

Draft Legislation Foresees Russian Citizenship for \$290,000

By [The Moscow Times](#)

February 12, 2014



French actor Gerard Depardieu getting ready to embrace President Vladimir Putin, who granted him Russian citizenship, in January 2013.

The government is considering easing rules on granting citizenship to foreigners who have studied and worked in the country or invested in the economy, Kommersant reported Wednesday.

Draft legislation initiated by the Economic Development Ministry and migration authorities envisions streamlining the citizenship application process for graduates from Russian universities that have worked in the country for at least three years. The bill is headed for the State Duma "soon" a source said.

Foreign businessmen earning at least 10 million rubles (\$290,000) annually and that have worked in Russia for at least three years, as well as entrepreneurs who own at least a 10 percent stake in legal entities here that have at least 100 million rubles in assets, will also

qualify for the expedited process.

One flaw in the program is that it does not provide preferential treatment for family members of such "investment-citizens" who might also want citizenship. As such, some estimates put the total number of such emigrants at only several hundred per year.

The criteria for student emigrants would be grandfathered to those who graduated from July 1, 2002.

"Overall, foreigners make up between 20 and 25 percent of post secondary students. As a rule, we are talking about citizens of Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan and Moldova," said Pavel Chernikh, Russia's delegate to World Skills, an international organization dedicated to developing youth employment. It is estimated that there are between 1 million and 2 million possibly qualified candidates.

Currently, only foreigners married to a Russian citizen or those who were born in the former Soviet Union and are stateless qualify for the fast-track procedure.

Nearly 136,000 foreigners obtained Russian citizenship in 2013, according to the Federal Migration Service. That was up from about 96,000 in 2012.

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