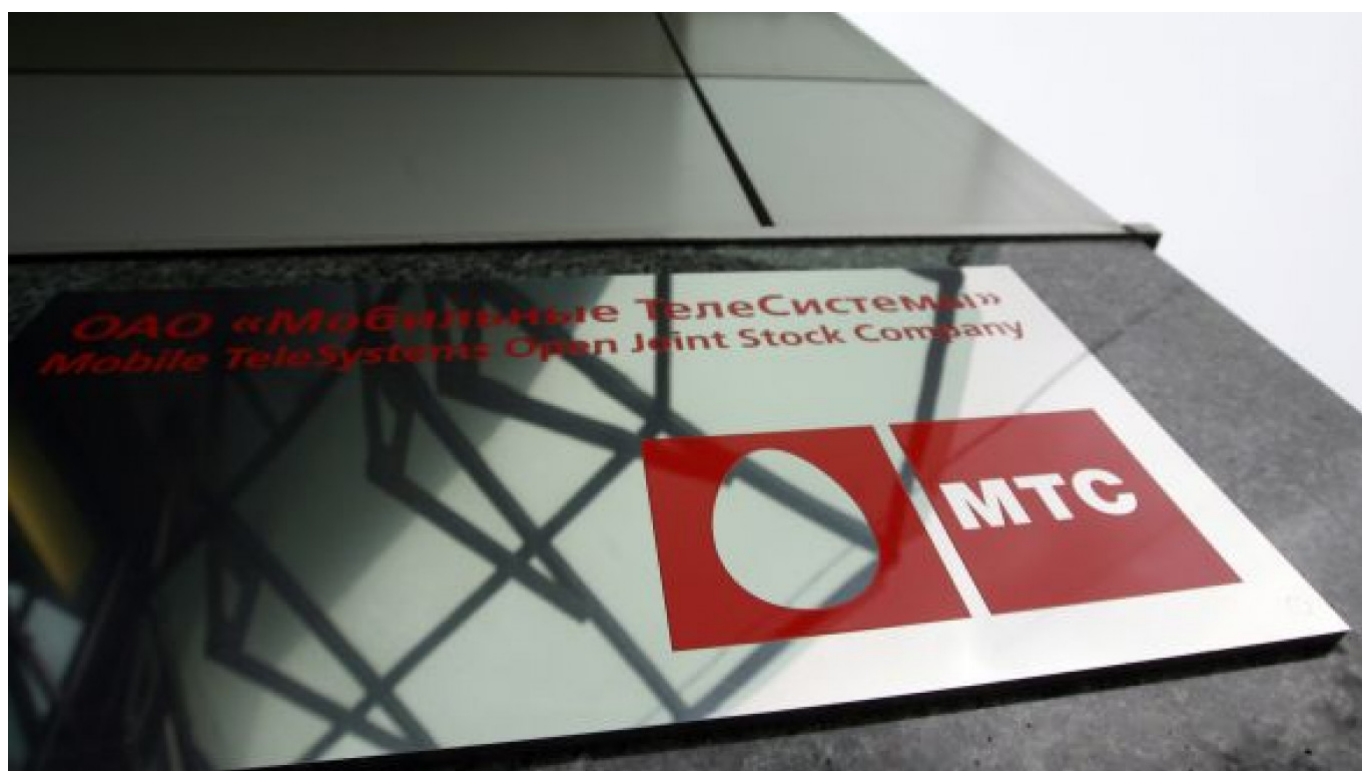


Belarus Plans MTS Auction This Year

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Mobile TeleSystems, which has a 49 percent stake in Belarus MTS, has reiterated its interest in buying the Belarussian government out of the pair's joint venture. **Maxim Stulov**

Belarus' State Property Committee has begun preparations for the auctioning off of the state's 51 percent stake in the joint venture it has with Russian cell phone giant Mobile TeleSystems.

The auction will be held before the end of the year, the committee told Interfax, and the starting price is still set at \$1 billion.

"A final date for the auction of the state stake in MTS has not yet been determined, but a series of presentations will take place at the end of October, beginning of November," a committee spokesman said.

Russian parent company Mobile TeleSystems, which has a 49 percent stake in the venture, has reiterated its interest in buying Belarus out. "We are interested in this asset," MTS public relations director Yelena Kokhanovskaya said.

Belarus MTS had 5 million subscribers as of July 1, 2012.

Meanwhile, Mobile TeleSystems in Russia said Monday that it plans to double the share of mobile Internet users among its subscribers by 2014.

About 37 percent of MTS' customers used mobile data services as of the end of the second quarter, company spokeswoman Valeria Kuzmenko said.

Data services generated 7.8 billion rubles (\$243 million) of the company's revenues from its mobile business in Russia in the second quarter, up by 35 percent. Rival operator MegaFon reported that its revenues from data services grew 27.5 percent to 7.9 billion rubles in the second quarter, while VimpelCom increased quarterly mobile data revenues by 35 percent to 5.6 billion rubles.

Smart phones accounted for 27 percent of the mobile phones sold in Russia in the second quarter, up from 18 percent a year earlier, MTS estimates.

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