

Putin Approves Physics Institute Merger

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Russian government has approved more reform in the nation's scientific community, with President Vladimir Putin telling Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev to formalize the merger of 15 institutes working in physics.

In December, the Kurchatov Institute National Research Centre proposed a partnership with 14 other physics institutes, merging more than five thousand employees, Polit.ru reported Friday.

The proposal, aimed at the "creation, modernization and use of unique megaclass research facilities," was eventually signed by all the institutes.

"We are talking about a very large projects, called megascience. These projects are difficult to implement alone, so interaction among scientific organizations is needed," Alexander Litvak, the Director of the Institute of Applied Physics at the Russian Academy of Sciences, told Kommersant.

Litvak cited his own institute's plans to create the world's most powerful laser as an example of such a project

On June 24, the president received a request asking for the formal creation of the new organization in a letter signed by the director of the Kurchatov Institute, Mikhail Kovalchuk, and former president of the Russian Academy of Sciences Yuri Osipov.

Putin ordered Medvedev to grant legal status to the merger before September 1.

However the current head of the RAS, Vladimir Fortov, opposes the reform and said that his organization is not looking to create any new structures. The academy will lose a small percentage of its funding if the physics institutes form a separate body.

Some employees of the physics institutes also disagree with the merger, fearing that it will be equal only on paper, with funds going primarily to the Kurchatov Institute.

The merger proposal offered no definitive plans, but cited the Helmholtz Association, a German group of 18 research institutions, as an example.

Education and Science Minister Dmitry Livanov announced in late June that a new government agency will manage all RAS property, a move that Fortov also opposed.

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