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Skoltech Linking Talent with Industry

By Guennadi Moukine

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Skolkovo scientists met counterparts and officials from Ireland on Wednesday to identify areas of cooperation and find ways to link their discoveries to industry players in a bid to assist economic development in both countries.

Some projects result in a greater benefit when two countries work together, rather than on their own, said Mark Ferguson, Director General of Science Foundation Ireland, or SFI, during the Russian-Irish workshop organized by the Skolkovo Foundation. The purpose of the meeting was to identify such projects, Ferguson said.

Both Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology, or Skoltech, and SFI are interested in funding research that has the potential to impact society — impact on economic development, impact on solving problems in health and other areas of life, Ferguson said.

Good relations between the two countries create a positive environment for collaboration, said Philip McDonagh, the Ambassador of Ireland to Russia, who was also present at the event. "Everybody on the international level is looking at a sustainable and inclusive economy

in the future. Science and education are essential elements of such vision," he added.

There is a gap between scientific talent and industry, Edward Crawley, Skoltech's president said. "Skoltech has been designed to respond to this challenge," Crawley said.

Skoltech has a different approach to education. There will be no departments; instead, the education model will be concentrated around the actual problems in industry, where different scientists from different disciplines will be working together on common projects. There will be no discipline boundaries either, Crawley said. "There will be just scholars, working together on problems."

Conor Lenihan, vice president for key partnership development at Skolkovo, said he hoped that the Skoltech initiative would encourage Russian talent to return to the country.

"Hopefully, as a result of Skolkovo and other initiatives, that talent will begin to come back," he said. "But what's more important, the talent, that is here, is not going to leave."

Skoltech is a private graduate research university, established in 2011 in collaboration with MIT.

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