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EFMD GLOBAL International Projects

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Catalysing Change: The EFMD International Projects Department

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The EFMD Business Magazine

SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT | International Projects

Catalysing Change: The EFMD International Projects Department

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Executive Editor
Matthew Wood | matthew.wood@efmdglobal.org

Editorial Assistant
Julia Greenslade

Design
Pili Pili Pigment | www.pilipilipigment.be

Photographs & Illustrations
EFMD unless otherwise stated

Editorial & Advertising
Matthew Wood | matthew.wood@efmdglobal.org
T +32 2 629 0810

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Rue Gachard 88 Box 3 - 1050 Brussels, Belgium

Contents

Introduction & Welcome to the Special Supplement | Eric Cornuel 3

20 years Timeline 5

Catalysing Change: The EFMD International Projects Department | Christophe Terrasse 7

• Testimonial C. Ramakrishna 13

Enhancing Entrepreneurial Skills and Increasing Business Competitiveness in the AI Era with Higher Education Projects | Maciej Pietrzykowski 15

• Testimonial Irma Grdzelidze 21

Contributing to Gender Equality in Higher Education | Anna Ginès i Fabrellas 23

• Testimonial Mabelin Armenteros Amaya 25

Navigating Challenges in Higher Education: The Impact of Capacity Building and International Collaboration in Developing Countries | Roberto Escarré 27

• Testimonial Marina Dabić 33

Towards a Third Mission University in Latin America: Reflections on IMPALA | Catherine Pereira Villa & Elyn Solano Charris 35

• Testimonial João Amaro de Matos 39

Strengthening Your Internationalisation Capacities with Projects | Jean-Baptiste Maillard 41

by Eric Cornuel

Introduction

It is a pleasure to introduce this special issue of Global Focus, marking twenty years of EFMD's engagement in international projects.

What began as a small unit has now evolved into a widely recognised specialist in international project management, having completed over 70 projects across nearly all world regions, reflecting the expanding global reach and reputation of EFMD.

Over the past two decades, the department has supported significant developments in higher education. These include supporting its increasing internationalisation, the establishment of entrepreneurship as a core area in management education, the digital transformation of institutions, the recognition of the societal role universities play, and a global shift towards greater inclusivity and gender equality in the higher education sector.

In recognition of these achievements, we invited our partners to showcase one project they were particularly proud to have undertaken with EFMD.

- **Christophe Terrasse** (EFMD) reflects on 20 years of existence of the department, highlighting its contribution to enriching EFMD's services to members.

- **Maciej Pietrzykowski** (PUEB) explores projects leveraging AI to prepare future entrepreneurs with skills for responsible innovation and enhanced business competitiveness.

- **Anna Ginès i Fabrellas** (ESADE) examines the EQUAL4Europe project's contributions to gender equality in academia, focusing on how it has addressed structural barriers to women's career progression.

- **Roberto Escarré** (Universidad de Alicante) underscores the essential role of projects in supporting Latin American universities' international engagement, quality assurance, and community outreach. He advocates thorough evaluation to ensure these initiatives deliver lasting, impactful improvements in higher education.

• **Catherine Pereira Villa** and **Elyn Solano Charris** (Universidad de la Sabana) reflect on the IMPALA project's role in shaping community outreach, entrepreneurship, and advisory services, fostering a socially engaged approach to higher education in Latin America.

• As a conclusion, **Jean-Baptiste Maillard** (EFMD) discusses how international projects enhance institutional collaboration and practical frameworks, supporting higher education internationalisation by addressing shared challenges.

Together, these articles illustrate the wide range of initiatives in which EFMD has taken a leading or active role. Collectively, they offer a comprehensive view of how higher education has modernised, one initiative at a time.

Other partners also kindly provided testimonials describing how their collaboration with EFMD has supported higher education development in their areas, and this complements the detailed description of the above initiatives.

The selection of the presented initiatives was challenging, and we are aware that this issue of Global Focus represents only a fraction of the many initiatives EFMD has supported. We hope that all our partners, regardless of the specific project, feel acknowledged and appreciated—for their trust in EFMD as a consortium member, for their achievements, and for the positive changes they have brought to higher education.

Happy reading!

About the author

Eric Cornuel | President of EFMD Global

20 years, 70 projects, and 13 milestones!

2001

The BISTRO project develops quality guidelines for management education in Central Asia. This is the first of a long series of projects aimed at proposing regional quality provisions in countries where management education is at the development stage.

2006

EFMD partners with AMDISA to establish SAQS South Asia Quality System, backed by EU's Asialink grant, training quality experts across Bangladesh, India, the Maldives, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and developing the first regional accreditation scheme for South Asia.

2009

The FOSENTHE project introduces entrepreneurship education in management, pioneering a series of initiatives to integrate entrepreneurship as a core component of management education.

ENTREPRE-NEURSHIP

2001 2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012

DIGITAL

E-learning is still nascent; EFMD launches eXeL, the eXploring eLearning project, igniting best practice exchanges in European management education. This project marks the start of EFMD digitalisation initiatives.

2004

Partnering with engineering education networks, EFMD launches three projects to create a quality referential for entrepreneurship education, supporting the sustainable industry approach and contributing to the quality of science and technology education.

2007

The EU delegation in Cuba mandates EFMD to modernise Cuban higher education, laying the groundwork for long-term collaboration with universities to support the evolution of Cuba's economy and foster non-state economic development. The long-term initiative will span over 12 years through the FORGEC and Intercambio de Expertos Cuba-Europe projects.

2010

2013

The TNE-QA project helps establish quality standards for transnational education in Armenia and Georgia, initiating robust partnerships in the Caucasus region, paving the way for other initiatives with the region's universities.

INTERNATIONALISATION

2018

Cooperation with Latin America intensifies, with Colombia added as a partner country. The IMPALA flagship project creates frameworks for universities' third mission development. Key learning points are later used to design the SQUARE project in Georgia.

2021

Continuing a long-term partnership with PUEB, EFMD supports European projects in green entrepreneurship and digital education, EFMD participates in FoDiGreT and DiSuDeSME projects

2025

EFMD launches its latest flagship project, PRODIGE, and collaborates with the Georgian Ministry, National Quality Agency, and major universities to prepare for the recognition of digital education, setting and establishing national quality standards.

QUALITY

2013 2014 2015 2016 2017 2018 2019 2020 2021 2022 2023 2024 2025

SOCIAL IMPACT

The FORINT flagship project supports Latin American universities in developing internationalisation strategies, and preparing similar projects in the Philippines and Tanzania.

2017

EFMD partners in three initiatives promoting inclusive, ethical management education:

- The IDEA project promotes inclusive digital education, answering an EU call for enhanced digital learning after the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Collaboration with Israeli institutions to develop capacity in inclusive social finance in the framework of the IFI project.
- Partnership in EQUAL4EUROPE (E4E) to advance gender equality in business and management schools.

2020

EFMD co-leads the DIVE project, advancing Higher Education digitalisation in Vietnam. It launches the EXIL project to aid European universities in welcoming exiled students, as part of the EU's response to Russian aggression in Ukraine.

2024

by Christophe Terrasse

Catalysing Change: The EFMD International Projects Department

The International Projects Department was formally established twenty years ago with the aim of creating a dedicated team to manage international initiatives funded by external donors, in particular the European Union. Prior to its creation, international projects—including its most notable one, the establishment of CEIBS—were managed by ad hoc teams of EFMD staff and external experts.

The first initiative of the Projects Unit (its original denomination at the time), undertaken in 2001, was a small-scale regional project initiated by the EU delegation in Kazakhstan. Its purpose was to support a regional network for developing quality guidelines for management education in Central Asia, where higher education management standards were in early development.

Since then, the structure has evolved into a fully-fledged department, that has managed over 70 projects with 474 partners across 61 countries worldwide. It brings an important service for EFMD members, and enhances EFMD's recognition and visibility both within and beyond its network.

This special edition of *Global Focus* acknowledges the department's valuable contributions to international initiatives. It also provides an ideal opportunity to share information on the department's achievements and ongoing projects with EFMD members. Despite the department's growth, it still remains relatively unknown to some members, earning it the reputation of being EFMD's 'best-kept secret'.

Service to EFMD Members

International projects primarily serve EFMD members, providing unique opportunities for engagement in the global discourse on the evolution and modernisation of higher education. EFMD members can advocate for management education's role in shaping higher education in Europe and beyond. Furthermore, joining international project consortia allows EFMD members to contribute to capacity-building efforts for universities in diverse regions.

Through these projects, EFMD members gain early access to insights, best practices, and educational innovations generated by global initiatives. As project partners, they also have the opportunity to network within consortia, building or strengthening relationships with peer institutions.

Collaborative Efforts

The International Projects Department collaborates closely with other EFMD divisions, drawing on their expertise for project missions and tasks. Experts from EFMD's networks are engaged as contributors to international project activities. Contacts from projects and consortia are invited to share insights with the EFMD community through

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conferences, publications, and awards such as the Excellence in Practice Award. Additionally, project outcomes related to higher education modernisation provide reference material for EFMD's publications and activities, promoting a continuous exchange and cross-fertilisation of ideas across the network.

EFMD International Projects Department Activities

International projects are highly varied in nature and scope, making it impossible to define a 'standard' project. However, these initiatives share certain common characteristics: they are typically undertaken by a consortium of partners, including universities, business schools, regulatory bodies such as ministries, and international agencies and organisations. The number of partners ranges from five to as many as twenty-five for the largest initiatives, involving participants from various countries within and beyond the EU.

2 to 5

A project typically represents a long-term commitment from the partners, who agree to collaborate over a period of two to five years, and occasionally longer.

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The nature and duration of the project naturally influence its financial scale, ranging from a few hundred thousand euros to several million.

The overarching goal of each project is to contribute to the modernisation of higher education, whether by implementing changes at the national level or by collaboratively addressing a common issue faced by consortium partners. Regardless of scope, successful projects require partners to share their expertise, adapt it to the specific context and needs of the target country, and work closely together to develop innovative solutions that can be adopted within and beyond the consortium.

Moreover, international projects serve as a vital means of promoting European values, including democracy, respect for diversity, and inclusion and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals.

The activities of EFMD's International Projects Department are diverse, both in scope and nature, depending on the project's area of intervention, thematic focus, and EFMD's role within the consortium. They can be classified into four main categories:

Project development and leadership

These flagship projects are led by EFMD, which assumes full responsibility from project development to management and accountability to the donor organisation. These projects often arise from direct requests, particularly from the European Union, which mandate EFMD to develop and oversee initiatives aimed at modernising higher education in specific countries or regions.

For instance, EFMD has led two projects in Cuba focused on introducing management education to support the country's economic reforms. Over a 10 year period, EFMD managed a consortium of European universities (from Spain, France, Italy, and Portugal) to train faculty, introduce new curricula in management and entrepreneurship, and establish structures within Cuba's nine largest universities to support the "non-state" economy and develop entrepreneurship.

EFMD also undertakes projects at the request of universities or public organisations, which seek support for modernisation programmes and their implementation. For example, a new project, set to start in 2025, will support the development of digital higher education in Georgia, where this delivery mode is currently not recognised by regulatory bodies. EFMD has designed the project, recruited consortium members from Georgia and the EU, and prepared the submission for the Erasmus Capacity Building for Higher Education programme.

EFMD will lead the project, coordinate partner contributions, ensure quality control, and report to the European Education and Culture Executive Agency.

EFMD is already co-leading a similar initiative in Vietnam to support the digital transition in Vietnamese universities, enhancing their capabilities and establishing digital education structures within each institution.

Additionally, EFMD has led and implemented other large-scale capacity-building projects to enhance universities' 'third mission', i.e., the dissemination of knowledge, and research outcomes beyond the academic community, in Latin America (Colombia, Panama, and Cuba) and Georgia.

Knowledge contribution within consortia

In some other projects, EFMD is invited to join consortia to provide expertise aligned with its core competencies, particularly in entrepreneurship, internationalisation and digital transition. Notable recent examples include projects on university internationalisation that were conducted respectively in Latin America, the Philippines, Azerbaijan, and Israel. EFMD has also contributed to projects establishing entrepreneurship centres in Southern Africa (Angola and Mozambique).

A special mention must be made of EFMD's core expertise in quality assurance and accreditation, which has provided the theoretical and practical foundation for numerous projects developing specific quality assurance frameworks. As mentioned earlier, one of the department's first initiatives was the creation of a quality assurance scheme for management education in Central Asia (Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, and

> "Moreover, international projects serve as a vital means of promoting European values, including democracy, respect for diversity, and inclusion and contribute to the UN Sustainable Development Goals."

Uzbekistan). This project was followed by a larger initiative to establish an accreditation system for management education in South Asia, in close collaboration with AMDISA (the Association of Management Development Institutions in South Asia). Launched in 2006, this accreditation system remains a benchmark in South Asian higher education to this day.

More recently, EFMD has contributed to developing a quality assurance system for transnational education (programmes delivered in a country other than that of the awarding institution) for Armenia and Georgia, in collaboration with the QAA (UK) and UNESCO. Additionally, EFMD supported the creation of a framework for assessing the impact of universities' third mission in Latin America. In Georgia, EFMD is also responsible for developing quality standards and guidelines for digital education, working closely with the Ministry of Education and the National Agency for Higher Education Quality as part of a flagship project on introducing digital education in the country.

Closer to its European roots, EFMD has participated in projects focused on advancing digital education, fostering inclusivity, and promoting innovative pedagogical approaches such as gamification, e-leadership, and e-skills development.

EFMD is also committed to socially oriented projects that aim to create a more inclusive higher education environment, promote gender equality in institutions across Europe, and prepare universities to integrate displaced students. A recent project, EXIL, in response to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, supports universities in Poland, Lithuania, and Bulgaria in welcoming Ukrainian students fleeing the conflict.

EXIL

A recent project, in response to the Russian aggression in Ukraine, supports universities in Poland, Lithuania, and Bulgaria in welcoming Ukrainian students fleeing the conflict.

Provision of technical expertise in quality management, impact evaluation and dissemination

EFMD frequently joins consortia to provide technical expertise in project quality management and impact evaluation, drawing on its established background in educational impact assessment.

EFMD's contribution is particularly sought for disseminating project results, leveraging the strength of its networks and international reach to maximise visibility and impact.

Equally important, though less visible to external audiences, is the expertise the department has developed in project monitoring and reporting. EFMD International Projects are primarily funded by international donors, particularly the European Union through its Erasmus+ programme. All these projects are highly competitive; for instance, the success rate for Capacity Building projects was approximately 15% for the last call in 2023. Meeting such stringent selection criteria necessitates advanced technical skills to formulate proposals that demonstrate their alignment with national and regional contexts and needs, quality of consortium, efficiency of activities, and potential for impact and exploitation. Each successful initiative typically involves months, if not years, of meticulous planning and preparation.

Once a project is selected for funding, quality control and reporting are essential. Since these initiatives are publicly funded, they are subject to rigorous control. In addition to regular financial reporting, projects go through stringent internal and external quality assessments and undergo systematic external financial audits. This requires a perfect understanding and expertise in internationally accepted financial reporting standards, combined with the specific management

procedures of the Erasmus programme. EFMD takes pride in the capabilities it has cultivated in these areas, establishing the department as a trusted reference for consortia in which it participates. This expertise explains why EFMD is frequently invited to take on a management or co-management role in projects, transferring knowledge to less experienced partners, particularly those from countries or regions with less formalised reporting systems.

In conclusion, the activities of EFMD's International Projects Department can be summarised in three main objectives:

- **Broadening scope beyond traditional EFMD activities:** while EFMD's core focus is on management education, the department actively engages with a diverse range of higher education actors. This includes not only business schools but also comprehensive national universities, specialised education institutions and vocational trainers, international organisations and donors, regulatory bodies and ministries. The department also serves as a bridge to other educational networks, such as the European University Association and the European Association of Higher Education, fostering cooperation and knowledge exchange at conferences and events.
- **Addressing transversal themes beyond management education:** the department explores areas of importance that may not directly relate to management education, covering cross-cutting themes such as the social impact of higher education, inclusion, and gender equality.
- **Operating in emerging regions for management education:** the department is active in countries or regions where management education is still developing, including the countries originating from the former Soviet Union, Cuba and the Caribbean, South Asia and Pakistan, as well as Africa, in particular Southern Africa, to mention the location of some of the recent initiatives. It has also established strong partnerships with institutions and networks in Central and South Asia, regions that are traditionally underrepresented within EFMD's membership.

In these ways, the International Projects Department complements and enriches the EFMD network, enhancing its visibility and recognition in diverse regions worldwide.

Reflecting on these 20 years of intense activity, some projects have long been completed,

Operating in emerging regions for management education: the department is active in countries or regions where management education is still developing, including Cuba, the Caribbean, South Asia, Pakistan, Southern Africa, and Central and South Asia.

having effectively addressed the issues they were commissioned to resolve, while others continue to bear fruit, contributing to the evolution of their respective national or regional educational landscapes. What endures, regardless of each project's specific impact, are the invaluable professional and personal relationships that have flourished over time and the commitment to work together with higher education professionals and institutions dedicated to the modernisation and advancement of higher education.

EFMD has gained significant recognition as a key player in promoting European values, advancing higher education, and acting as a catalyst for change, as stated in its mission.

The success of these projects has been made possible by the convergence of several critical factors:

- the financial support from our international donors, particularly the European Union through its Erasmus programme;
- the invaluable contributions of our partners, who brought their expertise and a collaborative spirit to work alongside EFMD;
- the continuous support of EFMD's leadership, particularly the vision and encouragement of Eric Cornuel, who decided to create the department and who always supported its growth;
- the credibility, expertise, and extensive reach of the EFMD network within the educational community;
- and, fundamentally, the dedication of the department team members, whose enthusiasm, professionalism, and resilience have ensured successful project delivery whatever the constraints, pressures, and sometimes adverse conditions they had to face.

Without this combination of factors, none of these achievements would have been possible. I extend my profound gratitude and am confident that the years ahead will bring even more accomplishments and successes.

About the author

Christophe Terrasse | Director, International Projects Department | EFMD

by C. Ramakrishna

Testimonial

"AMDISA - Association of Management Development Institutions in South Asia, established in 1989, is a network of Management Education and Management Development Institutions in South Asia. It is an international not-for-profit association and has 322 institutional members. Its mission is to 'Promote management education and management development activities in South Asia, taking into account the economic, social and cultural context of the region, with the firm dedication to the worldwide exchange of experience and ideas in the fields concerned'.

EFMD and AMDISA have a long history of association, the most noteworthy and identifiable of which has been in the context of EFMD's assistance in establishing the AMDISA International Quality Assurance programme – SAQS. SAQS was launched in 2003 by AMDISA and emerged from an EFMD-AMDISA cooperation through an EU-funded Asia-Link project in 2003-04. SAQS is inspired by EFMD's EQUIS criteria guidelines. Christophe Terrasse, Director of International Projects at EFMD was actively involved in the development of this programme. It is noteworthy to mention that since its launch in 2003-04, SAQS has completed over 80 accreditations in South Asia. More recently, having been inspired by the success of the SAQS International Quality Assurance project, EFMD's International Project Division has actively engaged with AMDISA in the formulation of the Erasmus Capacity Building Project to develop a quality assurance and accreditation system for distance/ digital education in South Asia. This project is in the advanced stages of report preparation and once approved by Erasmus will be another milestone in the EFMD Global and AMDISA collaboration. Being a regional association AMDISA values its time-tested partnership with EFMD's International Projects Division and is hopeful that such meaningful and relevant projects will continue to be taken up in the realm of management and management development in South Asia in the times to come."

- C. Ramakrishna -
Executive Director, AMDISA
Association of Management Development Institutions in South Asia,
University of Hyderabad Campus, India

EFMD GLOBAL
International
Projects

by Maciej Pietrzykowski

Enhancing Entrepreneurial Skills and Increasing Business Competitiveness in the AI Era with Higher Education Projects

Summary

Europe faces challenges to its competitiveness due to delays in digitalisation, high energy costs, and low levels of entrepreneurship. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) require support to adapt to green and digital transformations. Higher education plays a vital role in preparing leaders to leverage AI, develop innovative business models, and make decisions aligned with sustainable development. The integration of modern technologies with practical teaching, supported by multimedia and interactive tools, can effectively foster entrepreneurship. This approach allows universities to actively respond to market needs while promoting innovative and sustainable economic growth.

Introduction

The modern world is undergoing a highly dynamic transformation with the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and shortening innovation cycles.

Europe is at a critical juncture where a lack of action will result in a permanent loss of competitiveness and an increasing impoverishment of its citizens. According to a report prepared by a team led by M. Draghi (2024), despite Europe's considerable innovation potential, it has lost much of its former competitive advantage. The main problems include delays in adopting digital technology along with limited integration of AI tools, high energy costs, low levels of entrepreneurship and a reluctance to start new businesses, excessive bureaucracy and overregulation of the economy. A significant issue is the focus on setting ambitious environmental goals without adequate consideration of economic calculations or the potential impact of new regulations on the competitiveness of the economy. Particularly challenging is the situation of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), which are not sufficiently innovative and lack the financial, organisational, and human resources needed to energise the European economy and compete with firms from the United States and Asia.

Meanwhile, the modern world is undergoing a highly dynamic transformation with the development of artificial intelligence (AI) and shortening innovation cycles, creating the need to transform existing business models and develop new ones, which require rapid technological adaptation, and ongoing skills development among workers. In the face of climate challenges and technological changes, the fusion of digital and green entrepreneurship should pave the way for a new class of entrepreneurs who use technology not only to grow their businesses

but also to address environmental and sustainability challenges. However, it is crucial that this transformation focuses not only on maintaining, but also on enhancing, international competitiveness. The use of AI tools creates new opportunities for entrepreneurs but also requires appropriate support from the higher education sector, which plays a critical role in preparing young leaders and entrepreneurs to meet these challenges.

Integration of Green and Digital Transformation in Higher Education and VET Sectors

A review of educational curricula highlights a recurrent challenge: both green and digital transformations are often taught as separate domains, lacking integration. This fragmented approach results in students acquiring incomplete knowledge and skills, limiting their ability to make well-informed decisions that balance sustainability with economic growth. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) particularly struggle, frequently viewing green transformation as a financial burden rather than a long-term investment with the potential for significant benefits. Compounding this issue is the lack of tailored educational tools, real-world examples of successful implementation, and qualified instructors to guide learners in this area.

In response to these challenges and in cooperation with EFMD, we have implemented two projects in recent years focused on integrated thinking about digital and green transformation: one in the higher education sector— **FoDiGreT** (Fostering Digital and Green Transformation in SMEs) and one in the VET sector, **DiSuDeSME** (Digitalisation for Sustainable Development of SMEs).

FoDiGreT | Fostering Digital and Green Transformation in SMEs (FoDiGreT) develops a course on managing green digital transformation in SMEs. It has created an innovative curriculum with gamified interactive training videos, educational films and video case studies to increase the skills of students for managing green innovation in SMEs.

DiSuDeSME | Digitalisation for sustainable development of SMEs (DiSuDeSME) aims to improve the skills and competencies of employees in small and medium-sized businesses to accelerate digital transformation for sustainable development. The main results of the project are online training videos and a good practices guidebook.

In both projects, we developed innovative programmes and tools, created educational materials in visually appealing formats (educational films, video case studies, microlearning video pills, gamified scenarios), involved SMEs to reflect real business situations, and prepared tools for SMEs to diagnose their position on the path to green and digital transformation. We have observed that today's Generation Z has an increased need for visual forms of learning based on edutainment and storytelling. Our experiences indicate that in this type of business education, the following elements are of particular importance:

- **Integration of Experiential Learning through Storytelling and Film Production:** Utilising audiovisual techniques, such as film production and storytelling, engages students in practical and creative processes, making learning more dynamic and impactful
- **Implementation of Real-world Problem-based Learning:** Students analyse real-world cases presented through multimedia, fostering deeper cognitive engagement and practical readiness
- **Use of Multisensory and Inclusive Learning Formats:** Combining visual, auditory, and narrative elements makes education more accessible and engaging, catering to the diverse needs of different student groups
- **Collaborative Learning and Industry Partnerships:** Engaging SMEs in the creation of content bridges the gap between academia and industry, providing students with insights into real-world business environments and fostering collaboration
- **Utilisation of Scalable Digital Platforms:** Distributing course materials through scalable digital platforms expands accessibility and engagement, particularly for remote and hybrid learners
- **Development of Critical Thinking and Analytical Skills:** Interactive modules, decision-making scenarios, business simulations, and gamification encourage students to tackle real-world decisions and develop strategic thinking abilities
- **Interdisciplinary and Systems Thinking:** Programmes that integrate multiple disciplines equip students with a holistic understanding of interconnected challenges, enabling them to address complex issues effectively
- **Promotion of Ethical and Sustainable Thinking:** Encouraging students to evaluate the ethical implications of business and technological innovations fosters a sense of responsibility and sustainability in their decision-making

By integrating these elements into educational materials, we prepare students for future roles as leaders and entrepreneurs and foster transformative change towards a more sustainable and innovative society.

The Role of AI in Supporting Green and Digital Entrepreneurship

In today's world, it is difficult to ignore the importance of using AI tools in education. We are already implementing projects based on generative artificial intelligence tools in recruitment and training for the VET sector (e.g., the SMILE, CLAIM and VESTA projects). However, we also see the potential of using these tools in teaching entrepreneurship. AI can support the development of green and digital entrepreneurship in many ways. In the area of sustainable entrepreneurship, AI can offer innovative tools for monitoring, optimising, and managing resources. In energy efficiency, for example, real-time energy consumption analysis allows not only process optimisation but also a reduction in carbon footprints and the elimination of resource waste. In material management and recycling, AI can assist in identifying and sorting waste, optimising processes in line with the principles of a circular economy. Another critical application is in supply chain management, where better demand forecasting, production planning and transport optimisation reduces logistics costs and simultaneously minimises emissions associated with transportation. Additionally, through AI, entrepreneurs can create new, sustainable business models by leveraging precise predictions of consumer behaviour and market data analyses to identify future areas of demand.

In digital entrepreneurship, the benefits of integrating AI include the automation of business processes, such as monitoring orders, analysing sales data, and managing inventory, which significantly increases firms' operational efficiency. Predictive analytics enables the processing of large datasets and forecasting of market trends, revolutionising modern business intelligence. In customer relationship management, AI automates the collection of user data, monitors their behaviour, and provides personalised recommendations, improving the quality of customer service. Moreover, in cybersecurity, AI can detect potential threats, monitor unusual behaviours in IT systems, and implement automated preventive measures.

These examples of AI applications, which we are gradually integrating into educational programmes, highlight the potential for transforming both digital and green entrepreneurship. Such applications contribute significantly to increasing the competitiveness of businesses. Considering the growing expectations of students regarding tools and technologies that support their development, the higher education sector must actively respond by delivering curricula adapted to the demands of the modern market.

Embedding

AI

into educational programmes unlocks opportunities for students and professionals that were unimaginable just a few years ago.

How Can Higher Education Foster Green and Digital Entrepreneurship in the Age of AI

The higher education sector plays an important role in shaping future entrepreneurs. In a rapidly changing world, where technology and societal expectations redefine the purpose of education, effective learning must go beyond simply transferring knowledge. It must nurture future leaders capable of thriving in complex and demanding environments. Modern education requires a thoughtful combination of key elements that together form a solid foundation for the development of tomorrow's leaders. By reforming curricula, with projects such as FoDiGreT or DiSuDeSME, and rethinking daily practices, several interconnected priorities emerge.

The first pillar is digital literacy and the integration of artificial intelligence (AI). Embedding AI into educational programmes unlocks opportunities for students and professionals that were unimaginable just a few years ago. Advanced data analysis, process optimisation, and the creation of new business models make AI a tool that not only improves management, but also addresses global challenges such as climate change and resource scarcity. However, technology alone is insufficient. Understanding its context and societal impact is equally essential. This is where systems thinking and a holistic perspective come into play.

Modern leaders must grasp the interconnectedness of business, social, and environmental decisions. Such a perspective helps them understand that even local actions can have far-reaching global implications. Students learn to analyse long-term effects, moving beyond narrow definitions of economic success. Moreover, interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary approaches—combining knowledge and tools from various fields—are vital for creating innovative and sustainable solutions. Entrepreneurs and leaders equipped with this mindset can integrate digital technologies, sustainability principles, and market needs, effectively addressing challenges such as digital transformation and climate change. Encouraging students to think creatively and solve problems is equally important. Today's challenges not only require technical expertise but also the ability to apply it innovatively. Equipping students with critical thinking skills and the ability to design data- and AI-driven business solutions enables them to develop efficient and socially responsible models. Leadership and cultural sensitivity are also critical in the increasingly global and remote workplace. Managing diverse teams, fostering inclusive strategies, and adapting to different cultural contexts are skills that determine success in international markets. Lastly, modern leaders must be aware of their ethical responsibilities. While AI offers vast opportunities, it also presents challenges related to privacy, automation, and social equity. Preparing future leaders to balance innovation with ethical considerations is an essential part of their education.

Higher education institutions that integrate these elements into a cohesive strategy become more than centres of learning—they become drivers for social and economic transformation. By adopting such approaches, tomorrow's leaders will not only manage effectively but also inspire others, driving a more sustainable, responsible, and innovative world. With this foundation, Europe can once again reclaim its competitive edge in global markets.

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About the author

Maciej Pietrzykowski | Assistant Professor, Department of International Competitiveness, Poznań University of Economics and Business

by Irma Grdzelidze

Testimonial

"With projects, support, and shared experience, we are developing a higher education system that promotes excellence in academics and meets the challenges of our dynamic society. Cooperation with EFMD within the frames of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building projects has been highly beneficial in transforming the landscape of higher education in Georgia. Consequently, such projects as TNE_QA-Promoting Quality and Recognition of Transnational Education in Armenia and Georgia have enhanced our quality assurance frameworks for participating institutions to achieve international standards for transnational education. It has given substantial meaning to cross-border partnerships, raised the standard of academic curricula, and widened access to quality education.

The project SQUARE-Strengthening the QUality and RElevance of the 3rd mission in Georgian universities was instrumental for us in redefining our perception of the university mission. With multi-level stakeholder involvement we have managed to create a wider sense of societal engagement, knowledge transfer, and entrepreneurship as intrinsic parts of academic life. Indeed, this has been a cultural shift toward better collaboration between academia and the community where we have refined our goals, according to the needs of society, for effective change in education.

EFMD has been instrumental in supporting our conferences and linking us to various stakeholders and partners. This support has enabled us to expand our network, share best practices, and also learn from international experiences that have further enhanced our innovative and collaborative capacity.

Our recent engagement in the PRODIGE project, Promotion of Digital Education in Georgia for High Quality, has provided yet another example of our commitment to innovation. PRODIGE will foster multi-level policy development, quality institutional practices, and capacity building. It will equip the institutions with tools that will help them integrate digital methodologies within our curricula, ensuring that we are ready to meet the challenging demands of the education sector.

I am looking forward to the continuing fruitful partnership with EFMD, as we advance even further for the benefit of our institutions and communities."

- Irma Grdzelidze -
Head of Strategic Development Department
and International Accreditation Office at
Caucasus University and Associate Professor
Department of Education
Ivane Javakhishvili Tbilisi State University

EFMD GLOBAL
International
Projects

by Anna Ginès i Fabrellas

Contributing to Gender Equality in Higher Education

The EQUAL4EUROPE project, funded from 2020 to 2023 by the European Commission in the Horizon 2020 programme, was aimed at developing gender equality standards in higher education. The project, led by Esade, included the participation of six research institutions (Esade, ESMT, IEDC, INSEAD, RSM and Comenius University), one accreditation organisation (EFMD) and one independent monitoring organisation (Nehem).

The project focused on promoting gender equality in higher education and, specifically, at identifying measures to address the leaky pipeline in Arts, Humanities, Medicine, Social Sciences, Business and Law (AHMSSBL) research institutions.

The leaky pipeline phenomenon, present in many sectors and activities, refers to the declining presence of women in academia. According to She Figures, although women represent approximately half of PhD graduates, there are approximately only 30% women researchers, 20% with full professorships, and there are only 20% of European research organisations led by women. This phenomenon has been widely studied in STEM disciplines, where one important cause is the lower presence of women in undergraduate courses. Nevertheless, there was less understanding of the causes that explained the leaky pipeline phenomenon in AHMSSBL disciplines, where the presence of women in undergraduate courses has been high for many years now - in some cases, even higher than that of men.

The results of the project show that there are barriers in academia that especially affect women, hence limiting their opportunity and possibility of succeeding in an academic career. In this sense, in a world of uneven distribution of caring responsibilities between women and men, the challenges derived from balancing family responsibilities with the stringent requirements of an academic career (including travel, international mobility and long-hours) act as barriers for women in pursuing a career in academia. Unconscious or implicit gender bias also influences the recruitment, retention and career progression of female researchers, with significant differences between women and men regarding access to mentoring and formal or informal networks. Furthermore, there is evidence that suggests that sexual harassment - more present in male-dominated fields and organisations with a hierarchical power structure such as the academic career - acts as an important barrier for women to access or pursue a career in academia.

> “According to She Figures, although women represent approximately half of PhD graduates, there are approximately only 30% women researchers, 20% with full professorships, and there are only 20% of European research organisations led by women.”

In this context, the aim of the EQUAL4EUROPE project was to identify measures to promote gender equality in higher education and, specifically, to adopt measures to (i) remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and career progression of

female researchers, (ii) promote the presence of women in decision-making bodies and processes, and (iii) integrate the gender perspective in research and teaching and (iv) to mainstream gender equality.

Although higher education institutions have certainly made efforts in recent years to promote gender equality, it is important for institutions to continue to adopt institutional systematised measures to promote gender equality and, rather than easy fixes, focus on the structural issues and systemic biases that impact women in academia.

In this context, the EQUAL4EUROPE consortium published, among other documents, guides, practical tools, and the Position paper and recommendations for accreditation agencies to incorporate gender equality as part of the 'ethics and societal contribution' of the business schools. The study reveals that gender equality is already partially integrated into the most important and world-leading excellence accreditations, including EQUIS of EFMD. Gender equality is most addressed in accreditation schemes in the context of teaching, including criteria to ensure students a gender-sensitive learning environment and to share gender equality values, and workforce management. Strengthening the gender equality dimension in accreditation schemes, including, for example, areas less addressed, such as research, governance and community engagement, could further promote gender equality in higher education.

The inclusion of the gender equality dimension in current accreditation schemes is identified as an important driver for higher education institutions to continue pursuing gender equality. External requirements, such as accreditations or, for example, the Horizon Europe eligibility criteria to access funding, raise gender awareness and can act as accelerating agents of change.

About the author

Anna Ginès i Fabrellas | Project Coordinator EQUAL4EUROPE

Associate Professor of Labour Law | Esade, Universitat Ramon Llull

by Mabelin Armenteros Amaya

Testimonial

"The international projects FORINT and IMPALA are examples of good practices for the improvement of the quality and relevance of Cuban higher education. FORINT provided a methodology for the elaboration and implementation of strategic internationalisation plans in higher education institutions (HEIs). IMPALA developed an impact assessment framework for the third mission of universities. Both projects, part of the Erasmus+ programme, formed the theoretical and methodological basis for the conception and development of the INTESCUBA I and II projects aimed at all universities and Science, Technology and Innovation Entities attached to the Ministry of Higher Education. From these, capacities were generated for the rest of the HEIs, which allowed for the evolution of a more strategic, focused and assertive internationalisation process, with the integration of the international dimension in the institution's strategic planning and in line with the demands of the current context. Another relevant result was the creation of capacities in local actors that contributed to the development of innovative systems. With a national and international scope, the creation of the National Internationalisation Network (INTERRED CUBA) has allowed for inter-institutional cooperation, the exchange of good practices and knowledge transfer. Internationalisation is now a priority that enables the international dimension to be reflected in the university's mission and vision.

The alliance with EFMD and in particular, with its International Projects department, has contributed to strengthening institutional capacity. It has promoted the development of a process of incorporating new international trends into university management. Additionally, the partnership has helped Cuban higher education take advantage of international cooperation opportunities. This has supported the fulfillment of Cuba's commitments to the 2030 Agenda and addressed the priorities within the current Cuban context."

- Mabelin Armenteros Amaya -
Vice-Rector and Professor,
Agrarian University of Havana
"Fructuoso Rodríguez Pérez"

EFMD GLOBAL
International
Projects

by Roberto Escarré

Navigating Challenges in Higher Education: The Impact of Capacity Building and International Collaboration in Developing Countries

Summary

Exploring the critical challenges faced by higher education systems in developing countries, this text emphasises the role of donor interventions in addressing these issues through capacity-building projects. Successful international collaborations, such as the IMPALA and FORINT projects, have significantly enhanced university operations and internationalisation in Latin America. Both projects were coordinated by EFMD, and funded by the **Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Higher Education action**. The importance of employing robust methodologies to assess the impact of these initiatives is highlighted, ensuring they contribute effectively to sustainable development and improved educational frameworks.

Introduction

Navigating the complex challenges in higher education within developing countries requires strategic donor interventions and international collaborations. This article delves into these challenges, highlighting successful initiatives like the IMPALA and FORINT projects that have significantly advanced the internationalisation and operational efficiency of universities in Latin America. The discussion emphasises the critical role of robust methodologies in measuring the impact of such capacity-building projects, ensuring they contribute effectively to sustainable development and the improvement of educational frameworks.

Main Challenges of Higher Education Systems

Higher education systems in developing countries encounter numerous challenges. The most significant of these challenges include:

- **Inadequate Funding.** Developing countries often suffer from limited financial resources dedicated to higher education. This shortfall affects the maintenance of infrastructure, competitive salaries for staff, and provision of adequate learning materials and technologies, leading to a decline in educational quality and limited expansion of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs).
- **Quality of Education.** The quality of education in HEIs is frequently compromised due to insufficient funding, outdated curricula, and a lack of qualified faculty. Additionally, the focus on rote learning over critical thinking and practical skills further undermines educational outcomes.

- **Access and Equity.** There are significant disparities in access to higher education among different socio-economic groups, genders, and regions within developing countries. Barriers such as high tuition fees, inadequate preparatory education, and socio-cultural factors particularly limit educational aspirations for women and students from rural or low-income backgrounds.
- **Impact of COVID-19.** The pandemic exacerbated existing challenges, causing widespread disruptions in education. Many HEIs were unprepared for the rapid shift to online learning, revealing issues such as the digital divide, lack of technological infrastructure, and insufficient training for both students and educators on online platforms.
- **Policy and Governance Issues.** Ineffective policies and poor governance are significant hurdles. Decision-makers often fail to implement evidence-based or pro-equity policies, and there is frequently a disconnect between policy formation and actual needs. Corruption and lack of transparency further undermine efforts to improve the higher education sector.
- **Technological Challenges.** Despite the transformative potential of technology, many developing countries lack the necessary infrastructure and technical support to implement and sustain digital learning solutions effectively. This results in a significant gap in the adoption of modern educational technologies and methodologies.

Donor Contributions to Solving Challenges

Addressing these challenges requires a multifaceted approach. Here are some common strategies employed by donors in this area.

- **Long-Term Capacity Building.** Donors invest in developing human capital, reforming curricula, and establishing international networks. These efforts include scholarships for students and staff, supporting joint research projects, and creating new educational programmes that align with local contexts and needs. This strategy aims to enhance the resilience and self-reliance of partner institutions, ensuring sustainable improvements in educational standards.
- **Promoting Educational Quality and International Cooperation.** Donors emphasise academic exchange and collaborative research to strengthen HEIs and improve research capacities. These programmes facilitate mobility of students, researchers, and faculty members, fostering knowledge exchange and enhancing educational quality. They also aim to address brain drain by encouraging talented individuals to study and work within their home countries.

- **Systemic Challenges and Governance.** Donor programmes support projects that enhance institutional governance, improve financial management, and develop comprehensive quality assurance systems. This includes legislative reforms and governance enhancements, ensuring HEIs are better equipped to manage their resources and deliver high-quality education.
- **Inclusivity and Equity.** Donor programmes emphasise long-term capacity building that benefits all stakeholders, including marginalised groups. By providing opportunities for underrepresented communities and prioritising equity of access, these programmes help reduce educational disparities and foster social cohesion.
- **Alignment with Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).** Higher education initiatives are aligned with the SDGs, supporting projects that promote sustainable technologies, environmental stewardship, and social equity. Integrating SDG principles into educational initiatives ensures that higher education contributes to broader global development goals, fostering innovation and promoting sustainable economic growth.
- **Encouraging Innovation and Research.** Donors enhance research capacities and foster a culture of innovation by supporting joint research projects and promoting collaborative research through academic exchange programmes. This focus on innovation and research is essential for advancing higher education and developing knowledge economies.

30

With over 30 years of experience, EFMD Global has played a key role in coordinating and participating in international projects.

Measuring the Impact of Capacity Building Projects

By employing the following methodologies, it becomes possible to measure the tangible and intangible impacts of capacity-building projects in higher education, ensuring that donor investments effectively enhance the educational framework within developing countries and that progress is transparent to all stakeholders.

- **Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E).** Monitoring involves systematic tracking of a project's progress over time, including quantitative data (e.g., number of participants in trainings) and qualitative data (e.g., feedback from participants). Evaluation assesses the overall performance, relevance, effectiveness, and impact of the project through structured processes, including site visits, interviews, and review of project outputs.
- **Individual Level Assessments.** Tracer studies track outcomes for individuals who have participated in capacity-building programmes, such as changes in employment status and career progression. Qualitative methods, including interviews, surveys, and case studies, gather detailed insights into participants' experiences and the impact on their professional lives.
- **Organisational Level Assessments.** Evaluations focus on changes within HEIs, such as improvements in institutional governance, curriculum development, and research capabilities. External experts often use donor-provided frameworks to assess the sustainability and effectiveness of interventions.

- **Systemic Level Assessments.** These assessments examine the broader impact of capacity-building projects on the education system, including changes in policy, educational standards, and systemic governance. Comprehensive data collection and analysis are required to understand the long-term effects of interventions.
- **External Evaluations.** These evaluations cover various aspects of capacity-building interventions, including their effectiveness, efficiency, relevance, and sustainability, providing objective assessments and recommendations for improvement.
- **Impact Evaluations.** Focused on measuring the long-term effects and broader impact of interventions on the target population or sector, impact evaluations aim to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between the intervention and observed outcomes, often using rigorous statistical methods.

Examining EFMD's Impact: Case Studies on Capacity Building Projects in Higher Education

With over 30 years of experience, EFMD Global has played a key role in coordinating and participating in international projects, focusing on internationalising higher education, enhancing quality assurance, and exploring innovative approaches like open innovation and design thinking. More specifically, EFMD's capacity-building initiatives in higher education have created significant impact through projects like IMPALA and FORINT. These projects, funded by Erasmus+, have successfully enhanced the roles and internationalisation of universities in Latin America, particularly in Cuba, Panama, and Colombia, by developing frameworks, training experts, and embedding sustainable practices.

IMPALA Project | The IMPALA project, funded by the Erasmus+ programme from 2018 to 2022, aimed to strengthen the impact of Latin American universities. It involved 19 partners from Europe and Latin America, including universities and educational institutions from Colombia, Cuba, and Panama. The project focused on developing an Impact Assessment Framework (IAF) to measure the impact of universities' third mission activities, which include community services, continuous education, and research initiatives. Key achievements include training over 100 experts, creating significant reference materials, and integrating the IAF into regular operations of participating HEIs.

FORINT Project | The FORINT project, funded by Erasmus+ from 2016 to 2019, aimed to enhance the internationalisation of higher education in Cuba and Panama. Coordinated by EFMD, it involved seven Cuban universities, two Panamanian universities, and six European partners. Key achievements include a comprehensive situation and needs analysis, organising training seminars and study tours, and developing strategic plans and roadmaps for internationalisation. The project successfully raised awareness about internationalisation, involved over 500 participants, and embedded these practices within institutional frameworks, with support from the Cuban Ministry of Higher Education ensuring sustainability and wider adoption.

Conclusion

The article underscores the importance of addressing the multifaceted challenges faced by higher education systems in developing countries through strategic donor interventions and international collaborations. It also emphasises the need for comprehensive methodologies to measure the impact of capacity-building projects, ensuring that investments are effectively enhancing educational frameworks and contributing to sustainable development. A couple of contributions in the area by EFMD are provided such as the IMPALA and FORINT projects, which have successfully demonstrated how targeted capacity-building initiatives can significantly enhance the effectiveness and internationalisation of higher education institutions in developing countries, paving the way for sustainable improvements in educational quality and governance.

About the author

Roberto Escarré | Institutional Project Management Office | University of Alicante

by Marina Dabić

Testimonial

"FoSentHE, a transformative project funded by the European Commission: Education, Audiovisual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA) Tempus scheme from January 2009 to January 2012, sought to enhance entrepreneurship education across Europe and Israel. With EFMD as the quality assurance partner, the initiative united universities from Croatia, Austria, France, Israel, Lithuania, Poland, and Slovenia, fostering community and collaboration between countries, firms, and student organisations. The project was granted €1.1 million, and the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Economics and Business, led by Marina Dabić, was the grant holder.

The FoSentHE project set itself apart by introducing a pioneering curriculum that strongly emphasised sustainability, innovation, and integrated management. This unique approach engaged students and set a new standard in entrepreneurship education. FoSentHE established robust internal and external quality control systems, including publishing three books. These efforts ensure high educational standards across the consortium, providing our stakeholders with the assurance of quality and excellence. The FoSentHE project's legacy thrives with ongoing participation in e-learning initiatives. EFMD played a crucial role in the FoSentHE project. It provided a unique forum for information-sharing, research, networking, and debate on innovation and best practices in management development. EFMD's role as a catalyst to promote and enhance excellence in management development in Europe and worldwide was instrumental to the project's success.

FoSentHE has created a vibrant interdisciplinary research environment, encouraging collaboration among academics, entrepreneurs, and practitioners. This initiative enhances entrepreneurial education and lays a strong foundation for future initiatives. Results are a testament to the quality groundwork established by FoSentHE, led by UNIZG FEB, and quality assurance monitoring by EFMD, Christophe Terrasse, and Boriana Marinova. Students have directly benefited from the courses developed under FoSentHE, a testament to its enduring impact on entrepreneurship education. The project has left a lasting impression on 1,452 students from the Faculty of Economics and Business, University of Zagreb, who have attended the International Entrepreneurship course, with a new cohort of 137 currently enrolled."

- Marina Dabić -
Professor and Director for Accreditations
Faculty of Economics & Business
University of Zagreb

EFMD GLOBAL
International
Projects

by Catherine Pereira Villa & Elyn Solano Charris

Towards a Third Mission University in Latin America: Reflections on IMPALA

Four years ago, 11 different partners came together with EFMD's International Projects Department to typify the third mission of Latin American universities and develop a model to measure their impact; the project was known as IMPALA (strengthening IMPAct of Latin American universities). At the time, the pandemic had not yet been declared and the European Union had generously decided to cofinance the endeavour given the importance of measuring impact.

The partners of IMPALA were the Colombian Association of Management Faculties - ASCOLFA; five public and private Colombian universities, including Universidad de Antioquia, Universidad del Valle, Universidad Católica de Colombia, Pontificia Universidad Javeriana and Universidad de La Sabana; four Cuban universities comprising Universidad de Camaguey, Universidad Central "Marta Abreu" de las Villas, Universidad de Holguín, Universidad Agraria de la Habana "Fructuoso Rodríguez Pérez"; and two Panamanian universities, Universidad de Panamá and Universidad Especializada de Las Américas. For all the partners, IMPALA became an opportunity to better understand the role of universities in a societal context as well as a space to collaborate internationally and share best practices.

In fact, the relevance of IMPALA quickly becomes clear when higher education institutions (HEIs) are described around two main functions, namely teaching and research. However, these are not the exclusive focuses of HEIs. While prioritising teaching is generally associated with the so-called 'first mission university' and promoting research foments the 'second mission', HEIs also have a 'third mission' which pertains to their social contribution. Notwithstanding, this third mission lies at a wide range of intersections between teaching and promoting new knowledge amid realities that offer as many opportunities for innovation as instances of global crisis. Thus, HEIs' social contribution and impact are a complex phenomenon to pinpoint and measure given the heterogeneity and multidimensional character with which universities may affect a specific region, community, group, or field of knowledge.

In this context, it is not surprising that HEIs face challenges when it comes to declaring their influence on society beyond their commitment to teaching and research, and confronting the belief held by certain groups that HEIs are distant from real-world conditions. IMPALA was designed precisely to study how Latin America universities approach their impact; understand the specific regions they serve; rationalise and act on their responsibility towards their community; and reconsider how they can better transmit and transfer knowledge and technology to society.

Indeed, IMPALA defined four broad categories to analyse the third mission and used a sustainable development framework to include economic considerations, environmental protection, and social perspectives, while adding a fourth category described in the project as 'epistemological'. This last category combines the universities' first and second missions with knowledge and innovation management, to induce the engagement of what Campagnucci and Spigarelli (2020) would describe as 'non-academic stakeholders'. Thus, the project contributed an action model that identifies the main actors in a specific intervention as well as how they interact. As a result, the strategy for impact by a university is designed via a logical model that involves the relationship between resources, activities, products, effects, and the impact that is meant to be achieved.

In this context, the third mission has three broad outlets, which are formative development, research, and social outreach. For example, in formative development, one can find HEIs social contributions through lifelong learning programmes. In terms of research, HEIs may contribute via consultancy, advisory services, and innovation management training and applications. And in terms of social outreach, the study includes several community actions and services through which universities can promote cultural change and social assistance.

Hence, IMPALA defined a logical framework for impact measurement which contemplates the aspects that universities can control, specifically resources and activities, while the products, effects, and impact—which are less controllable—constitute the outputs and intended outcome. Together, these five elements are combined as part of a value chain that provides results.

Interestingly, while the term results may be translated into Spanish as 'resultados' and the term value chain is associated with an output, the term effect is related to an 'outcome', a term that does not have a direct translation into Spanish and has been frequently described in Latin America as either an objective, a purpose, or a result, a situation which has historically led to misinterpretations of what is meant to be measured. Therefore, IMPALA found that the different expressions of the third mission by Latin American universities and most of the institutional processes generating 'products', seldom involve measuring effects and rarely address impact. The two most common mistakes found by IMPALA involve on the one hand assuming that impact is the widest possible number of products that can be obtained, and on the other, that given those products there will be a specific impact.

During IMPALA, Universidad de La Sabana strategically chose to focus on two of the four categories defined by the project, namely economic considerations and social perspectives. This approach was based on the university's decision to develop its third mission through strategies as varied as adapting its organisational structure in favour of social outreach and co-creation, creating offices responsible for engagement, extending the reach of its business and innovation incubator, sharpening the objectives of its consultancy and advisory service, investing its resources in infrastructure to include applied research, developing a centre for translational science, and strengthening relations and follow-up of alumni.

The impact measures associated with the economic dimension and the social perspectives of the IMPALA model were explored respectively by the university through an entrepreneurship development programme that has provided mentoring to over 3,500 small entrepreneurs in 44 municipalities, mostly women, and the Service Consultancy, which has reached over 20,000 people in the university's impact zone through service, customer experience, hospitality, and social responsibility advisory, to promote sustainability among non-academic actors including both for-profit and not-for-profit organisations.

For Universidad de La Sabana the project contributed to the realisation that the third mission is part of the modernisation of higher education, in which a university is expected to be more multidisciplinary, cross-sectoral, socially impactful, and entrepreneurial. As a result, perhaps the most important reflection on IMPALA is that we should understand that social contribution and engagement by non-academic actors is about targeted impact in the long run, thus a part of a value chain that allows for the construction of indicators based on the specific community targeted for impact by each HEI.

> “Complexity theory shows that great changes can emerge from small actions. Change involves a belief in the possible, even the “impossible.” [...] Traditional evaluation approaches are not well suited for such turbulence.”
>
> **- Michael Quinn Patton -**

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About the authors

Catherine Pereira Villa | Dean and Associate Professor | International School of Economic and Administrative Sciences | Universidad de La Sabana

Elyn Solano Charris | Full Professor and Director of Faculty Development and Research | International School of Economic and Administrative Sciences, Universidad de La Sabana

by João Amaro de Matos

Testimonial

"NOVA University Lisbon, particularly its School of Business and Economics, has maintained a strong partnership with EFMD since the early days of EFMD's accreditation initiatives for business programmes and institutions. This collaboration began with programme accreditations and gradually expanded to joint involvement in European-funded capacity-building projects, fostering significant international development. Initially concentrated within the School of Business and Economics, the scope of cooperation extended over time to include the broader university and its diverse fields of expertise.

I was initially engaged in a project in Cuba, first led by ESADE and then coordinated by EFMD, to support universities in enhancing their management education capabilities. This initiative eventually evolved into the IMPALA project, expanding to other Latin American countries, including Panama and Colombia, in partnership with several European higher education institutions. IMPALA was meant to enrich their national quality control systems, at the time limited to the external evaluation of the teaching and research domains, by incorporating the measure of impact. This experience was highly rewarding and paved the way for further collaborations, such as the SQUARE project in Georgia, which aimed to improve universities' role in societal impact, and the UDI-Africa project, coordinated by NOVA in Angola and Mozambique, to empower African higher education institutions to promote sustainable, inclusive development in their regions.

Through projects in Latin America, Eastern Europe, and Africa, the collaboration between NOVA and EFMD has exemplified effective teamwork and aligned goals. While some planned initiatives in Israel, Senegal, and Mozambique did not materialise due to various challenges, the commitment and shared vision of NOVA and EFMD have solidified our partnership as a robust force in advancing Europe's higher education mission on a global scale."

- João Amaro de Matos -
Vice-Rector
at Nova University Lisbon

EFMD GLOBAL
International
Projects

by Jean-Baptiste Maillard

Strengthening Your Internationalisation Capacities with Projects

In today's globalised world, business schools encounter common challenges, such as the need for inclusive education, the growing use of digital tools across all sectors, and the importance of communicating knowledge and research to society. Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) cannot respond alone to the amplitude of these issues; peering with other universities with different expertise and backgrounds can help to develop innovative and practical solutions. Donor organisations, including the European Union, offer an excellent opportunity to address specific issues through international projects, including improving the integration of refugee students, developing a curriculum for entrepreneurs on sustainable development, or creating a framework to assess the digital inclusion of students.

This international cooperation through projects is a key aspect of the internationalisation of higher education. Many scholars and university practitioners intended to conceptualise this term to understand its scope, activities, and the role of university actors. In this case, internationalisation is to be analysed as a comprehensive process to expose the school to an international perspective with the engagement of all university actors and components. This international perspective is covered through various activities, from curriculum or joint research, to student services and staff training seminars.

While many international relations managers face difficulties engaging in new activities due to staff motivation, missing partners, or limited resources, a solution can be found in international projects. During the project execution, all university actors, faculty, senior managers, administrative staff, and students meet and exchange with peers to address common and practical issues, breaking down barriers to find solutions together. It is also an opportunity to meet with other institutions and people from new countries or disciplines that can pave the way for new partnerships. All in one, international projects support the internationalisation strategy of the institutions.

EFMD GLOBAL International Projects

Jean-Baptiste Maillard

Since **2000**, EFMD has participated in over **70** projects that have gathered **476** institutions, business schools naturally but also universities, associations of HEIs, and public body representatives to address common issues and find practical international solutions. EFMD brought its resources and management education knowledge to expand the outreach of the project results and ensure their applicability to the business school sector. EFMD was a pioneer in exploring new trends for international higher education, from collaborative digital tools for courses to international virtual internships. EFMD supported the internationalisation journey of its partner institutions and continues to share its experience through international projects.

EFMD has also designed projects dedicated to the internationalisation of higher education. From 2016 to 2019, EFMD managed the FORINT project to strengthen the internationalisation capabilities of Latin American universities. At its completion stage, **FORINT** exposed 300 university staff members from seven institutions to a broad range of internationalisation topics. It provided them with practical solutions on how to conduct research with international partners, how to create internationally-focused curricula, and how to facilitate international student exchanges. **This also encouraged a culture change on international affairs in each institution, which resulted in the increasing importance of the International Relations Office**, the department in charge of international partnerships and exchanges, as a central contact point within the university for all international affairs. It triggered the development of deeper regional cooperation among Latin American institutions, with the renewal of partnership agreements and their extension to other disciplines. Finally, it paved the way for future collaboration with European peers on different topics, such as assessing the impact of the universities on their environment or establishing entrepreneurship centres with international peers. Despite its conclusion in 2019, the FORINT project remains a stepping stone in internationalisation for the eight Latin American universities involved.

ANTENA | Internationalisation of Higher Education at the Philippines Network (ANTENA) accompanies the governance reforms at the ministry level to enhance the internationalisation capacities of universities in the Philippines. Activities included policy discussions, round tables and observation sessions in the Philippines and the EU, for the Philippine partners to be exposed to best practices in internationalisation and to streamline their internationalisation strategies and management guidelines.

ECAR | Establishment of the Rectors' Conference in Azerbaijan (ECAR) is a project that established the rectors' conference in Azerbaijan to promote networking and cooperation with national universities and support universities in their internationalisation strategies.

While FORINT focused on Latin America, similar challenges are experienced by institutions from other parts of the world. During the **ANTENA** project (2018 – 2022) in the Philippines, EFMD shared the experience and recommendations of the FORINT partners for creating PHL In-Net, the internationalisation network of 10 universities and the National Commission of Higher Education. As part of the **ECAR** project (2020 – 2024), EFMD has collaborated with Azerbaijani universities and business schools to establish the National Conference of Rectors, the country's first higher education cooperation platform. During the project, EFMD worked with various European associations of universities to present the role of international networks in their members' internationalisation strategy.

Today, EFMD continues to collaborate with business schools worldwide on internationalisation topics. Two Erasmus+ projects have recently been granted to strengthen the International Relations Offices' capabilities of African universities and Caucasian institutions. During their execution, EFMD will share its members' experience and expertise on international standards and processes for ensuring the quality of education, research, and international networking. Altogether, these projects will strengthen higher education in the two regions and continue to be one tool for all HEIs to engage in internationalisation activities.

About the author

Jean-Baptiste Maillard | Senior Manager, International Projects | EFMD

global focus

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SPECIAL SUPPLEMENT

Catalysing Change: The EFMD International Projects Department

YOUR SAY
We are always pleased to hear your thoughts on our publications. Please address comments and ideas to Matthew Wood at EFMD: matthew.wood@efmdglobal.org

EFMD aisbl
Rue Gachard 88 – Box 3
1050 Brussels, Belgium

Phone +32 2 629 08 10
Email info@efmdglobal.org
Website www.efmdglobal.org

Design by www.pilipilipigment.be

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