

Science and Technology Occupations at the head of an EU knowledge-based Economy

By Brenda Azzopardi

As can be seen from recent European Union regional statistics, issued by the EU statistical office Eurostat, EU capital regions in Northern Europe tend to have the highest share of highly qualified workers in Science and Technology and to lead the way towards a knowledge-based economy. This data also demonstrates that the stock of human resources in such field is "an essential indicator of the development of the knowledge-based economy in the EU".

This publication examines regional data for the EU Member States and for Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey, relating to the core of human resources in science and technology (HRSTC). HRSTC group is made up of those individuals who have successfully completed tertiary education and work in S&T occupation as professionals or technicians. They account for 37% of the total HRST population in 2006.

In 2006, approximately 28% of Stockholm in Sweden, Brabant Wallon in Belgium, Inner London in UK and Utrecht in the Netherlands had the largest proportions of people employed in all S&T occupations in their regional workforces. Poland is rated to have the youngest S&T workforce of all the EU Member States. Ile de France, followed by Comunidad de Madrid, possesses the highest proportion of employees in high-tech sectors. Statistics also show that capital regions add up to half of the highest ranking regions in terms of human S&T resources.

Despite this figure, only three capital regions obtained their position among the first top 20 in the education sector. In short, highly qualified workers occupied in S&T are well represented in capital regions, in general, but the education sector, with very high shares of HRSTC, does not follow this trend. Malta ranked top with 47% of the highest national shares for the age structure of regional S&T workforces.

In the 25-34 age bracket, Germany had the lowest amount of young people employed among the total labour force of young people working in regional S&T workforces. Statistics also reveal that female HRSTC are well represented in many eastern regions of the EU, while Turkey has very high regional shares of young HRSTC.

Among key factors, the proportion of young people employed in S&T in the total workforce contributes to the interpretation of the evaluation of possible future shortage of highly qualified workers in the EU.

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