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Russian Social Network VKontakte to Introduce Paid Music Services

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Russian social network VKontakte (VK) is to introduce subscription for its music services, the Izvestia newspaper reported Wednesday.

Users will still be able to listen to music on the site for free, but some paid functions will appear at the start of 2017.

“Users will still be able to listen to audio recordings for free but some paid functions will appear, such as adding audio to your own account," said Alexander Blinov, the general director of the Warner Music Group in Russia. "If you love performers, you have to support them. Musicians must earn a living in order to create new songs.”

Access to the paid functions is to be implemented via a subscription service, which music bosses state will cost "roughly the same as a cup of coffee."

The Mail.ru Group, the company that owns VK, signed an agreement with the United Music

Agency signed an agreement earlier this month to collaborate with major licensing companies Universal Music, Sony Music and Warner Music.

Sony Music Russia, Universal Russia and Warner Music U.K. all simultaneously sued VK for piracy in April 2014, claiming 50 million rubles ($1.4 million) in compensation. They also demanded a court order requiring VK to remove copyrighted tracks and implement technical measures to prevent users from re-uploading protected content.

The judge threw out the case, saying that VK could not be held liable for content uploaded by users.

With more than 88 million registered users in Russia and 143 million worldwide, VK allows account holders can upload and share files with the entire VK population.

VK remains the most popular social network in Russia, with more than eight times the daily users of leading international social network Facebook, data from media research firm TNS Russia showed.

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