

Beleaguered Russian Science Foundation Dynasty Delays Decision on Closure

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Dmitry Zimin, Dynasty's founder

Beleaguered science organization the Dynasty Foundation, which has been grappling in recent days with whether or not to shut its doors, announced that a decision on the matter will be delayed to provide time to wrap up ongoing projects, the Kommersant newspaper reported on Monday.

Following its inclusion on Russia's list of foreign agents, speculation swirled that the organization, which hands out grants for scientific research in Russia, would close. Dmitry Zimin, Dynasty's founder and the man whose fortune funds the foundation, has said in the past he would shut it down before accepting the label of "foreign agent."

The organization is presently focused on finishing up several ongoing projects, Yevgeny

Yasin, a member of Dynasty's board of directors, said in comments to Kommersant. A decision is expected to be made on the organization's future in two to four weeks.

"We have discussed the option of a full closure of the foundation, but we have not made a final decision," Yasin said, Kommersant reported.

Dynasty was placed on the foreign agents list in late May. Under Russian law, the Justice Department can place any NGO that receives foreign funding and that engages in loosely defined "political activities" on the list. The 2012 law was controversial among critics, as the term "foreign agent" carries a strong Cold War association with espionage.

In the case of Dynasty, the "foreign funding" comes from Russian national Zimin's foreign-based bank accounts. With regard to political activity, in addition to its many scientific projects, Dynasty also funds Liberal Mission — an NGO that provides a platform for debate among liberal-minded economists, political scientists and sociologists.

The decision to classify Dynasty as a foreign agent was met with widespread criticism from the science community.

Some 1,500 protesters rallied in Moscow over the weekend in defense of the Dynasty Foundation, The Associated Press reported.

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