

Hundreds of Russian Bloggers Registered With Media Watchdog

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More than half — 60 percent — of all violations involved the use of obscene language, Roskomnadzor officials said in early March.

Russia's media watchdog has classified 640 blogs and online communities as equal to the media, making their content subject to certain restrictions, the watchdog said on its Twitter page Monday.

Under the law adopted last year, bloggers and Internet users with public web pages visited by more than 3,000 people a day are eligible for inclusion on a register run by media watchdog Roskomnadzor. They can register voluntarily for the list, or be put on the list at Roskomnadzor's behest.

These bloggers must then disclose their identities and follow the rules that apply to media outlets — checking facts, avoiding obscene language, not publishing extremist materials and not disclosing private information. The law was widely criticized by popular bloggers, who claimed it would be applied selectively.

Bloggers on the list that violate any of these rules face a 30,000 ruble (\$476) fine. If a blog on the list is owned by a legal entity, the fine is raised to 300,000 rubles (\$4,760), the Vesti.ru news website reported last year.

More than half — 60 percent — of all violations involved the use of obscene language, Roskomnadzor officials said in early March. Another 24 percent of violations were attributed to the propaganda of drug use, Lenta.ru reported, while 6 percent concerned “insulting religious believers' feelings” and 5 percent involved the posting of extremist materials and Nazi symbols.

The list includes the public page on Russian social network VKontakte of Dmitry Kiselyov, director general of state-owned media giant Rossiya Segodnya. Kiselyov is also a TV host on the state-run channel Rossia, and is well-known for his relentless West-bashing views.

Earlier this year Kiselyov opened accounts on several social networks, including Facebook and Instagram, but his Facebook and Instagram pages were quickly blocked after being flooded with incendiary comments from his detractors, Lenta.ru reported in late July.

Russia has tightened Internet regulations since the grassroots 2011-12 anti-Kremlin protests, which were coordinated online.

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