

Visas for CIS Citizens 'Won't Be Brought In'

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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An officer from the Federal Migration Service checks the documents of a foreign citizen.

Russia is not about to institute visa requirements for visitors from neighboring countries, but instead wants to turn the problem of immigration into an asset by creating conditions that will help attract students and qualified professionals, a leading migration official said Monday.

"The introduction of visa relations with adjacent countries is unlikely," Federal Migration Service head Konstantin Romodanovsky said in an interview with Kommersant. "In this case integration, actually of any kind, is advantageous for us — both for the economy and for simple citizens."

In another interview published Monday, Mayor Sergei Sobyenin called for a visa regime to restrict the current influx of immigrants from the former Soviet republics. Under current law, people from the Commonwealth of Independent states are legally allowed to stay

in Russia for 90 days without a visa.

The problem is not immigration itself, Romodanovsky said, but that "those who are coming to Russia are by no means the ones we need."

In an attempt to change the face of immigration to Russia, the FMS is currently introducing both incentive and punitive measures.

As of 2014, students will find it easier to receive work permits, with Russian employers no longer required to receive special permission in order to hire them, Romodanovsky said.

However, a law recently approved by the State Duma bans entrance to Russia for those who have already violated immigration laws.

In the past four years, "the total entrance of immigrants to the Russian Federation increased by 37 percent and we had to react somehow," Romodanovsky said.

Asked where the majority of immigrants to Russia originate, Romodanovsky named Ukrainians as those who most frequently cross the border, while the greatest number of people who illegally stay for more than 90 days are from Uzbekistan.

"Oddly enough, our most highly developed relationship is with Tajikistan," Romodanovsky said, explaining that Tajikistan has made the greatest number of agreements with Russia on immigration and been most persistent in their enforcement.

The FMS said in September that there are 11.2 million immigrants currently residing in Russia, of whom only 1.5 million are working legally.

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