

## PRESS STATEMENT

ESOMAR and WAPOR call on the Russian Justice Minister to rescind decision  
declaring the Yuri Levada Centre a foreign agent 3 October 2016

ESOMAR, the World Association for Market, Opinion and Social Research and WAPOR, the World Association for Public Opinion Research, have written to ask Russian Minister of Justice Alexander Konovalov to rescind a recent measure declaring the Yuri Levada Centre a foreign agent.

Far from advocating opinions or promoting specific political views – activities associated with foreign agents – the role of the Levada Centre and other social and opinion researchers is to measure and report views and behaviours based on scientifically gathered data and statistical evidence.

"Our sector has always understood the importance of public trust and confidence in the effective application of globally accepted professional standards," said Finn Raben, Director General of ESOMAR, "We hope the Russian Ministry of Justice will accept our request and continue to allow Russian research organisations to operate in accordance with these standards, and the self-regulation frameworks that support their enforcement."

Social and opinion research is used by officials and management around the world to gain better insight into citizens' beliefs, attitudes and behaviours, to improve decision-making. In addition, such research is used by the media to report on citizens' views about the society in which they live. Infringements on the right to conduct opinion and social research therefore have a negative impact on the delivery of effective, evidence-based policy-making.

"Scientifically sound polls and the independence of the organisations that conduct these polls are fundamental to modern democratic systems," said Patricia Moy, president of WAPOR.

The measure will hamper the Centre in conducting research as it requires the Centre's staff to misrepresent themselves as foreign agents and not as independent researchers when conducting social and opinion research. This will impact the organisation's ability to assemble representative samples through voluntary participation of respondents in line with internationally accepted professional standards.

The Levada Centre has a solid international reputation amongst peers for the professionalism of its work and it has published both critical and favourable poll results about the Government, thus attesting to its neutrality.

The Levada Centre and its staff undersign and are subject to the Codes of Practice provided by ESOMAR, WAPOR, and OIROM (the Russian Association for Market and Opinion Research). Both Codes of Practice require researchers to execute and report research projects on the basis of scientific research principles and to objectively report on results that can be verified by the data collected. These principles comply with the spirit of the Council of Europe's Council of Ministers recommendation 2007 (15) undersigned by the Russian Government.



Founded in 1948, ESOMAR gathers nearly 5000 professionals and over 400 companies in 130+ countries providing or commissioning research, including public and academic bodies. For further information on ESOMAR and its activities, contact Kim Smouter, Head of Professional Standards and Government Affairs.

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Founded in 1947, WAPOR is the international leading association in the field of public opinion research with approximately 500 members in more than 65 countries. For further information on WAPOR and its activities, contact Patricia Moy, President.

#### WAPOR

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