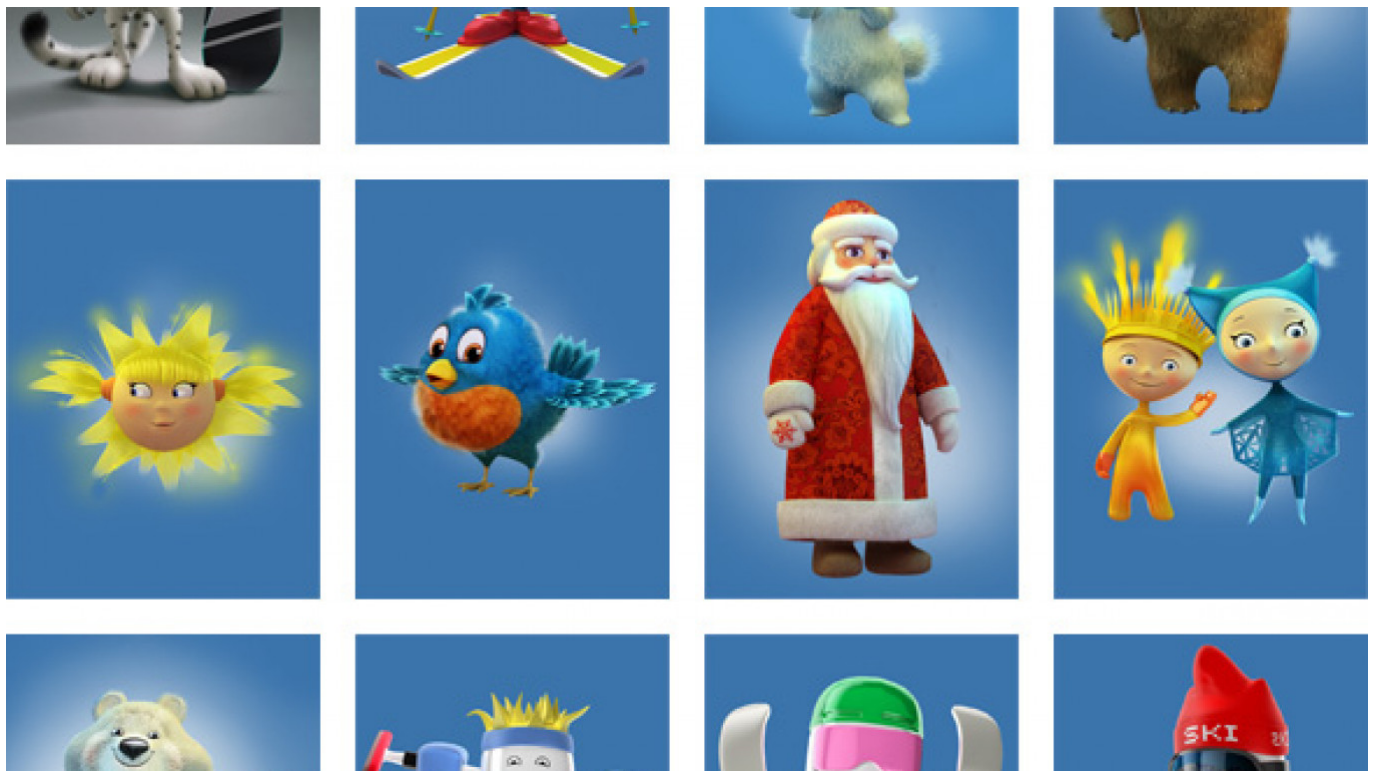


Mascots Audition for Olympics

By [Anatoly Medetsky](#)

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Four athletic matryoshkas are among the contenders vying for mascot.

The potential mascots for the 2014 Winter Olympics in Sochi premiered on the air Monday night in the first public presentation of the images after months of collecting ideas and design work.

Only two of the 10 mascots — shown on Channel One — will eventually represent the Olympic and Paralympic Games. Viewers will vote for the candidates during a “grandiose” show on the channel at the end of this month, the government's Sochi 2014 Organizing Committee said.

The committee started collecting ideas for the mascot online on Sept. 1, raking in more than 24,000 images by the close of the competition on Dec. 5. Afterward, a jury, including Channel One chief executive Konstantin Ernst, theater and film directors, athletes and musicians, selected ideas for professional designers to further develop.

One powerful voter, Prime Minister Vladimir Putin, said in September 2009 that a snow leopard would make a good Olympic mascot as “a sign of the rebirth of wildlife.” He made the

comment when he and Jean-Claude Killy, the International Olympic Committee's coordination commission chairman, attended an official handover of two snow leopards to a nature reserve near Sochi as a present from Turkmenistan, in an effort to breed them again in a region where they have been extinct for decades.

Alexander Vinogradov, a creative director at design company Agey Tomesh, favors the leopard as well.

“It would be superb for television promotions,” he said. “You could put it on a sled, skates or skis. The image is strong and vigorous. The others are too childish.”

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