

Russia's Doping No Worse Than Europe, Says Sports Minister

Russian sports minister Vitaly Mutko has remarked that the sports doping rate of the country is no worse than in other European countries. In a rare meeting with foreign reporters, Mutko said Russia has made a "*colossal*" effort to catch cheats by carrying out up to 20,000 tests a year.

Mutko said Russia has made really colossal efforts in fight against doping in the last five years and Russia has done so with WADA and with international federations and added it took some countries decades to do the same. The Russian minister also said international doping investigators now have free access to all Russian athletes and Russia has a new laboratory in Moscow that matches "really top international standards". Mutko also commented independence of the Russian Anti-Doping Agency was guaranteed by law. He went on to remark that the country has 9,000 international level athletes and many of them spend 70 percent of the year abroad where they undergo checks.

On the sidelines of the SportAccord convention in Sochi, Mutko said only two percent of our athletes are being caught doping and that is really a normal indicator just as in all other European countries. The Sports Minister added we are sure that Russia is a reliable partner in anti-doping and we have done and are going to do these activities in a very tough way.

In December, a German television documentary alleged widespread doping had been covered up, especially in athletics. The sports machine of Russia is under investigation by the World Anti-Doping Agency (WADA) and the International Association of Athletics Federations (IAAF) after the documentary. Meanwhile, the IAAF has initiated proceedings against [Viktor Chegin](#), who has trained more than 20 athletes caught for doping in recent years and heads the Russian race-walking centre in Saransk.

New Russian athletics coach [Yuri Borzakovsky](#) defended controversial race walking coach Viktor Chegin who is presently under investigation by the IAAF as part of its probe into Russian doping. Borzakovsky said Chegin will remain on the Russian team until there's an official piece of paper saying he's accused of something or other.

Mutko raised doubts about the tests raised in the television documentary. The Sports minister said it looks like someone has kept them hidden somewhere and then under certain circumstances they have taken them out to confront us. Mutko insisted that his country has acted "in good faith" and many athletes and coaches received life bans even if they were star performers. He also said we are ready to invite foreign experts for each step of the anti-doping procedure even for several years to end all these doubts and claims made about our country so we can cooperate in good faith.

In another development, IAAF President Lamine Diack said Russia will not be barred from major athletics competitions due to allegations of [systematic doping](#). The IAAF ethics commission and the World Anti-Doping Agency are presently investigating Russia over claims that Russian officials ran a sophisticated doping program. Diack said Russia is a great nation of athletics and compared the doping problem of Russia to the scandals in the United States in the 1990s. The IAAF President said Russia's doping problem should be solved in a similar way with stricter enforcement by an independent agency.