



Press release

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CTI to finance special measures promoting innovation in SMEs from 1 July

In the current year, the federal government is continuing to support export-oriented SMEs under pressure due to the strength of the franc. At the request of the Federal Department of Economic Affairs, Education and Research, the Federal Council in February of this year approved additional special measures aimed at promoting innovation amounting to CHF 61 million. In the summer session, Parliament subsequently approved the transfer of funds for the Commission for Technology and Innovation's temporary special measures.

For a second time, the Commission for Technology and Innovation (CTI) is able to help export-oriented SMEs to boost their innovative capabilities. Under the additional credit procedure for the 2016 budget, the Federal Assembly approved the funds requested by the Federal Council. The measures will be financed by rebalancing the funds approved for the ERI sector in the current financial period.

For the second time the federal government is responding in a targeted manner to the ongoing difficulties faced by export-oriented SMEs and is helping them to invest in innovation and to maintain or expand their R&D capabilities.

The special measures not allow business partners to reduce the cash contribution towards innovation projects, but also allow them to make a lower contribution to project costs. At the same time greater use will be made of CTI innovation mentors to advise the SMEs concerned. These measures proved themselves to be effective in the first set of special measures in 2015. In addition to the regular projects, 314 projects were assessed under the special measures. Of those, 154 were approved and federal grants awarded totalling CHF 57.7 million. Demand on the part of SMEs for support by innovation mentors also continued to rise as a result of the special measures. In 2015 around 70 per cent more R&D projects were launched and innovation cheques issued with innovation mentors than in the previous year.

President Johann N. Schneider-Ammann, the head of the EAER, who in 2015 initiated the first set of measures to compensate for the strong value of the franc, is convinced that these measures will again have a direct impact: “We have managed to provide targeted incentives to boost the innovative capabilities of heavily export-oriented SMEs. That way they are able to strengthen their competitiveness in this difficult phase and safeguard jobs.”

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