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EU will have €250m unused IC R&D money by 2013

David Manners
Tuesday 16 November 2010 10:19

The rate of take-up of the European collaborative semiconductor R&D programmes CATRENE and ENIAC is so slow that the programmes will have a surplus of unused money amounting to €250m by 2013 on present trends, Andreas Wild, executive director of ENIAC, told the European Nanoelectronics Forum 2010 in Madrid this morning.

This is an unfortunate development in a world which, says Wild, "is still hungry for silicon."

The amount spent by Europe on semiconductor R&D is still about a quarter of what the US spends. Wild gave a list of 15 US government agencies contributing to the US National Nanotechnology Initiative which provide funds worth about \$1.7bn to support semiconductor R&D.

One result of this is that US companies have 48% market share in the semiconductor industry – and is the USA's largest export industry – with exports worth more than cars and Hollywood movies.

65% of the capital investment by US companies is invested domestically and 75% of its R&D investment is invested domestically.

"In the last 20 years no European company has grown sufficiently to enter the Top 20 semiconductor companies," said Wild, "whereas, in the US and Asia we see companies growing into the Top 10 and Top 20."

One reason for the slow growth in Europe is the deteriorating capital investments as a percentage of sales. Ten years ago the European chip companies were investing 20-25% of sales in capex, now they're investing only 10-15% of sales.

In the US, investment as a percentage of sales is 3.5X that of Europe; in Japan its 2.35X more; in Korea it's 2.27X more; and in Taiwan it's 2X more.

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