



SIM International School – Paris

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Social Impact Managers in Action

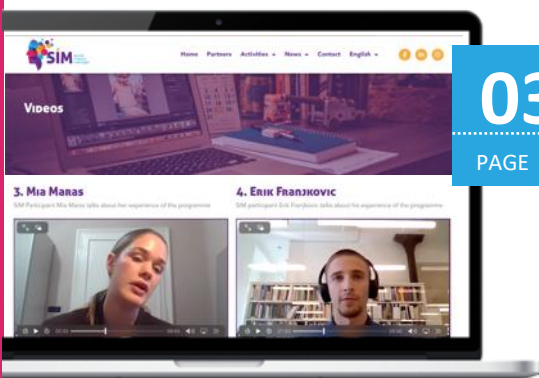
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Social Impact Managers in Action

The Social Impact Manager International School, Paris, 4-7th November 2025.

Follow our in-depth report on three exciting and intensive days in Paris, including pitching of SIM co-operation projects, roundtable discussions, master classes, networking and a company visit.



Day 01

The first generation of Social Impact Managers, a new European career pathway that blends business, ethics and social responsibility, gathered with project partners on November 4th, 2025, at the *House of Europe / Maison de l'Europe in Paris*, warmly hosted by the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

The day opened with two thought-provoking masterclasses and roundtables. Prof. Maryline Filippi from BSA and INRAE Paris Saclay spoke on *Beyond CSR: Defining and Operationalising Territorial Corporate Responsibility (TCR)*, showing how enterprises can anchor their social responsibility in local partnerships and regional development. Muriel Nouveau, Co-founder of Ezytail, followed with *When Social and Local Responsibility Drive Growth*, sharing a powerful account of how businesses can thrive by keeping people and purpose at their centre.

In the afternoon, seven cooperation projects were presented by graduates who had completed the SIM national training in their own countries. Uniquely, each project was shaped through collaboration between learners, companies, and community partners, and each tackled a different challenge, be that personal or corporate. Some projects are up and running while others are at an exploratory stage. All shared the same intention to connect people, business and community for lasting social impact.

Among them were StartHer from Italy, tackling the challenge of opening access to credit for women in business, and VitaWin from France, which is building stronger bridges between schools and local SMEs. From Greece, the Donation Network showed how logistics expertise could improve national donation systems, while Early Detection for Brighter Vision from Croatia presented a social impact initiative focused on glaucoma prevention. Growing Together from Italy measured the community value of the Orto 3 agriculture project, Be2cation and KIY from Austria explored the use of artificial intelligence in learning and youth work, and Life Cycle, Cycle of Opportunities from Greece demonstrated how circular economy practices can build inclusion and green skills.

With such creativity in the room, it is no surprise that there was an electric atmosphere of curiosity and collaboration. Tough questions from educators, enterprises and policymakers spanned theory, practice and applicability for each business model, but every presenter rose to the challenge with confidence and clarity.

The second day of the SIM International School took place at the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne, 12 place du Panthéon, 75005 Paris, in surroundings steeped in academic tradition and civic purpose.

The University has stood for centuries as a place where scholarship meets public life, where ideas are tested through dialogue and where learning is inseparable from social responsibility. With its view across the Panthéon, the venue offered the perfect backdrop for another day of insight, exchange and collaboration.

The morning opened with a new series of project pitches from the second group of SIM participants, each presenting business models developed through the national training programmes. The range of ideas once again showed the strength and adaptability of the Social Impact Manager profile.

From France, *Recognising Commitment, Amplifying Impact: The TE and IP Label* examined how recognition systems can reward authentic social engagement. From Italy, *Aligning Values with*

Action explored how Epson is embedding diversity, equity and inclusion into its corporate strategy. From Greece, the *Sustainability of Castle Towns and Traditional Settlements* addressed the challenges of climate adaptation and heritage preservation. From Croatia, *Trust Your Eyes* continued the focus on eye health and community well-being. A second French initiative, *Turning Unemployment into Opportunity*, showed how local partnerships can mobilise networks for inclusive employment. From Austria, *FEM Med* introduced new approaches to strengthening collaboration between medical professionals and social impact projects.

The afternoon featured two thought-provoking roundtables that connected corporate practice with territorial innovation.

Roundtable 1

Driving Business Innovation and Growth through Social Territorial Projects

Moderated by **François Rouvier**, Founder and Director of Le Chêne Conseil. Contributors included **Cesare De Palma** (De Palma Thermofluid, Italy), **Ivan Prudky** (DIP Society for Research and Support, Croatia), **Aris Tufexis** (University of Milan-Bicocca, Italy) and **Nenad Vretenar** (University of Rijeka, Croatia). Together, they explored how companies, guided by Social Impact Managers, can design and scale projects that strengthen local anchoring and generate measurable value for communities.



Roundtable 2

Strategic Partnerships and Channel Management: Enhancing Social Impact through Collaboration



Moderated by **Yann Ulliac**, former Director of the Partnerships Observatory at Le Rameau. Panel members included **Charles-Benoît Heidsieck** (President-Founder, Le Rameau), **Hrvoje Katunar** (EFRI, Croatia), **Peter Marckhgott** (die Berater, Austria), **Marina Stanojevic Vecerina** (Jadran Galenski Laboratory, Croatia) and **Konstantinos Styliaras** (SBE, Greece). The discussion focused on how strong alliances and coordinated partnerships can amplify social innovation while maintaining long-term business sustainability.

The day ended with a group cruise on the Seine, an unforgettable evening of conversation and connection with the backdrop of the Eiffel Tower and Notre Dame. It was a fitting close to a day that captured the European spirit of curiosity, collaboration and social responsibility.



Day 03

The final day of the **SIM International School** brought participants to the headquarters of **Up Coop**, one of France's most respected cooperative enterprises and a recognised international leader in social innovation

Founded in 1964, Up Coop now operates in more than 25 countries and employs over 3,200 people, showing how a cooperative can achieve scale while remaining deeply anchored in social purpose. Participants and partners were warmly welcomed by the Up Coop team and introduced to the organisation's history, structure and values with an emphasis on balancing financial performance with democratic governance, ensuring that employees,

communities and clients all share in the value created. Participant learned of Up Coop's role in managing food and meal vouchers. Originating in France in the 1960s, meal vouchers there (and in many other European countries) are not social welfare in the traditional sense. They're a tax-efficient employee benefit, essentially a clever mechanism that aligns social good with economic incentive.

Here's how it works:

- 01 Employers give workers “meal vouchers” that can be used to pay for food in participating cafés, restaurants, bakeries or grocery stores.
 - 02
 - 03 Both the employer and the employee share the cost. For example, the employer might pay 60%, and the employee 40%.
 - 04 The employer's contribution is tax-deductible, and the employee's portion is exempt from income tax up to a limit.
 - 05
 - 06 Small local businesses benefit because vouchers can only be used in registered outlets, keeping money circulating within local communities.
- It's a socially responsible model of consumption. Workers get real value, employers enjoy tax benefits, and local economies are strengthened.

Up Coop is a key part of social welfare and economic life in their operating countries, with offerings specifically tailored to each local ecosystem.

Their strength lies in the power of local collaboration, working with municipalities, trade unions, businesses and community groups to design solutions that respond to real social and economic needs. For SIM participants, this approach echoed the essence of the Social Impact Manager role: understanding local realities, building bridges between sectors and translating shared values into practical action. COVID-19 meant that social innovation was needed more than ever.

We learned how, during the pandemic, Up Coop adapted rapidly to digital vouchers and new delivery models, maintaining access to food services and protecting jobs when many sectors were under pressure. This responsiveness shows how agility and solidarity can reinforce one another - a lesson that resonated strongly with SIM participants, whose role is to drive that same balance of purpose and performance in their own organisations.





Always innovating, wellbeing vouchers (and related services) are a newer branch of Up Coop's activity. Building on the same cooperative logic as meal vouchers, they allow employers to support employees' access to activities and services that improve quality of life, such as sport, culture, childcare, sustainable mobility or health and wellness programmes. For SIM participants, it was a powerful illustration of how a business model can drive both economic and social resilience.

Trade unions also play a central role in Up Coop's governance. As part-owners and active members of the cooperative, union representatives participate in strategic decision-making, profit distribution and social dialogue. This shared ownership model ensures that worker perspectives remain central to corporate strategy and keeps solidarity and inclusion at the heart of business operations.

Throughout the visit, participants reflected on how closely the Social Impact Manager role aligns with this approach, bridging (one of the great explainer words in the SIM project) business strategy and social value, embedding ethical decision-making into structures and ensuring that performance and purpose advance together. Even on the metro, the conversations kept going; a blur of reflections, new friendships and plans scribbled between stations. A few tired smiles, a lot of laughter, and the shared feeling that something important had begun.

Participants compared notes, shared takeaways and imagined how to apply what they had seen at Up Coop within their own organisations and communities.

So, as the SIM International School drew to a close, there was a sense of quiet satisfaction and shared pride. Three demanding and energising days together had turned ideas into something tangible. What began in national trainings now feels alive through this first generation of Social Impact Managers, already applying their learning in real settings. Before parting ways, several participants recorded short video reflections, honest, thoughtful and full of momentum. We will share them with you soon.

Huge thanks to our hosts at Panthéon-Sorbonne University, led by Patricia Vornetti, *Maître de conférences* in Economics, supported by Sonia Laala and their dedicated team. Organising an international event is not for the fainthearted, but every detail reflected the true spirit of French hospitality, as well as the tradition and values of one of Europe's most historic and internationally respected public universities, known for its excellence in law, economics, social sciences, and humanities and for its strong tradition of civic engagement and intellectual independence.

Merci pour votre accueil, votre générosité et votre esprit européen.

Experience the Heart of SIM International School

We're thrilled to share two inspiring videos that capture the passion, people, and purpose behind the **SIM International School**, which took place in November in Paris, warmly hosted by the University of Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

Whether you're a partner, current participant, or simply curious about international education in action these videos are a must-watch.

Video 1: Partner Highlights -

Celebrating Collaboration & Impact

This video shines a spotlight on the partners and collaborators who make the SIM International School experience possible. Hear from the real voices of those involved, you'll see how our partnerships drive meaningful educational innovation, cross-cultural exchange and understanding as well as shared success in global learning environments

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Video 2: Participant Highlights -

Celebrating Learners & Their Journeys

Meet the heart of SIM International School, our participants themselves. This video showcases stories from students, and program contributors as they reflect on their experiences including standout moments from workshops, presentations, and discussions, their personal reflections on growth and learning, their SIM projects and how the program enriched their perspectives.



Our two videos tell a story of collaboration, learning, and international community.

Whether you're considering joining SIM International School or looking for inspiration on global education, these highlight reels offer a vibrant glimpse into what makes this initiative unique.

They capture transformative experiences from real participants, impactful relationships with partners across Europe and the spirit of international exchange in action.

Feel free to **share your thoughts** and tell us how the videos inspired you via our **social media channels**:



Putting the SIM Programme into Practice

At the heart of the Social Impact Manager (SIM) programme are the stories of the people who took part. Two recent podcasts on the SIM Project website bring these voices to life, featuring **Mia Maras** and **Erik Franjkovic** as they share their personal experiences.

We spoke to Erik Franjkovic, one of the Croatian participants in our **SIM Education Programme**. His journey began when his professor recommended the programme and, as Erik shares, *“the moment he saw the project title, he was hooked”*.

For Erik, SIM was about expanding horizons, meeting new people, and making a meaningful contribution to the community. He shares how inspired he was by the lecturers, knowledgeable educators, and many concrete examples of how social impact can be created within local communities.

Looking back, Erik highlights how the programme helped him better understand what social impact looks like in practice, and how individuals can play an active role in it. Erik articulates the importance of networking and exchange, pointing to how meeting other professionals broadened his view of what's possible in social impact work. His reflections show the practical value of real-world case studies and interactive discussions.

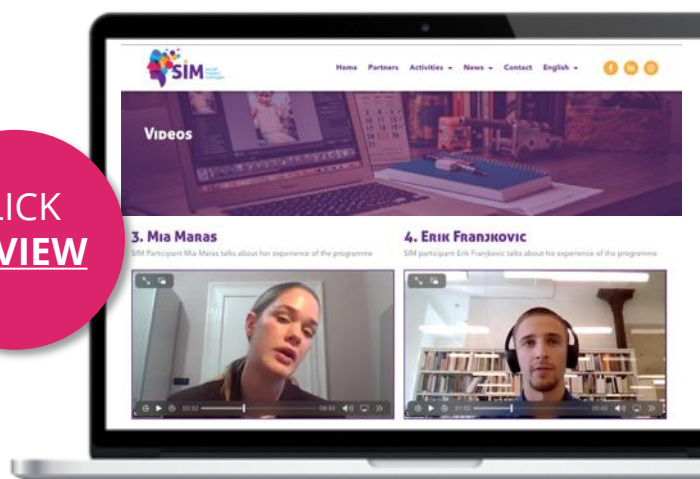
We also interviewed Mia Maraš, another Croatian participant of our SIM programme. She says she decided to join the programme because she *“wanted to do something different”* and understand what's really happening in the world.

She reflects on what it meant to participate in the SIM Programme and emphasises how the programme helped her broaden her perspective and deepen her understanding of social impact in practice. She highlights the value of engagement with diverse peers and the confidence she gained from collaborative, hands-on learning. Mia's insights remind us that learning doesn't happen in isolation but is shaped by the connections we make and the stories we share. For her, the SIM Education Programme turned out to be inspiring, eye-opening and intense, a learning journey that gave her practical knowledge she can now apply after her studies.

Her favourite takeaway? *“I know now how much I didn't know.”* These podcasts showcase the human side of professional development. Through candid conversations, Mia and Erik give listeners a sense of how immersive training programmes like the SIM Education Programme can transform perspectives, inspire action, and build community across borders. A special thank you to Erik and Mia for sharing their experience and motivation with the SIM community.

Listen to the full podcast interviews here **Podcasts – Social Impact Manager** and watch the videos here: **<https://simproject.eu/videos/>**

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Building the Next Generation of Social Impact Leaders

On 19 January 2026, the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Economics and Business (EFRI), Croatia, hosted a dynamic two-hour, in-person Social Impact Manager (SIM) Replication Workshop, bringing together 34 participants to explore the growing importance of social impact management in today's economy.



The workshop served as both a reflection on the achievements of the SIM project and a forward-looking platform to inspire future social impact professionals.

The programme began with welcoming speeches from the organisers, setting the tone for an interactive and forward-thinking session. Participants were introduced to the key achievements of the SIM project, its goals and milestones, as well as future opportunities and perspectives for further development.

Current SIM participants then shared their personal experiences, offering authentic insights into the programme's value and encouraging attendees to take part in future editions. Their testimonials highlighted how the SIM initiative supports both professional growth and meaningful societal contribution.



Why Social Impact Matters?

The central part of the workshop focused on an open discussion between organisers and participants about the necessity and importance of social impact initiatives in improving the economy and society. The dialogue revealed strong awareness among participants of the role that structured impact strategies, ESG integration, and stakeholder collaboration play in building resilient and inclusive communities.

Throughout the workshop, attendees gained insight into core Social Impact Manager areas, including:

Importantly, participants explored how these competencies are increasingly relevant for future career development, particularly in a rapidly evolving labour market that values sustainability and responsible leadership.

01

ESG principles (Environmental, Social, Governance)

02

Stakeholder engagement strategies

03

Impact measurement and evaluation

04

Strategic thinking for sustainable value creation

Mini Impact Lab: Learning by Doing

A highlight of the session was the Mini Impact Lab, an interactive, practice-oriented activity designed to simulate the real-life role of a Social Impact Manager.

Working in teams, participants identified real social challenges and mapped key stakeholders and available resources. The exercise demonstrated collaboration, creativity, and critical thinking. Continuous mentor feedback and peer exchange ensured that the learning experience was both reflective and action-oriented.

By stepping into the role of a Social Impact Manager, participants gained a firsthand understanding of how structured methodologies can translate social ambition into measurable impact.

Some Key Findings and Participant Feedback

Overall, the findings confirm a clear demand for accessible, flexible, and practice-oriented learning formats that better accommodate students and professionals while strengthening the integration of social impact topics into formal education systems

01

Strong Interest in Social Impact Topics

Participants demonstrated a high level of interest in social inclusion initiatives and impact-driven projects.

02

Foundational Knowledge Base

While most attendees possessed basic knowledge of social impact concepts, there remains significant room for deeper capacity building.

03

Curricular Representation

Social impact themes are present within university curricula; however, structured and comprehensive programmes dedicated to the topic remain limited

04

Clear Demand for More Programmes

Despite strong awareness of the importance of social impact initiatives, there is a noticeable shortage of educational formats that affirm and expand these themes.

05

Motivation to Upskill

Participants showed a strong willingness to further develop their knowledge and competencies in social impact management.

06

Structural Constraints

Time limitations and competing academic or professional obligations often restrict participation in long-term educational programmes.

Looking Ahead: Expanding the SIM Community

The Replication Workshop at EFRI confirmed both enthusiasm and readiness for deeper engagement in social impact education.

To build on this, the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Economics and Business, plans to conduct additional workshops before the conclusion of the SIM programme. These upcoming sessions will focus on recruiting new potential participants, expanding

outreach, and strengthening the SIM community for future editions. By continuing to invest in practice-oriented, collaborative learning formats, EFRI reaffirms its commitment to shaping the next generation of Social Impact Managers.

New Training Handbook Equips the Next Generation of Social Impact Managers

A new resource designed to help professionals, educators, and organisations lead meaningful social change has just been released

Our **SIM Training Handbook** is a comprehensive guide developed through the Social Impact Manager (SIM) project and now available for download in six partner languages: [Training – Social Impact Manager](#). The handbook captures the full results, methodology, and practical insights from our SIM educational programme, which was piloted across five European countries. It provides a detailed roadmap for developing the emerging professional profile of the **Social Impact Manager**, a specialist capable of connecting business performance with societal value.

A Practical Guide Built on Real European Experience

The SIM Training Handbook was created after the successful implementation of the SIM programme, consolidating reports from partners across **Austria, Croatia, France, Greece, and Italy**. It presents the programme's methodology, outcomes, lessons learned, and recommendations for future replication.

Designed as a practical resource, the handbook offers:

Its purpose is clear: to support organisations, universities, policymakers, and businesses in building sustainable social impact capacity.

01

A structured overview of the SIM curriculum and training approach

02

Real case studies from pilot countries

03

Insights from hackathons, cooperation schemes, and participant projects

04

Evaluation results and impact findings

05

Recommendations for scaling social impact education

Addressing a Growing European Skills Gap

As ESG requirements, sustainability strategies, and corporate responsibility expectations continue to rise across Europe, organisations face a growing need for professionals who can bridge business objectives with social development.

The SIM project responds directly to this challenge by defining and testing a new hybrid professional role, the Social Impact Manager equipped with competencies in social innovation, stakeholder engagement, project management, and impact measurement.

The Training Handbook documents how the programme successfully developed these skills through experiential learning, cross-sector collaboration, and real-world social innovation projects. During the pilot phase, participants worked with companies, NGOs, and public institutions to tackle real social challenges from healthcare access and social inclusion to territorial regeneration and sustainable entrepreneurship.

The handbook showcases how these collaborations led to tangible outcomes, including: social innovation hackathons involving dozens of participants, cooperation schemes between businesses and communities, employment pathways for trained Social Impact Managers and measurable social impact initiatives. By capturing these experiences, the handbook serves as both a learning tool and a replication guide.

Available free of charge, the SIM Training Handbook aims to support organisations seeking to integrate social impact into strategy, education providers developing sustainability curricula, and professionals pursuing careers in ESG and social innovation. With its evidence-based insights and practical frameworks, the publication represents

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