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✘ National governments have started to promote sustainable energy, innovation and new technologies in energy systems. Energy companies across the region adapt their business models, develop new-tech expertise and offer innovative solutions. Sector of energy-focused start-ups is developing rapidly, while scientific institutes engage in numerous research projects. All of these developments pass largely unnoticed by the majority of external observers.

Although countries do not introduce spectacular R&D policies, there are few eye-catching examples of technological breakthroughs coming from the region. What is happening in Central Europe is more similar to a quiet revolution—a number of steady changes in policies, businesses and academia, which taken together trigger innovation and improve functioning of energy systems.

This paper aims to briefly present major issues on energy innovation development in Central and Southeastern Europe (referred further as EU-11). The concept of energy innovation is blurred and inclusive and it is difficult to determine its real boundaries. So, we treat this topic widely, showing the general changes that lead to modernisation of the energy systems.

The paper is divided into three main sections. The first describes the general approach of national governments and business sectors in the region towards energy innovation. We show the pattern of growing interest in energy innovation and present the main challenges experienced so far, such as low financing levels. The second part shows several examples of energy innovation ‘in action’. In particular, the implementation of the new technologies in power production and transmission (inter alia RES penetration and implementation of smart grids), application of new technologies in traditional energy industries (nuclear and clean-coal technologies) and trends of electrification of transport. We also show a few interesting cases of new business models emerging in the energy sector. Thirdly, we offer several policy recommendations to support energy innovation in the region and move the process of energy transition forward.

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