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Russia Considers Banning 'Perverted' TV Shows and Movies Online – Vedomosti

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Steinar Engeland / unsplash

Russia's internet watchdog is considering sweeping bans of "perverted" TV shows and movies on streaming platforms in a proposal criticized by industry players as vague and punitive, the Vedomosti business daily reported Tuesday.

Roskomnadzor, the state media and communications regulator, has reportedly proposed simultaneous changes to three Russian laws regulating media, protection of children from harmful content and banning displays of "gay propaganda" toward minors.

Russian film distributors in recent years have edited LGBT sex scenes and characters from movies before they were shown in theaters. Roskomnadzor's proposed rules would for the first time affect online streaming and could lead to movies like "50 Shades of Grey" and shows like "Billions" being blocked by Russian internet providers.

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The watchdog seeks to ban content displaying "non-traditional sexual relationships and sexual deviations," a term that experts told Vedomosti includes pedophilia, exhibitionism, sadism and masochism.

Roskomnadzor head Andrei Lipov reportedly cited President Vladimir Putin's recent anti-liberal tirade — where he accused "monstrous" Western countries of forcing transgenderism onto children — as grounds for the proposed streaming bans.

Lipov is expected to "offer proposals on regulating online cinemas" at the planned Nov. 10 Public Chamber debates on the subject, according to Vedomosti.

Platforms found in violation of the proposed rules risk fines of up to 1 million rubles ($14,000) and 90-day suspensions.

Current laws allow "deviant" content, with the exception of pedophilia, to be broadcast or streamed with an "18+" age rating.

Russian streaming services and legal experts decried Roskomnadzor's proposed restrictions as overly vague and excessive.

"The application of this rule can and will be simply prohibitive," Megogo Russia director Viktor Chekanov told Vedomosti. "The lack of clear criteria for classifying information as 'promoting non-traditional sexual relations and deviations' brings serious uncertainty and can lead to very poor law enforcement practices."

"This rule is absolutely open to interpretation, making it possible to abuse it in practice and add almost any kind of [sexual] relationship" on a list of banned content, said Pen & Paper law firm partner Yekaterina Tyagay.

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