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The European Union (EU) has maintained a very rich scientific and technological relationship with its largest neighbouring country, Russia. In fact, since 2005, both the EU and Russia have committed to creating a “Common Space on Research, Education and Culture”. The BILAT-RUS and ERA.Net RUS projects are two key initiatives for developing this “Common Space”. Both projects have strived for durable partnerships and bilateral research programmes between the EU and Russia.



[1]

While [BILAT-RUS](#) [2] promoted the Science & Technology (S&T) potential between Russia, the EU, Candidate Countries and other Associated Countries, ERA.Net RUS focused more on enhancing the joint funding mechanism. “The ERA.Net RUS initiative served the purpose of integrating Russia more into the European Research Area. It also reduced the fragmentation of funding in S&T cooperation,” says [ERA.Net RUS](#) [3] project coordinator Dr. Andreas Kahle from the German Aerospace Centre in Bonn, Germany.

ERA.Net RUS has established a new funding instrument for EU-Russia S&T cooperation which is based on equal rights and mutual benefits. The partners involved have, as a result, learned to align their different funding and evaluation procedures.

The political and strategic impact of ERA.Net RUS is undeniable as it united key strategic partners in both regions and provides an excellent basis for even bigger joint initiatives in the future.

According to Kahle, there was a high response among the EU and Russian R&D communities to the two pilot joint calls in the fields of science&technology and innovation. Over 1,000 research institutions, universities and SMEs from Europe and Russia applied - this amounts to 42 projects with €10.5 million in funding. In addition, foresight exercises involving structural and thematic scenarios for future cooperation have contributed to establishing a firm basis for sustainable EU-Russia STI cooperation. Finally, a joint vision paper, complete with recommendations and an action plan were drawn-up, indicating pressing issues that needed to be overcome.

Through a process of information dissemination and raising awareness of existing collaboration opportunities, BILAT-RUS was another initiative that contributed to the aforementioned “Common

Space". A considerable effort was devoted to analysing and improving the existing framework conditions for S&T cooperation.

The project also enabled researchers from both EU and Russia to access the "S&T Gate RUS.EU" internet portal, providing researchers with easy access to information about S&T cooperation policy and collaboration opportunities.

BILAT-RUS has greatly increased Russia's participation in Community programmes including the Seventh Research Framework Programme (FP7). This was achieved through a series of information events on FP7 held in many Russian cities such as Moscow and St. Petersburg and the promotion of National Contact Points across the country.

Another major success of BILAT-RUS was the continuous dialogue and coordination of activities between relevant Russian and European authorities.

Since 2013, both initiatives have taken on a new dimension, aimed at further enhancing EU-Russia collaboration.

"BILAT-RUS-Advanced is essentially a continuation of BILAT-RUS," says its project coordinator Dr. Jörn Grünewald from the German Aerospace Centre in Bonn, Germany. "The aim is to further encourage dialogue and spread even more information between the EU and Russian partners. An extra focus will be placed on the subject of innovation cooperation," he adds.

BILAT-RUS-Advanced has already provided analytical input for the team of Russian and EU experts evaluating the EU-Russia S&T Agreement. The team has also supported the Joint EU-Russia S&T Committee by providing recommendations on topics of mutual interest, including aeronautics, biotechnology, ICT, nanotechnology and research infrastructures.

The project team is also playing a key role in organising the "EU-Russia Year of Science 2014" and has launched the campaign's website and selected and helped organising events that were held throughout the Year. The team is also responsible for raising awareness of the Year among the general public in Russia and across the EU.

Meanwhile, ERA.Net RUS has paved the way for a follow-up initiative known as ERA.Net RUS Plus, which has successfully launched two new joint calls worth €25 million in spring/summer 2014 on research and innovation topics. The BILAT-RUS-Advanced project supported the EU-Russia Year of Science 2014.

ERA.Net RUS Plus and BILAT-RUS-Advanced are seen as the next important step to completing the European Research Area (ERA). In fact, since 2000, the creation of the ERA has been one of the EU's main S&T policy objectives. It is now expected that both projects will play a crucial role in reaching this goal.

[2014 - The EU-Russia Year of Science](#) [4]

**See also:**

[CORDIS](#) [5]

**Project:**

Advancement of the bilateral Partnership in scientific Research and Innovation with the Russian Federation

**Project Acronym:**

BILAT-RUS-Advanced

**Contact:**

[Contact](#) [6]

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