

Russia announces plan to ‘use the advantages’ of climate change

Kremlin website recognises global heating as a problem but lists ‘positive’ economic effects

Agence France-Presse

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Gas boiler chimneys in Moscow. Putin has denied global heating is caused by human activity. Photograph: Maxim Shipenkov/EPA

Russia has published a plan to adapt its economy and population to climate change, aiming to mitigate damage but also “use the advantages” of warmer temperatures.

The document, published on the government’s website on Saturday, outlines a plan of action and acknowledges changes to the climate are having a “prominent and increasing effect” on socioeconomic development, people’s lives, health and industry.

Russia is warming 2.5 times faster than the planet as a whole, on average, and the two-year “first stage” plan is an indication the government officially recognises this as a problem, even though Vladimir Putin denies human activity is the cause.

It lists preventive measures such as dam building or switching to more **drought-resistant crops**, as well as crisis preparations including emergency vaccinations or evacuations in case of a disaster.

The plan says climate change poses risks to public health, endangers permafrost, and increases the likelihood of infections and natural disasters. It also can lead to species being pushed out of their usual habitats.

Possible “positive” effects are decreased energy use in cold regions, expanding agricultural areas and navigational opportunities in the Arctic Ocean.

Among a list of 30 measures, the government will calculate the risks of Russian products becoming uncompetitive and failing to meet new climate-related standards, as well as prepare new educational materials to teach climate change in schools.

Russia is one of the most vulnerable countries to climate change, with vast Arctic regions and infrastructure built over permafrost. Recent floods and **wildfires** have been among the planet's worst climate-related disasters.

Moscow formally adopted the **Paris climate accord** in September last year and criticised the US withdrawal from the pact.

Putin, however, has repeatedly denied the scientific consensus that climate change is primarily caused by emissions deriving from human activity, blaming it last month on some "processes in the universe".

He has also criticised the Swedish climate campaigner Greta Thunberg, describing her as an uninformed, impressionable teenager possibly being "used" in someone's interests.

He has also voiced scepticism on numerous occasions about solar and wind energy, expressing alarm about the dangers of turbines to birds and worms, causing them to "come out of the ground" by vibrating. While there is evidence that large wind-power installations can pose a risk to birds, known research does not suggest they harm worms.

On Sunday, Russia's meteorological service predicted temperatures up to 16C higher than normal for Monday and Tuesday, when Russia celebrates Orthodox Christmas.

Russian climate activist inspired by Thunberg is jailed

Arshak Makichyan had held a solo demonstration in Moscow for over 40 weeks before arrest

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Arshak Makichyan, second from left, was jailed after he returned to Moscow from the COP25 gathering in Madrid. Photograph: Pierre-Philippe Marcou/AFP via Getty Images

A Russian climate youth activist has been sentenced to six days in prison for taking part in a demonstration in Moscow.

Supporters said the punishment of Arshak Makichyan was disproportionately severe, and was one of the harshest crackdowns on student campaigners anywhere in the world.

Makichyan, a 25-year-old violinist, was inspired by **Greta Thunberg** to join the Fridays for Future movement, which urges governments to listen to scientists and meet the commitments they made in the Paris agreement.

He had recently returned from international climate talks in Madrid but was summoned by the Russian authorities on Friday to face charges that he participated in a protest without permission.

Earlier, he tweeted thanks to his lawyer and supporters. “We are waiting for the judge’s decision,” he wrote, then later updated with the verdict: “Six days of arrest.”

Climate activists from dozens of other countries expressed solidarity on social networks. “Hang in there. You are doing the right thing,” **said the Fridays4Future Twitter account**, which described the activist as an inspiration.



Arshak Makichyan

@MakichyanA

· Dec 21, 2019

Replying to @MakichyanA

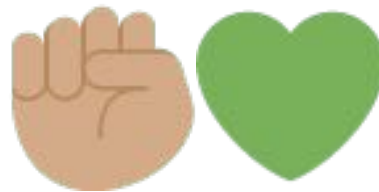
6 days of arrest.



FridaysForFuture

@Fridays4future

You are an inspiration to many activists out there Arshak. Hang



in there. You are doing the right thing

/FFF Twitter team

123

3:28 AM - Dec 21, 2019

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Makichyan had been staging a solo school strike in Pushkin Square, Moscow, for more than 40 weeks. Under Russia's tight restrictions on gatherings, individual protests are lawful but anything bigger requires police permission.

Shortly before September's global strike, Makichyan told the Guardian the lengths he and fellow Russian campaigners went **to try to avoid problems with the authorities.**

“In Moscow it is almost impossible to get permission for a mass demonstration so we protest in a queue. One person holds a poster for five minutes, then hands over to the next person who is waiting nearby. That way, we don't have any

problems because it is a series of solo strikes rather than a group gathering,” said the graduate of the Moscow Conservatory.

He had applied unsuccessfully more than 10 times for approval for a bigger protest in the hope of building momentum for the climate movement in Russia, a major gas-producing nation that has one of the world’s worst records in tackling emissions.