

## Feriel TOUITI - Manager of the Business Center

Kebili

Mashrou3i, a project implemented by UNIDO with support from USAID, the Italian Cooperation and the HP Foundation, works with partners in each of the project's 14 target regions. In Kebili, in the South of Tunisia, Mashrou3i works together with the region's Business Center to raise awareness of the project among aspiring and existing entrepreneurs.

The Business Center of Kebili was created in 2007, under the supervision of Tunisia's Ministry of Industry, in order to provide support to aspiring entrepreneurs from idea to startup launch. This includes helping young people to develop business plans and to gain access to finance. Ms. Feriel Touiti is the Director of the Business Center.

Feriel graduated in Finance from the Higher Institute of Management in Tunis in 2002, followed by a Master's degree in Business Creation at Sfax. At the same time, she worked as a financial officer at the General Commissariat for Agricultural Development in Kebili. After her studies, she began her professional career working within the Governorate of Kebili when the entrepreneurial ecosystem of the region was beginning to evolve. When she found out that the Business Center of Kebili was going to be created, she applied to be its director.

"I seized the opportunity and officially started my position as the Director of the Business Center in October 2007. The first few months I was working alone, which enabled me to build the administrative foundations of the center. Then in 2008, other colleagues joined me."

Today, the Business Center conducts regular

trainings in entrepreneurship, coaching sessions for the realization of business plans, and also guides aspiring entrepreneurs in their entrepreneurial career. Feriel is also quick to mention how the services offered to young entrepreneurs in the region have been strengthened through the center's collaboration with Mashrou3i.

"The partnership with Mashrou3i started in 2017, after the launch of Mashrou3i phase II. We work closely with UNIDO and the Mashrou3i experts to identify high-potential startups in the region who then receive technical assistance to help them improve their access to finance, marketing and market access. As a result, several entrepreneurs in the region have already received support to successfully launch their businesses."

Numerous aspiring entrepreneurs are also already benefiting from the project's HP LIFE workshops which assists young people in all stages of their project creation - whether developing a viable business plan or improving their marketing and managerial skills.

"The collaboration with the Mashrou3i project is good for aspiring entrepreneurs, and its contribution has become essential over time to entrepreneurs who need to be motivated in their challenging journey ahead. Mashrou3i has been able to respond to this problem through specific support and follow-up at all stages of business creation. Exchanges during the HP LIFE workshops, already represent an undeniable added value for the entrepreneurs who feel supported in the realization of their projects."