Everything designed for one player

Since the Ukrainian crisis and the annexation of Crimea at the latest, relations between Russia and the West have been strained, and the country is in an economically difficult situation due to the economic sanctions and the high price fluctuations on the global energy and raw material markets. Russia's resource-based economic model has not been sufficiently modernised and is reaching its limits. In this situation, the 2018 World Cup is a welcome opportunity for Vladimir Putin to shine, and the Kremlin has pumped an estimated 30 billion euros into the prestigious 2018 World Cup project. In his almost two decades in power, he has established himself as the key political actor and is already in his fourth term as president after his re-election in March 2018. In order to increase control over the Russian elite, the president and his government have created an authoritarian-bureaucratic system. Important decisions are only taken by a small group of people in the Security Council; the "Siloviki" (politicians from the ranks of security and military services) are expanding their influence. Russia's president has secured his popularity in recent years primarily through aggressive rhetoric and controlled confrontations on the international stage, which are intended to underline Russia's status as a geopolitical world power.

Elections

The Russian electoral system is playing into the cards of the Putin-affiliated party "United Russia". Other parties meet obstructions regarding registration and access to the media. In local and regional elections, officials have at times refused to register opposition candidates, and electoral fraud is widespread.

Freedom of speech

About 90% of the mass media are under the direct control of the state. Critical journalists are often harassed or sued, violent assaults are rarely properly investigated. Oppositional media with a small outreach exist, but criticism outside the limits set by the Kremlin is strictly prevented.

Civil rights protection

Citizens' rights are not reliably guaranteed and are not adequately protected. Courts are often biased and pressured to favour local politicians. Human rights violations by Russian security forces are rarely investigated and almost never sanctioned.

Social inclusion

15% of the population live below the national poverty line. Without additional income - such as work in the informal economy or support from the family - further social groups are at risk of poverty. Regional differences are great, poverty in rural areas is widespread despite state support.

Corruption prevention

Corruption is widespread, especially in the judicial system, public procurement and law enforcement. The auditing authorities lack competences, corruption cases are politically instrumentalized and not systematically prosecuted. Civil society or the press rarely dare to take up the issue at all.

Look up the detailed BTI 2018 country report on Russia here:

www.bti-project.org/rus