

RES-e Regions: WP 4: Specific technology promotion

Technology selection for Upper Austria: Small hydro power

Background

In Upper Austria, there are 533 small hydro power plants in operation with a total capacity of more than 100 MW. In 2004 about 540 GWh electricity produced from small hydro plants was fed into the grid. Most of the plants are small (35% of the capacity is below 1,000 kW). The potential for new plants is limited, existing plants are very often old, therefore the potential for retrofitting is very high but did in general not take place in the past.

Current situation

From 2003-2004 a new funding scheme was in operation which offered attractive conditions for the retrofitting of these plants ("Bundesökostrom-Verordnung", a national feed-in tariff and an investment subsidy by the region of Upper Austria) - all geared at triggering investments to increase the electricity production of these installations.

In addition to these financial support measures O.Ö. Energiesparverband offered an energy advice service to inform & support plant owners in their retrofitting efforts. The interest was very high and about 340 operators asked for advice with the aim of renovating their plants and about 70 investment projects are presently under construction.

Barriers

The challenge to be overcome is that many of the plant owners are not working in the energy field but very often are farmers, companies active in any other field or even private persons who happen to have inherited the land on which a hydro power plant is located. These groups usually need significantly more information and technical support than energy companies and will certainly not automatically act just because there is an interesting financial framework available.

Opportunities

The renovation potential in combination with the financial incentives of the feed-in tariffs and the regional investment subsidy presented a window of opportunity for increasing the share of RES-e in the region. Therefore increased information & awareness raising activities are necessary to make best use of the favourable framework.

Target Groups

The main target groups of the promotion activities are owners and operators of small hydro power plants and besides that also energy consultants and companies active in that field.

Actions needed

Increased information and awareness raising activities are necessary to make best use of the high renovation potential. In addition those plant owners who already decided to make an investment need additional support to successfully complete their activities. Aim of the project activities will therefore be to monitor progress and support plant owners and operators in their renovation efforts.