

Theaters May Be Forced to Show Russian Films

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The government is discussing a possible move to institute a quota for screen time given to Russian films in movie theaters, Kommersant reported Wednesday.

The policy being discussed in correspondence between the Economic Development Ministry and the Culture Ministry would mandate that a minimum of as much as 24 percent of screen time be given to the films, which are often less popular than foreign productions.

In a letter to the Culture Ministry, Deputy Economic Development Minister Stanislav Voskresensky advocated for supporting Russian films and said they remain popular for longer because they are of higher quality.

Voskresensky cited similar quotas in Western countries, including France, where he said 43 percent of screen time is required to be devoted to foreign films.

Producers have said the support would have little effect, and that these films would be shown "in closets."

Voskresensky also suggested import quotas restricting foreign films, noting China's policy limiting such films to 30 per year.

An unnamed source in the film industry told Kommersant that quotas have been discussed for quite some time, with Russian producers forming the main block of support.

The source said that while Prime Minister Vladimir Putin had effectively blocked import quotas, the idea of a screen-time minimum has general support and now falls under the authority of Deputy Prime Minister Vladislav Surkov, who is a member of the cinematography council in charge of such projects.

Theater attendance in Russia and the CIS rose last year by 16 percent, with revenues reaching a total of \$1.2 billion. Income from Russian films accounted for only 16 percent of that figure.

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