Key features of the first phase of national cluster program (Russia)

The case study on the Russian cluster initiative highlights the importance of taking into account the specific innovation profiles of regions and the involvement of regions in the drafting and implementation of federal policies; supports the coordination of innovation policy measures for support different actors (universities, research organizations, large businesses, SMEs, venture capitalists and business angels, etc.) and improves the efficiency of interaction between actors of the regional innovation systems, including trust building. As many other cluster programs, the Russian one is not just national. It involves joint work between the federal and the regional levels, with the former playing the role of facilitator and the latter managing or coordinating or taking part in the clusters. The federal level program is facilitated through an inter-ministerial committee. It provides the involvement and coordinated work of several ministries, agencies and development institutions to guarantee the pilot clusters comprehensive support. In general, the cluster program in Russia is consistent with the most successful international models.There is an increasing support to small and medium enterprises in the pilot clusters. Another positive trend is the recent decision to change priorities for cluster support. Despite it was originally expected to fund mainly the development of basic infrastructure in clusters, e.g. transport, engineering, housing, power, later infrastructural imbalance was offset. The pilot 14 clusters were offered to choose two of five possible areas of spending subsidy from the federal budget: the purchase of new equipment, additional education and training, cluster management activities and external consultancy, consultancy for the preparation of investment projects in the sphere of innovation, participation in international fairs, forums, round tables, etc. These areas of support - more than the basic infrastructure development - correspond to the idea and principles of cluster policy. Thus, it can summarized that cluster policy in Russia is constantly changing and evolving.

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