

Putin Accuses Foreign Organizations of Looting Russia's Brightest Youth

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The FLEX — or Future Leaders Exchange — program was established in 1992 and saw more than 8,000 Russian high schoolers travel to the United States for study purposes.

President Vladimir Putin has accused foreign-backed organizations of pillaging through Russian schools in search of their most talented pupils and then spiriting them away via educational programs abroad, state news agency RIA Novosti reported Wednesday.

Speaking at a meeting of the Council for Science and Education, Putin said it was necessary to pay attention to the work of nongovernmental organizations in schools because they threatened to suck Russia dry of its future talent.

"A network of [foreign] organizations has 'rummaged' through the schools in the Russian Federation for many years under the guise of supporting talented young people. In reality, they simply Hoover everything up like a vacuum," he was cited as saying by RIA.

Putin was responding to comments by Vladimir Fortov, head of the Russian Academy of Sciences, who said in March that a "brain drain" was robbing the country of its future

talent as educated youngsters sought out lives abroad.

Last year, as relations between Moscow and the West became strained over the crisis in Ukraine, Russia canceled an education exchange partnership with the United States in protest of the alleged adoption of a student by a same-sex couple.

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