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Russia has just made it easier for trans people get their gender identity recognized

The move has been welcomed by trans organizations in Russia

25 January 2018 by Shannon Power

Russia has just changed its laws to allow trans people to update their gender without having to go through gender affirming surgery.

The Russian Ministry of Health signed the order on Monday which will create a procedure to give trans people a medical certificate. The certificate will indicate a trans person's gender identity.

The new rules will come into effect on 2 February 2018.

Russia had not had a [legally established legal gender recognition procedure](#).

Until now, trans people could only officially change their gender identity by submitting a 'medical certificate on gender/sex change' to a civil registry office.

'We welcome the adoption of the Ministry of Health's order in its final version, and we believe that its entry into force will significantly improve the situation of trans people in Russia,' said Tatiana Glushkova, Transgender Legal Defense Project's Legal Programme Coordinator.

The Health Ministry was tasked with the duty of producing the medical certificates but has not done so since 1998.

That left trans people at the mercy of individual civil registry servants. The civil registry servants would decide if a person's documents could be changed.

In that time there had been many complaints from trans people about excessive requirements placed on them by those civil registry servants.

Some of the excessive requirement included gender affirming surgery and some people with children would not be given a certificate.

A welcome decision

The Ministry created the draft order on 'medical certificate on gender/sex change' in October last year and made it open for public discussion.

Many trans human rights organisations, submitted their comments to amend the text of the

draft.

Fortunately, most of their concerns were listened to and were included in the order.

Some of those changes included not requiring a mandatory period for psychiatrist observation before legal gender recognition.

Trans people will not have to undergo any medical procedures, in order to get their gender marker changed. It also does not restrict legal gender recognition for trans people who are married or have children.

Finally, a referral to a medical board that establishes a person's 'sexual re-orientation' is to be issued if they are diagnosed with 'transsexualism'. That makes the criteria for establishing a 'sexual re-orientation' more transparent.

'The document establishes a transparent procedure for legal gender recognition, which would allow trans people to change their documentation without applying to court,' Glushkova said.

'In addition, the adoption of the order would bring the Russian legislation in accordance with the European Court of Human Rights case law.

'At the same time, we regretfully note that the order did not reflect either the global depathologisation process, or the forthcoming reform of the International Classification of Diseases.

'The key actors who take decisions regarding trans persons' legal gender recognition, are still psychiatrists. Transgender people will still face all the challenges coming from the psychiatrist diagnosis.'

Discrimination still rampant

Trans people in Russia faces discrimination in all walks of life.

A [first of its kind study in 2016](#) revealed 50% of trans people are rejected for jobs based on their gender identity and many fear seeking medical treatment for fear of being treated badly.

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