

The project "Empowering Tunisian Renewable Energy Research Activities" (ETRERA) was funded by European Community-FP7 under REGPOT-2009-2 Action, an action finalized to empower the research cooperation in innovation between the European and the Mediterranean countries.

ETRERA project was aimed at the creation of a research network on renewable energy sources (RES), hydrogen (H₂) and fuel cell (FC) technologies involving as primary actors the Tunisian "Research and Technology Center of Energy" (CRTE_n), and three European entities: 1) Institute for Advanced Energy Technologies "N. Giordano" of the National Research Council of Italy (CNR-ITAE); 2) Polytechnic School of Nantes University (Polytech Nantes), France; 3) Innova Business Innovation Centre (InnovaBIC), Italy. Starting from this nucleus we like to develop an Euro-Mediterranean network dedicated to RES, H₂ and FC technologies. ETRERA started in 2010 and was completed in June 2013. It was centred on fuel cell technology, because up to 2010 there was not a laboratory dedicated to FC in Tunisia.

Project partners have been involved in coordinated activities to reinforce the research structure of CRTE_n. A new research lab dedicated to research on polymer electrolyte fuel cells (PEFCs) was built up at CRTE_n. The recruitment of new researchers was carried out to increase the research capacities and the human potential of CRTE_n. The experience of CNR-ITAE and Polytech Nantes on FC and hydrogen technologies, spanning from material preparation to the system integration, was shared by exchange of researchers, the organization of seminars and starting collaborative research activities on PEFCs.

Dissemination was a very important aspect of the project, and it was carried out through a set of actions aimed at increasing the visibility of the partners and related research activities to obtain a wide dissemination of the project results to scientific community and European and Tunisian industries. The Innova BIC's experience in communication was used for this purpose.

Along the way we encountered political and social problems (Arab spring) and the necessity to merge also different administrative approaches. We report here our experience, the obtained results, lesson learnt and our proposition for the future.