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Russian NGO Named 'Foreign Agent' in HIV Inquiry

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A woman surveys the work of a graffiti artist, who has painted the words "Foreign Agent" on the side of a building.

Russian non-profit organization Sotsium has been labeled a 'foreign agent' by an inquiry into HIV patients initiated by the Engels city prosecutor, the Meduza news website reported Tuesday.

The decision was made based on the fact that Sotsium, which makes HIV preventative drugs and is based in Russia's Saratov region, from 2013-14 received 1.5 million rubles ($23,000) from non-profit partnership ESVERO, who in turn receive money from the European Commission and other foreign sources.

Sotsium spent part of this amount on 100,000 syringes and 10,000 condoms for drug addicts.

The inquiry concluded that Sotsium is involved in political activity.

A conclusion made by Saratov State Academy of Law professor Ivan Konovalov was cited in a

statement to the court. Konovalov claimed that Sotsium were part of a "hybrid war" aimed at altering Russia's political landscape.

Speaking about the distribution of free syringes and condoms, Konovalov claimed that the non-profit "broke [Russian] traditions and national values."

Sotsium spokesman Vladimir Dementiyev said in court that the money from ESVERO was received before the law on foreign agents came into force.

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