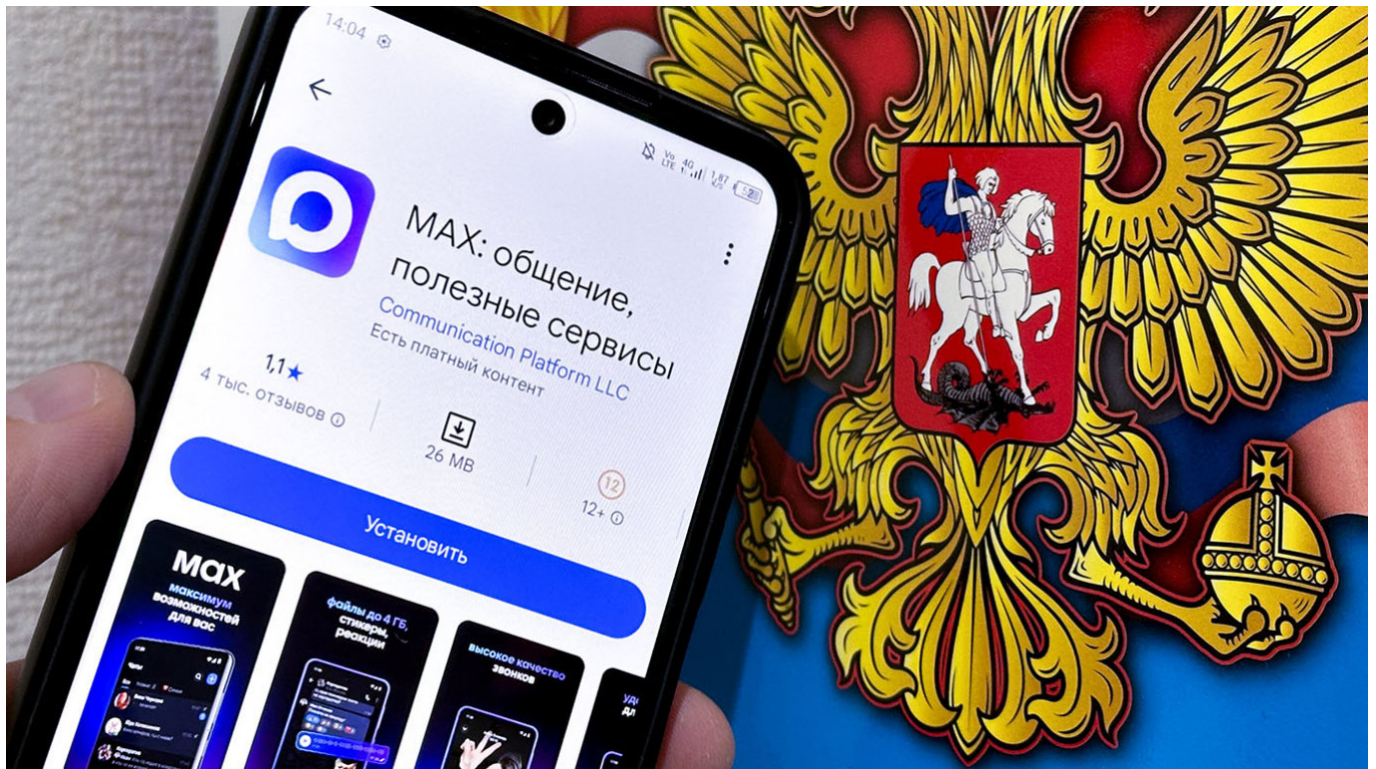


EU Sanctions VK for Developing Messenger App Max

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The Kremlin-backed messenger app Max. **Moskva News Agency**

The European Union on Monday [sanctioned](#) Russian tech giant VK over its role in developing the Kremlin-backed messaging app Max, which critics say was created for mass surveillance and censorship.

The restrictions on VK and its subsidiary, Communication Platform LLC, follow coordinated EU and British sanctions targeting individuals and entities accused of being behind Russia-attributed cyberattacks across Europe.

“The development of the Max application was supervised by the Federal Security Service (FSB),” the EU said in its official sanctions designation.

Brussels cited expert opinions claiming that Max, which comes pre-installed on all phones and devices sold in Russia, has “extensive” surveillance capabilities to monitor communications.

“The introduction and promotion of the Max application by the Russian state have been accompanied by a crackdown on and blocking of other independent applications,” the EU designated added, referring to restrictions on Telegram and WhatsApp.

“Therefore, VK provides technical support for the repression of civil society and democratic opposition, including by assisting and facilitating such acts,” it said.

Related article: [Apple Removes Kremlin-Backed Messaging App Max From App Store](#)

Responding to the sanctions announcement, VK [said](#) it did not expect its platforms, which include the social media websites VKontakte and Odnoklassniki, or Max to be impacted.

“Applications and services are available to users as normal,” the company [told](#) state news agencies.

Last month, Apple [removed](#) VK platforms and Max from its App Store. It said the move was based on sanctions compliance, even though VK was not under sanctions at the time.

Separately, the EU and the U.K. on Monday sanctioned individuals and entities accused of involvement in Russian “cyber and hybrid operations.”

The British government [targeted](#) 24 people and entities, including senior leaders of Russia’s GRU military intelligence, who are accused of working with cybercriminals to sow chaos and division across Europe.

Brussels [sanctioned](#) nine individuals and four entities linked to the FSB’s Center 16, accusing them of collaborating with cyber threat groups to infiltrate government networks and sabotage critical infrastructure in Ukraine and at least nine EU countries.

The EU is expected to adopt its 21st package of sanctions against Russia next week.

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