

Interview to Miriam Lanzetta

At Femxa we have a close relationship with Miriam, more than a partner in European projects, through her work in Lascó, she is a colleague, with whom we have many experiences related to the dissemination and communication of the innovations that occur in the international cooperation promoted by the European Union in the field of training.

Why did you become interested in working in the field of European projects?

I owe a lot to the third sector, and the opportunity to experience firsthand the impact of European projects on individuals and communities is among the reasons for it. It was there that I had my initial opportunity to engage with European initiatives and collaborate with multicultural and international teams, as a trainer first and as a project manager after.

Those experiences instilled a deep appreciation for the complexities and rewards of managing projects that tackle complex, cross-border challenges that have significant societal impacts and, at the same time, helped me recognise the value and beauty of diversity.



What aspects can be improved in terms of the implementation of a European project?

I think there is a pre-project consideration that can improve the implementation phase: ensuring the project's alignment with the organisational strategy. Securing EU funds represents a great opportunity to get financial support for growth, innovation and development. However, it also requires substantial effort, resources, and often, co-funding. It is essential that projects do not simply exist for their own sake but actively contribute to an organisation's strategic goals.

Projects that lack this strategic alignment often fail to deliver long-term value, as they may not be effectively integrated into the organisation's broader objectives and activities. There is also a practical consideration: 'isolated' projects might not receive the necessary upper-management support, resulting, among other things, in being deprioritised in the allocation of human, financial or physical resources.

For the implementation phase itself, beyond the need for robust project management practices and cross-cultural literacy, enhancing knowledge transfer among consortia of complementary projects presents a significant opportunity for improvement. Many European projects currently operate in silos, which can lead to redundant efforts and missed opportunities for leveraging collective insights and outcomes.

Incorporating structured knowledge management practices in project plans could help consortia better contribute to the broader ecosystem of related projects that contribute to the wider goals of the EU. PMI standards emphasise the role and responsibility of project professionals to build upon existing knowledge, as well as identify, capture and transfer new knowledge.

Due to your training, you are an expert in several methodologies, but we want to ask you about one of your certifications: what does it mean to be a Green Project Manager? How does the application of PMI principles change?

Beyond the title, I believe this certification is a responsibility to turn sustainability challenges into growth opportunities and ensure that organisations and project teams consider the impact of every aspect of a project on the environment, society and the economy. It means being responsible for equipping organisations with the necessary tools to achieve sustainability objectives and to support, through projects, the implementation of a strategy aimed at sustainable development and the creation of shared value.

Integrating sustainable project management principles changes the way project success is defined. It's no longer just about meeting time, budget, and scope goals; it's equally about ensuring positive long-term impacts. This is not a new concept for the Project Management Institute, though: since 2006, the PMI's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct has required project professionals to make decisions and take actions based on the best interests of society, public safety, and the environment.

However, the learning journey to achieve the *Certified Green Project Manager* certification - issued by Green Project Management (GPM) Global^[1], strategic partner of the PMI since 2022 – was eye-opening for me. The standard on which the certification is based, the P5™ Standard Standard for Sustainability in Project, empowers project professionals to recognise the importance of the principle of integrated sustainable project management, which promotes a holistic approach to sustainability, recognising the interdependence and interconnection between economic development social integrity and environmental protection in all aspects of project governance, practice and project reporting.

This principle emphasises the need to gain awareness of the effects of projects on the environment, society and the economy, inviting us to work to minimise negative impacts and maximise the positive ones. This journey empowered me to recognise this principle and equipped me with guidelines, good practices, and recommendations for implementing it in our projects.

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We see that you collaborate in the field of social intervention through the NGO Akira, which pursues civic and solidarity purposes, what kind of activities do you get involved in?

Akira was established in 2017 with a mission to empower individuals and communities. Supported by a dedicated team of educators, trainers, ICT experts, psychologists, and criminologists, we implement activities to prevent violence and social exclusion and promote learning mobility opportunities in Europe and social innovation projects in partnership with non-profit organisations, education and training providers and institutions.

I assumed the presidency of the association at the end of 2019. Since then, I have been dedicated to expanding our network of partners in the social private sector and enhancing our synergies with institutional stakeholders throughout Italy and Europe.

Thanks to the commitment of our members and the hard work of our volunteers, we've conducted numerous projects in the past seven years, which generated value for more than five thousand beneficiaries, including students, parents and teachers of schools in our region, young people with fewer opportunities and professionals. I am very proud of our results and grateful to our team.

In the extensive professional profile of Miriam Lanzetta also includes being a teacher in a Master's Degree in Project Management. How does being a teacher influence the implementation of a European project? Are better educational innovations designed based on experience as a trainer?

Sharing knowledge with diverse groups of highly skilled and enthusiastic professionals, such as the students I have encountered over the years at the Italian Institute of Management Studies' (ISTUM) Master Executive in Project Management, has afforded me the privilege of engaging in valuable bidirectional knowledge exchanges. It allows me to continuously learn from the various practices, experiences and working methods that learners share during classes, the challenges we encounter in project environments and the solutions we devise to align day-to-day practices with international project management standards. Each edition of the Master's program is a deeply enriching and

inspiring experience, for which I am profoundly grateful to ISTUM and the scientific coordinators at the *Agency for Projects Management* (A4PM).

How does this influence my projects? Training in formal and non-formal learning environments gave me a glimpse into the diverse challenges educators and learners face in their pathways, a compass that has contributed to informing the direction my projects should take to generate real value for people.

Digital transformation is unstoppable in all sectors of society, how does it affect a European project? To what extent does it improve your planning and execution?

Digital technologies are critical enablers in European projects. Given the typical consortium composition in these projects, with distributed and virtual teams collaborating from multiple countries, digital tools are not just advantageous but a must-have to ensure effective communication and collaboration. On the other hand, they can increase efficiency and agility. At Lascò, for instance, we leverage project management information systems to enhance internal collaboration, facilitating activity tracking, progress reporting, resource management or project performance forecasting.

We are also witnessing incredible advancements in AI, which can bring significant benefits to project management practices. Many project management systems now incorporate AI to automate routine tasks or develop forecasts, allowing project managers and their teams to concentrate on strategic decisions and complex problem-solving. New opportunities are on the horizon, and we are also seizing them. In June, Lascò is launching its own AI assistant, *Get Impact AI*, at the AI Summit in London: an intelligent assistant for project design and impact management powered by a methodological framework and an AI's proprietary and customised generative architecture.

Beyond the benefits and impact of technologies on project management, digital transformation also calls for our projects to support citizens' digital readiness and empowerment, contribute to a digitally skilled workforce and enhance human-centred pathways to digitalisation.

How do you see the future of European projects? Should we continue to support research to innovate in teaching and link it to digital transformation processes?

In our increasingly digital society and economy, education and training systems can either be catalysts for, chasers of, or proactive contributors to digital disruption. Through European research and innovation projects, we can help education and training providers anticipate future trends and challenges, shaping the digital landscape rather than just responding to it. With their broad scope and collaborative nature, projects at the EU level are particularly well-suited to this role. They can harness collective insights and expertise to lead rather than follow the wave of digital transformation.