

Spain shows interest in new laser facility in Szeged

Spain shows interest in joining the international consortium formed to utilise the capacities of the ELI laser research centre in Szeged, Hungary, however, further negotiations are necessary before making any commitment on membership – József Pálincás said to Hungarian news agency MTI on Friday, summing up the results of his three-day visit to Madrid.

At his meeting with Carmen Vela, State Secretary for Research, Development and Innovation, the President of the NRDI Office was told that the Spanish government's endorsement depended on the willingness of the Spanish researcher community to use the laser facility. In this regard, the head of the laser centre in Salamanca and the rector of the Technical University of Madrid had already given a positive feedback and pointed out at the meetings that cooperation with the ELI would be important for them – József Pálincás said adding that the forms of such cooperation would be subject to further negotiations led by Zsolt Fülöp, envoy extraordinary for the international coordination of the ELI consortium.

"Spain is open to participation, so we now have to discuss the details to enable making a decision at political and researcher level on the form of cooperation in ELI projects" he said. The President of the NRDI Office further explained: the legal and management structure of the consortium is currently being finalised and the individual countries definitely want to know the outcome before making any final decision. He added: in addition to Spain, they are also in negotiation with Italy and Sweden.

József Pálincás announced that he had invited the experts of the Spanish National Research Office to visit Budapest for an exchange of experience as the their country is outstandingly successful in winning directly accessible EU funds at competitive calls for SMEs. While the average success rate of EU Member States at these calls is 5%, Spain boasts a 17% rate. The Budapest event could be a great opportunity for experts to unlock the secret of Spain's success, and the best practice that Hungarian businesses could adopt – he said.

On Friday József Pálincás also attended the ministerial conference of EUREKA, a European platform for transnational industrial RDI cooperation. He shared that the conference adopted the EUREKA 2020 Strategic Roadmap with the main objectives of providing a clear added value to industry, becoming a preferred initiative for public funding agencies and opening towards countries outside Europe. He added: Chile joined EUREKA as its 44th member country.

According to the President of the NRDI Office, it is fundamental to create harmony between EUREKA and the EU's innovation calls for SMEs. József Pálincás also reminded that Hungarian businesses had participated in 150 EUREKA projects so far, and are currently cooperating with European partners in 15 projects.

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