

Federation Council Unable to Take Advantage of Number Portability

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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The Federation Council will not swap mobile phone providers from MTS to MegaFon, said Ruslan Gattarov, the head of the upper chamber's Committee on Information Society Development.

The decision marks the failure of a major corporate client to take advantage of the law enacted at the end of last year that allows cell phone customers to change mobile service providers without losing their old phone numbers, Vedomosti reported Wednesday.

Late last year the Federation Council announced a tender among the “big three” of major mobile communications service providers — MTS, MegaFon and Beeline — to supply communication services.

The council issued a tender to procure telecommunications services with the price of the contract starting at 29 million rubles (\$875,600) and the condition that its administrators as

well as senators get to keep their current phone numbers when transferring to another provider, Gattarov told Digit.ru on Tuesday.

Despite winning the tender, MegaFon, which had offered the lowest bid of 22 million rubles, has not been able to sign a contract with the Federation Council because it could not transfer phone numbers previously serviced by MTS to its network.

As a result, the contract with MTS was extended through 2014, although the existing operator has matched the terms of the winning bid proposed by MegaFon, the news report said. The incident demonstrated that the service of mobile number portability is not yet working, Gattarov said. He expressed hope that the Communications and Press Ministry would find a way to avoid such situations in the future. The regulator said it is studying the number portability process, using the Federation Council situation as an example, and will make changes to the regulations if it determines they are necessary.

After the law on mobile number portability came into effect on Dec. 1, hundreds of individual consumers were rejected by mobile operators when attempting to transfer to another network while keeping their phone numbers, but the situation with the Federation Council shows that corporate clients are also unable to make use of the law designed to end what has been labeled “mobile slavery.”

MTS said that MegaFon had not properly prepared the paperwork necessary for transferring numbers, while a spokeswoman for MegaFon accused MTS of sabotage. MegaFon complained to the Federal Antimonopoly Service in December about MTS’s behavior. A spokesman for the Federation Council said that MTS is continuing to serve the legislative body, and it has no complaints about the service.

In most cases problems arise with the operator whose numbers are being transferred to another network, a source in the Federal Communications Agency said. He did not comment on the latest case involving the Federation Council, but another source close to the Central Institute of Communications — which maintains the data base of transferred phone numbers — suggested that the “donor” operator MTS may have prevented the transfer of numbers to MegaFon using “legal loopholes.”

The source said he is hopeful that when the trial period for ramping up mobile number portability ends in spring, operators will no longer be able to set up obstacles to customers who want to keep their phone numbers while switching providers.

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