

Brussels, 7 October 2009

€3.3 billion invested in Europe in R&D on low carbon technologies

A new Reference Report published by the European Commission's Joint Research Centre (JRC) shows that €3.3 billion in R&D on low-carbon technologies were invested in the EU in 2007. Of this, 56% came from industry, a figure that rises to 69% when taking into account only non-nuclear low-carbon energy technologies. Both corporate and public R&D investments are largely concentrated in a few Member States.

This study has been carried out by the JRC's Institute for Prospective Technological Studies (IPTS). It constitutes a benchmark of current expenditures on industrial and public R&D in low-carbon energy technologies that have been identified as a priority for the EU in the Strategic Energy Technology (SET) Plan. These technologies are: wind energy, photovoltaics, concentrated solar power (CSP), bioenergy, carbon dioxide capture and storage (CCS), smart grids, nuclear fission, hydrogen and fuel cells and nuclear fusion.

The JRC research found that in 2007 public and private European investors together dedicated €3.3 billion to R&D on EU priority low-carbon energy technologies. €2.38 billion were invested in R&D on non-nuclear energy, of which €1.66 billion came from the private sector.

Expenditure on nuclear energy technologies reached €940 million and was almost equally split between fission and fusion research.

For research into non-nuclear low-carbon energy technologies, investment efforts were evenly spread, except for hydrogen and fuel cells related research, which showed a significantly above average expenditure: €616 million; and concentrated solar power with the lowest level of investment: €86 million.

For many technologies, countries with high public R&D funds also account for the largest corporate R&D investments. The report estimates indicate that 99% of the aggregated national R&D budgets on SET-Plan priority technologies originate from only eleven countries: France, Germany, Italy, the UK, Denmark, Spain, the Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, Finland and Austria, with the first three accounting for two thirds of the public investment.

When it comes to private investment, companies located in Germany, France, the UK, Denmark, Spain and Sweden were found to account for more than 90% of the total corporate R&D expenditure in SET Plan priority technologies.

Background

The report was created as input to the new SET-plan Information System (SETIS) now available online, and it served as a central reference document to the Communication on Investing on the development of Low Carbon Technologies, adopted today by the European Commission.

The analysis of public R&D investments of Member States is based on statistics by Eurostat, the International Energy Agency (IEA) and national information directly provided by a number of Member States. For the EU R&D funding it uses data from the 6th R&D and EURATOM Framework Programmes. Information on corporate R&D investments has been estimated on the basis of the EU Industrial R&D Investment Scoreboard, companies' annual reports, and other public data, as well as direct contacts with enterprises.

Further information

The JRC report "R&D Investment in the Priority Technologies of the European Strategic Energy Technology Plan" can be downloaded from: <http://www.jrc.ec.europa.eu/rr>

The SETIS website: <http://setis.ec.europa.eu>

Contacts

Elena González Verdesoto, JRC Press officer: Elena.gonzalez-verdesoto@ec.europa.eu

David Merino, IPTS Communication officer: David.merino@ec.europa.eu