

Russian Duolingo Removes LGBTQ+ References in Censorship Compliance

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A mascot of the Duolingo owl. [Brecht Bug / flickr \(CC BY-NC-ND 2.0\)](#)

The popular language learning platform Duolingo has removed references to LGBTQ+ people in its Russian version at Moscow's request, the state-run news agency TASS [reported](#) Tuesday.

Russia's state media watchdog Roskomnadzor had this spring [ordered](#) Duolingo to comply with its "LGBT propaganda" law after conservative activists [spotted](#) phrases like "Ben and Peter love each other" and "Clara met her wife Maria at a lesbian bar" on the app.

Otherwise, Duolingo faced a fine of up to 4 million rubles (\$45,000) or a potential ban in Russia.

"Duolingo has sent a letter of reply to Roskomnadzor confirming that it had removed materials promoting non-traditional sexual relations from the learning app," Roskomnadzor told TASS.

It was not immediately possible to verify the report.

Related article: [TikTok Users Turn Russian Pro-War Song Into 'LGBT Anthem'](#)

Russia banned “propaganda of non-traditional sexual relations” toward minors in 2013.

A decade later, President Vladimir Putin expanded the ban to outlaw public displays of non-traditional relationships and lifestyles to people of any age.

Rights groups have criticized the Russian government for failing to define what constitutes "gay propaganda" and warned that the vague criteria mean TV channels and websites could be fined at whim.

Since invading Ukraine in 2022, Putin accelerated Moscow's suppression of the LGBTQ+ community as part of a broader "culture war" with the West.

That year, Duolingo [disabled monetization](#) in Russia and Belarus in solidarity with Ukraine.

Russia’s Supreme Court designated the non-existent “international LGBT movement” as “extremist” late last year, effectively outlawing LGBTQ+ activism.

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