

Russia's "Tatyana Day": Putin's Statement on University Education

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As a good tradition observed in Russia, Jan 25 is popularly called Tatyana's Day – the last day of the first study semester in the academic year for all institutes and universities, so President Vladimir Putin seized the opportunity to interact with a cross-section of students via videoconference.

In his introductory remarks, Putin expressed appreciation for their readiness to learn and receive new knowledge amid the difficult conditions of the pandemic, and despite the fact that the technical capabilities for remote study are not always available, some places lack equipment and the necessary internet speed.

"Overall, this unusual format could not but affect the comprehensiveness and quality of education and the academic performance rating. Again, I reiterate that the transition to a totally remote study format was an exclusively temporary measure (in the places where it was introduced), related to, as we know, the spread of the coronavirus," he said.

At the same time, it is necessary to make use of the experience accumulated, the best know-how and practices, increasing the digital potential of all universities. Incidentally, it had already laid the groundwork for this, meaning the education system was prepared for the challenges of the era of rapid technological transformation and, importantly, opened up new opportunities for young people throughout the country. Online education is extremely important for such a huge country as Russia.

Putin said that efforts to strengthen and drastically expand the chain of modern higher education institutions all over Russia certainly rank among national priorities. This work is already underway, and it will continue.

"We have already expanded state-funded places at higher education institutions. This mainly concerns higher education institutions in the regions. Consequently, at least 60 percent of Russian high-school graduates can expect to study free of charge under higher education curricula," he informed. "We will expand the share of state-funded students because the number of high school graduates will increase here in the next few years, due to positive earlier results achieved by our programmes to support families, to increase birth rates and to facilitate demographic development."

According to him, affordable higher education is a highly significant matter in the context of social and national development and in providing equitable and equal opportunities for people's self-realisation. Successful studies at higher education institutions are intended to pave the way for professional success in life.

Furthermore, this year (2021) has been declared the Year of Science and Technology. This is ultimate recognition of the merits of our scientists and engineers, the enormous role of knowledge and innovation in people's life and in the development of our regions, cities and villages.

"I am confident that it is universities that must become real centres for the scientific and technological development of the Russian regions and pool the efforts of students, postgraduate students, strong teachers and professors, and company specialists for resolving practical tasks. All of them must form a single team and work in this way," Putin told the students.

To attract and interest these young and talented people, it is necessary to strengthen the research potential of universities, upgrade their infrastructure in general, and build dormitories as well as sports and social facilities. Of course, it is necessary to improve cities and create the conditions for leisure and recreation, as well as for implementing business, creative and public initiatives.

In this context, last year a draft federal law that substantially expands the autonomy of universities in forming educational programmes, and introducing many other useful innovations, was submitted to the State Duma.

In a word, it is essential to ensure modern standards for education and life and for a start of career. There is a saying, "East or West, home is best." This saying reflects great wisdom. It is necessary to use energy, vigour and talent for developing this big and enormous country.

Vladimir Putin held a meeting via videoconference with representatives of universities and other higher education institutions of Kazan, Samara, Smolensk, Ufa, Crimea, Novosibirsk, Nizhny Novgorod and Saransk.

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Kester Kenn Klomegah, who worked previously with Inter Press Service (IPS), is a frequent and passionate contributor to Global Research.

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