



Designing a SIM Education Programme

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Contents



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- 01** The SIM Education Programme for Social Impact Managers
- 02** A Broader Perspective on CSR and Community Engagement: New Research & Case Study
- 03** SIM celebrates ERASMUS+ days
- 04** SIM Programme Progress in Vienna
- 05** The Call for Greater Responsibility
- 06** Who is the Social Impact Manager?



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THE SIM EDUCATION PROGRAMME FOR SOCIAL IMPACT MANAGERS

In an era defined by the imperative to balance profitability with sustainability, the Social Impact Manager (SIM) Programme is designed as an inspiring learning experience for leaders in Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and community engagement. Developed through the collaboration of leading European universities and vocational education providers under the guidance of [the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Rijeka \(EFRI\)](#), this Erasmus+ initiative introduces an innovative curriculum designed to equip professionals with the skills to drive transformative social and economic change.

The SIM programme addresses the evolving role of businesses in society. It envisions a new breed of managers integrating sustainability into their corporate strategies while developing meaningful connections with local communities. By aligning business objectives with social impact, the SIM programme aims to create leaders who can navigate the complexities of today's socio-economic environment.

The SIM programme is being built around five core modules, each developed by expert partners with contributions from associate collaborators:

- Corporate Governance and Strategy:** Exploring the integration of Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) principles into corporate strategies, this module focuses on ethics, organisational culture, and the alignment of internal processes with sustainability goals.
- Territorial Analysis:** This will train participants to analyse local ecosystems, identify social needs, and explore opportunities for partnerships with local stakeholders to promote territorial development.

- Stakeholder Engagement:** Focused on building and maintaining positive relationships, this module covers communication strategies, stakeholder management tools, and the evaluation of engagement efforts.
- Project Management:** Participants gain expertise in planning, executing, and monitoring projects, with a special focus on the unique challenges of managing social impact initiatives.
- Impact Assessment and Reporting:** From impact theory to monetisation methodologies such as Social Return on Investment (SROI), this module equips learners to measure and communicate their contributions to sustainability.

In 2025, the programme will be piloted as a Lifelong Learning Programme (LLP) across five countries—**Italy, Austria, Greece, Croatia**, and France and tailored to participants ranging from university students to experienced SME owners. The curriculum will include lectures, case studies, and interactive projects to address real-world challenges.

The SIM programme adopts a learner-centred, outcomes-based approach, combining theory with practice. It offers hackathons to bring participants together to co-create innovative community engagement solutions. Real-world collaborations where learners partner with local businesses to develop initiatives that address regional challenges. Participants will present final projects detailing comprehensive solutions to social and environmental issues, receiving feedback and guidance from mentors.

By completing the SIM programme, participants will master skills in governance, territorial analysis, and stakeholder engagement. They will also be adept at applying project management principles to community-driven initiatives and assessing the socio-economic impacts of their actions. Most importantly, they will develop the ability to bridge the gap between business goals and community needs, fostering a culture of sustainability and ethical responsibility. By training a generation of Social Impact Managers, this initiative contributes to building resilient, inclusive communities and businesses that thrive by making a difference. The SIM programme is set to redefine the standards for leadership in CSR and sustainability.



A BROADER PERSPECTIVE ON CSR AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT: NEW RESEARCH

As we reach the halfway point of the Social Impact Manager (SIM) project, we are thrilled to highlight research which has mapped the connections between companies and local communities across Greece, Croatia, France, Austria, and Italy. This comprehensive analysis sheds light on corporate social responsibility (CSR) and community development practices, offering a unique lens into how businesses and communities engage for mutual growth and social impact.

Key Findings: Trends Shaped by Demographics and Local Practices

The study looks at how demographic factors like gender, age, and professional roles shape engagement in CSR initiatives. These insights are critical for understanding how diverse groups perceive and contribute to CSR efforts, highlighting opportunities for inclusion and targeted interventions.

Additionally, the research shows the increasing importance of collaborations between companies and communities. Each country's approach to CSR demonstrates the richness of Europe's cultural diversity, with practices tailored to local needs and values.

OVERALL VIEW

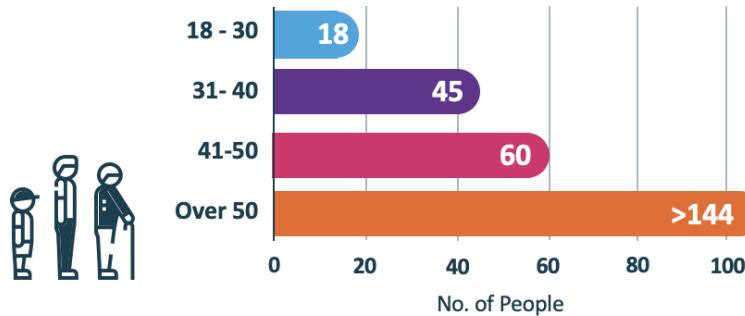


No. of Surveys

267



Age Range



Gender

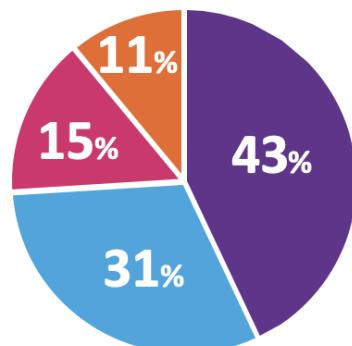


1% OTHER

60% MALE

39% FEMALE

Role Distribution



• Manager • Executive • CEO/Funder • Other

For example:

- France emphasizes inclusive practices and public-private partnerships.
- Croatia focuses on grassroots-level initiatives aimed at community empowerment.
- Greece and Italy excel in leveraging local heritage to drive CSR campaigns.
- Austria leads in structured, policy-driven CSR efforts.

These distinctions provide actionable insights for businesses seeking to design impactful and culturally relevant CSR strategies.

This research offers practical tools for companies and individuals aiming to strengthen their social responsibility initiatives. By addressing the unique challenges, needs, and desires of local communities, businesses can ensure their efforts are both impactful and sustainable. For professionals and aspiring Social Impact Managers, the findings serve as a guide to align business objectives with community priorities effectively.

The SIM project is now building on this foundational research and designing and developing a training course tailored for future Social Impact Managers. This course will equip individuals with the skills to navigate the complexities of CSR and drive meaningful change within their organisations and communities. We look forward to testing the SIM education programme in five partner countries and officially launching an International SIM School in Paris, France later in 2025.

For those interested in these trends and practices, the CSR & Community Development Analysis report is available in six languages, offering detailed case studies and insights: [Engage – Social Impact Manager](#)

Find a snapshot of the results including company case studies and podcasts here: [Research – Social Impact Manager](#)



CASE STUDY: INTERPLAST – GREECE

Another example of a business making a difference in their community is Interplast, a Greek company known for producing integrated water supply, heating, air conditioning, and drainage systems.

At the heart of Interplast's CSR initiatives is Ms. Zoe Rizopoulou, supported by her father. They lead efforts to build strong relationships within the local community and the wider region of Eastern Macedonia and Thrace.

Together, they develop the company's CSR roadmap and implement impactful initiatives in several key areas:

Responsible financial management is the foundation of their approach, ensuring sound economic practices. Environmental management is a priority, focusing on reducing pollutants and minimising environmental impact.

Education is another pillar as they work with regional universities to establish a new department, highlighting their belief in the power of education. Finally, partnering with organisations like the local church strengthens their community ties and demonstrates their support for diverse institutions. Through their dedication, collaborative spirit, and local initiatives, Interplast is making a positive and lasting impact on their community and region.

Their **commitment to the community** is evident through active participation in cultural and social activities. They support first responders by rewarding firefighters and donating essential equipment like masks, showcasing their dedication to public safety.

Promoting sustainability, they organise a forum with the Technical Chamber of Thrace and the Municipality of Komotini to focus on energy saving. Their regional collaboration involves continuous communication, supporting the region's growing industrial sector. Their community engagement is underscored by organising a large-scale forum in Komotini with 700 guests from all over Greece.



[LISTEN HERE](#)



SIM CELEBRATES ERASMUS + DAYS

By: Felipe Pimenta, Project Manager University of Paris I: Panthéon-Sorbonne

This year, SIM celebrated Erasmus+ Days in Paris with our French partners at the [Sorbonne School of Economics](#). The event captivated students, staff and the public who explored key landmarks tied to Erasmus+ and their academic legacy.

The tour started with a visit to the **Sorbonne**, an important site in the Olympic Movement, where the International Olympic Committee was founded in 1894. They took the opportunity to highlight one of this year's themes: the Olympic and Paralympic Games, and how they've shaped both academic and athletic pursuits. Next, it was the **amphitheatre** where Marie Curie made history, by becoming the first woman to lecture at the Sorbonne in 1906.

A visit to the **Panthéon Centre** provided a perfect chance to introduce the Erasmus+ programmes, including the **Social Impact Manager programme**. With a diverse group of students, including those new to Erasmus, it was great to highlight the wide range of opportunities available.

The day concluded with a stop at the **Panthéon Monument**, where the group reflected on the work of **Louis Braille** and the impact of his invention on accessibility. As we prepare for the 200th anniversary of the Braille code in 2025, we are reminded of how the power of innovation can change lives. This event truly reminds us of how **Erasmus+ bridges cultures** and shapes future leaders including our focus on social impact managers!



SIM PROGRAMME PROGRESS IN VIENNA

By: Samantha Carty, EU Project Manager, Momentum

Fourteen partners from seven European countries recently gathered in the beautiful Austrian city of Vienna for the third Social Impact Manager project meeting.

Representing, Austria, Belgium, Croatia, France, Greece, Ireland and Italy, our partnership includes higher education institutions and VET providers, business networks and platforms along with companies and organisations working in the education sector.

Following our valuable discussions and decision-making we paid a fun visit to Vienna's famous Christmas markets where we had the chance to catch up informally before dinner. A heartfelt thank you to [die Berater Unternehmensberatungs GmbH](#) for their generous hosting of our meeting and for introducing us to TOP-Lokal a sister socio-economic catering enterprise that helps long-term jobseekers re-enter the labour market through upskilling and work placement. It was very special to celebrate our progress and partnership in a place that is creating real social impact.



The meeting was led by project co-ordinators, the [University of Peloponnese](#) represented by Katerina Doundi, who started by reflecting on our research from earlier this year that will be included in our interim reporting and sharing updates on key work packages that focus on:

Content Development - It was the perfect opportunity for the participating universities supported by partners representing the business community to refine our curriculum content of the five core modules of the Social Impact Manager training programme under the guidance of work package three leaders, [the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Rijeka \(EFRI\)](#),

Course Delivery – We also discussed how we will structure the impactful programme for each country's audience in workshops that will commence in 2025 and the planning for the autumn International SIM School in Paris hosted by [University of Paris I: Panthéon-Sorbonne](#).



THE CALL FOR GREATER RESPONSIBILITY

By: Samantha Carty, EU Project Manager, Momentum

As the curtains fell on COP29, the UN Climate Conference in Baku, the spotlight was firmly on a new global finance goal aimed at helping nations safeguard their people and economies from climate disasters while reaping the rewards of the clean energy revolution. Simon Stiell, the UN Climate Change Executive Secretary, described it aptly as an "insurance policy for humanity."

This agreement is not just about mitigating climate risks but also about embracing the immense opportunities presented by sustainable energy—a critical lifeline in our fight against climate change.

While the world grapples with climate crises, another narrative is growing louder: the demand for social responsibility, particularly in the private sector. Corporations are increasingly challenged to align their operations with long-term environmental, social, and economic sustainability.

The **2021 Deloitte Global Millennial and Gen Z Survey** revealed a telling statistic: nearly one-third of respondents reported starting or strengthening consumer relationships with companies based on their responses to crises, such as COVID-19.

Consumers are now wielding their wallets as instruments of change, choosing brands that reflect their values.

The **2020 Porter Novelli Executive Purpose Study** underscored this shift, with 85% of business leaders acknowledging that it's no longer enough for companies to focus solely on profits; they must also make a positive societal impact.

For job seekers, particularly Gen Z, corporate responsibility is non-negotiable.

A staggering 97% of Gen Z believe that responsibility starts with being a good employer, while 91% expect companies to actively contribute to environmental and societal well-being.

This generation demands a holistic approach to corporate social responsibility (CSR), urging businesses to align with the **17 UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**.





Gone are the days when CSR could be dismissed as a mere marketing tool. [The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive](#) which came into effect in 2023, has raised the stakes. Under this directive, large companies and listed SMEs are now required to report on social and environmental performance, giving investors critical insights into how businesses impact people and the planet. This transparency is reshaping investment decisions and holding companies accountable. Enter the **Social Impact Manager**, a pivotal role in bridging the gap between businesses and their communities. These professionals focus on fostering sustainable growth and strengthening ties with local stakeholders, ensuring that a company's CSR initiatives go beyond surface-level efforts.

The role is becoming increasingly vital as organisations seek to create meaningful community development programs, align with SDGs, and comply with stringent sustainability reporting standards. Social impact managers are not only helping companies expand their impact but also ensuring that their operations contribute positively to the ecosystems in which they operate. The world is watching, and the stakes have never been higher. Whether it's through strategic CSR, transparent reporting, or the work of social impact managers, companies have the opportunity—and the responsibility—to lead the way in creating a future where both people and the planet can thrive. Simon Stiell's words at COP29 remind us that this is not just about mitigating risks. It's about building resilience, fostering hope, and ensuring that the benefits of a sustainable future are shared by all.



“This new finance goal is an insurance policy for humanity”

Simon Stiell



WHO IS THE SOCIAL IMPACT MANAGER?

By: Pierfilippo Maggioni, CSR Specialist, Manageritalia

A social impact manager is a manager of social impact. This new figure must have a complementary and innovative approach to CSR, emphasising the social impact dimension of a company: they will focus on the link between social responsibility and the development of the community in which the company operates and is based, to expand what is already being done and increasing the bond with the community of people and stakeholders.

The social impact manager, who will expand and enhance the commitment of current CSR managers or sustainability managers, will therefore be a corporate reference point for all activities related to the location of the company; they will be responsible for building a workplace and community where everyone can find greater satisfaction and will serve as a link between corporate responsibility initiatives aimed at local communities and the company's business strategy. Finally, they will be engaged in monitoring and evaluating the impact of the company's actions on the local community and in relating sustainability actions to the company's business strategy.

Core Responsibilities:

- 1. Corporate Reference Point:** Acting as the central figure for all CSR-related activities tied to the company's location.
- 2. Building a Satisfying Workplace and Community:** Creating environments where employees and community members can find greater satisfaction.
- 3. Connecting CSR Initiatives to Business Strategy:** Ensuring that CSR activities align with and support the company's broader business goals.
- 4. Monitoring and Evaluating Impact:** Continuously assessing the effectiveness of the company's actions on the local community and integrating sustainability efforts with the company's business strategy.

The Social Impact Manager represents a pivotal role in bridging corporate efforts with community development, ensuring that businesses not only thrive economically but also contribute positively to the society around them.

As this role continues to evolve, it promises to bring about significant advancements in how companies engage with and impact their local communities.

Manageritalia recently showcased their involvement in the first year of the SIM project in their magazine "Dirigente". This publication, available in both hard copy and digital formats, reaches 43,000 associated managers and 2,000 key figures from various sectors in Italy, including politics, business, and society.

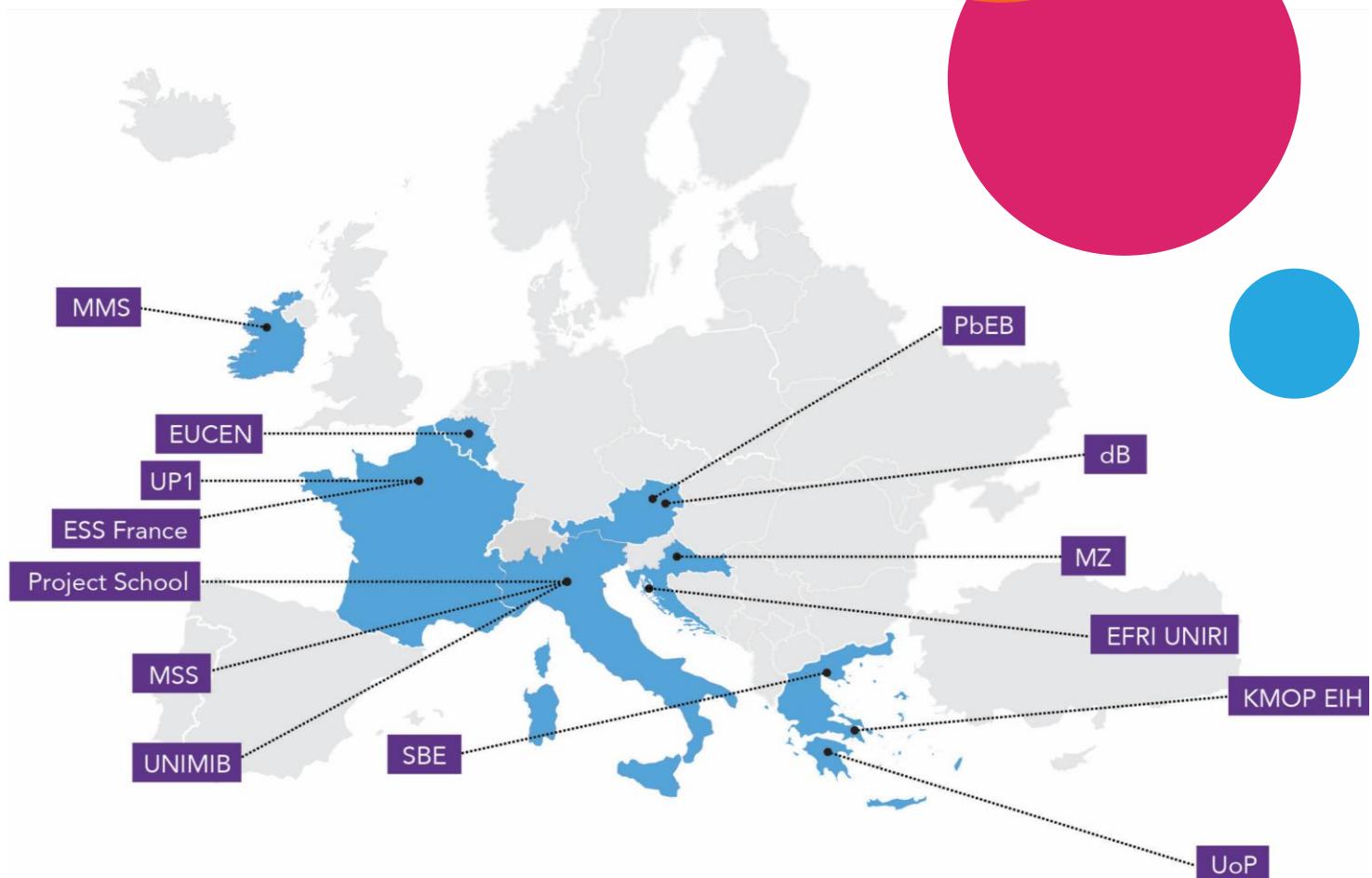
The article outlines the Social Impact Manager's role, the initial research stages, and the next steps in creating a dedicated training program. This initiative aims to equip future Social Impact Managers with the necessary skills and knowledge to excel in their roles. For those interested, the original article in Italian is available here:

<https://www.manageritalia.it/rivista/dirigente-luglio-agosto-2024/>





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