The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Revised Visa Process To Flourish in 2011

By Howard Amos

December 05, 2010

Government officials said Friday that while the number of highly skilled foreign specialists working in Russia under a new, simplified visa regime is “not big,” a significant increase in takeup is expected next year.

Mikhail An, deputy director of the Economic Development Ministry's department of investment policy and public-private partnership, said companies were looking at how the law was working before participating more fully. He made the statement at the Association of European Businesses' fourth annual migration conference.

Federal Law No. 86 introduced July 1 permits highly skilled foreign specialists — classified as those with an annual salary of at least two million rubles ($63,500) — to be employed in Russia under a preferential visa and work permit system.

Federal Migration Service Director Konstantin Romodanovsky told reporters Wednesday that

his ministry had approved 2,610 applications for this type of migrant.

Oleg Artamonov, head of the Federal Migration Service's external relations department, qualified this figure, stating at the conference that less than 2,000 specialists had actually entered the country since July.

He added that 80 percent of these foreign specialists were from the European Union, while most of the rest came from the United States, Japan and other East Asian countries.

On the basis of spiraling demand, an predicted 3,000 applications would be received by the end of 2010 and that serious growth would begin next year as companies got used to the new system.

Though all problems had now been resolved, there had been some initial complaints by certain “big firms” about the new legislation, said Alexei Utkin, advisor to the Foreign Ministry's Consular Department.

Admitting that foreigners sometimes have to go through “circles of hell” to work in Russia, An said further changes to the migration rules would be targeted in the science, education and innovation sectors.

Russia currently attracts less than half the 46,000 foreign specialists it has calculated are needed for its modernization drive, Romodanovsky said in November.

There is, however, one aspect of the July legislation, in which the Federal Migration Service functions as a form of employment agency, that has not been a success.

Highly qualified foreign specialists who have a desire to work in Russia have the option of registering with their embassies. The embassies then post the personal details on the Federal Migration Service's web site from where it can be accessed by potential employers. Though widely advertised, the scheme had been little used, Utkin said.

Georgy Gadenko, deputy director of the Health and Social Development Ministry's employment and labor migration department, also announced at the conference that the overall 2011 work permit quota for foreigners — including migrants from the former Soviet republics — will be reduced by 10 percent. The quota was also cut in 2010 but was not fulfilled.

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2010/12/05/revised-visa-process-to-flourish-in-2011-a3477