

Russia Rules Out Retaliation to EU Visa Hurdles

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Vladimir Chizhov **TASS**

Moscow will not respond in kind to the European Union's new hurdles for Russians visiting the bloc's visa-free travel zone, a senior diplomat [said](#) Tuesday.

The European Union last week formally suspended a 2007 visa facilitation deal with Moscow that had made it easier and cheaper for Russians to travel to Europe as part of the bloc's response to the invasion of Ukraine. The move, effective Monday, stops short of the full travel ban demanded by EU member states located closer to the Russian border.

"We won't respond tit-for-tat," Vladimir Chizhov, Russia's [outgoing](#) ambassador to the EU, said in an interview with Russian state broadcaster Rossiya 24.

Chizhov vowed that Moscow would remain "open to those who want to come and see how Russians really live and what happens in Russia."

"We will remain a country committed to democracy and freedom of movement," said

Chizhov. “This is a display of maturity and wisdom of our leadership.”

The Kremlin last week denounced the EU’s tourist visa suspension as “another ridiculous decision in a series of ongoing absurdities.”

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Russia’s Foreign Ministry [said](#) Tuesday the new EU rules — which allow passage to vetted Russian dissidents, journalists and humanitarian cases — constitute “undisguised interference in our country’s affairs” designed to “brain drain” out of Russia.

“Labeling Russians as ‘unsafe,’ dividing them into ‘useful and not useful,’ and talking about ‘privileges’ to visit the EU are blatant manifestations of xenophobia and hatred toward our country,” the ministry said in a statement.

Meanwhile, Russia’s Association of Tour Operators [said](#) at least nine EU member states have stopped accepting tourist visa applications from Russian citizens. Belgium, Denmark and the Netherlands joined central European and Baltic EU members in suspending tourist visa processing for Russian nationals.

At the same time, Russia’s state tourism agency Rosturism [forecasts](#) 1 million Russians to travel to Europe this year, a 15-fold drop from the pre-pandemic year of 2019.

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