

The logo consists of the Cyrillic letters 'С' and 'К' in a bold, sans-serif font. The letters are dark grey with a metallic sheen and are mounted on a light grey rectangular plate. The 'С' is on the left and the 'К' is on the right, both slightly overlapping.

СК

The word 'СКОЛКОВО' is written in a bold, sans-serif font, matching the style of the 'СК' logo. It is dark grey with a metallic sheen and is mounted on the same light grey rectangular plate as the logo above it.

СКОЛКОВО



Skolkovo will be a special economic zone, a bit like Shenzhen in China. Companies based there will receive whacking great tax breaks. They will also get special treatment when it comes to visas and imports.



The aim is for Skolkovo to become the basis for a vast ecosystem that spans all of Russia and brings together researchers, entrepreneurs and investors in five “clusters”: IT, biomedical, energy-efficiency, space and nuclear technologies, all of which have deep roots in Russia. This new ecosystem, its champions hope, will help Russia modernise.

Nobody seriously doubts that Skolkovo will rise in one form or another—although it will probably take longer than planned. Conor Lenihan, a former Irish innovation minister who is in charge of Skolkovo’s corporate partnerships, praises the Russian government’s decisiveness. “In a typical European democracy,” he says, “it would have taken three to five years to get this far.”



The university, too, is no longer just a PowerPoint presentation. For an undisclosed sum, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) has agreed to set up the Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology.

In August the first 21 Russian students will start taking courses (they will spend their first year studying abroad).



Skolkovo has already lured some big names. Attracted by the perks and anxious not to upset the Russian government, their largest customer in the country, some 20 companies have signed up, including Cisco, IBM and SAP. Each of them will open a sizeable R&D laboratory and co-operate with Skolkovo Institute of Science and Technology.





It will be much harder, however, to create the rest of the ecosystem. Silicon Valley has a critical mass of entrepreneurs and venture capitalists and, more importantly, a culture of turning whizzy ideas into profitable businesses.



The Skolkovo Foundation, which runs the project, wants to jump-start it with cash—some \$1 billion over five years. “We want to fill the institutional void and take some of the risk,” explains Alexander Lupachev, the organisation’s chief investment officer.

The aim is to build a long pipeline of start-ups to reside in Skolkovo. The Skolkovo Foundation will then provide them with some initial cash and hope that venture capitalists invest in them. Firms first apply for “resident status” and are reviewed by some of the hundreds of experts who work with the Skolkovo Foundation. If the firms pass muster, they are eligible for the city’s tax and other preferences and can apply for grants, usually \$150,000.



So far, more than 500 firms have obtained resident status. Over 100 have received some money from the Skolkovo Foundation, and about half of these have attracted regular venture capital, mostly from Russian firms.

