

Russia turns back clocks to permanent Winter Time

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Russia on Sunday is set to turn back its clocks to winter time permanently in a move backed by President Vladimir Putin, reversing a three-year experiment with non-stop summer time that proved highly unpopular.

Russia will also tinker with its [time zones](#) in order to revert to the full 11 zones from Kamchatka in the Pacific to Kaliningrad on the borders of the European Union—reduced to nine by previous president Dmitry Medvedev.

In one of his highest-profile reforms, Medvedev had backed Russia's move to permanent Summer Time (Greenwich Mean Time plus four hours) in 2011 on the basis that changing clocks upset people's biorhythms and made for "unhappy cows".

But the change provoked a rumble of protest, with many Russians unhappy at getting up an hour earlier on pitch-dark winter mornings.

In July, Putin—known for rarely making public appearances in the morning—signed a law bringing back winter time (GMT plus three hours). He ruled that the clocks henceforth would never change to summer time.

The seemingly random reforms have riled Russians.

Moskovsky Komsomolets daily ran a cartoon of man hanging himself on

the hands of a clock, saying: "I'm so sick of you changing all the time."

But health officials reassured citizens that the move back to winter time was harmless.

"Dark mornings have a worse effect on people's state of health than dark evenings," the head of sleep medicine at the Federal Medical and Biological Agency, Alexander Kalinkin, told TASS state news agency.

A poll by VTsIOM state agency this month found 17 percent of Russians opposed a move to winter time, while 40 percent said they did not care and 39 percent backed the move.

Russia's full 11 time zones will also be restored after Medvedev had cut down the number of time zones to nine by merging several zones, prompting street protests in the far eastern city of Kamchatka.

The Soviet Union introduced a switch to summer time in 1981.

Time remains a highly political issue in Russia and the ex-Soviet region.

Ukraine's Crimea region switched two hours forward to Moscow time in March, shortly after being annexed by Russia.

Neighbouring Belarus followed Russia into eternal summer time in 2011 but President Alexander Lukashenko has now defiantly refused to return to winter time.

Ukraine meanwhile has opted to keep both winter and summer [time](#).

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