Russian Media Watchdog May Ban Anonymous Wi-Fi Access

September 22, 2016

Vladimir Filonov / MT

Russia's media watchdog, Roskomnadzor is planning to introduce compulsory identification for those accessing public wifi connections and will lobby for legal liability for those offering anonymous Internet access, the Kommersant newspaper reported Thursday.

A report prepared by the head of Roskomnadzor's board of media control and oversight, Denis Paltsyn, is proposing obligatory online identification via software that users will have to download and provide personal identification details to install.

The initiative comes after Roskomnadzor checked more than 18,000 public Wi-Fi connections across Russia and found that roughly a third allowed users access without providing identification.

Roskomnadzor subsequently opened administrative cases for unlicensed entrepreneurial activity against operators offering anonymous access and could fine those responsible up to

40,000 rubles ($617), Kommersant reported.

The watchdog also stated that around 2,500 anonymous access points were offered by individuals, whose details were passed on to authorities in relation to anti-terrorist surveillance, Rozkomnadzor said.

Lawyer Yekaterina Ilina told Kommersant that it is unlikely that individuals or small businesses would face fines for providing anonymous Wi-Fi access under current legislation.

According to Ilina, they could be found guilty of "illegal entrepreneurial activity," but that would involve proving that third parties had financially benefited by using the Wi-Fi, something she claims is "practically impossible."

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2016/09/22/russia-to-ban-anonymous-wifi-accass-a55431