



Russia offers fast-track citizenship to all Ukrainians

Description

RUSSIA/UKRAINE: All Ukrainians, as as well as citizens of the two Donbass republics, may now apply using a simplified procedure

Any Ukrainian national may now apply for Russian citizenship under a simplified scheme, according to a decree signed by President Vladimir Putin on Monday. The measure also applies to stateless persons permanently living in Ukraine, as well as to citizens of the two Donbass republics recognized earlier by Russia as independent.

Ukrainians may now file the relevant request without the need to live in Russia for five years, to have a source of income or to pass a Russian-language test – something foreigners are normally required to do before they can apply for Russian citizenship.

The presidential decree modifies the procedures earlier reserved for the citizens of the Donetsk and Lugansk People's Republics, as well as the residents of the two southern Ukrainian regions that have been under the control of the Russian forces almost since the start of the conflict between Moscow and Kiev.

Back in 2019, a simplified procedure was introduced for those living in territories controlled by the two Donbass entities, which in February were recognized by Moscow as sovereign states. They could have their citizenship paperwork processed in just three months.

As of February, 950,000 people had reportedly filed applications and 770,000 of them have become Russian citizens. Monday's decree also explicitly stated that people serving in the Donbass militias and its local law enforcement authorities are eligible to apply for Russian citizenship as well, and that their status as foreign military personnel could not be used as a reason to deny them citizenship.

In May, another decree added the residents of Zaporozhye and Kherson regions in the south of Ukraine to those eligible for the citizenship scheme. A separate document signed by the president the same month made orphaned children from the Donbass republics and Ukraine eligible for processing as well. An application could be filed on their behalf by their guardians or foster families.

Russia sent troops into Ukraine on February 24, citing Kiev's failure to implement the Minsk agreements, designed to give the regions of Donetsk and Lugansk special status within the Ukrainian state. The protocols, brokered by Germany and France, were first signed in 2014. Former Ukrainian president Petro Poroshenko has since admitted that Kiev's main goal was to use the ceasefire to buy time and *"create powerful armed forces."*

In February 2022, the Kremlin recognized the Donbass republics as independent states and demanded that Ukraine officially declare itself a neutral country that will never join any Western military bloc. Kiev insists the Russian offensive was completely unprovoked.

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