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Russian Youth Agency Deputy Chief Arrested in Fraud Probe

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Denis Asharov. **Video grab**

Authorities in Moscow have detained the deputy head of Russia's Federal Agency for Youth Affairs (Rosmolodyozh) on suspicion of fraud tied to state contracts with a private university, the RBC news website reported Friday, citing three sources.

The investigation centers on two state contracts worth a combined 40.5 million rubles ($492,000) that Rosmolodyozh signed with Synergy University in 2023 and 2024, according to RBC.

Denis Ashirov, who has served as the agency's state secretary and deputy head since July 2022, faces up to 10 years in prison if convicted of large-scale fraud.

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Investigators are examining Ashirov's role in overseeing the contracts and approving the university's work on behalf of Rosmolodyozh, RBC reported.

Synergy University confirmed that investigators were looking into two contracts to develop online training programs for youth workers focused on "preventing negative social phenomena."

"The university fulfilled obligations under both contracts in full and within the established deadlines," Synergy University said in a statement. "The work results passed the customer's expert review and were accepted, with completion certificates signed by authorized officials."

The university said it won both contracts through open tenders involving seven organizations and that antitrust authorities had flagged no violations.

RBC and state-run media reported that Mikhail Yerofeyev, Synergy's vice rector for regional development, was detained during raids earlier Friday. The university said none of its employees had been charged.

In its statement, Synergy University denied that any charges were pressed against its employees.

Rosmolodyozh oversees Russia's youth policy and runs programs for young people, including educational forums and grants for youth-led projects.

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