

Migrant Quotas Cut For 4th Year in a Row

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November 24, 2011



Bek, a street vendor from Uzbekistan, peddling his clown marionettes by the Belorusskaya metro station Thursday. His marketing pitch includes an improvised performance in which the puppets speak in the voice of Vladimir Filonov

State quotas for temporary work and residency permits for migrants are being cut for the fourth year in a row, the government has decreed.

Authorities explained that the dip in work permits for next year stems from a new system for attracting migrants to work, but offered no reason why the figure has fallen over the past three years or why fewer temporary residence permits would be issued.

Migration experts, however, suggested that the moves could be driven by a number of reasons — from the 2008 economic crisis to general anti-migrant sentiment.

A government [decree](#) released last Friday, and those released the three previous years, show

that the quota for temporary residence permits for migrants has gone down from 200,345 in 2009 to 159,515 in 2010, 129,486 in 2011 and 105,807 next year.

A spokeswoman for the Federal Migration Service said authorities in each region set a quota for their territory, while migration officials only filled the quotas.

Earlier this month, the government released a separate [decree](#) for work permits. That figure has also steadily dropped from 397,674 in 2009 to 194,356 in 2010 and 174,584 in 2012.

Next year's quota is the same as in 2011, the Health and Social Development Ministry, which sets work quotas for migrants, said in a statement on its [web site](#) last week.

In a statement Thursday, the ministry explained that the quota had gone down since 2010 because of new mechanisms for attracting migrants to work that are not included in the quota. That includes migrants who come to work for a private person and invitations for highly qualified migrants.

Yelena Tyryukanova, who heads the Center for Migration Studies at the Russian Academy of Sciences, said the trends could be a consequence of the 2008 economic crisis or a reaction to anti-migrant sentiment.

Nikita Mkrtchyan, a senior researcher at Tyryukanova's center, said the drop in residence permits could be explained by preparations for abolishing residence permits entirely, as has been proposed by the Federal Migration Service, while the reduction of work permits could be an attempt to protect the domestic labor market.

As for Moscow, the quota for temporary residence permits for migrants has gone up from 1,500 in 2009 to 2,000 in 2011, but will remain at that level next year.

In the Moscow region, the quota was 10,000 both in 2009 and 2010, but went down to 6,500 in 2011. In St. Petersburg, the quota was 2,500 in 2009, 2,005 in 2010 and 1,500 in 2011.

A spokeswoman for the Moscow region's migration officials referred an inquiry to regional labor officials, who could not be reached for comment Thursday afternoon. Calls to the press office of the St. Petersburg migration office went unanswered.

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