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Finance Ministry Eyes Online Casino Legalization to Boost Revenues – Kommersant

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Finance Minister Anton Siluanov and Vladimir Putin. **Mikhail Metzel / TASS**

Finance Minister Anton Siluanov has proposed legalizing online casinos as a way to boost state revenues, the business newspaper Kommersant reported Tuesday, citing two people familiar with a letter the minister sent to President Vladimir Putin.

Siluanov suggested lifting Russia's ban on online casinos, which have been illegal since 2009, as the government looks for new sources of income to offset the rising costs of the war against Ukraine.

Despite the ban, online gambling has surged in recent years. The Finance Ministry estimates that total turnover in Russia's legal betting market, which allows licensed bookmakers and totalizators to operate online, reached 1.7 trillion rubles ($22.2 billion) in 2024.

By contrast, the size of the illegal online gambling market is estimated at 3 trillion rubles

($39.1 billion), with roughly 100 illicit platforms in operation.

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Kommersant reported that Siluanov's proposal would introduce a unified system for tracking bets, similar to the framework used for legal bookmakers, and place the industry under the oversight of a single regulator responsible for preventing gambling addiction.

Other government agencies would be tasked with stepping up efforts to block illegal operators, the report said.

Siluanov, in his letter to Putin, estimated that legalizing online casinos and imposing a monthly tax of at least 30% on gross revenue could generate about 100 billion rubles ($1.3 billion) a year for the federal budget.

Kommersant's report did not specify whether Putin has responded to the proposal or signaled support for legalizing online casinos.

The online gambling industry has experienced explosive growth throughout the world in recent years, and some researchers have been sounding the alarm about a corresponding rise in gambling addiction, which they view as a serious public health issue.

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