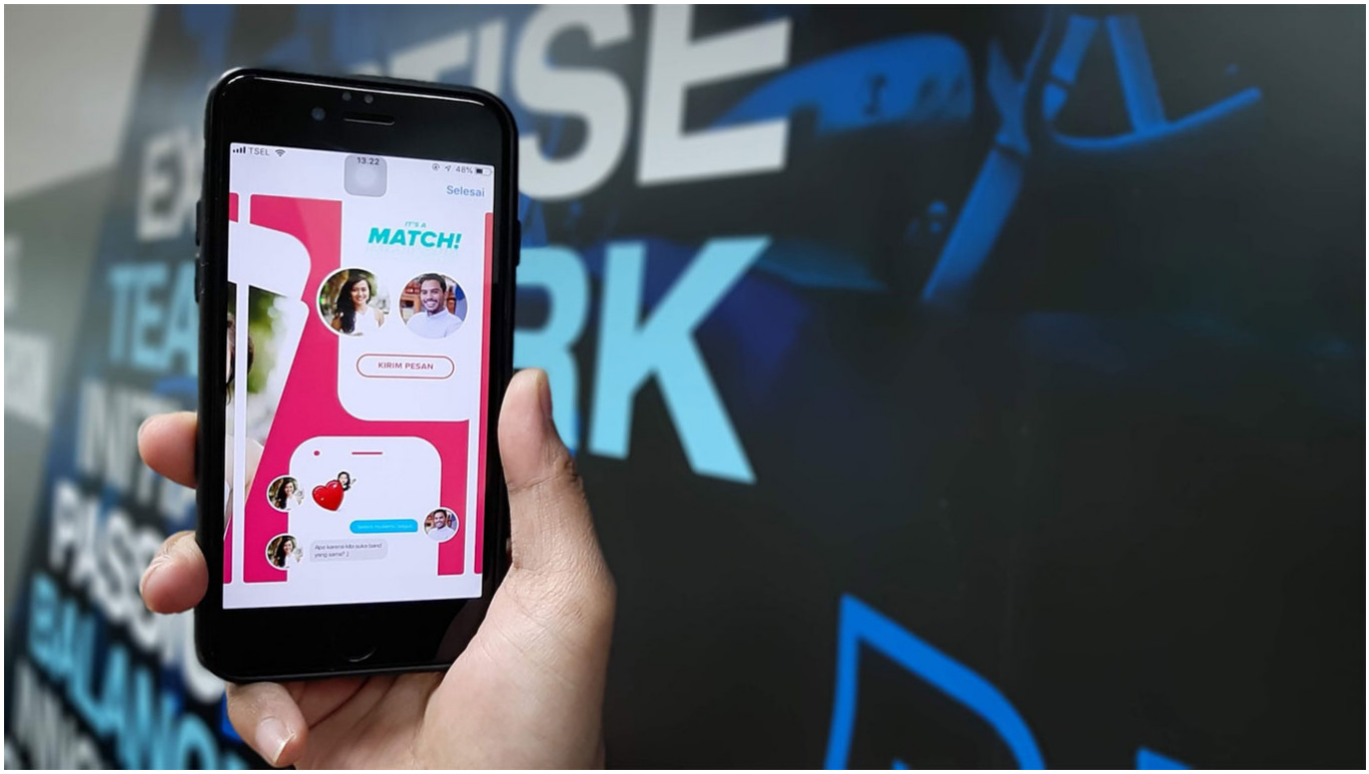
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Russia's VK Developing Homegrown Tinder Alternative

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Russian tech giant VK is developing its own dating service that could launch this summer following Tinder's planned exit from Russia, the Vedomosti business daily reported Friday, citing two unnamed sources close to VK and a third source close to the dating app.

Experts estimate the development and promotion of VK's dating app — based on its existing service VK Znakomstva — will cost hundreds of millions of rubles.

Related article: Tinder to Exit Russia More Than 1 Year Into Ukraine War

Tinder parent company Match Group announced this month that it plans to exit Russia by June 30, citing its commitment to "protecting human rights" amid Russia's war in Ukraine. Tinder's competitor Bumble announced its Russia exit in March 2022, days after Russian forces invaded Ukraine.

VK Znakomstva's user base has seen a year-on-year surge of 81% to 22.1 million unique users, Vedomosti cited a VK report dated May 2 as saying.

Vedomosti notes that the new dating app will not require an existing VK account.

Russia has sought to develop domestic-made alternatives to many of the Western businesses and digital services that left the country following the invasion of Ukraine.

"Given the very obvious trend of regional segmentation of the global internet and de-globalization of services, the emergence of own products replacing those that had left is a logical step for internet companies," Pavel Zhitnyuk, head of the iTrend communications agency, told Vedomosti.

In addition to its social networking platform, VK apps offer messaging, digital payments and grocery shopping services.

Apple removed VK apps from the App Store last fall, citing British sanctions on its developers.

VK CEO Vladimir Kiriyenko is the son of the deputy head of President Vladimir Putin's administration, Sergei Kiriyenko.

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