

Scientists Demanding More Funds

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About 500 Russian scientists rallied on Pushkin Square on Thursday, demanding more financing of research and more freedom to spend money received through grants and contracts.

"We have difficulties with buying what we need, and there are bureaucratic obstacles in the way of getting most grants," Viktor Kalinushkin, head of the Russian Academy of Sciences' trade union and one of the rally organizers, told The Moscow Times by telephone.

Announcing the rally on the web site of the academy in late September, Kalinushkin [said](#) the issues needed to be resolved "promptly."

The scientists are demanding an increase in state financing for Russia's two leading research foundations, which "remains at an unacceptably low level" in the 2012 budget bill, "despite multiple promises by authorities to increase it," Kalinushkin said in the statement.

The activists are also demanding that amendments to the law on state tenders, which will

allow researchers to spend money received in grants and buy contracts without competitive bidding, be approved in the current State Duma session, which ends in December, or else "resolution of this important ... issue will linger on," he said late last month.

The rally was one of many collective moves carried out by large groups of scientists since 2009 in attempts to attract the authorities' attention to the two problems, Kalinushkin said late last month.

In 2009, 12,000 scientists signed a letter sent to Prime Minister Vladimir Putin; in 2010, they held multiple rallies and wrote several letters to President Dmitry Medvedev signed by hundreds of scientists; early this year, more than 3,000 young scientists asked Medvedev in a letter to reform the law on state tenders.

Despite the scientists' protests, the government is "phasing out the financing of science in grants" and the law does not allow spending "even this small money effectively," Kalinushkin said earlier.

"We have received no replies, nothing was done and we decided to go into the street [again]," Kalinushkin said Thursday.

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