

Ban on Online Poker in Russia Could Be Lifted

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Russian government is considering legalizing online poker in Russia.

After a five-year hiatus, the government is considering legalizing online poker in Russia in hopes of pulling in an extra 5 billion rubles (\$146 million) a year to the federal budget, Kommersant reported Thursday.

First Deputy Prime Minister Igor Shuvalov has ordered the Finance, Economic Development and Justice Ministries to analyze the possibility, the report said, citing unidentified sources in the government.

Shuvalov's staff confirmed that the order was given and should be carried out by July 21, Kommersant reported.

Deputy Finance Minister Alexei Moiseyev confirmed that his ministry is looking into the issue, but declined to comment on its position.

Poker Union president Kakha Kakhiani told Kommersant that the government is looking into legalizing online poker on his request. He said that the move is justified by the amount of money it would generate for the federal budget, as well as the success of Russian players in international competitions.

A source familiar with the opinions of the initiative's supporters said that legalizing online poker would raise between 2 billion and 3 billion rubles (\$58 million to \$87 million) in its first year via taxes levied on operators and players. That sum could increase to more than 5 billion rubles within three to four years, the source said.

Poker was registered as a sport in Russia in 2007, which briefly protected its status. It was then banned in June 2009, however, when the Sports Ministry decided to remove it from the national sports registry and qualify it as a type of gambling after many poker clubs were found to have been operating as illegal casinos.

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