

No Killing Sheep in Courtyards: Moscow Readies Etiquette Guide for Foreigners

By [Alexey Eremenko](#)

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A planned City Hall handbook advises against wearing national costumes. **Igor Tabakov**

Moscow authorities are preparing an etiquette handbook for foreigners that advises them to speak in Russian, not to walk around the city in national attire and to avoid slaughtering sheep in the courtyard of their apartment building.

City Hall is collaborating with diasporas and scientists to create the “Muscovite’s Code,” a list of nonbinding behavior guidelines to be presented to every foreigner who moves to Moscow.

“There are unwritten rules that residents of our city are obliged to follow, such as not slaughtering sheep in the backyard, not grilling shashliks on the balcony, not walking around the city in national attire, and speaking in Russian,” Mikhail Solomentsev, head of City Hall’s committee for interregional cooperation and national policy, [told Rossiiskaya Gazeta](#).

“Now we want to develop a code to speed up the integration of migrants who take up

permanent residency in Moscow,” Solomentsev said in an interview published Wednesday.

“We have asked Moscow diasporas themselves to draft the rules. We’ll study their suggestions and consult with scientists to create the ‘Muscovite’s Code,’ so to speak. When a person moves to Moscow, he will receive a book from his countrymen to tell him what is acceptable here and what is not,” he said.

Solomentsev first announced plans for the “Muscovite’s Code” in 2008, but the idea was put on the back burner.

It is a rare sight to see foreigners walking around Moscow in national costume, and sheep slaughtering is unheard of, except at special locations during Islamic holidays.

Yulia Vaidakova, a spokeswoman for Solomentsev, said Wednesday that she could not disclose any additional details at the moment.

But Ekho Moskvyy radio reported Wednesday that [the code might be completed](#) by early next year.

Representatives of diasporas contacted by The Moscow Times were cautiously optimistic about the project, which they said may help new migrants integrate, but they warned that it must not infringe on their rights to follow their traditions.

Gavkhar Dzhurayeva, head of the Migration and Law Center, praised the call for dialogue but said “the absurdization” of the discussion might result in serious matters, such as the proper treatment of migrants, being dropped in favor of more controversial issues.

“The idea of a common code for everyone is great, but it must not be reduced to a false intrigue such as dress style, eating habits and behavior patterns,” said Dzhurayeva, who is the former head of the Tajikistan Foundation.

Eldar Guliyev, executive director of the All-Russian Azeri Congress, said people who move to a big city from a village — which includes Russian citizens as well as foreigners — really require help in integrating, but the new norms should be “delicate.”

“Rules are needed, but they must not be something the officials can use against a person’s rights,” he said.

Solomentsev said the handbook would preserve Moscow’s way of life.

“Moscow’s lifestyle is based on Russian culture and centuries-old traditions, and everyone moving to the city must reckon with this,” Solomentsev said.

But he added that Muscovites are “a community that is bigger than a nationality because it is a tangle of various cultures.”

Solomentsev also said the city has more migrant workers than it needs.

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