

CENTRAL ANTI-CORRUPTION BUREAU

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Inspection at Park Naukowo-Technologiczny Energii Sp. z o.o. completed

From 30 October 2019 to 20 April 2020, the officers of the Department of Control Proceedings of the CBA Regional Office in Lublin conducted an inspection at Park Naukowo-Technologiczny Energii Sp. z o.o., the subject of which was the correctness of receiving and using the support obtained from the funds of the Operational Programme Eastern Poland 2014-2020 within the project "Start-up platforms for new ideas - Idealist Platform".

As a result of the competition conducted by the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development (PARP), the aim of which was to select projects for co-financing under the Operational Programme Eastern Poland 2014-2020, (priority axis 1: entrepreneurial Eastern Poland, measure 1.1 Start-up platforms for new ideas) sub-measure 1.1.1 Start-up platforms for new ideas, on 14 November 2018 Park Naukowo-Technologiczny Energii Sp. z o.o. concluded an agreement with PARP for co-financing the project "Start-up Platform - Idealist". The value of the project amounted to almost PLN 20.2 million, while the co-financing was to reach over PLN 19.2 million.

The project assumed creation of a specialist platform, which aimed to support the development of young innovative start-up companies from the macro-region of Eastern Poland. A comprehensive support programme was to enable start-ups to enter the market. During the incubation period, the platform was to provide free of charge basic and specialist services, tailored to the individual needs of supported entities. The project was to be implemented in cooperation with partners, which were universities and private entrepreneurs. According to the assumption, at least 150 out of 300 entities supported under the project should be ready to enter the market with an innovative product or service after completing the incubation process.

In the course of the CBA inspection, it was established that representatives of the company provided false information in the application for co-financing in the scope of funds held (in the amount of PLN 2 million) to cover non-eligible costs of the project. For the purposes of the application submitted to PARP, the company indicated them in the form of a loan agreement, which was never paid out. The findings of the audit indicate that both on the day of submitting the application for co-financing and on the day of signing the agreement with PARP, the company did

not have its own funds for the project implementation.

Moreover, a breach of the co-financing agreement was found in the scope of the place of the project execution. During the inspection, it was established that the place of the project implementation, indicated in the application for co-financing, is in fact a vacant building, in large part without installed windows, utilities and any infrastructure, which was not and is not used for the purpose of project execution. It should be emphasised that the procedure of selecting projects for co-financing was based on applicants' written declarations submitted under the pain of criminal liability for making false statements.

Unreliable and untrue information included in the application for co-financing misled the Polish Agency for Enterprise Development as to whether the application evaluation criteria were met, and as a result led to a disadvantageous disposition of property in the amount of PLN 1.3 million, constituting the first tranche of co-financing of the total value of PLN 19.2 million.

In connection with the above, the Central Anti-Corruption Bureau submitted a notification to the District Prosecutor's Office in Lublin on a justified suspicion of perpetration of a criminal offence of fraud involving extortion and attempted extortion of co-financing from EU funds and submitting false and unreliable representations.

During the audit, a new management board was appointed, which undertook corrective measures. Among others, a new factual and financial schedule was established, as a result of which the number of entities accepted for incubation was reduced from 300 to 190, PARP reduced the project co-financing to the amount of PLN 14.2 million, while the indicator concerning the number of start-ups that will successfully complete the support remained at the current level of 150.

