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## Research

# Green light for creativity

By Lisa Schneider | June 19, 2015 | [Issue 25](#)

In Germany there is a funding instrument that is as colorful as the innovative ideas of the middle class itself. After seven successful years it has now been re-issued after a longer break. A view of the Central Innovation Programme for SMEs (ZIM).



*Photo: AiF Projekt GmbH*

During the tour explains development engineer Christian Scholz (left) Ole Janssen from BMWi and AiF Vice President Eduard Neufeld showcases a secure Schmeissner and the TU Dresden.

Whether drinking or process water to be disinfected is a gross difference. Whether a sled will slide through snow or sand, also. To change the angle and pour knowledge into the development of innovative technologies and products, is the recipe for success of the German Mittelstand.

### Facts & Figures

"In order to exploit the immense creative potential of SMEs, the Central Innovation Programme for SMEs remains consistent technology and market open," assured Secretary Matthias Machnig. On the SME Innovation of the Federal Ministry of Economics and Technology (BWi), last Thursday he was finally able to announce the awaited reboot of the ZIM. This can now submit applications for ZIM promotion again after almost six months of waiting time small and medium enterprises and cooperating research institutions.

Just as Pauly GmbH. They developed since 2004 reactors for disinfection of drinking water. Two and a half years ago, decided the leaders of their business to expand reactors for process water treatment. "The approach is quite another, as process water is heavily contaminated by rust, oil,

grease, etc.," explains company president Alexander Pauly. Nevertheless, it can present a patented reactor for electrodiaphragmalysis with our own disinfectant today. "The sterilized and purified cooling water has almost drinking water quality," Pauly says proudly.

A little longer, the KHW has plastic and wood processing factory GmbH worked together with its cooperation partners to develop a carriage which is suitable for sledding down the dunes. The Department of Polymer Technology at the TU Ilmenau found that high-strength carbon, glass or aramid fibers make the skid and wear-resistant polymers such as Teflon or silicone oils reduce friction forces. The Fraunhofer Institute UMSICHT checked the tribological properties. The 90 employees strong KHW will finish the product in the coming weeks - prospects, especially from North Africa and Arabia should give it plenty.

Both projects were funded by the Central Innovation Programme for SMEs (ZIM). This was launched in 2008 funding instrument was so far benefited 13 300 small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and 1650 research institutions. The total budget of € 4.1 billion were approved. ZIM was thus the strongest financial instrument for promoting research and development of the middle class - until the program ended in late 2014.

The new edition was slow in coming. "Since May 15, requests may be made again," announced Regierungsdirektorin Carmen Heidecke on the SME Innovation Day of the BMWi and reaped largely silence. The new ZIM Directive does not taste any.

While Machnig announced that the budget expanded and the blank has been improved, pointed the CEO of the promoter AiF Projekt GmbH, Klaus-Rüdiger jump out that "not everything that a directive requires, is compatible with the interests of enterprises" , To accept the new ZIM Directive, only two applications per company over a period of twelve months. This step might do some companies hurt that could previously submit as many projects. Also bonuses for firms located in the former East Germany fall in future away.

Otherwise, the new directive brings on closer inspection, especially shifts: It may at first entrepreneurs with up to 500 employees. Contrary to the EU interpretation and the previous Directive (up to 250 employees) include this now to the middle class. Research facilities can also be promoted to 100% immediately. Their maximum eligible costs, however, were limited to € 190,000. For companies, however, the new ceiling on funding will amount to € 380 000, 30 000 more than in the first funding period. The changes, in turn, not to the maximum grant amount of cooperation projects. It remains unchanged at € 2 million.

A big surprise is the new policy thus not. Many medium-sized companies should be the care. They have submitted their project proposals as a precaution before closing. December 2014 once 3800 applications were received to the old funding conditions. Those are on average seven times as many as in the preceding months. The German middle class is not only innovative, it can circumnavigate cliffs and noiseless.