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Russia to Check Films for 'Traditional Values' Violations

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Sergei Fadeichev / TASS

Russian authorities will start checking films released without official distribution permits for content that may "discredit traditional values," according to an order published by the Culture Ministry.

The checks will start on March 1 and will be launched following the submission of a complaint, the order said. The document does not specify whether complainants must provide their full name.

The ministry will set up a special expert council to assess flagged films and may consult academics and cultural figures.

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Reviews of films shorter than 420 minutes must be completed within 20 days. If violations are found, the conclusions will be forwarded to state media watchdog Roskomnadzor.

The new procedure comes ahead of a newly passed law due to take effect on March 1 banning the screening of films deemed to "discredit traditional values."

Under the legislation, films may be denied distribution permits and barred from circulation on online platforms with daily audiences of more than 100,000 users, as well as on social networks with more than 500,000 daily visitors.

The move is part of a broader tightening of state control over culture and media in Russia since Moscow launched its full-scale invasion of Ukraine in 2022.

Authorities banned what they described as "propaganda" of LGBTQ+ relationships in 2022, followed by a ban on the "promotion" of drugs in 2024.

The measures led to the removal of films from streaming platforms, the editing or censoring of scenes and the withdrawal of books from sale or alterations to texts in new editions.

State-controlled Gazprom Media Holding has said it spent "several hundred million rubles" developing an automated system to identify video content that does not comply with official definitions of "traditional values."

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