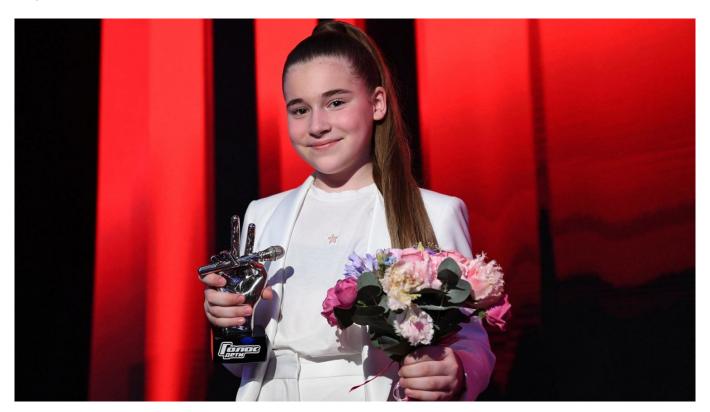


Russian TV Cancels 'The Voice Kids' Results After Mass Vote Rigging

May 17, 2019



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 <u>hired</u> 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 <u>cast</u> 8,000 text-message votes from 300 phone numbers for Mikella Abramova, daughter of popular singer Alsou and banker Yan Abramov.

Embed:

The results prompted Channel One to <u>announce</u> 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 <u>said</u> in a statement Thursday.

The show's rights owner, the Dutch company Talpa Media, <u>said</u> 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 <u>said</u> the final results of the investigation into the child singing competition scam will be confirmed later this month.

International news coverage of the controversy <u>evoked</u> claims of Russian interference in the U.S. presidential elections with <u>headlines blaming</u> "Russian bots" for the automated votes.

Abramova turned 11 on April 29, when Channel One <u>announced</u> its investigation in response to the wave of vote-rigging allegations.

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