

2nd eReNet Brief – The energy sustainability market opportunities in Europe for investment and jobs.

Sertã, Portugal

Europe and the conjuncture

Europe is currently facing a crisis that has been affecting each and every sector. Europe's competitiveness is facing difficult times and the demand for qualified human resources in different fields such as science, technology and engineering is now more important than ever. Therefore, in order to increase employment rates, one of the challenges in Europe has been to match the worker's skills with the demands of employers in order to restore growth and avoid the lack of employment in crucial sectors such as health care, science and in companies in the "green economy sector".

Europe 2020 targets: Employment

The Europe 2020 strategy has five main targets, in which employment is included. The target to be accomplished in 2020, for all member states, is increase the employment rate to 75% for women and men between 20 and 64 years old.

Also, within the Europe's 2020 strategy, seven flagship initiatives were defined under the objective of obtaining a smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Among these initiatives, two are directly related to the inclusive growth and therefore the employment. The initiatives are "An agenda for new skills and jobs" and "European platform against poverty". The main targets for this agenda are, besides the 75% of employment rate, to get the early school-leaving rate below 10% and at least 40% of young people in higher education or equivalent vocational education, as well as to have at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion.

The actions proposed in this agenda are related to the improvement of conditions for job creation, ensuring better working conditions, improvement of the flexibility and security in the labour market, among others, reaching a total of thirteen actions aiming at supporting efforts towards a lower unemployment rate.

"Green" and "White" Job opportunities

The most promising sources of new jobs for the future were identified by the European Commission as being the "White jobs" and the "Green jobs".

The "Green jobs" are related to clean and energy efficient technologies. The "White jobs" are related to health and social care.

The arising of "Green jobs" comes in a time where a change towards more sustainable development and greener economies is most needed. This job concept integrates the transition to a work provided by companies, workplaces and labour markets that are sustainable. Therefore, a "Green job" contributes to reducing the consumption of energy and raw materials, to limit the GHG emissions, to minimize the waste residues and pollution as well as it contributes to the protecting and restoring ecosystems.

The white jobs are those in health and social services sector. The expectation is that this sector will grow population keeps ageing and different and innovative treatments arise with impact on the provision of care to the ones in need.

These jobs include people working in hospitals, residential and daily social care activities, vets, dentists and also the people working in children's day care.

Employment and education in Portugal

In Portugal, considering the current crisis affecting Europe a decrease on the employment has been verified. In the 3rd trimester of 2012, the unemployment rate was 15,8%.

Even though this unemployment rate is verified, there are good indicators in what concerns the qualifications and studies in particular for youth. The level of education of the youth (15-24 years) is higher than the general population.

Investment in renewable energy and energy efficiency in Europe

Europe's primary objectives, reflected along the European Commission's communications and directives are focused in renewable energy aspects. The investments in renewable energy tend to contribute to diversification in energy supply. Also, as stated in the EU communication on June 2012 "Strong renewable growth to 2030 could generate over 3 million jobs" and maintain Europe's leadership in this matter.

However, with the conjuncture in Europe, mentioned earlier, there has been a decrease on investor's availability for the energy sector. Therefore, in the liberalized energy markets, this investment depends on the private sector and also on the country's renewable energy policy.

Available funds for renewable's investment in Portugal

Portugal has a wide range of opportunities in what concerns investment in renewable sources. Considering its specific characteristics, with an attractive climate to implement diversified projects, investors tend to consider Portugal as a very good choice.

Therefore it is important to have an extensive offer of funds to support the implementation of such projects. In Portugal, the main available funds are from the European Union.

The Portuguese sources of financing are made available through different instruments such as QREN, Fundo de Eficiência Energética (Energy Efficiency Fund) and also PRODER.

The National Strategic Reference Framework (QREN) is the framework for the application of the Community policy of economic and social cohesion in Portugal, for the period 2007-2013.

QREN has 3 major agendas, considering the targets which are: POPH, COMPETE and POVT.

The applications for the funds under QREN are made through a regional program, considering the region in which the investment will occur. All the opportunities that are available at the moment for all programs and the procedures necessary to submit an application referred to the topics above mentioned are updated on this website: <http://www.qren.pt/np4/avisos>.

The Energy Efficiency Fund is a financial instrument created to finance the programs and measures that are present in the National energy efficiency Action Plan, to promote it to the citizens and companies, support energy efficiency projects and enhance changing of behaviours.

The updates on available applications are in this website:

<http://fee.adene.pt/avisos/Paginas/avisos.aspx>.

PRODER is a strategic and financial instrument to support rural development, for the period 2007-2013. The updates on this instrument can be found in the website:

<http://www.proder.pt/>.