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HIGHER SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS
NATIONAL RESEARCH UNIVERSITY

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**SME POLICY OF THE RUSSIAN
STATE (1990–2015):
FROM A “GENERALIST”
TO A “PATERNALIST” APPROACH**

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The paper deals with the historical critical overview of the SME and entrepreneurship policy in Russia from the beginning of the systemic transition till the current state. The authors distinguish three period of the related policy designs in Russia, starting with the attempt of a “generalist” approach in early 1990ies, following with the “more targeted” attempt after the crisis of 1998 and characterize the recent stage (the crisis 2008–2009 as a frontier, 2012 as a culminating point) as a formation of a “paternalist” agenda of the State policy towards SME and the bottom-up entrepreneurship.

The authors formulate the twofold dilemma of the SME policy in Russia: the misbalance between the federal State and the regions regarding the tools and possibilities of any sustainable policy; as well as the function of State controlling interventions which should, but cannot be diminished without serious weakening of the social basis of the President.

Keywords: SME policy; Russia

JEL Classifications: E65, L53, O52

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Introduction¹

The SME and entrepreneurship policy is a rather new phenomenon in all post-Socialist economies.

In some CEE countries, some roots of private small enterprises existed during the Socialist period (like in Poland), there were some traditions of promoting the alternative non-State economy of micro-enterprises and co-operatives within the system of the “Gulash-Socialism” (Hungary) or of the semi-competitive order of the former Yugoslavia; besides, in some exceptional cases, the package of the SME policy was transferred “over one night” after the re-unification (former GDR).

None of these factors existed in most republics of the former USSR (except the Baltic states); the private economy was prohibited, the semi-cooperative forms of entities in agriculture were de-facto parts of the total state regulation and planning; the word “entrepreneur” was a term of criminal law, but not of economic literature; although illegal forms of private economy existed already in early 1970s, but both their influence on economic macro-data as well as on the social situation in the country was rather marginal; an informal economy was well embedded but without any access to open markets, finance etc. and had very primitive forms (see [Ledeneva, 1998; Rehn, Taalas, 2004]).

Because the final shift to the systemic transition in Russia in 1991 was merely a result of the abortion of a gradual change of the Socialist system [Elster et al., 1998], the start of the pro-market oriented reforms happened suddenly; there were no serious preparations to establish a coherent and outbalanced system of the private economy and of its agents. Hence, a SME policy emerged parallel to the spontaneous development of the street-entrepreneurship, a rapid marketization of the everyday life of millions of citizens of post-Soviet Russia, and mass privatization.

The emergence and evolution of the SME policy in Russia during the post-Soviet period, its relevance in the recent decades was the subject of some reports of international financial organizations and of the OECD, but merely in a very descriptive way. Its socio-economic patterns and evolution are until now only partly discussed in international literature [Puffer, McCarthy, 2001; Puffer et al., 2010; Chepurensko, 2011].

The nature, reasons of at least two significant changes in the approach to the design of the SME policy, in early 2000s and after 2009, and the options of future development in the stage of a “backward transition” are the subject of this chapter.

¹ The results of the project “The regional fiscal and tax policy's impact on the entrepreneurial potential”, carried out within the framework of the Basic Research Program at the National Research University Higher School of Economics (HSE) in 2016, are presented in this work.

Literature overview

The SME policy as a separate area of the public policy is a rather young issue even in the West; it is much less investigated in the literature than the SME phenomenon itself or the new venture establishment [Birley, 1987; Flynn, 1993; Storey, 1994; Freel, 1998; Bottazzi, Da Rin, 2002; Lundström, Stevenson, 2005; Da Rin et al., 2006; Audretsch et al., 2007; Autio et al., 2007; Cantner, Kösters, 2012; Mason, Brown, 2013, etc.].

Initially, in 1980–1990s, the agenda of the SME policy in the established market economies was based on the assumption of a systemic “market failure”; public policy interventions were justified when market mechanisms failed and the production of public-good benefits was possible [Mahoney et al., 2009]. The “generalist” approach which dominated entrepreneurship policy in the West at that time, when the transition in the CEE and CIS also began, implied that the governments had mainly to focus on increasing the number of new entrepreneurial firms by lowering barriers to entry and reducing the hazard of exit [Amezcuca et al., 2013; Schwartz, 2009], as well as by providing indirect financial support over special financial institutions of a different kind, as well as educational services etc. It seemed logical to support any new firms, in the hope that if a greater number of new businesses survive, more firms will also succeed and create new jobs.

Close to the end of the 1990s, the continuing interest of Western governments in having more sustainable entrepreneurial firms and a higher efficiency of public resources spent in entrepreneurship and SME promotion resulted in a shift from the “generalist” to the “targeting approach” in the SME policy. As a result, measuring economic impact has become an integral part of the evaluation of public programs [Storey, 2002]. In this context, there was increasing influence in the idea that supporting any new ventures is not efficient, as most of the new firms have no potential to grow, shape only a small number of jobs, and many of them quit very soon [Shane, 2009].

The understanding of the real contribution of entrepreneurship to economic growth became more nuanced, including the particular focus on high-impact new ventures [Smallbone et al., 1995; Delmar et al., 2003; Autio, 2007; Henrekson, Johansson, 2010; Autio, Rannikko, 2015] at the start of this century marked a very important turn in the SME policy philosophy; since that time, the literature deals with how to design policies to encourage growth and sustainability of SMEs, focusing largely on how to improve delivery and design (e.g. [Beck, Demirguc-Kunt, 2005; Enhancing the Role of SMEs..., 2008]). Another group of studies focuses on policy evaluation, which is a topic that a growing number of academics have contributed to [Storey, 2002; Wren, Storey, 2002]. Meanwhile, there are few attempts to assess the impact of the policy on the macro-level, i.e. the SME and entrepreneurship policy impact on the wider economy

within which the programs operate [Smallbone, Welter, 2002; Mahoney et al., 2009], apart from program evaluations that include economic impact assessment [Mole et al., 2008].

In the meantime, the state and prospects of the SME and entrepreneurship policy in transitional economies, and especially in Russia, the main constraints and interplay of stakeholders interests, its evolution during the transition in less advanced transition economies is still less discussed in academic literature [Chepurenko, 2011; Smallbone, Welter, 2011; Smallbone, Xheneti, 2012], contrary to the state of the SME sector and its institutional framework itself [Johnson et al., 2000; Smallbone, Welter, 2001; McMillan, Woodruff, 2002; Ovaska, Sobel, 2005; Estrin et al., 2006; Aidis et al., 2008; Manolova et al., 2008].

Experts soon recognized that the privatization led in many economies in the CIS region to the domination of the “predatory entrepreneurship”, executing the capture of most efficient assets either by the former “nomenclature” or by transnational big companies [Spicer et al., 2000; Scase, 2003].

Moreover, as a result if the institutional trap of privatization in weak and fragile environments, problems occurred also with the “quality” of bottom-up entrepreneurship [Feige, 1997]. They could hardly grow, were not motivated to shape new smart jobs etc. On the contrary, a variety of types of entrepreneurial behavior occurred in these economies which merely illustrated Baumol’s [1990] idea on unproductive and even destructive entrepreneurship, revitalized in the context of entrepreneurship under transition research [Sauka, Welter, 2007; Zahra et al., 2013].

SME sector in Russia (1990–2015)

Unfortunately, there is no sustainable statistical data of the SME during the whole period of 1991–2015 available, because the main definition of a small enterprise changed twice, in 1995 and in 2007. However, some data for 1994–2002 and 2007–2012 are remarkable.

Data on Table 1 shows that after the mid of the 1990s the sector was stagnating, regarding the numbers of the registered small firms, and even declining as regards the number of officially hired employees. The reasons for the stagnation at that time were of a different nature. First, the mass privatization in Russia in the first half of the 1990s was an institutional trap, as it leads to the domination of “predatory entrepreneurship” [Boycko et al., 1995; Feige, 1997; Black et al., 2000; Spicer et al., 2000] represented by large capital closely interconnected with the decision makers within the state bureaucracy. Second, as the economic situation became more stable since the middle of the 1990s, many micro firms’ owners and solo entrepreneurs turned back to where they came from under the period of a sudden massive collapse of big plants etc., namely became employees of larger firms again; for instance, “shuttle” traders, which formed a population of

several million solo entrepreneurs at the beginning of the 1990s, had already disappeared as a more or less significant group of SME at the end of the 1990s [Eder et al., 2003].

Table 1. Dynamics of small business in Russia in 1994–2002

	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002
Number of firms (thousands)	896	877,3	841,7	861,1	868,0	890,6	879,3	843,0	882,3
Number of full-time employees (thousands)	8,479.9	8,994.8	6,269.1	6,514.8	6207,8	6485,8	6596,8	6483,5	7220,3
Number of part-time employees (thousands)	6,676.6	4,926.2	2,352.1	2,124.4	1,193.6	1057,6	1024,3	952,3	755,8

Sources: Polishchuk L. [2001]; Maloe predprinimatelstvo v Rossii [2003].

In 2005, the definition of small business changed, and medium sized enterprises were included into the regular statistical observation, as well as individual entrepreneurs, therefore the statistics before 2005 and after 2006 are not comparable. As Tables 2 and 3 explain, this period was characterized by a steady increase in the number of small and medium firms and a more or less stable number of individual entrepreneurs; however, average employment in the sector remained stable, because of two reasons: a growing intensity of labor used, as well as growing part of the informal employment in the sector [Gimpelson, Zudina, 2012].

Table 2. Dynamics of the number of SMEs in Russia in 2007–2012, in thousands

	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Legal entities	1.137	1.362	1.594	1.669	1.852	2.013
Individual entrepreneurs	2.593	2.742	2.653	2.600	2.490	2.390
TOTAL	3.730	4.104	4.248	4.269	4.342	4.403

Source: Small and Medium Entrepreneurship in Russia

Table 3. Dynamics of the employment in SMEs in Russia, millions of people

	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012
Legal entities	13.7	13.3	13.4	13.5	13.2
Individual entrepreneurs	3.0	3.1	3.1	3.0	2.9
TOTAL	16.7	16.4	16.5	16.6	16.1

Source: Small and Medium Entrepreneurship in Russia

The basic features of the sectoral and regional structure of SMEs revealed during the first year of market reforms have not changed significantly to date. In 2012, the biggest part of all registered SMEs (ca 40%) was formed by wholesale and retail trade, car repair and B2C. The second biggest segment with 20% consisted of SMEs dealing with real estate, rental and related

services. The third biggest group with 11% formed construction, and only around 10% of SMEs were engaged in manufacturing [Maloe i srednee predprinimatelstvo v Rossii, 2013]. As per the regional structure of small businesses, Moscow became the absolute leader in SMEs development with 20–25% of all registered SMEs. It was followed by St. Petersburg (10–12%), Republic of Tatarstan and Sverdlovsk region [Ibid.].

The main features of Russian SMEs after 25 years of the beginning of the systemic transition are as follows:

1) the sector officially has a very restricted impact on the macroeconomic performance of the country, providing no more than 20% of the GDP and jobs for about 35% of all employees [Maloe i srednee predprinimatelstvo v Rossii – 2014, 2014];

2) the vast majority of SMEs are operating outside of structured business chains, the scale of subcontracting in manufacturing with independent SMEs in Russia is very low;

3) a high level of informality [Williams, 2008; Tonoyan et al., 2010; Chepurensko, 2014]. Off-the-books transactions to avoid taxation and informal hiring is widespread among Russian SMEs, the estimated number of informally hired employees was approximately equal to the number of official employees in the sector [Gimpelson, Zudina, 2012].

4) a very small share of Russian SMEs, 3–5%, are engaged in innovative development [Maloe i srednee predprinimatelstvo v Rossii – 2014, 2014].

SME policy evolution in 1990–2010s in Russia

SME support in the 1990s: the “generalist” approach under a fragile environment

The shaping of a SME policy agenda and initial institutions responsible for it in Russia were made in early 1990s, immediately after the break of the former economic system. Most the ideas on how to frame this policy came from the World Bank and experts representing some Western governments.

The first stage of the national SME policy designing and implementing was based on the Presidential Decree “On measures aimed at the development of small and medium-sized business in the Russian Federation” (1992) and the Russian Federation Government Resolution “On the network of regional agencies for small business support” (1994).

These documents marked the first steps in SME policy; although they formulated certain sectoral “priorities” for State support, the State never had real ability; established some taxation exemptions for SMEs; set up priorities in the allocation of State credit support to be invested primarily in the production of consumer goods, food and other commodities.

The Russian Foundation for Entrepreneurship Support and the Competition Development was established in 1993 as a financial agency to cooperate with regional funds and commercial

banks. Later on [1994], the Foundation for Assistance of Small Innovative Enterprises in the Scientific and Technical Sphere was established as a non-profit organization, with a budget of 0.5% of the total State subsidies for science (since 1996 – 1.0% of the related funds).

In the middle of the 1990s, a special state agency to conduct and supervise State activities in this area, the State Committee of the Russian Federation for Support and Development of SME (GKRP RF) was established (1995). This committee was assigned to develop the SME Federal support programs and to implement the international technological assistance to the Russian Federation in this area.

The main principles of the State SME policy were formulated in the Federal Act “On State Support of Small Business in the Russian Federation” [1995], which defined the status and the criteria of a small enterprise.

During this period, the infrastructure of small business support at regional level was in emergence. In 1997–1998, there were already 74 regional SMEs support funds functioning, moreover, several business incubators, educational and business centers, regional leasing companies, techno parks, information and analytical centers for development of small business operated in many regions of Russia at that time [O Federalnoy programme gosudarstvennoy poddershki, 1998].

Formally, Russian state SME policy at the beginning of the 1990s promoting any new firm creation was in line with the “generalist” approach. The SME policy of the Russian state was delivered by a set of state, non-government and private organizations; the role of the government typically was seen in funding the access to information, advice and training for start-ups and of some other services as well as in co-financing the regional funds and providing loan guarantees to commercial banks. It implied interplay of the State agencies with non-state stakeholders, like business associations, private financial institutions (banks, leasing and insurance companies etc.), academic experts etc. These principles and design were typical for all Federal programs in the mid of the 1990s – beginning of the 2000s [Vilenskiy, 2014].

However, the ambitions of the responsible State institutions went far beyond the existing realms and obtained resources; the private financial sector was in the very initial stage of establishment and most banks were engaged merely in privatization deals financing and could not provide any loans for SMEs under high inflation and huge commercial risks, while the state agencies were not sufficiently financed to provide any support either to the lenders or to the borrowers; business associations were rather institutionalized groups of particular interests; there were no experienced support agencies’ staff on the regional and municipal level as well as only a few training programs and academic experts on this area [Vilenskiy, 2007]. Therefore, State

policy was clearly decoupling from the real conditions and trends within the basis; in the mid-1990s a stagnation of the SME sector had already occurred, as it is shown on Table 1.

The Russian SME policy after the crisis of 1998: a “more targeted” approach

During the financial crisis of 1998 a significant number of small entrepreneurs, especially in retail trade, quit the business. Albeit being primarily the result of sudden change of macro-economic conditions, it led to an intensive discussion of the efficiency of the SME policy among policy makers and experts, and negative conclusions to abandon both the SME policy as an action area as well as the responsible institutions beginning to dominate in the internal political discourse.

The new post-Yeltsin government was aware of the necessity of a new agenda of the SME policy. The Gref's Program for Welfare State Reform (2000) was focused on eliminating exchange and trade restrictions, creating a favorable investment climate, deregulating the economy, providing guarantees for ownership of private property, and fostering competition. But this agenda was focused first of all on the most important issues of the Russian economy (oil and gas sector taxation, banking system, privatization etc.) mastered by the Ministry of Economic development and Trade (MEDT, later on – MED) under his supervision. It should also be stressed that after the crisis in 1998 most international support programs as well as activities of some Western governments and foundations in the area of the SME policy consulting were discontinued, therefore further development of the agenda and its implementation became subject of Russian stakeholders alone.

After 2–3 years of hidden conflict within the political elite and uncertainty, some changes in the area came. The MEDT became the core institution responsible for the SME policy at federal level. Federal programs for the development and support of small business were wrapped up. The GKRP RF and the Federal Fund for Small Entrepreneurship and Competition Support were closed in early 2000s.

Starting with the issuing of a series of new legal acts to improve the legal environment and to ease the taxation system for many SMEs, the government began a significant review of the whole frame and design of the SME policy in 2002–2006. Federal acts “On the single tax on imputed income”, “On Licensing Certain Types of Activities”, and “On Leasing” were adopted; the chapter “On the special tax regimes” in the new Tax Code of the Russian Federation along with a number of other Federal Acts followed. Lastly, the new Federal Act “On the development of small and medium-sized enterprises in the Russian Federation” (2007) was issued, which introduced the concept of “micro-” and “medium-sized business” and formulated the principles of

participation of business associations in the SME policy elaboration, as well as the shifting of the SME policy at the level of regions and municipalities.

In parallel, an expert group encouraged by the MEDT elaborated the “Target-oriented program for the support of SME in 2005–2008”. First, it focused on crucial target groups in the SME sector, i.e. innovative firms (the program provided for access to resources and to facilitate entry into new markets), start-ups (development of expertise and access to resources), sustainable growing SMEs (access to new markets and to resources). Other groups of SME were to become subjects of indirect support in the form of de-bureaucratization and entrepreneurial education. Moreover, the “Target-oriented program for the support of SME in 2005–2008” outlined not only the targets, but also indicators to measure the efficiency of its implementation.

The program provided a rationale for the basic State SME policy principles, namely, decentralization of SME support mechanisms, co-funding (Federation and regions), a combination of entrepreneurship promotion in the advanced territories and SME support in economically weaker territories, competition between state bodies and public organizations in the area of SME support, identification and dissemination of best practices, and lowering of exit barriers for less successful SME and incentives for cooperation between small, medium and large businesses.

Finally, the agenda paper stressed the importance of regular independent monitoring and evaluation of the Program’s performance; all crucial solutions of the Program were in line with the ideas discussed at that time in international literature [Storey, 2002; Lundström, Stevenson, 2005].

In the course of discussion with the main stakeholders in the government and in the business community and subsequent implementation, many of these principles got lost. For example, the idea of transparency of the program operation and efficiency measurement was rejected, the functions of designing, operating and monitoring of the program were left with the MEDT itself; hence, a conflict of interests was guaranteed. No public hearings were held on its agenda, nor on its interim results in the next years. The MEDT also failed to explain the arrangement and the dissemination of funding among several priorities as well as the indicators of its efficiency; the latter were typically seen not in the economic performance of the related groups of SMEs or sustainability of them, but simply in the number of co-funded “measures” (Table 4).

Table 4. Structure of federal budget expenditures and results of the Program for SME support in Russia in 2005–2007

Measures	Expenditures (RUR, bln)	Results
Support of business incubators formation	2730	Co-funding of 111 local, municipal and universities-based business incubators
Formation of venture funds	2151	21 funds, market capitalization – RUR 8 400 bln
Co-funding of regional SME support programmes	1593	SME support programmes in 56 RF oblasts and krais co-funded
Formation of guarantee funds	1556	23 funds, market capitalization – RUR 3 300 bln
Export support	170	380+ companies

Source: Maly bizness: ot inertsii k innovatsii [2008].

However, there are no doubts that in the mid of the 2000s the design of the SME policy changed from a “generalist” toward a “targeted” approach; some core groups of the SME sector were identified as subjects of specific support, whereas the vast majority of small firms could enjoy the indirect support in a form of diminishing of administrative pressure and introducing more friendly legal environment for SME.

During times of a relative prosperity, some regional authorities began to implement programs of entrepreneurship support in a more active way, sharing the costs with the Federal state. For instance, in 2007–2008 State support was more often provided to exporting firms, as well as to those who implemented innovations and invested in it. At regional level, any organizational or financial support was provided at that time to 37% of firms with significant investment, and only to 17% without any investment. Moreover, it was in line with the SMEs expectations; in 2005–2006 organizational support was already understood by owners of the firms as a more efficient tool to develop the business contrary to direct financial support [Yakovlev, 2011].

But the sound idea of decentralization of the SME policy was contradictory of the Concept of improving the efficiency of intra-budgetary relations of the Ministry of Finance to restructure the system of the fiscal policy, which was adopted in 2006. Its main results were a significant increase in the federal part of the collected taxes compared to the previous period and a super-centralization of the tax exemption process. In 2001–2002 the Federal state share of the total tax incomes was still around 50%, while in 2006 it was already close to 70%; and the share of the own budgetary incomes of the regions diminished on average by 13% [Commersant, November, 2005, 11 (Nov.)]. Moreover, their budgetary incomes consisted of a portion of the profit tax plus excise taxes and the tax on income of individual persons. In the meantime, during times of crisis these taxes are subject to a sudden and dramatic decrease.

This contradiction between the main focus of the SME policy on decentralization and the centralization of the budgetary funds became an institutional trap and played the role of a trigger of the shift to a “paternalist” SME policy already during and after the crisis of 2008–2009.

The SME policy in Russia after the crisis 2008–2009: turning to the “paternalist” approach

The economic crisis of 2008–2009 put on hold the implementation of further mid- and long-term plans. In December 2008, support of SME was put on the “List of Priority Measures of the Government of the Russian Federation” as part of its action against the effects of the global financial crisis. In April 2009 an Anti-crisis program of the Russian government was adopted, including a list of measures of the SME and entrepreneurship policy.

In the course of the anti-crisis action plan implementation, two ideas were either revitalized or invented; namely, the subsidizing of start-ups and the involvement of the SMEs into the state procurement. Of the entire federal financial support of the SMEs, RUR 60 billion, a significant part, RUR 10.5 billion, was ordered to be provided to support the formation of any start-ups. Moreover, the government was to provide a law for preferential treatment of small businesses in state and municipal procurement with a minimum quota of SME’s goods and services in public purchases of 20%. This measure should provide the SMEs in 2009 with extra RUR 800 billion of public procurement. The idea was to promote the manufacturing segment of the SMEs with granted markets. However, this measure was highly doubtful, even when looking to what was similarly happening in the EU [Public Procurement as a Driver of Innovation in SMEs and Public Services, 2014], because of the very non-transparent and corrupt practice of State procurement in Russia as well as the very weak demand for innovative goods and services on the side of the procurement beneficiaries.

Some other measures were conforming market logic; promises were made to lower the charge for power grid connection for SMEs and to provide SMEs who leased offices from state institutions with discounts and stable long-term rental rates; regional governments got their own rights to reduce the so-called single tax on imputed income used by many microbusinesses and some small firms from 15 to 5%; deregulation was launched – in 2009 the registration of a small firm was simplified, from now, the novice entrepreneur only had to inform the tax authority about starting a new business, and the number of regular inspections of SMEs activities were restricted to once every 3 years; any exceptional checks had to be permitted by a state prosecutor. Meantime, no measures to support high growth potentials and gazelles [Vin’kov et al., 2008; Yudanov, 2010] were introduced during the crisis.

However, after the crisis, in 2010–2012, there was a period of parallel existence of two rather different streams in the economic policy, including the SME area. On the one side, within

the agenda of a modernization of the Russian economy, supported by the president Medvedev, some initiatives to foster innovative start-ups became increasingly the goals of the support institutions; the Skolkovo project was launched [2010], the Agency of Strategic Initiatives (established in 2011 as an NGO under the supervision of Putin, at that time being the prime-minister) mastered a “road map” of public policy for the most problematic areas of SMEs state regulation was developed. Namely, the SMEs preferential financing system, improving accessibility of energy infrastructure, support for foreign market penetration and export promotion, development of competition and improvement of antimonopoly legislation, simplification of procedures for the establishment of legal entities and individual entrepreneurs, improving SMEs access to public procurement of infrastructure monopolies and state-owned companies from federal to municipal levels as a part of the decentralization of public policies for SMEs. As a result, Russia’s rank improved from 120th in 2011 to 51st in the World Bank’s 2016 Doing Business report, of 189 countries worldwide (<http://www.doingbusiness.org/rankings>).

Moreover, State owned venture and development institutions, like the Foundation for Assistance of Small Innovative Enterprises in the Scientific and Technical Sphere, Russian Venture Company (established in 2006) and others, started to promote hundreds of innovative start-ups, establishing a jointly agreed framework of the so called innovation lift. Credit lines and loan guarantees for regional banks financing SMEs became the priority of the newly-created State financial institution, the MSP-Bank (SME-Bank).

On the other side, the State was trying to get more and more control over the SMEs using different techniques and tools. The access of the manufacturing SMEs to public procurement of State institutions, semi-State infrastructure monopolies and state-owned corporations became the main tool of SME policy. Although the amount of public funds spent in SMEs support programs multiplied many times during the period (Table 6), the expected effect of the State procurement market opening for SMEs could be of a significantly bigger impact on the sector: in just the first 3 quarters of 2015 State owned companies fulfilled procurement procedures with small firms for RUR 2,100 billion (23% of the total procurement mass), State institutions – for RUR 420 billion (10% of the procurement mass), while the total SME sector turnover in 2014 made RUR 30,900 billion [Vedomosti, 2015, October, 26,]; the extension of the obligatory quota of SMEs from 9% to 18% (from 2016) and the involvement of the compulsory procurement procedures of all State and municipal-owned companies should increase the market of State procurement for SMEs up to RUR 7,000 billion [Vedomosti, 2015, September, 24]. Moreover, the Russian government is trying to make even large private companies with annual turnover of more than RUR 7 billion subject of the same regulations, even if it is contradictory to the economic freedom principle manifested in the Constitution; combined with some restrictive measures, like the rule to manage

procurement only on online-platforms, diminishing the number of such platforms and registering all existing valid contracts to avoid manipulation with target indicators [Vedomosti, 2015, September, 25, October, 19, 26] it is a real sign of a business capture by the State and a dependent role of private initiative in Russia. That manufacturing SMEs should be subject to a more sustainable State support policy in order to launch modernization of the economy, is evident. But contrary to the targeted approach in market economies, trying to stipulate clusters and provide business angels and other investors indirect incentives, the Russian State is implementing a policy to push manufacturing SMEs to become more and more dependent on the State, or on the State owned large corporations' procurement; this, under strong dominance of the State in the economy and massive and embedded corrupt practices, may lead either to an even stronger subordination of the SME under the State authorities and State owned large firms, or to a boom of corrupt practices among the SMEs adopting the usual practices of procurement; in a negative case, to both these results.

Table 6. Federal budget funds allocated to the SME support program, 2005–2015

Year	Funding, RUR billion	Increase, %
2005	1.5	
2006	3.0	+100
2007	3.8	+27
2008	3.9	+3
2009	18.6	+377
2010	17.8	–4
2011	17.8	0
2012	20.8	+17
2013	19.9	–4
2014	23.0	+16
2015	23.0	0

Source: Review of SME and Entrepreneurship Issues and Policies in the Russian Federation. Final Report [2015]. P. 30.

The second negative sign is the campaign to diminish the role of microbusinesses, the core group of SMEs in a market economy. After the turn toward “dirigisme” made by the Russian government, the solo owners of micro enterprises and individuals seemed to become “redundant” within the frame of the SME policy in Russia. In 2012–2013, the federal state changed the system of social insurance for them, moreover, in many big cities, starting with Moscow, the regional authorities launched a campaign against small kiosks and either did not extend the rent or violently demolished the property of them. In parallel, in many regions state authorities began to monitor the adults without official incomes, pushing them to legalize their income sources. In the course of the Federal Labor Agency and regional governments' activities only the first three

quarters of 1, 206 million informally employed adults were identified, with more than 1 million of them on formal contracts [Rostrud, 2015].

Attempts to diminish the opportunities for micro-business in the form of individual entrepreneurship may also have a fiscal logic. Encouraging individual entrepreneurs to quit their business and escape into employment at large firms or in state organizations where each job is subject of a social tax of more than 31.5%, from a moderate monthly salary of RUR 30000, the budget gets an annual tax mass of RUR 113 400, whilst an individual entrepreneur with a similar monthly turnover would pay the fixed fee of RUR 18610.80 minimum, but RUR 148 886.40 maximum, whatever their financial results are. Taking into consideration the budget deficits of most Russian regions, the motivation of the regional governments is evident. But as a result, some hundred thousands of the smallest individual entrepreneurs were either enforced to quit their business or to move to informal entrepreneurship definitely, increasing the “shadow economy” in Russia [Chepureenko, 2014].

Third, since 2012, the ombudsman entrepreneur was introduced as the higher defender of rights of entrepreneurs in Russia and mediator between the small business and the State. Although a positive step by Putin, objectively, it diminishes the role of self-regulated business associations in order to solve problems with excessive regulations and corruption in a more “personalist” way.

As a whole, on the very first look, general changes in the system of the SME policy after 2012 seem to be in line with the “more focused” approach used in the West. There are primarily manufacturing SMEs who are the proclaimed beneficiaries of the support policy; a direct support measures’ funding (like State agencies’ provided loans to SMEs etc.) is restricted, while the State procurement is used as an indirect tool to promote the target group; micro-business (solo owners etc.) should become formalized or quit business, etc. Moreover, according to the EY “20 Entrepreneurship Barometer 2013”, Russia was number one among the G20 countries regarding “coordinated SME support” [The power of three, 2013]. But in fact, under the existing framework conditions, the general trends in the SME policy in Russia at least since 2012–2013 are clearly tending to transform entrepreneurs into tenants and even serfs, using both incentives (engagement in State procurement) and sanctions (against micro-businesses).

Attempts by the Russian government in 2015 to develop a Strategy of SME policy until 2030, the establishment of the Federal Corporation on Small and Medium Sized Entrepreneurship as a super-corporation to promote financial support for the SME sector, measures to push even private large companies to involve small business into procurement, establishment of a registry of manufacturing small firms able to compete for state procurement etc., and being adjusted to the needs of an authoritarian State and implemented into the socio-economic context dominated

by some influential groups of interests close to the Kremlin, may strengthen rather the “unproductive entrepreneurship”.

Conclusions: The institutional traps and dilemmas of the SME policy in Russia

The SME policy in Russia during the transition period clearly changed at least twice. Starting with the “generalist” attempts to support both SMEs and start-ups using a broad set of instruments in the very beginning of the 1990s, it became a more focused profile in the middle of the 2000s, but changed toward a paternalist policy after the comeback of Putin as President in 2012–2013. The first of these turns was in line with the mainstream discussion of the SME policy in the West; however, the last change can be understood only in the context of a backward transition in Russia – the growing presence of the State in the economy and attempts to also “streamline” private business using the tool of the State procurement etc.

The most evident dilemma of the SME policy in Russia is as follows. The system of policy design and implementation needs a real refocusing from top to bottom because a centralist SME policy is not only a contradictio in adjecto but also contra-productive taking into consideration the territory of Russia and huge differences in the economic and political landscapes across the regions; a subsidiary principle in the governance should be introduced to enable the local and regional authorities to establish appropriate models of SME policy and to have incentives to do so. Therefore, the first urgent problem of SME and entrepreneurship policy is the need for a “win-win” policy, encouraging regions to attract sufficient financing to establish their own SME and entrepreneurship policy adjusted to the possibilities and needs of the regions themselves (see Table 7).

The solution should be a radical change of the fiscal policy towards a subsidiarity model as it is in all sustainable federal states. But the economic crisis in Russia since 2014 seems to possess a “L” form; under such circumstances, the readiness of the political elite to introduce radical change of the taxation system usually diminishes, and fiscal interests represented by the Ministry of Finance might dominate. Moreover, it would contradict the whole Putin’s elites’ philosophy of a “strong power”.

Table 7. Possible clusters of regional SME and entrepreneurship support programs' models

Level of the SME development (share at the RDP, number of SMEs per 1000 of adults, share of SME employees at the total regional employment and other respective indicators)	Entrepreneurial environment (efficiency of regional support programs, quality of institutions according to the appropriate criteria etc.)		
		<i>favorable</i>	<i>non-favorable</i>
	<i>upper mediate</i>	Promoting entrepreneurial ecological systems (interaction of gazelles and universities, exporting SMEs, fairs, ISO 18000 certificates etc.)	Support of the infrastructure establishment, including business associations, educating the CEOs of support institutions, promoting R&D centers at home universities, etc.
	<i>lower mediate</i>	Supporting accelerators of SME development (business-angels and venture capitalists, co-working centers-, success promotion etc.)	Entrepreneurship education programs and modules on different levels of education, MFO and self-employment support

Source: own concept.

Besides, it is critically important to diminish the State interventions, especially the redundant controlling activity etc.; however, it would undermine the political rent seeking of the mid-low State bureaucracy and lead to tensions between these groups and the leading elite across the Kremlin. If the combat against “unnecessary regulation” and “corruption” violating the SME became consistent and successive, it would soon weaken the social basis of the President.

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Политика российского государства в отношении малого и среднего предпринимательства (1990–2015 гг.): от «универсалистского» к «патерналистскому» подходу [Электронный ресурс] : препринт WP1/2016/02 / А. Чепуренко, А. Виленский ; Нац. исслед. ун-т «Высшая школа экономики». – Электрон. текст. дан. (500 Кб). – М. : Изд. дом Высшей школы экономики, 2016. – (Серия WP1 «Институциональные проблемы экономики») – 26 с. (на англ. яз.).

Статья посвящена критическому обзору политики в области МСП и предпринимательства в России с начала системной трансформации до настоящего времени. Авторы различают три разных дизайна этой политики в России – от попытки «универсалистского» подхода в начале 1990-х годов с переходом к «более фокусированной» политике после кризиса 1998 г. – и характеризуют начавшийся недавно последний этап (кризис 2008–2009 гг. рассматривается как начало, а 2012 г. – как кульминация перехода к нему) как период формирования «патерналистской» повестки государственной политики в отношении МСП и низового предпринимательства.

Авторы формулируют двойную дилемму политики в отношении МСП в России, отмечая неустранимый дисбаланс инструментов и возможностей проведения устойчивой политики между федеральным государством и регионами, а также проблему избыточных мер государственного контроля, которые должны, но не могут быть сокращены без серьезного ослабления социальной основы президентской власти.

Классификация JEL: E65 L53 O52

Ключевые слова: политика в отношении МСП; Россия

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Препринт WP1/2016/02
Серия WP1
Институциональные проблемы российской экономики

Чепуренко Александр Юльевич, Виленский Александр Викторович

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(на английском языке)

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