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Putin Announces Concessions in Retirement Age Hike

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Russian President Vladimir Putin has announced plans to soften a proposal to raise the retirement age following popular opposition.

Putin's approval ratings have dropped to four-year lows after the Russian government announced pension reform plans during the football World Cup this summer. Under the proposed reforms, the retirement age would increase for men from 60 to 65 years of age and for women from 55 to 63.

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Putin proposed on Wednesday to lower the increase in the pension age for women from 63 to 60 years, while keeping the proposed increase for men at 65 years.

“There is a special, careful attitude toward women in our country,” Putin said in a televised address. “That’s why I think we need to reduce the proposed increase in the retirement age for women from 8 to 5 years.”

Mothers of three children could retire at the age of 57, he said, while those with five or more children could retire at the age of 50.

In explaining the rationale behind the increase in the pension age, Putin told viewers that low birthrates in the 1990s had led to “serious demographic issues” and placed an increasing burden on the Russian pension system.

"Delaying any longer really is impossible," Putin said in his address, adding that "it would be irresponsible and could lead to serious consequences in the economic and social spheres, having a seriously negative impact on the fates of millions of people."

"Our inaction or the implementation of temporary 'cosmetic' measures would be irresponsible and unjust towards the country and our children," he added.

The president proposed additional measures to soften the burden of the pension age hike on citizens who are currently nearing their retirement age, including an offer to grant retirement six months earlier to men and women who would retire under the current law over the next two years. He also promised that social benefits, which include discounts on public transport and prescription drugs, would be granted at current retirement-age levels of 55 for women and 60 for men.

Putin additionally called for employers to be held liable for age discrimination in hiring or firing "preretirement age" employees — or those within 5 years of retirement — while promising to double unemployment benefits and launch a job-training program for workers in the age group.

“The proposals I mentioned today will be formalized as amendments and brought into the State Duma as soon as possible,” the president pledged.

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