

Statutes and Decisions, vol. 48, no. 5, September–October 2013, pp. 3–4.
© 2014 M.E. Sharpe, Inc. All rights reserved. Permissions: www.copyright.com
ISSN 1061–0014 (print)/ISSN 1558–0903 (online)
DOI: 10.2753/RSD1061-0014480500

VADIM VOLKOV

Guest Editor's Introduction

Concept for the Reform of Law Enforcement Agencies in Russia

In this issue of *Statutes and Decisions*, we publish the English translation of the Concept for the Reform of Law Enforcement Agencies in Russia (hereinafter, the Concept). The Concept is a product of the team effort of experts from three disciplines: sociology, law, and economics. It was commissioned by the Committee for Civil Initiatives, a foundation created by the former minister of finance, Alexey Kudrin. Several features distinguish it from the previous similar documents.

First, it stems from the results of several years of fieldwork during which dozens of interviews with law enforcement employees, prosecutors, judges, and lawyers were carried out in different parts of Russia, large volumes of statistics collected and processed, piles of regulating documents studied. A key principle followed by the Institute for the Rule of Law of the European University at St. Petersburg—that no statements, conclusions, or recommendations be made without empirical grounding—found its expression in this document as well.

Second, the Concept was worked out by independent experts

Vadim Volkov is academic director of the Institute for the Rule of Law of the European University at St. Petersburg.

having no vested interests or stakes in Russia's law enforcement sector. At all stages of work, however, authors engaged in numerous discussions with law enforcement experts, from researchers attached to the Interior Ministry to the minister of interior himself and his deputies. This helped enormously, as it enabled us to inform the authorities about the state of affairs "on the ground," on the one hand, and to adjust our own recommendations to the complex organizational realities of Russia's law enforcement agencies that were not immediately accessible to outsiders, on the other.

Third, work on the Concept was driven by a shared belief in the importance of organizational frameworks and institutions in shaping the behavior of people. Legislation and regulatory acts, being a fairly important part of the institutional environment of organizations, is insufficient for explaining the actual functioning of agencies and individuals. One has to look at evaluations criteria, bureaucratic routines, interaction patterns, governance techniques, and informal practices. Unlike previous work on police and court reform that focused on laws and saw legislative change (new laws and codes) as the chief instrument of reform, we put organizational and institutional change in the center of this project. We believe that careful analysis of institutional incentives and organizational influences can shed light on the causes of malfunction of Russia's law enforcement and provide recipes for improvement.

The Concept was publicized in December 2013 and received massive feedback, both approving and critical. The authors are fully aware of the complexity of the task set in this document and of the dependence of its success on political factors beyond their reach, so to speak. Nonetheless, persistent advocacy, additional research, and local experiments are on our current agenda. The team of the Institute for the Rule of Law looks forward to feedback from international colleagues who can react to this Concept and share their national experience once this English translation is available.