

Russian Visa Applicants Will Have to Be Fingerprinted

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In September, the Interfax news agency reported that Russian consulates in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Myanmar and Namibia would be implementing fingerprinting technology starting next year.

Foreigners applying for visas in a number of Russian consulates will be fingerprinted starting in December, in accordance with a decree signed by President Vladimir Putin earlier this week.

Starting on Dec. 10, those seeking visas at Russian consulates in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Myanmar and Namibia, as well as at Moscow's Vnukovo Airport, will be fingerprinted.

Russian diplomats abroad will also be required to inform the governments of their respective host countries of the new practice by Dec. 5. The order does not provide a timeline for the implementation of fingerprinting in Russian consulates in other countries, or at Russia's other international airports and border crossings.

In September, the Interfax news agency reported that Russian consulates in the United Kingdom, Denmark, Myanmar and Namibia would be implementing fingerprinting

technology starting next year. The head of the Foreign Ministry's consular department, Yevgeny Ivanov, said at the time that the move was a pilot project that would help determine the feasibility of collecting biometric data at other Russian consulates. The fingerprinting is not meant to harshen visa requirements for foreigners, Ivanov said at the time.

The measure, which will also apply to stateless individuals and those applying for transit visas, comes ahead of the European Union's planned introduction of biometric data collection in 2015 for Russians wishing to travel to the Schengen Area.

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