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Russian Lawyers Seek State Regulations on Recommendation Engines – Kommersant

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Proposed regulations would apply to social networks, news aggregators, streaming services and online marketplaces. **Vladimir Gerdo / TASS**

Lawyers from the Russian Bar Association have called on lawmakers to impose regulations on websites' recommendation algorithms, the Kommersant business daily reported Tuesday.

The proposed regulations would apply to social networks, news aggregators, streaming services and online marketplaces, Kommersant cited the lawyers as saying in their proposal to the State Duma and Federation Council.

Related article: Russia Threatens to Block Twitter Within 30 Days

Algorithms recommending content, goods or services based on one's interests should be independently audited and users should be able to turn them off, the lawyers from the RBA

Moscow branch’s commission on legal support for the digital economy said.

These algorithms can artificially create an abnormal interest in goods and "immerse a person inside an information shell that corresponds with his beliefs," the commission’s head Alexander Zhuravlev told Kommersant.

Such technologies can influence public opinion, "increasing the risk of social conflict," he added.

The commission proposed imposing the regulations on websites that have at least 100,000 daily users and process the data of at least 500,000 Russian users, Kommersant reported.

In addition to allowing users to turn the algorithms off voluntarily, the lawyers said recommendation algorithms must be audited in order to prevent the promotion of illegal content on these platforms.

Experts interviewed by Kommersant called the proposed regulations “excessive” and warned that they could negatively affect the entire digital economy.

In late 2020, Russia passed several laws aimed at regulating online information, giving officials the ability to block social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and YouTube within the country.

This month, Russia threatened to block Twitter, claiming that the platform failed to take down over 3,000 tweets containing banned content related to child pornography, drug use and calls for minors to commit suicide.

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