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**Innovation Slovakia**

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While the Slovak national innovation system is supported by education, research, development and innovation policies, as well as the promotion of small and medium enterprises, it currently faces significant challenges with respect to its performance, management and synergic implementation.

Slovakia, with its small and extremely open economy, does not have the option to improve the performance of its economy by utilizing the support of the different elements of the national innovation system and its output. The complexity of the innovation system and its component parts is very high. Therefore I will try to highlight the main elements of this topic – such as innovations in financing, research and the issue of innovation infrastructure, as well as the role of transnational companies in the system.

From the years 2007 to 2013, the system was primarily supported by the European Structural Funds through operational programs implemented by the Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sports (Operational Programme Research and Development) and the Ministry of Economy SR (Operational Programme Competitiveness and Economic Growth), both financed by the European Regional Development Funds. Financing innovation in Slovakia is, and will continue to be, heavily influenced by the European Structural and Investment Funds, and for the first time also by the joint programming of both key ministries within one single Operational Programme Research and Innovation for 2014 to 2020, with an overall allocation of 2.2 billion euros.

With regard to global excellence, and taking into consideration local relevance, the Slovak Government has approved a set of priorities, which are applicable for 2014 to 2020, for the Operational Programme Research and Innovation. The priorities identified refer to areas of economic specialization (automotive and mechanical engineering industries, consumer electronics and electrical equipment, ICT, services and production and the processing of iron and steel) as well as areas of specialization relating to the available scientific and research capacities of the Slovak Republic.

With regard to public R&D infrastructure, we consider it necessary to increase the performance of the state and public R&D sectors by consolidating and integrating their basic elements, which were formed as part of the support granted under the OP Research and Development in 2007 to 2013. We will avoid fragmentation in the number of projects, and also fragmentation in their thematic focus and duplication. Further, it will be necessary to ensure active involvement of the research centers created during the programming period 2007 to 2013 throughout the research activities of 2014 to 2020, both in Slovakia and within the European Research Area. Last but not least, it will be necessary to support long-term strategic research in the mentioned areas of priority.

Other key forms of innovation infrastructure, which will be supported, are the various forms of inter-sectoral partnerships, clusters, and technological platforms, as well as collaborative academia-industry research centers. In order to achieve synergies in innovative and economic activities, while using the potential of research institutions to have a positive impact on economic growth and increased employment, we will support the already mentioned partnerships in a systemic, predictable and long-term way.

The Slovak economy is driven by large multinational companies, which are active in key industries. These companies are involved in world-class technological research, development and innovation, but very few of these activities are taking place in Slovakia. We would like for this to change so that multinational companies become involved with the aforementioned partnerships and industry-academia research centers. This would go hand-in-hand with the support of the research, development and innovation activities in domestic enterprises which are operating, or have the potential to operate, in the supply chains for multinationals. I very much hope that this new approach to support innovation in Slovakia will help to ease the major challenges facing the Slovak innovation system, and at the same time, will mobilize innovation in all the relevant sectors through significantly stronger participation of the large multinational partners.

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