

Moscow, Nizhny Novgorod to Allow E-Voting for Putin's Constitutional Amendments

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A campaign poster calling for the public to vote on the constitutional amendments. **Sergei Vedyashkin / Moskva News Agency**

Moscow and central Russia's Nizhny Novgorod region will be able to cast their votes online on a set of constitutional amendments that would allow President Vladimir Putin to extend his rule into the next decade, election officials [said](#) Thursday.

The vote was originally set for April 22 but was pushed back to July 1 due to the coronavirus. The proposed changes to Russia's Constitution would allow Putin — who has been in office either as president or prime minister since 1999 — to serve two more six-year terms without taking a break.

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The Central Election Commission (CEC) said it has approved e-voting bids from Moscow and the Nizhny Novgorod region, rejecting bids from three other regions including St. Petersburg.

The e-voting system will be based on the technology used during the 2019 municipal elections in the Russian capital, Communications Minister Maksut Shadayev said according to the Kommersant business daily. A French cryptographer said he was able to [hack](#) into the e-voting system ahead of last year's vote, exposing a security breach in its protocol in 20 minutes.

"It's hard to believe that Moscow will conduct e-voting in a way that all voters could trust its results," Vasily Vaisenberg, an expert at the Golos vote-monitoring NGO, told Kommersant.

The technology allows a maximum of 10 million voters to be casting ballots online at a time, according to CEC deputy chief Nikolai Bulayev. Shadayev maintained that the system will be "stable and reliable."

Moscow plans to test the e-voting system sometime after next Friday.

Putin [approved](#) election law changes last month that allow Russians to vote online, prompting questions over whether the new rules will apply to the upcoming vote on the Constitution.

Observers have [said](#) that he expanded voting options, including e-voting and allowing early voting the day after Russia's rescheduled Victory Day parade, to ensure high turnout. Polls have [shown](#) a majority or [close to a majority](#) of Russians expressing willingness to vote in favor of the amendments, which in addition to resetting presidential term counts enshrine social guarantees.

Putin has [seen](#) his popularity fall to historic lows since he first introduced the package of amendments amid a sweeping government shake-up in January, with public discontent brewing over his handling of the economic fallout from the coronavirus.

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