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Russia Plans to Simplify Citizenship for Foreign Students, Official Says

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Alexandra Mudrats / TASS

Foreign students who graduate from Russian universities may find it easier to get a Russian passport as soon as this year as the country grapples with a shrinking population, a cabinet official has said.

The Russian government has enacted a number of financial programs in recent years to reverse its declining population and record-low migration numbers. President Vladimir Putin's efforts include attracting Russian-speaking migrants and easing citizenship rules for residents of separatist-controlled areas of eastern Ukraine.

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"We've finally ensured... that the Interior Ministry will submit a bill this year simplifying citizenship for foreign students who graduate from Russian universities," Deputy Economic Development Minister Ilya Torosov said Tuesday.

“That way, we get young people who have put themselves through five or six years of schooling in Russia, know the Russian language and have higher education,” Torosov told the state-run TASS news agency.

Torosov estimated that about 20 percent of migrants in Russia currently have some form of higher education.

A recent United Nations demographic report predicted that Russia’s population could decrease by half by the end of this century.

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