

## Insubria Biopark, three years dedicated to Life

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Fifteen companies have premises inside the Insubria Biopark. There are four projects researching new drugs, three partnerships with international institutes and a collaboration with an Italian institute researching in the medical and agricultural sectors; there is the largest photovoltaic system in Varese Province, and one hundred and fifty jobs have been created. These are the achievements of the Fondazione Istituto Insubrico di Ricerca per la Vita (FIIRV – the Insubria Research for Life Foundation), a research organisation based in Gerenzano, in its first three years of operating, which were presented this morning in Villa Recalcati, in the Activities Report for 2007, 2008 and 2009.

In these three years of work, the FIIRV, a non-profit foundation set up in 2006, thanks to Varese Province, to the State and Republic of the Canton Ticino, to the “Regio Insubrica” Work Community, to the Insubria University of Varese and Como, to the Ticino and Lugano Cardiocentre Foundation, and to the City Council of Busto Arsizio, worked to achieve the goals for which it was set up. “With a great sense of pride,” commented the representative of one of the main founding organisations, the Provincial Councillor De Bernardi Martignoni. “It’s important to support the people working to improve the quality of life.”

The Foundation began with the aim of stimulating and supporting initiatives for developing biotechnologies in the life sciences, in health protection, and in industrial biotechnologies, particularly within the Insubria region. Another ambitious goal of the FIIRV was to bring to the region know-how and technologies, by exploiting the synergies and collaboration between State bodies, qualified organisations and academic institutes, and stimulating the development of biotechnological research. “The difficulties in doing research are not related to the economic aspect, but to carrying out long-term projects, overcoming everyday urgency,” said Prof. Patrizio Castelli, a member of the Foundation’s governing body, for Insubria University. “In this sense, the foundation’s work is something serious, because we build the future with what we do today.”

With these objectives, the Foundation develops research activities thanks also to the intellectual heritage that the FIIRV has, which today consists of 172,000 extracts, and 15,000 strains, a huge potential to subject to screening. The research projects currently being carried out are in a variety of sectors of scientific interest, including: a project dedicated to agriculture and food, whose objective is to identify and to characterise the genes involved in production processes in the agricultural sector; a study of anti-inflammatory drugs, which seeks to find molecules that can selectively

inhibit the enzymes responsible for the inflammation process, without interfering with the activity of those that produce the substances that help to protect the tissues themselves; a project concerning anti-tumour drugs, to contribute to the search for a therapy for these diseases, by exploiting the large collection of microbial extracts that the Foundation has; a study related to celiac disease, to find a molecule that is active against the toxic or immunogenic fragments of gluten; the Club-Interreg project, which was developed with the Canton Ticino, concerning stem cells, designed for the creation of stents, optimal reticular polymers for positioning stem cells, which are particularly important in the reconstruction of cartilage, and therefore, decisive in the hospital sector.

The creation of the largest photovoltaic system in Varese Province, the seventh in Lombardy, which opened on 2 April 2009, is one of the projects developed by the Foundation. With the creation of this system, which is housed on the roof of one of the buildings in the Insubria Biopark, the FIIRV sought to give concrete support to the search for energy sources different from the classic ones, that use new techniques that respect the environment. The project was realised thanks to the contribution from the Cariplo Foundation, and cost € 1,800,000. So far, the photovoltaic system has produced savings of € 330,000, which correspond to 180 tonnes of oil.

Among the main projects of the Foundation, there is also the Insubria Biopark (which is the head office of the Foundation itself), the eighth (in chronological order) science and technology park and incubator for businesses in Italy, in the biotech sector. The project, which was started with the aim of preserving the great heritage of medical, scientific and biotechnological research, has a value (including premises, laboratories and knowledge) of the order of € 20 million. Today, the Biopark (which covers an area of 52,000 m<sup>2</sup>, of which, 15,000 m<sup>2</sup> is allocated to offices and chemistry, biology and microbiology laboratories, all provided with the most advanced technologies) contains fifteen companies, which can make use of all of the technical, logistic, computer and telecommunication, promotion, support and consulting services necessary for research.

“I thank the people that have made this great leap in quality possible,” said the Foundation’s director, Andrea Gambini. “First and foremost, the Province, which not only created the Foundation, but has given, and continues to give, economic help to our work. The most recent is the support to the celiac disease project.”

In all, there are 150 people who work inside the Insubria Biopark, in the 15 companies and in the foundation and connected services. The fifteen companies, which include well-known multinational companies, are involved in research and development in the pharmaceutical, diagnostic, agricultural and food, chemical and biomedical engineering sectors. The companies currently in the Biopark are Actygea, Areta International, Cyathus Exquirere, Chorusis, Creabilis Therapeutics, D-namic Consulting, Diasorin, Dr. Alberto Milanese, HO.p.e., ISB, the Galeazzi Orthopaedic Institute, Matric Europa, Quarta & Partners, Theo Servizi and Trueblue.

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