

# Interagency Snafu Delaying Issuance of Tax ID Numbers

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Staff from the Federal Migration Service.

A lack of coordination between two government agencies concerning taxpayer identification numbers is creating difficulties for some foreigners trying to get a Russian work permit.

Since the start of this year, all foreigners applying for a work permit in Russia are obligated to obtain a taxpayer identification number from the Federal Tax Service.

Earlier it was only required for those in the category of highly qualified professionals, who handled the paperwork to get the ID number.

Under the new rules, the Federal Migration Service submits information about those applying for a work permit to the tax authority, which issues the taxpayer ID number within 30 days and notifies the employer.

"This was meant to be an interaction between agencies; foreign citizens were not supposed

to be involved in the process," said Alexei Filipenkov, the head of Visa Delight human resources consultancy. "But practice shows that sometimes immigration authorities put the paperwork burden on individuals, telling them to personally apply for the taxpayer ID," he said, adding that this has resulted in long lines at the tax offices.

But those standing in line are finding themselves directed back to the immigration authorities, which, in turn, may refuse a work permit on the grounds that the taxpayer ID has not been provided, Filipenkov said.

Anastasiya Melnikova, an associate at Squire Sanders international law firm, said, "Our practice is to file the forms required to get the taxpayer ID beforehand and submit them along with other documents [for the work permit] to the migration service."

The Association of European Businesses told The Moscow Times that some of its member companies did have to fill out additional forms when applying for a work permit.

"We understood from an answer the migration service gave to our inquiry [regarding the situation with work permits], that giving them individual applications for tax ID numbers should speed up the process, although these forms are meant for use between the authorities," a spokesman for the association said. "However, we believe this is a temporary measure and soon the system will be better coordinated and will not involve individual applicants, the spokesman said.

Still, consultants recommend filing all necessary forms to the immigration authorities well in advance of applying for a new work permit.

"Otherwise, you will not be able to prove anything," Filipenkov said. "The authorities may excuse themselves on the grounds that their database was not working or give other reasons. But for a foreigner the result may be the loss of a desired position because for a company the risks of employing someone without a permit outweigh any possible benefits."

According to the Federal Migration Service, about 3 million foreigners were employed in Russia last year, up from more than 2.6 million a year earlier. More than 1.2 million of them had a standard work permit and 1.5 million obtained a "patent" — which is a work visa often issued to migrant workers and involves a one-time fee. The number of people getting work permits in the "qualified" and "highly qualified" foreign personnel category in 2013 grew threefold to 155,000, from 55,000 in 2012.

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