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Web Standards Body Opens in Russia

By Rachel Nielsen

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Surfing the web at a cafe. The opening of W3C's office in Russia was hailed by the director of the country's .ru and .рф administrator, who said it was "great news." **A. Astakhova**

The World Wide Web Consortium, or W3C, which helps set standards for how the Internet develops, opened an office at the Higher School of Economics on Thursday.

As of now, the global organization, co-led by World Wide Web inventor Tim Berners-Lee, has the prestigious business school and state news service RIA-Novosti as its only Russian members.

The office's director, Viktor Klintsov, who is also deputy director of the school's Information Technology Institute, wants to involve both technology and industrial companies in W3C, saying Russian developers have not been engaged in discourse about how the Web develops.

If the country's programmers and product makers don't participate in debates on web standards, "their ideas will never work with future standards," Klintsov said by telephone.

Andrei Kolesnikov, director of .Ru Coordination Center, which administers the .ru and *.рф* domains, called the launch of a local W3C office "great news."

Russian developers until now have just been "following the standards somebody already accepted," Kolesnikov said by e-mail. "Being a part of W3C makes it possible to bring your ideas and new technology solutions to the global scene."

W3C's members comprise more than 340 companies and institutions in 30 countries, ranging from Google and Boeing to the BBC.

Though Berners-Lee founded W3C in the United States in 1994, "Russia ignored it all this time," Klintsov said.

That changed after the Higher School of Economics opened a technology center in 2010 and then became a W3C member. "We suddenly had access to a huge stream of information" after joining, Klintsov said.

The new W3C office is planning to offer Russia's first courses with W3C certification.

The Russian branch will be staffed by eight people and might add several employees after a year.

W3C is funded by membership fees, as well as corporate and individual sponsorships and donations. It is led by technology guru Jeffrey Jaffe and Berners-Lee, who wrote the first web server and browser.

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