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Ozon Denies Central Bank's Claim That Marketplace Discounts Distort Competition

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An Ozon order pick-up point. **Alexei Belkin / NEWS.ru / TASS**

E-commerce giant Ozon on Monday rejected allegations of unfair competition after Russia's Central Bank was reported to have backed major banks as they seek restrictions on how online marketplaces incentivize customers to use their own financial services.

The business newspaper Kommersant reported that Central Bank Governor Elvira Nabiullina had proposed banning marketplaces from offering discounts to customers who pay through their subsidiary banks.

Nabiullina was said the practice gives platforms an "inherent competitive advantage over other market players," according to the report, citing a letter she sent to Economic Development Minister Maxim Reshetnikov.

Ozon, one of Russia's largest online retailers, called the Central Bank proposal "strange" and

insisted that it provides equal access to all banks on its platform.

"We have discussed equal access for all banks to our loyalty program with the [Central Bank]," the company told the state-run RIA Novosti news agency, without saying whether any agreement had been reached.

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The Economic Development Ministry told Kommersant it was reviewing Nabiullina's proposals but noted that Russia's platform-economy law already allows the government to set pricing rules for online marketplaces. Any new restrictions on loyalty programs, it said, would need to be assessed for their impact on sellers, consumers and the broader digital economy.

Russia's largest lenders, including Sber, VTB and T-Bank, accused marketplaces last month of restricting competition by tying discounts to their in-house payment tools.

Sberbank CEO German Gref said Tuesday that such practices reduce tax revenue and give e-commerce platforms an unfair edge over brick-and-mortar retailers.

Nabiullina was also reported to have argued in her letter that prices on marketplaces should not depend on the payment method customers choose at checkout.

E-commerce platforms, meanwhile, have accused banks of trying to curb competition as more customers switch to marketplace-linked financial services.

The Association of E-Commerce Companies, which represents Wildberries, Ozon and Yandex.Market, said banks have long used card-linked cash-back and similar rewards programs within their own ecosystems without facing comparable scrutiny.

In its comments to RIA Novosti on Monday, Ozon said it was working with 17 banks "to bring customers even more benefits."

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