

Russia Proposes Internet Ecosystem to Protect Users From 'Foreign Influence' – Report

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Rostelecom's roadmap for an online ecosystem is part of President Vladimir Putin's centerpiece National Projects program, which aims to stimulate the economy through 12 state-centric projects.
Sergei Porter / Vedomosti / TASS

Russia's state-controlled telecommunications provider is proposing a 260-billion-ruble (\$4.1 billion) online ecosystem to "protect users from foreign influence," the Kommersant business daily [reported](#) Wednesday.

Rostelecom's so-called roadmap reportedly envisions the creation of state-run messengers, gaming services, browsers and operating systems. The telecom provider's ambitious proposal also includes state-controlled content recommendation systems and speech and gesture recognition in addition to virtual and augmented reality technology, the publication reported.

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Their underlying purpose is to minimize the risk of public opinion being manipulated through technology, Kommersant reported.

“The roadmap says that such technologies can significantly affect economic development and social stability and carry risks of ... spreading fake news and negative influence from foreign organizations,” an unnamed source familiar with the document was cited as saying.

Rostelecom sent the draft roadmap to the Communications Ministry, the source told Kommersant and another IT industry source confirmed. Rostelecom and the Communications Ministry did not comment on the publication’s report.

The roadmap is part of President Vladimir Putin’s centerpiece [National Projects](#) program, which aims to stimulate the economy through 12 state-centric projects. Rostelecom’s proposal for a state-run online ecosystem is named among the digital economy project’s more expensive roadmaps.

IT experts expressed skepticism about the state spending program in the presence of similar solutions developed by private Russian tech firms.

“There’s a high probability of a completely useless waste of funds,” Karen Kazaryan, chief analyst at the Russian Association for Electronic Communications, was quoted by Kommersant as saying.

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