

Lesin Drives Quest for New Rating System for Television

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Recently appointed Gazprom-Media head Mikhail Lesin has united three of Russia's largest television companies to create a joint committee that will select a television-audience rating system for universal use within the industry, Kommersant reported Tuesday.

TNS Russia has provided audience measurements to the television industry since the late 1990s, with a total of 140 billion rubles (\$4.3 billion) worth of advertising time sold in 2012 based on its information, according to the Association of Communication Agencies of Russia, or AKAR.

Advertising agencies, their clients and almost all major broadcasters operate on TNS's data with one crucial exception — Channel One, which has spurned the company's services since 2005.

Now, Channel One has joined forces with Gazprom-Media and the All-Russia State Television

and Radio Broadcasting Company to create the joint committee, the companies said in a statement Friday.

The committee is expected to put out a tender for audience measurement services in the first quarter of 2014, said Alexander Kostyuk, head of the task force charged with creating the committee.

Television advertising industry players agreed that the project is the brainchild of Mikhail Lesin, a former presidential advisor who was appointed head of Gazprom-Media in October.

Lesin began a similar project as press minister in the early 2000s, but the project ground to a halt in 2004 with the collapse of The Media Committee, the state-industry association on which it was based.

Advertisers, represented by branded goods manufacturers association Rusbrand, then came together with advertising agencies, represented by AKAR, and clients of TNS in an unofficial association known as the Group of Data Users, or GDP, which has since functioned as an intermediary between TNS and the industry.

But while the GDP is just an advisory body, the proposed joint industry committee will wield the legal authority to pay for audience research on behalf of its members, Lesin said.

In addition to the three major broadcasters already named, National Media Group and STS Media both "support the joint industry committee and are ready to join it," Lesin said, adding that he hopes to bring AKAR, Rusbrand and additional television channels into the committee as well.

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