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Russia Plans To Increase 2018 Election Turnout With Memes and Selfies

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Two Russian advertising agencies will lead the PR drive to increase voter turnout in next year's presidential elections, officials announced on Wednesday.

President Vladimir Putin is expected to run in the March 2018 election, extending his tenure into 2024. Reports suggest Putin could announce his bid for a fourth term in December when the Central Election Commission said it plans to kick-off the campaign.

Related article: Putin Is Reportedly Deciding How to Announce His 2018 Presidential Bid

The commission awarded the get-out-the-vote contract to public relations agency IMA-Consulting in late August. The Moscow-based firm proposed to boost the youth vote through the use of memes and selfies.

Another firm, Mikhailov & Partners, was chosen to partner with IMA-Consulting to promote the presidential election through social media, the election commission announced Wednesday. A representative of the firm said that it would target voters on Yandex, Mail.ru

and YouTube, RBC business news portal reported Wednesday.

“Of course, voters will decide themselves about who to vote for, but our goal will be to provide them with the information necessary to make that decision,” the RBC business portal cited Ella Pamfilova, chief of the election commission, as saying at a press conference on Wednesday.

Pamfilova said the election commission plans to spend a total of 770 million rubles ($13 million) on the publicity drive, RBC reported. IMA-Consulting will receive 37 million, while Mikhailov & Partners will receive a higher amount that has yet to be finalized, Pamfilova said.

“We have three goals — to increase awareness among the audience, to create trust and to raise the level of participation,” a representative of Mikhailov & Partners told RBC.

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