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Foreign Agents Law May Sound Death Knell for Famed Science Foundation

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Dmitry Zimin

Russia faces the loss of its most prominent science and education foundation, which landed on the Justice Ministry's list of "foreign agents" on Monday.

Earlier Monday, the Snob news site reported that Dynasty Foundation's president and founder — respected scientist-turned-businessman Dmitry Zimin — had vowed to close the organization were it to land on the list.

Russia's foreign agents law, adopted in 2012, requires nongovernment organizations that are engaged in loosely defined political activities and which receive funding from abroad to voluntarily register as "foreign agents," a term that carries a historic stigma of espionage. Later amendments emboldened the Justice Ministry to place reluctant NGOs on the register.

"Dynasty Foundation is the only one in Russia that does not receive money, but donates it," founder Dmitry Zimin said in comments carried by Snob. "I have never been showered with such gratitude, was never told 'thank you' as frequently as I hear it now. Suddenly our

foundation appears to be a foreign agent. Of course we have never been one and will never become one — we would sooner close our doors."

Zimin added that his foundation would make a formal announcement soon.

Dynasty supports the development of scientific research and education in Russia. The foundation's planned budget for programs and projects stands at 435 million rubles ($8.7 million) in 2015, according to the organization's website.

The Vedomosti business daily reported earlier this month that the Justice Ministry had conducted an inspection into Dynasty's affairs.

Dynasty was founded by Zimin in 2002. According to its website, it was modern Russia's "first private nonprofit foundation supporting science and education."

Correction: A previous version of this article listed the year of Dinastiya's founding as 2001. According to its website, Dinastiya was in fact founded in 2002.

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