

Putin Manages His Brain Trust

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Prime Minister Vladimir Putin on Wednesday issued guidelines to experts the government recruited to generate ideas for the country's post-crisis development.

Putin said one concept was not subject to change: There should be no cuts in the government's social spending.

"One cannot be greedy about this," he said at a meeting with some of the experts, who include Yaroslav Kuzminov, director of the Higher School of Economics.

In December, Putin invited the country's leading economic experts to join forces in proposing a gamut of options for the government's policy decisions from 2012 to 2020. Led by Kuzminov and Vladimir Mau, the respected director of the state Economy and Public Service Academy, dozens of experts volunteered to join the 21 groups covering various issues, such as macroeconomics, global ties and red tape.

Government officials up to the rank of deputy prime minister will take part in discussions

by the groups, which may grow in number, First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov said Wednesday.

Selected experts will report interim ideas by the groups to the Cabinet every quarter, starting in March. The groups, whose members work gratis, will wrap up discussions in August and draft possible scenarios by the end of December.

Putin agreed with Mau that social expenditures could be made more efficient.

In response to Mau's proposals to rethink the pension and health care systems, Putin said jokingly that Russia might give birth to a new economic school of thought — Mauism.

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