

Moscow Official Says Russia Has the Best Television in the World

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Alexei Volin, the deputy head of Russia's Communications Ministry, has responded to the thousands of people who signed an online petition complaining about New Year's coverage on Pervyi Kanal, one of Russia's biggest national television networks.

"Russia has the best television in the world, and those who don't like its New Year's coverage don't have to watch it," Volin told the Russia Today news network, in comments that are likely to disappoint critics.

For the past week, the Russian Internet has buzzed with angry complaints about the shoddy quality of the holiday specials that aired on New Year's Eve on the country's biggest TV networks, where the same aging celebrities have appeared annually for many consecutive years.

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In a petition addressed to Pervyi Kanal's general director, Konstantin Ernst, a man in Rostov-on-Don has asked the network to invest in research to determine what viewers would actually like to see in the channel's holiday coverage next New Year's Eve. At the time of this writing, the petition has more than 92,000 signatures.

Last year, for the first time ever, the television network "Rossiya 1" beat Pervyi Kanal in nationwide ratings, according to the marketing firm Mediascope. Pervyi Kanal has failed only once before to take Russian TV's top spot — in 2012, when NTV narrowly claimed more viewers.

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