



The Academy of Business in Society

Highlights Report 2023

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Message from the CEO and Chairman



Dr. Ivo Matser EMP
Chief Executive Officer



Prof. Dr. Baback Yazdani
Chairman of the Board

Dear ABIS Partners and Members,

In times of uncertainty, the challenge of decision-making looms large. Society places upon us the responsibility to make choices that pave the way for sustainable development-decisions that resonate far into the future. This imperative is particularly significant in the face of the current turbulent landscape characterized by multiple transitions and crises. At the crux of it all lies human behaviour, a focal point that begins with us and the organizations we shape.

Our commitment to addressing this challenge was evident during our [Annual Colloquium 2023](#), a collaborative effort with Kozminski University. Here, the interdependence of multiple transitions took centre stage, with pivotal research shared and deliberated upon.

As we reflect upon the past year, it brings us immense satisfaction to recount our accomplishments. The third [Mentoring Programme for Early Stage Researchers](#), the publication of the [Special Issue "Driving impact through responsible investing and finance"](#), and the development of Scenarios for the Futures of Business Education in 2055 are among the highlights. Additionally, the launch of the [Sustainability Assessment for business schools](#) conducted among our academic members marked another milestone.

Looking ahead, we aspire to broaden our impact by bridging companies and business schools currently bereft of such opportunities due to resource constraints.

Our ongoing [Fundraising initiative, "Shape the Future,"](#) aims to empower these organizations to join our community, providing them access to the wealth of knowledge and experience within our network. We invite you warmly to contribute to this cause, facilitating collective, transformative actions that shape the future.

Anticipate a year filled with significant developments from ABIS in 2024. We will soon unveil the Scenarios for the Futures of Business Education, complemented by a tailored Scenario Exploration System- a serious foresight and gaming tool. Our unwavering commitment to EU Horizon Europe research projects continues, focusing on open science, enhancing researchers' careers and assessment, and envisioning the futures of circular economy practices. In the upcoming months, we will also share the date and place for our flagship ABIS Annual Colloquium.

In our pursuit, we stand steadfast in supporting our members to make informed decisions. View the ABIS network as a platform to continually refine your critical skills, share your impactful experiences, meet your peers, and learn from setbacks. After all, sustainability is a journey of continual learning by doing.

As we embark on the challenges and opportunities that 2024 holds, be assured that ABIS and our agenda will support you, ready to contribute to your endeavours and collectively shape a sustainable and impactful future, both at an institutional and individual level.

We will be at your service again in 2024.

Dr. Ivo Matser EMP
Chief Executive Officer

Prof. Baback Yazdani
Chair of the Board of Directors



About ABIS

ABIS was founded in 2001 and launched at INSEAD in 2002 with the support of the leading business schools in Europe (Ashridge, Bocconi, Copenhagen, Cranfield, ESADE, IESE, IMD, INSEAD, London, Vlerick, Warwick) in partnership with IBM, Microsoft, Johnson & Johnson, Unilever and Shell. The initiative was driven by a shared belief that the challenges linked to globalization and **sustainable development required new management skills, mindsets and capabilities.**

ABIS developed a strong role in responding to this need and it focused on **integrating sustainability at the heart of business curricula, corporate policies and strategies** by providing knowledge and capacity building. Some of our members have been part of our network since our foundation, which is as exciting as welcoming new members, learning and growing together into more responsible and committed individuals and organizations.

Our network

As one of the few existing business-academic networks, we nurture a unique experience and contribution to a more sustainable world. We trust that research and business have a role to play and we support and cross-pollinate joint efforts between academia and business.

Our network is big enough to always have new knowledge and ideas flowing, but also small enough to build strong and unusual bonds and create intimate spaces for brave discussions.

We care about our network priorities and needs. We encourage our members to openly share their progress, challenges and dilemmas to learn and further improve. This creates an inclusive community and environment where individuals feel safe to share and value each other's insights and experiences. This contributes to develop and scale up their sustainability efforts in research, education and responsible ways of doing business.

Our 4 Engagement Areas

In 2022, in line with ongoing developments, we updated and restructured our Membership Value and Engagement Opportunities, into the four engagement areas below. Our activities and highlights are summarised within these areas in the pages that follow.



We create resources and facilitate access to relevant insights and research and share best practices to develop sustainability change agency & leadership. We support our members and engage in EU projects on a variety of focused and interdisciplinary issues to drive sustainable development, innovation and change.



Our ambition is to make a significant contribution to the debate and the practice involved in equipping current and future business leaders with the knowledge, skills and capabilities for the long-term success of business in society. We create spaces and discussion platforms fostering thought leadership through our flagship or tailored events.



We empower and foster individual development, change agency and shared learning by providing access to business and academic experts, using effective tools and methodologies and creating supportive connections necessary to contribute to address environmental and social challenges.



We engage institutions by using long-term systemic thinking and management models designed for making continuous improvements, institutional strategy developments and stimulating innovations. We help to increase the outreach and visibility of our members' activities and results.

Knowledge Productivity

- ABIS Special Issues
- EU Research and Innovation projects

Driving impact through responsible investing and finance



ABIS Special Issue



In October 2023, the Special Issue on "**Driving impact through responsible investing**" was published in the **Emerald Journal Accounting, Management and Policy (SAMPJ)**. The Special Issue was initiated with a call for papers related to the 20th ABIS Annual Colloquium on the same topic and in light of other relevant initiatives ABIS organized concerning responsible investing, such as the **NN Investment Partners Responsible Summer Course 2021** and 2022.

We welcomed **responsible investing professionals, business practitioners**, as well as **scholars** in business to submit papers within the areas of:

- **ESG, Corporate Governance and Value Creation**
- **Responsible Investing approaches and performance**

The aim of the Special Issue was to help the ABIS business-academic network and beyond to gain and access relevant insights on:

- **How to enhance positive business impact on society through responsible investing**
- **The alignment among business and investors on investing in sustainable activities**

The papers included in the SI contribute to the existing body of knowledge by providing justifications and incentives **to apply more responsible business and financial models** as well as recommended course of actions and policy implications. Most of the papers included in the SI make the case for an **expanded role of the financial sector in supporting the sustainability transition** and call for concerted effort in developing ESG strategies, responsible investing approaches and regulatory frameworks to invest for the benefit of people, **communities, and society as a whole**.

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- Joan Fontrodona, Professor and Director of the Business Ethics Department, IESE Business School
- Luk Van Wassenhove, Emeritus Professor of Technology and Operations Management, INSEAD
- Ivo Matser, Chief Executive Officer, ABIS

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The Guest editorial can be accessed [here](#).

The full Special Issue with 7 papers are [here](#).

Business principles for the stakeholder capitalism era



ABIS Special Issue

We have been finalising our publishing efforts for the ABIS Special Issue: “**Business principles for stakeholder capitalism era**”. This initiative started in 2022 as a response to the **ABIS Value Creation Roundtables** and its resultant reports **Corporate Approaches to Sustainable Value Creation** and **Value Creation: A dialogue on Models and Methods** as well as the **21st ABIS Annual Colloquium 2022**.

The aim was to **move beyond specificities and fragmented approaches towards a holistic understanding of responsible business conduct** considering the **evolving concept of stakeholder capitalism**. This concept has been reforming the way we think about business and advocating for a system in which businesses are oriented to **serve the interests of all their stakeholders**. As such, it promotes **new and nuanced ways to innovate business strategies** and models for the benefit of society.

We invited academic researchers and practitioners to submit papers and cases on:

- **Stakeholder engagement in existing and new business models**
- **Stakeholder value approached and models**
- **Sustainable value creation**
- **Social value, fair trade and ethical business models**
- **Integrating business and ethics**
- **Purpose-driven businesses**
- **Co-creation of value**
- **Business model innovation**
- **Business models, management structures and incentives**

In **spring 2024**, we will publish **8 papers** and an editorial written by **our guest editors**:

- **Lisa Gring-Pemble**, Associate Professor of Business and Co-Executive Director, Business for a Better World Center, **George Mason University**
- **Manuela Brusoni**, Associate Professor of Practice of Government, Health and Not for Profit, **SDA Bocconi School of Management**
- **Ivo Matser**, Chief Executive Officer, **ABIS** – The Academy of Business in Society

The Special Issue will be published with the collaboration of the **Emerald journal Corporate Governance: The International Journal of Business in Society**.





Realizing the Transition Towards a Circular Economy (ReTraCE)

EU Research and Innovation projects

Since 2018, ABIS was part of a consortium led by **University of Sheffield** in **EU Horizon 2020 project under the Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions (MSCA)** called **"ReTrace" - Realizing the Transition to the Circular Economy**. The consortium was composed of *University of Sheffield, Università degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope, Universitaet Kassel, SEERC, ABIS, Hogskolan Dalarna, University of Kent, TATA Steel UK, Olympia Electronics and Erasmus Universiteit Rotterdam*. The partners also include *University of Exeter, Leeds University Business School, University of Ulsan and Shanghai Jiao Tong University*.

The main aim of the ReTraCE project was to create **a cohort of professionals capable of driving the transition towards the Circular Economy** and employable not only by research institutions, but also by public sector bodies (e.g. local authorities and national agencies) and manufacturing and service sectors including: metals industry, electric and electronic equipment manufacturing, construction materials and waste management. The consortium delivered world class multidisciplinary training to **15 Early Stage Researchers (ESRs)** offering them an extended and valuable program of international exchanges and secondments through the wide network of partner organisations from public, private and third sectors.

One of these 15 researchers was Dr **Josep Pinyol**, who was hosted by ABIS since May 2019 until finishing his doctorate at the *University of Exeter Business School*.

During the project, we organized two successful **project meetings with industry and policy experts** online and in Brussels in May 2020 and December 2021, with the aim to **support the professional development** of the ESRs while gaining practical information from experts working in the field.

In 2022 we organized **two Scenario Exploration System** workshops which were designed to explore two **potential pathways for a Circular Economy by 2050** during the **Final ReTraCE event** held in **Thessaloniki**. The workshops were delivered to around **15 Early Stage Researchers** from the ReTraCE consortium, together with their supervisors and other consortium partners. The second workshop was held with the collaboration of another project **JUST2CE** and **local stakeholders** were invited to participate in order to discuss practically how the **region of North Macedonia can embark on the circular transition**.

On 29th of March 2023, we were delighted to host the closing meeting in Brussels, where we celebrated the success and accomplishments, alongside **communicating policy briefs and recommendations** of the project outcomes.

Please find more information on the results on [the official website here](#) or at [Cordis website](#).

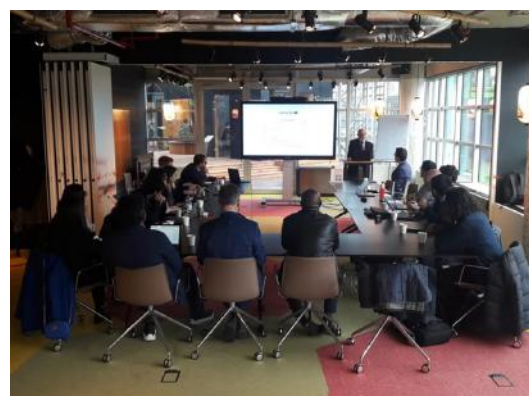
Even if the project has ended, the consortium partners wanted to continue working together and decided to set up **The Circular Economy Research Club (CERCL)**, a member-governed association dedicated to furthering research and teaching on the circular economy. Its aims include:

- Promoting interdisciplinary discourse and research
- Fostering joint grant applications and exchange projects
- Promoting teaching in the circular economy
- Offering consultancy services on a non-profit or pro-bono basis
- Providing a repository for information - via online channels - on jobs, research funding opportunities, events etc.

ABIS is pleased to be one of the **founding members** of CERCL together with *University of Sheffield, University of Vigo, University of Naples Parthenope and the South-East European Research Centre*.

ReTraCE

Realising the Transition towards the Circular Economy





Open and Universal Science (OPUS)

EU Research and Innovation projects

The project **OPUS: Open and Universal Science** under the **Horizon Europe** programme, HORIZON-WIDERA-2021-ERA-01 call, with the duration of 36 months, officially started off with a kick-off meeting in September 2022 in Gran Canaria, the headquarters of the coordinator partner PLOCAN. The consortium led by PLOCAN has **18 academic and non-academic partners**.

The project aims to:

- Conduct a comprehensive state-of-the-art on existing literature and initiatives for Open Science (OS)
- Develop a comprehensive set of interventions to implement Open Science
- Develop realistic indicators and metrics to monitor and drive Open Science
- Test the interventions and indicators and metrics via action plans in pilots
- Utilise a stakeholder-driven feedback loop to develop, monitor, refine, and validate actions
- Synthesise outcomes into policy briefs and a revised OS-CAM2 for research(er) assessment

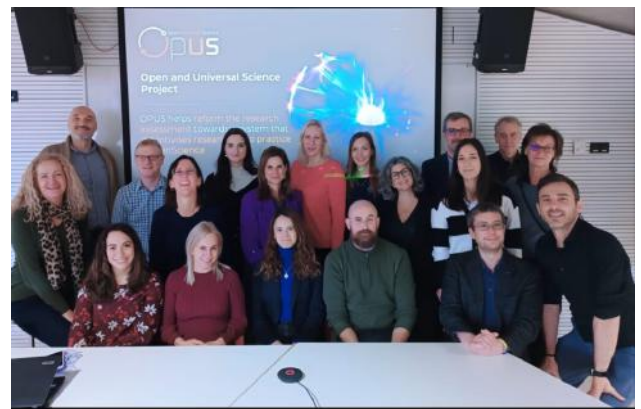
OPUS collaborates directly with three **Research Performing Organizations (RPOs)** (Nova University Lisbon, University of Rijeka, University of Cyprus) and two **Research Funding Organizations (RFOs)** (RCL, UEFISCDI) to test and pilot **the implementation of the Research Assessment Framework**. The initiative also focuses on the practical **integration of Open Science Principles** in these pilot RPOs and RFOs, aiming to influence other organizations in providing rewards and incentives for researchers. These pilot organisations will learn from both each other and draw experience from external experts in **mutual learning exercises**. The results of the pilots will be translated into **policy briefs** and thematic workshops that will help to raise awareness, build trust, and drive the uptake of Open Science in the community.

During the **OPUS Annual General Meeting** in November 2023 in Prague, Czech Republic, it was showcased not only the achievements of the past year but also set the stage for a future where Open Science principles and researcher assessment frameworks take center stage. Leaders from each work package showcased their achievements in the project's first year and laid out a roadmap for the next two years.

Currently, the RPOs and RFOs are starting to pilot their chosen sets of interventions and metrics, which will be co-monitored closely.

In order to maximise the relevance and benefits of the framework of indicators and metrics, we are also **gathering inputs from our business-academic network on the understanding of OS, existing or planned engagement, practices and policies for OS**. We are also providing with **industry perspective** on the **challenges and opportunities in implementing OS**.

Please find more information at the [OPUS official website](#) or at [CORDIS page](#).





Sustainable Careers for Researcher Empowerment (SECURE)

EU Research and Innovation projects

The Sustainable Careers for Researcher Empowerment (SECURE) project, granted by the EU under the Horizon Europe programme for the duration of 2 years, has kicked-off its mission in January 2023 at the coordinating institution **PLOCAN** headquarters in Gran Canaria together with all 18 partner organisations across Europe.

The aim of the project is to develop coordination and support measures to create, trial, implement, and mainstream a common **Research Career Framework (RCF)** and **Tenure Track-like Models (TTL)** that offers a comprehensive suite of options to support organisations in the recruitment, employment, training, development, progression, and mobility of researchers with **the aim of improving research careers and reducing career precarity**. The RCF will link the training and development of skills and competencies to researcher profiles as well as **career progression** from one researcher profile to the next and **mobility** in terms of transitioning to other positions **in and outside academia**. The draft RCF and TTL will be shared in **public consultation** with the **stakeholder community** via surveys and interactive feedback sessions to test and refine and validate, as well as drive interest and future uptake of the RCF and TTL.

SECURE will **test** aspects of the RCF and TTL models in trials in four Research performing organisations (RPOs) (namely Plocan, UCY, UNIRI, and UNL), one Research funding organisations (RFO) (namely UEF), and one recruitment agency (namely ADOC). The trial organisations will first conduct a scoping exercise to map the RCF onto their existing policies and activities for research careers before developing integration plans on how the RCF could be adopted into their existing policies and activities. The trial organisations will develop action plans, selecting relevant aspects from the integration plans, to test and implement during the trials.

SECURE will mainstream the RCF and TTL models through a **series of policy briefs** and a **policy roundtable** that will explain key aspects of the RCF and TTL models to relevant organisations employing researchers. The RCF and TTL models will be further promoted through key partner organisations in the project targeting researchers and companies.

For more information please consult [the official SECURE website](#) or [CORDIS](#).

Last project meeting was held in Rijeka, at one of our piloting organisations University of Rijeka. At the project's midpoint, the project work package leaders provided an overview of the work and the successes accomplished so far and discussed the next steps to deliver throughout 2024 and beginning of 2025.

ABIS is engaged in the project in **providing insights from our network, involving business communities and bringing industry perspective and creating recommendations on how to facilitate, recognize and reward intersectoral mobility and promoting the models to business** in order to **strengthen the interaction with business for access to labour market**. We will also use all the **project outcomes to disseminate and exploit with our academic members**.





Exploring Plausible Circular Futures (ExPliCit)

EU Research and Innovation projects

The project **“Exploring Plausible Circular Futures” (ExPliCit)**, funded by the EU under the Horizon Europe programme, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions Staff Exchanges.

This project calls for opening up a debate to **deconstruct the increasingly hegemonic discourse of Circular Economy** based on a technocratic approach and reconstruct it by **embedding normative and political dimensions**, looking at a **plurality of plausible CE futures**, and discussing their implications in terms of the **organisation of production and distribution networks**, also **involving a wide set of stakeholders**. As such, the project will involve a **plurality of disciplinary perspectives**, in order to **devise future supply chain configurations** that could be implemented in specific industrial sectors under specific CE scenarios.

A wide array of non-academic beneficiaries ensures that the project will be capable of **realising and sharing relevant knowledge transfer through secondment mechanisms**.

The project includes **10 partners**:

- The coordinator: *Università Degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope*
- Academic partners: *University of Vigo, Università Degli Studi di Catania, University of Sevilla, University of Sheffield*
- Non-academic partners: *CNA Campania Nord, Federco, AAEL, Revertia and ABIS*

The kick-off meeting took place at Università degli Studi di Napoli Parthenope, in Naples in January 2023 and served to start organizing the related tasks and plan secondment action plans.



In the months of February and March 2023, the ABIS colleagues Karolina Sobczak and Katarina Haluskova had the opportunity to spend one-month secondments at the University of Vigo (UVIGO), Post-Growth Innovation Lab in Pontevedra, Spain. From the groundwork, a first project outcome was published on **„Techniques of Futuring: Portfolio of techniques and critical reflections“**. The report features a collection of **most employed futuring techniques** that the authors have identified in relation to envisioning and studying preferred CE futures. The aim was to **summarise the work on Techniques of Futuring (ToFs)** in a comprehensible way and enable practitioners and researchers to tackle the challenging task of **imagining the future in a systematic and organised manner, within the context of the circular economy**.

ABIS also delivered the **Techniques of Futuring for the CE foresight deliverable**, and tailored the **Scenario Exploration System (SES)**, the serious and foresight gaming tool, for the **Circular Economy scenarios**.

In the upcoming months, ABIS will be organising **three stakeholder workshops** in **Brussels** (April 2024), **Pontevedra** (June 2024) and **Sheffield** (2025) to involve European and local business representatives, policy makers, civil society and consumers, and engage them in exploring the circular economy scenarios via the SES.

Please find more information at [the official ExPliCit website](#) or at [CORDIS](#).



Events & Opinion Leadership

- ABIS events
- Opinion Leadership

22nd ABIS Annual Colloquium



"Navigating Multiple Transitions"

On November 14-15, 2023 in Warsaw, ABIS welcomed our members, speakers and other participants at our 22nd Annual Colloquium on the topic "Navigating multiple transitions". The event served as a meeting point for our business-academic network and broader community, during which we had the opportunity to reflect on the complexities, competing priorities and wicked problems that decision makers in business, business education and policy makers must face to make sustainability a reality.

The resilience of our socio-economic systems and sustainability commitments have been put to test in recent years by the COVID-19 pandemic, the war in Ukraine and the energy and cost-of-living crises, among the others. Transitions that are often thought of as two sides of the same coin present considerable challenges when tackled in practice. For instance, accelerating decarbonization is much needed for tackling climate change; at the same time, conserving and restoring biodiversity is essential for limiting emissions and adapting to climate impacts. Such transitions are multi-faceted, need to happen fast, but they also have to happen in a fair and inclusive way.

The Colloquium welcomed **managers, practitioners and academic experts in business and management studies** who want to enhance action on social and environmental sustainability in a world in transition towards more inclusive, stakeholder and regenerative models. We were pleased to host, in-person and online, **70 participants** representing **40 organizations** and **17 countries**.



The official program started with a keynote speech by Paweł Nizinski, CEO of **B Lab Poland** and **Better**, on "**Transforming business and integrating sustainability in its DNA**". The keynote speaker highlighted the struggle between business as usual and the imperative of sustainability and shared that, despite alarming trends, there is hope in the growing scale of change towards sustainability. The B Corp movement was presented as a positive force building on the recognition of interdependencies. The speech concluded with a call for a transformative shift from "ME" to "WE" and "EGO" to "ECO", urging individuals to inspire positive change through tangible actions.

Next, a panel discussion on "**Multiple transitions compass: embracing transformative**" with speakers Leon Wijnands from **ING**, Boleslaw Rok from **Kozminski University** and Laura Maria Ferri from **ALTIS Graduate School of Sustainable Management**, analyzed the most important transitions currently affecting business practice and how to navigate opportunities and risks. Key points discussed included legislative changes incentivizing sustainability, but often leading to compliance over positive impact, ethical concerns over the desirability, a more political role of firms, and balancing interdependencies with practical solutions. While no definitive answer emerged, step-by-step approaches and sector-specific solutions with systemic awareness were highlighted for sustainable transformation.

During the first day, we also took a deep dive into two sets of breakout sessions. In the morning, the contributors and audience focused on discussing the:

- **Ethical and DEI Transition:** embedding a strong ethical culture and diversity, equity, and inclusion in business
- **ESG Transition:** the evolving landscape of responsible business & ESG regulations

While in the afternoon, we addressed the:

- **Climate Transition:** tackling the climate emergency proactively
- **Just Transition:** restoring biodiversity and shifting food systems

22nd ABIS Annual Colloquium



"Navigating Multiple Transitions"

On the second day of the event, two more in-depth sessions engaged speakers and participants in tackling the:

- **Business model Transition:** making businesses the best for the world
- **Financial Transition:** tools for the sustainable finance shift



Across the two days, **four different research tracks** took place, with 16 academic experts presenting their research findings on:

- Transitioning to sustainable energy and business models
- Reshaping business practice and education
- Exploring the impact of artificial intelligence and digital technologies
- Investigating sustainability transitions across sectors and geographies

The second day of the event featured an awaited keynote speech focusing on **"Towards a Decarbonized & Regenerative Economy: Charting the Path Forward"** by Joanna Wis-Bielewicz, Head of Market Development, **Ørsted Poland**. Building on her personal journey spanning four years with Orsted and in climate activism since 2004, the speaker highlighted the idea of the "great turning" towards sustainability that is currently taking place. Heroes of this turning include environmental leaders and the architects Paris Agreement, among the others. The focus then shifted to Orsted's transformation from fossil fuels to renewables. Orsted's global influence, **ambition for climate neutrality and biodiversity-positive targets**, step-by-step journey, and engagement with climate disclosure initiatives were highlighted.

Lastly, the event was closed by a panel on **"Transformative Education for Sustainability: Shaping the Future of Learning"** with speakers Franjo Mlinaric from **Kozminski University**, Giorgia Calvaresi from **Junior Enterprises Europe** and Karolina Sobczak from **ABIS**. The plenary emphasized the need to redefine the purpose of **business education beyond employability**, urging changes to **prepare students for the complexities** of the modern world. The speakers discussed the need for experiential and life-long learning, the potential of sustainability-focused awards, aligning academic incentives with sustainability efforts and the role of non-academic actors, such as ABIS. The session called for a shift towards change agency, stakeholder involvement, interdisciplinary approaches and the adoption of learning methods consistent with a more inclusive, participatory, and circular paradigm. The session included an overview of the **Futures of Business Education 2055**, which will be released by ABIS shortly.

The main insights from the event are summarized in [the event report](#).

The researchers and our business-academic community was welcome to submit their papers connected to the theme of Colloquium to our prepared Special issue in the [Emerald journal of Corporate Governance](#).



Professional Development

- Mentoring programme
- Scenario Exploration System

ABIS Mentoring Programme



Mentoring Programme for Early Stage Researchers

In line with our mission, the ABIS Mentoring Programme aims to **strengthen the learning and development** for **Early Stage Researchers (ESRs)** and **creating supportive connections** that are necessary in order to contribute to address today's environmental and social challenges.

Many ESRs today seek to find their ways developing their careers while also contributing to **make a positive impact**. At ABIS, we have hosted many young and talented researchers at events and conferences, and having been involved in many MSCA International Training Networks, we perceive how **in need ESRs are of both personal and professional support** to flourish in their careers and **take part in the sustainability transformation**.

Over the course of 2023, we successfully concluded the second edition of the programme running from October 2022 until June 2023 and launched a third cohort in September 2023.

During the **2022-2023 edition** we had the pleasure to accompany **6 mentor-mentee couples**, representing 9 ABIS institutional members, including a corporate member, from 4 countries (Belgium, Italy, United Kingdom, United States).

The core of the programme is a set of **6-8 hours of 1:1 mentoring sessions** from our **highly experienced mentors** over **9 months**, helping ESRs progress in their careers and make an impact on society. The programme also includes **regular workshops** and **online calls** organized by ABIS. The whole programme lasts **9 months**.

In the course of 2023, in order to further support the ESRs' professional development and growth and help mentors in their role, we hosted several informal sessions and 2 workshops. The two workshops focused on the topics:

- **Researchers as changemakers** - research impact vs academic rigour, featuring Andrea Werner and Tim Freeman from Middlesex University and
- **Responsible Research for business and management** with Peter McKiernan from University of Strathclyde.

In the final months, sessions were organized to gain feedback and insights from participating mentors and mentees and we were pleased to finish off with a celebration event on 22 June 2023.

Throughout summer to September 2023, we welcomed close to 60 applications from mentee and mentor candidates for the third cohort of the programme. After a thorough match-making process and kickoff event, the **2023-2024 edition** started in October 2023 with **9 mentor-mentees couples** from 17 institutions and 15 countries across 4 continents. This edition will conclude in June 2023.

The calls for mentors and mentees for the upcoming 2024-2025 mentoring programme will be communicated by summer 2024. The expected beginning of the next Mentoring programme is September 2024. To learn more about the details of the programme and the requirements to participate, you can [access the Mentoring Programme's webpage](#).

How does a mentoring relationship look like? 

Mentoring is an **equal and reciprocal** relationship

- centered around mentee's challenges and needs, but beneficial for both
- defined by concrete steps and process
- taking place within a set time-frame
- voluntary (!)
- both parties engage, nurture relationship and evaluate roles
- parties do not necessarily have a similar profile
- all information shared is confidential



Scenario Exploration System



Throughout 2023, we have been again engaged in mainstreaming the use of the Scenario Exploration System (SES) within the ABIS network and beyond. According to UNESCO, **futures literacy is an essential competency to face of our societal challenges**, and we are pleased to support our members and clients to integrate it across curricula thanks to the SES.

The SES is serious gaming and foresight tool that helps participants to explore systemic and long-term thinking while interacting with different societal stakeholders and exploring alternative future scenarios. During our SES-based activities participants are able to explore different future realities through engaging in a simulation or role-play in order to better anticipate possible future developments and make informed decisions and strategies in the present to shape the future.

As part of our Professional development area, in 2023 we delivered the following services:

• SES Taster Sessions

In order to share the tool with our network and beyond, we offer free, regular one-hour Taster Sessions. In this session we give a quick overview of the tool and showcase a practical and interactive example of how to play digitally. The participants gain a better understanding about the key benefits, learnings, and the dynamics of the tool. In 2023 we organized 4 Taster Sessions with over 25 participants.

• SES tailored workshops

The ABIS SES workshops have gained a lot of interest in recent years. We take great care when organizing and facilitating a SES workshop as the tool is highly versatile and can be tailored to different needs, scenarios or topics. The SES can be used in academic context as a teaching tool, but also for strategic aims for internal management teams in business, academia and many other settings.

Find out [more about the SES here.](#)

Exploring foresight scenarios for the EU bioeconomy

Between autumn 2022 and spring 2023, we were mainly engaged within the policy making context in which the SES was originally created. Building on the growing foresight knowledge and competences ABIS have been developing, we were proud to support the **Joint Research Centre (JRC) of the European Commission** to organise, tailor and facilitate 3 workshops utilizing a newly developed, specialised version of the SES **“Bioeconomy 2050”**, exploring bioeconomy foresight scenarios. Following 2 workshops we facilitated in October and December 2022 in Brussels, focused on the European bioeconomy in its entirety, in May 2023 we facilitated a third workshop in Ispra, Italy focused on the central and eastern European region. Thanks to our involvement, **over 130 stakeholders** from **over 17 countries** from **different sectors** (primary producers, business representatives, policy makers, consumers and youth ambassadors) actively **imagined and explored how to strengthen** the development of the EU bioeconomy and accelerate progress towards a circular and low-carbon economy.

The outcomes of the SES contributed to the drafting of **policy recommendations** and will be further applied to **foster the EU debate on bioeconomy** and shape its strategy. The final publication **“Exploring foresight scenarios for the EU bioeconomy”** [is available here.](#)



Institutional Development

- Scenario Exploration System -
Facilitator Training
- Futures of Business Education 2050
- ABIS Sustainability Assessment

Scenario Exploration System - Training



A serious foresight and gaming tool

SES Facilitator Training

On top of one-off Scenario Exploration System workshops, we also offer **trainings for future facilitators** (game masters) of the tool. We have trained around **80 facilitators** from Stellenbosch Institute for Sustainable Futures, Liverpool John Moores University, SCO Sweden, JE Europe, Liverpool John Moores Business School, Manchester Metropolitan University, Maastricht University and University of Durham Business School.

Our members and clients choose this option if they know they would like to integrate this tool on a large scale (such as offering it to more than 50 students) and are thinking of repeating it or integrating it in a module for several years.

- For three years in a row, we have trained students from **Liverpool John Moores University** (LMJU). Konstantina Skritsovali, Senior Lecturer in Strategic Management, has integrated the SES tool as a core part of LMJU undergraduate programme on International Business Management and its CSR module for 100 students. The students themselves volunteered for extra responsibility and acted as SES game facilitators for their other classmates.
- Upon invitation from Adriana Saraceni and Liubov Pakhomova, staff members from **Maastricht University** received an in-person full-day training in Maastricht in June 2023 and they used the SES game in a course on Global Supply Chain Management for bachelor students.
- Preparations also took place for a SES facilitation training at **Durham University Business School** planned for January 17-18, 2024 together with Catherine Spellman.

If you would like to know more about benefits of the SES, check out this testimonial by our main contact at **Manchester Metropolitan University**, where staff received training in September 2022. *"We have some great news – our pilot of the SES game on **7th March with around 50 students went really well**. The students enjoyed it hugely - there was a real buzz in the room, and they gained new perspectives and learning about sustainable futures thinking and the benefits of co-operation. The staff/student facilitators and game masters also very much enjoyed it."*

The Facilitator Training consists of:

- Playing the game to get a hands-on experience of the tool (2.5 - 3 hours)
- Lecture with practical cases and Q&A (2,5 hours)
- Access to all materials for further learnings, digitalized SES version, SES Sustainable Lifestyles 2050 version for printing, Game Facilitator guides and everything needed to be fully prepared for a facilitation

For further information about the SES, you can find [the SES overview report here](#).



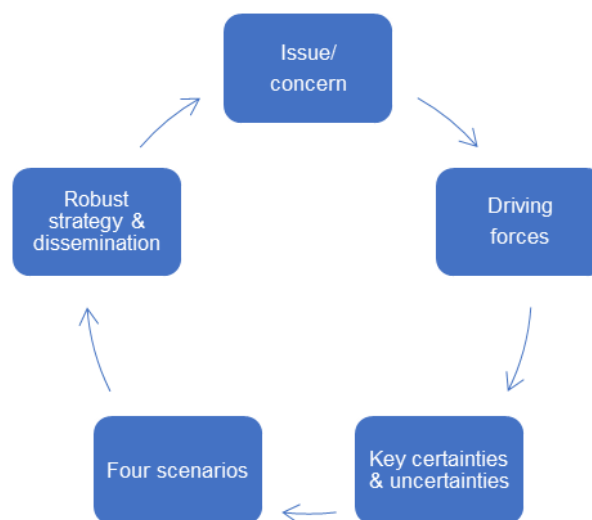
The Futures of Business Education



4 pathways towards the future of business education

In May 2022 ABIS decided to embark on a scenario building journey to understand how the system of business education could change over the next 30 years. True to its mission, ABIS believes that more than ever **business schools need to take responsibility for the mindsets, frameworks, and management theories they teach and to transform their practices, curricula and research** as laid out into our latest position paper on [Transforming business education for sustainability](#) (Teerikangas et al., 2022).

The aim of this initiative, named “Futures of Business Education 2055” is to offer original, novel insights and solutions to foster pedagogical innovation and dialogue around management theory as well as institutional transformation in business education. ABIS approached the topic through the lens of futures studies and foresight. The figure below represents the steps of the scenario building process ABIS has followed, which are described shortly below.



1. Issue/concern (May 2022)

We decided to reflect on what needs to be changed in business education and how so that we accomplish sustainable development, with a focus on Europe within a 30-year period (rounding up to 2055)

2. Driving forces (11 May 2022)

A set of forces underlying and impacting changes in business education were identified via a participatory stakeholder workshop

3. Key certainties and uncertainties (15 June 2022)

Among the previously defined driving forces, the two most relevant and with the highest impact potential on business education were selected during a second participatory stakeholder workshop:

- Paradigm shift in the economy towards circular, regenerative, and collaborative practices, or lack thereof
- Globalization/Localization characterized at a macro level by increasing global integration or a shift away from globalization

4. Four scenarios (July 2022 – April 2023)

The intersection of the two key uncertainties as horizontal and vertical axes led to a first 2x2 matrix determining 4 distinct scenarios of business education. Between summer 2022 and spring 2023, ABIS worked on defining the key events and characteristics of the four scenarios through a research-based and imaginative process with several iterations. During a 3rd participatory workshop on 3 April 2023 the scenarios were validated and improved by a broader group of stakeholders.

5. Robust strategy and dissemination (April 2023 – spring 2024)

The ABIS team worked on expanding and finalizing the four scenario narratives over the three decades, which will be published in spring 2024 and will be communicated to a broad audience interested in future developments of business education, including deans, academic and non-academic staff, policymakers, students, and business professionals.

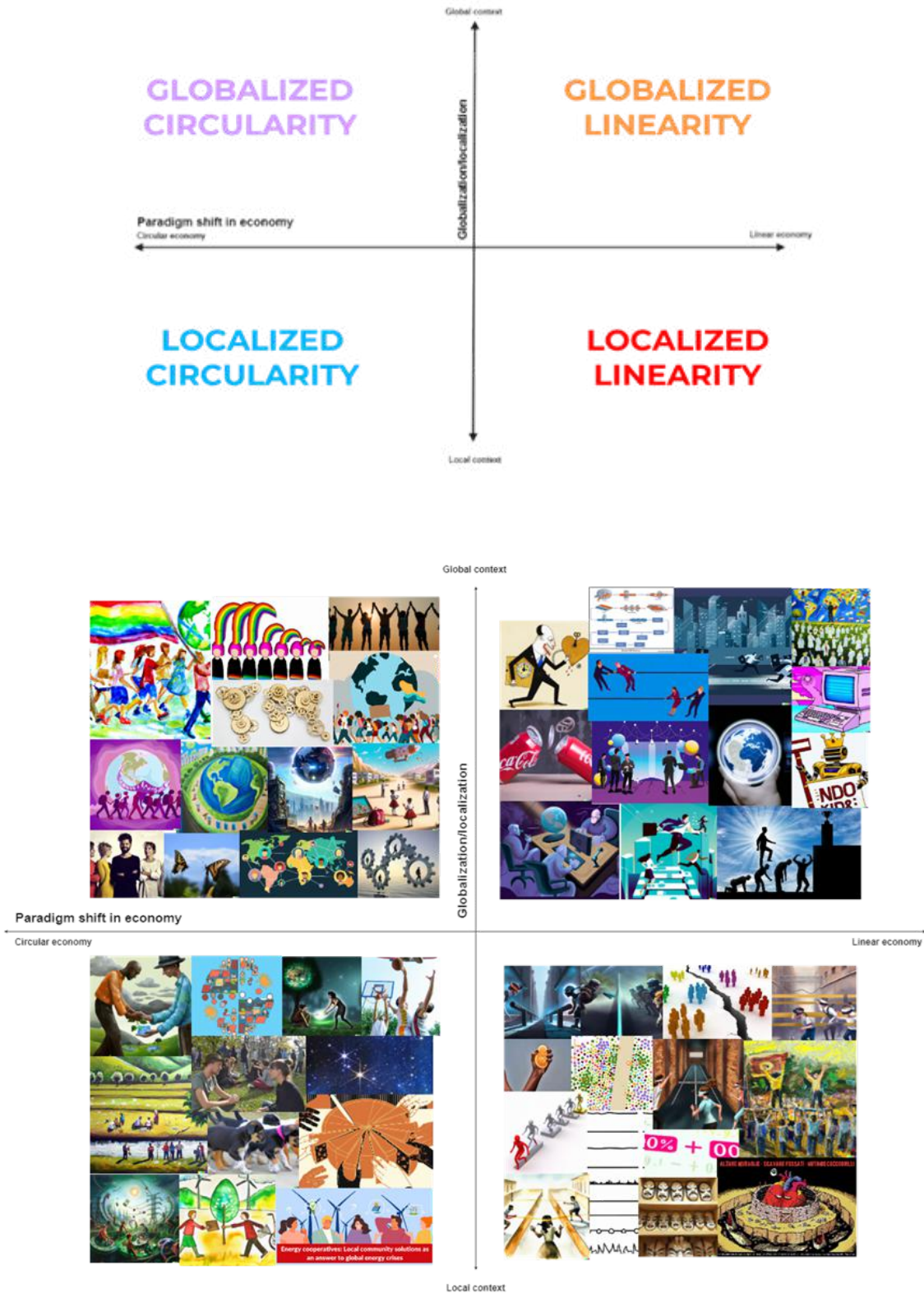
Most importantly, the scenarios will be further disseminated via a new tailored version of the Scenario Exploration System (SES), with the aim to engage academic executive teams to build their organisational capacity for long-term, strategic thinking and stakeholder engagement; to explore uncertainty, change and interconnectedness; and ultimately to develop their sustainability strategies and action plans.

The Futures of Business Education



4 pathways towards the future of business education

While the report will be published in spring 2024, we are pleased to share an exclusive, visual sneak peak of the four scenarios.



Sustainability Assessment



A management model designed by ABIS

Throughout 2023 ABIS continued delivering its Sustainability Assessment, a **management model designed in-house** and developed to **integrate sustainability in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs)**. The assessment, which comes under the form of a **report processing internal and external stakeholders' answers to a survey**, focuses on **sustainability enablers and performances** and analyses the **level of sustainability implementation at institutional and academic level**. Thanks to the tool, HEIs' decision-makers can gain awareness on the path to follow towards sustainable transformations and be provided with **clear recommendations for effective further developments**.

Apart from using the output for **internal executive strategic considerations**, it can also serve as a **support document for the self-assessment report for the institution's national or international accreditation purposes**.

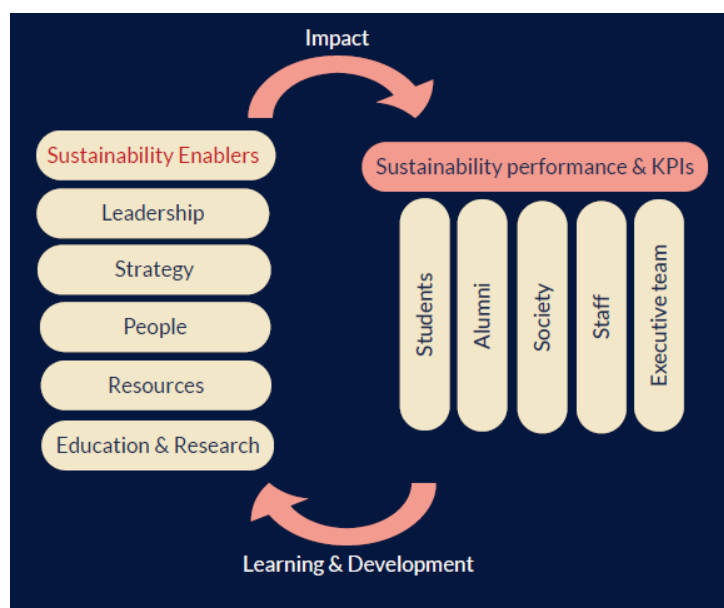
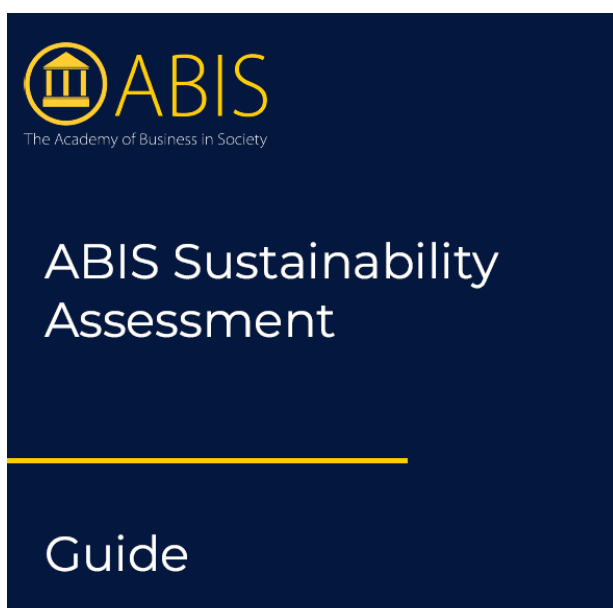
The assessment consists of

- **a survey** of 60 questions containing different sub-sets directed to *key internal and external stakeholders* focusing on sustainability *enablers and performances*
- **a report** from the analysis of the processed answers from the survey

To give all stakeholders an overview of the tool, in 2023 ABIS organized several **Info Sessions**, where the team presented the Sustainability Assessment and welcomed questions from participants. During 3 Info Session events planned in April, June, and October respectively, almost 94 people registered, with about 50% of active participation and event follow-up. The first two events were enriched by the **testimonials** of **Joanna Radeke, ESMT Berlin**, and **Baback Yazdani, Nottingham Business School**, after both institutions experienced the assessment first-hand.

Finally, the Info Sessions were also an opportunity to launch the **Sustainability Assessment Quick Scan, free taster** which anybody can take advantage of to **gain a more tangible understanding of the process**. By doing so, those interested were sent **a sample of questions** and asked to reply, before receiving **a short overview of the sustainability maturity level of their institution**.

To learn more about the process, the framework, and the report, you can consult [the dedicated page](#) on the website and download the **Sustainability Assessment Technical Guide**. You can also complete the **Quick Scan** yourself after contacting our team.



Other ABIS News



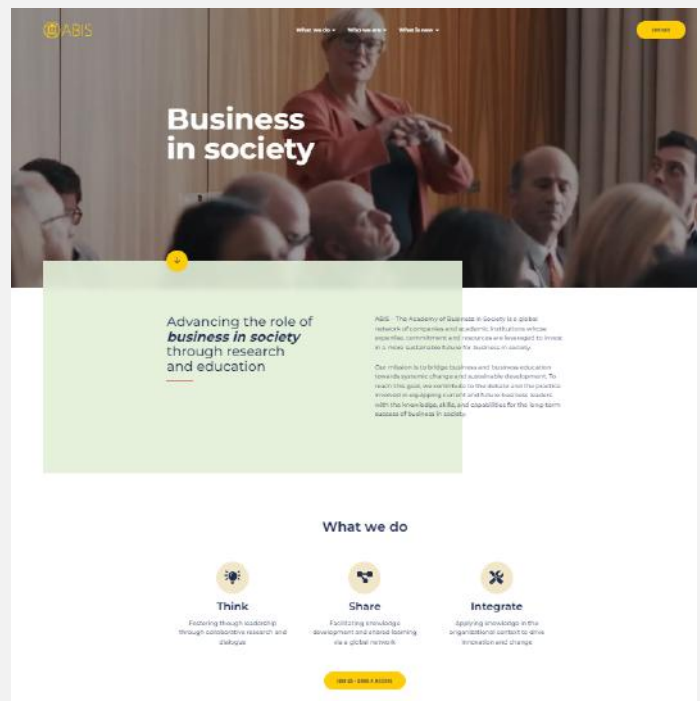
Shape the Future Fundraising

To expand its network and spread its impact, ABIS conceived its **first Fundraising** entitled **“Shape The Future”**, raising funds to include a broader range of members from SMEs, start-ups and small business schools, particularly from developing countries. Officially launched in December 2023, the ongoing campaign responds to the need of **fostering a more diverse and inclusive community, creating innovative and scalable solutions to shape a more sustainable future**, by driving **collective and transformative actions**, leaving no one behind.

If you wish to **drive the change by donating or simply spreading the word with your network**, [visit our dedicated webpage](#) and take action – keeping in mind that together and inclusively, we achieve more!

ABIS New Website

Among the ABIS initiatives, 2023 saw also the restyling of the ABIS website. Greeting a new season of strategies for growth, even the graphic design, **features and functionalities of the ABIS website were renovated**. To deliver the final outcome, ABIS worked side by side with its provider *Cuex*, an experienced dutch company in IT services. The workflow was developed all along the first half of 2023, analysing every detail, from the sections of the website and their components to the multimedia and graphic contents, to **tailor the user experience**. The final outcome of our „Digital display“ **made the navigation of contents easier**, to allow users to **better discover news, engagements, activities and opportunities of our network**. [Check it our here.](#)



Other ABIS News



JE Europe Winter Conference

Strengthening the long-lasting collaboration with Junior Enterprises Europe, in March 2023 ABIS participated in the JEE Winter Conference, the flagship annual event of the network gathering around 400 young leaders. There, ABIS CEO led a workshop on **Sustainable Innovations and Managing Change**, while the rest of ABIS team took part in the jury awarding the **Most Sustainable Junior Enterprise** and handed the reward during the closing ceremony. In addition to that, ABIS team participated in **the nomination of the JEE New Board**, who were later engaged during the Scenario Exploration System (SES) workshop, hosted at our premises.

JEE was also represented at ABIS Annual Colloquium in Warsaw, where its Vice-President brought the precious insights and perspectives of junior entrepreneurs.

European Business Summit

The European Business Summit (EBS) in Brussels represented an insightful event taking place on the 28-29 of November in Brussels, a few days before COP28. The event gathered high-level speakers from policy, business and academia from a variety of Belgian, European and International institutions to address **"The 2024-2029 EU Agenda: Strong Business for a Stronger Europe"**. The topics of the panels focused on the latest developments in relation to Net Zero commitments, competitiveness of EU and EU business, the impact of AI, recent and upcoming EU policies and legislations, geopolitical and economic outlook and much more. The ABIS team eagerly participated to and leveraged this invaluable opportunity to gain insights into the latest trends, best practices and enhance their professional development, as well as increase ABIS' visibility, exchange ideas and connect with business and academic leaders.



Beyond Growth conference - participation

On 15-17 May, the **"Beyond Growth 2023"** Conference took place at the European Parliament in Brussels. The three-day-conference concerned the need for a systemic and transformative approach to economic, social and environmental sustainability within planetary boundaries. The reflection was led towards the necessity of transition pathways and the organizers, speakers and attendees tried to **challenge conventional policies to move beyond sole economic growth**, understand the limits to grow, changing the goals towards social prosperity, and explore the idea of a post-growth future-fit EU. The ABIS team actively participated to the conference, challenging our own thinking and broadening our horizons, gaining valuable knowledge and connections to inform and innovate our own activities.

Other ABIS News



AMS Shape a Sustainable Future

On the 11th of November ABIS joined the **„Shape a Sustainable Future with us: top 10 trends“** organised by the Antwerp Management School (AMS), one of our valuable members. During the conference salient topics concerning sustainable transformation were discussed, including growing ESG finance, but also criticism towards the concept, automation and generative AI looming large and the challenges and opportunities of circular economy. The conference provided a context for a proficuous knowledge exchange between Business experts, researchers, academics and professionals.

Shaping the future of leadership development for university leaders in Europe

In September we attended the final event of the Erasmus+ supported **NEWLEAD project** organised by **European University Association**, focused on **innovative leadership** and **change management** in higher education, dedicated to **enhancing the capacity of university leaders across Europe** to effectively navigate change. The closing meeting aimed at gathering partners and stakeholders to reflect on the outcomes of the project and discuss **how to shape the future of leadership development for university leaders** in Europe. Also, it welcomed **idea exchanges on strategies to support and facilitate sustainable and impactful leadership development initiatives** across Europe and presented the European University Association's plans in this respect.

PMAC Conference

On the 21st of February, our CEO Ivo Matser represented ABIS in Leeds, during the **Professional Managers Annual Conference (PMAC)**, organised by the **Chartered Association of Business Schools (CABS)**.

The PMAC was a perfect chance to tighten ABIS' relations with its current members who were joining the Conference, and network with new partners and stakeholders.

During the PMAC, ABIS' CEO presented the ABIS network, underlining the added value that it creates for academic and corporate members, strengthening the boundaries between the two sectors and the importance of their collaboration in advancing the role of business in society.

AACSB EMEA Annual Conference

On 26-28th November, we joined the AACSB EMEA Conference in Rome, organised to foster collaborations with the aim of **driving innovation and excellence in business education in Europe, Middle East, and Africa**. During the three-day conference, business schools from all over the world had the chance to reconnect, expand their network, learn about industry trends and best practices. Through small working groups, plenaries and in-depth discussions, business school leaders had the chance to deep dive into how AI and disruptive technologies will redesign tomorrow's curricula, addressing the pressing issues faced by their schools, and cultivating an enriched educational ecosystem together.

Other ABIS News



Using AI in Doctoral Education to Enhance Mental Health and Career Management Skills in Academia

In July we participated in the Conference **“Using AI in Doctoral Education to Enhance Mental Health and Career Management Skills in Academia”**, focusing on innovations and tools to promote wellbeing and sustainable career development in academia. Speakers at the event showcased the results obtained from the projects **“Researcher Mental Health Observatory” (ReMO) COST Action**, and the **“Online, open learning recommendations and mentoring towards Sustainable research CAREers” (OSCAR) Erasmus+ project**, both on wellbeing and mental health within the academia.

HEIC Conference

On 21-22nd September, we flew all the way to Dubrovnik, Croatia, to participate in the **11th Higher Education Institutions Conference (HEIC)**, organised by the **Zagreb School of Economics and Management (ZSEM)** and **Luxembourg School of Business (LSB)** with the support of **AACSB International**. The event, themed **“Future of Learning, Teaching and Innovation: Artificial Intelligence and Higher Education”**, captured the essence of a rapidly evolving educational landscape and offered attendees a glimpse into the future of teaching, learning and innovation. Other than including keynote speeches, panel sessions and an AACSB accreditation workshop, as well as research presentations on the topic of artificial intelligence in higher education systems, the two-day event was a great opportunity for making international connections and expanding our knowledge and skill set.

Promoting youth-led social entrepreneurship through crowdfunding

In April, ABIS joined the Conference **“Promoting youth-led social entrepreneurship through crowdfunding”**, hosted by **EUROCROWD** on behalf of the **INCrowd project** funded by Erasmus+. The focus of the day was on **youth inclusion and employability** through the **development of social entrepreneurship skills**, with the goal of creating an understanding how **crowdfunding can support and train young people in developing their social business ideas**, which financial tools can adequately support youth-led social enterprises and **how European institutions can incentivize the creation and life of youth-led enterprises**.

Eleks workshop on sustainability

In November, ABIS took part of a board game and brainstorming activity organised by **Eleks**, in cooperation with **Systainchange**, on generating ideas around sustainability. During the thought-provoking workshop, with the help of various **creativity techniques** and **innovation approaches**, participants worked on **problem framing, concept creation and initial business modelling of sustainable ideas**, focusing on **leveraging digital technologies** to enhance sustainability.

ABIS Team and Board



ABIS Team



Ivo Matser
Chief Executive Officer



Karolina Sobczak
Senior Manager Professional Development



Katarina Haluskova
Senior Project Manager



Giulia Lizzi
Business Development & Partnerships Officer



Antonino Mangano
Office Manager & Communication Support

ABIS Board of Directors



Baback Yazdani
Chair of the Board of Directors &
Dean of Nottingham Business
School



Manuela Brusoni
Associate Professor
SDA Bocconi School of
Management



Marian Garcia
Professor and Dean
Kent Business School



Joan Fontrodona
Full Professor
IESE Business School



Adrie Heinsbroek
Sustainability Manager
NN Group



Leon Wijnands
Head of Sustainability, ING NL



Joanna Radeke
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Institute for Sustainable Transformation
ESMT Berlin



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Kozminski University



Lisa Gring-Pemle
Associate Professor and
Executive Director, Business for
a Better World Center
George Mason University



Kosheek Sewchurran
Associate Professor and Director of
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