

Justice Ministry Seeks to Ban Russian Home Births to Stop Scams

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The new legislation would severely restrict the current practice of allowing women who give birth at home to register their newborn on the basis of witness testimony.

In a bid to crack down on fraudulent maternal benefits claims, the Russian Justice Ministry wants to stamp out home births by refusing to register babies born outside hospitals.

The new proposal to ban the registration of home birth babies, is meant to "stimulate women to use medical services during and after birth and become a barrier to the misuse" of government handouts, the ministry said in a statement on its website.

The authors of the bill noted there had been a sharp increase in cases in which "nonexistent children" were illegally registered on the basis of a fake birth certificate so that the supposed mothers could claim maternal funding.

In 2012 alone, more than 40 birth certificates submitted by members of Russia's Roma gypsy population — which has a reputation for being talented at such scams — were discovered to be fraudulent, the ministry said.

The new legislation, which would require amending the federal Family Code if passed, would severely restrict the current practice of allowing women who give birth at home to register their newborn on the basis of witness testimony.

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