

Ukraine to implement reviews, preregistration of visiting Russians

Travel

Posted by:

Posted on : 2017/7/11 15:47:04

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KYIV, July 11, 2017 - The National Security and Defense Council of Ukraine decided on July 10 to initiate a system of biometric review of all foreigners entering Ukraine, including citizens of Russia, the presidential administration's website reported. “We should be collecting biometric data, including fingerprints and digital photos. That will significantly strengthen our ability to fight against terrorism,” Ukrainian President Poroshenko said. Later that day, Foreign Minister Pavlo Klimkin clarified that the initiative is in response to those countries that have yet to implement biometric passports and EU citizens won't be subject to review, the Ukrainian News agency reported. “The logic of the decision is related to threats that Russia poses in the context of internal destabilization in Ukraine,” he said. The system will be launched when all technical work related to the register of biometric data will be completed, he said. An electronic pre-registration system for Russian citizens visiting Ukraine will be implemented early next year, Council Secretary Turchynov said that day. Besides digital photo and prints, the system will require information about their residence and travel, he said. Currently, Russians are able to enter Ukraine with their non-digital foreign passports and freely move around the country. Such measures, in essence, correspond to the establishment of a visa regime and the Russian government will respond similarly, warned afterwards Frants Klitsch, the first deputy head of the Russian Federation's Council defense and security committee, as reported by the RIA Novosti news agency. He remarked that four million Ukrainians work in Russia and “we’ll have to politely ask some of them to leave.” Concorde analyst Zenon Zawada added: “Such measures have been avoided by the Poroshenko administration ever since the war erupted in 2014, given the interdependence of the Russian and Ukrainian economies. Yet the technical infrastructure seems to be coming into place for the Poroshenko administration to press forward with these plans, which are necessary to improve security. “The biggest risk, of course, is the loss of economic activity with Russia. We think the Poroshenko administration is betting that any such losses will be remedied by the economic rebound that has begun, as well as economic opportunities in eastern Europe, where travel has become easier. That’s not only the result of the visa-free regime, but the greater issuance of work permits and their wider availability.”

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