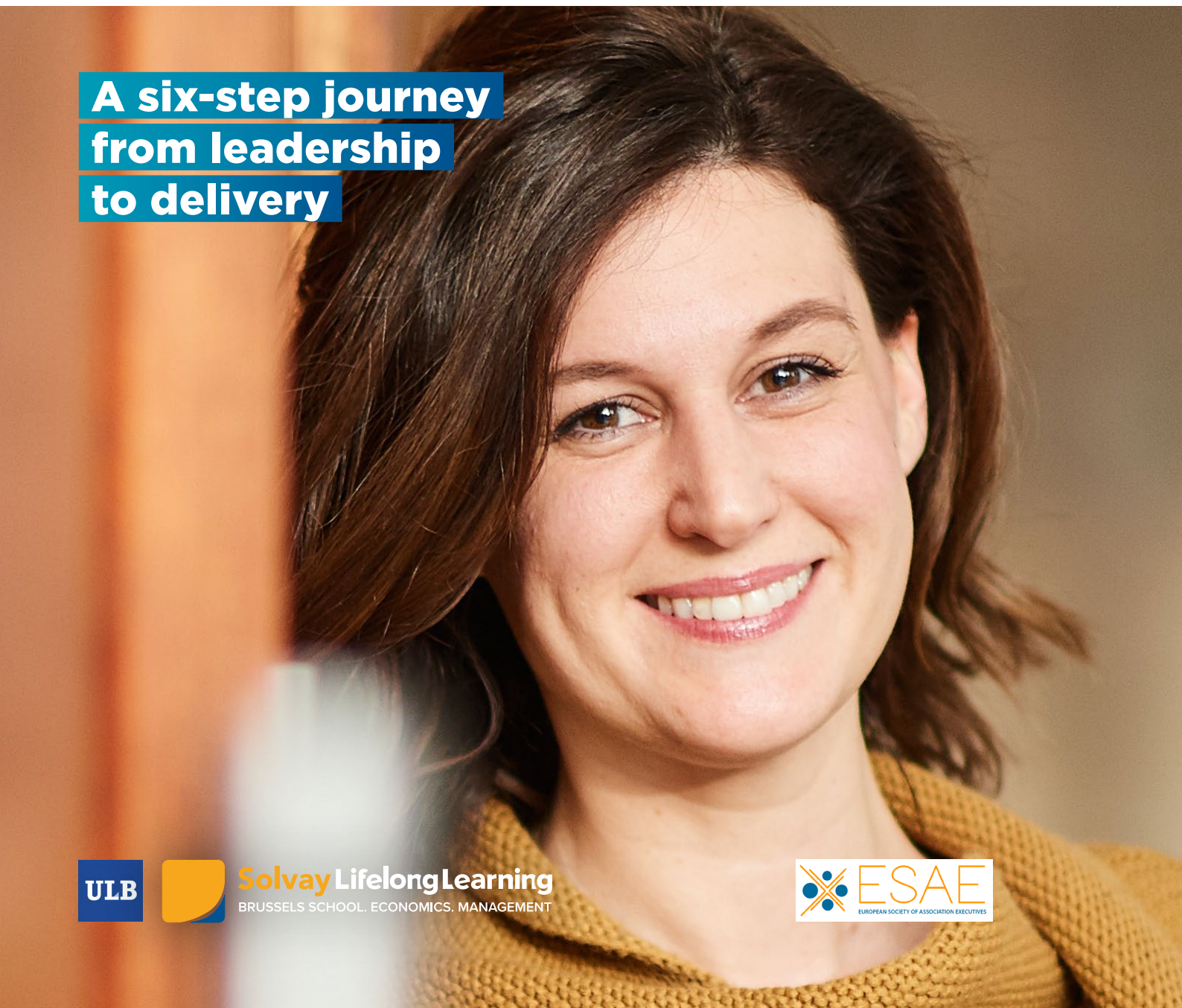
2 days | EN | On campus

Executive Master in International Association Management



ULB

Solvay Lifelong Learning
BRUSSELS SCHOOL. ECONOMICS. MANAGEMENT

ESAE
EUROPEAN SOCIETY OF ASSOCIATION EXECUTIVES



On the cover:
Chiara Gasparotto
Alumna 2015

For non-profit organisations and membership-based associations, the Executive Master in International Association Management (EMIAM) is the definitive path to strengthening your managerial muscle. By merging Solvay's academic excellence with the professional reach of ESAE, we offer Europe's premier qualification for association executives.

Investing in this programme allows associations to attract and retain top-tier talent by providing a world-class working environment and a clear path to leadership. Our graduates emerge with a keen understanding of the political and economic landscape, ready to tackle increased competition and operational complexity. From trade associations to professional societies, we are confident in delivering you the efficiency, effectiveness, and peer-to-peer network essential for modern governance.

Alessandro Cortese
Academic Director

The programme at a glance

- in English
- 12 days
- For senior personnel and executives of international associations, this programme equips participants with the management skills, strategic frameworks, and peer network to lead in an increasingly complex environment.

In brief

PAGES	
4-5	Your benefits
6-7	Programme content
8-13	The modules
14-17	The participants
18	Practical info and registration

Practical info and registration

Go to page 18

Your benefits

Association leaders must develop both strong management skills as well as soft skills to navigate Europe's socio-political landscape and the evolving global environment. Efficient management requires addressing new challenges like rising competition, resource shortages, and economic instability.

You

Leadership skills
Enhance the leadership skills required to face management challenges within your respective profession/task/ position.

Strategic insights
Gain a broad overview of the main fundamental strategic and functional areas in management.

Best practices
Understand the best practices across the association sector.

Your association

An essential human lever
Motivate personnel and help them reach higher levels of excellence to the benefit of the association.

Collaboration
Establish a platform for knowledge-sharing, showcasing experiences and cooperation.

Governance skills
Build managerial and hands-on capabilities as well as internal proficiency in association governance.



Programme content

The EMIAM is structured as a progressive business plan journey. Each module represents a step that a leader would take when building or transforming their association's strategy. Participants start from their own leadership identity and, module by module, acquire the skills and frameworks to produce a business plan for their organisation. By the end of Module 6, each participant holds the skeleton of a real, actionable business plan. The optional capstone allows them to present it to a jury for assessment and feedback.

STEP 1

Leadership & Change
2 days

Who am I as a leader? Self-awareness, leadership identity, the human context in which the plan will be implemented.

STEP 2

Membership & Markets
2 days

Who do I serve? Market analysis, stakeholder mapping, member needs, value perception—the evidence base on which every strategic choice depends.

STEP 3

Strategy & Business Models
3 days

What do I offer and why? Value proposition, business model design, strategic positioning, cross-financing—built on the market knowledge from Step 2.

STEP 4

Finance & Performance
2 days

What does it cost and what does it return? Financial translation of the strategy into budgets, projections, KPIs, and business cases.

STEP 5

Governance
1.5 days

How is it governed? Oversight structures, board alignment, risk management—you need the strategy and the numbers before designing governance.

STEP 6

Project Management & Delivery
1.5 days

How do I deliver? Execution planning, project structuring, measurable outcomes—the final step before launch.

FINAL GROUP PROJECT

Capstone

Refine your business plan with mentoring support and present it to a jury of Solvay faculty and ESAE practitioners. The capstone transforms the working draft produced in Module 6 into a polished, assessed deliverable ready for implementation.

Faculty professionals dedicated to your goals

This Executive Master's is delivered by academics and experts in their field through a wide variety of learning practices such as self-awareness, interactive lectures, short classroom exercises, case-studies, group discussions, re-enactments and many practical examples.

Throughout the programme, they team up with qualified international association specialists, allowing for a bottom-up approach in defining the module content. Real-world perspective thus complements the academic study throughout the programme.



Discover the detailed content for each module in the following pages!

Curriculum

Step 1
Leadership & change

Module duration: 2 days / **Lecturer:** Susan J. West + Esae Facilitator

Purpose in the Journey

Every business plan is implemented by people. Before participants can analyse markets, design strategy, or build financial projections, they need to understand their own leadership style and the human context in which their plan will live. This module establishes self-awareness, equips participants to lead through the change their plan will require, and builds the cohort trust that sustains the programme.

Key Topics

- Personal leadership styles and self-assessment: instruments for understanding your profile in the association context, where authority is distributed and volunteer engagement is central.
- Leading through change: frameworks for managing transformation in membership organisations, resistance management, stakeholder alignment, communication strategies.
- The volunteer–staff dynamic: navigating elected boards, committee chairs, and volunteer structures alongside professional taff teams.
- Building high-performance teams in resource-constrained environments: motivation, delegation, accountability.
- Emotional intelligence and adaptive leadership: leading through ambiguity, managing competing expectations.

Pedagogy

Self-assessment tools, facilitated group workshops, peer coaching exercises, association-specific case studies. Emphasis on experiential learning and reflection. Welcome dinner included.

Business Plan Output

Each participant produces a **leadership context statement**: who I am as a leader, what I lead, what needs to change in my organisation, and what kind of leadership the transformation will require.

Susan J. West holds a Bachelors degree in Romance Languages from Princeton University (USA) and a Masters in Organizational Psychology from Columbia University (USA). Her passion for the human side of business led her to an international career in human resources where, during the past 20 years, she worked with some of the Fortune 500's top global executives. In 2006 she established a consulting practice in Brussels, Belgium dedicated to helping leaders in associations, SMEs and start-ups develop theleadership capabilities needed to meet today's business challenges. She was recognized in 2020 as one of the Top 20 Women Advancing Associations. She is a member of the Lifelong Learning adjunct faculty at Solvay Brussels School of Economics & Management.



Step 2
Membership & markets

Module duration: 2 days

Purpose in the Journey

You cannot design a strategy without knowing your market. This is the evidence-gathering phase of the business plan. Participants learn to map their stakeholder ecosystem, understand what their members actually need (not what the association assumes), identify value gaps, and analyse the competitive landscape. This module also incorporates advocacy and stakeholder leadership—because understanding the broader ecosystem is a prerequisite for strategic positioning.

Key Topics

Day 1 — Market Analysis:

- Stakeholder ecosystem mapping: —who are all the actors?
- Member segmentation and asking the right questions: methodologies and tools for understanding what different segments need, want, and value.
- Value perception: how do members describe themselves as "customers" of the association? What drives engagement, retention, loyalty?
- Potential development: auditing what the association currently delivers vs. what the market needs—identifying gaps and growth opportunities.

Community development as a strategic function: building professional communities beyond transactional membership.

Day 2 — Advocacy & Stakeholder Leadership:

- Engaging the broader ecosystem: policymakers, regulators, allied professions.
- Advocacy as value driver: how advocacy strengthens the membership proposition and justifies cross-financing.
- Business development: first pass at translating market understanding into opportunities.

Pedagogy

Frameworks adapted from marketing theory but grounded in association reality. Workshops using participants' own member data. Case studies from ESAE members. Panel with experienced association leaders. Member journey mapping exercise.

Business Plan Output

Each participant produces a **market analysis**: stakeholder map, member segmentation, needs audit, value gap analysis, and stakeholder engagement priorities.

Benjamin Beeckmans is a Solvay graduate turned into a serial entrepreneur passionate about innovation and online businesses. After holding various positions in finance and marketing at Procter & Gamble and Coca-Cola, he founded Bluecorp, a software development company, and Teatower.com, a manufacturer and online reseller of tea-based products. He is currently running the online bank Paynovate.



Step 3
Strategy & business models

Module duration: 3 days / **Lecturer:** A. Cortese + ESAE practitioners

Purpose in the Journey

This is the module where the business plan itself takes shape. Armed with market knowledge from Step 2, participants now design the value proposition, select the business model, set strategic priorities, and build the road-map.

Key Topics

Day 1 — Business Models for Associations:

- Association business models at large: mapping value-creation activities.
- Value proposition design: articulating unique value for each stakeholder segment identified in Step 2.
- Cross-financing dynamics: how associations cross-subsidise activities (events funding advocacy, membership fees subsidising publications) and the strategic implications.

Day 2-3

— Strategic Planning:

- From market insight to strategy: translating the market analysis into strategic choices.
- Strategic positioning: competitive and collaborative landscape, differentiation from peer organisations.
- Business model innovation: triggers for change, diversification strategies, digital transformation as a strategic lever.
- Building the strategic roadmap: from vision to operational priorities, 3-year horizon.

— ESAE Practitioner Workshop:

- Application day: participants apply Business Model Canvas (adapted for associations) to their own organisation using the market data gathered in Step 2.
- Peer review: structured feedback sessions where participants challenge and refine each other's strategic choices.
- ESAE expert panels: seasoned association executives share real-world cases of strategic transformation, business model shifts, and lessons learned.

Pedagogy

Framework lectures, adapted Business Model Canvas, group strategic positioning workshops, peer review sessions. Day 3 is entirely practitioner-led and application-focused. This bridges academic rigour with real-world implementation.

Business Plan Output

Each participant produces a **strategic plan**: value proposition, business model, strategic priorities with rationale, and a 3-year action roadmap.

Alessandro Cortese is the Chief Executive Officer of ESTRO, the European Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology, and theChairman of the ESTRO Cancer Foundation. Alessandro has gained significant experience as Director of the Association Management practice at the MCI Group, working with international associations, such as the Project Management Institute (PMI), IAEE (International Association of Exhibitions and Events), DMAI (Destination Marketing Association International), CIC (Convention Industry Council) and APICS (The Association for Operations Management). He is a member of several Advisory Boards and is regularly invited to give talks to industry events and congresses, focusing on strategy for International Associations.



Step 4
Finance & performance

Module duration: 2 days

Key Topics

Day 1 — Financial Literacy for Association Leaders:

- Reading (not constructing) financial statements: what is typically missing in advocacy-driven and not-for-profit organisations.
- How operational decisions impact financial outcomes: the link between the strategic choices made in Step 3 and the financial statements.
- Not-for-profit financial logic: reserves management, restricted vs. unrestricted funds, the difference between running an association and a company.

Day 2-3 — Strategic Finance & Dashboards:

- Budgeting as a strategic tool: building a 3-year budget that reflects the strategic priorities defined in Step 3.
- KPIs and dashboards: membership retention, revenue per member, event ROI, programme cost ratios.
- Cross-financing and resource allocation: financial management of the interdependencies identified in Step 3.
- Building the business case: project-based financial analysis for the lead initiative in the participant's strategic plan.

Pedagogy

Hands-on workshops with real (anonymised) association data. Participants work on their own numbers. Accessible for non-financial profiles. By end of Day 2, each participant has produced financial projections for their strategic plan.

Business Plan Output

Each participant produces a **financial plan**: 3-year budget aligned with their strategy, a KPI dashboard, and a detailed business case for their lead initiative.

Benjamin Lorent is the CEO of Solvay Lifelong Learning and a Professor of Finance and Financial Accounting at Solvay Brussels School, the University of Mons (Belgium), and the Universities of Rouen and Toulon (France). Holding a PhD in Finance and a Master's in Actuarial Sciences, he also teaches across numerous executive programmes at Solvay's chapter in Vietnam. Beyond academia, Benjamin serves as a finance consultant for SMEs and financial services firms, and acts as a financial management advisor for several institutions. His core expertise spans corporate finance, financial analysis, insurance regulation, and risk management.





Step 5
Governance

Module duration: 1.5 days / **Lecturer:** J. Shahin (Guest Prof.), ESAE guest experts

Purpose in the Journey

A business plan is only as strong as the governance that oversees it. Positioned after Strategy and Finance, this module asks: given the plan you have built, what governance structures are needed to oversee it, align the board, manage risk, and ensure accountability? Participants cannot meaningfully design governance without the strategic and financial context from Steps 3 and 4.

Key Topics

- Governance models for international associations: comparing structures, board compositions, decision-making processes across trade and professional societies.
- Board–management dynamics: role clarity, delegation frameworks, managing the governance–management boundary.
- Governance as enabler of strategy: aligning committee structures, reporting lines, and oversight mechanisms with the strategic plan built in Step 3.
- Financial oversight and fiduciary responsibility: the board's role in overseeing the financial plan built in Step 4.
- Legal and regulatory framework: Belgian and European law for international associations, compliance, data protection, ethics.

Pedagogy

Case-based learning from ESAE members and international best practice. Panel with experienced board members and CEOs. Governance self-assessment workshop.

Business Plan Output

Each participant produces a **governance framework**: board alignment plan, oversight structure for their strategy, risk map, and proposed governance improvements.

Jamal Shahin is Programme Director of the Advanced Master in European Integration and Chair in Digital Sovereignty at the Brussels School of Governance. He is also Senior Lecturer at the University of Amsterdam and Professorial Fellow at the United Nations University, CRIS in Bruges.
His expertise focuses on digital sovereignty, global internet governance, EU governance, democratic participation, and the relationship between science, society, and policy.
He has carried out consultancy work for several major institutions and organisations, including the European Commission, the OECD, Deloitte, RAND Europe, the European Economic and Social Committee, and the Committee of the Regions.
He holds a PhD in Politics from the University of Hull, with research dedicated to the relationship between the Internet and governance in the EU.



Step 6
Project management & delivery

Module duration: 1.5 days / **LECTURER:** F. Hoffmann + ESAE guest experts

Purpose in the Journey

The final step: translating the complete business plan into an execution roadmap. This module connects all prior steps—leadership, market insight, strategy, financials, governance—into a structured delivery plan with milestones, success metrics, and risk mitigation. Also addresses the specific skill of managing EU-funded projects, which many international associations depend on.

Key Topics

- From strategy to execution: structuring the strategic priorities (Module 3) into projects with clear deliverables, timelines, and resource allocation.
- Measurable outcomes and impact: defining success metrics, impact reporting for boards (Module 5) and funders.
- EU project participation: frameworks for EU-funded projects, consortium management, reporting requirements.
- Agile and adaptive approaches: applying agile principles to association programme delivery within governance constraints.
- Integration exercise: participants assemble all outputs from Modules 1–5 into a complete business plan draft, add the delivery chapter, and present a 5-minute pitch to peers.

Pedagogy

Workshop format. Participants develop a project charter for their lead initiative. Guest presentation on European project experience. The final session is a plan-assembly and pitch exercise, providing a natural bridge to the optional capstone.

Business Plan Output

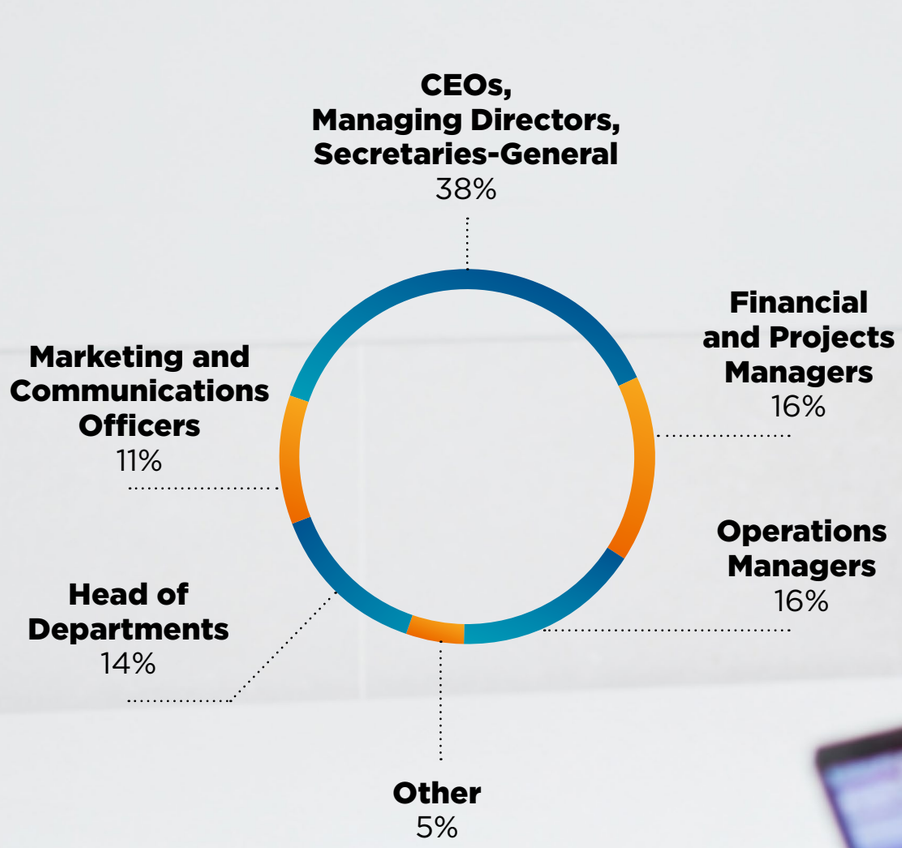
Each participant produces a **delivery plan and complete business plan draft**: project charter, milestones, success metrics—and a complete assembled business plan integrating all six module outputs.

Frederic Hoffmann has gained extensive expertise in Project & Portfolio Management (PPM) and in business & digital transformations through 25 years of experience, including 12 years of consulting. He has implemented PPM best practices, methods and tools for international private and public organisations and took part in several major transformation programs. He is now the product owner of the agile collaborative tooling within the Agile Center of Excellence of BNP Paribas Fortis. He is also professor and executive coach at the Solvay Brussels School of Economics & Management for the Masters, Executive Programs and for the MBA in Brussels and in Vietnam. He holds a master degree in Economics and a postgraduate master degree in Management of Information Technology.



Participants with the ambition to grow

The programme is specifically designed for association professionals expected to take on wider responsibilities, grow within their respective organisation or to lead and ensure sustainable growth of their associations. Typical participants are senior leaders and executives of international associations and professional societies:



The focus of the programme curriculum is:

1 To address the main fundamental strategic and functional areas in management.

2 To bring them into perspective within the association sector through a set of case studies, testimonials and discussions led by association specialists.





“After almost 3 years in a managerial position within an association, I was looking to learn something new but also gather feedback on my way of working and identify ways of doing things better. The EMIAM provided the perfect fit with my professional situation. Our association is relatively small in size and I am involved in a large number of projects therein, from governance to finance, as well as in event organisation. The programme successfully covers all these bases in a truly comprehensive manner.”

Raquel Izquierdo de Santiago
Secretary General
Europatat - European Potato Trade Association

“Thanks to the Executive Master in International Association Management, I learned and put in practice key theoretical concepts which make the foundation of a strong management of associations. The case studies covering important topics offered me the possibility to transfer the knowledge into my daily work. Also, the master is a unique opportunity to meet peers and build strong connections with leaders from various disciplines and sectors in the world of nonprofit associations.”



Loredana Simulescu
Executive Manager
Biomedical Alliance in Europe

“This Master offers a unique combination of theoretical concepts widely supported by practical case studies. The Solvay professors bring their invaluable insight (and sense of humour), and join forces with association experts. Together, they cover all the key elements of international association management, and help you bring this deep strategic knowledge to the practical field.”



Adline Lewuillon
Association & Events Professional
Previously The European Cancer Organisation (ECCO)

“A very useful helicopter view on many complex and articulated topics, a precious benchmarking tool for current knowledge, a very helpful networking opportunity to exchange peer-to-peer experience in state-of-the-art association management.”



Michael Delle Selve
Senior Communications Manager
The European Container Glass Federation (FEVE)

“As a young professional about to take on his first leadership challenges in an international association, joining EMIAM proved to be a very valuable experience. This Executive Master provided me with a solid theoretical underpinning in association governance through a combination of theoretical concepts and practical case studies. Also, it allowed me to exchange views and perspectives with association leaders from all over Europe, which accounted for a unique learning opportunity.”



Simone De Ioanna
Governance and Education Project ManagerEuropean Society for Radiotherapy and Oncology (ESTRO)

Why do participants choose Solvay Brussels School

1

The Business School in the heart of Brussels

Solvay Brussels School of Economics and Management attracts the best Belgian and European candidates because it is the only business school attached to a university – the ULB – to offer Lifelong Learning programmes in Brussels.

2

Business education connected to the professional world

The EMIAM, like all of Solvay Business School’s programmes, follows the evolution of the market year after year to respond to the problems that you face in your daily work.

3

First-person learning

Case studies, debating sessions, visits, rich media, simulations ... At the Solvay Lifelong Learning, we like to place you at the heart of learning – utilising the immersive approach to make the content of the training more stimulating and directly applicable to real conditions.

Executive Master in International Association Management

Practical information

Location

Solvay Brussels School (ULB, campus Solbosch)
Avenue F.D. Roosevelt 42
1050 Brussels

Language

English: All course materials and lectures are in English.

Contact us

- Any questions about the programme?
- Want to discuss how to make your personal and professional development plan a reality?
- **csp@solvay.edu**

Solvay Lifelong Learning

Your pathway to lifelong success

The Solvay Brussels School of Economics & Management offers an expansive portfolio of programmes designed to fuel your growth throughout your career. Whether you're looking to master general management, refine your strategy, or deepen your expertise in finance, taxation, marketing, innovation, or entrepreneurship, we have the tools to help you thrive in an ever-evolving business world.

Company-specific Programmes

We can tailor the content of each programme and offer it as specific training organised within your company. We adapt it to the demands of your teams and our specific sector of activity.

More info?
csp@solvay.edu

Advanced Masters

Designed as programmes for one academic year for Master students with no or limited professional experience. With the right mix of theory and practice, they prepare you for the job market.

- Advanced Master in Financial Markets
- Advanced Master in Innovation & Strategic Management
- Advanced Master in Biotech & MedTech Ventures

Executive MBA

18 months programme for experienced professionals looking for a career change or a career boost. EMBA offers you the tools and insights you need to lead your transformation.

Executive Education

Short, medium and long courses in various fields, in English and French. For professionals seeking to upgrade their skills, advance their career and successfully manage businesses of all sizes.

General Management

- Executive MBA
- Accelerated Management Programme
- Executive Master in Management
- Executive Programme in Enterprise Risk Management
- Executive Programme en Gestion de la Réputation
- Executive Programme en Management et Philosophies

Finance & Tax Management

- Finance pour Non-Financiers
- Executive Master in Tax Management
- Modular Education in Finance

Specific Industries

- Executive Programme in Future-Proof Real Estate
- Executive Master en Management des Institutions de Santé et de Soins

Digital Transformation & Governance

- Executive Master in Cybersecurity Management

Sustainability

- Sustainability Fundamentals
- Executive Programme in Future-Proof Real Estate

Leadership

- Programme in People Leadership
- Regenerative Leadership Foundations
- Regenerative Leadership Collective Shift

Marketing

- Executive Master in Digital Marketing & Communication

Executive Master
In International Association
Management

solvay.edu/emiam

Solvay Brussels School
Avenue F.D Roosevelt 42 - CP114/01
1050 Brussels, Belgium
csp@solvay.edu

Dream. Learn. Lead.

Established in 1903, Solvay Brussels School of Economics & Management is a faculty of the Université libre de Bruxelles. It currently holds a leading position in Europe for research and education in the fields of Economics and Management. The school's core mission is to train business leaders and entrepreneurs with the ability to adapt to the ever-changing nature of Society and to shape tomorrow's world.

ULB

Solvay Lifelong Learning
BRUSSELS SCHOOL. ECONOMICS. MANAGEMENT