

After Media Law, Foreign Ownership of Russian Internet Operators Could Be Next

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Russia's Communications Ministry has proposed limiting foreign ownership over internet exchange points to 20 percent, following similar restrictions to Russian media holdings in 2014.

The limitation would apply to foreign governments, companies and individuals. Russian companies in which foreigners have a 20 percent or higher stake, as well as Russian nationals with dual citizenship would also be affected, according to a [copy](#) of the proposal on the government's legal portal.

The 20-percent foreign ownership cut off has already applied to Russian media since 2014,

and fits into a wider trend of increased government control over the internet.

Related article: [Foreign Publishers Quit Russia Over Media Ownership Law](#)

The proposal defines exchange points as technology through which internet traffic is exchanged through networks, meaning it would also apply to communication operators, [Vedomosti](#) reports.

That spells trouble for some of Russia's largest operators, including Megafon, which is 25 percent owned by the Swedish company TeliaCompany, and Vimpelkom, which is 100-percent owned by the Dutch Veon.

MTS and Tele2 would also be affected, [Vedomosti](#) reports.

The ministry cited "the possibility of foreign interference with Russian internet infrastructure," and a lack of "control over the internet traffic in Russia" as reasons for the amendment.

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