

# Microsoft Scraps Russian Schools Tablet Program Over Rotenberg Blacklisting

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The U.S. software giant's Windows-based tablets would be delivered to schools across Russia in a move toward making electronic versions of all Russian school textbooks available by 2015.

Microsoft has suspended plans to provide tablets to Russian schools under a deal expected to benefit a textbook publisher headed by Kremlin ally Arkady Rotenberg, citing "concerns" over Western sanctions, a news report said.

According to an agreement signed in late September, Microsoft would "provide free of charge, to [publisher] Prosveshcheniye, the same type of technical assistance that [it] provides at no cost to thousands of schools and publishers worldwide," Microsoft said in a statement cited Saturday by the [New York Times](#).

A long-time ally of President Vladimir Putin, Rotenberg, who heads the the board of directors of Prosveshcheniye, has been targeted by Western sanctions over Moscow's involvement in Ukraine.

Microsoft said it had "not found evidence" that the publishing house, like its board chairman, is subject to any U.S. or European sanctions, but had decided to "follow up on the concerns by postponing work under the agreement and conducting an additional review," The New York Times reported.

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The deal was widely expected to strengthen Prosvescheniye's market position, following a reshuffle of the textbook industry that has seen many of its competitors go out of business for failing new textbook mandates, including ones on books' "ethno-cultural value."

Citing Mikhail Morozovsky, editor in chief of the trade journal Book Business, the New York Times said government procurement records showed Prosvescheniye won 60 to 70 percent of Russia's textbook contracts, worth \$187 million, in the first seven months of the year.

The publisher is also providing 80 percent of textbooks being shipped to the newly annexed Crimea peninsula, the report said.

Since last winter, the number of textbooks approved for Russian schools has more than halved, the New York Times report said.

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