

EC/Russia agreement on cooperation in science and technology: renewal

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PURPOSE: to renew the agreement on cooperation in science and technology between the European Community and the Government of the Russian Federation.

PROPOSED ACT: Council decision.

ROLE OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT: Council may adopt the act only if Parliament has given its consent to the act.

BACKGROUND: the agreement on cooperation in science and technology between the European Community and the Government of the Russian Federation was signed in Brussels on 16 November 2000 and entered into force on 10 May 2001. Since then, the agreement has been renewed three times in 2004, 2009 and 2014 for an additional period of 5 years each time.

The Commission recalled that Russia is the most important Science, Technology & Innovation (STI) actor in the neighbourhood of the EU that is not associated to Horizon 2020. Cooperation in STI between the EU and Russia has traditionally been very active, notably in the fields of research infrastructures, transport and environment.

Among all non-associated countries, Russia currently ranks 6th in terms of participations in collaborative projects of Horizon 2020. Moreover, the Horizon 2020 Work Programme 20182020 aims to intensify cooperation with Russia on topics of mutual interest and common benefit. In particular, apart from the general openness of Horizon 2020 to entities from all over the world including Russia, there are two major flagship bilateral cooperation initiatives with Russia, in research infrastructures and health, and one flagship multilateral cooperation initiative on aeronautics that targets also Russia.

The Commission stated that science diplomacy can be a powerful tool in the relations with Russia as it provides a positive cooperation agenda and is a source of 'soft power' that can be particularly instrumental in catalysing and opening channels of communication and building trust between the two societies.

It is for this reason that the cooperation agreement should be renewed.

CONTENT: the Commission proposes that the Council approve, on behalf of the Union, the renewal of the agreement on cooperation in science and technology between the European Community and the Government of the Russian Federation for an additional period of five years (20 February 2019 to 19 February 2024).

The substance of the renewed agreement will be identical to that of the current agreement as discussed and agreed with the Russian counterparts. It will not create new rights and obligations for the EU, but instead it will extend in time the legal regime already existing between the Parties in the field of S&T cooperation.

The agreement provides a framework for strengthening people-to-people contacts and STI cooperation in areas of strategic EU interest in the coming years, in order to counter the downward trend in the intensity of scientific collaboration between EU and Russian participants.