

Russia

EU engagement to date

The EU-Russia agreement on readmission is in force since 1 June 2007. Its implementation is being monitored by yearly meetings of the Joint Readmission Committee, the latest of which took place on 22 November 2019.

Cooperation on readmission

In 2019, 8 545 Russian nationals staying illegally in the Member States were issued return decisions and 5 730 effectively returned to Russia resulting in a **return rate** of 67%. Member States submitted 2 614 readmission requests to the Russian authorities, which issued 1 046 travel documents resulting in an **issuance rate** of 40%.

A total of 25 Member States reported having approached the authorities of Russia for readmission matters related to its nationals in 2019.

According to 12 Member States, accounting to more than half of the return decisions issued, the relevant provisions of the **Readmission Agreement** are often or always respected by Russia. On the other hand, for eight Member States, representing 40% of return decisions issued, the relevant provisions of the agreement are rarely to never respected by Russia. The main issues regards the non-respect of the time limits laid down by the agreement and the cumbersome procedure for submitting requests and sending replies (notably due to Russia's refusal to use any form of electronic communication).

Four Member States – which are not subject to the EU readmission agreement – report having **bilateral agreements** in place with Russia, whose relevant provisions are often or always respected. They report however similar issues as the Member States subject to the EU Readmission Agreement.

Two thirds of responding Member States assess the **cooperation in the identification procedure** with Russia as good or very good, while six Member States assess it as poor or very poor. The remaining four consider it average.

Only 10 Member States have an established routine for cooperation on identification that is effectively implemented with Russian diplomatic missions while for five Member States such business routine is rarely or never implemented.

For 13 Member States, representing almost two-thirds of all return decision, consular interviews are often to always performed upon their request as necessary, with, on average, acceptable to very satisfactory outcomes. It is rarely to never the case in the remaining eight.

According to three Member States, Russian authorities are often available to organise short or long-term identification missions, the outcomes of which are acceptable.

Interviews are also often to always requested by Russian authorities in cases where sufficient evidence to establish nationality was already provided (e.g. valid or expired travel documents), in the case of six Member States.

Evidence accepted includes not only valid or expired passports, but also almost always other identity documents, photocopies of documents, and, for fewer Member States, information extracted from the VIS and biometric evidence.

According to three quarters of the responding Member States, where more than two-thirds of all Russian nationals ordered leave are to be found, the **issuance of travel documents** often or always takes place in a timely manner.

Additional elements other than nationality are also very often taken into account by Russia when deciding whether to issue travel documents or not, in the case of two Member States.

Returns by **charters flights** are accepted by Russia. For about half of the Member States, certain restrictions are applied in case of returns by **scheduled flights**, namely the visa requirement for escorts.

In general, most Member States have assessed the **overall cooperation on return and readmission** as either stable or improved since 2015.

With a total of 8 545 Russian nationals ordered to leave in 2019, Russia ranks 14th amongst visa-bound third countries whose nationals have been issued return decisions in the Member States. Overall, almost three quarters of the Member States interact on readmission with Russia, and the EU Readmission Agreement provisions (and the equivalent provisions of the bilateral arrangements) are generally well respected in more than half of the cases, resulting in steady return and issuance rates. Identification processes are conducted successfully, including through interviews, and issuance of travel documents is timely, even though the degree of formalism requested by Russian authorities for communicating requests slows down the processes, at times beyond time-limits of the agreement. To improve cooperation, identification processes would need to be expedited, by engaging in communication through electronic means and by extending to all Member States identification through biometrics, and be followed through swiftly with issuing travel documents, without interviews for documented cases. This should result in a better rate of issuance of travel documents and a higher return rate.