The Moscow Times
30 YEARS
INDEPENDENT NEWS FROM RUSSIA

Medvedev Sends Innovation Spending Plan Back to the Drawing Board

By Anatoly Medetsky

October 31, 2012



Prime Minister Dmitry Medvedev on Thursday rejected a government plan to develop science and technology after describing its reliance on a surge in private funding as "absolutely unrealistic."

The proposal, reviewed at a Cabinet meeting, envisioned that private companies would increase spending on research tenfold by 2020, compared to this year. None of the Cabinet members put a ruble number on either state or private expenditures during the discussion.

A brainchild of the Education and Science Ministry, the 2013-2020 plan had to gain approval from the Finance Ministry, which had insisted on reducing the state share of funding for the proposal to 30 percent over time.

Medvedev cast doubt on the plausibility of that target.

"Globally, in the [funding of the] innovation sector the state share remains very significant," he said. "To be honest, the [proposed] proportion [for Russia] ... where 70 percent is private investment looks absolutely unrealistic to me. Absolutely unrealistic!"

Medvedev ordered the ministries to be more optimistic when planning the country's future economic performance.

"As long as there is hope that the general economic situation will recover ... we need to orient ourselves on a development option, rather than the most conservative option," he said.

Medvedev made his comments after Education and Science Minister Dmitry Livanov warned that the government might fail to reach the development targets set forth by President Vladimir Putin immediately after his inauguration in May, should private investment in research fall short. Putin recently scolded three ministers, including Livanov, for poor work implementing those targets. Regional Development Minister Oleg Govorun, one of the ministers in question, resigned after the reprimand.

Yury Osipov, president of the Russian Academy of Sciences, urged greater state funding for the proposal. There's little hope for private effort in this area, given that "even" state-controlled firms prefer to buy technology abroad rather than develop their own.

"If we want to make a breakthrough, the state is obligated to support science," he said. "Let's make an effort and make it a drastic effort."

Deputy Prime Minister Arkady Dvorkovich said he disagreed with a drop in science funding relative to gross domestic product from the level that is now 0.9 percent.

"We can say that we can't increase it ... but we sure can't make it lower either," he said.

The proposed state program seeks, among other things, to increase the total spending on research and development, both by state and private companies, to 3 percent of GDP by 2020; ensure that publications by Russians in international scientific journals make up 3 percent, up from 2 percent now; and raise the share of state-of-the-art equipment at research institutions to 70 percent. It also aims to guarantee higher salaries to researchers, or double that of the average in any given region.

The Cabinet has been considering the so-called state programs because it wants to base next year's and future federal budgets on these programs and replace the current budget structure.

Related articles:

- Medvedev Pledges Support for High Tech
- Building a Virtual Skolkovo
- Intellectual Property: Investment Landscape in Russia

Original url:
https://www.themoscowtimes.com/2012/10/31/medvedev-sends-innovation-spending-plan-back-to-the-drawing-board-a19072