

# 60,000 .рф Domain Names Unblocked

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About 60,000 Cyrillic domain names improperly processed by registrar Ru-Center were unfrozen Tuesday, according to the national domain coordinator, which had ordered the temporary blockage. A special commission will be assembled to look into the matter.

The main problem with the domains in question is that they were registered in violation of the “first application” rule, according to which a name goes to the first individual or organization to apply for it. Registration companies are prohibited from taking names for themselves, but it seems some of the firms skirted that rule, resulting in the freeze.

“We are [unblocking the domain names] in the interests of the end users who in this situation are held hostage to auctions. Most of them ... are conscientious buyers and they should get the opportunity to use the domains for which they have applied,” said Andrei Kolesnikov, director of the Coordination Center for TLD RU, which drove the creation of .рф and has oversight responsibility for registration.

Several registration companies, foreseeing the demand for popular and “vanity” domain

names, registered such domains under their own names through partner companies, and then organized auctions to sell them.

Over 60,000 Cyrillic domain names registered by Ru-Center were blocked last week, said Olga Yermakova, information projects manager with the Coordination Center.

“This registrar caught the Coordination Center’s eye because of users’ complaints,” Yermakova told The Moscow Times. The complaints came from individual domain users who had applied early and rule-abiding registrars.

Ru-Center was not the only one to draw complaints, she said.

Users also complained about the registrar Netfox breaking the registration rules, but the company canceled all auctions following a warning from the Coordination Center, Yermakova said.

The newly formed commission to investigate the violations and resolve ownership of the domain names will consist of representatives from the Internet community, State Duma deputies, representatives of the Federal Antimonopoly Service and the communications ministry.

It will be studying registration documents for disputed domains “within the legal framework and taking into account, first and foremost, users’ interests,” Yermakova said.

The anti-monopoly service also launched an investigation into the matter and already filed lawsuits against six domain registrars including Ru-Center, Registrator and Elvis-Telecom. Court decisions are expected in December.

Cyrillic domain registration opened to the general public on November 11. In the first week alone 500,000 new domains ending in .рф were registered.

Russian President Dmitry Medvedev highlighted Cyrillic domains as a national accomplishment in the state of the nation address on Tuesday.

“This year we ‘taught’ Russian to the World Wide Web. This is important for our country,” Medvedev said.

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