**International Conference on Financing Innovative Start-ups in EaP countries, 21 September 2017, Minsk, Belarus**

One of the tasks of EaP PLUS is promoting EU – EaP Panel on Research and Innovation. Within this task the project contributes to the organization of the International Conference “From innovative ideas to successful businesses: promoting the national systems of early stage financing of innovative companies in EaP countries” to be held in Minsk, Belarus on September 21, 2017 under the aegis of the Panel.

Though the small business sector and its input to GDP in the EaP countries is gradually increasing, the share of innovative companies among SMEs is far below the EU average. At the same time, the experience of different countries suggests that the innovativeness of SMEs is not necessarily associated with the country’s level of economic development. Early stage financing of innovative firms is considered as one of the weakest components of the national innovation systems in the region thus preventing emergence and growth of new innovative SMEs.

Within the overall goal to contribute to the further development of the national systems of early stage financing of SMEs in the EaP countries, **the objective of the Conference** is

* to share best practices existing in the EU MS/AC in supporting innovative SMEs at their early stages,
* to demonstrate the role that EC instruments play in supporting the innovative SMEs and raise awareness of EaP stakeholders and businesses about their availability,
* to discuss possible joint activities of the EaP countries, EU MS/AC, the European Commission and other international donors to assist EaP countries in addressing the identified challenges.

Target groups:

* National authorities (ministries, regional authorities or agencies) in charge of innovation policy, SMEs’ development and/or international cooperation
* Public funding bodies (Innovation funds and other public funding bodies) tasked with financial support of in novation, start-ups and/or SMEs
* Private venture capital firms and business angels, as well as their national networks
* Technology transfer offices from academic research centers and universities, other innovation support intermediaries
* Successful innovative start-ups and spin-offs with experience of using public or private support
* Think-tanks, NGOs, consultants and analysts working on topics of entrepreneurship and innovation
* SME NCPs and EEN

**Organizers:**

* European Commission
* State Committee on Science and Technology of Belarus
* Belarusian Institute of System Analysis and Information Support of S&T (BelISA)
* EaP PLUS project

Participation is free of charge. Registration is opentill **September 15, 2017.**

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Attachments: Draft agenda, Registration form.