

TIA – Slovenian Technology Agency

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“The Government of the Republic of Slovenia founded the Public Agency for Technological Development of the Republic of Slovenia (TIA for short) to perform specialist, developmental and executive functions in the sphere of promoting technological development and innovation.

We work in accordance with the adopted national research and development programme and other national programmes in the sphere of technological development and innovation. We are the executive institution for the implementation of programmes and measures designed to encourage competitiveness and technological development and for the promotion and encouraging of a culture of innovation. Our agency is also a member of the European Network of Innovation Agencies (TAFTIE) and participates in international projects. The main function of the TIA is above all to encourage connections and the transfer of knowledge between knowledge institutions and the commercial sector.” This introduction to the TIA was provided by Dr Franc Gider, the Director of the TIA. Our conversation with him is reproduced below.



Dr Franc Gider, the Director of the TIA

The Agency is becoming an increasingly important executive institution for the achievement of the objectives set in strategic programming documents such as the Resolution on the National Research and Development Programme for 2006–2010 and the Strategy of Development of Slovenia for 2007–2013.

That is true. The TIA has greatly strengthened its role as the leading executive institution in the sphere of technological development and innovation; the total value of the six public tenders envisaged in the agency’s Programme of Work and Financial Plan for 2008 is around 75 million euros.

As well as the documents you have mentioned, there is also the framework of economic and social reforms to increase prosperity in Slovenia, the Lisbon Strategy, the Programme for Promoting Technological Development and the Information Society for 2007–2012 and the Programme of Measures to Promote Enterprise and Competitiveness 2007–2013.

The fundamental mission of the agency is to connect Slovenia’s economic and research potentials in order to raise the country’s level of technological development and innovation in the direction of intensive and sustainable economic development and higher economic growth. The basic mechanism of the TIA involves technology/innovation programmes or instruments implemented in conjunction with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, the Ministry of the Economy and the Ministry of Defence.

Your main action programmes include direct incentives for joint development/investment projects.

Here I should mention the “direct incentives for joint development/investment projects” instrument, which is partially co-financed by the European Union, from the European Fund for Regional Development. This instrument will be implemented within the

context of the Operational Programme for Strengthening Regional Development Potentials for 2007–2013. Within the context of the instrument, the TIA, in conjunction with the Ministry of the Economy, will co-finance joint development/investment projects of enterprises representing the development of a new product or service or the development of a significantly improved product or service with higher added value. Support will be given to the R&D activities of enterprises and related investments in R&D equipment and the highly complex technology and equipment necessary for the successful implementation of test production and the collaboration of enterprises with research groups on R&D activities. The purpose of the instrument is to encourage enterprises to increase investment of their own resources in development in the direction of technological development and innovation in order to strengthen their competitive position on European and foreign markets, and to forge connections and develop collaboration with research groups.

This also includes incentives for R&D projects.

The “strategic R&D projects” instrument is partially co-financed by the European Union, from the European Fund for Regional Development. The instrument will be implemented within the context of the Operational Programme for Strengthening Regional Development Potentials for 2007–2013. The purpose of the instrument, which the TIA will implement in conjunction with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, is to support R&D projects:

- which correspond to the development priorities identified by national technology platforms and/or
- which show a connection of the project to the strategic plan of an enterprise or group of partners on collaboration with partners abroad, or a connection with ambitions to implement important R&D activities in conjunction with international partners who are trend-setters in a specific sphere or represent a major R&D connection that will enable the further economic growth of the Slovenian partners and/or
- which show a connection of the project to the strategic research plans of the European technology platforms identified in the

7th Framework Programme for research and development.

Your agency also provides support to young researchers from the commercial sector via the “young researchers from the commercial sector” instrument, which is partially financed by the European Union, from the European Social Fund.

The instrument will be implemented within the context of the Operational Programme of Development of Human Resources for 2007–2013. The additional funds from the European Union will enable a significant increase in the annual number of new young researchers from the commercial sector in comparison with previous years. While in the past two years the status of young researcher from the commercial sector was approved for 56 candidates each year (and for a total of 233 candidates in the period 2001–2006), it is envisaged that in the period 2007–2010 the status of young researcher will

be approved for 130 candidates each year. The subject of the instrument, which the TIA will implement for the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, is the co-financing of the costs connected with the research work of young researchers from the commercial sector until they obtain their PhD. The more specific purpose of the instrument is to enable young researchers to obtain quality experience through working on basic research for the needs of the commercial sector during postgraduate studies leading to a PhD – experience which will equip them to face the challenges in the commercial sector when they have completed their studies.

In conjunction with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology, the TIA supports the activity of technology platforms representing a forum for collaboration between the commercial sector and the scientific research sphere.

The company Optotek d.o.o. produced the prototype LIDARJA to detect chemical and biological agents, as part of the TP PEACE project “DALJDET”



The emphasis in the activity of technology platforms is above all on their active inclusion in European technology platforms.

You are also implementing the TP MIR technology programme, through which the Ministry of Defence aims to encourage the commercial sector in Slovenia to participate more actively in the development of military technologies.

Here it is important that these technologies also have a civilian component, which is apparent in the sphere of protection and rescue in the case of natural and other disasters. Enterprises will also be able to use many findings of research projects in their own products and services which they offer on the market. Through the implementation of the programme, an increase in investments in R&D on the part of enterprises is expected. New jobs are envisaged in the projects, and the establishing of connections between the commercial sector and knowledge institutions will strengthen Slovenia's technology hinterland. The project implementers will also be able to take part in the programmes of a number of European institutions (e.g. the European Defence Agency (EDA), which is expected to provide a boost to Slovenia's reputation in the international environment.

Your programme definitions also envisage co-financing of the work of organisations supporting innovation activities.

In conjunction with the Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology we aim to foster a supportive environment for those who are active in the sphere of innovations, in such a way as to help them development and protect innovations and put them to use.

The TIA is also active in international projects. In most cases these are projects financed by the European Commission and related to the development of new methodologies, policies and instruments to promote technological development.

In 2008 the TIA is taking part in several international projects, including two in which it is particularly active.

The first of these is VALOR. The TIA is one of fifteen partners from all over

Europe involved in this project. The aim of the project is the preparation and testing of a methodology for the more efficient transfer of technologies and knowledge to the market, known as the "valorisation process". On the basis of experience and recommendations, we will try to realise between 30 and 45 pilot examples of the commercialisation of knowledge in the participating countries, with the help of national calls for proposals and international criteria. The financially supported projects will have the opportunity to grow on the market and will also be eligible for the other services of the support environment in the individual country and in the EU for which they were not eligible during the pre-seeding phase.

The second project is STARNETregio, in which the TIA is one of twelve partners from Italy, Croatia and Slovenia. The objectives of the project include increasing the influence of regional

actors from the technology sphere in the "sea economy" sector on the development of the sector. The result of the project will be a joint European action plan to increase regional economic competitiveness. The four-phase project identifies a cluster of actors in the sea economy sector (knowledge institutions and enterprises), analyses the regional development plans of the participating coastal regions (Friuli Venezia Giulia, Slovenia and Rijeka), formulates proposals for knowledge transfer instruments and prepares a joint action plan to improve the process of integration.

As regards the activity of the TIA in the future, I would also like to mention our efforts, in conjunction with domestic and international partners, to develop new services connected with the promotion of technological development in Slovenia.

EUROSTARS

Aleš Mihelič,

Chairman of EUREKA and General Director of the Slovenian Ministry of Higher Education, Science and Technology

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