

18th Russian-Finnish Cultural Forum

Dmitry Medvedev and Prime Minister of Finland Juha Sipilä at the forum's opening ceremony.

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The Russian-Finnish Cultural Forum has been held every year, alternatively in Finland and Russia, since 2000.

The main goal of the forum is to enhance the importance of culture in bilateral relations and support the development of regions of both countries.

The forum is attended by representatives of the parliaments, ministries of education, culture, foreign affairs and government agencies responsible for regional development, as well as members of creative unions, public organisations, and Russian and Finnish cultural institutions interested in promoting promising creative projects.

In 2017, the 18th Russian-Finnish Cultural Forum, "100 Images of Culture", is taking place in St Petersburg on 21-23 September as part of the celebrations of the 100th anniversary of Finland's independence.

Excerpts from the transcript of the opening ceremony of the Russian-Finnish Cultural Forum

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Dmitry Medvedev: First of all, permit me to read out the Message of Greetings of President Vladimir Putin of the Russian Federation to the participants and guests of the 18th Russian-Finnish Cultural Forum:

"Dear friends,

"I cordially welcome you on the occasion of the opening of another Russian-Finnish Cultural Forum.

"This year the Forum is timed to coincide with the centenary of the independence of Finland, and its scale is larger than usual. Among its guests are representatives of government agencies, regional and local authorities, members of parliament, as well as representatives of culture and the arts, science and education.

"The extensive programme of the Forum confirms that Russian-Finnish cultural cooperation is on the rise. Active exchanges are taking place between cultural institutions, educational establishments, and non-governmental organisations. Festivals and tours of performing groups are held regularly, and useful joint educational projects are implemented.

"I expect that during the course of the discussions at the Forum new interesting ideas and initiatives will be put forward that seek to further expand bilateral cultural ties, and strengthen trust and mutual understanding between the peoples of Russia and Finland.

"I wish the participants in the Forum successful work and all the best.

"President of the Russian Federation Vladimir Putin."

During the past hundred years our countries have traversed a long path, which has not always been smooth. There were periods of very serious complications and periods of full-scale cooperation. Against the background of the post-war division of Europe, and indeed of the whole world, it was a unique example of neighbourliness, and we would like our relations to continue to be based on these same principles.

Our countries are close partners, and the peoples of our countries have great sympathy for each other.

This year a record number of Forum participants have come to St Petersburg.

This year also saw performances by the Bolshoi Theatre at the Savonlinna Festival, the Mariinsky Theatre at the summer musical festival in Mikkeli, the Russian Theatre Season in Helsinki, as well as Russian Film Week in the Finnish capital and Finnish film festivals in Russian regions.

Just recently, the Government submitted for ratification the decision on the status of the Finland House in St Petersburg. After the adoption of the corresponding laws, our Finnish friends will be able to call it truly their own house.

Juha Sipila: The Cultural Forum is different from other events held in St Petersburg to mark the 100th anniversary of Finland, as it is being attended by an exceptional number of people involved in culture and the arts – 450.

There was an open search process for partners for 2,500 cultural projects. About 5,000 people were involved in this process. Talks are underway for some 140 cultural projects.

Young people are the future of the Cultural Forum, therefore, we must ensure that young participants and their projects gain more prominence in the forum in the future.

Every autumn, Finnish universities present their academic programmes in Moscow and St Petersburg at the popular Study in Finland events.

In St Petersburg, there are over 10 schools where Finnish is taught. It also taught at about 15 universities throughout Russia.

A large number of Russians or Russian-Finnish families live in Finland. Russian is taught in many Finnish schools.

More to be posted soon...