

INVITATION

BÖLL LUNCH DEBATE

The Russian Legislative Election 2016: How Much Freedom for Civil Society and Political Opposition?

Described by some as 'the most boring election of 2016', the Russian legislative election will take place on 18 September. It is long-since certain that President Vladimir Putin – also thanks to the loyal parties of the 'system opposition' – will receive a clear majority of deputies. In spite of this, the election electrified the political elite of the country. The Russian political leadership may act in an authoritarian way, but it appreciates a broad legitimisation by the people. The Kremlin very carefully observes whether political apathy turns into a mobilisation of the malcontents and which governor controls his district so well that he can report record results for the party in power – Putin's 'United Russia' – to Moscow. The nervousness in the run-up of the election also had an impact on civil society: the biggest independent opinion research institute in Russia, the Levada Centre, was declared 'foreign agent' on 5 September. On the same day an investigation was opened against the office of the human rights organisation Memorial International. Politics and society seem to be firmly under control of the Kremlin. Still, spaces and niches for alternative politics and civic engagement remain. Russia's activists have learned a long time ago how to react flexibly and ingeniously to all turns of the spiral of repression. What is the red line they should avoid to cross? Who defines these boundaries in politics and society? How can civic organisations and oppositional politicians deal with the pressure of the authorities? How do young Russians find their way between adjustment, activity and self-realisation? In spite of the dwindling civil liberties is there also reason to look optimistically to the future of Russian society and politics?

Date **Wednesday, 28 September 2016, 13.00 – 14.30**

(light sandwich lunch and registration 12.30-13:00)

Venue will be communicated after registration

Speakers **Dmitry Kokorin**, PhD researcher Russian Institute at King's College, London; development director International Society Memorial
Maria Lipman, Editor-in-Chief of Counterpoint journal, published by the Institute for European, Russian and Eurasian Studies, George Washington University
Aude Merlin, lecturer in Political Science at CEVIPOL, ULB, specialised in Russian and Caucasian Studies

Moderator **Johannes Voswinkel**, Director Heinrich-Böll-Stiftung Moscow

No admittance without confirmed registration. E-Mail registration only. Please send the attached reply form to: marianne.ebertowski@eu.boell.org

The meeting is held under Chatham House Rule. Conference language English – no translation.



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