

EU offers financial support to the Russian enterprise sector

The Russian Federation is one of the most important partners for the European Union. A key priority for the EU is to build a strong strategic partnership with Russia based on a solid foundation of mutual respect. Moreover, Russia is the largest neighbour of the EU with a dynamic market for EU goods and services and the EU's market, on the other hand, is by far the most important destination for Russian exports.

During recent years, both sides reinforced their cooperation through a number of bilateral initiatives known as "four common spaces" in the work of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement. These common spaces cover economy, security and justice, external security as well as research and education. The aim is to put in place conditions which will increase opportunities for economic operators, promote trade and investment, facilitate the establishment and operation of companies on a reciprocal basis and strengthen cooperation in many sectors such as information, energy, research and development, transport and agriculture.

Furthermore, the development of the EU-Russian cooperation plays a decisive role in the success of the Partnership for Modernisation. The creation of a common programme of activities in the area of harmonisation of technical standards, the development of mechanisms for public-private partnerships and the support of projects in key areas are of mutual concern. PPPs are the most promising instruments of support for projects of technological cooperation in the areas requiring considerable amounts of long-term capital investment.

Stakeholders who want to engage in EU-Russian cooperation activities on innovation, such as the European Commission EU Member States and regional authorities, researchers and business people, are the principle factors participating in this strategic policy.

In 2011, the funding Programme for Research and Technology in Nanotechnologies aims to improve the competitiveness of the European Industry and to generate knowledge to ensure its transformation from a resource intensive to a knowledge intensive base by creating step changes through research and implementing decisive knowledge for new applications. This will benefit both new, high-tech industries and knowledge based traditional industries with a special focus on the appropriate dissemination of RTD results to SMEs. The key feature of the annual programme is to serve the main goals of Europe 2020 strategy for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. The action on innovation and research mainly includes support of innovation in manufacturing, the construction industry and the automobile sector. This is being implemented under the scheme of three PPP initiatives namely: "Factories of the Future", "Energy - Efficient Buildings" and "Green Cars".

The objective of the exercise includes the involvement of the Theme "Nanosciences, Nanotechnologies, Materials and new Production Technologies (NMP) with the knowledge intensive European Industry. The NMP WP 2011 is characterised by a higher budget of €300 million in addition to the amount of €130 million for PPPs mentioned above. Furthermore, the 2011 WP specifies a funding scheme to be used

for small and medium collaborative projects and large scale integrating projects as well as for coordination, networking or supporting activities at European and international, national or regional level.

A particular angle of this project is dedicated to the organisation of events related to the Presidencies of the European Union. An integral part of the NMP's theme is to organise, together with successive EU Presidencies, events of a strategic nature. The proposed support action should contribute to new EuroNanoForum (ENF) conferences and activities related to the EU Chairmanship of the IMS (Intelligent Manufacturing Systems) Scheme or other appropriate new events to be held in a Member State which will hold a forthcoming Presidency of the EU, specifically Denmark-Cyprus (2011-2012) Presidencies.

Next to those important initiatives, the EU offers a large inventory of publicly funded programmes supporting Scientific and Technical (S & T) cooperation between Russia and the EU. Among them, the COST Programme in the field of S & T research, ERASMUS MUNDUS and Jean Monnet Fellowship and Tempus IV in the area of higher education, and FP7, which is one of the most important EU programmes dedicated to research, technological development and demonstration activities.

Last but not least, significant is the role of the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD) which provides financial support to the enterprise sector through regional venture funds with early-stage equity funding and Russia Small Business Fund providing loans to micro and small enterprises in Russia.

Concretely, all these programmes which run through specific programming periods are only open to interested parties for certain periods of the year and the projects have to be mature, designed and financially supported. Only in this way can they succeed and be selected for co-financing by the EU authorities. For some of the projects, applications may be submitted at any time whereas for others, there are specific deadlines. The most important factor remains the formation of the project, which has to demonstrate maturity, detailed analysis and precision of perspectives with imminent integration in the production of the EU economy.

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