

Mayor Sobyenin Opens Entrepreneur Congress

By [The Moscow Times](#)

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Mayor Sergei Sobyenin (red tie) at the opening of the Entrepreneur Congress.

Mayor Sergei Sobyenin on Monday kicked off the Global Entrepreneurship Congress, an annual meeting where businesspeople and officials discuss ways to encourage new investment and advertise Moscow as a city of great opportunities.

More than 4,500 participants from 156 countries packed the Manezh to hear Sobyenin proudly state that companies built 8.5 million square meters of residential and commercial space in the city last year. The city welcomes investors into projects ranging from health care services to bicycle rental, he said.

Viktor Vekselberg assured the audience that things were on the right track for the country's business community.

"The word 'entrepreneur' has ceased to be a curse word," he said from the podium.

The conference's agenda, which is tailored for small and medium-sized businesses, is brimming with discussions of things like government regulations of business and the role of mentors in developing entrepreneurship. The delegates did not mention the subject of how Russian entrepreneurs might have to deal with the country's possible future economic isolation from the West if the sanctions over Crimea's secession from Ukraine turn out to be stringent.

Ben White, an attendee from the Netherlands, declined to speak about the potential effects of the Russia-West standoff. The conference is seeking to find solutions for better protection of intellectual property rights and other ways of improving the entrepreneurial 'ecosystem,' said White, who is the founder of VC4Africa, a service that connects investors with business owners in Africa who would like to expand.

In hosting the congress, Moscow is taking over the honor from such previous host cities as Shanghai, Dubai and Kansas City.

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