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Part-Time Employment Soars as Russia's Crisis Deepens

By The Moscow Times

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The number of part-time employees in Russia shot up nearly 8 percent in a single week, Labor Minister Maxim Topilin said Monday, as Russia's unfolding economic crisis takes its toll on the labor market.

The number of part-time employees in Russia rose by 24,000 people, or 7.8 percent, over the course of the week, Topilin was quoted as saying in a statement on the Labor Ministry's website.

"We have noted this persistent negative trend over the past few weeks," Topilin said.

This sharp rise in part-time employment shows that the number of underemployed Russians is rising as the country fights off a steep economic downturn aggravated by Western sanctions

over the Ukraine crisis and a steep plunge in oil prices. The total number of part-time workers in Russia now exceeds 331,000 people, according to the Labor Ministry.

At the same time, the official unemployment rate in Russia remains relatively low. As of May it stood at 5.6 percent, according to state statistics service Rosstat, and it is currently declining, according to the Labor Ministry.

The number of registered unemployed people fell 1.1 percent between June 24 and July 1, ending at about 977,000, Topilin said.

Experts attribute the absence of a sharp rise in unemployment to the fact that the Russian state is avoiding large layoffs that could lead to political discontent.

Russia will use its "traditional" crisis management technique of cutting salaries instead of firing staff as it weathers this crisis, Vladimir Gimpelson, the director of the Center for Labor Market Studies at Moscow's Higher School of Economics, told The Moscow Times earlier this year.

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