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Launch of the EU-Russia Year of Science 2014

The 'EU-Russia Year of Science 2014' will be officially launched at an event in Moscow on November 25. Its purpose is to celebrate and promote the vibrant and multifaceted scientific and technological cooperation between the two partners. In the course of twelve months, a rich programme of events and initiatives across Russia and the EU will highlight joint achievements, successes, and the strong potential for future cooperation in research, innovation and higher education. Involving scientists, research organisations, innovators, enterprises and the wider public, the EU-Russia Year of Science will build on the longstanding and fruitful cooperation between the EU and Russia in this area.

What events are planned during the year

About 200 events are planned in both Russia and EU Member States. Some will be dedicated events, others will include a strong focus and/or special sessions on EU-Russia S&T cooperation. For more information on the EU-Russia Year of Science, the latest news, events and a guide on how to participate in the Year of Science please see: http://eu-russia-yearofscience.eu/

Key related events in 2014

The timing of the Year of Science benefits from the conjunction of key related events in 2014, including: the launch of the new European Union research framework programme "Horizon 2020"; the renewal of the EU-Russia Science and Technology (S&T) Agreement; the launch of the Russian State Programme and the Federal Targeted Programmes for R&D. These programmes provide the basis for a new balanced relationship in science, technology and innovation based on shared responsibility through co-funding and programme-level coordination.

A long-standing and strong partnership

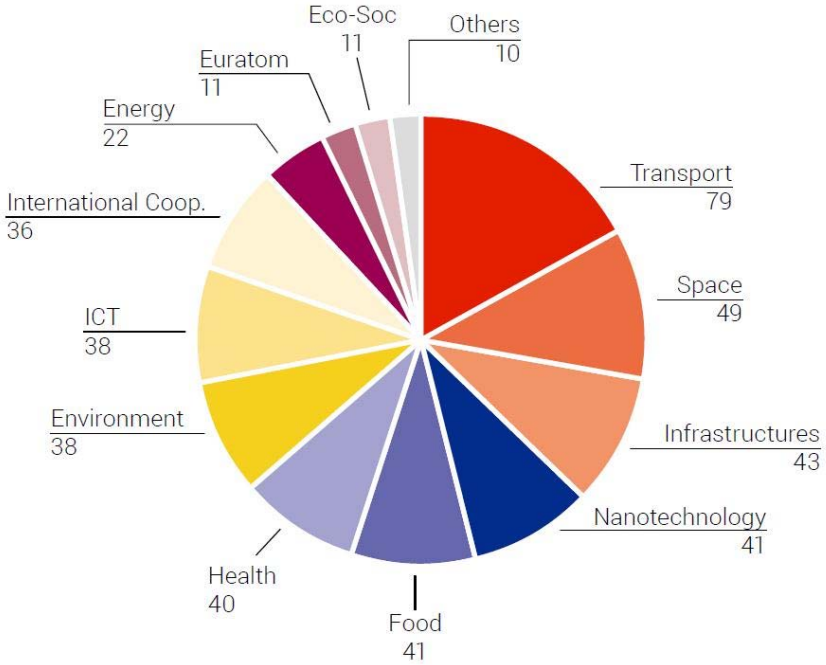
The European Union and Russia are both leaders in the generation of scientific insights. The EU produces a third of the world's scientific knowledge and is at the forefront in many research areas. Russia has a long history as one of the world's leading scientific nations and has been at the origin of many of today's scientific schools and discoveries.

The EU, its 28 Member States and Russia are thus natural scientific partners, and this is reflected in a number of bilateral and multilateral cooperation agreements that have been established in the past decade, including:

- Agreement on cooperation in science and technology between the European Community and the Government of the Russian Federation (2000)
- Agreement for cooperation between the European Atomic Energy Community and the Government of the Russian Federation in the field of controlled nuclear fusion (2001)

- Agreement for cooperation between the European Atomic Energy Community and the Government of the Russian Federation in the field of nuclear safety (2001)
- Roadmap for the EU-Russia Common Space in Research and Education including Cultural Aspects (2005)
- EU-Russia Partnership & Cooperation Agreement (chapter on science & technology – article 62).

Key areas of EU-Russia cooperation have included aeronautics research, space, ICTs, energy, nanotechnology, health and research infrastructures (see chart). In keeping with the EU's new international cooperation strategy for research and innovation, future cooperation will focus on three mutually agreed "flagship" priority areas: aeronautics, ICTs and research infrastructures.



How is scientific cooperation between the EU and Russia organised?

Science and technology cooperation is coordinated by the Joint S&T Cooperation Committee and EU-Russia thematic working groups established under the Cooperation Agreements. The joint working groups meet regularly to discuss potential research topics of mutual interest for joint actions in common scientific and technological priority areas.

The trilateral EU-Russia Dialogue on Space Cooperation between the European Commission, the European Space Agency, and the Federal Space Agency of the Russian Federation oversees cooperation in the areas of Satellite Systems (in particular Earth Observation, Satellite Communication and Satellite Navigation) and Space Science and Technology (in particular Fundamental Space Sciences and Applied Space Sciences). Russia and the EU also collaborate within the framework of the Group of Senior Officials (GSO) on global research infrastructures.

Global research infrastructures

A key area of Russia-EU S&T cooperation involves the development of global research infrastructures, including the large-scale 'mega-science' projects. For example, Russia and the EU are cooperating in the development of the EU X-ray Free-Electron Laser (XFEL), the Facility for Antiproton and Ion Research (FAIR), the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor (ITER) and the European Organisation for Nuclear Research (CERN).

EU–Russia S&T cooperation in figures

Russian entities are very active participants in the EU's framework programmes for research and technological development. The Russian Federation has been the most successful international partner in the EU 7th Framework Programme, both in terms of budget and number of participations. 273 different Russian institutions have recorded 459 participations in 298 projects, receiving €64 million in EU financing. Half of Russia's participations are from research organisations based in Russia's regions. Nearly 20% are from industry and the private sector.

The participation of Russian citizens in EU mobility programmes has been equally impressive. Between 2007 and 2013, Marie-Skłodowska Curie Actions funded nearly 350 Russian researchers coming to Europe. In recognition of the quality of Russian research, 25 European Research Council (ERC) grants have also been won by Russian nationals: 18 in the area of physical sciences, four in social sciences and humanities, and three in life sciences. Of these, 17 grantees hold a Starting grant – for young, early-career top researchers – and eight hold an Advanced grant – for senior research leaders. They are hosted by research institutions in the UK (6 grantees), France (4), Germany (4), Switzerland (3), the Netherlands (2), Sweden (2), Austria (1), Belgium (1), Spain (1) and Norway (1).

One of these researchers is Dr Konstantin Novoselov, who holds British and Russian citizenship. He received an ERC grant in 2007 for his project on graphene, the one-atom-thick crystal with unusual properties that is tipped for a number of future applications in electronics and photonics. He was also awarded the Nobel Prize in Physics in 2010 together with Andre Geim, for their "ground-breaking experiments regarding the two-dimensional material graphene" (read more here). Both work at the University of Manchester in the United Kingdom.

European Union researchers have also been successful in winning grants offered by Russia under its April 2010 decree on 'Measures to Attract Leading Scientists to Russian Educational Institutions' (Mega-grants). These research projects are implemented by university research teams under the supervision of leading scientists. Thirty one grants awarded under the first three calls are held by EU citizens.

Does the European Commission's Joint Research Centre also have programmes with Russia?

Yes. The Joint Research Centre (JRC), the European Commission's in-house science service, and Russia cooperate in many areas, including nuclear energy, the environment, soils and food security, forestry, agriculture and energy efficiency.

Assistance and knowledge sharing in the nuclear field have covered nuclear safety, radioprotection, safeguards and security. It has included Russian nuclear operators, the nuclear regulatory authority Rosatom, technical support organisations and bodies responsible for radioactive waste management and remediation of contaminated sites within the TACIS programme. The JRC (representing Euratom) and Rosatom also have regular collaborative activities within the reactor system committees of the Generation IV International Forum (GIF) and within the IAEA International Project on Innovative Reactors and Fuel Cycles (INPRO).

JRC has collaborated with the V.V Dokuchaev Soil Science Institute of the Russian Academy of Science since 1998. The 2010 Soil Atlas of the Northern Circumpolar region was developed in close cooperation of the two organisations. Russia is also a member of the European Forest Fire Information System (EFFIS) network. This will allow for harmonisation of the monitoring of forest fire activity in Europe and in Russia. Preparatory works for detailed forest cover mapping over Russia has been carried out with the Space Research Institute (IKI) of the Russian Academy of Sciences.

In agriculture, JRC carries out a study on the farming sector and rural development with the Russian Research Institute of Agrarian Problems and Informatics. The two organisations have also collaborated in a project on the agri-food sector in Russia and market outlook until 2025. Joint activities on food security will be pursued through the newly established Eurasian Centre for Food Security (ECFS).

Further cooperation in various fields is being pursued through the on-going EU-funded ERA-Net.RUS project, which gathers 18 partner organisations, six from Russia and 12 from the EU, among which the JRC.

Renewal of the EU-Russia S&T Agreement

The EU-Russia S&T Agreement is due for renewal in February 2014. The renewal process is now well underway. A joint team of independent EU and Russian experts carried out an in-depth evaluation of the Agreement – the first time such an evaluation was done jointly with a third country. Their report, which proposed to renew the agreement as is, was accepted by both the Commission and the Russian Ministry and will be published in the next few weeks. The EU expects to formally adopt the new agreement by the end of the year.