

UNESCO to Close Moscow Office in 2015

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The UNESCO cultural and scientific agency is planning to shut its Moscow office next year, Russia's permanent representative to the organization has said.

"This is a planned closure, the decision was made in 2008 but we are only just getting round to addressing it. ... By the middle of next year, [the office] will completely have stopped functioning," Eleonora Mitrofanova told radio station Govorit Moskva (Moscow Speaks) on Tuesday.

The UNESCO envoy told Sputnik state news agency that the decision had been taken in light of "financial difficulties," but that the bureau's employees would "not be left to their fate."

Mitrofanova stressed the closure was in no way related to the ongoing political situation surrounding events in Ukraine and that the organization would continue to support the UNESCO institute in Moscow.

"The Institute for Information Technologies in Education will be strengthened. And the powers given to Russia's [UNESCO] representative may instead be vested in its director," Mitrofanova was cited as saying.

UNESCO, the United Nations scientific and cultural agency, was founded at the end of World War II to promote peace and security through increased international cooperation.

Its Moscow office has operated since 1994 and eight years later its mandate was extended to include four other countries: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus and Moldova.

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