

# ORGANIZATIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF RUSSIAN SMEs: CURRENT TRENDS

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## ABSTRACT

The research paper sheds a light on Russian SMEs transition and specifically on their current development and evolution. The paper attempts to explain what are the main drivers and antecedents on SMEs during the period 2010-2015. Along with it, it is applied detailed analysis of Russian SMEs in terms of key performance indicators, turnover and volume of sales. Further, are given potential developments and trends within SMEs in Russia. The paper draws attention to socio-economic and political factors influencing SMEs development.

**Keywords:** Transition, SMEs, Russia, current trends, developments.

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## INTRODUCTION

### Purpose

The paper attempts to explore current developments of SMEs in the Russian Federations, their antecedents on the economy and future scenarios for their evolution. Furthermore, the paper revises literature on SMEs transition.

### Design/methodology/approach

Literature Review on SMEs transition and Quantitative research on Russian SMEs and specifically of their transition in the Russian economy.

### Findings

There are some very light signals of the change of the economic policy in Russia towards increasing independence of the economy from the oil and gas

prices on the international market, and more attention from the state to the SME sector development.

### Originality/value

This paper demonstrates that the Russian SMEs are picking up speed in terms of economy growth and they are becoming major engines for exiting of the Russian economy from economic crisis

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Russia is a geographic giant with rapidly growing economy and great capacities in terms of natural energy sources and investment possibilities. Promoting small and medium enterprises (SMEs) as the main generator of growth, employment and revenue diversification has become a focus of national governmental policy. The most prominent

unitary indicator of growth has been growth in sales (Ardishvili et al. 1998; Hoy et al. 1992; Weinzimmer et al. 1998; Wiklund 1999). On the other hand, the majority of firms start as small organizations, exist as small firms and disappear as small firms. They never enter into growth trajectory (Aldrich 1999; Reynolds and White 1997; Storey 1994). In 2010 the government allocated 600 million Euros (\$777 million) in start-up business incubators, micro loans, support for youth entrepreneurship, business training and 140,000 jobs were created. Still, small and medium-sized firms account for 20% of employment in Russia as of year 2015. The government aims to remove structural barriers in order to promote growth of SMEs. Russian SMEs currently represent less than 30% of the total workforce, but the government's intention is to increase it to 50% by 2020. The national strategy for further economic development focuses on increasing competition, creating a favorable economic environment that encourages long-term investments.

Russian government tends to make the Russian Federation one of the most enticing places to do business in Eurasia and a national initiative has been created to boost investment climate for all businesses-domestic and foreign. The investor climate agenda includes rigorous policy reforms varying from tax reliefs for investors to simplifying regulation, privatization, improving procedures for public tenders and supporting innovation.

Nowadays, in the international business literature and theories, SMEs represent prevailing source of economic growth, dynamics and flexibility in the developed and developing countries. It stems from the fact that SMEs are the dominant form of business organization, representing approximately 95-99% of all enterprises. According to the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), SMEs represent more than 95% of enterprises and contribute to creating 60-70% of the jobs across the Globe. The latter SMEs are presented in all sectors of the economy, and it is especially noticeable in the area of services, catering, wholesale, retail trade, consumer goods and food industries. Thus, SMEs are key players in promoting competitiveness and bringing new products or services to the market.

There is no global agreement on the definition of SMEs, but one thing virtually every country does agree on is that they are essential for economic prosperity, as SMEs make up the vast majority of businesses in most countries and employ a significant percentage of the global workforce.

Popular definitions of SME usually vary when considering employee counts, turnover or balance sheet figures. This study uses the definition for SME as presented by the European Commission (2005) which states that a small enterprise employs 10 to 49 people, has a turnover of two to 10 million euros, or has a total balance sheet ranging from two to 10 million euros. For medium sized enterprises the corresponding figures are 50 to 249 employees, turnover of over 10 million euros but less than 50 million, and a balance sheet totaling more than 10 million euros but less than 43 million. This number, however, varies across countries. In the words of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) Glossary of Statistical Terms "the most frequent upper limit designating SMEs is 250 employees, as in the European Union". Some countries set the limit at 200 employees, while the United States considers SMEs to include firms with fewer than 500 employees. In most OECD countries small enterprises are those with fewer than 50 employees, while micro-enterprises have at most 10 or, in some cases, 5 employees. In addition to this, financial assets are also used to define SMEs.

It is also noteworthy, that there are several challenges that have to be met when analyzing data about the size of the SMEs across countries regarding comparability and consistency, as different nations adopt different criteria. In most of the cases, these criteria to define small and medium enterprises include employment, total net asset, sales, and investment level. It is quite difficult to analyze and compare the landscape of SMEs, as there is often the lack of existing data on SMEs and widely diverging definitions used for SME categorization. Mainly, employment is the basis for definition. As it was mentioned above, the majority of sources define SMEs to have a total of 250 employees. Basically, there are two different accrual methods, namely the qualitative and the quantitative method in order to categorize SMEs (Kayser, 2006).

The qualitative (ordinal) differentiation uses a

catalogue of variables full of descriptive criteria that might be applicable to SMEs. The more specific criteria are fulfilled, the more obvious is the differentiation between SMEs and large concerns. According to Glancey (1998) one of those criteria is the nature of the decision-making process of a company. He argues against quantitative differentiations stressing that a firm's key factors can diverge widely between the individual industries and regions. In SMEs, control and ownership are in most of the cases in the hands of one person. In contrast, in large firms there are on the one hand usually more decision makers and on the other hand they are more likely to act in favor of the company's shareholders than for the benefit of the firm (Glancey, 1998).

SME definition in Russia was stipulated by the Federal Law of July 24, 2007 № 209-FZ "On the development of small and medium entrepreneurship in the Russian Federation" and by the Government Decree of February 9, 2013 №101 "On the thresholds of sales revenues for each SME category" (See Table 1).

#### METHODOLOGY AND DATA COLLECTION

The paper employs secondary (aggregated) data collected for the period 2010-2015 on Small and Medium-Sized Companies in Russian Federation. The statistical data is collected from the Russian Statistical Department. Furthermore, the research paper employs key performance indicators (KPIs) of the Russian SMEs in order to reveal the current developments and changes which have taken place since the financial crisis in 2008. Moreover, the research paper comprises of detailed characteristics on several important factors influencing SMEs development as national policy for SMEs tax ease off, policies for regional development, cross-border business activities between the Russian SMEs and foreign entities, etc. In the paper are employed descriptive statistics demonstrating the emerging trends for economic growth among the Russian SMEs as a part of their organizational development. Then in the last part of the paper it is discussed recent development of the Russian SMEs in terms of external factors as legislation amendments, governmental interventions and business competitors' development which are influencing the key performance indicators in the selected SMEs.

#### DISCUSSIONS AND FINDINGS

As it was noted, the European Commission has introduced the definition for SMEs in 2005, which includes staff headcount, annual turnover and balance sheet. Those criteria are not uncommonly used internationally, but with varying thresholds.

The following table summarizes the differences in definitions of medium-sized, small and micro enterprises in Russia and the European Union.

Overall, in order to count as a SME in Russia, firms do have to fulfill the following quantitative criteria regarding the number of employees and the annual turnover. In contrast to the EU there is no option to choose between turnover and the balance sheet.

Russian Law provides definitions of two categories of companies based on the dimension of the enterprise activity, the small enterprises and the large and medium enterprises. These definitions are important because they are used in officially published statistics, which are calculated in accordance with the law in ancillary normative acts such as the regulations issued by the CBR. The range of enterprises constituting small business is defined by Federal Law Nr. 88 of 14 June 1995 "On State Support to Small Business in the Russian Federation", which includes individual entrepreneurs without legal status, farmers and small enterprises legal entities. In addition, the law defines the small enterprises as enterprises being legal entities, registered with the State and having no more than 100 employees in total. In practice, of these three categories, only small enterprises have retained the attention of officials and have been subject to statistical record keeping. As a result, there has been little systematic analysis of the role played by individual entrepreneurs in the Russian economy. It is estimated that at least 40% of Russian SMEs are in the "shadow economy", i.e. are not registered, keep no official books and pay no taxes. This is particularly true in the following industries: textile, trade of technical equipment and computer programs, alcohol and green markets. Moreover, statistics concerning small enterprises in Russia are particularly unreliable due to the following reasons:

- many enterprises encourage employees to take on the status of individual entrepreneurs in order to benefit from the simplified tax system available to small enterprises;

- much individual entrepreneurial activity goes unregistered, potentially under-estimating the contribution of small business;
- large number of employees are part-time employed in two or more businesses but are registered only in one.

Also, a major setback of the definition of small enterprises is that it does not take into account financial criteria. As a result, a large number of enterprises active in wholesale in particular qualify as small enterprises in Russia while they would be considered otherwise in Western countries.

Also, entrepreneurs in Russia face different local practices depending on where they establish their businesses. The demand for business services is usually lower in smaller cities than in large business centers. That can lead to bottlenecks and higher costs for services in large cities, but these also benefit from economies of scale and might have more resources to invest in administrative modernization.

The initial goals of state policy in the area of development of SMEs in Russia are as follows:

- developing small and medium businesses with the purpose of creating a competitive environment in the economy of Russia;
- fostering conditions favorable for the development of SMEs; rendering assistance to SMEs in the promotion of goods and services;
- growing the number of SMEs;
- multiplying the share of taxes paid by SMEs in the tax revenues of the federal budget, the budgets of the subjects of the Russian Federation and local budgets.
- The main principles of state policy in the area of development of SMEs in the Russian Federation are as follows:
  - the designation of the powers of supporting SMEs among governmental bodies;
  - the responsibility of governmental bodies for ensuring favorable conditions for the development of SMEs;
  - the participation of representatives of small businesses, and not-for-profit organizations expressing the interests of small and medium businesses in the formation and implementation of state policy in the area of development of small and medium scale

entrepreneurship, expert examination of draft normative acts of the Russian Federation, draft legal acts of subjects of the Russian Federation, draft legal acts of local self-governing bodies regulating the development of small and medium scale entrepreneurship;

- the provision of equal access for small and medium businesses to support in accordance with the terms and conditions for the provision of the established governmental programs and for the development of SMEs.

### Key SME sector indicators in Russia for 2015

The total number of registered operating SMEs in Russia as of January 2015 is 4.5 million, including micro-, small, medium-sized enterprises and individual entrepreneurs. They provide jobs for over 18 mln. people, which is 25% of total employment in Russia's economy.

According to Rosstat, the core of the SME sector in Russia (94.3%) is composed of segment of individual entrepreneurs - 2.4 mln. or 53.3% of all SMEs - and micro enterprises - 1.9 mln. or 41% of all SMEs. Small enterprises account for 5.2% of all SMEs, while medium-sized enterprises make up 0.3% of all SMEs. Micro enterprises and individual entrepreneurs account for 55% of all jobs in the SME sector.

### SME performance trends in 2010-2014

In 2010-2014 the number of microenterprises steadily grew, although the growth rates in recent two years have decreased, as it is shown in Table 2. In fact, the number of micro- and small businesses has noticeably increased by 28% within 4 years, from 1644.3 thousand in 2010 to 2103.8 thousand in 2014. In 2014, the total number of micro enterprises increased almost by 1/3, as compared to 2010, and attained 1868.2 thousand. However, the number of new microenterprises in 2014 was only 40 thousand, as compared to 2013, or 2.2%.

The growth in number of micro- and small enterprises in recent 5 years has been accompanied by a lowering in number of medium-sized businesses. The number of medium businesses in 2014 was the same as in 2013 or 13.7 thousand. The ½ downsizing of the medium business segment in 2013, 13.7 thousand, against 25.2 thousand in 2010, is due to application of new

criteria for SMEs, including sales revenues and share of private capital. The latter one is the most complicated criterion in terms of application scope. Sometimes it was applied not only to company founders -individuals, but also to the organizations which were company founders.

The five years, 2010-2014, demonstrated a noticeable 34% increase in employment at microenterprises, from 3.3 mln. people in 2010 to 4.4 mln. people in 2014. The total employment at micro- and small enterprises grew within four years by 10.2% - from 9.7 mln. people in 2010 to 10.8 mln. people in 2014. In the segment of medium business, the total employment reduced from 2.4 bln. people in 2010 down to 1.6 bln. people in 2014, or by 35%. The total sales revenues of micro- and small enterprises steadily grew within 5 years and attained 26392.2 bln. RUR. in 2014, which is 40% higher than that in 2010 or 18933.8 bln. RUR. The total sales revenues of medium-sized enterprises decreased within 5 years from 7416.2 bln. RUR. in 2010 till 5027.8 bln. RUR. in 2014, or by 32%

In 2014, one medium-sized enterprise employed, on the average, 121 people, small enterprise - 6 people, micro-enterprise employed 3 people (Table 3). In recent 4 years, 2011-2014, an average number of employees at micro- and small enterprises did not change, while an average medium business tended to employ fewer people. SME distribution across Russia is uneven. Most of the small and microenterprises are located in the Central Federal District and Volga Federal District, accordingly, 27.3% and 17.5% of all micro and small enterprises. North Western Federal District ranks 3rd, with the share of micro- and small enterprises equal to 15.8%. Siberian Federal District ranks 4th, with 14.4% of all micro- and small enterprises. In the other federal districts, the share of small and microenterprises does not exceed 10%.

As for employment, the share of employment at micro- and small enterprises in Central Federal District exceeds by far the other districts. Specifically, the share of total employment in small and microenterprises in the Central Federal District is 30.6%. The Volga Federal District ranks 2nd, with 21.4% of all employees engaged in small and microenterprises, while the Siberian Federal District ranks 3rd with 12.6% of all employees. The share of employees in the North Western Federal

District is slightly less, 11.8% of all employees.

Sales revenues of micro- and small enterprises in these districts are: 36.6% in the Central Federal District, 18.3% in the Volga Federal District and 10.7% in the Siberian Federal District.

Most of the medium businesses operate in the Central Federal District- 26.7%, in the Volga Federal District -21.4% and in the Siberian Federal District-14.6%.

These districts demonstrate the largest indicators of employment and sales revenues for medium businesses, as well. The share of total employment in medium enterprises in the Central Federal District is 27.9%, in the Volga Federal District-22.6%, in the Siberian Federal District-13.5%. The shares of sales revenues of all medium enterprises are 29.3% for the Central Federal District, 19.9 % for the Volga Federal District and 13.1% for the Siberian Federal District.

#### Structure of SME sector (legal entities).

The structure of small and medium enterprises by sector in 2014 was mostly the same as before, with the largest share of enterprises engaged in trade and repair -38.7% of all SMEs (legal entities). One fifth of all SMEs (legal entities) are engaged in real estate and services-20.3%. The share of SMEs engaged in construction was 11.9%, while the share of manufacturing SMEs in 2014 was 9.6%.

As for the segment of medium-sized enterprises, the share of manufacturers is more significant, being 24.6%, that is only slightly less than that of trade companies - 26.6%. The share of medium companies engaged in agriculture, forestry and hunting in 2014 was 16.8%.

Of interest are the data on financial performance of SMEs within 5 years. It is worthwhile looking at the ratio of profitable and loss-making companies. In 2014 the ratio-for micro-, small and medium businesses - was 80:20, that is, each 5th company was loss-making.

#### CONCLUSIONS

As we see, the development of Russian SMEs is considered to be challenging. And, based on the official indicators of SMEs development statistics, the government has made substantial progress in developing a complex program for the change of the mentality towards the market-driven. There is

no doubt, it would be costly for Russia, and it would take much time and effort, but bring benefits in the long run.

Analyzing the current situation, we would state that there are some very light signals of the change of the economic policy in Russia towards increasing independence of the economy from the oil and gas prices on the international market, and more attention from the state to the SME sector development.

It should be noted, that Russia is entering the next stage of its economic development by gradually switching from "large corporations" economy to the growth through the SME sector.

The main objectives of the SMEs Development in Russia are:

- supporting SMEs and SME infrastructure forming companies;
- mobilizing funds from Russian, foreign and international institutions to support SMEs;
- providing information, marketing, financial, and legal support to investment projects implemented by SMEs;
- taking measures aimed to increase the share of purchases of SMEs' goods, works, and services by customers, defined by the Government of the Russian Federation, in the annual volume of purchases of goods, works and services, in the annual volume of purchases of innovative products, high-tech products;
- creating information exchange between SMEs and the state authorities, local authorities, and other bodies and organizations with an aim to support SMEs;
- Submitting proposals on improving support measures for SMEs, including proposals on legislative improvements regulating this field.

The Russian government is spending billions of rubles, providing support to SMEs throughout the country. The financial support is provided in two ways:

- General tax system with tax benefits and simplified system of taxation.
- The first one consists of specialized and basic incentives for SME:
- tax benefit to small enterprises for using accelerated depreciation methods;

- SMEs engaged in production of consumer goods, construction industry and several other fields, do not pay income tax in the first two years of operating.

The second way implies transition to the simplified system of taxation. Under this system certain companies are free to choose to pay single tax or federal, regional and local taxes (including VAT, property and sales taxes). Enterprises using this taxation system do not pay the uniform social tax, but they are obligated to pay pension insurance contributions, VAT on imported goods and state duties. Under these conditions taxpayers are entitled to choose whether they pay a uniform tax at a rate of 6 % on the basis of all revenues or at a rate of 15% on the basis of income. In 2011, revenue from these special tax regimes, designed for SME, rose up to 15% and accounted 173.3 billion rubles. Tax reform, carried out in 2011, established new Patent-Based Simplified Taxation System. The Patent-Based STS might be used only by the sole entrepreneurs and allows performing business activity under the conditions of minimal tax burden and simplified reporting; the tax declaration is not required to be submitted, all payments are fixed and do not depend on the financial results of the entrepreneurship subject activity. In spite of the novelty of this tax system, experts note the significant rise of its popularity, revenue is announced to increase by two times.

To conclude, it is important to underline the great economy importance of SMEs for every country, as they perform multiple economic and social functions. In addition to tax deductions for budgets, SMEs develop economic sector by creating new workplaces and promoting market competition.

It is worth mentioning, that in the Russian Federation small and medium business is on the positive stage of growth, and it is engaged in the process of reaching the developed countries success. In spite of all drawbacks, the main aim has already been achieved. Russia's SME sector is increasingly gaining the attention of the Kremlin, and has been targeted by the State Duma and President V.V. Putin as a priority area for further development.

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## Attachments:

Table 1. SMEs classification in Russia

SME type	Employment	Sales revenue	Share in registered capital
Micro	< 15 employees	< 60 mln. RUR	Share of public bodies in the registered capital is less than 25%, share of foreign legal entities which are not SMEs is less than 49%.
Small	16 - 100 employees	< 400 mln. RUR	
Medium	101 - 250 employees	< 1 bln. RUR	

Source: Russian Federal Law, 2007

Table 2. Key SME performance indicators, as of January 1, 2015

Type of SME	Micro	Small	Medium	Individual entrepreneurs	All SMEs
Number, thousand	1 868.2	235.6	13.7	2413.8	4 531.3
Share in SME sector, %	41.2	5.2	0.3	53.3	100%
Employment, thousand people	4 431.1	6 358.4	1585.8	5 645.7	18 021*
Sales revenues, bln. Rubles	9 699.3	16 692.9	5 027.8	10 447.5	41 867.5

\*SMEs account for 25% of total employment. For reference: total employment in Russia as of end of 2014 is 71539 thousand people. Source: Labour and Employment in Russia. 2015. Statistical book. Rosstat, Moscow, 2015. p. 274

Source: Small and medium entrepreneurship in Russia. 2015. Rosstat. Moscow, 2015. p. 96



Table 3. Key performance indicators of SMEs (legal entities), 2010-2014.

	Small enterprises										Medium-sized enterprises				
	Micro-and enterprises					small									
	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014
Number of enterprises, thousand	1644.3	1836.4	2003.0	2063.1	2103.8	1415.2	1593.8	1760.0	1828.6	1868.2	25.2	15.9	13.8	13.7	13.7
Employment thousand people	9790.2	10421.9	10755.7	10775.2	10789.5	3320.0	3864.4	4248.9	4322.9	4431.1	2426.7	1964.4	1719.5	1630.7	1585.8
Sales revenues, bln.RUR.	18933.8	22610.2	23463.7	24781.6	26392.2	5609.2	7028.3	8347.4	9101.3	9699.3	7416.2	5150.4	4710.6	4717.5	5027.8
Average monthly wages, RUR.	12367	15743	16711	17948	19201	10612	12855	13898	15039	15774	17246	19824	21537	23961	26065

Source: Statistical Yearbook "Small and Medium Entrepreneurship in Russia 2015". Rosstat. - Moscow, 2015, p. 96

**Table 5.** Financial performance: Profit & Lost of SMEs  
(accounting and reporting data), 2010-2014.

	Number of enterprises	Including			
		Profitable SMEs		Loss-making SMEs	
		Number of enterprises	Total profit, mln. RUR	Number of enterprises	Total loss, mln. RUR
<b>Microenterprises</b>					
2010	435 119	347 183	457694	87 936	216676
2011	406 206	331 200	369548	75 006	170479
2012	500 314	412 360	715371	87 954	177090
2013	1 155 668	931 644	1297496	224 024	447613
2014	1 328 352	1 061 436	1648981	266 916	749455
<b>Small and microenterprises</b>					
2010	525 399	416 778	868401	108 621	332407
2011	495 484	402 641	776796	92 843	302628
2012	602 698	496 030	1256205	106 668	305994
2013	1 344 849	1 082 082	2093226	262 767	656174
2014	1 530 294	1 219 954	2548634	310 340	1337684
<b>Medium enterprises</b>					
2010	15 190	11 658	209699	3 532	70312
2011	14 746	11 727	233521	3 019	71420
2012	16 499	13 571	296286	2 928	80009
2013	17 411	14 126	308519	3 285	108360
2014	18 747	14 937	334392	3 810	191257

Source: Statistical Yearbook "Small and Medium Entrepreneurship in Russia 2015". Rosstat. Moscow, 2015. p. 96