2.2. Legislation on undesirable organisations and foreign agents

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2.2.1. Undesirable organisations

The legislation on ‘undesirable organisations’ was adopted in 2015 to allow the designation of non-government organisations (NGOs) as ‘undesirable’ if the General Prosecutor’s Office found that they undermine ‘the foundations of the Russian constitutional order, defence capabilities, or national security of Russia.’146 In August 2024, the legislation was broadened to allow for the designation of any foreign or international organisation as ‘undesirable’147 if its ‘founders or stakeholders are state bodies of a foreign country.’148 A register of ‘undesirable organisations’ is managed by the Ministry of Justice (MoJ).149

As of October 2025, the register of ‘undesirable organisations’ comprised 269 entities, with 65 organisations added in 2024150 and 74 in the period between January 2025 and the beginning of October 2025.151 The register includes prominent independent media outlets and human rights organisations.152 Among organisations designated as ‘undesirable’ in 2024 were media sources such as Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, Belsat, and The Moscow Times and international NGOs such as Freedom House, Article 19, Feminist Anti-War Resistance, and crowdfunding platform Global Giving.153 In May 2025, Russian authorities added to the list of ‘undesirable organisations’ Amnesty International,154 in July 2025, the Paris-based Andrei Sakharov Institute and a civil movement, Peace. Progress. Human Rights, both established by prominent human rights advocate Lev Ponomarev,155 and in August 2025, Reporters without Borders.156 As of June 2025, 195 organisations on the register were media outlets.157

Recognition of an organisation as ‘undesirable’ results in a ban on maintaining offices or conducting projects in Russia, as well as producing or disseminating any content, including online.158 Involvement with ‘undesirable organisations’ – including distributing their content or making donations to these organisations159 – is a criminal offence.160 As noted by Deutsche Welle (DW), this includes ‘the dissemination of quotes and links to the text and videos’ produced by ‘undesirable’ organisations and ‘participation in any of their public events.’161

People participating in the activities of an ‘undesirable organisation’ first face administrative liability under Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences which escalates to criminal

liability under Article 284.1 of the Criminal Code if the offence is repeated.162 While the administrative punishment for individuals involved in the activities of an ‘undesirable organisation’ is a fine ranging from 5 000 [51 euros163] to 15 000 rubles [154 euros],164 the criminal liability can result in up to four years in prison for participation in the activities of an ‘undesirable’ organisation, up to five years for financing such activities, and up to six years for organising them.165

As noted by independent media outlet Mediazona, in 2024 courts issued a record-high 178 administrative fines for participation in the activities of ‘undesirable organisations’ (Article 20.33 of the Code of Administrative Offences), compared to around 150 fines issued in 2022 and 2023 combined. Unlike previous years, when most fines were issued for participation in religious organisations, in 2024, the largest number of fines (81) were for involvement with independent media, primarily affecting content contributors such as authors, editors, and experts. However, in some cases readers who reposted content have also been fined.166 As noted by UN Special Rapporteur, Mariana Katzarova, between mid-2024 and mid-2025, at least 152 administrative cases for participation in ‘undesirable organisations’ were prosecuted. Besides, at least 25 criminal cases were initiated under article 284.1 of the Criminal Code, on involvement with ’undesirable organisations’, resulting in at least 37 convictions.167

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