

Moscow to Cut Migrant Jobs in Housing Services, Sobyenin Says

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The  **Moscow Times**

Moscow Mayor Sergei Sobyenin plans to slash job opportunities for migrant workers in an effort to address the capital's problematic relationship with migrant labor, a Russian newspaper reported Monday.

Sobyenin told city newspaper Vechernyaya Moskva that next year, authorities will cut by a third the number of jobs for migrant workers in the housing services and public utilities sector.

The mayor, a vocal advocate of tighter migration laws, said in the interview that migrant work should be eliminated where possible, but will not disappear entirely.

"The main task is to make this work legal, so that migrant labor will not be cheaper for an employer than Russian labor," Sobyenin said, the newspaper reported. "They must pay taxes to the same extent as nationals of our country. Otherwise, employers will look for loopholes

to hire, for example, a Tajik, and not a Russian."

Road cleaning, taxi services and markets are several areas in which Moscow authorities are working to crack down on illegal labor and boost the number of Russian employees, Sobyenin said, according to *Vechernyaya Moskva*.

Police have shut down 30 Moscow markets in the last three years, which Sobyenin said had brought about a reduction in crime, the newspaper reported.

Thousands of migrants have been detained in the Russian capital in recent months as police targeted dozens of Moscow markets to round up illegal workers, a strategy apparently aimed at alleviating discontent over growing numbers of foreign workers in the city.

Migration was a key issue in September's mayoral election in Moscow, in the run-up to which both Sobyenin and his leading opponent, Alexei Navalny, promised tough action against illegal migrants in response to the growing nationalist mood among voters.

Russia depends heavily on migrant laborers, mostly from former Soviet republics in Central Asia and the Caucasus, but public opinion about their effect on crime rates and employment opportunities has gotten more negative over the last decade, and large-scale anti-migrant violence has broken out in various parts of the country several times in recent years.

Sobyenin told *Vechernyaya Moskva* that the city has also legalized 30,000 taxi drivers, two-thirds of whom are migrants, and created street-cleaning task forces manned mainly by Russian citizens.

Konstantin Romodanovsky, head of Russia's Federal Migration Service, said Monday the country's system of allocating quotas for work permits for foreigners should be reformed, and that the FMS would propose new solutions to the migrant labor issue over the next year.

The FMS estimates that about 3.5 million migrants are currently living in Russia illegally, though other analysts put the number far higher.

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