

# Western Union Expands Russian Network Despite Shrinking Market

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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U.S.-based money transfer company Western Union has dramatically expanded a service focusing on transfers from Russia to the countries of the former Soviet Union, the Interfax news agency reported Monday, even as the nation's economic crisis spurs a migrant exodus.

Western Union services to the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS) are now available in 22,000 post offices under an agreement with the Russian national postal service, Russian Post. The transfer service had previously been available only in 3,000 post offices, Interfax reported.

"The market in money transfers to the countries of the CIS is promising, but until recently Russian Post had practically no presence there," Russian Post's deputy financial director Vladimir Salakhutdinov said, Interfax reported.

Still, while the market may once have been booming, its prospective clientele are fast leaving Russia as tough new labor rules and a steep devaluation of the ruble make working in the

country less attractive.

More than 170,000 citizens from Tajikistan, a country that relies heavily on remittances from citizens working abroad, left Russia in the second half of last year, newspaper RBC reported in February, citing data from Russia's Federal Migration Service.

Russia's economy is expected to shrink by about 3 percent this year as low oil prices and Western sanctions on the Ukraine crisis stifle investment.

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