

DESERTEC Foundation: 110928-01 Jobs and prospects for young North Africans

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Two new Desertec projects support regional development

The sun-rich North Africa is ideally suited for the generation of clean power from the desert, but often lacks the necessary expertise in the field of renewable energies to fully profit from this solar resource. North African experts from the Desertec Foundation are working together with partners from Germany and the Mediterranean region to address this skills gap through two new projects.

In order to enable the people of North Africa to benefit from the construction of solar and wind power plants, these projects will initiate master degree programs, train technical personnel and help to create suitable conditions for the further development of renewables in the region. With more than 3 million Euros in funding, these projects are supported by the European Union, the Kingdom of Morocco and the Federal Republic of Germany.

Stability through jobs in Egypt and Tunisia

The unrest in North Africa and the Middle East has shown how important, especially to young people, participation, employment and prospects are. This is the focus of the project "RE-Generation MENA" funded by the Foreign Office of the Federal Republic of Germany.

"The objective is to focus on a greater involvement of students in Egypt and Tunisia, equipping them with the skills to contribute fully to the democratic process and to demand the necessary conditions for the expansion of renewable energies," says the German-Egyptian Nagi Siam, head of the project at Desertec Foundation. Support comes from the Desertec University Network, a network of around 20 universities in North Africa and the Middle East, which is committed to the development of know-how and the implementation of programs related to renewable energies.

Until now, Desertec has often been seen as a great vision, consisting solely of the construction of many solar and wind power plants in deserts and electricity exports to Europe. According to project manager Nagi Siam, the Desertec concept can offer significantly more: "It can strengthen the region by building a sustainable industry and economic stability through job creation. In addition, it offers an abundant supply of energy, more than enough to generate electricity for North African countries' own consumption, for exports to Europe and for much needed sea water desalination."

Knowledge transfer between Morocco and Germany

The second project is a co-operation between Morocco and the German Federal State of Schleswig-Holstein. Called "WEREEMa", it aims to consolidate through knowledge-transfer Moroccan expertise in the field of renewable energies.

"Morocco is ideal for the implementation of the Desertec concept," said Dr. Meriem Rezgaoui, Moroccan Project Manager at the Desertec Foundation. "Morocco is one of the most stable countries in the region. In response to the Arab Spring, the King did not rely on confrontation but on far-reaching reforms. In addition, the country already has plans in place to invest several billion Euros to create jobs and reduce dependency on imported fossil fuels by greatly expanding its renewable energy production. Crucially, a transmission line linking the Moroccan and Spanish power grids, already exists. This means, in a few years, renewable energy generated in Morocco could begin to flow to Europe, as well as meeting the country's own needs."

The "WEREEMa" project is funded by the European Union and the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety to the tune of 3 million Euro. The Moroccan Energy Agency will contribute another 600,000 Euro. The project was initiated by the Ministry of Agriculture, Environment and Rural Areas of Schleswig-Holstein. Under the lead of the Schleswig-Holstein Investment Bank, the Desertec Foundation, the research network CEwind, the University of Flensburg, the Center of Excellence for Biomass Utilization in Kiel and the Moroccan Energy Agency (ADEREE) are working together to create the foundations for the implementation of Desertec in Morocco. The project will provide institutional support for the Moroccan Energy Agency and the state grid operator. Furthermore, the project will establish master degree programs in cooperation with German universities and provide training for technical personnel. At the same time, German entrepreneurs will gain the expertise and know-how to operate in the renewable energies sector in Morocco.