

Government investment in Science & Technology up 23% in 2001 to €1,760 Million – Forfás Report

Forfás, the national policy advisory board for enterprise, trade, science, technology and innovation, has today (7th May, 2003) published a report on State expenditure on science and technology (S&T) for 2001.

Launching the report, entitled **State Expenditure on Science and Technology**, Mr Martin Cronin, chief executive, Forfás said “This report presents the most detailed and comprehensive picture of spending on S&T in Ireland and shows trends in S&T spending over ten years. The report is an essential policy document for S&T policy analysis”.

The report provides details of expenditure on science and technology by nine Government Departments and 31 separate agencies, and also includes a separate volume on how much of this expenditure was devoted to R&D. Some of the key findings of the report in relation to spending on S&T are:

- Total Government allocations to science and technology (S&T) activities in 2001 were €1,759.8 million, an increase of €400 million or 23 per cent over the 2000 level;
- The exchequer component of this funding amounted to €1,491.7 million, or 85 per cent of the total allocation, and represents an increase of €23.6 million on the 2000 level;
- The contribution of the EU’s Community Support Framework to public sector science and technology continued a downward trend to €73 million in 2001 from €91.5 million in 2000;
- The balance of the €1,759.8 million allocation represents non-exchequer monies – mainly fees earned by state agencies for the performance of S&T activities – and amounted to €195 million in 2001, a slight decrease from the 2000 level of €200.9 million;

In relation to State expenditure on R&D it was found that the total public funding of R&D in the economy increased from €244 million in 2000 to an allocation of €341.8 million in 2001, an increase of 40 per cent. The major contributors to this increased funding were:

- Department of Education and Science: €39.1 million
- Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment: €28 million
- Department of Public Enterprise: €10.6 million

Additional funding from the Department of Education and Science relates to expenditures under the Programme for Research in Third Level Institutions (PRTLTI). The Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment increase reflects expenditures to fund Science Foundation Ireland as well as additional grants for R&D from Enterprise Ireland to the

business sector and to third level institutions. Other significant increases are evident in the Department of Agriculture, Food and Rural Development (€7.5 million) and the Department of the Marine and Natural Resources (€7.5 million) and the Department of Health and Children (€3.1 million).

Importance of Research and Development (R&D)

Mr Cronin stated that “the significant increases in recent years in the levels of public funding of R&D shown in this report are very impressive and will help build the research infrastructure and capability we require for long-term success. While investment in Ireland is still below that of our competitors, when SFI is fully on-stream and complementing the HEA funding, Ireland will be making the necessary levels of investment. The challenge then will be to maintain these levels so that our research base can continue to strengthen”.

Mr Cronin welcomed the continuing significant investments in third level research by the Department of Education and Science through the PRTLTI and by the Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment, through Science Foundation Ireland, which are having a major impact on the Irish public research system. He stressed the importance of maintaining these investments, even in times of budgetary constraint, in order to build up a strong research base in Ireland. The Department of Public Enterprise is also supporting R&D in the Digital Hub and in MediaLab Europe, while Enterprise Ireland has committed additional funds through an increase in R&D grants awarded to the business sector and to third level institutions.

“These additional allocations are to be welcomed”, said Mr. Cronin, “particularly the increased support for strategic research in the third level sector, an area where Ireland has under-invested historically compared to other developed countries. These investments are very necessary to underpin the standard of living which Ireland has achieved in recent years.”

Ends

Note to Editors

Science and technology includes scientific and technical services, training and information, technology transfer in addition to R&D activity.

Forfás

Forfás is the national policy and advisory board for enterprise, trade, science, technology and innovation. It is the body in which the State’s legal powers for industrial promotion and technology development have been vested. It is also the body through which powers are delegated to Enterprise Ireland for the promotion of indigenous industry and to IDA Ireland for the promotion of inward investment.