

Deliverable 4.3

Impact Report



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01 | INTRODUCTION

This report presents the results of the impact evaluation of the SIM (Social Impact Manager) programme, developed within the framework of the project. The document adopts a deliberately analytical approach, aimed at systematically presenting the evidence collected through the evaluation process. At the same time, it includes a final discussion section that provides a more narrative and interpretative reading of the results, supporting a broader

The report begins with a description of the project and a clear definition of the object of the evaluation, outlining what is being assessed and the scope of the analysis.

The second chapter presents a detailed presentation of the methodological approach adopted. The evaluation is based on the Bicocca methodology, integrating both quantitative and qualitative components, and is structured around the project's Theory of Change and Impact Framework. The latter identifies four main outcome areas (Education, Economic Development and Employment, Local Development, and Research, Innovation and Scale-up) which guide the overall structure of the analysis. The section also describes the main data collection tools used, including participant surveys (T1 and T2), company surveys, network analysis and internal project databases.

The third chapter, which is the core of the report, presents all the quanti-qualitative results and is then organised around the four outcome areas. For each area, the results are presented through a combination of quantitative evidence (based on specific indicators) and qualitative analysis, highlighting the main findings emerging from the data.

Finally, the report concludes with a discussion section that synthesises and interprets the results in a more narrative form. This section is designed to provide a more concise and interpretative overview of the project's outcomes and implications, complementing the more detailed analytical sections.

The analysis presented in this report can be further complemented by the interactive dashboard available at the link below, which provides a visual and dynamic representation of the main data and results discussed. Moreover, readers who are primarily interested in a more interpretative perspective (including the broader significance of the results and their implications) are invited to refer to the sections "evaluation findings" of 3.3.5, 3.2.3, 3.3.4 and 3.4.3 and to chapter 4 "discussion and conclusion", where findings are synthesised and discussed in a more discursive and integrative manner.

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Object of the evaluation

The present impact report, produced as the final deliverable of the SIM project, analyses the results achieved through the project's activities and assesses their contribution to the intended objectives and outcomes.

SIM, an acronym for Social Impact Manager, aims to develop a hybrid and multifaceted professional profile equipped with a set of competences designed to support companies in strengthening their Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) practices, particularly in relation to community development.

- The project seeks to achieve this goal by enabling structured cooperation among higher education institutions, vocational education and training (VET) providers and companies across five target countries: Italy, Croatia, Greece, France and Austria.
- It started in June 2023 and is finishing in May 2026.
- The overall budget as by Grant Agreement is 1.270.366,00 €

The SIM project has been developed through four main phases:

1. Engage – This phase involved research activities aimed at assessing the needs of companies and local communities, as well as the development of an engagement strategy and the establishment of local SIM networks.
2. Design – In this phase, the skills, methods and learning outcomes of the SIM curriculum were defined, and the educational programmes to be implemented in the five target countries were co-designed.
3. Empower – During this phase, project partners delivered the SIM educational programme, targeting both young graduates and adult professionals. The programme aims to build participants' capacity to work with companies in designing and implementing community engagement initiatives at the local level.
4. Evaluate & Exploit – The final phase focuses on assessing the impact of the SIM project at different levels and on strengthening partnerships and alliances with local and European stakeholders in order to ensure the sustainability and potential scaling-up of the project results.

The Social Impact Manager is envisioned as an emerging professional role equipped with the skills required to foster cooperation between companies and their local communities, thereby contributing to greater community resilience. The project's ambition is to enable European companies to play a stronger role in addressing the major societal challenges of our time, supported by internal professionals – Social Impact Managers – who are trained to build partnerships within local communities and design sustainable solutions to address local needs.

The project is structured into four work packages, two of which constitute the primary focus of this impact report (WP2 and WP3), while the remaining two cover planning and administrative functions (WP1 and WP2). In particular:

- WP2 – Background Analysis: this work package is briefly analysed to assess whether the background analysis against the quality assurance indicators.
- WP3 – SIM Education Programme: this work package represents the core of the project activities and therefore constitutes the main focus of this report.

At the core of the project is the SIM educational programme, a training pathway of 150 hours with a mixture of theoretical lessons, project works, hackathon and individual study. It has been conceived to connect academic learning with real-world challenges. The training curriculum is structured around five core modules: Corporate Governance and Strategy, Territorial Analysis, Stakeholder Engagement, Project Management, and Impact Assessment and Reporting. A strong emphasis is placed on experiential and practice-based learning. Each country organised one local hackathon involving at least 30 participants, where interdisciplinary teams worked on real challenges proposed by companies or non-profit organisations. In parallel, cooperation schemes were implemented to connect learners, companies and local communities, engaging at least five organisations per country and aiming to develop around 15 community-based initiatives across the partnership. The programme also included the

development of final project work, consolidating the solutions co-created during the training and, in some cases, contributing to the activation of further collaborations or professional opportunities.

Partners

With 14 partners across seven EU countries, the SIM project engages higher education institutions and VET providers, business networks and platforms as well as companies and organisations working in the education sector. The full list of partners is reported in the table below.

| Partner | Acronym | Country |
|---|----------------|---------|
| University of the Peloponnese | UoP | Greece |
| UNIVERSITE PARIS I PANTHEON-SORBONNE | UP1 | France |
| SVEUCILISTE U RIJEKI EKONOMSKI FAKULTE | UniRi | Croatia |
| UNIVERSITA' DEGLI STUDI DI MILANO-BICOCCA | UNIMIB | Italy |
| DIE BERATER UNTERNEHMENSBERATUNGS GESELLSCHAFT MBH | Db | Austria |
| KMOP - KOMVOS EKPAIDEFSIS KAI KAINOTOMIAS ASTIKI MI KERDOSKOPIKI ETAIREIA | KMOP EIH | Greece |
| PROJECT SCHOOL SR) | PROJECT SCHOOL | Italy |
| SYNDESMOS VIOMICHANION ELLADOS | SBE | Greece |
| CHAMBRE FRANCAISE DE L'ECONOMIE SOCIALE ET SOLIDAIRE | ESS FRANCE | France |
| MREZA ZNANJA | MZ | Croatia |
| MANAGERITALIA SERVIZI SRL | MSS | Italy |
| PLATTFORM FUR BERUFSBEZOGENE ERWACHSENENBILDUNG | PdE | Austria |
| EUROPEAN UNIVERSITIES CONTINUING EDUCATION NETWORK AISBL | EUCEN | Belgium |
| MOMENTUM MARKETING SERVICES LIMITED | MMS | Ireland |

02 | METHODOLOGY

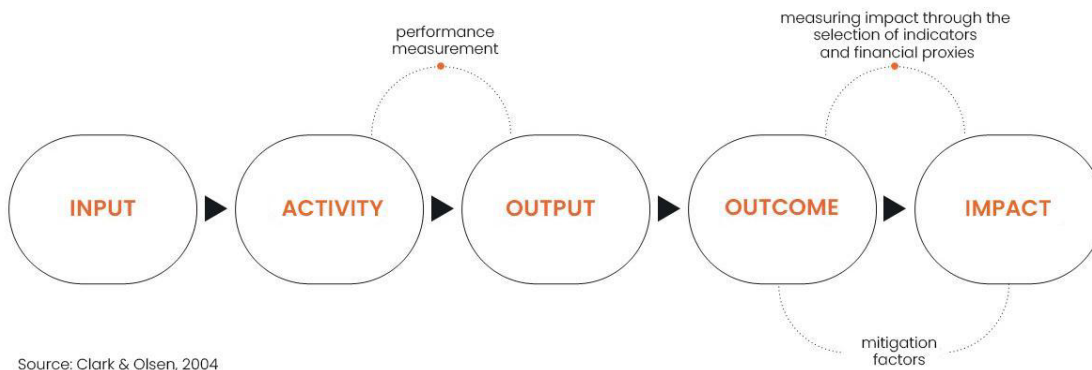
The concept of social impact evaluation is essential for understanding the broader effects of projects, programs, and policies beyond just financial outcomes. Before presenting the specific impact evaluation model of Empower!, it is necessary to provide an overview of what social impact means and the methodology used to assess it. This section offers a concise and accessible discussion, with further references available in the bibliography for those interested in a deeper exploration of the topic.

The challenge of measuring impact lies in overcoming the traditional, single-dimensional view of value as purely financial and expanding it to include social and environmental dimensions. Historically, performance measurement has been dominated by an economic perspective, but impact assessment aims to capture the full range of results generated by an initiative. Whether it be an organisation, a public policy, or a social program, impact evaluation seeks to recognize economic, environmental, and social changes, thus providing a more comprehensive understanding of long-term effects. Despite the increasing presence of impact evaluation in academic and public discourse, policy and program design still lack standardized tools for effectively assessing social and environmental interventions. Technical evaluations are therefore crucial in filling this methodological gap. These studies utilize advanced conceptual and analytical tools to scientifically capture positive social outcomes, highlighting their multidimensional value across economic, social, and environmental aspects. Beyond its primary function of verifying expected outcomes and guiding future interventions, impact evaluation also benefits organisations in several ways. First, the process of defining an evaluation model enables organisations to conduct internal self-assessments, refine strategies, and adopt more effective management approaches. Second, by continuously updating baseline conditions, organisations gain real-time insights into evolving social needs. This allows for mid-course adjustments, enhancing the effectiveness of interventions rather than solely relying on post-implementation reviews. In essence, impact evaluation is both a strategic tool for long-term planning and a practical mechanism for improving ongoing initiatives.

2.1 UNIMIB's role and methodology

UNIMIB plays a significant role in SIM project, utilising a methodology to develop and refine impact monitoring frameworks tailored to assess capacity building and digitalization for social economy organisations. This approach is built on rigorous data collection, comprehensive stakeholder engagement, and innovative analytics, ensuring that the impact assessments provide actionable insights and a clear understanding of project outcomes.

UNIMIB begins with a structured design of the impact framework, crucial for capturing the diverse impacts of Empower! project across economic, social, and political dimensions. This phase involves the application of the Theory of Change principles, which map out the expected pathways through which project activities lead to desired outcomes and impacts. These principles help in identifying relevant Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for each impact dimension, ensuring they are measurable, relevant, and clearly linked to the broader goals of the project and the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).



Source: Clark & Olsen, 2004

Figure 1 - The impact chain (Clark, C., Rosenzweig, W., Long, D., & Olsen, S. (2004). Double bottom line project report: assessing social impact in double bottom line ventures)

The impact chain provides initial evidence of the overall change (outcome areas) generated by project activities and outputs and allows for the interpretation of such change across different scales – individual, community, society – highlighting the different but integrated nature of its constituent parts.

In particular, the definition of the impact chain starts with the analysis of the main stakeholders involved in the project, the definition of the project outputs, and their comparison with the outcomes – which are the expected medium to long-term changes. UNIMIB's analysis is therefore divided into two macro-phases: qualitative analysis of the outcomes to be considered and quantitative analysis of the indicators connected to each outcome identified.

Once the concatenation “stakeholder > output > outcome” is obtained, each identified change is linked to indicators and financial metrics that express its value, thus composing the overall social value generable from interventions of different scales and natures. The highlighted social, environmental, and economic value will then be appropriately linked to internationally acknowledged metric systems, such as the United Nations’ Sustainable Development Goals. Data collection methods under UNIMIB’s methodology are comprehensive, incorporating both primary data from surveys and interviews with stakeholders, and secondary data from existing research relevant to the Social Economy Ecosystem. UNIMIB uses a mix of quantitative methods, such as statistical analysis and trend evaluation, and qualitative insights from participatory approaches to ensure a nuanced understanding of both numerical data and narrative contexts.

Stakeholder engagement is a cornerstone of the approach, involving interactive workshops and focus groups with project partners, local communities, industry experts, and other relevant entities. This participatory process is vital for the co-development of the impact framework, allowing stakeholders to contribute directly to the formulation of KPIs and assessment criteria, thus ensuring the framework accurately reflects their needs and perspectives.

viduals, organisations, and local ecosystems without overextending the analytical assumptions required for financial valuation.

An impact monitoring framework is a structured approach used to systematically assess and document the effects and outcomes of projects or initiatives, particularly those aimed at creating social, economic, environmental, and cultural changes. This framework serves as a fundamental tool for project managers, policymakers, and stakeholders to ensure that the intended benefits of any initiative are realised and sustained over time. It provides the metrics and methodology for measuring specific outcomes and also offers a comprehensive view of how these outcomes align with the overall objectives of a project.

The core of an impact monitoring framework lies in its ability to connect project inputs (the resources committed to a project) and activities (the tasks and operations carried out) to outputs (the immediate results of project activities) and ultimately to broader outcomes and impacts. These impacts reflect the long-term changes and benefits that occur because of the project, which can be social, economic, environmental, or cultural. For instance, in a sustainability project, impacts might include reduced carbon emissions, enhanced community wellbeing, or improved economic conditions for local populations.

To be effective, an impact monitoring framework must be clearly defined and aligned with the project's goals from the outset. It typically involves several key components:

- Outcome definition: clearly defining what the project aims to achieve.
- Selection of indicators: identifying specific, measurable indicators that can provide evidence of progress towards achieving these goals.
- Data collection: systematically gathering data to track these indicators over time.
- Analysis and reporting: analysing collected data to assess progress and reporting the findings to stakeholders in a transparent and accessible manner.

A well-implemented impact monitoring framework is dynamic and adaptive, capable of responding to new insights and changing conditions. It enables stakeholders to make informed decisions based on empirical evidence, thus maximising the effectiveness of the project and ensuring accountability. Moreover, it facilitates communication between all parties involved, from project teams to donors and community members, fostering a shared understanding of project achievements and challenges. By linking project activities directly to quantifiable impacts, such frameworks not only demonstrate the value of the project but also guide ongoing improvements and scaling strategies. In essence, an impact monitoring framework is an essential tool for measurement, representing a critical element of project management and strategic planning, integral to achieving and demonstrating project success.

While Social Return on Investment (SROI) was taken into consideration as an approach for assessing the impact of SIM project, it was not applied in this case for several methodological and operational reasons.

First, a significant share of the outcomes generated by the SIM project are of a qualitative and behavioural nature, largely based on self-reported changes by participants (e.g. skills development, changes in attitudes, and perceived professional capacity). These types of outcomes, while highly relevant from an impact perspective, are not easily suitable for robust financial proxy attribution without introducing a high degree of subjectivity.

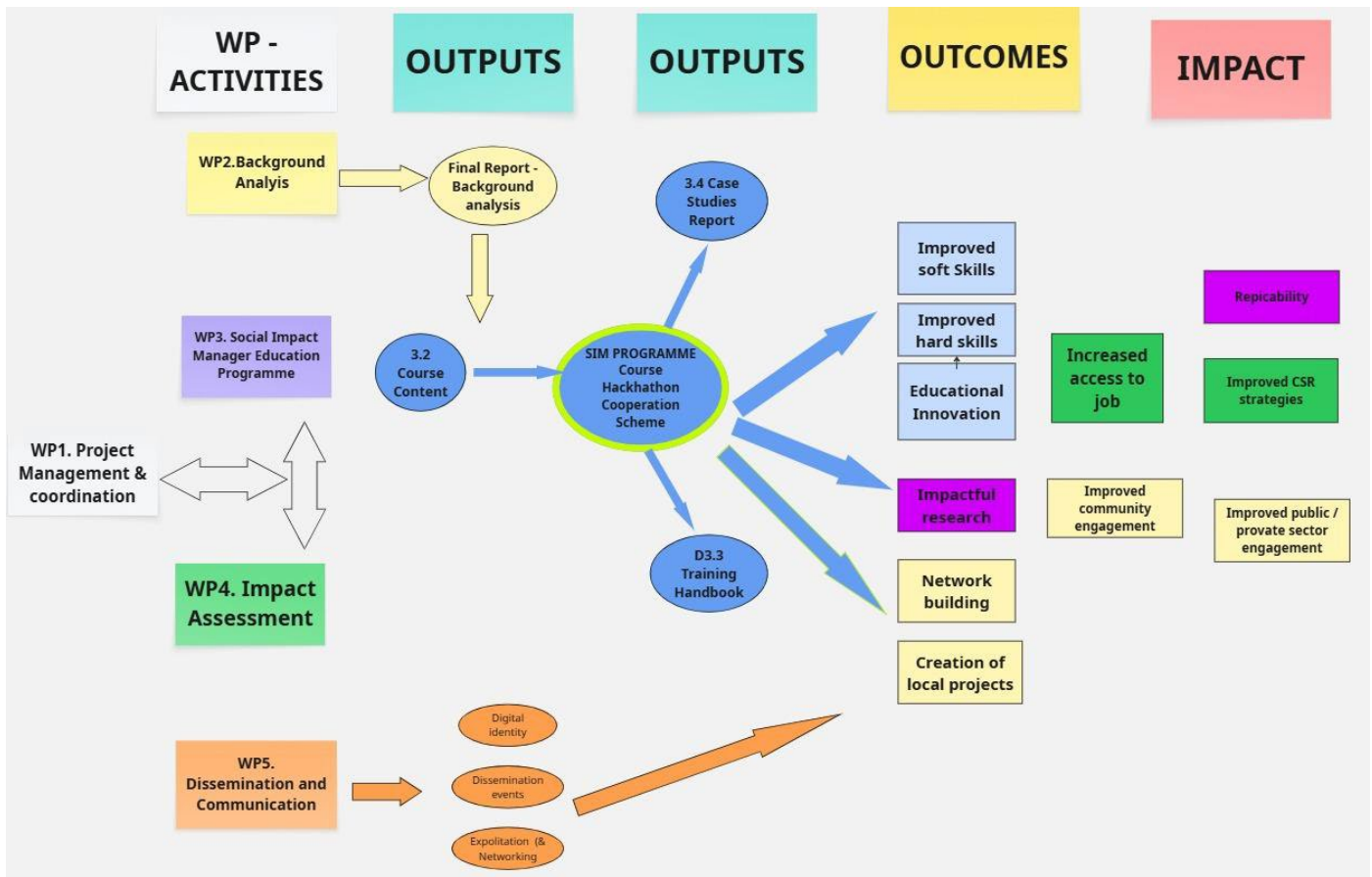
Second, many of the outcomes identified are process-oriented and relate to intermediate changes (such as network building, stakeholder engagement, and capacity development), which would require a longer-term ex post evaluation to be reliably translated into measurable and monetisable impacts. Such an evaluation was beyond the temporal and operational scope of the present project.

Third, the data collection strategy prioritised participant engagement and user experience, which are critical success factors in educational and capacity-building initiatives. Data were collected primarily from direct beneficiaries on a voluntary basis, and no mandatory data provision was enforced. While this approach ensured higher quality engagement and participation, it limited the possibility of collecting the structured and comprehensive datasets required for a robust SROI analysis.

In light of these considerations, a Theory of Change-based approach without monetisation was considered the most appropriate and methodologically sound option. This approach allows for a consistent and reliable assessment of the

project’s impact while it is being implemented, capturing multidimensional changes across individuals, organisations, and local ecosystems without overextending the analytical assumptions required for financial valuation.

2.2 SIM - Theory of Change



The impact framework adopted in this report is grounded in the Theory of Change (ToC) developed within the SIM project, which provides a structured representation of how project activities are expected to generate short-, medium-, and long-term changes. The ToC connects the different Work Packages (WPs) and their related deliverables into a coherent impact pathway, linking project inputs and activities to outputs, outcomes, and ultimately broader systemic impacts.

The process starts with **WP2 – Background Analysis**, which produces analytical deliverables aimed at identifying the needs of companies and local communities and defining the knowledge base for the project. These outputs informed the design of the intervention and ensured its alignment with real and context-specific challenges.

Building on this, **WP3 – Social Impact Manager Education Programme** translates these insights into concrete educational outputs, including course content, training materials, and practice-based components such as hackathons and cooperation schemes. Key deliverables of this phase (such as the SIM course, case studies reports, and the training handbook (e.g. D3.3)) constitute the core mechanism through which the project activates change.

These activities are supported by **WP1 – Project Management and Coordination**, ensuring overall coherence, and by **WP5 – Dissemination and Communication**, which expands the project’s reach through dissemination, networking, and engagement activities. In parallel, **WP4 – Impact Assessment** provides the analytical framework for monitoring and evaluating results.

At the centre of this framework lies the SIM programme itself, which combines formal training, collaborative activities with organisations, and practice-based learning. Through these outputs, the project generates a range of outcomes across multiple dimensions. At the individual level, the programme aims to strengthen both soft and technical skills; at the organisational level, it supports the development of CSR strategies and facilitates access to professional opportunities; and at the territorial level, it promotes stakeholder engagement, network building, and the creation of locally embedded social innovation initiatives. In parallel, the project contributes to knowledge generation and awareness raising in the field of social impact and CSR.

These interconnected changes are expected to contribute, over time, to broader and more systemic impacts, particularly in terms of the replicability and scalability of the SIM training model, as well as its capacity to strengthen collaboration between companies, communities, and educational institutions. The Theory of Change thus reflects the multidimensional and progressive nature of the project’s impact, where capacity building and ecosystem activation represent key enabling mechanisms for longer-term transformation.

On this basis, the following section presents the SIM Impact Framework, which operationalises this logic into specific outcome areas, indicators, and measurement tools.

2.3 SIM - Impact Framework

The impact framework that constitutes the core of this impact report is structured around four outcome areas: (1) Economic Development and Employment, (2) Education, (3) Local Development, and (4) Research, Innovation and Scale-up. The framework builds on the original version developed at the beginning of the project and was refined during its implementation. The definition of outcomes and indicators was developed through a co-design process involving the project partners, ensuring alignment with the objectives of the SIM project and with the expectations of the stakeholders involved. Compared to the original framework, the current version introduces a fourth outcome area – Research, Innovation and Scale-up – which captures longer-term and systemic effects that emerged as relevant during the project implementation.

The first outcome area, **Education**, captures the effects of the SIM training programme on participants’ learning and on the overall quality and innovation of the educational offer. This area includes three outcomes. The first concerns **improved soft skills**, referring to the development of transversal competences such as communication, collaboration, problem solving and leadership. The second relates to **improved hard skills**, understood as the acquisition of technical competences related to sustainability impact management and corporate social responsibility. Both outcomes are measured through the number of participants reporting improvements in soft and hard skills, together with indicators capturing the variety and diversity of participants trained (including gender, nationality, age and salary level). The third outcome, **educational innovation**, captures the attractiveness and perceived quality of the programme, measured through participants’ evaluation of the training and the number of applications received.

The second outcome area, **Economic Development and Employment**, focuses on the project’s contribution to employment opportunities and to the strengthening of CSR practices within organisations. The first outcome, **increased access to jobs**, captures employment opportunities generated both directly and indirectly by the

programme. This is measured through the number of beneficiaries who start internships, professional collaborations or job contracts, as well as through the number of enterprises willing to open positions after participating in the project. The second outcome concerns **improved CSR strategies**, measured through the number of individuals reporting improvements in the quality of their CSR strategies and the number of enterprises declaring improvements in their CSR practices.

The third outcome area, **Local Development**, focuses on the project’s contribution to strengthening collaboration among local stakeholders and fostering socially oriented initiatives. Four outcomes are considered within this area. The first relates to **private–public sector engagement**, measured through the number of companies, local NGOs and public administrations involved in project activities, together with the degree of engagement demonstrated by these actors. The second outcome concerns **community engagement**, captured through the number of people who continue participating in social or community-oriented initiatives. The third outcome refers to the **creation of local projects**, measured by the number of local projects launched. Finally, **network building** captures the strengthening of relationships among participants and stakeholders, measured through the number of formal and informal collaborations created.

The fourth outcome area, **Research, Innovation and Scale-up**, addresses the longer-term effects of the project in terms of knowledge generation, dissemination and replicability. The first outcome concerns **replicability**, referring to the potential adoption or institutionalisation of the SIM training model. This is measured through the propensity of stakeholders to replicate the training, the number of stakeholders integrating the course into official programmes, and the number of universities recognising the course. The second outcome, **impactful research on CSR**, captures the project’s contribution to advancing knowledge and awareness in the field of corporate social responsibility. Indicators include the number of stakeholders reporting a deeper understanding of CSR, the number of stakeholders reached through dissemination activities, and the number of new research areas or training gaps identified through the project’s research activities.

The table below presents an overview of the impact framework, including the four outcome areas, eleven outcomes and related KPIs.

| Outcome area | Outcome | Stakeholders | KPIs |
|--------------|------------------------|---------------|--|
| Education | Improved soft skills | Beneficiaries | 1. N of people that improved soft skills |
| | | | 2. Variety and diversity of people trained (i.e.: sex, national background, age, salary level) |
| | Improved hard skills | Beneficiaries | 3. N of people that improved hard skills |
| | | | 4. Variety and diversity of people trained (i.e.: sex, national background, age, salary level) |
| | Educational Innovation | Beneficiaries | 5. Quality perceived by participants |
| | | | 6. N of application |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|--|
| Economic Development / Employment | Increased access to jobs | Beneficiaries | 7. N of beneficiaries who start an internship, professional collaboration or a job contract |
| | | Enterprises | 8. N of enterprises willing to open positions after participating in the project |
| | Improved CSR strategies | Enterprises | 9. Number of participants reporting improvements in their capacity to contribute to CSR strategies in their professional contexts. |
| | | | 10. N of enterprises that declare an improved quality of their CSR strategy |
| | | | <i>N of people hired in CSR departments*</i> |
| Local Development | Improved private/public sector engagement | Enterprises, NGOs, PA | 11. N of companies engaged in project activities + degree of engagement |
| | | | 12. N of local NGOs engaged in project activities + degree of engagement |
| | | | 13. N of PA engaged in project activities + degree of engagement |
| | Improved community engagement | Local community | <i>N of people of the local community engaged in project activities + degree of engagement</i> |
| | | Beneficiaries | 14. N of people that persist in social active participation |
| | Creation of local projects | Enterprises, NGOs, PA | 15. N of local projects launched |
| | Network building | Enterprises, NGOs, PA | 16. N of informal collaborations created |
| | | | 17. N of formal collaborations created |
| Research, Innovation and Scale-up | Replicability | Policy makers Funds Managing authorities Universities - VET | 18. Propensity of stakeholders to replicate the training |

| | | |
|---------------------------|---|---|
| Impactful research on CSR | Universities - VET | 19. N of stakeholder that insert the course in official program |
| | Citizenship | <i>N of stakeholders claiming to have reached a deeper understanding/awareness of CSR</i> 20. N of stakeholders engaged through dissemination activities |
| | Policy makers Funds Managing authorities Universities - VET | 21. N of new research areas or training/knowledge gaps identified as a result of the research |
| | Policy makers Funds Managing authorities Enterprises Education Providers | <i>N of citations of the project and project intellectual outputs (news, policy reports, papers...)</i> |

Special remarks related to selected critical KPIs that have been erased from the framework

The indicators marked in red in the table above have been removed from the framework for operational reasons.

- *N of people hired in CSR departments* - was deleted as considered redundant with data points on enterprises willing to open new CSR-related positions.
- *N of people of the local community engaged in project activities + degree of engagement* - was deleted as the hackathon, initially intended to be performed in collaboration with the local communities finally was realised in a format that saw the exclusive involvement of students and organisations
- *N of stakeholders claiming to have reached a deeper understanding/awareness of CSR*: operational impossibility to reach the audience with data gathering tools (i.e.: survey)(which could have monitored this outcome KPI. The analysis will stop at indicator N of stakeholders engaged through dissemination activities
- *N of citations of the project and project intellectual outputs (news, policy reports, papers...)* was actually out of the scope of SIM activity.

2.4 Data gathering tools and strategy

The data gathering strategy is structured as described below, combining three types of instruments: surveys, databases and network analysis.



Figure 1. Data gathering tools

- **Survey to students**: surveys designed to gather self-reported information from individuals who have attended SIM courses. Two types of surveys have been conducted.
 - **Immediate Impact Survey (T1)**, administered immediately following the university course, aiming to capture students' reactions and feedback on their learning experience. The immediate impact survey was carried out in M28-29 at the end of the course
 - **Medium -Term Impact Survey (T2)**, seeks to capture the medium-term effects of the project. It focuses on how participants' knowledge and skills have evolved and if they improved their working condition. This long-term survey helps gauge the sustained impact of the project on participants' personal and professional growth, as well as its influence on organisational practices and sector-wide changes. Data collection is carried out in the later stages of the project, between M30–M31, with the deadline for data submission in M34.

- Survey to organisations: a survey aimed at collecting self-reported data from the organisations involved in the project. The survey was conducted in M30–M31, with the deadline for data submission in M34.
- Network Analysis Matrix: a tool used to map and analyze the relationships and interactions between various stakeholders, allowing for the identification of key connections within the project ecosystem. The Matrix was updated every six months throughout the project, with data for this report extracted in M34.
- Dissemination & Communication Database: a dataset that captures the data related to the communication and dissemination activities. The database was updated periodically throughout the project; with data for this report extracted in M34.
- Database - Replicability and Impactful Research: a database that focuses on tracking the scalability and replicability of the course, monitoring publications in scientific journals, and fostering synergies with other EU programs and initiatives to enhance the project's impact. The compilation of this database started in M26–M27, with data for this report extracted in M34
- Student Database: the database helps to document the student's journey, from initial involvement in the project to ongoing activities and collaborations, ensuring a comprehensive record of their engagement and achievements. The compilation starts in M24–M25, with a data extraction in M28–M29 at the end of the course.
- Materials for training handbook: these are the existing datasets from the project, which will be integrated into the data gathering process and contains all the data connected to the implementation of the SIM programme.

The table below presents which tool is utilised for every KPI part of the impact framework.

| Outcome area | Outcome | KPIs | Data source |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|--|
| Education | Improved soft skills | N of people that improved soft skills Variety and diversity of people trained (i.e.: sex, national background, age) | Student survey T1 |
| | Improved hard skills | N of people that improved hard skills Variety and diversity of people trained (i.e.: sex, national background, age) | Student survey T1 Student survey T2 |
| | Educational Innovation | Quality perceived by participants | Student survey T1 |
| | | N of application | Students Database |
| Economic Development and | Increased access to jobs | N of beneficiaries who start an internship or a professional collaboration or a job contract | Student survey T1 Student survey T2 |

| | | | |
|--|---|---|---|
| Employment | | N of enterprises willing to open positions after participating in the project | Survey organisations |
| | Improved CSR strategies | Number of participants reporting improvements in their capacity to contribute to CSR strategies in their professional contexts. | Student survey T2 |
| | | N of enterprises that declare an improved quality of their CSR strategy | Survey organisations |
| Local Development | Improved private/public sector engagement | N of companies engaged in project activities + degree of engagement | Network Analysis |
| | | N of local NGOs engaged in project activities + degree of engagement | Network Analysis |
| | | N of PA engaged in project activities + degree of engagement | Network Analysis |
| | Improved community engagement | N of people that persist in social active participation | Student survey T2 |
| | Creation of local projects | N of local projects launched | Student Database |
| | Network building | N of informal collaborations created | Network Analysis Matrix Student survey T2 |
| | | N of formal collaborations created | Network Analysis Matrix Student survey T2 |
| Research, Innovation and Scale-up | Replicability | Propensity of stakeholders to replicate the training | Student survey T2 Survey organisations |
| | | N of stakeholders that insert the course in official program | Database - Replicability and Impactful Research |
| | Impactful research on CSR | N of stakeholders engaged though dissemination activities | Database - Dissemination and Communication |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|---|
| | | N of new research areas or training/knowledge gaps identified as a result of the research | Projects deliverables - Survey to students (open answers) External Evaluation Board |
|--|--|---|---|

Statistical representativeness of sample

Overall the program trained 124 participants, equally distributed throughout Austria, Croatia, France, Greece and Italy. The results presented in the following section are based on data collected through two surveys of students, with response rates of 61% and 36% for T1 and T2 respectively - and one survey of companies, with response rate of 58%.

| Total course participants | Student survey respondents T1 | Student survey respondents T2 |
|---------------------------|-------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 124 | 76 (61%) | 45 (36%) |

| Total participating organisations | Of which companies | Survey respondents |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|
| 58 | 38 (64%) | 22/38 (58%) |

03 | IMPACT OF SIM - QUANTI-QUALITATIVE RESULTS

This chapter takes an analytical approach to evaluate the direct outputs and outcomes realised through the SIM project.

This chapter adopts a deliberately analytical and granular approach to the assessment of the SIM project's results. Such a choice is methodological rather than stylistic: the structure and level of detail are intentionally aligned with the project's impact framework and evaluation methodology, which require a systematic and disaggregated reporting of outputs and outcomes.

By presenting evidence in a structured and indicator-based manner, this chapter ensures transparency, traceability and consistency with the underlying evaluation design. Each result is therefore reported in relation to predefined indicators, allowing for a clear verification of what has been achieved against the expected targets.

At the same time, this analytical focus may limit the narrative fluidity of the reading experience. *Readers who are primarily interested in a more interpretative perspective (including the broader significance of the results and their implications) are invited to refer to the section "evaluation findings of each outcome area and to the following chapter, where findings are synthesised and discussed in a more discursive and integrative manner.*

All quality assurance indicators have been met, both for the background analysis in WP2 and the SIM Programme in WP3. In particular, at the output level, these indicators are referenced and used throughout the analysis to support the interpretation of results. However, they do not constitute the core of the evaluation. As an impact assessment, this report adopts a more in-depth and outcome-based perspective, going beyond output verification to examine the

extent to which the project generated meaningful changes at individual, organisational and ecosystem levels, where evidence is available.

| | Target | Results |
|---|--|--|
| WP2 | | |
| Number of companies engaged through the project | 10 per country, and 50 in total 5 per country as change-makers, and 25 in total | 54 in total - 23 with degree of enlargement of 4 or 5 out of 5 |
| Number of participants in analysis and mapping activities | 30 answers/companies per country, and 150 in total | 267 companies responded to the survey |
| | 5 interviews to companies per country, and 25 in total | |
| | 1 focus group per country with the participation of at least 5 companies each (5 with 25 participants at least) | 25 companies involved in focus group |
| | 1 local participatory workshop with 20 people | 93 NGOs, associations and local institutions involved in local participatory workshops |
| | 4 interviews to representatives of local communities (2 representatives of NGOs/CSOs and 2 representatives of local public authorities) per each country (20 in total) | 20 interviews to local communities |
| WP3 | | |
| Number of learners directly involved in the project | 20-30 (100-150 in total) | 124 |
| Number of hours of the empowerment programmes | about 150 hours per country per cycle | 150 |
| Number of hackathons delivered | 1 per country with at least 30 participants each | 5 |
| Number of cooperation schemes tested | 3 pilot initiatives for each target region, about 15 schemes in total | 25 cooperation schemes |
| Number of international events organised | International SIM School (min. 70 participants) | 1 - |
| | Final Conference (min. 100 participants) | To be organised after the delivery of the present report |

The analysis presented in section 3.1, 3.2, 3.3, 3.4 is primarily based on data available in the project dashboard, which contains the large majority of the quantitative evidence collected throughout the evaluation. The dashboard can be consulted at the following link and serves as a complementary tool to support the reading and interpretation of the results.

<https://app.powerbi.com/view?r=eyJrIjoizmM1MjY1MTYtYmMzYS00ODBiLThkNDMtNmYwZTYwYjdhMjk3IiwidCI6ImE0MDZkY2ZmLTAwNTktNDIzYi1iOWE1LTlkYTQyNDNkN2VkMyIsImMiOjI9>

3.1 Education

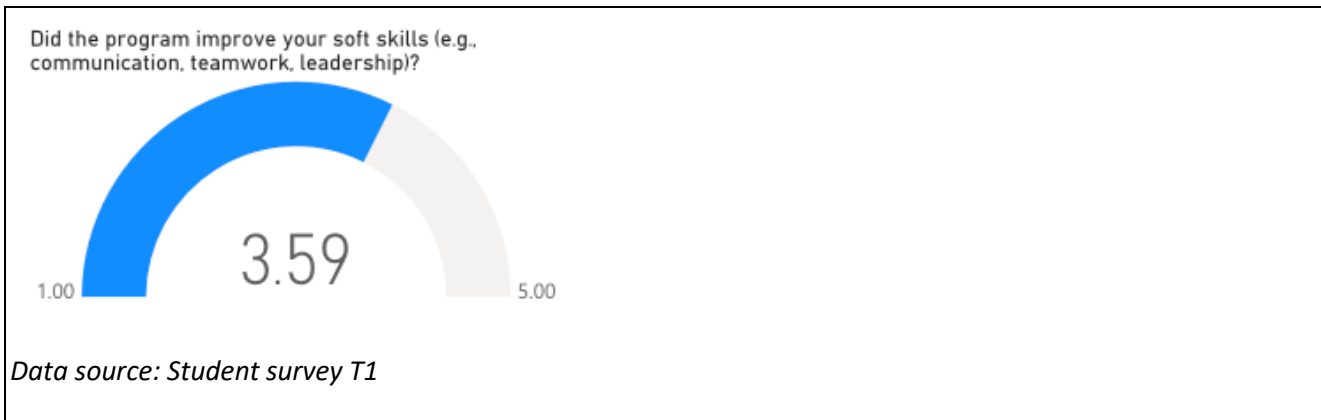
The Education outcome area captures the effects of the SIM training programme on participants' learning and skills development. Overall, 124 participants attended the programme, coming from five different countries, reflecting the international dimension of the initiative. The composition of the cohort shows a strong female representation, with 75% of participants being women and 25% men. Participants also display a wide age distribution, ranging from 20 to 60 years old, indicating that the programme attracted individuals at different stages of their educational and professional trajectories. This diversity in gender, nationality and age contributes to creating a heterogeneous learning environment and reflects the programme's ability to engage a broad range of profiles interested in sustainability impact management.

Within this framework, the Education outcome area captures changes in three main dimensions: the development of soft and technical skills, and the programme's contribution to educational innovation through the introduction of new topics, tools and learning methodologies.

The analysis is based on data collected through student surveys at T1 and T2, allowing for the assessment of both immediate learning outcomes and their evolution over time.

3.1.1 Improved soft skills

The outcome **Improved Soft Skills** captures the extent to which the programme contributed to strengthening participants' transversal competences, such as communication, teamwork and leadership. This outcome is measured through the number of participants reporting an improvement in their soft skills. The survey results indicate a positive overall perception, with an average score of 3.59 out of 5. **Notably, 43 out of 76 respondents rated the improvement with a score of 4 or 5**, suggesting that a substantial share of participants perceived a significant enhancement of their soft skills as a result of attending the programme.



3.1.2 Improved hard skills

The second outcome assessed concerns the **improvement of participants' hard skills**, measured through the indicator **“number of people who improved their technical skills.”** Evidence for this outcome comes from the **student surveys conducted at T1 and T2**, which capture both the perceived improvement in technical competencies and the extent to which these competencies have been applied in professional or academic contexts.

Results from the T1 student survey indicate a strong perceived improvement in participants' technical skills. When asked whether the program improved the technical skills relevant to their current or desired profession (ET5), respondents reported an average score of 3.92 out of 5. This relatively high value suggests that the program was widely perceived as effective in strengthening participants' professional competencies. **More than half (52/76) of the survey respondents rated the improvement with a score of 4 or 5.** The result indicates that the training content was broadly aligned with the technical requirements of participants' professional trajectories and contributed to enhancing their capacity to engage with specialised tools, methods, and analytical approaches relevant to the field.



Data source: Student survey T1

Evidence from the T2 student survey provides insight into the extent to which these competencies were subsequently applied. Participants reported an average score of 3.38 out of 5 when asked to what extent they had been able to apply the technical or hard skills acquired during the program in their professional or academic activities. 19 out of the 45 survey respondents rated 4 or 5 to their ability to apply the new skills. This score suggests a moderately positive level of application, indicating that many participants were able to translate the knowledge gained during the program into practical use within their work or study environments.



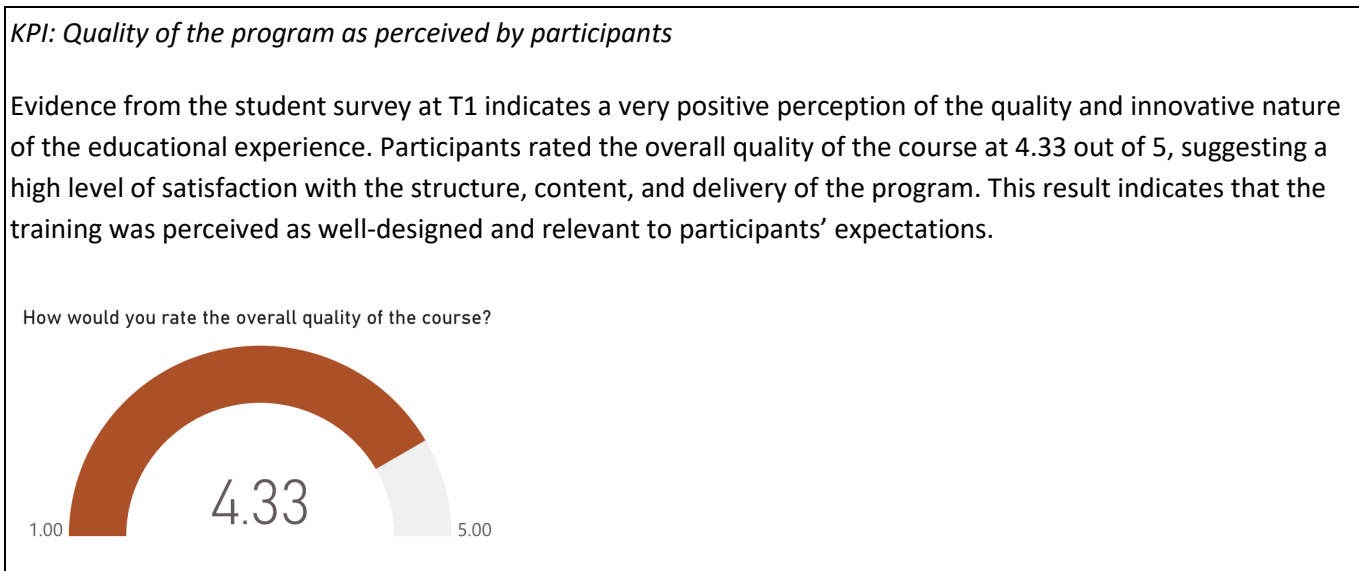
Taken together, these results suggest that the program was effective in strengthening participants’ technical competencies, while the application of these skills in real contexts appears somewhat more gradual. The difference between the perceived improvement in skills (T1) and their later application (T2) likely reflects the influence of external factors such as employment conditions, organisational opportunities, or the timing of professional engagements, which can affect the speed at which newly acquired competencies are put into practice. Overall, the evidence indicates that the program contributed to building a solid base of technical skills among participants, with a meaningful though not universal level of subsequent application in professional or academic settings.

3.1.3 Educational Innovation

The third outcome concerns educational innovation, assessed through two indicators:

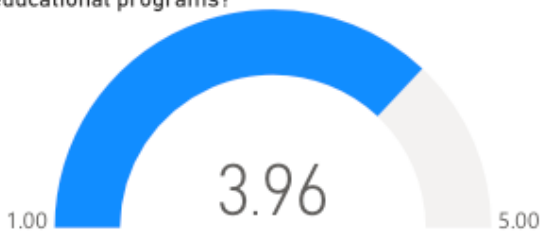
1. Quality of the program as perceived by participants
2. Number of applications or participants involved in the program

The analysis draws on data from the **student survey at T1, information from the student database, and results from the company survey.**

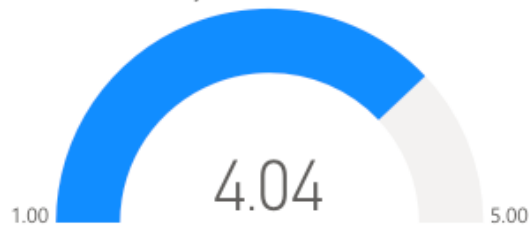


Additional questions explored the extent to which the program introduced innovative content and learning approaches. Respondents rated 3.96 out of 5 the extent to which the course addressed topics or perspectives rarely covered in similar educational programs. This suggests that the course offered distinctive and relatively novel content, contributing to its perceived educational innovation. Similarly, participants reported a score of 4.04 out of 5 regarding the extent to which the course introduced new tools and methods they had not encountered before. This result further confirms that the program exposed students to methodological approaches and practical tools that were perceived as innovative compared to other educational experiences.

Did the course content address topics or perspectives that are rarely covered in similar educational programs?



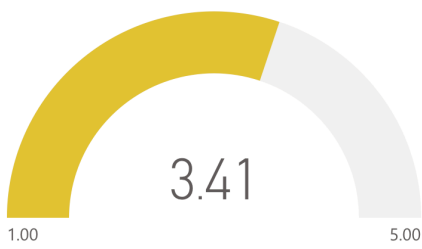
To what extent did this course introduce you to new tools and methods you had not encountered before?



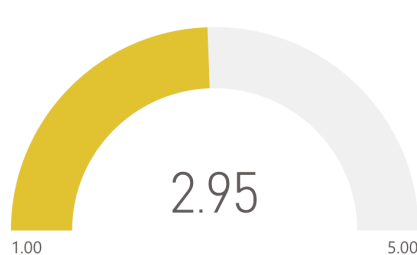
Data source: Student survey T1

Evidence from the **company survey** provides an additional perspective on the relevance of the program from the viewpoint of organisations involved in the initiative. When asked to what extent the project addressed real challenges faced by their organisation, respondents reported an average score of **3.41 out of 5**, suggesting that the training content was moderately aligned with practical organisational needs. However, when organisations were asked about the relevance of the project's contents and activities for their organisation's needs, the average score was **2.95 out of 5**, indicating a more moderate perception of direct applicability.

To what extent did the project address real challenges faced by your organisation?



How relevant were the project's contents and activities for your organisation's needs?



Data source: Company survey

KPI: Number of applications or participants involved in the program

The second indicator relates to the **number of applications or participants**, which reflects the program's ability to attract interest and participation. Based on the D3.3 Training Handbook, **the course received 192**

applications. Out of these, 124 participants were selected. This participation level signals a strong demand for educational initiatives addressing sustainability, impact evaluation, and responsible business practices.

Overall, the available evidence suggests that the program achieved **a strong level of educational innovation from the perspective of participants**, particularly through the introduction of new topics, tools, and methodological approaches. At the same time, while organisations recognised that the program addressed relevant challenges, the perceived alignment with their specific operational needs appears somewhat more moderate. Taken together, these results indicate that the program was **highly valued as an innovative educational experience**, with strong participant engagement and positive evaluations of quality and novelty.

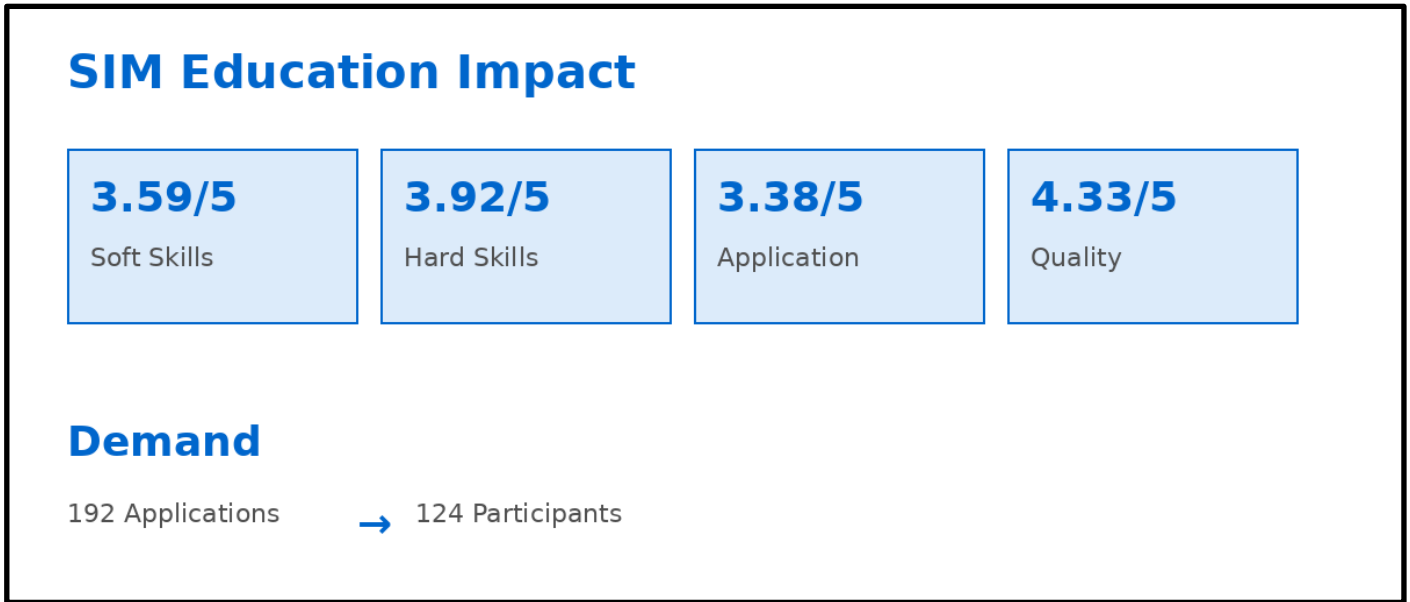
3.1.4 Analysis on open qualitative answers on T1 and T2

Open-ended responses were collected from 28 participants out of 76 in the T1 survey and 9 out of 45 in the T2 survey. While the limited size and self-selection of respondents pose constraints in terms of representativeness—discussed in the methodological section—these inputs provide useful qualitative insights that complement the quantitative findings.

Across both surveys, participants consistently highlight the high quality of the programme, particularly in terms of teaching, relevance and innovativeness of content, and the effective combination of theory and practice. At the same time, a recurring theme concerns the density of the programme relative to its duration, with limited time to deepen key topics and apply acquired competences. This contributes to a gap between learning and immediate application, which appears even more evident in T2, where the use of skills depends largely on individual career trajectories and external conditions.

Overall, the qualitative evidence confirms the programme's strong capacity-building value, while highlighting structural trade-offs between breadth and depth, and areas for improvement related to timing, workload, and alignment of practical components.

3.1.5 Evaluation findings on Education



Overall, the evidence indicates that the SIM training programme generated strong educational outcomes, particularly in strengthening both transversal and technical competences among participants. The higher score associated with hard skills suggests a high perceived relevance of the programme for professional development, while improvements in soft skills confirm its effectiveness in building key transversal capabilities.

However, the lower score related to the application of competences highlights a gap between learning and practice, likely influenced by external contextual factors such as organisational environments and limited immediate opportunities for application.

The programme also demonstrates a significant contribution to educational innovation, as reflected in both the high overall quality rating and the introduction of new topics, tools and methodologies not commonly available in comparable training initiatives.

Finally, the strong demand—evidenced by 192 applications for 124 places—confirms a substantial interest in structured training on sustainability and impact management. At the same time, qualitative and survey evidence suggests that alignment with organisational needs remains more moderate, indicating potential for further strengthening the connection between training content and practical application contexts.

3.2 Economic Development and Employment

This section analyses the extent to which the SIM programme contributed to economic and employment-related outcomes, in line with the project’s Theory of Change, which identifies professional activation and organisational change as key intermediate steps towards broader impact.

In particular, the analysis focuses on two main dimensions: the activation of employment opportunities for participants and the strengthening of CSR strategies within organisations. These outcomes reflect the programme’s

ambition to move beyond individual capacity building and contribute to tangible changes in professional pathways and organisational practices.

The evidence presented combines data from multiple sources—student surveys at T1 and T2, as well as the company survey—allowing for a comprehensive assessment of both immediate and medium-term effects. This approach makes it possible to capture not only the perceived usefulness of the skills developed, but also the extent to which these competences translate into concrete employment opportunities and organisational change.

3.2.1 Increased access to job

The third outcome *increased access to job* is measured through two key performance indicators:

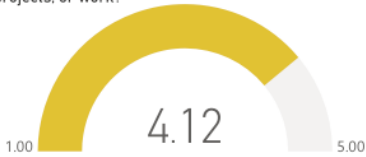
1. N. of beneficiaries who start an internship or a professional collaboration or a job contract
2. N. of enterprises willing to open positions after participating in the project

The data collected through the three sources — the student survey at T1, the student survey at T2, and the company survey — provide a coherent picture of the perceived usefulness of the program and its capacity to generate professional opportunities, while also highlighting a gap between the skills developed during the training and the concrete activation of employment pathways within participating organisations.

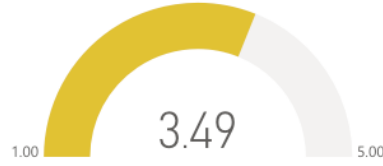
KPI: N. of beneficiaries who start an internship or a professional collaboration or a job contract

The immediate impact survey T1, administered immediately after completion of the course indicates a generally positive perception of the immediate outcomes of the training. Participants rated the usefulness of the skills acquired during the course at an average of **4.12 out of 5**, suggesting that the program was widely perceived as equipping them with competencies applicable to their current activities, projects, or work contexts. This result signals a strong alignment between the training content and the practical needs of participants. At the same time, the perceived effect of the program on participants' employment prospects appears more moderate: the average score for the question on whether the program improved the chances of finding a job or advancing in one's career stands at **3.49 out of 5**. This difference suggests that while the course was considered effective in strengthening professional capabilities, participants were somewhat more cautious in evaluating its direct impact on labour market outcomes. Finally, the survey shows that the program also contributed to the creation of relational opportunities: respondents reported a relatively high score (**3.93 out of 5**) regarding the possibility of meeting people or organisations with whom they might collaborate in the future. This indicates that the training environment functioned not only as a learning space but also as a networking platform that could potentially support future professional interactions.

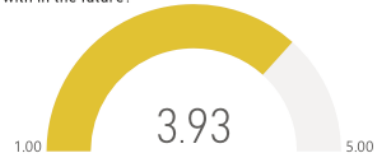
Do you think the course provided you with useful skills that can be applied in your current activities, projects, or work?



Did the program improve your chances of finding a job or advancing in your career?



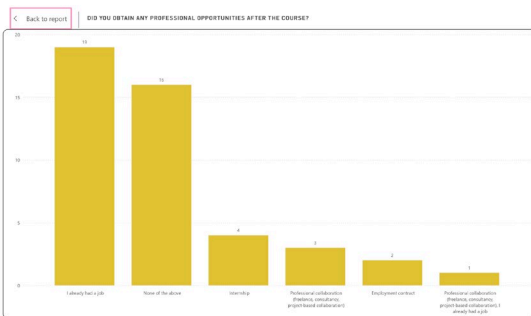
During the course, did you come into contact with people or organizations you would like to collaborate with in the future?



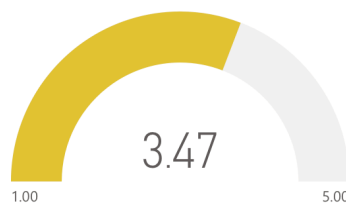
Data source: Student survey T1

The second set of evidence, collected from students at T2, provides further insight into the medium-term outcomes of the program. Participants rated the overall contribution of the SIM program to their professional development at **3.47 out of 5**, confirming the moderately positive perception already observed at T1. The distribution of professional opportunities obtained after the course shows that the most frequent response was “I already had a job” (19 respondents), suggesting that a significant share of participants were already employed while attending the program. Among the remaining respondents, 16 reported that none of the listed opportunities occurred, indicating that many participants had not yet translated the training experience into concrete professional outcomes.

Nevertheless, some relevant opportunities did emerge: 4 respondents reported obtaining an internship, 4 reported professional collaborations (such as freelance or consultancy activities), and 2 obtained an employment contract. Although these numbers are relatively limited, they show that the program did generate some tangible employment-related outcomes for a subset of participants. More broadly, the results suggest that the training may have played a role primarily as a capacity-building experience rather than as a direct placement mechanism.



To what extent do you think SIM has or will contribute to your professional development?

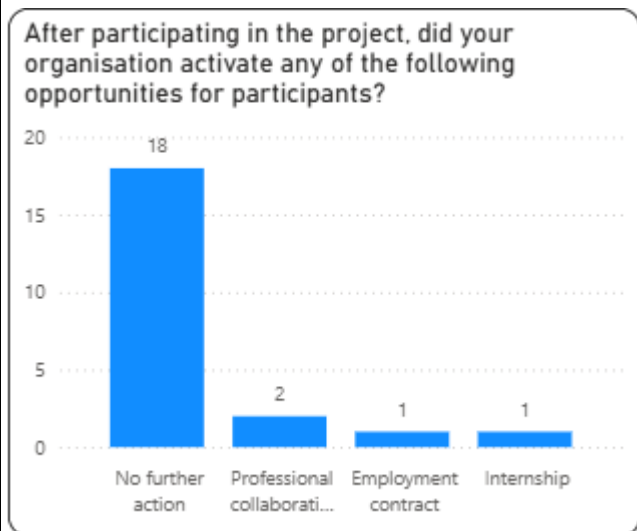


Data source: Student survey T2

KPI: N. of enterprises willing to open positions after participating in the project

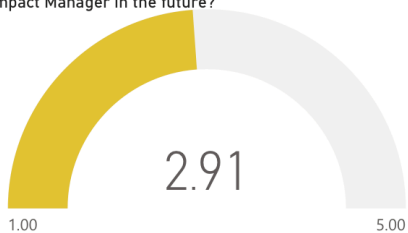
The third perspective, derived from the company survey, highlights a slightly more critical dimension of the program’s impact on organisational practices. When asked whether their organisation activated professional

opportunities for participants after the project, the majority of respondents (18 organisations) reported “no further action”, while isolated cases of internships, employment contracts, or professional collaborations were recorded (4 in total).

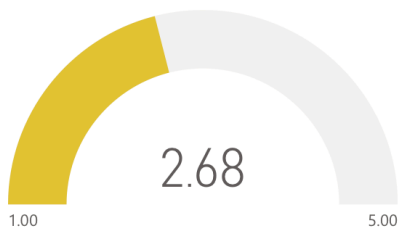


This finding is consistent with the relatively limited number of employment outcomes reported by participants themselves. Moreover, organisations expressed a modest level of willingness to integrate professional profiles similar to that of the Social Impact Manager in the future, with an average score of 2.91 out of 5. Similarly, the perceived contribution of the project to strengthening connections between organisations and potential talents received a score of 2.68 out of 5, suggesting that the program had a limited effect in consolidating recruitment pipelines or long-term collaboration mechanisms.

As a result of the project, is your organisation willing to integrate professional profiles that resemble the Social Impact Manager in the future?



To what extent did the project contribute to strengthening connections between your organisation and potential talents?



Data source: Company survey

Taken together, these three sources point to a program that was effective in delivering relevant knowledge and skills and in fostering networking opportunities among participants, but whose translation into concrete professional opportunities remains more limited. The training appears to have strengthened participants’ professional capacities and expanded their relational networks, yet the organisational ecosystem involved in the program did not

systematically convert this potential into structured employment pathways. This gap suggests that future iterations of the program could benefit from stronger integration between training activities and organisational engagement, for example through more structured internship pipelines, partnerships with host organisations, or mechanisms designed to facilitate the transition from training to professional placement. Such measures could help bridge the divide between the high perceived educational value of the program and its currently moderate impact on employment outcomes.

3.2.2 Improved CSR strategies

The fourth outcome assessed concerns the **improvement of CSR strategies within participating organisations**, measured through three indicators:

1. Number of participants reporting improvements in their capacity to contribute to CSR strategies in their professional contexts.
2. Number of enterprises declaring an improvement in the quality of their CSR strategy

The available evidence comes from the **student survey at T2** and the **company survey**, allowing the analysis to capture both the development of CSR-related competencies and the extent to which these competencies translated into organisational practices.

KPI: N of participants reporting improvements in their capacity to contribute to CSR strategies in their professional contexts

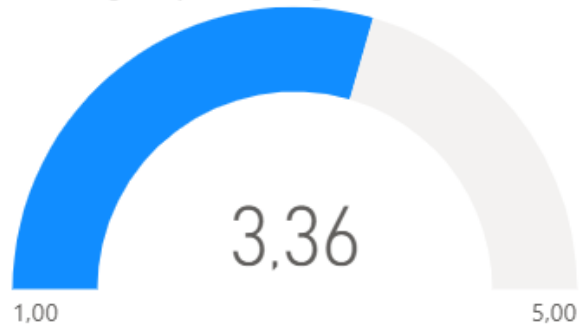
Results from the **student survey at T2** show that the program contributed positively to strengthening participants' knowledge of CSR concepts and tools. Respondents reported an average score of **3.89 out of 5** when asked whether the program had improved their knowledge of CSR, indicating a broadly positive perception of the learning outcomes. Participants also reported a **moderate level of application of the acquired tools in their professional activities**, with an average score of **3.36 out of 5** regarding the possibility of applying knowledge and tools from the program in their work contexts.

In absolute numbers, **30 out of 45 respondents to the student survey at T2 reported an improvement in their CSR understanding and skills; while 17 of them reported that they were able to apply those in professional and organisational contexts**. These results suggest that the training effectively strengthened CSR-related competencies and provided participants with frameworks that could be used in professional settings.

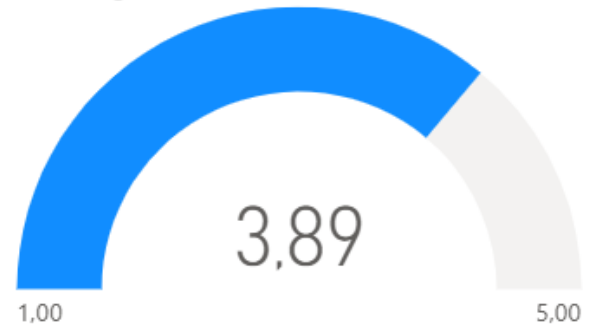
Qualitative feedback from students further illustrates how this knowledge has been applied in practice. Several respondents reported using the tools introduced during the program to **develop monitoring systems for organisational impacts**, prepare **monitoring plans during project design**, or **build impact logic frameworks for specific initiatives**. Others highlighted how the course improved their ability to support **sustainability strategies for clients**, particularly in consulting contexts. References to frameworks such as **GRI and OECD guidelines** indicate that participants gained familiarity with recognised CSR standards and

were able to apply them in real professional activities. In some cases, the training also stimulated reflection on how business activities themselves could become more sustainable, encouraging participants to reconsider the social and environmental implications of organisational products or services

Were you able to apply in your job tools and knowledge acquired during SIM?



After SIM do you think you have improved your knowledge on CSR?

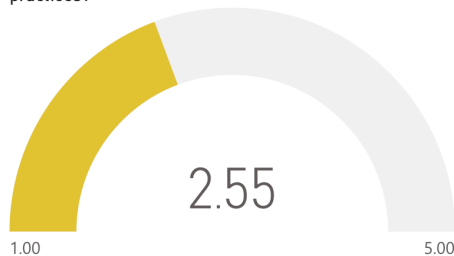


Data source: Student survey T2

KPI: N of enterprises that declare an improved quality of their CSR strategy

Evidence from the **company survey**, however, suggests that the translation of these competencies into organisational change has been more limited. When organisations were asked to what extent their CSR strategy or practices had improved as a result of the project, the average response was **2.55 out of 5**, indicating a relatively modest perceived improvement. In fact only **2 companies in total answered 4 or 5** to these critical questions.

After participating in the project, to what extent has your organisation improved its CSR strategy or practices?



Data source: Company survey

3.3.3 Evaluation findings on Economic Development and Employment



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Overall, the evidence indicates that the programme contributed positively to strengthening participants' professional capacities and CSR-related competencies, while its direct effects on employment creation and organisational change appear more limited.

Participants widely recognised the usefulness of the skills acquired (4.12/5) and the programme's contribution to professional development and networking opportunities, although its perceived impact on employment prospects was more moderate (3.49/5).

Medium-term results confirm this pattern: while some participants obtained internships, professional collaborations or employment contracts, many had either already been employed or had not yet translated the training into concrete job outcomes, suggesting that the programme functioned primarily as a capacity-building initiative rather than a direct placement mechanism. A similar dynamic emerges from the organisational perspective, where few companies activated professional opportunities and the willingness to integrate profiles such as Social Impact Managers remained moderate.

At the same time, the programme proved effective in strengthening participants' knowledge and practical understanding of CSR frameworks and tools (3.89/5), with several participants reporting the application of impact monitoring systems, sustainability strategies and recognised standards such as GRI or OECD guidelines in their professional activities. However, organisations reported only limited improvements in their CSR strategies (2.55/5), alongside a relatively low capacity to strengthen connections between organisations and potential talents (2.68/5). This indicates that while the programme successfully built individual competencies, the translation of these skills into broader organisational practices and structured employment pathways remains partial, and could benefit from stronger integration between training activities and organisational engagement.

3.3 Local Development

This section analyses the contribution of the SIM programme to local development outcomes, in line with the project's Theory of Change and Impact Framework, which identifies ecosystem activation and network building as key mechanisms linking individual capacity building to broader territorial impact.

The analysis focuses on three main dimensions: the engagement of private, public and third sector actors, the activation of community participation, and the development of local initiatives and collaborative networks. These outcomes reflect the programme’s capacity to operate not only at the individual level, but also at the level of local ecosystems, fostering connections, experimentation and social innovation processes.

The evidence combines network analysis, student surveys (T2), and the company survey, allowing for an assessment of both the breadth of stakeholder involvement and the quality and durability of the relationships generated.

3.3.1 Improved private/public sector engagement

The outcome related to improved engagement of private and public sector actors within the local development ecosystem is assessed through three indicators:

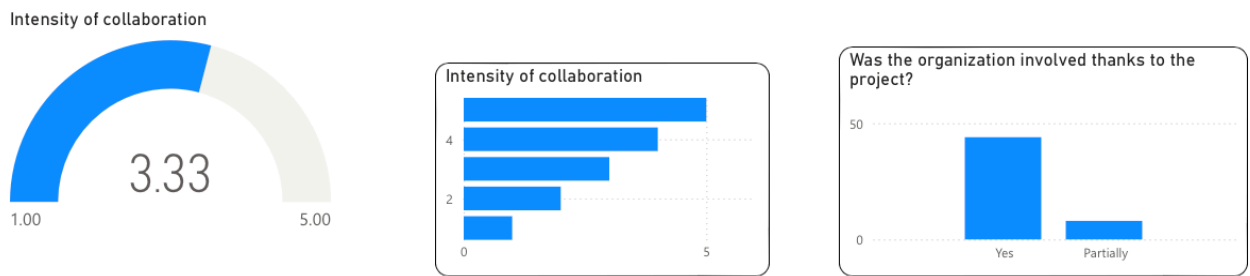
1. Number of companies engaged in project activities and their degree of engagement
2. Number of local NGOs engaged and their degree of engagement
3. Number of public administrations involved and their degree of engagement.

The available evidence combines the network analysis of participating organisations and results from the company survey, providing a perspective on both the breadth of stakeholder participation and the perceived strength of relationships generated through the project.

The **network analysis** shows that the project involved **52 organisations** across several European countries, representing a diverse mix of institutional types. Of these, 44 were engaged through the project work showcasing the relevance of these activities to create a vibrant network of private and public sector stakeholders around SIM.

The network includes **companies (33), NGOs (8), associations (4), public administrations (4), cooperatives (1), social enterprises (1)**, indicating that the initiative succeeded in mobilising a **heterogeneous ecosystem of stakeholders**.

The analysis reports an **average collaboration intensity of 3.33 out of 5**, indicating a moderate but tangible level of interaction among organisations participating in the project’s activities. Survey responses further show that the majority of organisations reported being **directly involved in the project**, while a smaller share indicated partial involvement, confirming that the initiative succeeded in activating a broad network of engaged stakeholders. About half of the organisations, (21 out of 52) scored 4 and 5 on intensity of collaboration - broadly distributed through geographies and types.

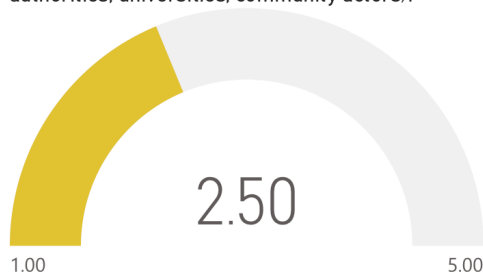


Data source: Network analysis

Evidence from the **company survey** provides additional insight into the perceived effects of this engagement on organisational relationships. When asked whether the project helped strengthen relationships with other stakeholders such as NGOs, public authorities, universities, and community actors, respondents reported an average score of **2.50 out of 5**, suggesting a relatively limited perceived strengthening of stakeholder relationships.

However, qualitative feedback collected through the survey highlights several concrete examples of collaboration stimulated by the project. Some organisations reported **new connections with educational institutions and representatives of the local community**, while others emphasised the **opportunity to engage with universities in order to implement joint activities**. Networking events organised within the project, such as the **Hackathon**, were also cited as occasions that facilitated interaction between organisations. In several cases, respondents explicitly noted that the project **strengthened collaboration with higher education institutions**, indicating that the initiative contributed to building bridges between organisations and the academic sector.

Did the project help your organisation strengthen relationships with other stakeholders (NGOs, public authorities, universities, community actors)?



Data source: Company survey

Overall, the available evidence indicates that the project succeeded in **mobilising a broad and diverse network of organisations across the private, public, and third sectors**, creating opportunities for interaction and collaboration within the local development ecosystem. While the **perceived strengthening of stakeholder relationships remains moderate**, both the network structure and the qualitative feedback suggest that the project facilitated **new connections between organisations, educational institutions, and community actors**, laying the groundwork for potential future collaborations.

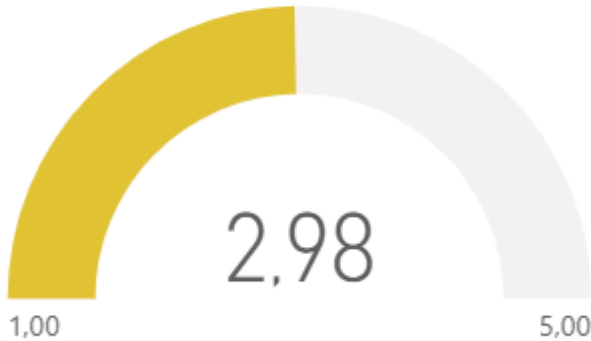
3.3.2 Improved community engagement

Number of people that persist in social active participation

Evidence from the **student survey at T2** provides an indirect indication of the durability of these engagements. When participants were asked whether they were still actively involved in social, community, or CSR initiatives launched or strengthened through the project, the average response was **2.78 out of 5**, **with 11 out of the 45 respondents** providing positive feedback (4 or 5). This score suggests a moderate level of continued involvement in initiatives

related to the project, indicating that while some collaborations have persisted beyond the immediate duration of the activities, the long-term continuity of these engagements appears uneven.

Are you still actively involved in social, community, or CSR initiatives that were launched or strengthened during SIM?



Data source: Student survey T2

Creation of local projects

Throughout the SIM programme, participants developed a total of 40 final projects and 25 cooperation schemes, translating acquired competencies into concrete social impact initiatives.

The project pipeline followed a structured approach across countries: hackathons enabled participants to work on real challenges and generate initial ideas, while cooperation schemes and final projects allowed for further development and testing in collaboration with companies, NGOs, and local actors, often in alignment with ESG strategies.

The resulting projects can be grouped into a few main areas: employment and skills development, social inclusion and welfare, territorial regeneration, and ESG-oriented organisational innovation. Across contexts, a key feature is the strong anchoring of projects in real organisational or local environments, ensuring both practical relevance and potential for implementation.

A detailed overview of all projects is provided in Deliverable 3.3 SIM Training Handbook.

3.3.3 Network building

The outcome related to **network building** is assessed through two indicators:

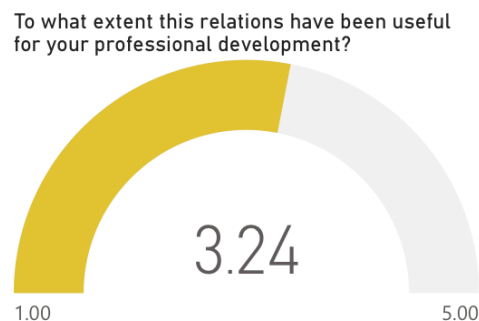
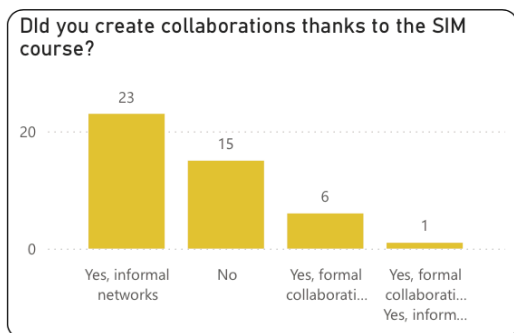
1. Number of informal collaborations generated through the program
2. Number of formal collaborations generated through the program

The analysis draws primarily on results from the **student survey at T2**, complemented by qualitative insights from students and evidence emerging from the **network analysis of participating organisations**, which together help illustrate the nature and quality of the relationships established through the project.

KPI: Number of informal collaborations generated through the program (students)

Evidence from the **student survey at T2** indicates that the program contributed to the creation of several new professional connections among participants. When asked whether they had created collaborations thanks to the SIM course, the largest share of respondents reported the creation of **informal networks (23 respondents)**. A smaller number reported **formal collaborations (6 respondents)**, while **one respondent indicated both formal and informal collaboration**. In contrast, **15 respondents reported that no collaboration had been created**. These results suggest that the program's primary contribution in terms of networking lies in facilitating informal professional relationships, which often represent the first step toward more structured forms of cooperation. Participants also reported that these relationships were moderately useful for their professional development, with an average score of 3.24 out of 5 when asked to what extent the relationships created through the program supported their professional growth.

Qualitative feedback from students provides further insight into the nature of these connections. Several respondents described the development of informal interpersonal relationships with professionally stimulating peers, with whom they continue to exchange information on job and training opportunities even after the course. Others highlighted the importance of sharing experiences and best practices with fellow participants or establishing connections during collaborative activities such as group work and hackathons. In some cases, these interactions led to the identification of professional synergies with other participants, strengthening peer-to-peer learning and collaboration within the network created by the program. These examples suggest that the course functioned as a platform for professional exchange and peer networking, enabling participants to build relationships that extend beyond the duration of the training.



Data source: Student survey T2

KPI: Number of informal collaborations generated through the program (organisations)

Additional evidence from the **network analysis of participating organisations** indicates that the project also generated collaboration opportunities at the organisational level. Four organisations reported that the networking activities associated with the project contributed to the **design or proposal of new projects or services**, even if these initiatives had not yet been implemented. Organisations mentioning such developments are **Lendlease, Humana People to People, EY Foundation, and Epson**, suggesting that the network created through the project stimulated ideas for potential future collaboration.

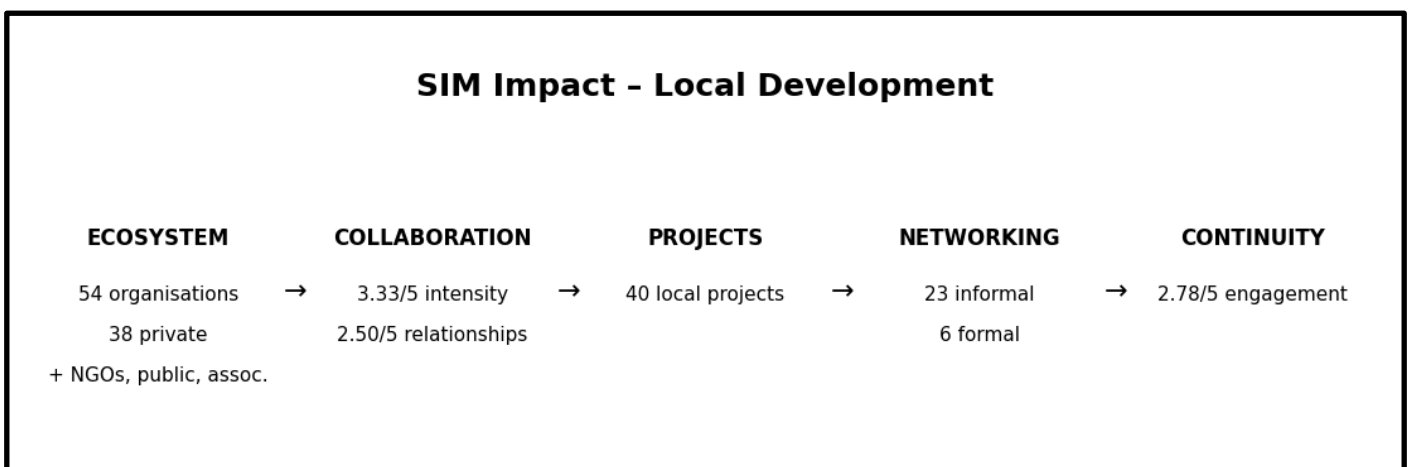
Number of formal collaborations generated through the program (organisations)

In addition, one organisation reported the establishment of a **new formal collaboration** linked to the project. The Croatian private company **Jadran-galenski laboratorij d.d. (JGL d.d.)** indicated that it will participate in the implementation of the **SIM Lifelong Learning (LLL) programme at EFRI**, taking part in cooperation schemes and hackathon activities. An **informal agreement has already been signed**, representing a concrete step toward a structured partnership.

Data source: Network analysis

Overall, the evidence suggests that the project was **particularly effective in fostering informal networking and professional exchange among participants**, while the creation of formal collaborations remains more limited but nonetheless present. Informal connections appear to represent the **main networking outcome**, functioning as a foundation for knowledge exchange, professional opportunities, and potential future collaborations among both individuals and organisations involved in the initiative.

3.3.4 Evaluation findings on Local Development



Overall, the evidence indicates that the programme contributed positively to local development by activating a diverse ecosystem of stakeholders, fostering new connections among participants and organisations, and stimulating the creation of locally embedded social innovation initiatives. However, the consolidation of these interactions into stable, long-term collaborations remains more moderate.

The project engaged 54 organisations across the private (38), public and third sectors, with a moderate level of collaboration intensity (3.33/5), demonstrating its capacity to mobilise a broad multi-stakeholder network around social impact management. While organisations reported only limited strengthening of stakeholder relationships (2.50/5), qualitative evidence suggests that the programme effectively enabled new connections, particularly through interactive formats such as hackathons.

At the same time, participants translated the competencies acquired during the training into 40 local projects addressing key challenges such as social inclusion, green skills development, access to entrepreneurship, and community regeneration, highlighting the programme's capacity to generate locally relevant innovation. However, the available evidence does not allow for a systematic assessment of the continuity and long-term implementation of these initiatives, making it difficult to determine the extent to which they have been sustained beyond the duration of the programme.

Networking outcomes were especially visible at the participant level, where the programme primarily facilitated informal collaborations supporting knowledge exchange and peer learning. In contrast, more structured and formal partnerships among organisations remained limited, though emerging in some cases.

Taken together, these findings suggest that the programme was effective in creating opportunities for interaction, experimentation and network activation within the local development ecosystem, while the transition from initial engagement to sustained collaboration represents a key area for further strengthening.

3.4 Research, Innovation and Scale-up

This section examines the extent to which the SIM programme has generated outcomes beyond the immediate implementation phase, particularly in terms of replicability, knowledge generation and dissemination. It aims to assess whether the training model and the evidence produced through the project have the potential to be transferred, adapted and scaled within other educational, organisational and policy contexts.

The analysis focuses on two main dimensions. On the one hand, it explores the replicability of the SIM training model, considering both stakeholders' willingness to adopt it and the initial evidence of its integration into new settings. On the other hand, it examines the programme's contribution to research and knowledge development in the field of CSR, ESG and social impact management, as well as its capacity to reach and engage a broader audience through dissemination activities.

3.4.1 Replicability

The outcome related to replicability assesses the extent to which the training model developed within the project shows potential to be adopted, integrated, or replicated by external stakeholders and institutions. This outcome is measured through three indicators:

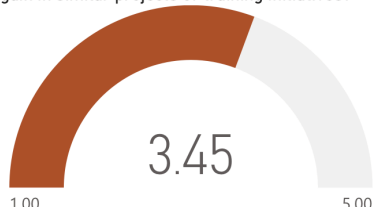
18. Propensity of stakeholders to replicate the training
19. Number of stakeholders willing to integrate the course into official programs

Evidence for this outcome comes from the company survey, the student survey at T2, and an internal database titled "Replicability and Impactful Research", which documents concrete examples of replication and knowledge transfer generated by the project.

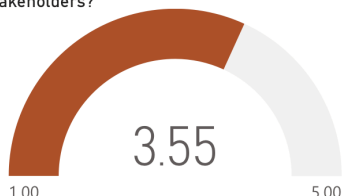
KPI: Propensity of stakeholders to replicate the training

Results from the **company survey** indicate a strong openness among organisational stakeholders to the potential replication of the training model. Respondents reported an average score of **4.27 out of 5** when asked whether they would recommend the course to people within their professional environment. This result suggests a high level of confidence in the relevance and usefulness of the program, indicating that organisations perceive the training as valuable for professionals working in fields related to sustainability, CSR, and social impact management.

Would your organisation be willing to participate again in similar projects or training initiatives?



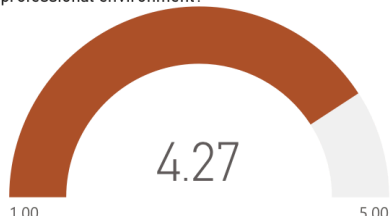
Would your organisation recommend this type of collaboration to other companies or stakeholders?



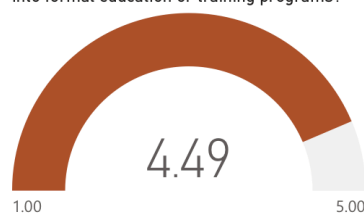
Data source: Company survey

Similarly, the **student survey at T2** provides strong evidence of the perceived replicability of the course within formal education systems. Participants rated **4.49 out of 5** the extent to which they would recommend integrating the course into **formal education or training programs**, suggesting a very high level of support for institutionalising this type of training within academic curricula or professional education pathways. This result indicates that participants view the program not only as a valuable individual learning experience but also as a **model that could be systematically adopted within higher education or professional training environments**.

Would you advise this course to people of your professional environment?



Would you recommend integrating this course into formal education or training programs?



Data source: Student survey T2

KPI: Number of stakeholders willing to integrate the course into official programs & Number of universities recognising or adopting the course within their educational offer.

Additional evidence is provided by the **“Replicability and Impactful Research” database**, which documents concrete instances in which the training framework has already been transferred or adapted in new contexts. One example is the **full replication of the SIM training model at the University of Rijeka – Faculty of Economics**

and Business (EFRI) in Croatia, where the **EFRI SIM Replication Workshop** has been implemented, focusing on themes such as **CSR, ESG, and Social Impact Management**. A second example involves **the University of Milano-Bicocca (UNIMIB)** in Italy, where elements of the program have been integrated into **capacity-building activities related to impact assessment and the social economy**.

Overall, the available evidence suggests a promising potential for the replicability of the training model, supported by stakeholders' willingness to recommend and integrate elements of the course, as well as by initial examples of institutional uptake within partner universities.

In particular, examples from consortium universities indicate that the SIM training has been adopted in different forms: the University of Rijeka (UNIRI EFRI, Croatia) implemented a full replication of the programme through the "EFRI SIM Replication Workshop", focusing on CSR, ESG and Social Impact Management, while the University of Milano-Bicocca (UNIMIB, Italy) integrated selected components of the training into its capacity-building activities, particularly on impact assessment and social economy. While these cases demonstrate the adaptability of the model, they do not yet provide sufficient evidence on the continuity, scaling, or long-term institutionalisation of these initiatives.

Similarly, the information contained in the "Replicability and Impactful Research" database confirms that the educational framework has begun to be transferred to new academic and training contexts. Nevertheless, the available data does not allow for a systematic assessment of the extent, depth, or sustainability of these replications over time. As such, while the model shows clear potential for broader adoption, further evidence would be required to validate its effective scalability and long-term impact beyond the original project implementation.

3.4.2 Impactful research on CSR

Evidence emerging from participants' feedback, particularly from the student surveys (T1 and T2), highlights several areas where further development of knowledge and training would be beneficial. As discussed in previous sections, participants consistently expressed the need for deeper exploration of key topics—such as impact measurement methodologies (e.g. SROI), practical application of tools, and stronger alignment between theoretical content and real-world implementation contexts. These insights point to the identification of relevant training and knowledge gaps, particularly in relation to the operationalisation of impact management and the transition from learning to practice.

However, while these indications provide a valuable preliminary understanding of emerging research and training needs, a more systematic validation of this outcome will depend on the final assessment conducted by the External Evaluation Board.

In addition, The following key performance indicators, derived from WP5 (Dissemination and Communication database), provide an overview of the project's outreach and stakeholder engagement that make the work of its research impactful:

- **52,226** website visits (Aug 2023 – Nov 2025)
- **+850** stakeholders reached through the project database



- **1,140** followers across project social media channels
- **1,705** downloads of project e-zines (4 editions)

It should be noted that the data reported refer to the period up to November 2025. The collection of data for the final six months of the project is scheduled to begin in May, following the submission of the present deliverable.

3.4.3 Evaluation findings on Research, Innovation & Scale-Up

Overall, the evidence suggests that the SIM programme demonstrates a strong potential for replication and knowledge transfer, supported by high levels of stakeholder endorsement and initial examples of institutional uptake. Both organisational stakeholders (4.27/5) and participants (4.49/5) expressed a strong willingness to recommend and integrate the training model, indicating that the programme is perceived as relevant, credible, and adaptable to different educational and professional contexts.

At the same time, the available evidence points to a gap between this high perceived replicability and its actual consolidation. While initial cases of adoption within partner universities—such as the full replication at UNIRI EFRI and the partial integration at UNIMIB—demonstrate the flexibility of the model, they remain early-stage experiences. There is currently limited evidence regarding the continuity, institutionalisation, and scaling of these initiatives beyond pilot implementations.

In parallel, the programme contributed to the identification of emerging research and training gaps, particularly in relation to the operationalisation of impact management, the application of methodologies such as SROI, and the alignment between theoretical frameworks and real-world practice. These insights, primarily derived from participant feedback, represent a valuable input for future research and curriculum development. However, their formal validation and consolidation will depend on the final assessment conducted by the External Evaluation Board.

Finally, dissemination activities under WP5 indicate a significant outreach capacity, with over 52,000 website visits, more than 850 stakeholders reached, and sustained engagement across digital channels. While these results confirm the programme's visibility and potential to influence broader audiences, they primarily reflect reach and awareness rather than direct evidence of uptake or systemic change.

Taken together, these findings indicate that the SIM programme has successfully generated the conditions for replication, innovation, and knowledge diffusion. However, the transition from potential to actual scale-up—particularly in terms of institutionalisation, long-term adoption, and integration into educational and organisational systems—remains a key area for further development and validation.

3.5 Overview of results

Before presenting the overview of results, the following key output figures provide a concise summary of the scale and reach of the SIM programme:

- **124** participants trained
- **54** organisations involved (including **38 companies**)
- **40** local projects developed
- **5** HEI/VET engaged
- **150** hours of training delivered

The table below aims to summarize the achieved results, based on the impact framework.

| Outcome area | Outcome | KPI | Realised Value (Absolute) | Realised Value (% of respondents) |
|-----------------------------------|--------------------------|---|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Education | Improved soft skills | 1. N of people that improved soft skills 2. Variety and diversity of people trained | 43/76 75% women Age range 20-60 | 57% |
| | Improved hard skills | 3. N of people that improved hard skills 4. Variety and diversity of people trained | 52/76 75% women Age range 20-60 | 68% |
| | Educational Innovation | 5. Quality perceived by participants | 4.33/5.00 | 87% |
| | | 6. N of applications | 192 | n/a |
| Economic Development / Employment | Increased access to jobs | 7. N of beneficiaries who start an internship, professional collaboration or a job contract | 10/76 | 13% |
| | | 8. N of enterprises willing to open positions after participating in the project | 4/22 | 18% |
| | Improved CSR strategies | 9. Number of participants reporting improvements in their capacity to contribute to CSR strategies in their | 30/45 | 66% |

| | | | | |
|--|---|---|----------------------------|-----|
| | | professional contexts. | | |
| | | 10. N of enterprises that declare an improved quality of their CSR strategy | 2/22 | 9% |
| Local Development | Improved private/public sector engagement | 11. N of companies engaged in project activities + degree of engagement | 33 | - |
| | | 12. N of local NGOs and associations engaged in project activities + degree of engagement | 12 | - |
| | | 13. N of PA engaged in project activities + degree of engagement | 4 | - |
| | Improved community engagement | 14. N of people that persist in social active participation | 11/45 | 24% |
| | Creation of local projects | 15. N of local projects launched | 40 | - |
| | Network building | 16. N of informal collaborations created | 24/45 (students) | 53% |
| | | | 4/22 (companies) | 18% |
| 17. N of formal collaborations created | | 7/45 (students) | 16% | |
| | | 1/22 (companies) | 4% | |
| Research, Innovation and Scale-up | Replicability | 18. Propensity of stakeholders to replicate the training | 3.44/5 | 70% |
| | | 19. N of stakeholder that insert the course in official program | 3/5 | 60% |
| | Impactful research on CSR | 20. N of stakeholders engaged though dissemination | 2000 + 5226 website visits | - |

| | | | | |
|--|--|--|----------------------|----------------------|
| | | activities | | |
| | | 21 N of new research areas or training/knowledge gaps identified as a result of the research | Qualitative analysis | Qualitative analysis |

04 | EVALUATION FINDINGS

The results presented in Section 3 confirm that the SIM programme was effective in generating relevant outcomes across multiple dimensions, particularly in terms of capacity building, while also highlighting areas where impacts are still developing.

At the **individual level**, the programme clearly **achieved its primary objective of strengthening competences in social impact management**, CSR and ES engaging 124 participants across 5 countries. Participants reported improvements in both technical and transversal skills, alongside high levels of satisfaction with the quality and innovative character of the training. These results confirm the **relevance of the SIM model in addressing emerging skills needs** within the sustainability and impact management field, as also reflected by the strong demand for the programme and the diversity of participants involved.

First of all the overall perceived quality of the course was 4,33/5. At the same time, the translation of these competencies into employment outcomes appears more gradual. While participants recognised the usefulness of the skills acquired (4.12/5), the perceived impact on employment prospects remains more moderate (3.49/5), and only a limited share accessed concrete opportunities. This suggests that the **programme contributes significantly to employability, although additional mechanisms may be needed to further support the transition into the labour market.**

The analysis also highlights the presence of different learner profiles within the programme, including **students entering the labour market and professionals seeking to upskill**. These groups have distinct needs and expectations, which may not be fully addressed by a single curriculum structure. Greater differentiation in learning pathways could therefore enhance both the effectiveness of the training and its alignment with labour market and organisational contexts.

From an **organisational perspective**, the programme enabled initial forms of engagement with companies and other stakeholders, particularly through cooperation schemes and project-based activities. **54 organisations across the private, public and third sectors were involved, contributing to the activation of a diverse ecosystem.** However, the evidence indicates that these interactions were more prominent during the implementation phase and less consolidated over time. This may reflect the broader **challenge of aligning training initiatives with organisational priorities, especially in contexts where direct benefits or strategic incentives are not immediately evident.** This dynamic is also reflected in the relatively moderate results observed in terms of organisational change, including improvements in CSR strategies (2.55/5) and the strengthening of connections between organisations and potential talents (2.68/5). While these results do not diminish the value of the programme, they suggest that further efforts (which are beyond pure course design and implementation) may be needed to enhance the integration of training outcomes within organisational practices.

At the **ecosystem level**, the programme successfully activated networks and stimulated collaboration, leading to the development of 40 local projects addressing challenges such as social inclusion, green skills development, access to entrepreneurship and community regeneration. These initiatives illustrate the programme's **capacity to connect education with real-world problem solving and to support locally embedded innovation, while many of these collaborations remain informal** in nature and their long-term continuity cannot yet be fully assessed, suggesting

that additional structures or mechanisms could support their consolidation into more stable and sustainable partnerships.

The evidence on **replicability** further reinforces the overall positive assessment of the training model, particularly in terms of perceived quality and relevance of its contents. Both organisational stakeholders and participants expressed a **high propensity to recommend the programme (4.27/5 and 4.49/5 respectively), indicating strong appreciation of the curriculum**, methodologies and thematic focus on CSR, ESG and social impact management. This suggests that the SIM training model responds effectively to an emerging demand for structured competences in this field and is recognised as valuable across different contexts. However, while this high level of endorsement confirms the attractiveness and perceived usefulness of the programme, it should be interpreted primarily as an indicator of **potential rather than actual replication, as evidence of long-term adoption and institutionalisation remains limited at this stage.**

It is important to frame these findings in light of the original scope and ambition of the SIM project. The **programme was primarily designed to develop and test a new professional profile (the Social Impact Manager) and to initiate the conditions for the emergence of a supporting ecosystem across multiple countries.** In this sense, the underlying impact model was inherently ambitious, aiming to connect individual capacity building with labour market dynamics, organisational change, and broader systemic effects. **Within this framework, the evidence suggests that the project successfully achieved its core objectives**, particularly in terms of skills development, activation of networks, and initial ecosystem building. At the same time, **some of the more advanced outcomes** (such as sustained employment pathways, organisational transformation, and long-term institutionalisation) **require longer timeframes and more structured enabling conditions to fully materialise.**

This pattern highlights a broader implication for the future development of the SIM model. While the content and structure of the training are clearly appreciated, their effective scaling depends on the presence of enabling conditions that go beyond the educational dimension. In particular, the involvement of companies and stakeholders in the programme could go beyond a skill analysis and design but be extended to the implementation phase in a more structural way. As also reflected in the policy recommendations, strengthening multi-stakeholder governance mechanisms, differentiating learning pathways according to target groups, and better aligning training content with corporate and regulatory drivers could support a more effective integration of the model within both education systems and organisational practices. **In this perspective, the challenge lies not in further validating the quality of the training (already widely recognised) but in creating the conditions for its stable and scalable implementation.**

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