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Federal Anti-Monopoly Service Grants Grace Period on Telegram, YouTube Ad Ban After Backlash

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Russia's Federal Anti-Monopoly Service (FAS) said Wednesday that it will introduce a grace period through the end of the year for a ban on advertising on Telegram and YouTube, coming after members of parliament asked the agency to clarify enforcement of the surprise ban.

Confusion arose earlier this month when Russian media reported that FAS was pursuing criminal charges against at least two bloggers for placing ads on Telegram and YouTube. FAS linked the charges to restrictions imposed on the platforms by the state communications regulator Roskomnadzor.

Until then, there had been no indication that advertising on either platform was illegal.

Roskomnadzor, which has gradually tightened restrictions on Telegram's features since August, appeared to support the FAS interpretation that advertising on restricted platforms

could be unlawful but offered few other details.

In response, lawmakers in the lower-house State Duma called on FAS to provide clarification about the advertising ban.

“It is clear that businesses need time to adapt to the new rules and shift to alternative advertising channels,” FAS said in a statement published on its website on Wednesday.

“Therefore, a transitional period through the end of 2026 is deemed necessary for advertising on Telegram and YouTube. During this time, enforcement measures will not be applied,” it added.

However, FAS said advertisers and content creators could still face fines for placing ads on Instagram and Facebook, which Russia banned in 2022 as “extremist” platforms. Advertising virtual private networks, or VPNs, is also illegal, it added.

Related article: Russia’s Antitrust Agency Confirms Advertising Ban on Telegram, Meta Platforms and YouTube

Alexei Nechaev, a State Duma lawmaker and founder of the New People party, said the grace period was the result of a “joint effort” in parliament, noting that blogger groups had pushed back against fines for advertising on social media platforms restricted in Russia.

“Their concerns were heard, and the authorities agreed to compromise. Thousands of bloggers and businesspeople will now be able to continue working without disruption,” he said.

Nechaev added that rules for 2027-2028 are still under discussion and “should not place an undue burden on advertisers.”

The advertising ban comes amid mounting restrictions on Telegram, which has around 90 million users in Russia. Authorities claim the messaging app is being used by criminal and terrorist groups, as well as Western intelligence agencies, to sow chaos in Russia.

Unconfirmed reports in February suggested Russia could move to block Telegram entirely as early as next month. The FSB security service is currently investigating the company’s founder, Pavel Durov, on allegations of aiding and abetting terrorism.

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