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Requirements and procedures to obtain internal and foreign travel passports; whether biometric passports have been issued; if so, information on the biometric passport, including stored biometric data and its appearance; requirements and procedures to obtain a biometric passport within Russia; whether it can be replaced and renewed from abroad, including requirements and procedures [RUS103842.E]
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Immigration and
Refugee Board of Canada

Commission de l'immigration
et du statut de réfugié du Canada

Requirements and procedures to obtain internal and foreign travel passports; whether biometric passports have been issued; if so, information on the biometric passport, including stored biometric data and its appearance; requirements and procedures to obtain a biometric passport within Russia; whether it can be replaced and renewed from abroad, including requirements and procedures [RUS103842.E]

8 November 2011

RUS103842.E

Russia: Requirements and procedures to obtain internal and foreign travel passports; whether biometric passports have been issued; if so, information on the biometric passport, including stored biometric data and its appearance; requirements and procedures to obtain a biometric passport within Russia; whether it can be replaced and renewed from abroad, including requirements and procedures

Research Directorate, Immigration and Refugee Board of Canada, Ottawa

Obtaining an Internal Passport from Within Russia

According to the website of Russia's Federal Migration Service (FMS), all citizens of the Russian Federation 14 years of age and over who are residing in Russia are required to have an internal passport, the primary document that confirms their identity (Russia n.d.i). Internal passports have to be renewed at 20 and 45 years of age (ibid.). The passport is issued by the FMS branch in the area in which the citizen's residence has been registered (for a copy of the internal passport see the attachment to this Response) (ibid.).

In order to obtain a new or replace an existing internal passport, citizens must submit the following documents:

A completed application form for the passport;
Birth certificate;
Two black-and-white or colour photographs measuring 35 by 45 millimetres;
Documents confirming Russian citizenship;

Documents to indicate the status of certain information requirements in the passport (military service, children's birth certificates, proof that the citizen's residence has been registered); and
Confirmation of payment (ibid.).

The application form for obtaining a new internal passport is available on and can be submitted electronically through the Government and Municipal Services Web Portal (Pravda.Ru 16 Aug. 2010).

An official of the Canadian embassy to Russia stated that the Russian internal passport has replaced the USSR internal passport, which is no longer in use (Canada 21 Oct. 2011). It is possible that someone, for example, senior citizens would "still be in possession of the old internal passport, but it would be impossible for them to use it without facing legal problems. No institution will accept this document" (ibid.). The USSR passport can be exchanged for an internal passport of the Russian Federation at any office of the FMS (ibid.).

According to the FMS spokesman, internal passports "may be replaced by ID cards"; however, there is no indication on when the change will take place because "[d]iscussions of the prospect of replacing national passports with electronic plastic ID cards have been ongoing since the mid 1990s" (qtd. in Interfax 18 Nov. 2010).

Obtaining an Internal Passport from Abroad

During an interview with the Research Directorate, the Head of the Consular Section of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Ottawa indicated that Russian consular missions abroad issue only foreign travel passports (Russia 27 Sept. 2011). Individuals living abroad should apply for the internal passport when they return to Russia (ibid. n.d.f). If they have not already done so, they must first register their residence in Russia to apply for the internal passport (ibid.).

Obtaining a Foreign Travel Passport from Within Russia

Russia continues to issue two types of foreign travel passports (Russia 13 Sept. 2011):

An older version of the passport that is valid for five years (ibid.); and
A biometric passport (also referred to as the "passport for the new generation" (ibid. 20 Mar. 2006; ibid. n.d.c.), which is valid for ten years (ibid.; Interfax 30 June 2011).

Biometric passports with a five-year validity period are no longer issued; however, bearers of those passports may use them until they expire (Russia 13 Sept. 2011). According to the website of the FMS, since 1 March 2010, citizens of the Russian Federation are able to choose whether they want to receive the old-style passport or the biometric one (ibid.). The FMS has not been "assigned with the task to replace all the existing passports [with the] new ones [and] biometric passports are issued to citizens only on their wish" (Secureidnews.com 21 July 2007). The 2009 amendment to Federal Law No. 337-FZ of 1996 on Procedure of Exiting and Entering the Russian Federation states that, starting on 1 March 2010, Russian citizens can submit a written request if they wish to obtain a biometric passport (valid for 10 years) (Russia 13 Sept. 2011). A foreign travel passport can be obtained at a branch office of the FMS (ibid.; ibid. n.d.a; ibid. n.d.b), in the area in which the individual's residence is registered (ibid.).

New biometric passports have 46 pages and enhanced security features, such as better anti-forgery protection and more accurate personal identification (ibid. 13 Sept. 2011). Except for their photographs, information about children under 14 years of age is included in the biometric passports of the parents, but each child must have his or her own passport (ibid.). According to the 2009 amendment to the 1996 Law on the Procedure of Exiting and Entering the Russian Federation [translation],

for the purpose of collecting passport holder's personal data to be recorded on the electronic information carrier, a digital photograph of the citizen of the Russian Federation shall be produced at a federal or territorial authority site or on the premises of a diplomatic mission or a consular institution of the Russian Federation whose responsibility it is to receive passport applications. (ibid. 1996, Art. 9)

Copies of the front cover and data and signature pages of the biometric passport (valid for 10 years), biometric passport (valid for 5 years) and the old-style foreign travel passport (valid for 5 years) are attached to this Response.

According to the FMS, individuals who wish to obtain a new biometric passport must surrender their previously issued passport if it has not expired (Russia 13 Sept. 2011). However, the website of the Ministry of the Interior indicates that [translation] "issuance of the new foreign travel passport is carried out without the confiscation of the previously issued passport if it has not expired at the moment of the submission of the application" (ibid. n.d.a.).

Citizens of the Russian Federation who frequently travel abroad (at least once a month) and who do not have the right to receive a diplomatic or a service passport, can, at the request of the organization sending him or her

abroad, receive a second passport (ibid. 13 Sept. 2011). In this case, in order to confirm the person's frequent travel abroad, the person's passport should have an indication note (or a stamp) demonstrating that he or she crossed the border at least once a month for the last three consecutive months (ibid.). The second passport will have the same date of expiration as the previously issued passport (ibid.).

The government charges the following fees for passports:

The old-style version:

Adults - 1,000 rubles [32.42 Canadian dollars (CAD) (XE 30 Sept. 2011a)]

Children (under 14) - 300 rubles [9.72CAD (XE 30 Sept. 2011b)]

Biometric passports:

Adults - 2,500 rubles [81.09CAD (XE30 Sept. 2011c)]

Children (under 14) - 1,200 rubles [38.93CAD (XE30 Sept. 2011d)] (Russia 13 Sept. 2011).

Documentation required to obtain a biometric foreign travel passport

According to the FMS, a citizen should provide the following documents to state authorities in order to receive a biometric passport:

Adults

The completed biometric passport application form and a copy (which can be submitted electronically through the Government and Municipal Services Web Portal);

Internal passport of the citizen of the Russian Federation;

Confirmation of payment;

Two photographs;

A military service booklet indicating that the individual served in the army or a certificate from the military commissariat where the applicant is registered (for men between the ages of 18 and 27); and

Previously issued passport if it has not expired.

Children (under 18)

The completed application form and a copy;

Birth certificate confirming Russian citizenship;

Photocopy of the birth certificate;

Confirmation of payment;

Passport of a parent or a legal guardian (as well as the document confirming guardianship); and

Two photographs (Russia 13 Sept. 2011).

Documentation required to obtain the old-style version of the foreign travel passport

In order to obtain a new passport in the old style, the following documents should be provided:

Adults

The completed application form and a copy, as well as the accompanying appendix to the application form;

Internal passport of the citizen of the Russian Federation and a photocopy;

Confirmation of payment;

Three photographs;

A military service booklet indicating that the individual served in the army or a certificate from the military commissariat where the applicant is registered (for men between the ages of 18 and 27); and

Previously issued foreign travel passport if it has not expired.

Children (under 18)

One completed application form;

Documents confirming Russian citizenship (for children under 14);

Internal passport of the citizen of the Russian Federation (for individuals between the ages of 14 and 18) and a photocopy;

Confirmation of payment;

Document, confirming the right to represent a minor, and a photocopy; and

Three photographs (Russia 13 Sept. 2011).

Obtaining a Foreign Travel Passport from Abroad

According to the Federal Law of 1996 on the Procedures of Exiting and Entering the Russian Federation, Russian citizens enter and exit Russia with the documents that confirm their Russian citizenship (Russia n.d.f).

According to the website of the Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Toronto, passports with the Soviet-era symbols should be exchanged after their expiration date (ibid.). As of 1 January 2001, new passports, issued by the FMS and its subdivisions, contain the symbols of the Russian Federation (ibid.).

The consular head at the Russian embassy in Ottawa indicated that Russian consular services in Canada issue only the older version of foreign travel passports, which are valid for five years (ibid. 27 Sept. 2011). The Russian consular missions in Canada are planning to start issuing biometric passports in 2012 (ibid. n.d.e.). However, the websites of the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Berlin, Germany, and the Embassy of the Russian Federation in Riga, Latvia, indicate that they issue two types of passports: the biometric passport (valid for 10 years) and the old-style passport (valid for 5 years) (ibid. n.d.c; ibid. n.d.d).

According to the Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Toronto, an individual should provide the following documents in order to obtain a passport (ibid. n.d.g):

A statement requesting a passport addressed to the Head of the Consular Division of the Russian Federation;
An electronic application form, plus two copies of the form;
Four black-and-white or colour photographs (3.5 x 4.5 cm.);
Photocopy of the valid foreign travel passport or the internal passport;
Money order for 30CAD; and
A document (plus a photocopy) confirming legal status in Canada (e.g., Visa, Permanent Resident Card/Record of Landing, Canadian passport (ibid.), citizenship card, or similar document (ibid. n.d.k).

The documents cannot be sent by mail and must be submitted in person (ibid. n.d.e). Processing is completed within approximately three months of the date of submission of all the required documents (ibid. n.d.k).

The Consulate General provides five different application forms to be used based on the following criteria:

[translation]

Citizen (over 18), who has not been removed from the registrar in Russia (for temporary travel abroad);
Citizen (over 18), who has not been removed from the registrar in Russia (for permanent stay abroad);
Underage citizen (under 18). (The application is filled out in the name of a parent or guardian who has not been removed from the registrar in Russia and has or has not obtained temporary consular registration);
Underage citizen (under 18). (The application is filled out in the name of a parent or guardian who has obtained permanent consular registration or who is not a Russian citizen);
Citizen (over 18), who has not been removed from the registrar in Russia (for temporary travel abroad) eligible for obtaining consular registration. (Russia n.d.h)

If both internal and foreign travel passports have expired and the individual did not previously register at the Consulate, he or she must to submit additional documents to confirm Russian citizenship (ibid.). Only after this confirmation can a citizen obtain a new foreign travel passport (ibid.).

If an individual lost his or her passport and would like to replace it, he or she must submit, along with all the required documents, a statement explaining the circumstances of the loss and a document from the police confirming that the incident has been reported to them (ibid.). If an individual lost the passport and he or she cannot wait three months for the new passport, a "certificate of return" can be issued (ibid. n.d.i.). The "certificate of return" temporarily replaces a foreign travel document allowing entrance into Russia and confirms the identity and citizenship of the person. (ibid.).

Upon his or her return to Russia, an individual who did not present his or her internal passport to the Consulate, and who is not registered at the Consulate, must contact an appropriate branch of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to obtain a note in the internal passport indicating that a foreign travel passport was issued (ibid. n.d.g). The foreign travel passport will also be stamped in order to indicate that [translation] "the note in the internal passport has been made" (ibid.).

The Director of the FMS states that they are working on the new "provision of foreign travel passports with fingerprints," which, according to him, "will speed up interaction with the European Union on the visa-free travel track" (qtd. in Interfax 30 June 2011).

This Response was prepared after researching publicly accessible information currently available to the Research Directorate within time constraints. This Response is not, and does not purport to be, conclusive as to the merit of any particular claim for refugee protection. Please find below the list of sources consulted in researching this Information Request.

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Additional Sources Consulted

Oral sources: Attempts to contact representatives from the following organizations were unsuccessful: Federal Migration Service, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Moscow Helsinki Group, and law firms.

Internet sites, including: Amnesty International; Argumenty i Fakty; European Country of Origin Information Network; Factiva; Human Rights Watch; International Crisis Group;; Moscow Helsinki Group; Moscow News; Moscow Times; Rossiyskaya Gazeta; Russia — Embassy of the Russian Federation in Canada, Government and Municipal Services Web Portal, Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Ministry of Internal Affairs, Russian Embassy in Brussels, Belgium; United Nations Refworld..

Attachments

Russia. N.d.a. Internal Passport. Document received from an official of the Embassy of Canada in the Russian Federation.

_____. N.d.b. "New Russian e-Passports (46 Pages)." Document received from an official of the Embassy of Canada in the Russian Federation.

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