

Medvedev Signs Law Easing Registration for Expats

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President Dmitry Medvedev has signed into law a raft of measures aimed at easing the lives of foreigners and protecting them from official corruption, the Kremlin said Wednesday.

The law, which came after heavy lobbying by foreign businesses, reverses legislation that toughened registration rules and came into force Feb. 15.

The speed at which the government overturned the harsher rules has stunned the foreign business community. The Association of European Businesses, which together with the American Chamber of Commerce in Russia lobbied for the eased rules, expressed "deep satisfaction" on Wednesday that "the reaction of the Russian authorities was immediate and constructive."

"We welcome the decision of the Russian leadership to reconsider the changes to the rules of migration registration of foreign citizens in the Russian Federation," Association of European Businesses chief Frank Schauff said in an e-mailed statement.

The new law eases registration rules by extending the period that foreigners can be in the country without notifying the authorities from three to seven working days. It also ends a Feb. 15 requirement that landlords register foreign tenants at their factual addresses, reinstating instead the previous rule of registering at the employer's address.

The new law also forbids police from collecting fines from foreigners carrying invalid or missing registration papers. Instead, the organization that issued the foreigner's visa invitation will be held responsible for violations. This change is aimed at preventing extortion from corrupt police officers who could otherwise demand money on the street.

AmCham said the amendments would likely be implemented within two weeks.

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