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Putin Scraps Visa Requirement for International Athletes

By The Moscow Times

May 12, 2013



President Vladimir Putin has signed a decree waiving the visa requirement for foreign athletes, coaches and other staff attending international sports events in Russia, the Kremlin announced Monday.

Athletes are to pour into Russia over the next five years, with next year's Winter Olympics in Sochi and the 2018 football World Cup the two biggest draws.

"Participants in international sporting competition ... can enter and exit the Russian Federation without applying for visas on the basis of existing documents that confirm their identity and are accepted by the Russian Federation," a Kremlin statement said.

Athletes, coaches and medical staff must be in possession of official accreditation by competition organizers to qualify for visa-free status, the statement said.

The government is to publish regulations on how long those without visas may remain in the country, the statement said.

The decree enters force immediately.

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