The discussions need to be constructive and reflect all key views on the existing public concerns.

Electronic government

The direct public watch of state machinery involves an access of people to the information about activities of state and municipal authorities. An important element contributing to transparency of governmental authorities is the system of electronic government enabling users to enjoy public services in electronic mode.

The Government’s Commission for Coordination of Open Government with participation of Expert Board of the Government and the ministries, departments, nonprofit organizations and mass media drafted the Openness Guidelines for federal executive authorities, which were adopted in 2013. Last year, 45 ministries and services created pages with publicly accessible data on their official websites. According to the Freedom of Information Fund, the content of websites maintained by federal executive authorities becomes increasingly competent and informative. The Fund’s initial estimates were that websites of federal executive authorities provide 56.096% of total scope of information to be made available at official sites of such authorities (see Image 12).


Blue: the information is available.

Top-down: Attendance time for individuals including members of legal entities, public associations, community bodies; Description of handling procedures for applications from individuals and legal entities on general matters including information requests; Full name of unit leader or other official responsible for the attendance of individuals and legal entities and the handling of their requests; Email for inquiries concerning the attendance of individuals and legal entities and the handling of requests; Phone number for inquiries concerning the attendance of individuals and legal entities and the handling of requests; Availability of direct online filing of requests; Brief review of applications and requests received from individuals and legal entities

The success of e-government may be also evaluated based on the public surveys. By information from WCIOM, more than 80% Russian people have some knowledge or heard about the Common Government Services Portal of the Russian Federation, but only about 20% have experience of its use. Of all opportunities available with e-government, Russians place the most importance on receipt of public services electronically.
filing of complaints or proposals to competent authorities online, and the accessibility of such authorities’ open data.95

In 2013, the recording of online petitions was launched with the help of new instrument “Russian Civic Initiative” introduced in accordance with the Order of Russian President dated 7 May 2012. The RCI official portal96 is available for proposals and voting to people above 18 years old receiving authorized access through the system of Government Services. If an initiative gains the necessary number of votes during a year (100 thousand for federal level and regions with population of more than 2 million, and 5% for other regions and municipal units), it is submitted to an expert group of relevant level. At federal level, the composition of expert group is to be determined by the Government. The group will include members from business community, non-profit organizations, executive authorities, deputies, senators and members of Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. The similar arrangement applies to groups at regional and municipal levels. They will be responsible for deciding whether the “development of the draft in question would be useful and/or which further steps should be taken to implement the given initiative”.97 The first initiatives that gained 100 thousand votes were reviewed by expert task group. The proposal to reinstate the tolerance blood alcohol content for drivers has been already implemented. In the increasingly widening space of online culture, the Russian Civic Initiative may become

2.2 Developments in the area of public watch

The independent appraisal is crucial to the development of any system. Without the civic control, governments may become disconnected with societies and unaccountable to it, and may give in to temptation of voluntaristic actions. Public watch is what makes the state represented by its institutions and officials to guarantee the compliance with Laws, to perform its duties in responsible and competent manner. Public watch is “useful” for the state itself as it boosts the consistent improvement of its regulatory arrangements. Civic watch improves feedback in relations between society and its government, helps people to maintain an open dialogue on purposes and priorities of the country’s development. Due to the feedback from society, the government becomes capable of hearing and supporting the pressing call for reforms.

Public supervisory boards

The year 2013 was the fifth anniversary of the Federal Law No. 76-FZ “On Civic Watch of Human Rights in Facilities of Forced Imprisonment and Assistance to Persons Placed on Forced Imprisonment”.
Since the Law has taken effect, the public supervisory boards were established in 80 constituent entities of the Russian Federation with direct participation of RF Civic Chamber which was considering the application portfolios of their candidate members. In 2013, more than half of existing PSBs held new elections. Of 1,800 vacancies, supervisors’ mandates were issued to 712 members. While in Moscow and Saint-Petersburg there were enough applicants for PSB membership (40 individuals per each board), the Kabardino-Balkarian Republic and the Ingush Republic were unable to constitute PSB. Of course this hard and unfunded job cannot be expected to attract everybody.

The public supervisory boards have eventually found their niche among institutions of civil society. Unlike to agencies and services responsible for compliance control of sentence execution procedures, public supervisors assume responsibility pro bono, on voluntary basis for people isolated from society. By contrast with other human rights activists, PSB members have free access to detention centers and correctional facilities. Such visits are subject to giving a notice.

Having detected any breach or inadequacy, PSB members execute a certificate of defects specifying the claims of convicts or faults identified during inspections. The identified facts are discussed with managers of forced imprisonment facilities. If following these discussions such defects are not rectified, PSB members may refer to the leaders of superior agency or other instances. In the event that such instances fail to take response measures, PSB may apply to prosecuting and investigative authorities. PSB members have capacities to report the revealed breaches through mass media and various online communities. Thanks to activities of PSBs, a number of correctional facilities have improved the conditions of confinement including by way of general refurbishment.

In several regions, PSBs have established constructive relations with security and law-enforcement authorities. In many cases however their officials do not pay due regard to recommendations from PSBs, or PSB activists surrender over to their influence and hide the revealed defects. Some of experts notice the increasing number of former security officials among PSB members; a number of boards were even found to fall under their control which fact undermines the very idea of efficient public watch.

The present agenda requires PSBs to be vested wider rights to photo- and video recording of what happens in confinement institutions and to enlarge the range of facilities accessible for inspections, and focus on protection of PSB members from potential criminal and administrative proceedings. In a number of regions, PSB members are denied access to correctional facilities and prisons with video and photo cameras despite the special order of the Federal Penal Enforcement Service that prescribes the sector employees not to object their activities.

The awareness-raising efforts of the boards remain insufficient. The information they make available at their websites is quite poor although this issue raises strong public concern as evidenced by the permanent “hotline” maintained by Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation.

At present PSBs are almost unfunded and often have no separate space for their work although they obviously need stationery and other consumables as well as access to fax machines etc. for the preparation of their enquiries and reports.

The lessons learned by PSBs necessitate the extension of public watch practices to asylums for orphans and children without parental custody. Formal inspections of these institutions are taken on scheduled basis only or following the high-profile incidents. Furthermore, children fostered by orphan asylums often have no direct contacts with those whom they would be able to report abuses.

The Report of RF Civic Chamber for the year 2012 states that the introduction of the Law “On Public Monitor of Rights of Orphans and Children without Parental Custody” would become a key milestone in the development of public watch system. The concept of this draft law providing several new arrangements for public supervision of rights of orphans and children without parental custody has been approved by the Civic Chamber. However the State Duma postponed the review of the draft after the first reading.

Meanwhile, activists are trying to approach this issue at regional levels. In Sverdlovskaya Oblast, they are preparing the draft law providing the public watchers with free access to state institutions for orphans and children without parental custody. If passed, this law will make Sverdlovskaya Oblast a pioneer of public control over the rights of children fostered by orphanages.

In 2013, Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation proposed to extend the PSB practices to the system of secure medical institutions96. The Chamber took part in inspection of neuropsychiatric nursing homes. This decision was taken after the fire of neuropsychiatric dispensary in Novgorodskaya Oblast the victims of which were 37 individuals. According to the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, there are 37 neuropsychiatric boards existing in the country which accommodate more than 145 thousand old and disabled people above 18 years old97.

Civic chambers as agents of public watch

Participation of civil society institutions in the law-making process provides democratic grounds for the social modernization.


As was mentioned above, in 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was involved in the launch of National Center for the Public Supervision of Housing Management and Utilities Sector “HMU Oversight”.

Regional centers of public watch in HUS industry were established by civic chambers in the Republic of Karelia, the Republic of Komi, the Chechen Republic, Amurskaya Oblast, Kaluzhskaya Oblast, Murmanskaya Oblast etc.

Also, in 2013 the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was monitoring the student residences. In early September it established a “hotline” and surveyed students on the Chamber’s official website asking them “What sort of the “fort” do you reside in?” The interference of the Chamber had good effect: after its inspection of student residence of the Russian State Geological Prospecting University, the rent was reported by its students to decrease almost ten times.

The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation expects to continue monitoring the student residences as well as prepare an interactive map showing the average rent of residence with specified universities and regions103.

For the purposes of public supervision over the healthcare system, the civic chamber of Saratovskaya Oblast created the Public Board of Patent Rights in 2013. Following the meeting that addressed “Pharmacological Support of Patients with Socially Relevant Conditions Including Orphan Diseases”, patients were provided with vital therapy.

From 2006, Samarskaya Oblast has been implementing a long-term project under the title “Grassroots Expert School”. Its key goal is to train representatives of civil society in techniques of public audit of state and local regulatory arrangements, development plans and programs. The School’s graduates take part in practical public audits in Samara Regional Duma, a number of municipal units and become members of Advisory Public Board under the regional Ministry of Funds Management.

Monitoring of “May Orders”

The monitoring of Presidential Orders NN 596-606 of 7 May 2012 concerning the issues of social protection, provision of affordable housing, development of education, support of families, motherhood and childhood, as well as the development of healthy lifestyle became a remarkable initiative in the area of public supervision in 2013.

The monitoring network was based on regional civic chambers and relevant socially-focused nonprofit organizations and alliances. The Public Monitoring Portal served to consolidate information and resources supplied from regional civic chambers and the regional network of Russian President’s Ombudsman for Children, Nonprofit Organizations and Universities106.

Public monitoring does not aim to compete with governmental authorities but is intended to ensure prompt receipt of feedback from people. Public monitoring of socially relevant orders issued by Russian President may become a further step to responsible partnership between civil society and the government.

During the monitoring, the Civic Chamber faced challenges that complicate the implementation of Presidential Orders. In particular, governmental authorities in some regions were found to overstate their performance. Material difficulties were faced by large families in land provision. People receiving land plots on free basis have to pay tax at 13% of the land’s market value104. Almost no progress is seen in the market of affordable and comfortable housing.

The monitoring revealed the creation of quite sufficient jobs for people with disabilities. However there are no arrangements to coordinate their recruitment. Employers need to be incentivized for employment of such candidates. At the same time, about 2 million people with disabilities are not using the state employment services to seek jobs.

Areas addressed by the monitoring also included “social aspects of education”, “development of healthy lifestyle”, and “protection of mothers and children”. In several regions of the Russian Federation, the target levels of wages are achieved, among other things, by restructuring of educational institutions and the resulting increase of workload on teachers104.

Availability of childcare in kindergartens is an especially critical concern. By information from the Public Opinion Fund as of February 2013, more than 40% respondents said their families or those of their friends have children who do not visit kindergartens though would need to. 60% respondents complain about long waiting lists for placing of children with kindergartens105.

The Bill “On the Principles of Public Oversight”

The duties of public oversight are undertaken by broad range of civil society institutions in Russia but the whole system is based on activities of civic chambers and public councils at all levels, public supervisory boards, and relevant NPOs. Today, the efforts of civil society institutions in the area of public supervision are not regulated by any uniform legal system which would define powers and responsibilities of each public watch institution as well as the oversight procedures. The existing regulations apply to activities of public organizations in specific areas only such as, for example, environmental control.

An important step to the establishment of public oversight system in our country is expected to be made by the Law “On the Principles of Public Oversight in the Russian Federation”. This draft law is the first to confer wide powers of public supervision on civil society and civic activists. The range of public supervision actors, according to the draft law, includes citizens and their associations, nonprofit nongovernmental


organizations, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, regional civic chambers, municipal civic chambers (public councils), public councils attached to federal, regional and local authorities, public supervisory boards, and public watch committees.

The draft law sets forth the key principles of public supervision, its goals and objectives, and provides framework for relationships between actors of public supervision and supervised authorities. The draft law enlists the documents subject to mandatory public audits and confers liability for objection to or avoidance from participation in the public supervision system on government officials. Also, it offers specific instruments of public oversight, outlines its key tasks and procedures, e.g., monitoring, hearings, examination and audit, as well as public inspections and investigations.

In 2013, the development and public discussions of the draft law kept going. Following the meeting of the Civil Society Institutions and Human Rights Council under the President of the Russian Federation held on 4 September 2013, the President ordered the preparation by 1 March 2014 of the draft federal law “On the Principles of Public Oversight in the Russian Federation for approval by the State Duma of the RF Federal Assembly”.

The Report of Civic Chamber for the year 2012 shows that, despite the point of view maintained by a number of experts that a single public supervision legislation would be rather excessive and inconsistent with global practice, in Russia a sound and open system of public watch has not become a political tradition yet and thus requires appropriate legal support.

A regional Law on Public Oversight is already in effect in Permsky Krai. In 2013, activists of Perm public organizations have been implementing it through a comprehensive inspection of 29 regional health centers. Records of revealed violations were submitted to the RF Ministry of Health and the Perm Health Department. The local draft Laws On the Principles of Public Oversight were prepared by Civic Chamber of Chelyabinskaya Oblast and Civic Chamber of Irkutskaya Oblast.

2.3 Mass media as the communication environment of inter-sector relations

Mass media represent a key institute of civil society, communicator and channel for the expression of socio-economic and political concerns. Just as any other institute of civil society, it may only exist through interaction with other public and state institutes and attempts to influence the processes unfolding in the society and the important decisions taken by governmental and municipal authorities.

Today, the main sources of information for Russian people are television and the Internet. The remaining mass media are much less popular: newspapers are referred to by 7% respondent only (as compared to 1991, when this source of news ranked the second after TV - 31%). Radio is a preferable source of news just for 5%. Personal contacts are almost completely excluded from channels for exchange of socially relevant information (4%)111.

The highest demand appears to be placed on television, especially by rural citizens (67%), respondents above 45 years old (72% - 76%), as well as Russians with elementary level of education (74%). The Internet is preferred mainly by citizens of Moscow and Saint-Petersburg (35%), individuals between 18 and 24 years old (50%), and highly-educated respondents (32%)112.

The launch of Public Television of Russia became an important event of 2013 (it started broadcasting on 19 May). The Civic Chamber took immediate part in creation of PTR and the constitution of its Public Television Council and Public Television Supervisory Board.

The Public Television was declared to pursue, as its main goals and objectives, the development of civil society in Russia, education and entitlement of viewers, promotion of universal human values. Despite the difficulties attributable to tough competition, PTR is steadily gaining sympathy of its audience and becoming a platform for discussions of the most relevant concerns114.

As regards active Russian users of the Internet, 48% of them prefer receiving the news in online mode, with television ranking second (40%)115.

According to estimates from the Civil Society Development Fund, the most probable scenario for the next few years is that TV will retain the status of backbone media with gradual, albeit not drastic yet, transformation under the pressure of the Internet and new technological opportunities116.


114 What does stand for PTR? The Public Television of Russia, at: http://www.ot-chili-life.ru/thinkable/ito-takev-ot-


Participants of events initiated by Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation repeatedly stressed that public perception of mass media and freedom of expression is what constitutes the well-being of the society. The year 2013 appeared not the easiest one for Russian mass media. They are becoming increasingly exposed to state regulation and ownership, and often acquired by major state-oriented businesses; many publishers reduce circulation of their issues, journalistic profession keeps losing prestige, and generally the confidence in mass media keeps falling.

Development of mass media legal framework

In recent years, the legislative regulation of mass media has been developing towards tougher restrictions. Unlike to many developed countries with self-regulating media, Russian law-makers attempt to expose them to stronger governmental control.

During 2013, certain changes have been introduced to mass media legal framework. Under a newly adopted Law, any “incorrect” information including publications in the Internet may be refuted or even deleted. Initiators of the law argue that it is intended solely to protect media persons from “yellow press”. In practice however the new law affects the investigative journalism most of all.

The Criminal Code has been amended to envisage the punishment of disclosure by mass media of crime victim children. The fact that disclosure of personal data of children is already prohibited by current laws was disregarded. Moreover, the newly introduced wording “indicative details of individual” leaves room for a too broad construction which may complicate the coverage of child abuse cases although the view of many experts is that the society must have access to information regarding offenses against children.

In April 2013, the Law prohibiting vulgar language from use by mass media has taken effect. Vulgar language is surely inadmissible. However the first practical application of the Law resulted in the closure of Rosbalt Information Agency. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation reviewed this case in legal terms and found that the awarded withdrawal of the Agency’s certificate of registration was unjustified. Experts mention that the statement of claim was accepted with gross procedural mistakes, and the judgment contains references to legal provisions which can be interpreted rather to the benefit of the convicted defendant.

The amendments to the Federal Law “On the Advertising” which entered into force in October 2013 and to the Code of Administrative Procedure of the Russian Federation (Article 14.3) regarding the liability of mass media for the advertisement of nutritional supplements also present great challenges for publishers. Mass media do not have adequate professionals to assess the quality of nutritional supplements which quality should be the responsibility of the licensing authorities. This limitation, with liability of media as a sequence, may be potentially extrapolated to all goods marketed through mass media – from construction materials to plant seeds.

The media community is also concerned about several other legislative initiatives. For instance, a State Duma deputy from the Liberal Democratic Party of Russia proposed to punish journalists for the use of private information drawn from social media without consent of a person it relates to, by way of penalty at RUR 500 thousand or five-year imprisonment. This proposal is completely unreasonable. Social media are unrestricted spaces of individual information which becomes accessible once posted there.

One of the most recent initiatives aimed at regulation of the media space was proposed following the events in Biryulyovo Zapadnoye, a district of Moscow, in October 2013. It came from Yu. I. Chaika, Prosecutor General of the Russian Federation, as well as I. N. Slunyaev, Minister of Regional Development. Both officials argue that reporters must be made liable for their coverage of interethnic relations. Indeed, the current trends in coverage of interethnic relations sometimes deserve criticism. However, reporters should not be considered the main originators of conflicts. Such proposals require serious expert approach and discussions anyway.

Another quite disputable instrument is the Law No. 187-FZ of 2 July 2013 “On Amendments to the Law of the Russian Federation “On Mass Media” (Article 4) proposed by Legislative Assembly of Kirovskaya Oblast on 12 November 2013 for approval to the State Duma. This draft law contemplates the expansion of the list of information prohibited from distribution in mass media and the Internet, as follows: “to prohibit the distribution in mass media as well as in information and telecommunication networks of audiovisual reports and materials depicting bodies (or parts of bodies) of people died in car accidents, industrial accidents, catastrophes, mass disaster, natural disasters and other casualties”. This ban is proposed to involve administrative liability (for legal entities, penalties of up to RUR 50 thousand).

This draft law essentially prohibits on-the-spot reports and immediate information. It will prevent reporters from making press photos and running commentaries. In addition, people will be also disincented to place shots of accidents from the scene which restriction may impede the notification of families of those injured.

One of the most important concerns in 2013 was connected with extrajudicial termination of access to mass media including their online versions. The Law “blacklisting” specific websites, “Antipiracy Law” and amendments to Civil Code affecting the protection of Intellectual Property in the Content of Information and Telecommunication Networks”...
KP website blocking in Zabaikalskiy Krai. A reporter of this newspaper has captured obscene contests in one of local clubs. The prosecutor determined that this video invades privacy of adolescents, promotes violence and abuse. Not a word was said about the fact that violence and abuse captured by that video require intervention of law-enforcement authorities.

The draft law “On Amendments to the Law of the Russian Federation “On Mass Media” (for the introduction of self-regulation)” has been considered for several years already\(^\text{125}\). At present, it is being reviewed by the State Duma. It imposes on mass media an obligation to join self-regulating organizations (SRO). The minimum number of members for such self-regulating organizations is also prescribed by the Law, which means that withdrawal of any one member may potentially endanger the existence of other media being members of the same self-regulating organization. Such consequences seem more than feasible, especially at regional level. It would be more reasonable for the present time to contemplate volunteer consolidation of mass media into self-regulating organizations on the proviso that SRO may not interfere with professional activities of mass media or direct their editorial policy.

According to expert opinion, the introduction of additional regulators, namely self-regulating organizations is not only unreasonable but inconsistent with freedom of mass information and independency of mass media laid down in the Russian Constitution and the original Law “On Mass Media”.

Another confusing proposal is the requirement for mass media to become members of self-regulating organizations before registration: “according to paragraph 3 of the draft amendment, mass media will be denied registrations if they are not the members of self-regulating organizations. Therefore, the registration of mass media is made subject to approval of a self-regulating organization”, the Chamber reports\(^\text{126}\).

The draft law “On Amendments to the Law of the Russian Federation “On Mass Media” (for the introduction of self-regulation)” received no support from society.

The new legislative initiatives include a proposal to increase liability for assaults on reporters and offenses against them. The idea of this measure has been initiated by Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation as early as in 2011. Each month, in many regions of Russia journalists are slaughtered, prevented from doing their business, have their cameras and microphones broken. The majority of contracted murders of reporters remain unsolved.

Discussions in the Chamber during the reported year repeatedly emphasized that the proposals brought in 2013 indicate at erratic attempts of the government to interfere with mass media legislative framework. In this regard, the Chamber finds expedient to reconsider the new version of mass media legislation developed by M.A. Fedotov and Yu.M. Baturin and submitted to the State Duma for approval in 2008. This new version reflects a comprehensive approach to all legislative issues of the changing media environment.

Regulation of Web space

The past year saw high-profile initiatives aiming at regulation of online universe, the wide public remaining uninvolved in development and discussions of relevant proposals. The greatest concern was raised about the so-called “antipiracy law” strongly criticized by major Internet resources and media community. Also, regulation of the Internet needs addressing a number of basic issues. Thus, although the words “site”, “Internet” and others are deeply engrained in our life, they are not supported by legal definitions. Therefore, there is a strong need in fundamental law setting forth the key terms and the limits of governmental regulation. Any oversight should only extend to those areas of Internet-based activities which require and are capable of regulation.

Another strong concern is the deficiency of proper knowledge of the Internet environment in officials and law-enforcers who take responsibility for the decisions to interfere with Internet resources. By reason of poor interdepartmental coordination at regional levels, local courts often judge to block access to websites in several constituent entities of the Russian Federation without notice to the Federal Service for Supervision in the Sphere of Telecom, Information Technologies and Mass Communications (ROSKOMNADZOR) or publishers.

In April 2013, the Russian Association for Electronic Communications (RAEC) researched the global trends in regulation and self-regulation of the Internet. The research also included a comprehensive review of Russian laws applying to the Internet. Its main findings are mentioned below\(^\text{127}\):

- governments of many countries increasingly tend to strengthen the regulation of the Web;
- regulation of the Internet most often targets the issues of national security, economic growth supported by usage of the Internet, and protection of people’s rights;
- regulation focuses include protection of children, prevention of computer crime and terrorism, development of electronic commerce and protection of rights of authors;
- democratic societies, the most adequate option would be softened regulation combined with self-regulation on the basis of public private partnership.

The economy of mass media

In 2013, the All-Russia State Television and Radio Broadcasting Company (VGTRK) was allotted about RUR 20 billion, TV channel Russia Today – RUR 11.2 billion, and Rossiyskaya Gazeta – RUR 4.9 billion from the state budget\(^\text{128}\). In general, many Russian mass media subsist on grants or receive money from regional budgets, and

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\(^{125}\) Strips of Runet. Part One “E-Commerce in Runet: figures, estimates, and positions at global market”. The Russian Association for Electronic Communications (RAEC), at: http://raec.ru/ timeframe/detail/2454/.

\(^{126}\) Comprehensive Audit of Legal Environment. The Russian Association for Electronic Communications (RAEC), at: http://raec.ru/times/detail/2490/.


therefore may not be regarded fully independent in true sense. Governments use various levers of pressure.

Also, the reported year saw a wide range of changes having effect of toughening the rules for players at small-scale retail market. Now when they are imposed different taxes, increased requirements for the trade facilities layout, the allowed range of goods will miss whole classes. According to the Russian Press Distributors Association, while in 2004 there were 42 thousand media kiosks, in 2013 their number fell down to 30 thousand, which means that a certain part of consumer base was lost. In March 2013, members of the party “Single Russia” proposed to revise the tax policy for mass media to abolish tax benefits of print media other than those “socially-focused”. The latter term was proposed to be formalized in federal laws.

The Guild of Press Publishers (GPP) that consolidates multimedia publishing companies mentions the hard situation of print media as a sequence of the real economic war launched against them. By expert estimates, about 10 kiosks are daily liquidated in the country at average. Governmental departments are planning to change the funding arrangements for subscription of print periodicals. In June 2013, leaders of major mass media, press publishers and distributors requested President Putin to continue the funding of the FSUE Russian Post to compensate losses associated with acceptance of subscription and delivery of newspapers and magazines to subscribers. Also, the government refuses to fully perform the obligations it assumed when joined the WTO to set duties for the light-weight coated paper at 5%, thus knocking down the domestic publishing industry for which the marked-up prices of paper based on increased customs duties will result in loss of customers to the benefit of foreign competitors.

It seems that the so-called “death of newspapers” may turn from the natural and long-run process driven by preferences of new generations and changed choices of information media into intentional economic strangling of competitive, mature and developable system of print media.

What will be the implications for the civil society? First of all, the artificial limitation of constitutional rights to information.

It is obvious that in foreseeable future, even at that rapid penetration of mobile and online technologies, there will remain areas uncovered by them where people are not that skilled in their use or intentionally prefer information in paper form. Even in Moscow Oblast today there are numerous places unreached by the Internet and mobile communication, at least with an adequate level of quality to support the proper mode of information flow, not to speak of less “advanced” regions.

There are many facts proving that the demand for print media in Russia remains unsatisfied. In majority Russian cities and rural areas, federal and even local newspapers are hard to find; what is found much easier is the second quality light reading.

The Alliance of Independent Regional Publishers (AIRP) has reviewed the key development trends of regional press in 2013. Experts stress the stagnation of the regional advertising market; however several constituent entities of the Russian Federation demonstrate a slight growth against the preceding year (up to 7%), while others show a slight decrease (up to 10%). Circulation of regional newspapers keeps stagnating or slightly decreasing (between 0% and -12%)\textsuperscript{127}. Publishers of conventional print products in regions start launching the Web-based projects. Similarly to federal mass media, local press faces difficulties of subscription due to unsatisfactory performance of local post offices. The increasing legislative pressure in advertising sector caused large-scale inspections by regional units of Federal Antimonopoly Service whose warnings are not always well-grounded. AIRP mentions remarkable increase in legal work with regional media in 2013 such as pre-publication checks of commercials and editorials, appeals against FAS determinations etc.

For the development of print media as the institution of civil society and for more efficient contribution of the state information policy into the development of civil society, a range of measures is recommended to be taken. They include the provision of favorable market conditions for development of mass media by reducing the target funding of specific publishers at the account of federal and regional budgets; implementation of the state funds distribution system on competitive basis; doing away with publication of official information in mass media and designation of special newsletter and generally accessible electronic systems instead; prohibition of publishing ads on commercial basis for mass media funded from federal budget or budgets of Russia’s constituent entities including regional and municipal levels; introduction of preferential taxation treatment for mass media desks.

Key challenges faced by reporters and publishers in 2013

In recent period, representatives of Russian mass media have been working in increasingly complicated environment. The year 2013 is no exception. Reporters were assaulted, subjected to criminal proceedings, including under the reinstated defamation article of the Criminal Code but especially often under the “anti-extremist” Article 82 of the Criminal Code of the Russian Federation\textsuperscript{128}. The monitoring conducted by Glasnost Defense Foundation shows that murders of journalists do not grow but keep happening, largely thanks to impunity of murderers. A striking example is the story of Akhmednabi Akhmednabiyev, Dagestan reporter who received multiple threats, was attempted and then killed. Unfortunately, the law enforcement authorities who have been repeatedly advised of his being persecuted were attributing this assault, just as many others, to anything but his profession.


RELEVANT AGENDA 2013 IN THE EYES OF CIVIL SOCIETY

3.1 Legal culture and the protection of civil rights

The independent court and law enforcement authorities holding ward of security and rights of citizens are what provide the necessary infrastructure for the development of civil society.

The advocacy community represents an important segment in the system of civil society institutions. Its efforts actually contribute to promotion of constitutional state, legal culture of citizens, and the rule of law.

In 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was discussing the Peacekeeping and Anticrime State Program of the Russian Federation129. The main goal of the program is to improve quality and performance of law enforcement authorities in its anticrime and peacekeeping efforts as well as to increase confidence of people in law enforcers. Experts have drawn attention of authorities responsible for the social order to the mostly accusative bias of investigations, insignificant relative share of acquittals, poor professionalism of policemen, and their exposure to arbitrary actions of their chiefs.

The inadequate elaboration of legal framework for the protection of victims remains a core issue. Participants of discussions held in Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation mentioned that more than 10 million people are annually affected by crimes in Russia130. More than 60% abstain from reference to police and try to restore justice on their own account even to the extent of vigilantism. Over 10% offenses are committed by former victims. An absolute majority of victims cannot afford lawyer’s services; the damage compensation scheme formalized in Article 52 of the Russian Constitution does not work in practice131. At the same time, Article 6 of the RF Code of Criminal Procedure132 makes a victim central to the justice by reason that collaboration of victim with law enforcers is what determines the investigative quality and efficiency as well as the recompense.

Active discussions in 2013 were focused on admissible limits of self-defense. Currently there are three draft laws pending approval of the State Duma which concern civilian weapons. Participants of the hearings in Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation held on 29 August 2013133 argued that people should be entitled to potentially defend themselves, their families and property. However the related duties and liabilities should not be disregarded, for which purpose discussants recommended the development of security awareness and culture of weapon usage.

On 16 October 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation hosted the hearings on the draft federal laws No. 238654-6 “On Participation of Citizens in Maintenance of Public Order” and No. 238639-6 “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation Regarding the Participation of Citizens in Maintenance of Public Order”134. The issue of public involvement in security maintenance arrangements was raised following the events in Biryulevo-Zapadnoye district of Moscow. A voluntary people’s patrol is believed to appear useful by several reasons. Firstly, it will help expand the general coverage of patrol; secondly, people will have an opportunity to take part in prevention of crime not in their home communities only, but at the entire territory of their city. The proposed provision of voluntary guards with weapons is a questionable idea. The very term “people’s patrol” requires legal treatment, the same approach should be used to define the legal status of people helping to maintain public order. However some experts express concern about possible consequences of this draft law referring to the fact that voluntary guards may also present public threat at certain conditions.

There is also an increased concern about the food security of our country. This is where consumer rights are breached at every turn. This sector omits clear and controlled rules for marking of genetically modified products or components and is not provided with developed laboratory network to support safe food supplies. Trade inspections and mandatory certification of food products were abolished in recent years, by which reason the supply of fake products at food markets increasingly grows.

The protection of consumer rights has not been properly addressed thus far. Discus- sants in the Chamber mentioned that judgments in favor of consumers often remain unenforced. By information from the Consumer Union of the Russian Federation, fifty percent of judgments on cases initiated through its member organizations during the recent three years at average were unfilled. The most vulnerable segments include sales outside permanent facilities, service centers, online shops and virtual services, housing and utilities sector. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation proposed to amend the applicable laws so that to improve the legal protection of consumers including timely and adequate application of injunctive relief based on consumer claims, where a defendant can be reasonably expected to try avoiding the enforcement; to introduce administrative liability for avoidance of enforcement including the disqualification of debtor’s supervising authorities for a specific period and limitation of their rights to leave Russia; to revise the application practices of RF CC Article 315 regarding the liability for malicious evasion of enforcement; to rearrange the forensic service by building-up the potential of state forensic institutions and introduce accreditation requirements for nongovernmental expert organizations seeking to conduct forensic investigation; to increase the number of judges, court officers and bailiffs.

131 Constitution of the Russian Federation, Chapter 2. Rights and Freedoms of Man and Citizen, Article 52: “The rights of victims of crimes and abuse of office shall be protected by law. The State shall provide them with access to justice and compensations for sustained damage.”
132 Code of Criminal Procedure Chapter 2 Article 6 “Institution of Criminal Proceedings”.
133 Hearings “On the improvement of laws on weapons including firearms of non-lethal effect (traumatic)”. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, 29 August 2013, Moscow.
Another important issue that keeps raising concerns is the road traffic safety. To promote the legal culture of citizens, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation published the report “On the Road Traffic Coordination and Safety in Russian Regions”135. The report summarizes the public examination of key road traffic concerns in the national scale.

Annual reporting on this issue is expected to become an efficient tool of public supervision over governmental authorities at different levels.

3.2 Interethnic relations and the freedom of conscience

The maintenance of interethnic peace and accord, strong reaction against attempts to undermine the unity of our country and spark ethnic and religious conflicts are crucial to successful development of civil society in Russia. In 2012, the President of the Russian Federation has approved the Strategy of the State Nationalities Policy of the Russian Federation136 following active discussions with strong participation of Civic Chamber. The Strategy pursues the preservation of uniqueness and diversity of nationalities, promotes the idea of supra-ethnic civic consolidation. Civil society institutions are called to implement projects holding people together and designed to overcome the interethnic segregation especially among young citizens. They are intended to provide conditions and support for civic engagement in activities that increase the level of interethnic cooperation and civic patriotism. Illustrations of such integrating projects are provided by volunteer work at Olympic Games in Sochi, World Student Games in Kazan, student construction brigades etc. It is through nongovernmental institutes and organizations enjoying the people’s trust that instruments of the nationalities policy may be successfully implemented.

A key role for the furtherance of this policy is played by state support of nonprofit organizations including ethnic associations. Since 2006, the federal budget has been annually providing for the funding of nonprofit organizations which contribute to development of civil society institutions. From 2013, the aforementioned “Presidential” grants are provided for the implementation of projects promoting the national solidarity and public accord, harmonization of interethnic and interreligious relations. Today a wide variety of public organizations are active in this sector, including ethnic and cultural autonomies137.

In December 2012, as part of the Strategy of the State Nationalities Policy, amendments were introduced to the Federal Law “On Nonprofit Organizations” to allow federal and local governmental authorities to provide support to socially-focused nonprofit organizations concentrating their efforts on the preservation and protection of ethnic diversity, cultures, and traditions of Russian people as well as on the development of interethnic cooperation.

A big deal of concerns about interethnic relations is connected with migration. The year-to-year increase of migration flows from CIS countries became a strong trend in recent years. Today there are more than three and half million nonresidents illegally staying in Russia138. This situation is caused by a number of objective reasons including the need of domestic economy in workforce from other states. However, the existing infrastructure is not capable to accommodate large flows of migrants and provide all related services such as registration for tax purposes, medical service, education, insurance, housing, or protect their lawful rights and freedoms. One of the most relevant though unsolved issues in the circumstances is the establishment of adaptation centers. It can be addressed with participation of public and religious organizations. The migrant adaptation system must extend to their countries of origin as well. By expert opinion, such countries should maintain training centers for introduction of potential migrants with Russian traditions and language. The examination of Russian language has been launched for specific migrant groups in December 2012, while the content of proposed examinations in history and law remains uncertain.

Meanwhile, the methods used by certain public organizations evoke nothing but resentment. Especially the so-called “raids against migrants” undertaken by nationalistic organizations. Such raids often involve violation of laws and rights of foreigners.

Omissions of migration policy, corruption and inefficiency of labor migration laws, violation of migrants’ rights, illegal migration of workforce, criminalization of migrants including involvement of them in corruption practices and shadow economy fuel interethnic conflicts and instigate growth of xenophobia and nationalism. As a result, 72% Russians support the introduction of visa regime with countries of Central Asia139.

The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was broadly discussing the amnesty of all illegal migrants. The main discussion was held on 1 November 2013140. Participants of the hearings argued that those illegal migrants who can speak Russian, respect Russian values and rules of behavior must not be pressurized but rather “deserve amnesty”, though with reservations that this way “we are going to lose our national identity” because the “legalized” migration will continue destabilizing the market of workforce, fuel social tension and foster the growth of “transnational crime”.

The year 2013 saw mass actions with interethnic context. Conflicts between different ethnic groups are often caused by incorrect or even offensive behavior of internal migrants which gives rise to routine encounters though far reaching in terms of their consequences for interethnic relations. Especially strong stir was caused by July events in Pugachyov of Saratovskaya Oblast where following the murder of local citizen people held an unauthorized protest rally and demanded “deportation of North-Caucasians”. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation assigned a task force for the review of the established situation; members of the Chamber visited the scene and


137 As of the reporting-date, the register of the RF Ministry of Justice lists 965 of such organizations including 16 federal, 244 regional and 705 local ones. The Portal for Nonprofit Organizations of the RF Ministry of Justice, at: http://rosnmo.moj.ru/NGOs.aspx/.


139 With the exception of titular citizens of Chechnya, Ingushetia and Dagastan whom just over 40% support the introduction of visa regime with countries of Central Asia. Report “The issue of interethnic relations in Russia. State and political life”. Ed. by M. V. Romanov and V. V. Stepanov. – M.: Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, 2013 (printed as manuscript).

140 Roundtable Discussion of the Amnesty Project. Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, 1 November, 2013, Moscow.
met local people who made them suggest that the key troubles of Pugachyov pertain to social and economic relations. The finding of the taskforce was that the conflict has been rather of social than interethnic nature. It has become already almost a common rule that the issues arising from social and economic disorder or unemployment are easily transformed into intercultural and interethnic tension and disfavor.

Another, even greater stir was made by protests and commotion in Biryulevo-Zapadnoye district of Moscow in October 2013 caused by murder of local citizen Egor Scherbakov. The rallying citizens of Moscow demanded authorities to promptly find a murderer and close the local horticulture warehouse that mostly employed migrants as well as to toughen the migration laws.

The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation immediately started monitoring and trying to settle the conflict. Members of the Chamber spent several days onsite continuously working both with local citizens and governmental authorities, human rights activists and law enforcers.

To discuss the conflict and its consequences, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation organized public hearings under the title “Biryulevo: Looking for a Way out of the Conflict”. Participants of the meetings were proposing various approaches to the issue. Comments of the experts show that this is not the first occasion when the lack of legal order in small and medium business sector generates stir in residents of Moscow suburbs. As a sequence, social conflicts and crimes often penetrate into the space of interethnic relations involving migrants.

The high-profile incident in Matveievskiy market of Moscow where a policeman was injured when trying to apprehend a suspect caused a chain reaction which ultimately led to introduction of detention camps for illegal migrants. Discusants of this solution during the public hearings insisted on the revision of the existing system of quotas for foreign workforce and adoption of more definitive measures against breaches of labor code by employers.

Today, Russia is obviously full of problems capable of aggravating the tension in interethnic relations at any time. They include corruption, low professional and ethical culture of public officials, politicization of ethnic and cultural factors, nationalist organizations and ideologies, negative interethnic stereotypes deeply enrooted in public mind.

The growth of extremist spirit in the society has been observed for several years already. The year 2013 is no exception. The application of federal law on prevention of extremist activities often fails. It affects mostly oppositional politicians and journalists while real extremists, xenophobes, instigators of conflicts and hostility manage to avoid liability. The nationalities factor is often used by politicians interested in the increase of extremist crime.

Aggressive xenophobia represents one of the most serious challenges faced by Russia today. In 2013, the sociological survey conducted by Levada Center has registered the greatest xenophobic wave, with up to 70% or 80% percent of population being exposed to it in one way or another in Russian regions141. It is the maximum level ever found by surveys in a long term; moreover, the observed wave is highly irregular. It reached peaks in October following the Moscow elections and after the incident in Biryulevo. The highest level of xenophobia is typical for Moscow where the largest number of migrants is concentrated.

A number of draft laws proposed in 2013 caused broad public polemics. The draft law “On Inadmissibility of Rehabilitation of Nazism, Glorification of Nazi Criminals and Denial of Holocaust” pending approval by State Duma means by Nazism not a political doctrine with elements of nationalism, racism and anti-Semitism but specifically the ideology of Hitler’s Germany between 1933 and 1945. This bill classifies public expulcation of this particular ideology and its broad distribution as rehabilitation of Nazism. But the point is that in this light even scientific research of German Nazism can be considered the distribution of this ideology.

In November 2013, the State Duma started considering the draft law on criminal liability for promulgation of separatism, particularly for those who demonstrate support of separatist movements or deny/question the territorial integrity of the Russian Federation. A number of social activists expressed concerns by reason that the first of those who may be affected by this will be representatives of mass media.

There are some evidences of the fact that provisions against extremism (such as Article 282 of Criminal Code and the Federal Law No. 114-FZ of 25 July 2002 “On Prevention of Extremist Activities”) are sometimes misused or applied to adherers of politically inconvenient views.

The issues of interethnic relations are hard to effectively approach by reason that they are discussed in theory by governmental institutions and public organizations, while in practice they are being addressed at local levels where the problems, absent the necessary supervision, are tied up. In this regard, a definitive role can be expected from the Federal Law No. 284-FZ of 22 October “On Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation Regarding the Powers and Responsibilities of Governmental Authorities of Russia’s Constituent Entities, Local Authorities and their Officials in the Sector of Interethnic Relations”. The Law requires local governments to create the necessary environment for the harmonization of interethnic relations, provide equal social, economic and cultural conditions and opportunities for different ethnic groups.

The freedom of consciousness and faith has been actively discussed by Russian society in recent years. It is not the first year that the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation procures platform for the dialogue between society and church, discusses principles of cooperation between the state and the religious associations. This polemics usually involves religious leaders and social and political activists, both of conservative and liberal views. Secular-minded parties argue that human freedoms and rights in their modern interpretation represent the important achievement of civilization, while religious leaders call to conceive the events from the standpoint of traditional and moral values.

In March 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was hosting the hearings and discussions of federal bill introducing amendments to the law “On the Freedom of Consciousness and Religious Associations” as well as to the RF Code of Administrative

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Procedure. During the hearings members of the Chamber unanimously agreed that the updating of federal laws on religious organizations were a long-standing need and called deputies to develop the package of necessary amendments. However both secular-minded participants of the hearings and representatives of Orthodox, Islamic and Jewish religions concurred in negative treatment of the bill’s wordings proposed by deputies.

A related topic - the role of religion in the development of key civil society institutions was also discussed during the year. The discussions were focused on contribution of traditional religions in education, the living of army, politics, social ministration and philanthropy.

In May 2013, participants of the hearings on the topic “Religion, Society, and Life-style: Provisional Outcomes and Prospects of the Challenging Forum” were discussing whether religion relates to an inner world of human beings and that of their families and communities, or sets forth the norms and rules being highly relevant to all spheres of life from economy to arts and from warfare to daily routine. Representatives on the Orthodox tradition argue that the influence of religion on social life must not be disregarded, and believers must not be limited in their right to build up their living including the participation in economic, political or social processes based on their religious principles. There have been expressed the different views as well. Experts stressed that majority of Russian people do not share the opinion that religious organizations should reduce their activities to divine service. Russians appreciate the broader social engagement of Russian Orthodox Church, Islamic and other religious organizations and move toward the system to help prevent specific social troubles, first of all the degradation of moral standards. In particular, Russian citizens support the idea to institute custody of religious organizations over some orphanages and adult residential centers.

Also, participants addressed the issues of professional religious education. One of the public concerns in this area is that Islamic religious organizations often have to train their clergy outside Russia. The training of Muslim priests in Arab world cause especial anxiety. Participants of the hearings mentioned that the society and the state cannot be unconcerned about the leaders of religious communities and therefore placed specific importance on public influence.

In November 2013, the Committee of the RF Civic Chamber for Interehtnic Relations and freedom of consciousness applied to the Prosecutor General, the Ministry of Internal Affairs and the Supreme Court with a request to improve the procedures for review of religious literature for extremism by exemption from such reviews of ancient holy books of Russia’s traditional confessions as well as those pertaining to other global religious traditions such as Hinduism, Sikhism, Shintoism, and Confucianism. On 13 November 2013, the Chamber held the hearings on the examination of religious texts, based on the prosecutor’s reference to the court claiming to recognize extremism in Bhagavad-gita As It Is, one of the modern interpretations of Hindu text of Bhagavad-gita which was met with a mixed response of experts and social activists. To their mind, such approach may potentially lead to detection of extremism even in Holy Bible, Koran or Torah. The law enforcement authorities sometimes fail to take note of the fact that contemporary legal language cannot adequately convey the meanings of texts written many centuries ago and full of specific religious imports. Experts express concern about the non-involvement of historians and advisors from religious communities in examination of literature for extremist ideas.

The application to the Prosecutor General stressed that “some of modern interpretations of ancient texts may be of extremist nature; they are made and distributed with an aim of instigating interreligious, inter-confessional and interethic conflicts and as such may qualify for a ban”, and that law enforcement authorities “have reasons to show concerns about texts of various religious organizations as they find there the evidences of calling for interethic hatred”. In these circumstances, members of the Chamber consider “holy texts of Russia’s traditional confessions to be certainly beyond any expert investigations for calls to extremism and other unlawful actions”. At the same time, “other religious literature which is used by believers for worship, pray and private purposes” may be reviewed “with engagement of skilled theorists of religion and members of religious communities”, the request says.

The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation is of the opinion that the government should take the most active part in regulation of interethic relations. It is no coincidence that almost all mass protests on ethnic grounds were essentially reduced to the attempts of getting attention from competent authorities. At present in Russia with its low level of public security and widespread corruption the most advantageous positions are with ethnic groups including those consolidating their community grounds. Now when the Russian government virtually opts out of regulating the inter-ethnic relations, considerable dividends accrue to those communities which appear the most advanced in terms of mutual aid, clanship, and fellow support.

3.3 Addressing the social issues

In 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was following up the performance of Orders issued by Russian President on 7 May 2012. On 24 April the Chamber held Plenary Meeting together with the Council of RF Civic Chambers devoted to preliminary results of their performance.

In particular, the Meeting was focused on provision of special jobs for people with disabilities. In Russia, the number of disabled citizens of employable age amounts to 3 million 960 thousand, of whom only 816 thousand are actually employed. The Chamber conducted hearings on this issue.

Also, the Chamber was monitoring the implementation of demographic policy. By information from the Public Opinion Fund (FOM), 59% respondents believe that once a family gets a child, mothers face more difficulties with employment, 142

142 Rel. No. 161/415-2012: the Request to exempt from the extremism testing the ancient holy books of Russia’s traditional confessions as well as of Hinduism, Sikhism, Shintoism, and Confucianism. 21 November 2013. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, Moscow.

143 Meeting of the Committee for Interehtnic Relations and Freedom of Consciousness, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, 13 November 2013, Moscow.


145 The hearings “On Provision of Special Jobs for People with Disabilities” (as part of public follow-up monitoring of Order No. 597 issued by the RF President on 7 May 2012) – the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, 13 March 2013.
retraining or improvement of their skills. 71% were sure that this group of young women needs help from the government146. In mid May, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation held the hearings on provision of mothers with conditions for combination of their childcare duties with successful career147. Participants emphasized a number of issues such as employment discrimination, violation of rights of employed women in case of pregnancy, difficulties with resumption of job after a parental leave and several others. Based on the results of the hearings, the Civic Chamber prepared recommendations for the State Duma, the Federation Council, the Government and relevant ministries. Consequently, the Federal State Statistics Service has developed the extended list of statistical indicators to obtain better knowledge of employment among women with children of three or less years old. In 2014, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection is going to include in the vacancies info posted at the portal “Job in Russia” the statutory provisions concerning the combination of career and childcare for women.

The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was actively concentrating efforts on the improvement of family policy. By the reporting date, all of the Federation’s constituent entities have already introduced the necessary regulatory base for provision of large families with land plots. According to FOM, more than one third respondents are of the opinion that large families have housing conditions below the average level of the region they live in148. The provision of families with land plots equipped with necessary infrastructure is hampered by a wide range of uncertainties including the absence of clear and transparent procedure for the granting of plots, deficiency of free lands, and additional taxes and other charge on recipients of land plots as well as other difficulties.

Majority of regions and several municipal units implement measures of governmental support for young families, large families and public sector employees. However successful implementation of Presidential Orders encounters a range of complications. For example, in some regions the number of families which are eligible for preferential terms of mortgage and are willing to enjoy them exceeds the capacities of local budget. In addition, the money earned by young families, specialists or research workers is insufficient to repay mortgage loans. Mortgage is only accessible to families where both spouses are of the age below 35. However by reason that much time passes between an application date and the granting of preferential mortgage arrangement, a part of families stops qualifying for such preferences. As shown by FOM survey, the proposed mortgage arrangements for young families and public sector employees appear incapable to make a radical difference. 53% mention that young families face more difficulties today in setting up home. Just 8% believe the setting up home for this group to have become easier today149. 49% respondents said that “in recent years, it became harder for public sector employees to acquire home”. The option “setting up home became easier” was chosen by 6% participants of the survey.

The so-called “Dima Yakovlev Law” passed at the end of year 2012 which prohibits the adoption of Russian orphans by U. S. citizens continues to evoke active discussions. In 2013, the similar ban was introduced for countries not bound by adoption treaties with the Russian Federation and allowing the same-sex marriages. According to official data of the Ministry of Education and Science, 259 children were affected by the ban of American adoption. However it is not a full list as it omits children whom U. S. citizens have already chosen for adoption but have not finalized all necessary documents. As of late 2013, 43 children were resigned to foster Russian families, adoption of other 12 is in process, 64 children were resigned to foreign foster families, and 43 are to be transferred to foreign families soon150. Russian people start demonstrating growing interest in orphans. In 2013, the number of adopted children increased by 6.7% as compared to previous year151. However it should be noted that the Dima Yakovlev Law limits the opportunities for orphans with disabilities to find adoptive families. According to the RF President’s Ombudsman for Children, foreign citizens take children with disabilities 16 times more often than Russian families152, 32 of 79 children who lost the opportunity to be adopted by American families following the introduction of the new Law are those with disabilities153. Any artificial barriers for adoption of disabled children must be abolished.

On 3 June 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation held the hearings “On the Concept of the State Family Policy of the Russian Federation”. By June 2014, the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection together with Ministry of Education and Science, Ministry of Health, and Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Russian Federation are to develop the amendments to the Russian laws regarding the family policy. Participants of the hearings supported the idea of the Concept and prepared recommendations conveying their understanding of key guidelines and methods for the development of this instrument. Also, they have discussed the proposal to substitute conventional orphan houses by family groups154. Furthermore, on 19 March 2013 the Civic Chamber arranged the roundtable discussion on the topic “Issues and Opinions: Social Assistance to Charged Families” which addressed the ways to improve performance of custody and guardianship agencies for the benefit of children resigned to foster families, to develop and introduce professional standards for this sector and to update the federal laws. Based on the outcomes of the roundtable discussion, its participants proposed recommendations for relevant ministries.

In 2013, variety of platforms was provided for discussions of the pension reform conception. A number of events devoted to this agenda took place in the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. In particular, it held the hearings “Discussion of New Pension

146. Records of the Public Follow-up Monitoring of High-Relevant Social Tasks set by Orders of the President of the Russian Federation Nos. 596-606 dated 07 May 2012; Issue No. 3, FOMnibus Survey of 9-10 March 2013 (100 population centers, 43 RF constituent entities, 1,500 respondents).
148. Records of the Public Follow-up Monitoring of High-Relevant Social Tasks set by Orders of the President of the Russian Federation Nos. 596-606 dated 07 May 2012; Issue No. 3, FOMnibus Survey of 9-10 March 2013 (100 population centers, 43 RF constituent entities, 1,500 respondents).
149. Ibid.
150. Astakhov told about the fate of more than 30 orphans who has not left Russia for the U.S.A. RIA Novosti, 24 December 2013, at: http://ria.ru/society/20131224/986125110.html#ixzz2oNsTkAmQ/.
151. The number of Russian orphans transferred to foster families increased by 6.7% in 2013. RIA Novosti, 12 November 2013, at: http://ria.ru/society/20131112/984516844.html#ixzz2oWzVW7
152. Ibid.
153. Astakhov told about the fate of more than 30 orphans who has not left Russia for the U.S.A. RIA Novosti, 24 December 2013, at: http://ria.ru/society/20131224/986125110.html#ixzz2oWzVW7
Majority participants of the hearings on 26 July mentioned that the proposed pension formula seems quite vague and may therefore evoke the growth of social tension. Recommendations were developed to improve the approach to the pension reform. The most questionable issues are transparency and complexity of the formula proposed by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. It is unclear how the pension coefficient which is to be introduced for calculation of pensions as part of the reform will correlate with insurance principles and how it will be influenced by future state of the economy, inflation, wage and employment trends or pension contributions. In formal terms the pension reform does not affect the minimum retirement age, though the proposed formula raises questions in this regard as well. People who will retire once attained this minimum age may hardly expect to receive pensions at maximum rates.

Materials for the understanding of whether the new formula takes into account any long-term projections and existing threats to social and economic development should be made publicly accessible. Transparency of the pension reform is not the only point; the reform should be made understandable to people. For this purpose, we recommend public explanations of the reform to be made by representatives of the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation and, for example, a special competition for senior school pupils “Financial Literacy and the Pension System” to be introduced. The Law was adopted at the end of 2013 and is to take effect from 1 January 2015.

Another high-profile topic for the series of public discussions was the future of maternal capital in Russia. Maternity capital is paid out according to the Federal Law No. 256-FZ of 29 December 2006 “On Additional State Support Arrangements for Families with Children”. Initially, the maternity capital was set at RUR 250 thousand. Upon yearly readjustments, by 2013 it reached almost RUR 409 thousand. By information from the RF Ministry of Labor and Social Protection, as of 1 January 2013 there have been issued 4,037 thousand state certificates of maternity capital. It was applied for and received by 1,509 thousand families: almost 97% of which (1,458 thousand) utilized it in improvement of their housing conditions, 50 thousand spent it for education of children, and 1 thousand women credited it to the funded part of their future retirement pensions. Birth rates continue growing against the decreasing number of women of active fertility age (between 20 and 29 years old) since 2010, by which reason the current measures of support must not be considered exhaustive and attemting. Between January and July of 2013, 1,085.1 thousand children were born which is 8.4 thousand or 0.8% more than in the same period of 2012. Majority of experts consider the maternity capital the most efficient measure of all arrangements designed to tackle the demographic crisis, and call the government not to abolish it after 2016, notwithstanding the intention of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. Seen exclusively as an instrument of social protection which is unrelated to demographic policy, the program of maternity capital may not be comprehensively evaluated. At present, Russia demonstrates growing birth rates mostly for the second and third births, and the completion of maternity capital program in 2016 may result in reduction or even fall of birth rates and therefore may jeopardize the achievement of goals set by the Concept of Demographic Policy of the Russian Federation for the Period to 2025. At the meeting of Russian Government on 9 December Prime-Minister D. A. Medvedev proposed to consider the renewal of maternity capital program after 2016 with changed criteria of eligibility. Vice-Prime Minister O. Yu. Golodetz supposes the program may be extended for five or ten years more. The final decision will be taken in 2014.

The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was also discussing several other issues of demographic policy. In particular, its attention was drawn to the fact that the ongoing optimization of midwifery system disregards a large number of factors and risks which ultimately cause deplorable consequences. For example, in 2013 84 deliveries in Vladimirskaya Oblast happened in transit, as regional civic chamber reports; in Yaroslavskaya Oblast at least two newborns and one woman in labor, a mother of four children died due to the difficulties in transit. Similar problems, complaints and protests of local citizens took place in all regions of Russia affected by the “reform”.

In October 2013, several large families launched a hunger strike in Volgogradskaya Oblast demanding to build a rehabilitation center for adaptation of children with disabilities, improve housing conditions and address other social problems of large families. The working group of the RF Civic Chamber came to the city of Volgograd and helped settle the conflict.

Statistical figures of child offenses and abuse remain distressing. In 2012, 89,183 underage people became crime victims. In the first half of 2013 alone, the number of murders and attempted murders of children increased by 8.3%; wilful infections of grievous bodily harm increased by 3.6%, rapes of underaged increased by 30%, and sexual batteries grew up by 26%. Despite the package of implemented measures and liabilities imposed by laws, a victim, especially underage, in practice often appears unable to obtain compensation of damage caused by offense. There is an increasingly urgent need in efficient legislative instruments to address compensation of damage and social rehabilitation of underaged affected by crimes.

We recommend establishment of local centers for public follow-up monitoring of the “National Strategy for Action on Children for the Years 2012 – 2017” at the account of RF federal districts, in cooperation with the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and civic chambers of its constituent entities. Public municipal boards and public associations must also take part in the monitoring. The areas of prior importance in

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158. O. Golodetz. Payments of maternity capital will be extended for 5 or 10 years more. RIA-Novosti, 12 December 2013, at: http://ria.ru/socialnews/20131212/990652530.html.
The main objectives of the state policy with regard to support of socially-focused non-profit organizations include: the increased scope and quality of social services available to people, specifically through the promotion of competition for budget funding in social sector, independent quality assessments, introduction of innovative social technologies; the increased scope of preventive measures and support for people in hardship. Socially-focused nonprofit organizations may be engaged in social activities on terms of funding from the budget system of the Russian Federation by various ways such as development of necessary arrangements for provision of state and municipal services, works or goods on the basis of target consumer grants, when the amount of funds receivable by provider from the budget will depend directly on the number of consumers ordering the relevant service with it (the principle “money go after people”), and the funding of NPOs projects through the competition for grants or direct grants and subsequent placement of orders for supply of goods, works or services with socially-focused nonprofit organizations for the needs of state and municipal customers. In accordance with the decision of the Agency for Strategic Initiatives, the draft “roadmap” was prepared to support the access of nongovernmental organizations to provision of services in social sector. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has held and hosted large number of discussions focused on the improvement of, and sharing of the best practices connected with involvement of NPOs in the provision of services at budget costs.

The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has taken active part in measures of recovery after a major flood in Far East which continued from late summer and ended only in autumn. It conducted hearings on the issue “Recovery of Regions Affected by Flood is Our Common Commitment” on 24 September 2013 as well as the onsite meeting in Blagoveschensk on 29 October 2013 with civic chambers, NPOs and volunteers. The taskforce for rectification of flood consequences in the Far East was established following the hearings held on 18 December 2013 under the title “Onsite Public Follow-up of the Order “On the National Strategy for Action on Children for the Years 2012 – 2017” issued by the President of the Russian Federation.

Another important issue widely discussed in 2013 was about the key principles of social services. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation prepared recommendations based on the hearings “Forms of Independent Quality Assessment of Social Service Providers” conducted on 7 February. The recommendations highlight the key weaknesses of the existing system for performance appraisal of social service providers and propose amendments to relevant documents of the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. Right at the end of 2013, the State Duma passed in the second reading the law “On the Guidelines for Provision of Social Services in the Russian Federation”. It sets forth the legal, administrative and economic principles of social services, powers of governmental authorities, rights and responsibilities of recipients and providers of social services. Also, it introduces the concept “social support” of families in hardship. The institute of social support is going to start working in Russia since 1 January 2015.164

Social services as such often do not help people or their families to extricate themselves from the hardship, by reason that specific social services work to arrive at some intermediate but not final results. In many cases, the overcoming of difficulties requires a synergy of interdepartmental measures and combination of efforts by governmental authorities, society and people or their families in hardship, who must not be considered passive recipients of help anymore. Furthermore, the social services are provided on the application basis, i.e. after the hardship occurs, and preventive measures appear irrelevant therefore. In this regard, a more efficient solution can be expected from the social support arrangement. Also, it is important to introduce differentiation of responsibilities between customers and providers of social services, promote competition and ensure that all providers including the socially-focused nonprofit organizations have access to equal opportunities for the provision of social services at budget costs; integrate the resources of philanthropy and volunteer work in the social support system; encourage and provide conditions for public oversight. Based on the proposals from the Chamber, the draft law “On the Guidelines for Provision of Social Services in the Russian Federation” was finalized by the Ministry of Labor and Social Protection. The State Duma currently continues developing the necessary arrangements.

The involvement of nongovernmental providers of social services at budget costs remains a central issue. “The provision of state and municipal services must not depend solely on capacities of state and municipal institutions”, the President of the Russian Federation said in his Budget Message covering the budget policy for years 2013-2015.165


dress uniform for the military staff, the changed procedures of military duty for students and university graduates, etc. In 2013, the key areas of civic engagement in the system of relations between society, army and state were the development of civil society institutes in military communities, social and legal protection of military servants, their family members and veterans; legal support of potential conscripts, further efforts aiming at humanization of military service; monitoring of reform of the Armed Forces, including the modernization of military education, science and medicine; promotion of veterans’ movement and raising of military-patriotic awareness in young people.

The most important instrument of influence on military community available to civic society is the work of civil society aiming at increased role of public institutions in such community, first of all officers as the army backbone.

The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has analyzed the experience of the Headquarters of Internal Military Forces (RF Ministry of Internal Affairs) paying special attention to forms and methods which they use to strengthen their influence, consolidate officer corps, train and educate young officers, improve military and professional training of officer staff (about 90% officers have higher education, and 90 senior offices passed out from the General Staff Academy of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation), inasmuch as these efforts are key to successful performance by the law enforcement troops of their tasks, especially considering that today they have to provide forward defense against terrorism.

The experience of Officer Assembly of Internal Forces is communicated to all force structures.

Unfortunately for the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, the role and significance of Officer Assemblies with their traditions ascending to the Russian Imperial Army which were actively promoted in the Soviet era were almost reduced to zero by the former leaders of the RF Ministry of Defense. Therefore, this most important instrument of collective education encouraging the initiatives and self-fulfillment of officers, ensuring the protection of their honor and dignity, democratization of military hierarchy and consolidation of command unity on legal basis remains underused.

Measures proposed by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation for the strengthening of Officer Assemblies and their influence on military service of officer staff in troops and management bodies were approved. In cooperation with public councils attached to defense and law enforcement agencies, military authorities are implementing today the system of measures to develop the public institutions working with all classes of military men in the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation, other corps, units and agencies.

Social and legal protection of military men, their families and veterans

Provision of housing for military servants and retired employees of defense and law enforcement structures remains an urgent concern which requires the mobilization of considerable financial and organizational resources by the state. This issue concerns tens thousands Russian families.

As of 1 October 2013, the waiting list for permanent housing comprised 40,400 persons, and 70,660 military men still needed to be provided with service accommodation facilities. By this time, the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation, in cooperation with those federal authorities with which the military service can be delivered under the applicable laws, have developed the draft federal law contemplating the provision of military men on retirement with housing by way of a one-time cash payment. The hearings held in the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation on 1 October 2013 demonstrated a broad support of this measure but also revealed certain bottlenecks of the proposed legislative innovations. One of them is unavailability of forecasts explicating the potential influence of cash amounts so released on regional real estate markets; another relates to the dependence of the amounts to be so paid on the average price of housing in relevant regions of the Russian Federation which is to be determined by the Ministry of Regional Development, and so forth.

By this date, more than 5 years passed after the publication of Presidential Order No. 714 dated 7 May 2008 “On Housing Provision of Veterans of the Great Patriotic War 1941-1945”. However the waiting list for the improved housing conditions became no shorter. As of 1 March 2013, it still includes 24,460 combat veterans165. The established situation provides grounds for strong concern that this work will not be completed even by the 70th anniversary of the Victory.

In several regions, the quality of housing construction for participants of the Great Patriotic War remains unacceptable. In Cheeta, 14 houses built on the former dump site fail to comply with any construction or sanitary requirements. The housing complex Pobeda (Victory) still lacks drugstore, medical center and post office. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has had to interfere and draw the attention of relevant authorities to the provision of necessary infrastructure. Furthermore, over 25 thousand veterans of the Great Patriotic War166 were excluded from the waiting list by various reasons. Such omissions largely arise from deficiencies of the relevant regulatory base and law enforcement practice at regional levels.

In 2013, under the pressure of public criticism the destructive reform of military medicine was suspended. The Minister of Defense abolished the former orders concerning restructuring of 48 military medical institutions167. By way of the changes to their ownership structure, the largest military medical institutions (Kirov Military Medical Academy, Vishnevsky Central Military Clinic etc.) received more financial independence.

The system of health resort facilities for military servants continues evoking strong criticism. Military servants mention the growing prices and poor quality of related services, complicated and non-transparent procedure for access to benefits in this area, reduction of medical staff in army health resorts which results in proportionate reduction of their capacities in general (by information from the General Department of Regional Development of the Russian Federation, 86 thousand medical workers were laid-off in 2013).

166. Ibid.
for Military Medicine, RF Ministry of Defense, their medical staff was reduced more than ten times - from 42 thousand in 2008 to 4 thousand in 2013\(^\text{168}\)). Rights to preferential provision with health resort services as well as payless travelling to and from health resorts and organized recreation facilities that have been extended by federal laws to family members of officers were denied to families of retired warrant officers, families and parents of citizens lost or deceased in the performance of their military duties during the state of emergency or armed conflicts. As a matter of course, all of these events raised a wave of protest references to governmental authorities, human rights institutions and civic chambers.

The successful partnership between society and the state in provision of medical and social services to veterans is illustrated by the State-Public Association “Moscow House for Veterans of Wars and Armed Forces”. It includes the Department for War Veterans Home Care which employs 750 nurses who serve 700 single and living alone combat veterans with disabilities. The Department also includes the first aid service to veterans. The alarm button devices were installed for all disabled persons and veterans of the Great Patriotic War who applied for them (more than 22 thousand). The medical and social Department of the Veteran House maintains the medical and social home rehabilitation service (“home health resort”) which covers up to 5 thousand veterans per year\(^\text{169}\).

The social and legal protection of military men and their families also include the issue of social adaptation, employment and retraining of individuals dismissed from military service.

The difficulties with such adaptation result from the fact that people entering the labor market as unemployed upon dismissal from military service are those of employed age and with higher professional education in most cases. Today, employers often maintain certain stereotypes regarding the discharged military servants. At the same time, the specializations of training available to dismissed servicemen often appear unsolicited in the labor market. This fact represents a serious problem for the social adaptation of former servicemen. In 2013, the Ministry of Defense, the Ministry of Internal Affairs, the Ministry for Civil Defense, Emergencies and Elimination of Consequences of Natural Disasters, and the Federal Protective Service, together with the Ministry of Education and Science have conducted an experiment consisting in provision of dismissed servicemen with personal state educational certificates. The experiment covers 121 universities accountable to the RF Ministry of Education and Science, 14 universities accountable to the RF Ministry of Defense, and educational institutions of other federal authorities with which the military service can be delivered under the applicable laws\(^\text{170}\).

Another reason for concern is provided by the absence of uniform state system for medical and psychological rehabilitation of military men, employees of law enforcement authorities and special services attaining combat tasks in extreme circumstances.


\(^{169}\) Ibid.


Despite the Presidential Order No. Pr-634 issued on 14 March 2011 which instructs the Government of the Russian Federation to develop the arrangements for the provision in Russian regions of social adaptation centers for dismissed military servicemen and their family members, in practice such facilities are being reduced in number and liquidated at large. Between 2011 and 2013 such centers were established in 49 constituent entities of the Russian Federation. As of 1 September 2013, only 29 of them were still in existence (27 remaining by the yearend) which fact raises serious concern.

Notwithstanding the declared priority for the Russian Federation of its goals as a social state, the measures of social protection aiming to provide support to families of military servicemen who died in the performance of their duty remain mostly inefficient. "Tens of federal laws and other legal and regulatory instruments setting forth the social guarantees for this group appear challenging in applicability terms. The fundamentally new approaches will be required to address issues of such families. As an important step towards this goal, the adoption of federal law “On the Status of Servicemen’s Survivors” can be considered.

There are also certain difficulties with the granting of status “combat veteran” and the related measures of state social support. Servicemen claiming the certificates of combat veterans have to produce documented evidences of their direct participation in combat operations which may be impossible in some cases. Even military men with war decorations often have no specific records of participation in combat operations. According to the Russian Soldiers’ Mothers Committee, for instance, about 2 thousand war veterans in South Osetia were deprived of this status and dissuaded to relevant benefits.

Social and legal protection of conscripts and humanization of military service

The review of hotline calls received by Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation from servicemen and their relatives, as well as their appeals to soldiers’ mothers committees reveals a considerable advancement of human rights protection in the army in 2012 and 2013. The engagement of third party service providers put an end to employment of soldiers in works not related to their military assignment. Simultaneously the term of conscription was limited to one year which also relieved the social and interpersonal tensions. The implementation of the Federal Target Program for substitution of mandatory service by voluntary contract-based enlistment that was launched in September 2012 also contributes to the lessening of ill-treatment and tyranny in troops and favors the growth of legal awareness in soldiers and officers.

Furthermore, in late 2012, the Russian Ministry of Defense decided to stop disposal of ammunition by way of range detonation requiring the participation of servicemen (about 12 thousand people)\(^\text{171}\) and proposed the complete conversion towards their disposal through commercial processes instead. As part of its public supervision functions, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, together with the Main
Missile and Artillery Directorate of the Ministry of Defense of the Russian Federation (GRAU), visited the storage facilities for missile and artillery weapons and promoted the modernization of existing armories and warehouses.

By initiative of the Russian Soldiers’ Mothers Committee, military servicemen were allowed to use cellular phones for communication with their families, soldiers’ mothers committees and the military attorney department so that not to feel lonely, unprotected, separated from family and to be able use these contacts for the protection of their rights.

In recent two years, the Internet has been playing a remarkable role in protection of servicemen’s human rights. Its resources and the social networking websites of major human rights organizations help keeping in touch with soldiers and their parents, prevent conflicts and offences in the army.

The largest portion of appeals from conscripts and their family members relate to:

• incorrect conscription fitness determination at registration of young people in the age of 17 and during the examination by conscription commission; this is what especially often occurs to students of colleges, technical schools and universities: young men with serious spinal, cardiac, gastric and psychoneurological diseases are considered fit for military service;

• too loose construction of the Federal Law No. 53-FZ of 28 March 1998 “On Military Duty and Military Service” by military enlistment offices as regards excusable delays for family reasons, for expelled university students or change of university, as well as for postgraduate students, intern and resident doctors.

The recent initiatives of the RF Ministry of Defense pursuing the increase of prestige and humanization of military service are broadly discussed by the society. The former of them will allow the students of civilian universities to choose an alternative form of conscription by serving three months on summers over a number of years, with several-year intervals. Another initiative is designed to involve conscripted university students in performance of research work to orders from the Ministry of Defense which, in turn, may not be concerned about involving citizens on a full-time basis in military patriotic awareness raising activities until they reach the age of 17 and become eligible to registration for military service.

A wide range of universities take efforts with intention to reinstate the system of military patriotic education despite of the position maintained by the Ministry of Education and Science. A particular importance should be placed today on the creation of common awareness-raising space within the established single educational environment defined by the Federal Law “On the Education in the Russian Federation” and the State Educational Guidelines for the Higher Professional Education.

For this purpose, a number of public state organizations including the Voluntary Association for Support of Army, Air Force and Navy (DOSAAF) have proposed the concept of federal law “On Patriotism and the Raising of Patriotic Awareness” envisaging the coordination, supervision and funding of the agents of patriotic education at all levels and whether governmental or nongovernmental.

In addition, the onsite meeting of the Ministry of Defense Collegium in Saint-Petersburg on 31 July 2013 resolved to order the development of the short course in the History of Russian Army as a mandatory textbook for military units. At present, this course is being developed by a group of authors including the leading researchers and experts of the Military History Institute and the Military University of RF Ministry of Defense. Representatives from the Russian Academy of Science, Russians Societies for History and Military History, the National Public Organization of Veterans of the Armed Forces, the Public Council under the Ministry of Defense are also taking part in the project. The supervision and funding of the project are provided by the Main Staff Department of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

Reforms of military education and science

The development areas for the military science are primarily based on the goals of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation the key of which are to:

• develop the strategic deterrence forces and the aerospace defense systems;

• develop the state arms program for the period from 2016 to 2025 and the refurbishment of the Armed Forces with new models of weapons and military equipment;

• create prospective systems of management, intelligence, information and cyber effect.

The research work is coordinated directly by the General Staff of the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation. Along with research organizations and institutions of military education under the Ministry of Defense, this work involves federal executive authorities, institutes of the Russian Academy of Science and nonprofit research associations (such as Russian Academy of Missile and Artillery Science and the Military Science Academy).

Unfortunately, the duration and incompletion of the reform undertaken by the military research system of the Ministry of Defense have weakened the potential of military science and decreased the performance of its efforts to a certain extent. The selection of most suitable forms for the arrangement and high performance of the
military research system requires reliance on strong scientific basis absorbing the best achievements of domestic and foreign experience.

The alignment of the officer staff training system with qualitative and quantitative requirements imposed by modernized Armed Forces of the Russian Federation is the most sensible of all issues connected with the reform of the Armed Forces launched in 2008. Due to the modernization of the military education system, many research schools that have been in existence for many years were dissolved, majority of academic departments for military history, history of wars and military arts were liquidated, which liquidation adversely affects the training of military staff. By reason of most of research offices being reclassified as civilian staff, the continuity of generations of military scientists is endangered. In the foreseeable future, the military arts will be taught to potential officers by people having no idea of what the army is, which situation, in turn, may lead to paradoxical and harmful “de-militarization” trend of military education.

Participants of the events held by Committee of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation for National Security and Social and Economic Living Conditions of Servicemen, their Families, and Veterans in 2013 were repeatedly expressing strong doubts regarding the scientific validity and elaboration of the selected approaches to modernization of military education institutions. The Chamber declared the liquidation or relocation of the major military educational and medicinal institutions (such as Kirov Military Medical Academy, Aerospace Defense Academy after Soviet Marshal Zhukov, and Zhukovskiy Air Force Engineering Academy) inadmissible.

The standpoint of the RF Civic Chamber was taken into account by new Minister of Defense of the Russian Federation who issued resolutions in particular to resume the alignment of the officer staff training system with qualitative and quantitative requirements imposed by modernized Armed Forces of the Russian Federation.

In recent years, the implementation of federal projects (the Education National Project, the Modernization of Regional Basic Education Systems) and orders of the Russian President was contributing to the improvement of school infrastructure, growth of wages in educational sector, and increased construction of kindergartens.

However surveys of public opinion reveal dissatisfaction with Russians with situation in the sector. Concerns of respondents about a number of issues such as placement of children in kindergartens, increased costs of additional educational services as well as low quality of education which reduces chances of potential university applicants or seekers of good job become even stronger than ever.

Reports of federal ministries and regional executive authorities regarding successful implementation of multiple large-scale projects and programs significantly differ from perception of their actual results by respondents.

This difference largely comes from the current condition of feedback arrangements and the involvement of society in shaping of educational policy or support of its implementation in practice.

Thus, there are strong grounds to diagnose an increasing public mistrust in educational policy and the shrinking away of public support of schools. At first sight it looks paradoxically because all projects, including the top priority national project “Education”, were intended to increase openness of the educational system, involve parents in management of educational institutions, and develop the system of state and public management.

In practice however such work often appears a mere simulation which therefore disappoints the most active parents. The latter start self-organizing outside the educational system, on the grounds of criticism of the established educational policy.

Professional pedagogical community, in turn, becomes increasingly overloaded with reporting responsibilities and administrative pressure. The number of reports often duplicating each other, the range of inspecting and supervising authorities watching their observance of excessively detailed norms that are often disharmonized reached a critical level and significantly limit both time and abilities of educators to address their core professional tasks.

The follow-up monitoring by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was the most important social tasks set by Orders of Russian President dated 7 May 2012 which was

3.5 Education

Education represents one of the main social values for Russians. Society imposes the increasingly high expectations on the educational system. Availability of pre-school education, additional education for children and higher education are perceived today as a common social weal. Warranted free education of children is of critical importance. Education is what people consider a priority sector of governmental spending.


177 Survey conducted by Levada Center in 2013 showed that majority of Russian people (72%) is dissatisfied with the quality of current educational system. In 2013, the current quality of education was described as ”worsened” by the largest group of respondents since 2005 – 38%. Levada Center, 21 June 2013, at: http://www.levada.ru/21-06-2013/rossiyane-o-shkolke-red/40005.php.

178 The FOM Survey of June 2013 revealed only 16% Russians thinking that placement of children in kindergartens is not a difficulty. Of respondents whose families (or those of their friends or relatives) need placement of children with kindergartens this view is shared by 9% only. Two thirds consider this task challenging: 45% mentioned long waiting lists for kindergartens (61% of those directly concerned by the issue), 27% are sure that there are none or just a few kindergartens available (34% of those directly concerned). The Public Opinion Fund (FOM), 11 June 2013, at: http://fom.ru/surveys/10495/.

179 Survey conducted by Levada Center in May 2013. Which issues of the school education today, in your mind, are the most relevant and require solution in the next 5 or 10 years? Levada Center, 21 June 2013, at: http://www.levada.ru/21-06-2013/rossiyane-o-shkolke-red/40005.php.
conducted during 2013 revealed that concerning the increase of teachers' salaries the Order\(^{180}\) is generally fulfilled as figures show. At the same time, some constituent entities of the Russian Federation partly manage to achieve the relevant targets through the restructuring of educational institutions and the resulting growth of workload on teachers. By opinion of educators' trade union, the workload on teachers' reached the level at which neither teachers' skills nor educational quality can be improved and even a normal work becomes impossible. Along with these imbalances, the monitoring discovered a number of other important but unsolved issues such as provision of housing opportunities for teachers, poor legal protection of the latter, and weak supply of schools\(^{181}\).

There are several further reasons for serious concerns. For example, a founder has a right to inspect educational institutions that account to it, without being obliged to observe any formal procedures or limitations. No public or professional follow-up audit of decisions taken upon such inspection is contemplated. Innovative schools and universities appear the most exposed to these risks. This pressure increasingly compromises the leadership role of educators and educational institutions thus limiting their capability to effectively address educational concerns of families and children.

A package of important measures taken by the government broadens the access of private educational institutions to budget funding and the support of socially-focused NPOs\(^{182}\). The range of educational agencies may be therefore significantly extended, i.e. any legal entity becomes entitled to provide services of pre-school education or additional education which is crucial not only for the nonprofit sector but businesses as well (e.g. firms and staff training opportunities and provision of social guarantees to employees). The implementation of these measures in practice however appears challenging. Concerns are most often raised about criteria for distribution of admittance targets among universities on competitive basis and their results, as well as about the actual discrimination of private educational institutions by reason of uncertainty of said criteria. The funding arrangements for private educational institutions also remain unaddressed. A number of subordinate legislative instruments such as sanitary epidemiological requirements do not adequately reflect the ongoing changes, impede the employment of opportunities provided by laws and need further adjustments and revisions. In practice, nongovernmental institutions providing additional education for children are deprived of competitive access to budget funding. This fact actually indicates at discrimination of nongovernmental sector which limits its potential for the solution of many urgent issues including the provision of kindergartens and broader coverage of children with additional educational services.

Regaining of people's trust, building-up of public support for governmental policy and the provision of environment for implementation of institutional and individual initiatives in the best interests of children are crucial to successful development of educational sector in the medium run. The progress in this direction can be achieved through:

- efficient and non-imitational use of appropriate instruments to ensure transparency of educational system and influence of civil society on educational sector;
- alleviation of administrative pressure and bureaucratic load on educational institutions;
- destruction of barriers for realization of families' ambitions and initiatives of nongovernmental sector in educational area.

It should be noted that the system of education has become more open in recent years. By percentage of organizations maintaining their official websites where they post important information, education leaves behind many other social areas. However, the online element of educational sector still has many issues to address: statutory requirements as to the content to be always available at websites of educational institutions, executive authorities and local governments are not fully observed; the interactive communication services often remain underdeveloped.

The Federal Law No. 273-FZ “On Education in the Russian Federation” which has taken effect on 1 September 2013 confirms the information openness as a core approach of state policy to educational sector and the state and public nature of administration as the education management principle. The Law provides a wide choice of instruments to ensure that these principles are put in practice.

The Law imposes tougher requirements as to the openness of educational institutions by extending the range of data and documents to be published at official websites of educational institutions as highly important for consumers. A broad accessibility requirement is introduced with regard to the educational system in general including statistics, data of monitoring, and regular reports of administrative authorities.

Also, the Law provides for the development of wide range of federal information resources which will considerably facilitate the communication between parties to educational relations and prevent distortions and fraud (e.g. the federal information system for the final state examination of school graduates, the state information system “Registry of Educational Institutions Delivering Educational Programs with State Accreditation” etc.).

Pursuant to this Law, educational institutions establish collective management bodies (pedagogical, administrative, supervisory boards, school boards etc.) and committees for settlement of disputes between parties to educational relations. The Law introduces pedagogical examination of draft regulations concerning the educational and awareness-raising issues to detect and prevent factors and occurrences that may adversely affect the quality of education.

Also, the Law introduces an independent quality assessment of education, public accreditation of educational institutions and professional-public accreditation of educational plans, as well as public watch of the Uniform State Exams.

At the same time, the newly introduced laws and regulations still leave certain areas of civil society’s influence on educational sector without legal support. For instance,


182 Federal Law No. 273-FZ “On Education in the Russian Federation” provides private educational institutions implementing the educational plans of basic and higher education with access to budget funding of their services and warrants the equality of funding terms. This law opens the educational sector to nonprofit organizations with educational goals as well as other nonprofit and for-profit organizations (i.e. any organizations providing training and educational services) and individual entrepreneurs.
no requirements are imposed on the decision-making responsibilities of founders of educational institutions in terms of public or expert involvement in key management decisions. Posting of documents and information on official websites of educational institutions remains unregulated.

Furthermore, the development of civic engagement instruments (such as collective management bodies, public watch etc.) should cause appropriate modification of laws to confirm the more significant status of such instruments.

The preparedness of the society to monitoring of educational processes and watch of human rights and social guarantees in this sector is evidenced by strengthening system of public oversight. The system of public oversight needs to be completed with adequate warrants and procedures of handling the revealed irregularities. The practice of reporting by public monitors initiated by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has convincingly demonstrated how the successful detection of violations may be cancelled out by inadequate legal formalization of mandatory procedures for processing, analysis and response measures. Public monitors should remain involved in the oversight process up to the final stage of follow-up work (including feedback from administrative and regulatory authorities and their accountability to public monitors). The period of public watch must be extended to include stages before and after the Uniform State Exams. It is very important to apply practices of public monitoring at all stages of the National Academic Olympiad of Secondary School Students.

Appropriate amendments should be made to regulations covering the frequency and procedures of inspections of educational institutions so that to relieve schools of excessive bureaucratic pressure.

The Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation” is the first legislative instrument to cover innovative activities in education; however it fails to propose arrangements creating the favorable environment for innovative educational institutions. Also, the Law omits the statement of governmental policy for innovative education.

Another issue widely discussed in 2013 was the utilization of maternity capital for educational purposes. Maternity capital represents a form of state support for Russian families with children. The efficiency of this measure has been proven in practice. Maternity capital enables parents to shape educational strategy for their children which makes it especially important and relevant at one point but imposes certain expectations on the existing regulatory system at another. The rules currently regulating the utilization of maternity capital do not match the actual trends, including the sector of education. Under Article 3 of the Federal Law No. 256-FZ of 29 December 2006 “On Additional State Support Arrangements for Families with Children”, a right to use the money of maternity capital arises not before the expiry of three years from the date of birth or adoption of the second, the third or any subsequent child. The necessary educational charges may however be born before a child reaches the age of 3. This issue appears especially relevant given the commercial nature of third party childcare services which often cannot be detached from the services of pre-school education. Partial compensation of parents’ expenses does not tackle the issue completely. The restriction for use of maternity capital before a child reaches the age of 3 materially limits the accessibility of pre-school education to low-income families. Furthermore, while prior to September 2013 maternity capital was available for payment of additional education for children of pre-school and school ages, now this became impossible by reason of inconsistency between statutory instruments referred to by the Pension Fund of the Russian Federation and the newly introduced legislative requirements. All instruments regulating the use of maternity capital need to be revised to the benefit of children.

The launch of self-regulation arrangements including coordination of rules and guidelines to be used by professional community for the rating of educational institutions represents another critical milestone. The Order No. 597 issued by the President of the Russian Federation on 7 May 2012 “On Approaches to Implementation of the State Social Policy”, as regards the development of independent quality assessment system for social sector organizations, and the Resolution No. 286 passed in the furtherance of this Order by Russian Government on 30 March 2013 provide for the quality assessment of education with participation of, and consideration of opinions from public organizations, professional communities, mass media, industry rating agencies and other experts. For the purposes of such assessments, governmental authorities constitute public committees which prepare the lists of organizations to be assessed and performance requirements to be used, and notify relevant authorities upon completion of assessments, recommend measures to improve the quality of education as well as provide access to information for users of educational services. Based on such proposals, the educational institutions update and approve their quality management plans and post them on their official websites. The instruments described above are capable of rendering strong influence on educational system and provide efficient levers for civic engagement in tackling the issues of education. However this approach involves risks of inadequate ratings and negative implications of decisions taken on their basis. For instance, ratings of schools or even municipal units and regions are often made subject solely on results of the Uniform State Exams which is inadmissible. The expert community, with support from the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, is currently actively developing the “Guidelines for Educational Rating System in the Russian Federation” The certification of ratings and/or rating agencies is considered one of the most promising approaches in this area.

An important prerequisite for the potential of civil society to be realized is the promotion of training practice for its representatives: public monitors, public managers (members of collective management bodies), or grassroots experts. Since 2012, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has been providing distant training courses for public monitors. The courses are seen as a way to overcome the formalist approach to recruitment of public monitors and experts. In 2014, the distant training is expected to be delivered to all accredited federal public monitors and all interested public observers accredited by educational administrations of Russian regions.

The adoption of the Federal Law “On Education in the Russian Federation”, implementation of Presidential Orders and the State Program “The Development of Education” for years 2013-2020 represent the crucial milestones shaping the new image of the educational system and contributing to development of the country’s human capital. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation conducting civic monitoring and providing discussion platforms is committed to further promotion of solutions aiming at modernization of the educational system and advocacy of human rights in educational sector.
The restructuring of the Russian Academy of Science became the key event of 2013 in science sector. In June, the Government of the Russian Federation submitted for approval by the State Duma the draft law “On the Russian Academy of Science, Reorganization of State Science Academies, and the Amendments to Certain Legislative Acts of the Russian Federation”. This bill envisaged the establishment of Russian Academy of Science as a public state association instead of the current Russian Academy of Science (RAS), Russian Academy of Medical Science and Russian Academy of Agricultural Science which the bill proposed to liquidate.

This reform caused negative response from significant part of research society. Mass protest actions were held in Moscow and several other centers of academic science, numerous discussions of this draft law took part at various levels. Protests of scientists were evoked both by content of the draft law including the actual dissolution of RAS and the absence of any prior consultations with research community, public discussions and audits.

As a result of numerous consultations and adjustments, the draft law incorporated more than thirty amendments based on comments from the research community. In accordance with the final text of the Law183 signed by the President of the Russian Federation on 27 September, the modernized Russian Academy of Science retains the status of the state budget-funded institution and becomes responsible for coordination of scientific research in the national scale. The Law provides for incorporation of the Russian Academy of Medical Science and the Russian Academy of Agricultural Science in the Russian Academy of Science. The organizations formerly accountable to RAS are transferred under control of the Federal Agency of Research Institutions. In addition, in October the President of the Russian Federation introduced a one-year moratorium of RAS decisions affecting its assets and staff. Following the enactment of the new Law, members of public research organizations established a public watch committee to monitor the process and results of the reform in science sector.

At the same time, as reported by Levada Center, the reorganization of the science management system was virtually left outside the public focus. Only 5% were watching the reform of the Academy attentively, while 42% heard nothing about it184.

In 2013, search of compilation and plagiarisms in scientific theses became an established practice which led to a number of scandals and even revocation of scientific degrees185.

In recent years, the self-organization of research community was demonstrating new dynamic trends. The year 2011 saw the establishment of the national public organization “Russian Association for the Advancement of Science” with support from Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. The main mission of the Association is to consolidate efforts of individuals and public alliances for the comprehensive promotion of Russian science, participation in the national science, technology and education policy making processes, selection of priority development areas, and technology, projection of research and technological trends, development and implementation of research and socio-economic conceptions, projects, plans and initiatives. In 2013, the Association has prepared the analytical report on the condition of research infrastructure in the Russian Federation.

3.6 Culture

In recent years, the efforts of public organizations have been increasingly active in the cultural heritage protection sector. This is the area where the most important civic initiatives of cultural sector are centered on.

As reported by the Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation, there are 130,662 items of cultural heritage located in Russian territory of which 125,523 are cultural landmarks. The condition of 54% only is considered satisfactory or good, while only third of these items (34%) is in unsatisfactory condition, and 5% are ruined186.

In 2013, the public associations focusing on the preservation of historical and cultural heritage were showing new trends. The first of them relates to closer coordination of efforts between the city integrity protection organizations of various regions. In March 2013, there was held the interregional meeting in Saint Petersburg attended by representatives from NPOs of Saint Petersburg, Moscow, the Republic of Tatarstan, Tverskaya Oblast, Nizhegorodskaya Oblast, and a number of other regions. The meeting has proposed a range of measures for coordination of their activities.

The strengthened interregional coordination resulted first of all in two actions of national scale. In summer 2013, protest actions were taken in more than 10 Russian cities against the reconstruction of Volkonsky House at Vozdvizhenka Street in Moscow ordered by municipal government. This building relates to a single guarded area of cultural heritage. It was depicted by Leo Tolstoy in his novel “War and Peace”. Collective readings of the novel were held at streets and squares of cities.

In fall 2013, public organizations arranged the so-called “Days of Consolidated Actions” during which people in various cities were simultaneously taking protest and awareness-raising actions devoted to the protection of cultural heritage.

Another new trend of the city integrity protection groups is their attempts to place the protection of cultural heritage in highly relevant social and political context. During the Moscow Mayor pre-election campaign, public activists prepared the “Charter for Protection of the Historical Moscow City” which envisages a number of guidelines and arrangements required for the preservation of the city’s historical look. This document was supported by five of six registered nominees representing the opposite sides of political spectrum.


185 “DocVerse” launches the site to show the findings of plagiarisms in dissertations. RIA Novosti, 23 September 2013, at: http://ria.ru/science/20130923/965222380.html#ixzz2nvQEbstS./

It was greatly due to the pressure from public organizations that the Moscow Government decided to issue preservation orders with regard to metropolitan landmarks. In 2013, penal sanctions for destruction or damage of items of cultural heritage were significantly increased: for officials up to the range of RUR 20 - 400 thousand and for legal entities up to the range of RUR 200 thousand - 5 million (formerly RUR 30 thousand). This restriction concerns construction and restoration operations carried out within the historical landmark areas. It is very important to ensure that this legislative restriction does work, since developers and contractors often neglect the requirements of regulatory authorities. In addition, the current Criminal Code of the Russian Federation contains an article (243) “Destruction or Damage of Items of Historical and Cultural Heritage” which is never applied. Notwithstanding the intensification of efforts by public organizations, the unauthorized demolitions of items comprising the historical architectural environment were still recorded in 2013.

One of the persistent difficulties faced by the city integrity protection enthusiasts is the absence of institutional platforms in many regions for the dialogue with governmental authorities and joint discussions of pressing concerns with experts. Several regions however maintain proven institutions such as regional councils and committees on the issues of cultural heritage. They manage to establish and maintain the dialogue between civil society and governmental authorities and so to prevent “urban planning related conflicts”. At the same time, the proposals from city integrity advocates to establish the municipal council of cultural heritage under the Moscow Mayor and in a number of other regions have met no support from the government. The cultural heritage protection sector in Moscow has no influential permanent institution for decision-making. Discussions of the most significant projects, decisions regarding specific projects and landmarks are taken based on opinions of individual experts without comprehensive discussions by expert community of Moscow in general.

During 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has made several requests and appeals to governmental authorities expressing resentment over threatened destruction of historical and cultural landmarks. In particular, the Moscow Mayor was requested to conduct the agency audit based on the demolition of two buildings of Novo-Ekaterininskaya Bolnitsa (hospital) on Strastnoy Boulevard. In another special appellation, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation declared the demolition of Nikolsk Sretensky Temple (Vologodskaya Oblast) inadmissible and demanded the official state protection for this building. The Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation and the Governor of Kaliningradskaya Oblast were requested to investigate the official state protection for this building. The Ministry of Culture of the Russian Federation and the Governor of Kaliningradskaya Oblast were requested to investigate the intentional destruction of the tower belonging to the XIV-century Protestant temple Nikolsk Sretensky Temple (Vologodskaya Oblast) inadmissible and demanded the official state protection for this building. The Minister of Culture of the Russian Federation and the Governor of Kaliningradskaya Oblast were requested to investigate the intentional destruction of the tower belonging to the XIV-century Protestant temple Nizhny Novgorodskaya Oblast. In Ulianovskaya Oblast, the local civic chamber was actively involved in creation of a taskforce for the review of hotel construction in the Ulianovsk city center for legality. Both local public and experts are of the view that this project will cause serious damage to the city’s cultural and natural landscape.

Generally, the main difficulties with efficient preservation of historical, cultural, and natural landmarks come from the lack of public consensus in the context of which the cultural landscape would be conceived by responsible officials and major part of the society as an enduring value requiring specific approach by the government. For instance, in Moscow Oblast the overwhelming majority of items of cultural heritage are not provided with approved territories and areas of protection and therefore often become subject to large-scale development and distortion of their historical architectural and natural environment. There is no any sound program for the development and validation of protected areas. A large number of projects ready for implementation remain unadjusted and unapproved.

Historically, an important part in creation of the cultural environment and civic climate in Russian province is played by national wilderness reserves and parks. Grassroots movements concerned about the preservation of historical and cultural landscape contribute to the development of public activism focusing its efforts on the protection of natural and cultural heritage. This trend is illustrated by the group of “do-gooders” – young people who annually come to the memorial estate Mikhailovsky of Pushkino to help restore the natural and cultural landmarks. Environmental camps represent another new form of civic engagement in this sector.

Impressive examples of civic engagement are provided by several national reserves such as Kenozerskiy national park where volunteers and grassroots activists managed to establish efficient cooperation with local governmental authorities. Another instance relates to activities of public council for the biophoric area of the national park Ugra which consists of representatives from research and nonprofit organizations, and local enthusiasts. The recent years saw the increasing development of rural tourism which facilitates the cooperation between representatives of protected areas and local citizens, and the establishment of countryside civil society institutions (self-government, membership clubs, public boards etc.).

The attention of civil society in 2013 was also fixed on the teaching of literature at schools. Classic literature has been historically considered a remedy against all social troubles. As reported by sociologists, Russians have been increasingly losing
an interest in serious reading over the recent years. It seems the more unreasonable therefore that literature was expelled from school curricula. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation promotes the increased learning of literature within the educational process. An important step towards this aim was made by the President of the Russian Federation who ordered to retrieve compositions as part of final school examination in Russian language and literature. Discussions over these issues in 2013 considered the publication of uniform textbook of literature for schools. Experts taking part in the hearings hosted by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation recommended that the school course on literature must remain variable but certain uniform requirements for the textbooks need to be introduced.

Furthermore, in 2013 the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation conducted the examination of the draft federal law No. 289979-6 “On Amendments to the Labor Code of the Russian Federation Designed to Improve the Regulation of Intellectual and Creative Labor”. The draft law introduces the mandatory competitive selection of creative professionals for vacant positions. Experts, though recognizing the need in improved legal regulations of intellectual and creative labor, have not supported the idea of the draft law. It requires deep reworking by reason that it deprives creative professionals of an opportunity to work under employment contracts with unlimited term, which measure may result in a strong trend of unjustified dismissals. As a sequence, such professionals may become less motivated for job at least by such important feelings as stability and affiliation with a particular creative team.

The year 2014 is declared the Year of Culture in Russia. Organizations of civil society are ready to take active part in promotion of the Russian culture both in in and outside the country. This opportunity is what can be efficiently employed in tackling the issues that accrued over the recent years. One of the most critical issues is that in connection with transfer of management authorities from regional to municipal levels many cultural institutions face a threat of being dissolved: municipal units are generally short of financial resources required for the support of cultural institutions.

During the public discussions of the Strategy of the RF State Nationalities Policy, their participants repeatedly proposed to consider the hosting in Moscow of Literature and Arts Days for various regions. In the Year of Culture, it would be reasonable to come round to this initiative.

3.7 Environmental sector

The year 2013 was declared by Order of the Russian President the Year of Environmental Protection.

In furtherance of this Presidential Order, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation held a large number of events in 2013 devoted to environmental issues, wildlife protection and the raising of awareness in related matters.

The main purpose of these events was to consolidate efforts of grassroots and research organizations as well as business community in the face of environmental challenges, and improve the environmental culture of people.

More than fifty percent of urban population in Russia lives in the environment with high or very high extent of air pollution. Water pollution also remains one of the most urgent environmental issues for large industrial areas of Moscow and Moscow Oblast, Volga Region, Urals, Kuzbass, and North Caucasus.

An important environmental issue which admits no delay anymore, by reason of its direct and adverse impact on the level and quality of our life, is the liquidation of environmental damage already accrued. By late 2012, Russia has accumulated more than 31 billion tons of waste generated by its past economic activities.

Participants of discussions mentioned the weaknesses of environmental legislation, limitations of statutory environmental control, monitoring, and audits.

Since early 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has been hosting active discussions of the future law on environmental control. Members of the Chamber consider that it must expand capabilities of public monitors. In particular, it should regulate potentially conflicts of relations, clearly explain rights and responsibilities of all stakeholders and therefore minimize the role of the state as moderator in protection of environmental rights, which role must gradually come upon the civil society. Experts express opinion that public watchers in environmental sector should be independent on governmental authorities and businesses.

Just as in previous years, in 2013 the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was addressing the issues of environmental education and consultancy. The Chamber members are convinced in relevancy of environmental awareness for educational staff. Many educational courses should approach the topical issues of ecology and sustainable development since it is impossible to solve economic and social problems today without consideration of the objectives of sustainable growth.

Education and consultancy in issues of sustainable growth became one of key areas focused by the RF Civic Chamber’s Institute for Sustainable Development. It prepared the guidelines for the All-Russian Class “Ecology and Culture are the Russia’s Future”. The Institute has hosted in the Chamber the meetings of Teachers Association on issues of ecology and sustainable development of Moscow and took part in creation of interregional associations of school and university educational staff.

These issues were approached during many other events in February and August, April hearings and November International Research and Practice Seminar in
In connection with preparation of Olympic Games in Sochi and several other sport events, sports were declared a priority area for the promotion of sustainable growth. Many regions showed strong commitment to the advancement of these ideas. Sustainable growth was defined as top priority in the educational program of the Russian International Olympic University established by initiative of the Russian President in Sochi.

In 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has been repeatedly focusing its efforts on the wildlife protection issues including the provision of aid to outcast animals and animals’ homes, the activities of training hunting centers and other high-profile issues. Also, it considered the utilization of funds allocated for the artificial biotic control of homeless pets in Russian cities.

According to reports from sites, the funds provided for the animal capturing, sterilization and management often sink in pockets of officials and related structures. In lieu of being subjected to cost-taking measures of artificial biotic control, animals were found merely killed.

In September, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation held the first national conference devoted to environmental oversight and environmental reviews (audits)

Environmental reviews represent an instrument of preventive nature. It helps society to prevent solutions having an adverse impact on the environment. To strengthen this power of wide public, a law on environmental referenda should be introduced. The International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (IACESIS) has established an environmental sector the charge of which was taken in 2013 by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. Another strong recommendation is to resume the licensing of solid domestic waste landfills and conduct environmental certification of industrial enterprises.

Based on the results of the Conference, the special working group was designated to adjust the recommendations which were sent to state and regional governmental authorities afterwards.

The most high-profile event in 2013 was an incident with environmental activists of Greenpeace and seizure of Arctic Sunrise icebreaker sailing under the flag of the Netherlands. Activists decided to arrange action against oil exploration of Arctic region and tried to climb on the drilling platform PIRAZLOMNAYA in Pechorskoye Sea in order to unfold banners calling to stop the drilling operations. Opinions of members of Civic Chamber as well as in the society in general regarding this case were divided. An often expressed view was that actions on the brink of crime become possible by reason that the available legislative instruments (such as complaints, attempts to question the actions of authorities, including by way of court proceedings) appear inefficient.

In late November 2013, seizures and detentions followed another big stir raising case of so-called "saboteur ecologists" – residents of Voronezhskaya Oblast who were strongly protesting against the nickel production project.

Participants of the national conference devoted to environmental control in Russia argued that the event in Novokhopersky region resulted from the fact that both businesses and authorities were completely disregarding the public opinion about the copper and nickel exploration of Khopfer river valley. As early as in November 2012, the RAS Institute of Sociology conducted the survey in which 99% of local residents showed their opposition to this project. 2/3 respondents mentioned their preparedness to use force in case that exploration work starts despite their protests.

Another important area focused by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation in the past year was rural and environmental tourism in Russia.

Natural reserves and state national parks have always played a significant part in the development of civil society, especially in regions.

The prospects of this focus of volunteer movement in Russia were first touched on in late 2012 at the conference held by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation “The Role of Volunteer Work in Preservation of Natural and Cultural Heritage: Challenges, Opportunities, and Horizons”. The conference considered urgent issues connected with development of volunteer activity in protected areas, its legal framework as well as trends of further advancement. Participants were presented the best practices of volunteer movement.

The issues of rural and environmental tourism were discussed by public activists, managers of memorial estates, national parks, ecologists, members of public environmental organizations during the hearings called “Rural Tourism and Conservation Areas. The Import of Special Protection National Territories and Memorial Estates for the Development of Russian Province” held by Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation on 6 March 2013. Participants saw one of the most urgent issues obstructing the development of rural and environmental tourism in Russia in omission of their legislative definitions. They stressed that the potential of rural and environmental tourism in Russia remains underestimated and lacks adequate support of governmental authorities as well as the relevant well-structured policy, while the promotion of such tourism can help create jobs, improve the general economic and environmental situation, and contribute to patriotic education of people.

The shaping of appropriate legal framework remains a key condition for the advancement of environmental tourism.

195 Ibid.
“Green” economy and sustainable growth were declared the topical issue by the Government of the Russian Federation at UN Conference on Sustainable Development Rio+20 in June 2012.

The selection of top priority areas for the support of sustainable growth at the level of civil society was coordinated within the framework of the Social Forum for Sustainable Development with expert and organizational contributions from the RF Civic Chamber’s Institute for Sustainable Development and the network of similar institutes at regional levels. Such meetings within the Social Forum 2013 were held on 24 April (“The Goals of Sustainable Development: Tasks of Civil Society”) and 25 September (“Priorities of Sustainable Development: Tasks of Civil Society”). Proposals based on the Forum’s findings and concerning the priority areas of sustainable growth were presented and approved by the Interdepartmental Working Group of the Presidential Administration for issues of climate change and sustainable growth, while recommendations on goals of sustainable growth were submitted to the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

In connection with the IV National Environmental Congress held by the RA Civic Chamber’s Institute for Sustainable Development, a proposal was brought to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Environment of the Russian Federation (Minprirody of Russia) for the adoption of the “Environmental Awareness Raising Strategy”, Ethical Code based on the Earth Charter, as well as the recommendations on the development of “green” economy in Russia.

In 2013, the Civic Chamber was repeatedly discussing the bill amending the federal law “On Special Protection National Territories”. The power of governmental authorities to modify the status of special protection national territories “in ordinary course” and lower the status of conservation areas down to national parks raised strong concern of the society.

Conservation mode is known to mean an absolute prohibition of any economic activity in conservation area, while national parks permit the same or even encourage (like tourism). In terms of protection, conservation areas represent a top level, and ecosystems preserved there are considered benchmarks. In theory, tourism is one of the safest types of economic activity with minimum damage to environment.

Internationally, there are many examples of such arrangements. In Russia the condition of almost all national parks remains far off perfection or even normality. Economic activities being allowed in national parks, the latter face all of the effects compounds protection by the very nature of their harmfulness for protected areas of that class. There are serious grounds to expect that the lowered status will result in devastation of conserved areas just as of many national parks in Russia199.

The society is also strongly concerned about the fact that amendments to the bill may result in the imposition of mandatory charge on visitors of national parks, while there are population clusters in some of these areas, and people will therefore have to pay for access to their homes or those of their close relatives.

By 2020, the Minprirody of Russia is going to create 11 new conservation areas, 16 national parks and one federal wildlife reserve. Other 12 conservation areas are expected to expand their sites.

3.8 National health and the quality of life

One of the most important tasks to be pursued by the society is the achievement of social development targets set by the President of the Russian Federation in his Orders of 7 May 2012200.

As part of the healthy lifestyle development monitoring, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, jointly with the national public organization Nation’s Health League, has conducted the survey of 248 organizations of the sector. The survey showed that only 67% of all concerned entities had knowledge of relevant regional programs for the development of healthy lifestyle. Positive changes in policies maintained by regional authorities in this sector over the recent two years were mentioned by 61%, no changes were noticed by 23%, and 3% reported negative trends in the sector. As regards the regional choice of sport facilities and institutions providing services in this area, a considerable percentage of respondents (80%) find it insufficient, only 19% find it adequate, while others remain uncertain. The major part of respondents (62%) estimate the physical and economical accessibility of sport facilities in their regions as “unsatisfactory”. It is a serious concern because all efforts aimed at promotion of healthy lifestyle may appear useless so long as physical and economical accessibility of sport facilities remains insufficient.

The growth of drug addiction presents another increasingly pressing issue. As reported by the Federal Drug Control Service, the number of individuals using drugs in our country increased to 8.5 million; 660 thousand of them have been officially recognized drug addicts201. Drugs are what kill many young people who would have been able to drive the demographic growth otherwise. The anti-drug sector in Russia is represented by 400 to 1200 nonprofit organizations. Assistance from NPOs reaches only 0.5% addicts of psychoactive substances. NPOs are able to help and offer social services to approximately 5,000 individuals at any one time202.

Neither businesses nor trade unions are willing to cooperate with the Ministry of Healthcare and rehabilitation centers or even help their drug-dependant employees; this is what was particularly mentioned during the roundtable discussion “The Role of Socially Responsible Businesses in the Development of Drug Addicts Rehabilitation System” held on 15 November 2013 in the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation. Participants of the discussion proposed to include the provisions on prevention of drug addiction in tripartite agreements with employers. During the roundtable discussion of “Methods for Rehabilitation of Alcohol and Drug Addicts” held on 17 April 2013, 80% of funds allocated for state rehabilitation programs were found to be spent without effect.


201. The number of drug users in Russia increased to 8.5 million. Echo of Moscow, 17 May 2013, at: http://echo.msk.ru/News/103556-echo.shtml.

The Federal Law pursuing the early detection of illegal use of drugs and psychotropic substances took force on 5 December 2013203. The Law places especially strong focus on the use of prohibited substances by children and youth for which purpose it introduces a countrywide socially-psychological testing and periodic medical screening of students.

On 25 November, the President of the Russian Federation endorsed the Law empowering the courts to award compulsory treatment of drug addicts204. The Law will take effect following half a year of the publication date and allow courts to order compulsory treatment of drug addicts both in criminal and administrative cases. It should be taken into account however that secure medical institutions today are completely unexposed to public watch. This bottleneck was discussed during the hearings of “Observation of Human Rights in Neuropsychiatric Nursing Homes of the Russian Federation” on 8 October 2013. In addition to the newly adopted Law, we recommend the provision of appropriate public watch instruments to monitor the human rights protection in such institutions. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation may coordinate efforts for the constitution of pilot committee and invite representatives from relevant NPOs and experts to this end.

Figures show the growth of HIV epidemics; this disease has expanded behind the well-known risk groups. In 2012 there were 20 thousand deaths of AIDS, the HIV infection spreading increased by 12%. In 2007, there were 130 cases of infection registered per day, while in 2012 their daily number reached 190, or eight per hour205.

A number of protest actions in 2013 were connected with healthcare system. In early 2013, the child health center No. 31 in Saint-Petersburg was faced with a threat of closure. The reduction in number of maternity clinics in Yaroslavskaya Oblast also was met with protests.

The responsible approach of people to their health and that of their relatives represents an indispensable condition for the implementation of healthy lifestyle. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation arranged a number of measures to facilitate the solution of this issue206.

The area on which public organizations and healthcare authorities of all levels may join their efforts most fruitfully is the initial prevention of diseases. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation devotes a big deal of its activities to the prevention of socially relevant conditions such as diabetes, flu, ARVI and other respiratory infections. According to the data of monitoring, only 68% respondents have heard about the regional programs for the prevention of socially relevant conditions207. During the


206. The roundtable discussion headed “Urgent Issues of Development of Physical Training and Grassroots Sports in Russian Regions” held on 28 February 2013; roundtable discussion headed “TheDevelopment of Students’ Sports and Promotion of Healthy Lifestyle to Youth” held on 16 April 2013; roundtable discussion headed “An Alternative for Myself” held on 29 June 2013; and the Conference “Mass Sport and the Accessible Sound Environment” held on 20 May 2013.


year, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation conducted a number of roundtable discussions focused on prevention of diabetes in Russian regions208.

A strong contribution in the promotion of healthy lifestyle is made by grassroots organizations such as Nation’s Health League and Sporting Russia which are the largest both in terms of membership and the range of issues addressed. The expanding opportunities of the Internet and social media consolidate efforts of professionals and patients with rare conditions, and facilitate the sharing of experience and information the shortage of which is often felt by residents of remote regions. Practices of free medical advice and helplines gather paces. Actively promoted measures include the change-over to environmentally friendly transport, development of bicycling especially in big cities. Thousands and even tens thousands volunteers arrange mass runs and marathons. According to monitoring conducted by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, 94% representatives of concerned organizations report the existence of grassroots movements and public organizations in their regions that operate in areas of healthcare, environmental protection, development of healthy lifestyle, and prevention of alcohol, drug and tobacco addictions209.

In late 2012, the Ministry of Healthcare has approved the new procedures for periodic health assessments which have been already practically tested in 2013. Participants of the hearings held by Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation under the heading “Periodic Health Assessments and Healthy Lifestyle” on 29 October mentioned that more than 20 million Russian people have passed such assessment including 9 million children. Almost 3,732 medical institutions were involved in the process. As often reported by experts, the bottlenecks revealed during the exercise included the deficiency of equipment and offices and low level of public awareness. On 22 November, the National Medical Chamber announced that the achievements of the periodic health assessments look nice in papers only and their structure and procedures require updating210. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation has provided the platform for the creation of Coordination Center for public organizations engaged in promotion of healthy lifestyle and for the increased involvement of people in periodic health assessments211.

One of the most urgent issues in healthcare sector is the shortage and imbalanced structure of medical staff. Despite the approved range of measures tackling this issue, they are mainly focused on improved training and retraining of future staff in medical universities or social support, and not on increase of average salaries which is also crucial to the optimization of staff base.
The recent changes in the healthcare funding system also provide reasons for strong concern. Experts fear that the implementation of the approved “Development Strategy for Medical Science in the Russian Federation till 2025” may cause at least two or three times reduction in funding of clinics based on the mandatory medical insurance system (MMI). This will put at risk the creation of competitive domestic technologies and innovative products as well as the training of high-skilled specialists. Upon the public discussion held in April 2013 with participation of the National Medical Chamber, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences, heads of medical universities and directors of medical research centers, deputies of the State Duma and members of the Federation Council, participants have signed the proposals to the President of the Russian Federation concerning the reservation of state support for federal research institutes and leading medical universities of the country since 2015 and the amendments to Article 101 (paragraph 2.8) of the Federal Law No. 223 “On the Healthcare Principles in the Russian Federation of 1 November 2011.

The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation maintains follow-up monitoring of laws affecting the urgent medical and social concerns, such as Federal Law No. 15 adopted on 23 February 2013 “On Protection of Public Health from the Impact of Secondhand Tobacco Smoke and the Smoking Effects” which prohibits smoking in public areas from 1 June 2013. This Law represents a strong achievement of civil society, however it remains unclear who and on which grounds will impose the applicable penalties. In this context, the due regard should also be paid to expert comments that protection of people from negative consequences of smoking must not impair civic rights of smokers212.


The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was monitoring the implementation of the Law. On 20 March, it arranged a roundtable discussion “The Blood Donation Legislation: its Condition, Bottlenecks and Prospects” the participants of which reported that the number of donors has increased in Russia by 4% against the previous year. At the same time, they mentioned, the awareness raising efforts do not always bring success and the more comprehensive promotion of blood donation is required. Discussants concluded that the Law may appear inoperative lacking the necessary support from individuals and public organizations.

In 2013, the Ministry of Healthcare of the Russian Federation proposed for broad discussions the bill concerning the insurance of medical malpractice. A key purpose of this new bill is to protect consumers receiving medical services. It introduces the concept of “medical malpractice” which means any action or omission of medical professionals resulting in damage to health of individual(s). The bill supposes that medical organizations are to undertake the insurance of their patients213. However the National Medical Chamber expressed strong criticism of the bill. The main defects of the proposed instrument relate to its ill-developed conception and approaches to insurance. It contemplates only two insured events triggering the right of insured for compensation: disability and death, while the majority of claims to insurers arise from light and medium damage which the bill does not mention at all as well as the compensations for moral injury214.

The roundtable discussion held in Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation on 22 May 2013 under the heading “Medical Ethics” concerned the draft code of conduct for medical professionals in Russia215. Discussants argued for legislative formalization of ethical norms and rules for medical professionals by introduction of appropriate provisions in the draft law concerning the self-regulation of Russian healthcare system. As shown by review of the best practices in application of professional ethical codes, the development and observation by professionals of the rules of conduct which supplement and support the requirements set by applicable laws appear to bring the most successful results in industrial communities.

Today, there are 150 grassroots organizations, associations and unions of medical professionals in the Russian Federation. Some of them maintain industrial codes of conduct (professional ethical code of doctors, code of medical ethics, ethical code of Russian doctor, code of dentistry professionals, ethical code of nurse, professional code of midwives of the Russian Federation etc.) However Russian healthcare sector still lacks a uniform instrument setting forth both moral principles and rules of conduct in professional environment.

There are further questions raising concern of society. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation often receives claims regarding medical advertisements, proposals to tighten public control over medical advertising on TV. Also, the pricing and licensing arrangements in private sector remain non-transparent for the society.

Another highly relevant topic is connected with passing of Uniform State Exams for admittance to medical universities. The Chamber continually receives claims from professors of medical universities who report about complete disablement and tremendous attrition rates of students after the first or second year of higher education. Hence the USE appear insufficient for the admittance to medical universities.

The public and private partnership in healthcare sector remains underdeveloped. It must be further improved towards provision of preferences for investors and partners involved in sector-related projects, introduction of instruments for the sharing of best practices, and legislative formalization of leases and concession contracts for healthcare sector.

215 The roundtable discussion headed “Medical Ethics. The Discussion of Code of Professional Conduct for Russian Doctors”. The Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, 22 May 2013, Moscow.
3.9 Russian civil society at global scene: public diplomacy and protection of Russians overseas

In the XXI century, the involvement of civil society in the solution of global issues and external political tasks (the so-called public or “people’s” diplomacy) plays an increasingly important and remarkable part for the evolution of international situation. In the context of globalization process, distribution of information technologies and growth of the “third sector”, this trend gains special influence and irreversibility. At one point, the lessons of recent history are that many complicated regional conflicts where efforts of political reconciliation often appear fruitless may be only overcome through personal contacts and activities of nongovernmental organizations capable of proactive action. At another point, the civil society acting at international scene represents a “soft power” of states whose national interests are at times more successfully targeted due to attractiveness of their models (political, economical, cultural etc.) and volunteer participation of other countries – unlike to “hard power” which involves compulsion.

In the current situation, such international activity of nonprofit sector becomes especially relevant for Russia. This issue was closely approached at governmental level in 2012, in particular by one of 11 strategic orders of President V. V. Putin dated 7 May 2012. In 2013, the demand for participation of civil society in implementation of our country’s political course was for the first time detailed in the Foreign Policy Conception approved by President of the Russian Federation on 12 February 2013216.

In this connection, and given the pursuits of Russian foreign policy relating to preservation and expansion of our country’s global influence, the Russian political diplomacy has to solve several crucial tasks: communicate the position of Russian state and society to international community; obtain support from international community; and take active part in the development of Russian foreign policy.

There are several tens nonprofit organizations in Russia which successfully approach international issues, including the A. M. Gorchakov Public Diplomacy Support Fund, the Russkiy Mir Foundation, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation defined in the Foreign Policy Conception 2013 as an independent agent of public diplomacy, the Russian Public Council for International Cooperation and Public Diplomacy, the Council for Foreign and Defense Policies, The Russian Center for Policy Studies (PIR-Center), the Institute of Strategic Studies and Analysis, the Fund for the Support and Protection of Russian Compatriots Overseas etc.

The year 2013 became an important stage in expansion of role played by civil society institutions in the strengthening of international security by way of public diplomacy. The increasingly active influence has been shown by the International Advisory Council for Foreign and Defense Policies, The Russian Center for Policy Studies (PIR-Center), the Institute of Strategic Studies and Analysis, the Fund for the Support and Protection of Russian Compatriots Overseas etc.

As part of the Global action “Mission of Peace and Friendship”, important events were arranged in Vienna, Bratislava, Astana, and Belgrade which involved representatives from more than 30 countries. Participation in the International Congress on “Security and Protection of Private Persons, Society and State” held in October 2013 in Moscow was taken by representatives from more than 50 states as well as the World Veterans Federation.

The active civic engagement of Russian society was driven primarily by the eventful international agenda of 2013: the changing format of power balance at global scene and the resulting emergence of polycentric international system; consequences of global financial and economic crisis, continuing growth of tension in the Middle East and North-African states; the new players coming up the front of world politics; and the displacement of world business and political activity center towards the Asia-Pacific Region.

At the same time, the inadequate activity and coordination of Russian nongovernmental organizations at international scene, the deficiency of information and funds remain the factors considerably limiting the capacities of “soft power” in Russia.

An efficient platform for consultancy and discussions aiming at consolidation of positions of leading civil society institutions on the most relevant and urgent issues of global and foreign policy agendas is provided by the Russian Public Council for International Cooperation and Public Diplomacy established by Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation in 2012. The productivity of the Council’s efforts is most strikingly illustrated by declaration and subsequent application of Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation to leaders of G20217 based on the public hearings regarding the aggravation of situation around the Syrian Arab Republic. By expressing the principal position of the Russian civil society that the armed conflict in Syria requires political and diplomatic approaches, and calling for the respect of international legal rules, activists and experts showed themselves as partners of the state in addressing the pressing issues of conflicts. Russian public organizations work on recruitment and assignment of observers to provide fair monitoring of the situation in Syria. Also, Russian civil community was promptly responding to the most high-profile events such as Snowden case or assault on Russian diplomat in the Netherlands in October 2013. Furthermore, it was taking a strong part in discussions of vectors of Russian and American, Russian and Chinese relations in today’s global frame of reference; and development scenarios of the situation in the Central Asia following the withdrawal of coalition troops from Afghanistan in 2014 that are considered by the Council at its regular meetings.

The strategic priority of the Russian foreign policy – the promotion of integration in Eurasian region – was kept focused in 2013 by civil society institutions actively operating at global scene. Despite the development of integration mechanisms and adoption of relevant political declarations, it becomes clear that genuine integration is impossible without involvement of nonprofit sector, intensification of individual contacts and the shaping of the integration’s “humanitarian track”. In this...
context, the most important area on which the Russian nonprofit organizations were concentrating their efforts in 2013 was the work with young citizens of post-Soviet states which included, among other things, the training of skilled human resources for public diplomacy capable of not only expressing but protecting the state interests at global platforms. Being simultaneously a subject and an object of international activity, young people remain the most vulnerable social group in terms of “influence”. However today they successfully implement the project “Public Diplomacy Community of the Commonwealth”, the expanded influence is demonstrated by the Commonwealth International Public Organization of Youth, also the development of the Youth Interparliamentary Assembly of CIS member states gathers pace. This way of approaching youth facilitates the development of social activism in younger generation, shapes the climate of mutual trust and commitment among future elites of post-Soviet space. Unfortunately, despite successful implementation of youth policy in the area of international cooperation, at present Russia appears comparing poorly not only with the West or Europe but certain member-countries of CIS.

In this context, it is important to emphasize the active part of the Russian nonprofit sector in implementation of programs providing for short exploratory trips to the Russian Federation of young representatives from political, social, research and business communities of foreign states218. Russian nongovernmental organizations have shown themselves in development of bilateral relations of Russia with other countries thus meeting the relevant demand from social activism of the younger generation. One of the most outstanding examples of their efforts on reduction of barriers between Russia and the European Union, first of all between their citizens. In 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and the Economic and Social Committee (EESC) have initiated several joint projects supported by governmental authorities such as Twin Schools, children’s “Smart City” parks, Trainees Factory for employers from Russia and EU, an expert competitiveness network, optimization of roaming arrangements for citizens of Europe and the Russian Federation, newly created social media and joint TV program. A crucial point is that, thanks to this continuous bilateral dialogue EESC as official structure of EU is persistently lobbying the abolishment of visa mode with the Russian Federation.

Another relevant example was the launch in 2013 of the new permanent discussion platform – the Russian - Bulgarian Public Forum initiated by representatives of both countries’ civil societies. The scope and scale of implemented projects which include the International Conference devoted to the 135th anniversary of Bulgaria’s liberation from the Ottoman yoke; the International Press Forum; the Agreement on twin-city relations between Mozhaiskiy municipal district of Moscow Oblast and the city of Shipka are all demonstrating the timeliness and relevance of this idea.

In addition, the civil society lays the basis and paves the way for political convergence. For instance, early 2013 saw the start of active contacts between communities of Russia and Azerbaijan. In particular, partner relations were established between the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation and the Committee for State Support of NPOs under the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan which initiated the annual Russian and Azerbaijan Civic Forum and participation of Russian public activists in elections of the President of Azerbaijan as international monitors, as well as a number of other projects. The subsequent visit of the Russian President to Baku in August 2013 boosted the further development of bilateral relations between two countries. Currently, the establishment of similar bilateral public cooperation platform (U. S. citizens’ board) is attempted with regard to the USA.

In 2013 a game-changing part was played by one more key instrument of “soft power” – the participation of civil society representatives in proceedings of international organizations. The Russian civic activist P. V. Sulyandziga, an expert in protection of small indigenous peoples took charge of the UN Working Group on the Issue of Human Rights and Transnational Corporations and Other Business Enterprises in 2013. Generally, typical trends of 2013 include the expansion of Russian public organizations’ representation at major global platforms which demonstrates the serious growth of their influence. By these platforms, we mean not only the United Nations, but the Council of Europe, the Advisory Committee for Nonprofit Sector Legal Frameworks of the Council of Europe’s Conference of Non-Governmental Organizations the first Moscow meeting of which was hosted by the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation, and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe. In 2013, the number of Russian nongovernmental organizations granted with advisory status in the UN Economic and Social Committee increased to 54.

The election of the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation a President of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS) became a remarkable event of 2013. This large international organization of networking nature includes national organizations of 72 countries. E. P. Velikhov, the President of Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was appointed the President of the Association for years 2013 – 2015. In this new role, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation will shape the biannual agenda for AICESIS and provide political leadership of the Association thus obtaining an important instrument for the “soft force”. By words of S. V. Lavrov, RF Minister of Foreign Affairs, it is a crucial step “which enhances the capability of our civil society not only to take part in the global public movement but contribute to the shaping of its agenda”219.

In 2013, AICESIS, together with the International Labor Organization (ILO) has undertaken the study “Role of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions in Meeting the Challenges of Financial and Economic Crisis and Unemployment”. The ILO survey covered civil society institutions of 47 countries. The study revealed that notwithstanding the preparedness of civil society institutions to promptly meet contemporary challenges and threats, it is not always that they have adequate mobility and discretion. In this context, the organizations were recommended to further focus efforts on identification of ways to strengthen the role of economic and social councils and intensification of social dialogue in general as key areas of their cooperation. Upon the presentation of the joint report of ILO-AICESIS on 3 and 4 December 2013 in Madrid (Spain), the interest in cooperation with AICESIS was shown by the International Monetary Fund.

218 Order No. 1394 of the President of the Russian Federation dated 19 October 2011.

219 Speech of S. V. Lavrov, RF Minister of Foreign Affairs in connection with the election of Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation the Chairman of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions. 6 November 2013, Moscow, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, at: http://www.mid.ru/bp_4.moll/8490055006378044257C1B056A406/
Also, it should be noted that coordination of efforts with Russian compatriots residing abroad and engagement of them in social and political life of Russia become increasingly important in the present situation since millions Russian speakers in tens countries of the world represent a serious resource of “soft force”. Considerable efforts in this direction are taken by the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Federal Agency for the Commonwealth of Independent States, Compatriots Living Abroad and International Humanitarian Cooperation (Rossotrudnichestvo), however they may only achieve their goals on condition that they unite these efforts with Russian civil society institutions like, for example, during the French seminars for Russian-speaking young people residing outside the Russian Federation held in 2013.

The successful international cooperation between nongovernmental organizations and communities may be illustrated by the Foros International Youth Forum which was gathered this year for its 15th time under the long-term youth project “Politics of the XXI Century. The Future Russian Eltie”. The Forum was attended by members of youth organizations from Ukraine, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova, and the Moldovan Republic.

Furthermore, the maintenance of the “Russian world” requires strong focus of Russian nonprofit sector to be placed on needs and concerns of Russian compatriots and citizens staying abroad. The positive changes in this area are evidenced by the results of visit to Georgia made for the first time after a long period by representatives of Russian civil society institutions. The visitors revealed material violations and bottlenecks which hamper and discredit the work with compatriots in Georgia. Despite the absence of diplomatic relations between our states, the situation was specifically addressed with contribution from the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

Russian public was also demonstrating an active response to troubles of Russian citizens staying abroad. For instance, in connection with strong aggravation of military political situation in Egypt in August 2013, the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation requested the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs to support the imposition of moratorium on sales of tours to Egypt for Russian people until the situation gets stabilized. As a result, the Ministry of Foreign of the Russian Federation published recommendations to ban the marketing of Egyptian resorts in Russia.

In general, despite certain successes and positive trends in the development of Russian public diplomacy, Russian nongovernmental organizations still need stronger coordination and awareness in this area. A clear understanding of public diplomacy and its missions must be developed both by governmental authorities and grassroots activists. The aforementioned successes were achieved in no small part due to the RF Ministry of Foreign Affairs which has been firmly supporting the initiatives proposed by the Russian civil society. However the institutions of Russian civil society should always bear in mind that their representation at global scene is not limited to their own interests but extends to those of the Russian Federation, its society and the government.

In recent years, civil society in Russia has been sustaining significant changes. It is the gradually advancing community of positive-minded citizens who consolidate their efforts in social activity and are prepared to constructive dialogue and cooperation in approaching the urgent issues of social and state development.

The year 2013 saw this trend strengthening. Civic engagement manifests itself in variety of forms. Although at national level the political and social involvement of citizens was showing no remarkable growth, it changes in terms of quality and becomes more sensible and socially motivated. Informal activist groups and online communities become an important center of social life, especially for youth. There was observed the increasing influence of volunteer movement that showed itself during the flood in Far East. Volunteers demonstrate the growing level of organization and cohesion. Public oversight is turning into a strong network. Civic engagement has extended to an important area – participation of public monitors in supervision of election proceedings. All these trends represent key conditions for rapid and progressive development of the Russian society and provide foundation for social stability. “Active groups” make headway in understanding of public interests, development of civic culture as a feeling of involvement in social life and personal responsibility for the situation in the country, and getting rid of paternalistic stereotypes. It is an indispensable basis for the formulation of political decisions meeting the strategic development goals of Russia, its society, economy and state.

At the same time, the growth of interpersonal confidence in the Russian society remains very low. The same low level is shown by trust in public institutes. Russians are very often inclined to individualism and show a certain extent of social apathy normally caused by their inability to influence important decision-making processes and the outward things. Psychologists mention alarming symptoms such as the growing aggression and intolerance. These attitudes are reflected in increasingly favored idea of “firm hand” which means the reduction of things to order using the extralegal and undemocratic methods.

The society objectively raises numerous concerns capable of aggravating the interethnic relations at any time; these concerns are about corruption, social and economic polarization, politicization of ethno-cultural factor, and negative interethnic stereotypes deeply rooted in public mind.

The large portion of issues in the area of interethnic relations comes from the current migration practices. Omissions of migration policy including corruption and inadequacy of laws regulating the workforce migration, illegal migration of workforce and involvement of migrants in criminal activity are what provide grounds for interethnic conflicts and instigate growth of xenophobia and nationalism.

At the same time, the society demonstrates the well-articulated demand for justice which it understands as “equality of opportunities”. Therefore, the civil society becomes stronger not so much due to the growth of economy and well-being as to its
increasing potential of influence on important decision making process, the openness and accessibility of government, observation of key rights and the trust in legal and law enforcement systems.

A factor of key importance for the progressive development of society is the consolidation of the system of dialogue platforms and institutions in which individuals and initiative groups may implement their socially relevant projects, find response and support.

The basis for civil society is traditionally provided by nongovernmental nonprofit organizations. Now the Russian nonprofit sector is going to overpass the line beyond which it should make a difference. Recent years saw the development of legislative framework for NPOs, philanthropy and volunteer activity, as well as multifold increase in state funding of the “third sector”. However the contribution of nonprofit sector into the Russian economy, solution of social issues, and its role in the employment system remain disproportionately low.

Today, the majority of nonprofit organizations declare their commitment to provision of certain social services. However they are often incapable to find consumers for such services. The delegation of social services to nonprofit organizations should be accompanied with prior notification of public and be subject to fair and competitive procedures. The “third sector” shows considerable growth potential just as in previous years but fails to implement it to full extent.

The further development of “third sector” will require maximum financial transparency and openness of NPOs especially socially-focused, philanthropic, as well as those which are involved in implementation of anticorruption policy or public oversight of various state and public areas of life. Financial transparency becomes one of the necessary conditions for nonprofit organizations to gain public trust and forms the basis for their influence. Not only the improvement of legal framework is crucial to the achievement of this goal; another key requisition is the consensus of all “third sector” representatives on this issue.

Local self-government shapes the environment which determines the quality of life, and where many civic initiatives are implemented, civic engagement is built-up, and citizens maintain daily dialogue with governmental authorities. In Russia, key bottlenecks of local government remain the same relevant as in previous years. Despite the exciting examples of successful cooperation between communities and municipal administrations, active citizens often lack levers to influence the situation. The willingness of local authorities to arrange partnership cooperation with citizens is obviously inadequate to the growing social activity of people. This controversy is aggravated by the deficit of necessary funds and powers in municipal administrations. For the furtherance of priorities set forth in the annual Address of the Russian President to the Federal Assembly of 2013, we recommend consider all opportunities for the increase of funding for municipal units. It is very important to promote active participation of local people in solution of their community issues, starting from the management of multi-apartment houses.

In recent years, Russia has established the multi-level horizontal system of institutions designed to guarantee the feedback between governmental authorities and civil society. It includes regional civic chambers, municipal civic chambers and public boards, human rights ombudsmen, and ombudsmen for children and businessmen. A crucial role in this system should be played by reorganized public councils under federal executive bodies. Starting from 2014, civic chambers of constituent entities of the Russian Federation will designate one representative each to the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation.

Now that the system of platforms for public and state dialogue has been established over the whole country, it should be made more understandable and accessible to people. In the context of growing civic engagement, civic chambers and councils of all levels provide crucial channels for articulation of public dispositions, review of civic initiatives, audits of bills and regulations, and ultimately the representation of civil society and its engagement in managerial decision making process. However when the activity of such mediator institution has merely a simulative nature and lobbies private and group interests only, it undermines the reliance on opportunities otherwise made available due to the public and state dialogue, and results in growth of social tension and apathy.

The involvement of organized civil society in the life of the state implies that institutions of civil society must be able to take part in discussions and decision making process at all “floors” of the state building. First of all, these include possibilities of public supervision over the process and outcomes of decision making. Institutions acting as mediators provide the basis for the multi-level public watch system currently developing in Russia. With adoption of the law “On the Principles of Public Oversight in the Russian Federation”, this system of cooperation is expected to change its status and become more well-arranged and productive. The further structuring of civil society will help to ensure that the organized mechanisms of civil society are capable of rendering more efficient influence on the state and cooperating with it on equal terms.

Cooperation and partnership represent the trend of global scale which develops in various countries with different degrees of successfulness. The new quality of cooperation at international scene is reflected in the fact that the Civic Chamber of the Russian Federation was elected President of the International Association of Economic and Social Councils and Similar Institutions (AICESIS) in September 2013.

The development of civil society in Russia remains a multi-vector process. Even within any single region or population center, the expanding range of constructive civic engagement may be coupled with estrangement of citizens from the socially relevant decision making process. At the same time, the view of active civic stand and engagement as a social norm which is increasingly gaining foothold brings us a strong hope that the consolidation by civil society of its positions in social and political life will become the prevailing trend quite soon.
CIVIC CHAMBER OF THE RUSSIAN FEDERATION

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