

Russian TV Cancels 'The Voice Kids' Results After Mass Vote Rigging

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Mikella Abramova **1st Channel**

Russia's state-run television has canceled the results of a popular children's singing competition after cyber experts uncovered online vote-rigging that favored the 11-year-old daughter of a celebrity and a banker.

Channel One [hired](#) the Group-IB international cybersecurity firm to investigate claims that "The Voice Kids" vote-by-phone system was tampered with in April. Group-IB's initial investigation showed that bots had [cast](#) 8,000 text-message votes from 300 phone numbers for Mikella Abramova, daughter of popular singer Alsou and banker Yan Abramov.

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The results prompted Channel One to [announce](#) that a do-over of the final will be held next Friday, May 24. It did not say if viewers will be able to vote for a winner in the new round.

“What happened ... should become the first and last case of someone trying to manipulate the audience’s choice,” the TV channel [said](#) in a statement Thursday.

The show’s rights owner, the Dutch company Talpa Media, [said](#) it “regrets” that the votes were rigged. “We believe that the special one-time concert will showcase the talents of all finalists and semifinalists,” it told Russia’s RBC news website.

Group-IB founder and CEO Ilya Sachkov [said](#) the final results of the investigation into the child singing competition scam will be confirmed later this month.

International news coverage of the controversy [evoked](#) claims of Russian interference in the U.S. presidential elections with [headlines blaming](#) “Russian bots” for the automated votes.

Abramova turned 11 on April 29, when Channel One [announced](#) its investigation in response to the wave of vote-rigging allegations.

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