

HBO to Enter Russia by Year End

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russians are soon likely to enjoy the Game of Thrones, one of HBO's most popular television shows.

U.S. cable network Home Box Office (HBO) will team up with businessman Leonard Blavatnik to launch its services on the lucrative Russian market by the end of this year, said the heads of one cable company and two satellite television providers.

This information was confirmed by an Access Industries source.

Time Warner, HBO's parent company, and Amedia, a company controlled by Blavatnik, will set up a joint venture, one of the sources said.

The companies will invest "tens of millions" of dollars in the project, the Access Industries source said. In addition to running HBO content, they plan to buy series and films produced by other U.S. companies and may also purchase Russian shows, the source added. Amedia's shows include Poor Nastya, as well as the Russian version of Colombian telenovela Yo soy Betty, la fea (Ugly Betty), and the local version of Spanish television drama El Internado (The Boarding School Black Lagoon).

HBO's television package will be distributed through cable and satellite networks and will consist of three channels, including one focused on television series and another channel featuring films, one of the sources said. The new episodes of U.S. shows will be run in Russia almost simultaneously with their premiere in the United States, the Access Industries source said.

Alexander Akopov, a minority shareholder of Amedia, as well as spokesmen for Access Industries' Russian office, HBO and Time Warner, declined to comment on the report of HBO's plans.

The HBO channels are likely to be included in Gazprom Media's NTV Plus package, another source said, adding that the parties had reached an agreement on that. NTV Plus subscribers will pay an extra fee for HBO content, a Gazprom Media source said. But the Access Industries source said HBO channels will appear not only in the NTV Plus package but also on other platforms.

HBO is the second largest premium cable network in the United States. Its most popular shows are Sex and the City, Sopranos, Boardwalk Empire, True Blood, the Game of Thrones and the Newsroom.

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