

4 May 2022

Open letter to industry about new restrictions on the provision of certain internet services to, or for the benefit of, “designated persons”

As part of the Government’s package of sanctions following Russia’s invasion of Ukraine, on Wednesday 27 April 2022, the Secretary of State for Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Affairs made new regulations imposing restrictions on the provision of certain internet services to, or for the benefit of, designated persons (the **Regulations**).¹ Currently the Secretary of State has named TV-Novosti and Rossiya Segodnya as designated persons for these purposes.²

The Regulations relate to the provision of internet access services, social media services and application stores. They were laid before Parliament and came into force on Friday 29 April 2022.

The Regulations require different actions to be taken depending on the nature of the services that are offered:

- Providers of internet access services must take reasonable steps to prevent users of the service in the United Kingdom from accessing, by means of that service, an internet service provided by TV-Novosti or Rossiya Segodnya.
- Providers of social media services must take reasonable steps to prevent content that is generated directly on the service, or uploaded to or shared on the service, by TV-Novosti or Rossiya Segodnya being encountered by a user of the service in the United Kingdom.
- Providers of application stores through which an application for an internet service may be downloaded or otherwise accessed must take reasonable steps to prevent users of the application store in the United Kingdom from downloading or otherwise accessing, by means of that service, an internet service provided by TV-Novosti or Rossiya Segodnya.

For these purposes, internet services provided by TV-Novosti include rt.com; internet services provided by Rossiya Segodnya include sputniknews.com.

The Regulations appoint Ofcom as the enforcement authority responsible for ensuring compliance, including granting us information gathering powers, and additional powers to impose monetary penalties of up to £1,000,000 in relevant circumstances. Were it necessary for Ofcom to take enforcement action, we would follow the general processes and procedures set out in our regulatory enforcement guidelines.³

More information and general guidance on the Russia Sanctions regime can be found here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/russia-sanctions-guidance/russia-sanctions-guidance>.

¹ See The Russia (Sanctions) (EU Exit) (Amendment) (No. 9) Regulations 2022 SI 2022/477: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2022/477>.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-uk-sanctions-list>.

³ https://www.ofcom.org.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0015/102516/Enforcement-guidelines-for-regulatory-investigations.pdf.