

No Consensus on Candidates' Access to Media Coverage

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The Central Elections Commission and independent elections watchdog Golos gave divergent opinions Thursday regarding presidential candidates' access to media coverage during the campaign.

The state body said they uncovered no violations, while Golos claimed there was disproportionate TV coverage of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

The elections commission on Thursday dismissed complaints on the matter filed by the Communist Party fraction in the State Duma and by civic group League of Voters, Itar-Tass reported.

A working group in the commission said statistics from companies that measure television coverage time of the candidates were based upon faulty methodology and did not provide objective results.

Meanwhile, representatives of elections watchdog Golos said Thursday that Putin received more than double the amount of TV coverage as the other candidates, BBC Russian Service

reported.

They noted that the country's leading television channels showed extra footage of Putin on the grounds that they were covering his activities as prime minister.

Golos analytics department head Alexander Kynyev also noted the predominant role of television in media coverage of the campaign, saying there were very few outdoor signs promoting the candidates.

"It's impossible to know that there is a presidential campaign on in the country if you don't watch television," Kynyev said, BBC reported.

Elections chief Vladimir Churov said no official complaints had been received from candidates regarding violations of media access rules, Itar-Tass reported. In past presidential campaigns, candidates have accused state-run media of providing more coverage of the candidate from the ruling party.

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