

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Nov. 29, 2024

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Ministry of SMEs and Startups Launches Full-Scale International Joint R&D for Global Innovation Special Zones

SEJONG – The Ministry of SMEs and Startups (MSS, Minister OH Youngju) announced that project implementers from the four Global Innovation Special Zones will launch 33 full-scale international joint R&D projects in collaboration with 29 institutions across 12 countries, including Fraunhofer ISIT in Germany, Tokyo Medical University in Japan, Johns Hopkins Hospital in the United States, and the University of Strathclyde in the United Kingdom.

The initiative, backed by the MSS, will allocate KRW 400 million per project over two years, totaling KRW 13.2 billion. The program is designed to support joint research and development with leading overseas innovation institutions, enabling companies in challenging regulatory environments or emerging technology sectors to more effectively enter the global market. By fostering cooperative relationships with foreign institutions, the program will eliminate indirect costs, enhancing the efficiency of public funds and reducing the financial burden on participating companies, all while boosting the effectiveness of R&D outcomes.

Furthermore, to safeguard against technology risks associated with international collaborations, LawVax (led by Representative Lawyer KIM Hoo-Gon), a technology protection law firm, will provide proactive support through the 'Legal Support Group for Global Innovation Special Zones.' This includes measures to prevent technology leaks, secure intellectual property, and protect core technologies.

The key overseas partner institutions and R&D details for each zone are outlined below.

The Jeonnam Direct Current Industry Global Innovation Special Zone will collaborate with Fraunhofer ISIT in Germany to develop power equipment, including direct current power conversion devices and circuit breakers. This partnership aims to secure a foothold in the rapidly growing direct current industry while advancing direct current distribution network

operation technologies. The zone also strives to establish international standards in alignment with the global shift toward direct current systems for carbon neutrality.

The eight selected companies in the Chungbuk Advanced Regenerative Bio Global Innovation Special Zone have been based at Shonan iPark in Japan since September. They are engaged in joint research and development with Tokyo Medical University, Kyushu University, and Astellas Pharma to advance cell and gene therapies, including arthritis cell treatments, organoid-based regenerative therapies, and induced pluripotent stem cell therapies.

The Busan Next-Generation Marine Mobility Global Innovation Special Zone seeks to develop cutting-edge eco-friendly and autonomous vessel technologies in partnership with the University of Strathclyde, a leading institution in naval architecture and marine engineering in the United Kingdom. This collaboration will focus on demonstrating intelligent ship carbon management platforms and developing remote control decision support systems for autonomous vessels.

The Gangwon AI Healthcare Global Innovation Special Zone is working to develop AI-driven healthcare products and services, including a cloud-based teleconsultation platform for cerebral hemorrhage cases in collaboration with the University of Tartu in Estonia, and software for dizziness diagnostic tests in partnership with Johns Hopkins Hospital in the United States.

YOON Seok-bae, Director of the Special Economic Zones Policy Division, stated, “The Global Innovation Special Zones will provide enhanced support for companies within the zones to pursue international joint R&D by alleviating burdens such as indirect costs and offering legal advice for IP protection.”