

# SEGMENT

*Unapologetically Italian*



## GUERRA E PACE

War ... or Peace?

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# HUMAN CAPITAL AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT IN SICILY

by **Elisa Lolicata** | Image provided by **Dhebora Mirabelli**

**Confapi Sicilia is promoting initiatives of human capital and economic development among municipalities in Sicily. Dhebora Mirabelli spoke to *Segmento* about their latest project, *Pensiamo a sud*.**



**Dhebora Mirabelli**

**D**hebora Mirabelli is an entrepreneur, export manager, innovation expert, and lawyer. She is the first woman president of Confederazione italiana della piccola e media industria privata (Confapi) Sicilia. Deborah has always invested in her training by acquiring multidisciplinary specializations in public and private management. In recent years, she has collaborated on numerous ethical and social innovation projects, dealing with design, technical assistance, and supervision, in particular for the allocation of funding resources. She has more than 10 years of experience in the management and control of European funds and public funds, support activities for the Ministry of the Interior, the Ministry of Economy and Finance, the Ministry of Labor and Economic Development as well as the network of public investment evaluation units. *Segmento* spoke to Dhebora about how Confapi Sicilia's initiatives promote

human capital and economic development among municipalities in Sicily.

**How is Sicily placed to become a hub of economic development and innovation?**

Confapi Sicilia views the agricultural industry as a key asset for the development of Sicily.

Two other strengths of the island are tourism and culture, and the food and wine supply chains. If these are properly exploited, there is potential for development with exponential growth and obvious synergies can be created. Although there is already a strong connection between various industries on the island, it is still important to continue investing in some key areas, such as communication, innovation, and digitization. In recent decades, external factors, such as globalization and rapid technological development, have led to sudden increase in the value associated with highly innovative digital capital.

Confapi Sicilia cannot ignore the need to promote digital literacy and technological innovation for the benefit of those in need of economic independence: young entrepreneurs, women, victims of abuse and violence, and, in general, all those seeking employment. The added value of our current project is the implementation of public services that facilitate the development of human capital through technology and highly innovative and creative digital and territorial marketing."

In 2021, Confapi Sicilia internally also established the Committee for Internationalization and Foreign



Taxation, a new coordination and support service to promote Made in Sicily internationally that is responsible for coordinating the work of ambassadors and promoting the participation of Sicilian start-ups in international events to encourage networking with foreign investors. With the enactment of the 2022 budget law, Confapi Sicilia officially became part of the steering committee for internationalization. This international body is co-chaired by the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation and Economic Development, it defines the strategic guidelines each year, and actions the promotion and internationalization of the production system.

**What is an example of collaboration and project development and synergy between Confapi Sicilia and small municipalities in Sicily?**

The synergy between tourism, food and wine, the environment and territory represents a key factor for our economy, an element of strength we must focus on so that sustainable and lasting economic growth can be nurtured for the south and for the country as a whole in order to increase exports and the internationalization of Made in Sicily products and excellence. An interesting project is the one carried out by the municipality of Mussomeli. Confapi Sicilia has promoted the Pensiamo a Sud initiative. Mussomeli and other Sicilian villages have espoused Confapi Sicilia's strategy: let's invest in productive districts to restore value to Made in Sicily. The agreement between the municipal



administration and Confapi Sicilia is aimed at promoting the development of productive districts in the cultural tourism and agribusiness sectors. This is through the commitment of Confapi Sicilia to transform €1 properties (the municipality has focused on the rebirth of the village, starting with the inhabitants and local businesses and ending with tourism and policies to attract foreign investment and capital) into productive economic reality. All this is thanks to its own production chains, both local and national and international, and creating real productive interconnections both for all those young entrepreneurs who do not want to leave Sicily to develop their ideas but also to give a physical space to those who want to create, expand, or relocate their business activities in Sicily.







Nino Messina



### What exactly is the Pensiamo a Sud project, and why is it aimed at supporting young Sicilian start-ups?

It is the first digital business accelerator of the agri-food and cultural tourism supply chains with young people in mind. With Pensiamo a Sud, Confapi Sicilia created a business incubator for people who desire to stay in the south and start their own companies: a unique approach that matches top market experts with the ideas of young men and women; a network ready to instantly offer online advice, guidance, and suggestions.

### How is the project structured?

It is structured in different offices to support people in different areas (export office, intellectual property office, marketing office among others). Through this project, Confapi Sicilia collects business ideas to turn them into business projects. It provides consulting and training services on digital strategy, access to credit, subsidized finance, territorial and digital marketing, intellectual property protection, digital export and business internationalization, legal and financial consulting, investment appraisal, business plan drafting and evaluation:

- **Pensiamo a Sud** allows people to have all the solutions they need at their fingertips. In fact, it contains not only digital manuals and video tutorials but also a virtual assistant for real-time guidance to the best content according to user needs, as well as a complete contact list of professionals.

- **Progettiamo a Sud** will allow users to quickly and efficiently submit business ideas through an app by answering targeted questions developed by our experts. The system will provide an immediate response on refining the idea and steps to bring it to completion.

- **Advisory Sicily Influencer** represents a young and creative communication strategy that targets young people. In this way, topics such as tax advice, internationalization, and legal issues are user-friendly and within everyone's reach.

- **Safety card with interactive QR code - SOS VIOLENCE** gives users the ability to report harassment and violence in the workplace and look for new jobs at ethical and safe companies by scanning the QR code. In addition, users will be able to apply for open job positions from Sicilian companies that have joined the European Digital Observatory project against harassment and violence in the workplace.

- **CRM** is the beating heart of the team's and experts' activity digitized for coordination with other plan projects.

- **Chatbots** will provide guidance for finding the right professionals and sectors in more than 10 topics available on Pensiamo a Sud.

