



# Bridging between business and the local community

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# LAUNCHING THE SIM PROJECT: DESIGNING A RESPONSIBLE FUTURE



On the 25th and 26th of July, the Social Impact Manager (SIM) consortium met in Athens to officially launch the project, generously funded by the European Commission under the Erasmus+ programme. In a display of collaboration, all 14 partners, some of whom joined virtually, came together to kick-start this innovative venture under the lead coordination of the University of the Peloponnese.

The SIM project aims to create a hybrid and multifaceted profile of a manager with different competences, all of which are functional to make a company grow in terms of CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility). The project emphasises the social impact dimension of a company, as it assumes that companies need communities and communities need companies. To develop this profile, a group of partners from the VET, education and business sectors will work together, with the help of Momentum (MMS) and EUCEN to promote and share the findings and results of the project.

Focused on the social impact dimension of companies, the SIM project is geared towards fostering growth, not just in financial terms, but

also in terms of societal and environmental well-being. To achieve this ambitious goal, the project has strategically chosen to concentrate its efforts in five key countries: Austria, Greece, Croatia, Italy, and France. The SIM position will be carefully developed in each of these countries through the collaborative efforts of selected organisations with significant influence.

In each country, an educational provider (universities or VET providers) works together with a technical partner (i.e. business networks and platforms) in order to mix experiences and expertise. Following this idea, in Austria, Die Berater, a consulting company for education and training, will collaborate with the Plattform für berufsbezogene Erwachsenenbildung (PbEB, Platform for Vocational Adult Education), an association consisting of the leading private providers of education and training in the vocational and economic sector.

In Greece, the University of the Peloponnese, KMOP Education and Innovation Hub, a centre for social action and innovation, and Syndesmos Viomichanion Ellados (SBE, Federation of Industries of Greece) will work together. In France, the University Paris 1 Pantheon-Sorbonne will join forces with the Chambre Française de l'Économie Sociale et Solidaire, (ESS FRANCE, French Chamber of the Social and Solidarity Economy). While in Italy, Project School, a company that offers training and consultancy to individuals and organisations in the development of social impact projects will combine with the University of Milano-Bicocca (UNIMIB) and Manageritalia, the Italian National Federation of Managers, senior staff and executive professionals in the fields of commerce, transport, tourism and advanced tertiary. Finally, in Croatia, the Faculty of Economics and Business of the University of Rijeka (EFRI UNIRI) and Mreza Znanja (MZ, The Knowledge Network), a consulting company,

will work together to release their potential. During this inaugural meeting, the consortium discussed the project's timeline and charted out the next steps to turn this vision into reality. Starting from July 2023, the SIM partners are embarking on a journey that will span nearly three years, culminating in March 2026, when the project is expected to complete its SIM education programme across five countries reaching 150 learners and 50 European companies.

The SIM project is not just an endeavour in business leadership; it's a commitment to fostering responsible management that transcends borders and impacts communities on a global scale. Stay tuned as we continue to bring you updates on this project that has the potential to reshape the future of corporate social responsibility and responsible management.



# PROJECT LEADERS: UNIVERSITY OF THE PELOPONNESE

Understanding the dynamics of a project's success is intrinsically tied to its human resources, especially in a venture involving a diverse consortium like Social Impact Manager (SIM). Co-ordination and collaboration among partners are crucial in such scenarios. Therefore, let's take a look at the role of the coordinator in the SIM project, led by the University of the Peloponnese (UOP).

Established in 2000, UOP is a modern, multidisciplinary, regional, and multi-campus university with a presence in six cities across the Peloponnese: Tripolis, Corinth, Nafplio, Sparta, Kalamata, and Patras. With over 20,000 students across nine schools and 22 Departments, UOP actively engages in high-quality teaching, research, innovation, and training. In addition to offering

undergraduate, postgraduate, and doctoral studies, UOP supports Lifelong Learning and Vocational Education and Training (VET) activities. The university fosters close collaboration with local and regional communities and authorities, contributing to cultural and economic progress through knowledge-based innovation. Over the years, UOP has developed extensive expertise in social entrepreneurship.

With approximately 200 competitive research projects in progress, UOP has gained valuable experience in coordinating and guiding nationally and internationally funded projects. A strategic goal for the university is the continuous enhancement of its management capacities.

Let's meet the  
University of the  
Peloponnese, SIM's  
lead coordinator.

By Katerina Doundi and  
Antonis Klapsis, UoP.



In the Social Impact Manager project, UOP assumes the role of project coordinator, overseeing the project's technical and financial management to ensure smooth implementation. Its primary responsibilities include ensuring the project adheres to the established timeline and budget while fostering effective cooperation within the consortium. UOP defines rules and procedures to achieve the highest quality in project implementation, as well as in the design and development of the project results.

Working alongside other partner universities and VET providers, UOP is tasked with data collection, learner selection, and organising learning activities such as lessons and hackathons. Within the initial six months of the project, UOP, in seamless collaboration with all partners, has laid the groundwork for a productive professional collaboration, fostering a friendly and

professional working atmosphere. Recognising the significance of each partner in the project, the consortium is committed to leveraging the experiences and expertise of partners from the VET, education, and business sectors. The collective goal is to collaboratively shape the profile of the Social Impact Manager, encompassing various competencies essential for a company's development in terms of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) linked to community development. Embracing a vision of sustainability and CSR, the consortium anticipates that the SIM profile will positively influence people's attitudes toward social aspects in business operations.



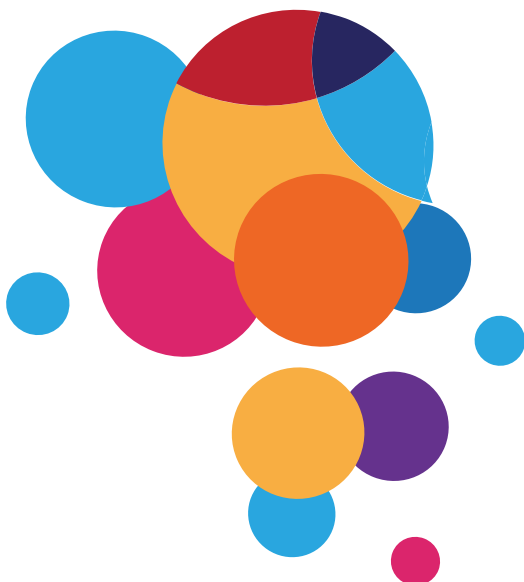
# SOCIAL IMPACT THROUGH DESIGN AND LOCAL COMMUNITY COLLABORATION

Project School is a social innovation company founded in Italy that empowers individuals and organisations to tackle the most pressing challenges facing their communities. With a focus on creative problem-solving and design thinking, Project School equips participants with the skills and tools to develop sustainable and impactful solutions to issues ranging from education and employment to environmental sustainability and social inclusion.

At the heart of Project School's approach lies a belief in the transformative power of design and innovation. The company fosters a collaborative and participatory environment where individuals from diverse backgrounds come together to share their perspectives, expertise, and experiences. By harnessing the collective creativity and problem-solving abilities of these individuals, Project School facilitates the development of innovative solutions that address the root causes of societal challenges. Project School's commitment to social impact is further exemplified by its involvement in several EU-funded Erasmus+ projects from 2020 to date. These projects focus on critical areas such as active citizenship and urban regeneration, women's empowerment, migration management, and youth engagement, and sustainable development. The world is facing many pressing challenges, from climate change to social inequality. These challenges require innovative solutions that can address the root causes of the problems.

Being part of the Social Impact Manager (SIM) project for us is a step forward to work with new allies (e.g. companies and universities), in tackling these challenges. Within SIM, using a bottom-up research methodology and co-planning at a European level, it is an important opportunity to get to know the territories and the social problems that have emerged up close. At the same time, through SIM, we are playing a fundamental role in building new social and business models in local communities. This collaborative process involves stakeholders from all levels of society, embracing the complexity and difficulties of uniting local communities with businesses. SIM aims to create a new professional figure, the Social Impact Manager, capable of guiding the way of doing business, which will increasingly combine the aspects of the non-profit world with the profit ones.

Social Impact Managers will be trained in design thinking, Corporate Social Responsibility and community engagement, therefore they will be equipped with the skills and knowledge to develop creative solutions. New professionals are essential to driving change because they bring fresh perspectives and new ideas. They are not bound by the same old ways of thinking, and they are more likely to be open to innovation. The Social Impact Manager project is helping to create a new generation of professionals who are committed to social impact and capable of driving change.



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# SOCIAL IMPACT WEBINAR UPDATE

French project partners, University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne wish to express their sincere gratitude to all the participants who contributed to making the webinar on the Social Impact Manager (SIM) project a memorable and successful event. This event, held on 5 th October 2023 was a resounding success and captured a diverse audience, including representatives from businesses, organisations in the Social and Solidarity Economy (SSE), and the academic community.

The webinar began with a detailed presentation of the various phases of the SIM project by Fabrice Combet (EES France) and Patricia Vornetti (University Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne). The innovative approach focused on the social impact of businesses and their commitment to deepening engagement with the local community. The facilitators emphasized the importance of placing SSE businesses at the heart of the process.



Passerelle  
entre les  
entreprises  
et la  
communauté  
locale







## SOCIAL IMPACT WEBINAR

For those who couldn't attend the event the webinar recording is available.

[CLICK TO VIEW](#)

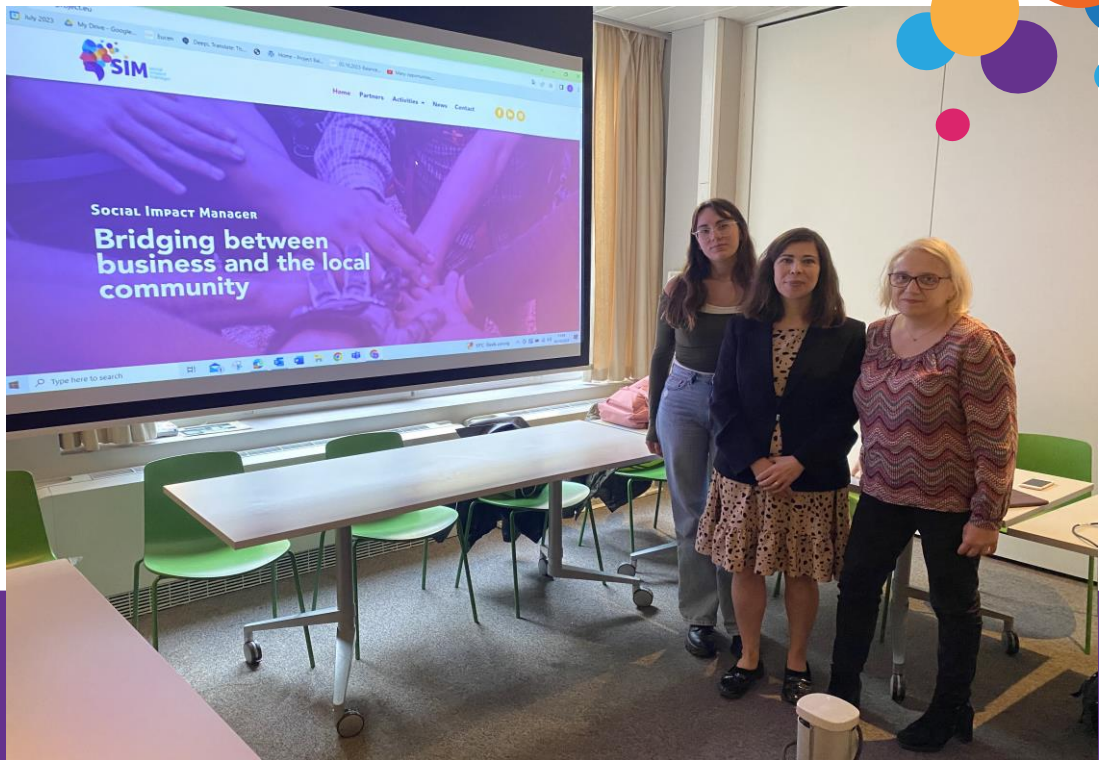


There is no power for change greater than a community discovering what it cares about.

Margaret J. Wheatley

The SIM France team wish to thank all the participants for their commitment and valuable contributions. The French version of this article is also available [here](#).

# PARTNER PROFILE: EUCEN



The European University Continuing Education Network (eucen) stands at the forefront of strengthening University Lifelong Learning (ULLL) in universities across Europe. With a primary focus on contributing to the development and enhancement of ULLL, eucen plays a crucial role in advocating for ULLL at the European policy level. Through a multifaceted approach that includes activities targeted at Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and direct lobbying in Brussels, eucen has strong expertise in initiating dialogues at an EU level, exchanging knowledge, and influencing the European policy development related to ULLL.

Eucen is joint dissemination partners with Momentum in SIM, their reach extends far and wide, with a network comprising of 170 members from 34 different countries. This extensive network allows eucen to make significant contributions to the social, economic, and cultural life of the European higher education landscape. The organisation achieves this by promoting and advancing lifelong learning within HEIs, thereby fostering a positive impact on society. Currently, this is underscored by eucen's commitment to societal well-being is its involvement in the Social Impact Manager (SIM) project.

The SIM project addresses a gap in European programs by focusing on the linkages between Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and community development. SIM introduces a new perspective on CSR, emphasizing the social impact dimension and encouraging companies to strengthen their connections with communities and stakeholders.

The social impact manager in the SIM project is conceptualised as a hybrid figure combining the roles of a corporate social responsibility manager and a community development officer. This shows that SIM operates on the fundamental premise that companies and communities are interdependent - companies need communities, and communities need companies. This symbiotic relationship forms the basis of the project, advocating for a holistic and collaborative approach to social impact. The SIM role is characterised by the ability to facilitate collaboration between companies and their local communities, thereby fostering community resilience.



## SHARING AND PROMOTING SOCIAL IMPACT MANAGER



The project plays a crucial role in empowering European companies to take on more significant responsibilities in addressing contemporary societal issues. Armed with specialised training and expertise, SIMs excel in nurturing alliances and partnerships within their communities. Moreover, they devise and implement sustainable solutions tailored to local challenges, ensuring that the impact is not only significant but also contextually relevant.

Eucen's involvement in the SIM project showcases the organization's dedication to leveraging education as a catalyst for positive societal change. By bridging the gap between lifelong learning and social impact, eucen and SIM collectively contribute to a vision where universities, companies, and communities collaboratively shape a better future. Through initiatives like this, eucen continues to be a driving force in advancing the cause of lifelong learning and promoting the holistic well-being of European societies.



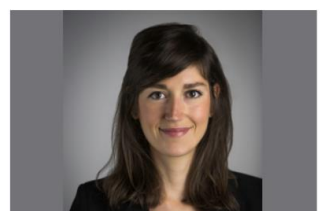
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### Strengthening University Lifelong Learning in Europe

Established in 1991, eucen is the largest multidisciplinary association for University Lifelong Learning in Europe. We represent this educational level in Europe through our research, lobbying and activities.





# THE IMPACT REVOLUTION - TRANSFORMATION FROM A MONITORING TOOL TO A CONCRETE APPROACH

As researchers, the University of Milan (UNIMIB) has been working in the field of the impact revolution for a decade. The disruptive challenges and transformation of the last years such as the pandemic, the crisis of the European welfare state, financial and geopolitical instability and climate change made it clear that something had to be changed, not only in the way resources are allocated and how public policies and local project are designed, but also in how people perceive business and values.

We have always thought that the shift from a merely profit-oriented mindset towards an impact-oriented one was one of the key factors to promote this transition. As a matter of fact, through our work, we want to help overcome cultural and technical barriers to measuring impact, promoting the development of a society

that recognises and rewards social and environmental value alongside economic and financial value. In today's world, the need to foster a more ecologically, socially, and economically sustainable and equitable environment is broadly acknowledged. There is a growing interest in impact, and many stakeholders from public, private and non-profit sectors are demanding support to acknowledge, monitor, manage, assess, and communicate the impact of their activities.

Nonetheless, even though the interest in the concept of impact is rapidly arising and impact design methodologies are now becoming a praxis for various stakeholders, especially public institutions and NGOs, two important issues still must be addressed in the realm of the private sector.

“Through our work, we want to help overcome cultural and technical barriers to measuring impact, promoting the development of a society that recognises and rewards social and environmental value alongside economic and financial value.”

First, generically, enterprises are more engaged in assessing and lowering their ecological impact and take less into consideration their part as “social players” in the territory they operate in. Second, regardless of the importance of the role that Corporate Social Responsibility is acquiring, there is still a lack of vision within the enterprises on how to manage such an important opportunity and a not negligible skill mismatch.

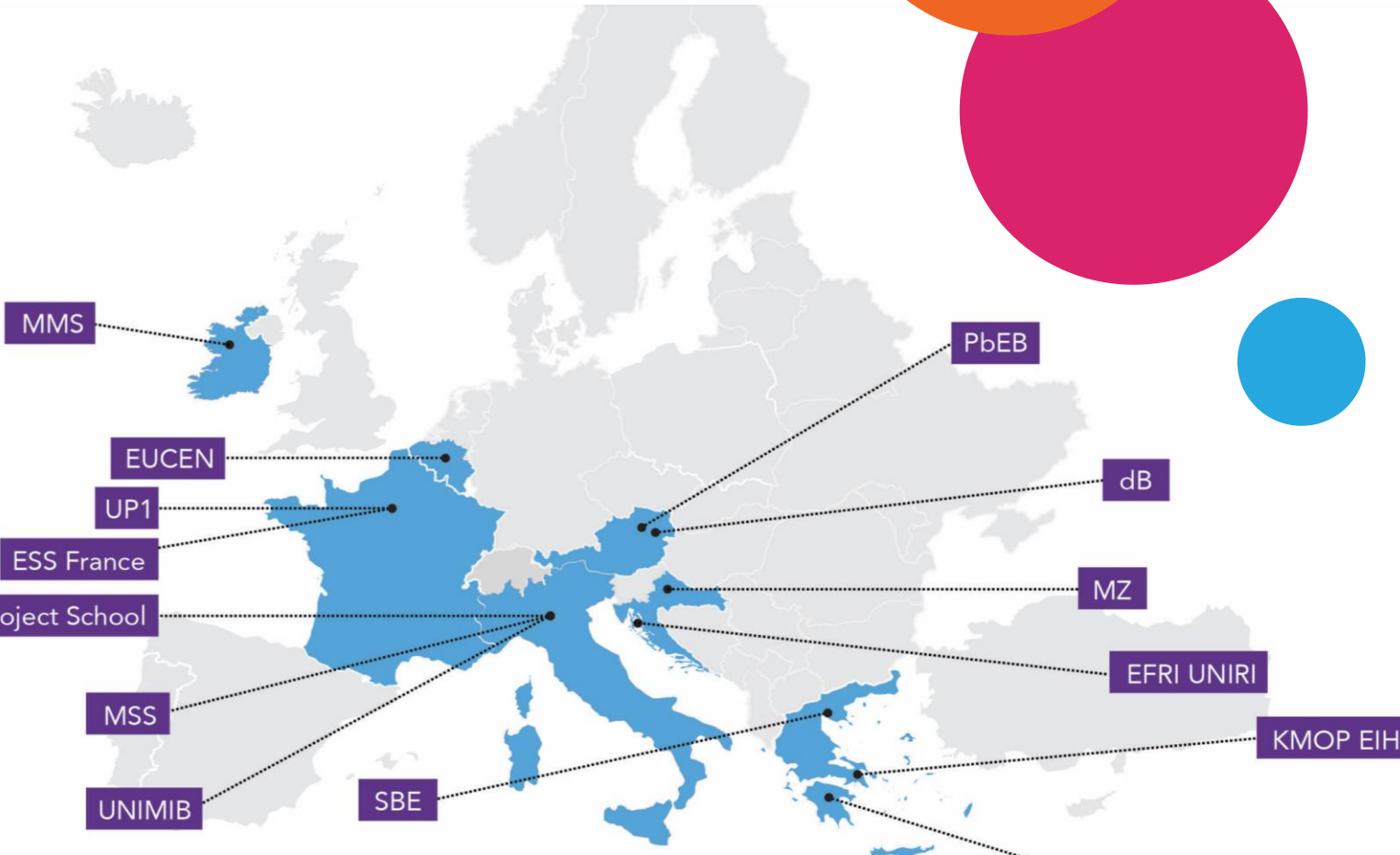
This is the reason why UNIMIB see the Social Impact Manager project as an incredible opportunity. We perceive the SIM program as a possibility to set free impact from its status as a

mere predictive or monitoring tool but instead to make it a concrete approach, a set of theoretical and practical skills to be taught to professionals that will then have the possibility to integrate it in ambitious and wise Corporate Social Responsibility strategies. In addition, by creating a transnational program and engaging several enterprises we also aim to promote a European debate and dialogue between enterprises and their territories, enforcing the role of CSR not just as an innovative accounting method, but as a concrete system to redistribute value to territories and to play its role in the impact revolution that we are witnessing.





Want to learn more about our work?



[www.simproject.eu](http://www.simproject.eu)

