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Mayor Sobyanin Says Moscow Migrants Are Source of Revenue

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Mayor of Moscow Sergey Sobyanin

Migrants in Moscow are a source of income, not problems, because they come to the capital to work and don't receive benefits, Mayor Sergei Sobyanin told the Argumenty i Fakty newspaper in an interview published Wednesday.

"[Migrants] go to Europe [looking] for benefits, but to us, for work," he told the newspaper when asked whether he thought Moscow would face the same fate as Western countries, where not everyone has welcomed a recent wave of refugees.

"If Europeans pay them to do nothing at all, and sustain them, our migrants pay us to be able to come and work here," Sobyanin said.

Sobyanin added that migrants who wanted to stay in Moscow for longer than three months had to get a permit and pay 4,000 rubles ($64) a month in advance taxes, without receiving any social benefits.

“That's why migrants in Moscow bring in more revenue than problems,” he said, adding they helped to fill Moscow's labor shortage of around 2.5 million people.

The number of migrants in Russia from Uzbekistan and Tajikistan — the two top migrant countries to Russia — fell by 17 percent and 16.1 percent respectively compared to the same period last year, the Regnum.ru portal reported Wednesday, citing recent statistics from Russia's Federal Migration Service.

The downward trend in migration is widely attributed to the devaluation of the ruble and tightened regulations governing migrant labor.

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