

## Speakers' short-biographies



**Pr. Helmi Mardassi** Director General of the European Programs Management Unit by Objectives (UGPO – Horizon 2020)

Helmi Mardassi obtained his doctorate in veterinary medicine (1988) at the Tunisian National School of Veterinary Medicine. After that, he moved to the university of Montreal (Canada) where he completed a master degree in Microbiology and Animal Pathology. In 1996, he obtained his PhD degree in Molecular Virology at the Institut Armand-Frappier (University of Quebec, Canada), and next joined the Biotechnology Research Institute of Montreal for a postdoctoral training. Currently, he is a senior researcher – head of Molecular Microbiology, Vaccinology and Biotechnological Development laboratory aiming to delineate the molecular basis underlying the successful evolution of particular *M. tuberculosis* lineages, including epidemic multidrug-resistant clones. He was the PI and coordinator of an EC-FP7 REGPOT project that implemented the Euro Mediterranean network for upgraded TB research and control (2010-2013). At present, he is the principal coordinator of the PHINDaccess project – EU/H2020 funded project (2018-2021).



**Dr. Rym Kefi** is a Senior Lecturer/Associate Professor (PhD, Habilitation to Direct Research) in Institut Pasteur in Tunis (IPT). Team leader in the Laboratory of Biomedical Genomics and Oncogenetics and responsible for the Genetic Typing Laboratory in IPT. She obtained a Master degree and a PhD at the University of the Mediterranean (Marseille- France). She worked on Mitochondrial DNA

diversity in current and prehistoric human populations and on mitochondrial DNA variability of Cave Bear. She joined in 2006 IPT. She is mainly involved in research on genomic characterization of human disorders, genetic diversity in North Africa and genetic typing in forensic. She has an experience in scientific project editing and implementation through her contribution as Principal investigator (PI), co-PI or Work Package Leader in more than 25 collaborative projects on multidisciplinary investigation of metabolic diseases, Host/Pathogen interaction and on capacities building in Omic sciences. The skills of Rym KEFI were recognized at national, regional and international levels. Rym KEFI is TWAS (The World Academy of Science) young affiliate since 2010, and Global Young Academy member since 2012. In 2017, she was Laureate of the Next Einstein Forum (among the best 16 young scientists in Africa). She was selected by the World Economic Forum as one of the top 50 scientists in the world under 40 years old. She was also selected by Science and Technology in Society forum (STS) as "Future Leader" and participated in the meeting with the Nobel laureates in Kyoto, Japan. In 2018, she obtained the national award for excellence "Arvea Women Award" in the category of scientific research.

Rym KEFI is also involved in training and teaching activities. She supervised more than 30 undergraduate and graduate students from Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and

Mauritania, for the realization of their research activities and dissertations. She is an author/ co-author of more than 85 publications.



**Mr. Mondher Khanfir** is a seasoned professional with a strong background in business consulting, digital transformation strategy and investment advisory for both private and public sectors. His passion for innovation as enabler of social and economic development had driven him to policy advocacy, mainly in Africa and MENA region, where he is regularly appointed as an expert by different International institutions, namely the World Bank, OECD, UN-ESCWA, AFD, GIZ and EBRD. He is assisting Governments to develop innovation ecosystems and manage infrastructure projects in order to better integrate international value chains. He authored several reports and led many missions to implement Research & Innovation programs, also delivered studies on private sector competitiveness and analysis on the capital market development in emerging economies. His publications are searchable on <http://khanfir.info/>



**Mr. Alaya Bettaieb** is, since February 2021, the Managing Director of Smart Capital, the national operator of Startup Tunisia. He was a VC fund manager since 2000, technology transfer practitioner since 2008 and founder of the first academic incubator in Tunisia at ESPRIT since 2013. He was a founding member of the Tunisian Venture Capital Association “ATIC” in 2004, and of Euromed Capital Forum in 2006. He has been a member of fund investment committees in Tunisia and Saudi Arabia since 2010. Mr. Bettaieb graduated in Physics, Engineering, Economics & Management from Tunisian American and Japanese Universities.



**Ms. Linda NAIT-KAOUJIT** joined the Institut Pasteur in 2020 as Head of the Technology Transfer and Business Development Office. With over ten years’ experience in business development, she is an expert in partnerships with industry. She spent the last six years at IQVIA (Quintiles & IMS Health merger), a world leader in using data, technology, advanced analysis and human expertise to help life sciences companies advance healthcare and human health. Its mission is to develop partnerships and revenues for pharmaceutical companies, EBPs, medical device companies, investment funds, payers, and e-health.



**Mr. Oussema Ben Fadhel** has been the head of the tech transfer office (CVT2) of the Institut Pasteur of Tunis since March 2011. He holds a research Masters of Sciences and Technologies: Integrative Physiology and a professional Masters in Health Law Specialty: Industrial Property and Health Industries. He is also a PhD candidate, and his focus area is knowledge and technology transfer from public health institutes (biotech related to infectious diseases). His mission is to promote commercial development of inventions and industrial partnering. He is responsible for drafting and negotiating agreements, promoting knowledge transfer, managing patent and intellectual property, preparing marketing materials, handling relations with industry and supervisory authorities.

Before joining Institut Pasteur de Tunis, he has worked at the Technology Transfer Office, FIST (France Innovation Scientifique et Transfert), of the CNRS (National Center of Scientific Research) in Paris (France), for one year, where he was also a Project Manager in Transfer & Licensing (Life Sciences). He was also an AUTM member (Association of University Technology Managers) in 2015-2016.



**Dr. Sadri Znaidi** is a biochemist (B.Sc., M.Sc. from the University of Sherbrooke, Canada) and molecular biologist (Ph.D., from the University of Montreal, Canada), with expertise in yeast genetics and functional genomics. He is currently a RIIP (Institut Pasteur International Network) Affiliate Program Fellow, with affiliations at the Institut Pasteur in Tunis and Paris. His current work focuses on the implementation of systems biology-oriented approaches to identify and characterize components of the biological circuitry involved in the interaction of human fungal pathogens with the host environment.



**Dr. Sinda Zarrouk-Mahjoub** is a researcher at Pasteur institute of Tunis (IPT) and Head of the Technological Platform IPT-OMICS /US01IPT since 2012. She is also a member of the scientific advisory committees for the Technology Development and Transfer Unit (CVT2/US02IPT). She's serving as scientific advisor for the Technological Development and Business Creation (BuTT-IPT /ANPR).

She obtained her Master degree in Biology, a Doctorate in Human Genetics and Molecular Biology and a Diploma of Advanced Studies in Population Genetics and Bio-resources from Tunis El Manar University. Her Research topics of interest include cardiogenetics and mitochondrial disease. She published 201 Documents with 559 Citations by 487 documents (h-index 12).

She has participated in several national and international projects, federated research project CIC-2017-HT04, EU project LeiShiledMati H2020-MSCA-RISE-2017, project PHINDaccess H2020 WIDESPREAD-05-2017-Twinning and project WELLCOME TRUST The COBRA-NGaV.



**Dr. Kais Ghedira** is a researcher at the IPT holding a PhD in Bioinformatics with a large experience in bioinformatics education and training and supervision of multi omics and bioinformatics projects. He has been PI/co-investigator/WP leader for several national and international grants including H3ABioNet (h3abionet.org), PHINDaccess (phindaccess.org), TriOmics-CoV, PerMediNA and other funded projects. He is highly contributing to build capacities in Bioinformatics at the institutional, local, regional, African and International levels through providing theoretical and practical trainings. He initiated the first multi institutional research master in bioinformatics in Tunisia and was highly involved in building capacities in bioinformatics at the national, regional and African level. He is coordinating this Bioinformatics master at the Institutional level. He was in charge of setting up a High Performance Computing (HPC) cluster in IPT in the frame of the PHINDaccess project and assisted IPT users to run their bioinformatics jobs on the cluster using slurm.

He contributed to the writing of the Genome Tunisia project and is an active member of the Genome Tunisia Collaborative Alliance (GTCA) that aims to sequence Tunisian genomes from healthy participants in order to identify and generate a Tunisian reference genome that would later on help in disease diagnostics in Tunisia. He is currently a member of several international consortia on genomics projects and is contributing through several initiatives to implement genomic medicine in Tunisia, the North Africa region and the continent. Since the COVID-19 pandemy, he has participated in the national effort to identify SARS-CoV-2 variants circulating in Tunisia and contributed to alert the Tunisian authority to take the best measures and decisions. He contributed to design primers that target a partial region of the protein S allowing to detect the A.27, the UK, the delta and recently the B.1.1.529 (Omicron) variants in Tunisia at low cost before validation by WGS. Kais is author/co-author of more than 50 publications in highly ranked journals in the bioinformatics field and is co editor of three INTECHOpen books. He is mainly interested in functional genomics and integrative multi omics data, network generation and analysis, analysis of NGS high throughput data, gene regulation analysis, host pathogen interaction studies and databases and web tools development.



**Ms. Najet Hadhri** has worked for 9 years as a Research Officer in charge of Fundraising and Valorization within the Unit of Communication, Valorization, and Technology Transfer. She was responsible for funding opportunities insight and also research publications valorization. In 2020, she became the Head of the Grants Office and continues to provide support to researchers in applying and managing their research-funded projects. She also ensures formal exchange and communication with national and international funding agencies. Furthermore, she is also working on setting up workflows for smooth research information management pertaining to fundraising, project management as well as research output valorization.



**Mr. Hichem Ben Hassine** launched an initiative to embrace Responsible Research and Innovation (RRI) principles at IPT. This was done through the organization of different RRI events and trainings. He is the communication manager of the Institut Pasteur de Tunis and the coordinator of IPT's Unit "Communication, Science and Society". His mission is to enhance the activities of the Institute. This includes in the organization of scientific and social events, preparation of communication materials, handling of relations with the press, with the supervisory authorities and with the Institut Pasteur International Network, etc. He ensured the communication activities in the frame of international projects, in particular EU FP7 international cooperation activities. In addition, he developed the digital communication component of the Institut Pasteur de Tunis particularly through the creation and animation of various accounts on social networks. Between 2017 and 2021, He has been the IPT principal investigator of the H2020 InSPIRES project whose objective is to create and implement Science Shops in partners' institutions. He is also WP leader in other H2020 projects at IPT and member of institutional, local, and national commissions for communication in Health and Research.



**Pr. Balkiss Bouhaouala-Zahar** is Head of NanoBioMedika research Team at LBVAT-Institut Pasteur Tunis (LR20IPT01). Her nanobiotechnology areas of expertise include genetic engineering of toxins and antibodies, single domain antibody development and nanoparticles functionalizations (i.e.venimology, serotherapy efficiency, in vitro and in vivo neutralizing and protecting capacities and quality control of biologicals). She is involved in the development

of antibody-based modulators (i.e. Toxins; ion channels; Macromolecules; MERS-CoV and SARS-CoV).

Balkiss Bouhaouala-Zahar supervised numerous Masters and PhD students and published almost 50 research papers in leading scientific journals. She has been coordinator/WP leader for several international innovative grants (IFS-1; IFS-2; NATO sfp981865; CMCU09G0806; CMPTM11TM08; FP7 ERAWIDE GM\_NCD\_InCo; ENPI Tunisian-Sicilian BIOVecQ; IPM-4-CITRUS H2020 RISE; Cycle 5 PEER;H3ABionet1/2 Bioinformatic network;IPINetworkVenoMATIcs projects, etc.). Currently, she is Co-PI of a Projet de Recherche Fédéré (PRF-D4P1-NanoFast Response) and Principal Investigator of a R&D COLLABORA project funded by the Ministry of High Education and Scientific Research (MESRS).She is currently the Principal Investigator for a R&D project funded by the Wellcome Trust Foundation (UK, 2021-2024), AFRIDI project advisory board member and Partner of the TUN5032-2022 IAEA project.

Balkiss Bouhaouala-Zaharis has been involved in IP issues since 2008 as University Coordinator of Intellectual Property Rights (IPRs) and Scientific Director, Agence Nationale de Promotion de la Recherche (2010-2014). She got numerous certificates and one diploma on IP and licensing, UC Davis (2012). She's the recipient of Medal for rendered services presented at the International course of health support in Saharan environment, Tozeur March 2009; Gold Medal of work presented at the 4th Korea International Women's Invention Exposition Seoul, Korea, 2011 and Special Prize from the Intellectual Property Poland Office (PPO); Winner of the Concours Régional de l'Innovation (Grand Tunis), April 2016; Winner of the Concours National de l'Innovation, Agence de Promotion de l'Industrie et de l'Innovation, May 2016 (<http://www.tunisieindustrie.nat.tn/innovation/allnews.asp>); Selected Fellowship of the ANDI-EMORY university (USA) joint program for Project Based Training of African Network for Drugs and Diagnostics Innovation (ANDI), July 2017. She was nominated Fellow of the African Academy of Sciences, FAAS in November 2013 and currently is appointed as Membership of the Advisory Committee (MAC) and the Finance Risk & Audit Compliance Committee (FRACC).Balkiss Bouhaouala-Zahar is T6.2 and T7.3 Taskleader within the PHINDaccess project.



**Dr. Silvia Tórtola** is a Senior Business Development Manager – Technology and Business Development Office (CRG). She has a long track record in technology transfer, having been fundamental for the development of CRG’s technology transfer office since its inception. She is an expert negotiator with great experience in technology assessment, valorization, business development and licensing, and the identification and management of IP rights, having been also deeply involved in the creation of spin-off companies such as

qGenomics and Pulmobiotics, and other innovation projects at CRG. Before, Silvia worked both in the academic and biotech sectors, accumulating more than 12 years of basic and translational research experience internationally. Silvia holds a Ph.D. in Biology from the University of Barcelona and a Master in Immunology from the same institution. She has worked as a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of Geneva (Switzerland), and as a scientist and team leader at the German biotech start-up company Europroteome AG (of which she was also founder member), focusing on the development of diagnostic and prognostic tools as well as patient-specific therapies for human epithelial cancers. Late in 2005, Silvia moved back to Barcelona to initiate the technology transfer activities at CRG, where she became also a member of the Ethical Committee of Clinical Research of the nearby hospital. Silvia has participated in more than 20 national and international courses on intellectual property and technology transfer-related matters, including a 6-month CREATE Entrepreneurship Course (or “How to run a start-up company”) at the Swiss Federal Institute of Technology in Lausanne, Switzerland.



**Dr Anabel Sanz** is the Head of the Technology and Business Development Office . She has broad experience in evaluation of technologies in life sciences, intellectual asset management, licensing, business development and new ventures. Since 2010, she has held managerial positions in technology transfer at three research excellence centers in Spain, CNB-CSIC (Biotechnology), CNIO (Cancer) and since 2019, at CRG (Genomics). Previously she worked for more than a decade in

a spin-off (CropDesing) of the Flemish Institute for Biotechnology (VIB) and in the multinational company BASF. She has implemented innovation processes and successfully supported establishment of numerous public-private research partnerships and IPR transactions. A chemist by training, she holds a Master’s in Science from the U. Wales, UK, a PhD in Biology from the Autonomous University in Madrid (ES), postdoctoral experience in Spain and Belgium and an Executive Master in Science and Technology Business from IE business school.