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Russians Applying for Schengen Visas Required to Give Fingerprints

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Russians were granted more than 5.76 million Schengen visas in 2014, about a third of all Schengen visas issued worldwide.

Russians applying for Schengen visas are required to give their fingerprints as of Monday, the RBC news agency reported. Once recorded, fingerprints will be stored for five years.

Children under the age of 12 and disabled people with no fingers are exempt from the requirement, along with government leaders and members of official government delegations, the report said. The costs of Schengen visas, which allow holders to visit any country in Europe's 26-state Schengen Area, will remain the same.

The measure has already been implemented for several Middle Eastern, Asian and African countries. Fingerprints are also required from applicants in Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus, the Komsomolskaya Pravda newspaper reported in July.

Russian tourist organizations worry that the new rules will create obstacles for residents of remote regions of the country who will have to travel to visa centers to provide their

fingerprints, and will cause a further decrease in the number of tourists traveling to Europe.

“We fear that demand for trips to Europe will decrease by 30 percent, while the overall number of tourists going abroad has dropped by 50 percent [since the start of the economic crisis],” Irina Tyurina, spokeswoman for the Russian Tourism Industry Union, was cited by the Vesti FM radio station as saying Monday.

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