

State Media Giant Rossiya Segodnya to Launch New Agency in 45 Languages – Report

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State-run news agency Rossiya Segodnya is set to launch a new media project this month in dozens of different languages, RBC Daily reported Wednesday.

Dmitry Kiselyov, the controversial head of Rossiya Segodnya, will unveil the new project together with Margarita Simonyan, the agency's editor-in-chief, at a private presentation on Nov. 10, the newspaper reported. The project, which reportedly has the working title "Sputnik," will be presented to the press at a later news conference, it said. Simonyan is also editor-in-chief of the state-sponsored English-language news channel RT.

RBC Daily cited an unidentified source with knowledge of the situation as saying the project

would target an overseas audience and unite several of the news agency's foreign-language departments. It said Rossiya Segodnya had confirmed the launch of a new product, but declined to give more details.

The news comes on the heels of a newly adopted law that will severely limit foreign companies from owning media outlets from 2017.

The liquidation of RIA Novosti and establishment of Rossiya Segodnya in its place last December — and the appointment of the outspoken Kiselyov to the helm — was widely seen as the Kremlin tightening its grip on the media. The reshuffling of staff at independent news websites like Lenta.ru has also sounded alarm bells, as longtime editors known for their independent coverage were replaced by editors with known ties to the Kremlin.

Further fueling concerns of independent media being edged out altogether, the Russian government last month announced a sizable increase in funding for state-run news agencies, with 6.48 billion rubles (\$170 million) allocated for Rossiya Segodnya alone.

Russia's federal media watchdog Roskomnadzor registered two separate entities under the name "Sputnik" on May 29: a radio station and a news agency, according to the agency's website.

The countries where coverage will be offered by the new "Sputnik" project has not been disclosed, but broadcasts will be offered in 45 languages.

"It's just another brand," the unidentified source told RBC Daily. "It has no relation to the 'Sputnik' search engine released by Rostelecom in May."

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