

Russia – OECD: Monitoring of Science, Technology and Innovation Policies

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[HSE Institute for Statistical Studies and Economics of Knowledge \(ISSEK\)](#) presents a review of national science, technology and innovation (STI) policies. This issue covers recent decisions made by the Russian Government and the administration of leading foreign countries aimed at combating the coronavirus pandemic and at promoting economic recovery, as well as a number of relevant OECD recommendations.

Russia

Coronavirus drugs and vaccines

The [Russian Ministry of Health has registered first drug “Avifavir”](#) (active ingredient "Favipiravir") for the treatment of COVID-19. The medicine was developed jointly by ChemRar group of companies, Russian Direct Investment Fund and Skolkovo Foundation on the basis of a candidate drug designed by Toyama Chemical Company (Japan). First batches of the drug were delivered to hospitals in seven Russian regions and helped to cure some patients. A total of 60 thousand Avifavir courses will be supplied in July. The Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade has provided targeted preferential loans to scale up the production (if necessary, the output can be increased to two million courses per year).

Coronavirus vaccines are being developed along several paths and in various versions, including on the basis of viral genes' combinations. All projects include preclinical studies of promising vaccine prototypes, as well as clinical studies involving volunteers. [47 such prototypes](#) are currently being developed in Russia. Leading Russian research institutes are engaged in the development of vaccines and other antiviral agents, including State Virology and Biotechnology Research Centre "Vector", N.F. Gamaleya National Epidemiology and Microbiology Research Centre, M.V. Lomonosov Moscow State University's Faculty of Biology, A.A. Smorodintsev Influenza Research Institute, Kazan Federal University, etc.

Companies involved in research and development to fight COVID-19 are supported using faster, simplified procedures. E.g., [Skolkovo Foundation applies softer co-investment requirements](#) for such projects (25% to be provided by investors, and 75% – by the Foundation). Companies' own funds can also be used for co-investment. The number of grants that can be received and used simultaneously has been increased to three.

[Russian Foundation for Basic Research \(RFBR\) organised a call for projects](#) on “Fundamental Aspects of the Emergence and Spread of Coronavirus Epidemics”. Successful applicants will be allocated grants in the amount of 3 to 6 million roubles (45 to 90 thousand USD) per year for a period of up to 2 years.

Research organisations and universities will be supported with subsidies

[The Russian government plans to allocate 15.8 billion roubles \(240 million USD\) from the reserve fund during the pandemic](#) to provide subsidies to federal institutions engaged in educational, research, and medical activities (Instruction of 15 June 2020 No. 1589-r). Out of this sum, 4.8 billion roubles (70 million USD) are earmarked for the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, 5.8 billion roubles – for the Ministry of Education, and 5.4 billion roubles (90 million USD) – for the Ministry of Health and 13 other major public funds administrators. Decisions to allocate subsidies will take into account institutions' financial situation, labour costs, expenditures on utilities, property maintenance, and compliance with sanitary and epidemiological requirements.

Part of the National Wealth Fund will be allocated for the development of research infrastructure

[A number of S&T development initiatives are included in the list of major projects with state participation](#) funded from the National Wealth Fund (NWF) and in the framework of federal targeted

programs (the RF Government Instruction of 16 June 2020 No. 1599-r). In particular, they provide for construction of the following facilities:

- “Obraztsovo” multifunctional technological cluster featuring a national digital engineering, prototyping, testing, and intelligent transport systems certification centre at its core, along with a complex of relevant research and testing laboratories;
- Megascience research facility “Siberian Ring Photon Source Shared Equipment Centre” (SRPS SEC), being established in the framework of National Project “Science” with the goal to create an advanced network of next-generation synchrotron radiation sources in Russia.

National Project “Science” shows good progress

[Accounts Chamber of the Russian Federation has published up-to-date information about the implementation of national projects.](#) Overall budget execution in the first six months of the year amounted to 35.5% (757.5 out of 2,135.9 billion roubles or 11 out of 32 million USD). The leader is National Project “Science”, with 50.3% (21.7 out of 43.1 billion roubles or 320 out of 650 million USD); for Federal Project “Development of Research and Science-Industry Cooperation”, the figure is 73.8%; for “Creating Advanced Research and Development Infrastructure in the Russian Federation” – 44.5%; and for “Strengthening Human Resources in the Field of Research and Development” – 15.4%.

The following developments are expected in the framework of National Project “Science” in the near future:

- [142 leading R&D organisations will receive grants to upgrade their instrumentation](#); about 9.1 billion roubles (140 million USD) will be allocated for these purposes;
- [construction of two advanced research vessels with unlimited navigation range will begin](#), to be completed in 2024;
- [three world-class research centres specialising in priority S&T areas will be selected](#) (about 60 consortia of R&D organisations and universities have applied for this call for proposals).

The Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education is working on a strategic academic leadership programme

[Strategic Academic Leadership Programme](#) that is currently being developed by the Russian Ministry of Science and Higher Education can become one of the novelties in the field of science and higher education support. It is expected to be presented to the Government in July, with qualifying events to begin in the fall.

The new initiative is positioned as a follow-up and expansion of the programme to strengthen Russian universities’ global competitiveness (the “5-100” project) which ends in 2020, and to provide support for flagship universities, and as a new tool to promote integration and cooperation of science and education at the regional level.

The programme will engage 100 to 150 universities. The implementation period is 10 years (first phase in 2020-2025, second phase in 2025-2030); total programme budget in 2021-2024 will be at least 52 billion roubles (780 million USD).

Betting on innovation in key sectors of the economy

This year, Russia adopted a [new Energy Strategy until 2035](#) (RF Government Instruction of 9 June 2020 No. 1523-r). At the first stage of its implementation (until 2024), the emphasis will be on accomplishing the national goals set in the RF Presidential Decree of 7 May 2018 No. 204. At the second stage (2025-2035), a transition to next-generation energy industry is foreseen that will rely on advanced technologies, efficient use of conventional energy sources, development of nuclear and hydrogen energy, and accelerated development of innovative renewable energy projects. Priorities will shift from fuel production and long-distance transportation to deep processing.

The RF Government also adopted [Manufacturing Industry Development Strategy](#) that includes aircraft construction, shipbuilding, electronic, medical, automotive industries, transport and agricultural engineering, as well as the chemical and petrochemical complex (RF Government Instruction of 6 June 2020 No. 1512-r). The Strategy's key objective is to ensure technological competitiveness of the Russian industry; to create conditions for its rapid growth; and to promote development in related sectors (science, education, telecommunications, etc.). By 2035, the manufacturing industry's production index should grow by 192%; the share of organisations implementing technological innovations should reach 50%; expenditures on adoption of digital technologies – 5.1% of gross value added, and internal expenditures on research and development in the manufacturing industry – at least 1.270 trillion roubles (19 billion USD).

Incentives to promote the development of engineering and industrial design

[Engineering and industrial design development roadmap for 2020-2025](#) was approved in Russia (RF Government Instruction of 11 June 2020 No. 1546-r). The plan is to increase the domestic engineering market by 2025 from 2.8 to 3.9 trillion roubles (40 to 60 billion USD), the share of small and medium-sized businesses in the industry – from 42% to 45%, and the share of integrated EPCM (engineering, procurement, construction, management) contracts – from 30% to 40% of all contracts signed in the market. These objectives are expected to be accomplished by improving government regulation and training of personnel; setting up specialised centres that will be hosted by innovative clusters and universities; creating an open company register; introducing special tax incentives; and involving development institutes in supporting engineering.

The roadmap provides for a number of new industrial design-related initiatives, including creation of a network of specialised competence centres, popularisation activities, establishment of a dedicated award of the Russian Ministry of Industry and Trade, etc.

Tax manoeuvre for IT companies

Support for the industries most affected by the pandemic is being stepped up in Russia. [Reducing the current \(already preferential\) insurance premium rate from 14% to 7.6%, and of the income tax rate from 20% to 3% is envisaged for IT companies](#). The benefits are expected to be provided for an indefinite period of time to virtually all companies primarily engaged in software development, application, sale, and after-sales support. In addition, incentives and special subsidies are planned for such companies to cover the costs of advertising activities abroad and of registering exclusive rights to software products. The purpose of the tax manoeuvre is to enhance the development and export of Russian software products.

Regulatory experiments with digital innovation will be legitimised

There is ongoing work on [the draft law “On Experimental Legal Regimes for Digital Innovation in the Russian Federation”](#) (RF Presidential Instruction of 6 July 2020). The adoption of this federal law should be accelerated. Experimental legal regimes (ELR), or “regulatory sandboxes”, are widely used in international practice and serve as catalysts for creating and implementing innovations.

The draft law introduces the ELR concept into the legal environment and provides for legal registration of relevant mechanisms for the IT industry. ELRs allow to improve framework conditions for digital innovation, simplify the development and application of new products and services by softening mandatory (regulatory) requirements for licensing, accreditation, certification, confirmation of compliance, etc. Introducing ELRs is crucially important for the development of digital medical technologies, unmanned transport systems, distant learning, financial market, and online trading.

Global agenda

The OECD recommendations for coordinating R&D policies in the context of pandemic response

The OECD regularly [monitors and systematises national and international practices of supporting research and development in the context of combating the pandemic](#).

Experts predict that it may take 1 to 1.5 years from clinical trials to the market launch of an effective vaccine, and several more years to make vaccination affordable and accessible. Since 50% to 75% of the world's population must be vaccinated for the final victory over the pandemic, governments should focus on building production and distribution capacities, on ensuring the availability of the new vaccine, and on setting vaccination priorities, with subsequent transition to mass vaccination.

The emphasis should be put on providing equal and universal access to future coronavirus vaccines and treatments as they become available, and on strengthening countries' collaboration at the preclinical testing stage. The main goal is to accelerate the most promising research and to improve intellectual property rights management, as well as drugs and vaccines procurement mechanisms.

The European University Association: COVID-19 impact on university funding in Europe

In May 2020, the European University Association (EUA) published a [report on the issues with university funding due to the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

In the short to medium term, all university funding sources will decline. Public funding is being sequestered, universities' revenues from education and research are declining, and donations become smaller. Funding provided in the framework of European programmes, which depend, *inter alia*, on organisations' financial stability, will also decline.

Increased inequality between European countries' educational systems in terms of availability of resources is expected, along with restructuring of universities. This trend is driven by "investment gaps" between European economies and by the differences between universities in terms of the availability and amount of university funding.

Restrictions on redistribution of funds and cost cutting, combined with growing financial inequality of universities, will sooner or later lead to structural changes in the higher education systems of many EU countries, first of all to mergers.

Short-term university support initiatives may need to be extended. Due to the continuing uncertainty with future prospects of the pandemic, anti-crisis measures may have to be extended for several years. This should be taken into account when university support measures are developed.

The structure and amount of university funding may transform, since the availability and scale of various funding sources will dramatically change, while the scope for redistributing funds within the university always remains limited.

Universities have to cut costs, but the room for manoeuvre is limited. The requirements and standards regarding organisational structure, number of students, teaching conditions, facilities, and equipment often hinder effective cost cutting.

Assessing universities' performance will become more important. Given the shortage of public funds, their allocation will increasingly rely on performance assessment based on formalised criteria. This may negatively affect universities' long-term institutional development and academic autonomy.

Mitigating the negative impacts requires large-scale coordinated action at the EU level. Relevant steps include switching to long-term mission-oriented plans for supporting universities; developing comprehensive (covering universities' educational, research and innovative activities) programmes; and designing and implementing simpler, more flexible funding mechanisms at the EU level.

The UK: diverting research grant funds to counter COVID-19

During the epidemic, [grants provided by Innovate UK](#), the quasi-autonomous UK Research and Innovation Agency (UKRI), and the Global Challenges Research Fund (GCRF) can be used to find ways to combat the virus and the effects of the pandemic, even if it's contrary to the original goals of the funds' allocation. At the same time, it is not allowed to extend the grant term or to allocate additional funding for the implementation of ongoing projects'.

This tool is mainly used to fund short-term (no more than 18 months) projects aimed at neutralising or mitigating social, economic, cultural, and environmental impacts of COVID-19. The maximum subsidy for UK residents is up to 80% of their costs, and for foreign scientists – up to 100%.

Organisations participating in projects funded by Innovate UK are eligible for [grants or soft loans](#) to compensate for cashflow interrupts directly related to the epidemic. The grant size is set between 25-250 thousand pounds (32 to 320 thousand USD), while loans can be up to 1.6 million pounds (around 2 million USD).

Canada: fast grants to fight the coronavirus Infection

The Mercatus Centre at George Mason University has launched, in the scope of the current Emergent Ventures funding programme, [Fast Grants to fight COVID-19](#), totalling 40 million Canadian dollars (30 million USD).

Representatives of academic institutions implementing projects to counter the COVID-19 pandemic who expect to get results in the next six months are eligible to take part in the programme.

The size of a fast grant ranges from 10 to 500 thousand Canadian dollars (8 to 375 thousand USD); the decision to support the project is made by a group of biomedical experts within 48 hours. The main evaluation criteria for applications are implementation costs and expected time of achieving the result.

127 researchers have already received fast grants to model age-related susceptibility to SARS-CoV-2 infection in 3D organelles of human lungs, to visualise the electron tomography of SARS-CoV-2 virions, and to develop a vaccine against SARS-CoV-2 using a new polymer to protect mRNA, etc.

Hungary: supporting researchers' employment during the pandemic

One of the ways to combat the consequences of the pandemic is by [providing public support for R&D personnel](#). Non-state organisations affected by the epidemic with researchers on the payroll are eligible for a subsidy to pay compensation to these employees.

If the application is approved (evaluation takes up to 8 days), the organisation must pay the employees within 3 months from the date of application. The amount of the subsidy per one researcher is 318,920 forints (around 1 thousand USD) per month.

Eligibility criteria for taking part in the programme include company age (over six months), compliance with labour legislation and a commitment to maintain the number of employees, the amount of their remuneration and their jobs, while receiving the subsidy.

France: supporting start-ups' capitalisation

The French government has developed a [package of measures to support start-up companies during the crisis](#). One of them is the so-called French Tech Bridge, implemented jointly with state-owned investment bank Bpifrance. 80 million euros (90 million USD) was allocated to purchase convertible (exchangeable for the issuer's shares) bonds in the amount between 100 thousand and 5 million euros (110 thousand to 5.5 million USD) for start-ups in the process of fundraising, or planning to start operations in the coming months. A key condition is 100% co-financing by private investors.

The state is willing to guarantee start-ups' bank loans (including those by Bpifrance) in the amount of up to 200% of the company's payroll for 2019, or 125% of its annual turnover. The total guaranty fund amounted to almost 2 billion euros (2.2 billion USD). Start-ups will also receive fast-track tax deductions for 2019.

Czech Republic: helping innovative businesses that contribute to containing the epidemic

The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) enables a number of programmes to support innovative development in the Czech Republic. E.g., [the COVID Technology Programme](#) provides subsidies to SMEs to purchase new technological equipment (instrumentation, installations) designed to combat the spread of the coronavirus and to mitigate the consequences of the pandemic. Up to 50% of the costs incurred by the acquisition of technologies, devices and software can be reimbursed. The amount of the subsidy ranges between 250 thousand and 20 million Czech crowns (11 thousand to 900 thousand USD). This allows to support companies trying to adapt to the new conditions and to diversify their own production of medical devices.

Another tool is [innovation vouchers](#) for companies involved in the fight against the epidemic. They cover 50 to 85% of product certification, testing, diagnostics, design, and modelling costs, procurement of software or equipment, prototyping, and optimising production processes, in the amount between 50 thousand and 1 million crowns (2 thousand to 45 thousand USD).

The [Smart COVID-19 Response \(CZECH RISE UP\) programme](#) promotes rapid adoption of innovative solutions. It allows companies of all sizes to receive a subsidy to cover the costs of purchasing materials, remuneration of employees and other expenses, provided that the results of the company's activities will positively affect proliferation of the SARS-CoV-2 in the shortest possible time. The maximum amount of the subsidy is 5 million crowns (225 thousand USD).

Spain: accelerating digitalisation of small and medium-sized businesses

The Spanish government has launched the [Acelera Pyme programme](#) to speed up digitalisation of small and medium-sized businesses by providing them financial support, helping with training and finding technological solutions. The Ministry of Economy and Digital Transformation of Spain allocated 70 million euros (around 80 million USD) for these purposes.

The first set of initiatives is related to the development of training courses to acquire and improve digital technology-related skills and to provide career guidance for young people. The investment amount is 20 million euros (22 million USD), part of which comes from the European Social Fund. Course topics include cybersecurity, big data, web programming, cloud technologies, digital marketing, video game programming, 3D design, and virtual reality.

35 million euros (40 million USD) are allocated to improve the effectiveness of medical services and to promote the development of the Internet of Things (IoT) based on artificial intelligence. Between 150 thousand and 3 million euros (170 thousand to 3.3 million USD) can be allocated per project. 15 million euros (17 million USD) will be spent on developing digital content – data processing systems to improve healthcare and to respond to crises, audio-visual content including digital advertising, social networks, etc. The amount of funding per project ranges from 150 thousand to 2 million euros (170 thousand to 2.2 million USD). Part of the grants is provided by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF).

Singapore: supporting digital sustainability to survive the coronavirus crisis

The Singapore Ministry of Finance developed a [programme to promote digital transformation of the economy in response to the COVID-19 pandemic](#), and digitisation of businesses. 500 million Singapore dollars (360 million USD) were allocated for these purposes.

For enterprises which haven't yet switched to electronic payment systems, government agencies will subsidise the cost of relevant services in the amount of 300 Singapore dollars (220 USD) per month

for 5 months. To ensure digital sustainability and to promote application of e-commerce and business process management solutions, companies will be eligible to receive funds (“digital resilience bonus”) in the amount of up to 5 thousand Singapore dollars. The government will allocate 250 million Singapore dollars (180 million USD) to promote small businesses’ collaboration with digital platform providers and industry leaders.

It is also planned to focus on developing industry-specific solutions to overcome the crisis. The first step will be to ensure a safe exit from the quarantine, including creation of new safe jobs, safe homes, safe schools, etc. Innovations in this area will be funded by the government.

Cooperation with the OECD

TIP workshop “Science, Technology and Innovation in Times of Covid-19”

On 17 and 24 June 2020, “Science, Technology and Innovation in Times of COVID-19” workshop was held, organised by the OECD Working Party on Innovation and Technology Policy (TIP) jointly with the OECD Committee for Scientific and Technological Policy (CSTP). The objective was to discuss approaches to countries’ STI policies to address challenges and to use opportunities created by the crisis. The main topics of the discussion included the following:

- short-term impact of the coronavirus on the STI sphere and policy responses in the OECD countries (impact on companies, sectors and regions; expected changes after cancellation of lockdown; effectiveness of international cooperation, introduction of new policy tools);
- opportunities and challenges for improving long-term policies, increasing sustainability and resilience of national innovation systems;
- outcomes of the project "OECD Survey on the Science and Innovation Policy Responses to Coronavirus (Covid-19)" and of the OECD Monitor of Countries’ Anti-crisis Policies ([STIP Covid-19 Watch](#)).

Russian experts contributed to the project “Supporting co-creation for resilient, inclusive and sustainable futures”, in particular, by developing a conceptual framework for the study and presenting a Russian case of establishing joint laboratories by universities and major Russian companies.

NESTI workshop on STI Measurement during Crisis

On June 15-16, 2020, the OECD Working Party of National Experts on Science and Technology Indicators (NESTI) held online workshop “STI Measurement during Crisis”. The coronavirus pandemic has become a new source of uncertainty, including for timely updates of statistical data on STI development in the OECD countries. The crisis hindered national statistical services’ work on collecting and processing data from organisations and individuals, as well as efficient data exchange at the international level. At the same time, the COVID-19 pandemic changed the social and political discourse on a whole range of STI related issues. Successfully countering the current challenges largely depends on the ability to create and apply new knowledge, while disruptive innovation is becoming a new economic imperative. In this context, issues critically important both for decision-makers and for the whole society were brought up for discussion, in particular:

- identifying the need for STI statistics in the context of current policy changes in the OECD countries;
- sharing countries’ experience of overcoming the COVID-19 crisis and setting objectives to adapt statistical methodology to match the new situation;
- specific initiatives of the OECD countries, other organisations and experts to analyse the current state of national innovation systems and the STI sphere.

Russian experts took part in the seminar, spoke about the current national practices and specific decisions on supporting the STI sphere and agreed on an action plan to share relevant statistics until the end of the year.

Commentary

Amid the crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the prospects of rapid economic recovery highly depend on developing and applying new technological solutions and innovations in virtually all affected industries. The need for a massive supply of such solutions is a challenge for countries' science, technology, and innovation policy.

In leading foreign countries, this policy is changing at an unprecedented rate. The emphasis is placed on providing personalised targeted support for researchers, universities, research laboratories; organising "fast" grant competitions to fund COVID response-related research; using and sharing of open research data; strengthening international cooperation; accelerating development of start-ups, and supporting innovative businesses.

Russia has also taken important steps to combat the pandemic and its consequences. Additional funds have been allocated to develop tools and techniques for detection, prevention, diagnosis, express-testing, and treatment of the infection. Registration procedures for medical devices and pharmaceuticals have been accelerated. Leading research and education centres and innovative companies are developing vaccines and other antiviral treatments, supported by development institutions.

Unprecedented benefits were provided to IT companies, which should lead to accelerated growth in this sector. A number of industry-specific strategic documents have been adopted in areas such as energy, manufacturing, engineering and industrial design. The implementation of National Project "Science" continues.

At the meeting of the Council for Strategic Development and National Projects under the President of the Russian Federation held on 13 July, it was decided to adopt long-term goal-setting format at the national level, and to identify national development goals for the period until 2030. The objectives set by the RF President in the new Decree of 21 July 2020 No. 474 "On National Development Goals of the Russian Federation for the Period until 2030" include "ensuring the Russian Federation's presence among the world's top ten countries in terms of research and development, in particular by creating an efficient higher education system". At the same time, national projects will remain subject to revision, with a focus on obtaining socially significant results.



Sources: official websites of the RF President, RF Government, Ministry of Industry and Trade, Ministry of Finance, Russian Direct Investment Fund, Russian Foundation for Basic Research, ChemRar Group of Companies, Russian Academy of Sciences, Skolkovo Foundation, the OECD; websites of foreign countries' governments, agencies, companies, foundations, etc.

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■ **Authors:** Tatiana Kuznetsova, Mikhail Gershman, Vitaly Dementyev, Galina Kitova, Konstantin Vishnevskiy, Konstantin Fursov, Elena Sabelnikova, Stanislav Zaichenko, Sergey Bredikhin, Sofia Privorotskaya, Elena Gutaruk.

Information selection: Yana Popova, Elizaveta Simokhina, Anastasia Rykhlik, Roman Shcherbakov, Lyudmila Meshkova, Yulia Dolgoplova.

Contacts

HSE ISSEK Centre for Science, Technology, Innovation and Information Policy

e-mail: stipolicy@hse.ru

Web: <https://issek.hse.ru/en/stipolicy/>

HSE ISSEK Competence Centre for Cooperation with International Organisations

e-mail: globalcentre@hse.ru

Web: <https://globalcentre.hse.ru/en/>

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