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Medvedev Announces Housing Strategy

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Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on Monday put forth a finalized version of the government's plan for improving the country's dilapidated housing stock and making quality apartments more accessible.

The measure is designed to fulfill a decree on housing issued by President Vladimir Putin on May 7, his first day in office.

Titled "Providing Accessible and Comfortable Housing and Building Management," it lays out a slew of goals ranging from increasing the level of the mortgage lending to developing "noncommercial housing stock" to cleaning up drinking water.

The overarching goals "are to increase the population's access to housing," including high-quality housing, which the government is obligated to provide to special groups such as young families, and "to increase the quality and safety of provided housing and utilities," according to the government's website.

All the goals are supposed to be addressed during a three-stage timeline that begins next year and ends in 2020. But only two goals listed in Medvedev's version include metrics for evaluating success.

Those are reduction of the average cost of constructing a square meter of new housing by 20 percent by 2018, using the deflation-indexed figure for this year as a yardstick; and increasing the annual number of mortgages to 868,000 by 2020.

The growth of noncommercial housing construction is highlighted several times in the plan. Currently, much of the nation's housing is built by for-profit developers.

Medvedev's plan also calls for a lowering of mortgage rates and government assistance for housing loans.

Regional Development Minister Igor Slyunyayev presented an earlier version of the housing strategy at a Cabinet meeting with Medvedev on Nov. 15. Those proposals included "the maximum number of directives" from Putin's May 7 edict, he said at the meeting, according to a transcript on his ministry's website.

Many details and metrics in Slyunyayev's presentation were absent from Monday's version.

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