

Rostelecom to Keep Up Providers' Expansion Into Banking

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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State-owned telecoms company Rostelecom, is seeking to buy Sobinbank, joining the rush among phone companies to buy their own banks and break into a growing market for mobile banking, credit services and online payments tools.

Rostelecom is negotiating the deal with Bank Rossia, which controls Sobinbank, Kommersant reported Monday, citing unidentified businessmen from the three organizations.

Rostelecom chief Sergei Kalugin said last week that his company wanted to break into the banking industry and was looking at small banks and consumer credit organizations.

Neither Rostelecom nor Sobinbank confirmed that deal.

Alexei Gonus, deputy chairman of the UralSib bank, would not be surprised if a deal was in the process of being brokered, saying that "all telecommunications providers already own a bank

or are interested in buying one."

Russia's largest mobile provider MTS bought a stake in a bank from its parent company AFK Sistema in 2011. VimpelCom partnered itself with Alfa Bank in 2011 to set up an online payment service, with its turnover reaching 20 billion rubles (about \$620 million) by June. Megafon, Russia's second-largest mobile operator, said last month it was shopping for a small bank, Reuters reported.

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