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Wikipedia Edits Cannabis Article

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Russian Wikipedia edited an article on cannabis smoking on Monday, after being told that it could be shut down under the Internet content law passed last year.

"The article has been edited. The user community of Wikipedia decided against removing the article" said Stanislav Kozlovsky, acting director of Wikimedia RU, Itar-Tass reported.

Wikipedia had said earlier in the day that it would only change the article if it were required by U.S. authorities, since the web portal is based there, Vedomosti reported.

This follows a notice from the Communications and Press Ministry regulator that the page with the article was identified as "containing information prohibited for public distribution in the Russian Federation."

The article's popularity, spiked from the usual 400 daily views to more than 56,200 views on Friday, following the official Twitter message from Russian Wikipedia that the site was blacklisted.

Wikipedia decided to edit the article, keeping the site alive, pending the regulator's satisfaction with the changes.

"The article is completely reworked. It doesn't contain any instruction on how to make a smoking device; it never did. It's just it wasn't written in a scientific style," Kozlovsky said.

Nevertheless, the article underwent a substantial facelift. Sections such as "dosages," "specifics of smoking cannabis," "smoking devices," "local cannabis names" and "literature and hyperlinks" have been removed and new sections "effects of cannabis on human organism" and "legal status in Russia" have been added. In addition, the words "cannabis use is prohibited in many countries" have been added to the introductory paragraph.

Last July, Wikipedia shut down its Russian-language site for one day in protest against the federal Internet censorship bill. The bill was signed into law by president Vladimir Putin and went into effect in November 2012, allowing the government to blacklist and shutdown websites containing material promoting drug use, child pornography or suicide.

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