

Russia Will Implement Its MIR Payment System in Cuba

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MADRID, Spain. - The Russian government is working towards launching the MIR (World) cards in Cuba, cards that are part of the National System of Payment Cards (NSPK), according to Olga Skorobogatova, first vice president of Russia's Central Bank.

"There are several countries that would like to cooperate with us. For example, Cuba is one of the latest projects we are undertaking at the present time. That means that our citizens will be able to use their Mir cards in Cuba," stated Skorobogatova.

According to the official news agency *Prensa Latina*, during a work session of the State Duma, Skorobogatova indicated that other countries are negotiating with Moscow in order to implement the system, although she failed to mention which countries.

The MIR card is the Russian equivalent of the international cards Visa and MasterCard, and it was created in 2016 in order to avoid electronic payment blocks after American companies Visa and MasterCard denied services to several

Russian banks as a result of sanctions. Today, the MIR system is accepted mainly by Russian companies like Aeroflot and Russian Railways, and in countries such as Turkey, Vietnam, Armenia, Uzbekistan, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, South Ossetia and Abkhazia.

According to Juan Carlos Escalona, tourism advisor to Cuba's embassy in Moscow, the use of these cards in Cuba will be "an important step towards the reopening of tourism."

"Visitors from Russia will be able to pay for services in the island with MIR [cards] as soon as flights resume between both countries," he added.

By accepting the MIR cards, the Cuban government is laying the groundwork for when normalcy is restored to flights from Russia, which were cancelled last February as a result of its invasion of Ukraine.

The government in Havana expected that Russians would be as much as 20% of international tourist arrival in Cuba in 2022. This goal has been frustrated by the conflict unleashed by the Russian attacks.

According to official data, in 2020 a total of 146,151 Russian tourists came to Cuba. Until mid 2021, more than half of registered tourists were Russian.

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