

Friday, 20th June 2008

Ireland's Renewable Energy Potential Hampered by Shortage of Engineers

Ireland can lead the world in the Renewable Energy sector in the areas of Wind and Wave but only if the number of engineering graduates increases and universities and industry collaborate to build the engineering resource pool, according to Dr. Werner Kruckow, CEO, Siemens Ltd Ireland who was speaking at the 10th anniversary of the Siemens Young Innovative Engineer of the Year Awards in Dublin. The awards, which are held in association with Engineers Ireland, each year, are designed to recognise and encourage emerging engineering talent.

“We can create a new industry with significant employment and become a net exporter of renewable energy. However if we are to deliver this vision, we need industry and universities collaborating to produce more inspiring engineering degree courses and marketing engineering as a career to secondary students. A continuation of the dramatic shortage in engineering graduates will negatively impact on economic investment into Ireland” said Dr. Kruckow.

In Ireland, a country with a proud tradition of producing engineers and innovators such as Charles Parsons, Robert Boyle and Thomas McLaughlin the undergraduate situation is shocking. The C.A.O. statistics from 2000 to 2007 show the number of acceptances to technology disciplines decreased by 33%.

Dr. Kruckow added “Our engineers in Ireland are providing Answers -Answers to the really toughest questions facing the country - How do we generate Energy without damaging the environment? How do we develop sustainable transport systems? How can we build a world

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class healthcare service? Siemens in Ireland has many exciting projects in the pipeline but my biggest challenge is to have a stream of young engineers to help us with these projects. I want to say to the representatives of Colleges, please work with us so that together we can “market” Science and Engineering to Secondary Schools students. We urgently need to reverse the decline,” he added.

To develop a knowledge-based economy Ireland needs to double the number of PhD engineering graduates over the next five years. Innovation is a key priority for Irish Government. The NDP has committed €20 billion to Enterprise, Science and Innovation. This is necessary to improve the capacity of Irish industry to compete in the global marketplace and to continue to attract Foreign Direct Investment. Ireland’s research capacity faces a major challenge due to the small size of the existing research base and the limited supply of students with potential to become researchers.

Kieran O’Callaghan from Cork Institute of Technology won for his design of a swimming aid for the visually impaired.

Notes to Editor;

About Siemens

Siemens is a global company providing products, systems, services and solutions for the industry, energy and healthcare sectors. The company employs over 1000 highly skilled people in Ireland and has offices in Belfast, Cork and Dublin.

About Engineers Ireland

Engineers Ireland is one of the largest and oldest representative bodies on the island of Ireland, with an ever increasing membership of engineers which now totals over 23,000. The membership incorporates all disciplines of the engineering profession in Ireland across industry, the public service, semi-state organisations and academic institutions.

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