

# update



A community of responsible leaders

ESMT  
BERLIN



# Crafting success together

Join the ESMT community

Embark on a transformative journey by joining an ESMT Berlin MBA program. Beyond the world-class learning experience, you gain access to a powerful network of successful professionals who have not only excelled in their respective fields but also share a deep commitment to fostering growth and collaboration. Benefit from shared knowledge, support, and connections that will fortify your professional journey for years to come. Join ESMT and become part of a global community of disruptors, change makers, and thought leaders.

Discover our  
MBA programs

[esmt.berlin/degrees/  
mba-programs](https://esmt.berlin/degrees/mba-programs)



**C**hange propels us forward, shapes our identities, and defines our aspirations. It is with this understanding that ESMT Berlin proudly unveiled its refreshed brand identity, marking a pivotal moment in our school's journey in business education.

At the heart of our brand transformation lies a profound commitment to evolving while remaining rooted in our core values of community, courage, curiosity, and rigor. Our new logo, inspired by the iconic Berlin TV tower that may be seen from our campus, serves as a beacon of collaboration and unity across borders, mirroring the spirit of ESMT as a global hub for entrepreneurial excellence. By seamlessly blending elements from our past with symbols of progress, we honor our heritage while embracing a future defined by responsible leadership and innovation.

Our new tagline – “Business as unusual” – reaffirms our dedication to continuously challenging the status quo and charting new paths in an ever-changing world. This claim captures the unconventional thinking of our faculty and students. It speaks to our unwavering commitment to fostering personal growth and transformation, propelling our graduates towards a future filled with boundless opportunities.

To learn more about the brand refresh, please listen to the Campus 10178 podcast episode dedicated to it. In that episode, Jeanne M. Gaebler, deputy director of corporate communications at ESMT, and Andy McLane, creative director at Anything is Possible – the agency that supported the development of a new logo, tagline, and color scheme – detail the rebranding process. They also discuss how they collaborated in this with key stakeholders, including faculty, students, and alumni.

As we embark on this new chapter, we want to celebrate the invaluable contributions of our alumni community and therefore dedicate this ESMT Update to them. Our alumni are the embodiment of our mission – *From the heart of Europe, we create and impart new knowledge to advance business and society. We develop entrepreneurial leaders who think globally and act responsibly.* Our graduates carry our values and vision into the world and make a tangible impact in their respective fields. They serve as mentors, collaborators, and ambassadors, enriching our global network with their diverse perspectives and experiences.

In the spirit of “Business as unusual,” we invite our alumni to continue pushing the boundaries of what is possible, to embrace change with courage and curiosity, and to join us in shaping the future of business and society. Together, we can write the next chapter of ESMT's remarkable journey, inspiring generations to come with our shared commitment to excellence and innovation.



**JÖRG ROCHOLL**  
President, ESMT Berlin

# IN THIS ISSUE

SUMMER 2024



20



08



32

## 03 EDITORIAL

### FEATURES

- 05** **Creating community, the ESMT way**  
Jovana Panić
- 08** **Winning in corporate-startup collaborations**  
Baris Efe
- 16** **Circular economy is a paradigm shift – for business, environment, and society**  
Nina Fechler and Pamela Ong
- 24** **Alumni at the helm**  
Marcel Kalis
- 32** **When will you live the life of your dreams?**  
Marius Kraus

### IN PICTURES

- 14** **Annual Alumni Meeting 2023**
- 31** **New Year's Alumni Reception 2024**

### FOCAL POINTS

- 36** **It's who you know**

## CAMPUS & COMMUNITY

- 20** **Legacy and leadership: The evolution of the ESMT Alumni Council**
- 23** **Alumni by the numbers**
- 26** **Our story, told chapter by chapter**
- 27** **Inside our campus transformation**
- 29** **Become a Legacy Maker**  
Alessandra Angeloni
- 37** **Putting social impact first**  
Interview with Michael Tekabe

### Imprint

**Editorial** Tammi L. Coles, Senior Editor, tammi.coles@esmt.org  
**Contributors** Molly Ihlbrock, Head of Corporate Communications; Jeanne M. Gaebler, Deputy Director of Corporate Communications; Jovana Panić, Head of Alumni Relations  
**Creative Design** Eva Gonçalves Studio  
**Printing** Köllen Druck + Verlag GmbH  
**Photography** Cover art by Ray Noland. Other images licensed from Adobe Stock, created by AI image generators, or used with permission of ESMT faculty, staff, alumni, students, and guests.  
**Postmaster** Send changes and corrections to ESMT Berlin, Corporate Communications, Schlossplatz 1, 10178 Berlin, Germany; newsletter@esmt.org.  
**Copyright** ©2024 by ESMT Berlin. Published biannually. Printed in Germany.

# CREATING COMMUNITY, THE ESMT WAY

Alumni relations is one of the cornerstones of a university ecosystem. Connecting alumni with their alma mater creates opportunities for growth, learning, and collaboration founded in mutual values and shared experiences.



**JOVANA PANIĆ**  
Head of Alumni Relations,  
External Engagement  
ESMT Berlin

Universities in the US and the UK have been honing alumni relations for over a century, focusing on building communities, legacies, and personal investment in the university's future. European universities, by contrast, have had a significantly reserved approach towards alumni, with smaller investments in alumni relations and lower levels of alumni engagement. There are many reasons for these distinct approaches: from longer institutional histories, to elitist environments that create a sense of pride connected to the institution, to tax laws that facilitate philanthropy and showcase a clear return on investment in alumni relations. However, with the increased number of private universities in Europe, a shift towards strategic alumni relations is noticeable.

## Understanding alumni relations

Although ESMT is a fairly young institution, we took an early interest in our alumni. The first Alumni Meeting took place in 2009, less than three years after the first MBA cohort graduated. Except during the height of the coronavirus pandemic, a version of this gathering has been held annually ever since.

ESMT has enjoyed a rapidly growing alumni network. We have alumni chapters in 14 cities worldwide and diverse alumni clubs. And its alumni council works with the alumni relations department to steer the network's strategic development. Together, we serve approximately 10,200 alumni of ESMT degree and executive education programs and those of the

## Creating a thriving alumni network is a shared effort. Everyone plays a pivotal role in shaping its future.

post-graduate diploma in management program. Our alumni represent 109 nationalities, live in different areas of the world, and work across diverse industries. The potential within our alumni network is immense and undeniable.

Nevertheless, the growth of alumni networks is not without effort. Networks require agility, re-evaluation, and nurturing to thrive. Following a regrettable but understandable period of inactivity under the pandemic, our alumni network suffered. Any fresh growth would require a new value proposition for our alumni, one recognizing community at its heart.

### Reimagining community

In her book “The Gifts of Imperfection,” Brené Brown draws on her research on vulnerability as a crucial component to leading and living authentically. Brown emphasizes that human beings have an inherent need for belonging, which

she defines as being part of something greater than ourselves. Good alumni networks have the potential to offer us that social connection and sense of belonging.

Alumni communities, in all their diversity, are built on a stable foundation of shared experiences, good and bad. No matter how challenging, time spent at a university is great for personal and professional development. Welcoming new experiences, learning about new industries, exploring different markets, and meeting new people are chapters in every ESMT student’s story. And friendships made over the course of the journey to graduation endure for many years thereafter – they do not depend on yearly reunions to be rekindled.

Yet, there is more potential from such a community.

It was with this potential in mind that we started our work on the new alumni value proposition. We sought to discover how

our alumni network could best serve all its members and where, in turn, members could contribute to and draw on the strengths of a supportive community. We identified the needs of different groups within our diverse alumni network, how ESMT departments already interact with alumni, and the components of a meaningful community.

### A new vision of engagement

What we came to recognize (and honor) is that the ESMT experience does not end with graduation. Rather, it is a lifelong journey, along which members of our alumni community can connect, learn, grow, and create an impact with like-minded responsible leaders from around the globe. We see



these as the four pillars of engagement upon which the ESMT alumni experience can continue to grow.

**Connect** – networking and making valuable personal and professional connections within a diverse alumni community that spans industries, regions, and seniority levels through alumni events, chapters, and clubs.

**Learn** – continuing the lifelong learning journey with executive education programs and Global Online MBA electives, and tapping into the rich knowledge and expertise of the alumni community through alumni-organized workshops and lectures.

**Grow** – growing careers through mentoring programs, consultations with the Career Development Center, and recruitment of successful talent from the ESMT community.

**Impact** – creating an impact with fellow alumni by supporting existing initiatives such as the Responsible Leaders Fellowship, the Social Impact Project, various consulting projects, and dedicated scholarships.

### A collective endeavor

We believe that every member of the community has an interest in engaging with the school and within the alumni network to expand the ESMT universe and strengthen its reputation. This is not entirely altruistic: the better the school is doing, the more valuable an ESMT degree becomes.

To achieve success in building a strong and enduring community, everyone is needed – from the alumni relations team to the school president, from a student

to an alum. Our mentoring programs will fail without committed and well-matched mentees and mentors. The impact of our events will be dulled without attendees. The reach of our digital efforts will diminish without active, networked members who are sharing our news, events, and research. A strong community needs engaged members.

The reverse is also true: to attract alumni engagement, the activities of our community must match their interests, our opportunities must be clearly and timely communicated, and their feedback must be solicited and incorporated.

Creating a thriving alumni network is a shared effort. Everyone plays a pivotal role in shaping its future. With all elements for success at hand, we invite a deeper commitment from our entire community.



# Winning in corporate-startup collaborations

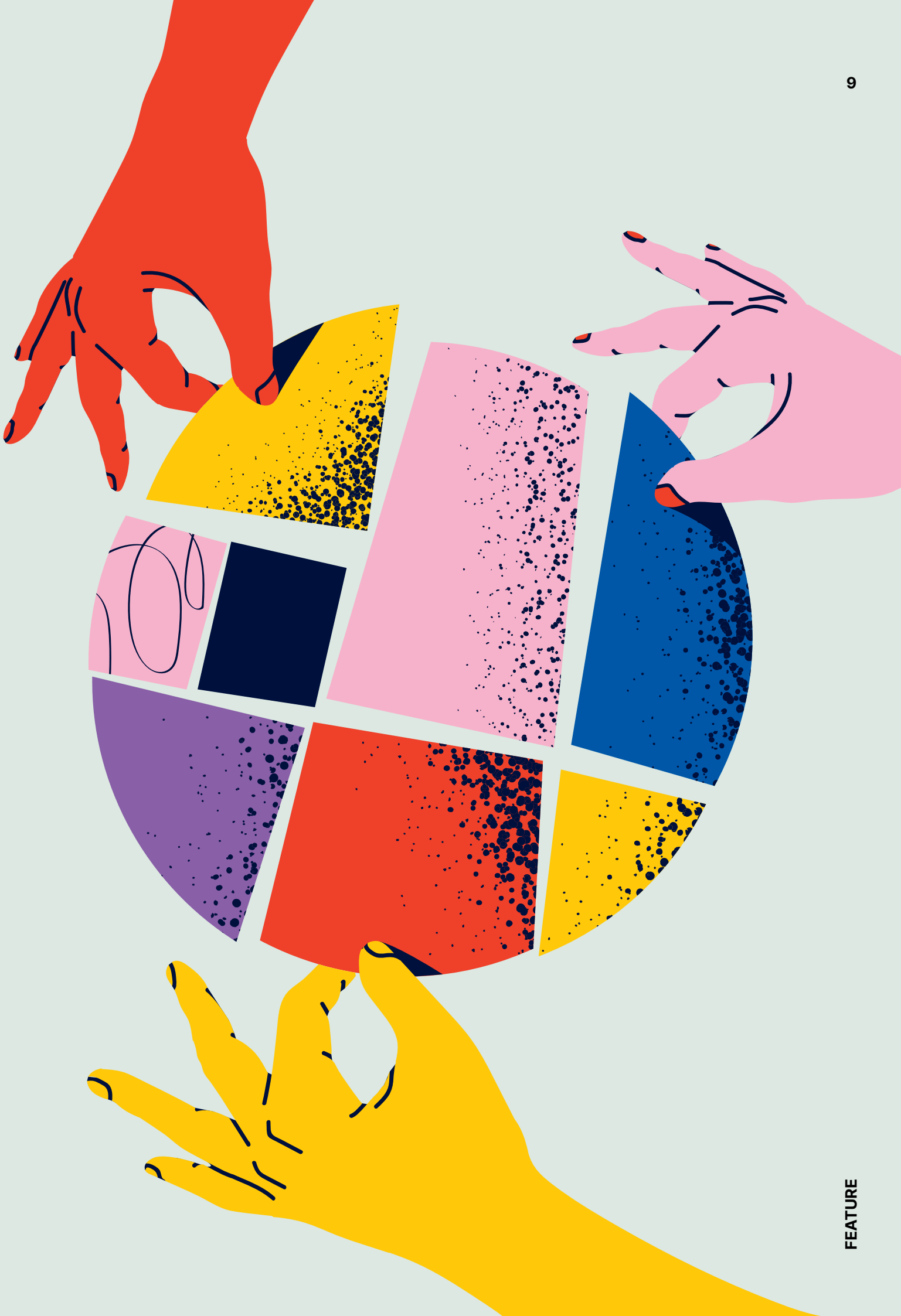
---



**BARIS EFE**  
Manager  
Vali Berlin – Entrepreneurship Hub  
ESMT Berlin

When connecting through the ESMT alumni community, corporates and startups first find common ground. Vali turns these encounters into real-world success stories.



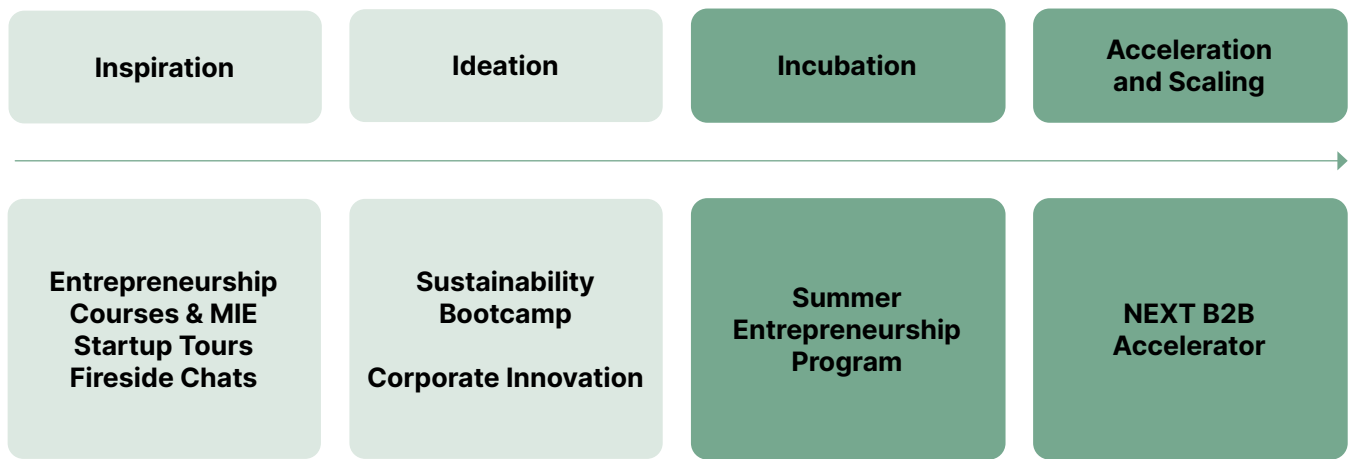


**W**hen I began my studies at ESMT in 2018, my dream was to launch my own tech venture in Berlin. I soon realized, however, that support for aspiring entrepreneurs was limited to the classroom. This limitation sparked an idea, not just for my own startup but for a broader mission: to cultivate a thriving entrepreneurship and innovation ecosystem for the aspiring talents arriving at ESMT each year. This vision led in 2021 to the creation of Vali Berlin, the entrepreneurship hub at ESMT and a hotspot for innovation and entrepreneurship in Berlin.

While juggling my studies and involvement in a healthcare startup, I dedicated myself to growing this emerging community, leveraging early support from an alumni community comprising entrepreneurs, investors, and corporate executives. After I transitioned to leading Vali full time, the continued involvement of our alumni as mentors, coaches, industry experts, and speakers became instrumental in connecting tech entrepreneurs and corporates, underscoring the alumni network's critical role in realizing Vali's ambitions.

### Vali Berlin today

Vali is situated at the heart of one of Europe's leading startup ecosystems and embodies the ethos of ESMT by fostering entrepreneurship for economic, environmental, and social value creation in Europe and beyond. We do so through a range of initiatives in three main areas: venture building, corporate entrepreneurship, and entrepreneurship education and research. In all of our offerings, we are bridging the gap between the corporate and startup world by integrating alumni, corporate executives, and thought leaders of the startup ecosystem into our programs. Moreover, we educate future entrepreneurs and innovators inside and outside of the classroom, offering courses in tools and frameworks, for example, in the ESMT Master in Innovation and Entrepreneurship (MIE) and other degree and executive education programs. We support outstanding entrepreneurial talents in a structured funnel of venture programs to build aspiring tech ventures, from initial concept through finding co-founders to reaching product-market fit.



Education Startup support



### The senso-Schneider story

Central to Vali's mission is the synergy between corporates and startups, a relationship that leverages the industry expertise and financial resources of the former to the innovative drive and cutting-edge technologies of the latter. Despite the inherent challenges of such collaborations, our alumni community has shown that it can successfully unite these worlds. A prime example of this success is the mentorship and collaboration between Marie Kober, co-founder and CEO at senso, and Till Leibold, logistic territory director BeNe-DACH at Schneider Electric.

#### The players

Marie has five years of experience as a top account manager at DHL. She chose ESMT's Full-time MBA Program to kick off her entrepreneurial career in Berlin in 2021. Vali was founded that same year, and we welcomed our first cohort of the incubation program, SEP, in which Marie took part. I was fortunate enough to work with Marie during that summer to help her along her

entrepreneurial journey from idea to validated business model. Since then, Marie has been working from our co-working space in Berlin-Schöneberg and has had our support in developing her venture, senso. Senso gathers last-mile data into one easy-to-use platform that enables organizations to understand the full scope of their transport network, optimize processes, automate tasks, and save time and money.

Till is responsible for the customer experience and global supply chain of Schneider Electric in Belgium, the Netherlands, Germany, Austria, and Switzerland. Till holds a post-graduate diploma from ESMT and supports Vali's community as an industry expert, for example, in the NEXT B2B accelerator.

#### The opportunity

Marie and Till first met during the Global Network Week for EMBA students, an initiative of the Global Network for Advanced Management. GNAM, of which ESMT is a member, connects leading business schools from around the globe to facilitate exchange among students, faculty, and the broader academic and business communities. Marie

was a guest speaker in one of the week's courses, one led by Linus Dahlander, an ESMT professor at ESMT and the holder of the Lufthansa Group Chair in Innovation. That session and a follow-up exchange over a cup of coffee launched the journey of mentorship and collaboration between Schneider Electric and senso.

"My driving force has always been to give back to the alumni community," said Till. "I've felt the profound impact of having a mentor and understand the importance of paying that forward. Becoming a mentor myself was a step outside the corporate bubble – a world often dictated by external controls. Engaging with startups offers a refreshing perspective that truly grounds you. It's a give-and-take relationship where both sides benefit. This interaction has been a huge inspiration for me, sparking new ideas and enhancing my approach to challenges within my company and department."

Over several intense months, Marie and Till have explored the use cases that could blossom into a pilot project. From the outset, Marie has examined the challenges of Schneider Electric, seeking to align senso's capabilities with Schneider Electric's challenges and aspirations. This led to a pivotal moment in which Marie was invited to step inside one of their logistic warehouses to experience the world of Schneider Electric firsthand. This site visit was not just about understanding the technical challenges; it was about immersing in the company's

culture, laying the groundwork for a partnership that promises not only to innovate but to integrate seamlessly into the fabric of Schneider Electric.

### The win-win

This collaboration between Marie and Till illustrates just how valuable connections among members of our alumni community can be. With our community as a basis for common understanding, first conversations become much easier and potential business partnerships have fertile ground on which to grow.

Moreover, the story underscores how Vali enables startups to engage with corporates in Europe. Each part of our suite of programs has been designed to nurture tech ventures, foster corporate entrepreneurship, and bridge the gap between academia and practical entrepreneurial endeavors. Our success in this is underpinned by a robust network of alumni, industry experts, and investors, who contribute their knowledge and resources to cultivate a culture of sustainable and impactful growth. The alumni community especially helps to solve issues related to corporate and startup collaborations in our ecosystem – giving back in meaningful and powerful ways. The guidance, industry insights, and networking opportunities provided by alumni like Till are crucial, enabling startups like Marie's senso to thrive. The ESMT Alumni Network acts as a dynamic catalyst for innovation, demonstrating the impact of a united community in fostering change and progress. Ultimately, this will not just be a win for ESMT, but a driver for innovation and economic progress for Europe and beyond.

**Over several intense months, Marie and Till have explored the use cases that could blossom into a pilot project.**



Marie Kober and Till Leibold on a site visit at Schneider Electric

# Masters without borders

By joining an ESMT master program, you will learn in an international environment from a diverse faculty producing innovative research while also demonstrating excellence in the classroom. Study alongside peers from over 40 different nationalities, take advantage of an exchange semester abroad, and benefit from a powerful alumni network. Embark on a life-changing journey, where a truly global learning experience will prepare you to lead in the international business landscape.

ESMT  
BERLIN

Discover our  
master programs  
[esmt.berlin/degrees/  
masters](https://esmt.berlin/degrees/masters)



# ANNUAL ALUMNI MEETING 2023

Last June, we welcomed over 220 alumni back to our campus for the two-day Annual Alumni Meeting. The celebration included milestone anniversaries for six cohorts marking 5, 10, and 15 years. Highlights of the event included the traditional Town Hall with ESMT President Jörg Rocholl, and a program enriched by the contributions of our alumni during the ESMT Community Impulse Session. Together with our faculty, centers, and institutes, participants engaged in nine diverse learning sessions. With favorable weather, we gathered in our garden and danced the night away in our historic building. Please save the date for the next Annual Alumni Meeting on June 7–8, 2024.



#### LEFT PAGE

Networking during the break

#### RIGHT PAGE

Do you WANT to own the room?

Larissa Reinprecht

Panelists Ariel Rosen, Hiltrud Werner, Dominic Runge, and Jovana Panić

Dominic Runge, member of the Alumni Council and moderator of AAM 2023

Engaged class discussion

The MBA 2018 cohort celebrates their five-year reunion



# Circular economy is a paradigm shift – for business, environment, and society



**NINA FECHLER**  
Director Global Circular Economy Program  
Evonik



**PAMELA ONG**  
Senior Innovation Manager  
E.ON Group Innovation

Until recently, industries and consumers have acted based on the linear “make-use-dispose” model. Products were manufactured, used (or not), and then discarded as waste. The materials were lost to any further product use; virgin raw materials had to be sourced, derived mostly from fossil resources. Given the challenges posed by population growth and climate change, this model is increasingly limited in meeting the rising demand for resources while minimizing environmental impact.

Circular economy offers an alternative business practice that seeks to decouple economic activity from the finite supply of scarce resources. This new model focuses on keeping resources in use for as long as possible by reimagin-

ing the entire product life cycle. This includes selecting alternative raw materials – such as recycled, bio-based, or CO<sub>2</sub>-based materials – circular product design for more efficient use phases, and end-of-product life solutions like recycling or biodegradability. Besides technical aspects, building reverse logistics and designing new business models are key to closing value chain loops.

Implementing a circular economy requires a systemic shift in how businesses operate and how consumers make purchasing decisions. This shift affects multiple aspects of business operations, such as supply chain management, product development, customer relationship management, and marketing and sales strategies.



**In a circular economy, the linear business-as-usual operating model is transformed so that companies act as partners, not competitors. For this new business trajectory, ESMT's entrepreneurial and diverse environment offers great opportunities.**

### **An imperative for circularity**

Implementing circular economy principles represents a fundamentally different business practice that can also significantly reduce environmental impact. Many opportunities exist for businesses to embrace circularity opportunities. Using circular raw materials in production, businesses can reduce dependence on virgin fossil-based materials. By designing products to allow for easy repair, businesses can extend the lifespan of their products, lowering demand for new production. By recycling products, businesses can keep materials in use for longer, preventing them from ending up in landfills or burning in incinerators, thereby reducing CO<sub>2</sub> emissions and its environmental impact along value chains. The specialty chemicals company Evonik, for example, is significantly expanding its commitment to developing solutions for the circular economy. From 2030, it aims to generate at least €1 billion in additional sales each year from circular products and technologies.

Besides environmental benefits, a circular economy can also help to address increased (consumer) demand for more sustainable products while better positioning organizations to meet their

company targets and legislative requirements. Engaging early in the transformation will enable the identification, creation, and development of new business opportunities and future-proof company strategies.

### **Enabling the green transition**

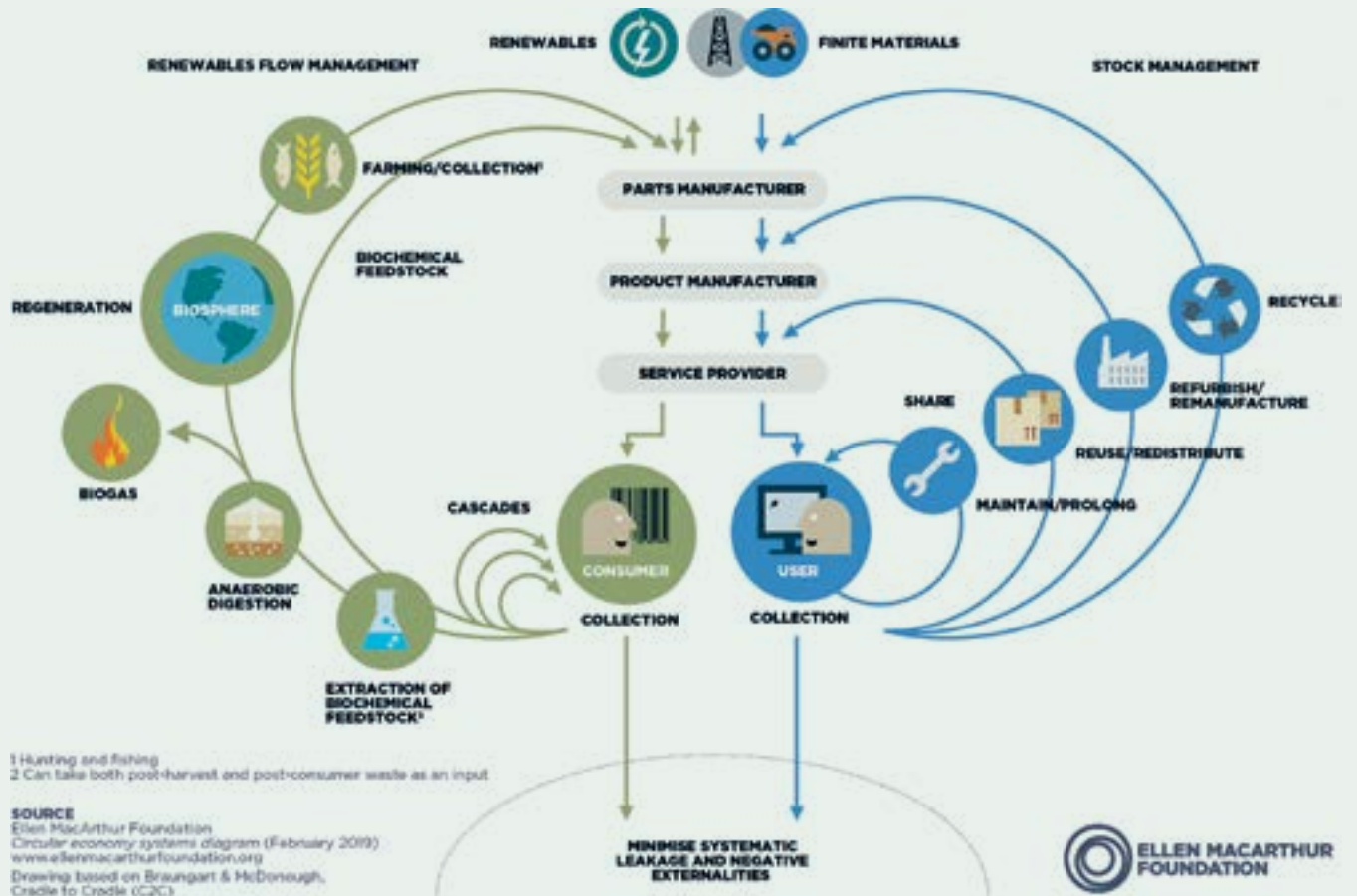
The transition to clean energy systems is crucial for reducing greenhouse gas emissions and mitigating the effects of climate change. However, it will also drive an enormous increase in demand for the critical minerals, such as cobalt, nickel, lithium, and rare earth elements, which are needed to produce clean energy products like photovoltaic solar panels, wind turbines, and electric vehicles. According to the International Energy Agency, the total demand for these critical minerals and rare elements is expected to quadruple by 2040, which could decrease the probability of achieving our a clean energy transition goals.

By adopting circular economy principles through thoughtful eco-design, repairing and refurbishing products, and extracting critical minerals from end-of-life products, businesses can play a vital role in ensuring the success of clean energy transitions globally.

### **Challenges and opportunities**

Implementing circular economy principles requires a significant transformation of existing linear value chains into circular ecosystems. There is no one-size-fits-all solution to this. Rather, it requires rethinking business practices and discovering new ways of working together. Much more than ever before, businesses must factor in mid- and long-term effects, rather than just focusing on short-term gains. It may require companies to sharpen their purpose and identify meaningful synergies with other value chain partners. Building new

**Organizations that adopt an ecosystem approach to their business strategies may have an advantage in the circular economy.**



capabilities, either internally or together with others, may also be necessary.

Organizations that adopt an ecosystem approach to their business strategies may have an advantage in the circular economy. By creating a common (business) language and a joint approach early on, they can better navigate the challenges of rearranging value chains and building new connections. However, this requires a shift in mindset across all levels of decision making to develop new business models that not only share risks but also opportunities. Competitors in a linear world may thus become partners in a circular world.

### Joining the effort

A circular economy cannot be won by one company. It is a collabora-

tive business endeavor, requiring diverse stakeholders, including businesses, suppliers, customers, and regulators to learn from each other, together.

ESMT brings together people from diverse professional and educational backgrounds, mindsets, and companies. Within this cross-organizational environment, this community can create fruitful connections between people and industries that might have been impossible in the linear business world.

To tap this potential, the idea was born to create the ESMT Berlin Circular Economy Network. Our objective is to bring together ESMT students and alumni who are passionate about circular economy to facilitate dialogue across sectors and along value chains. By fostering links between research and business on circular economy topics, we can address critical global challenges while creating environmentally sustainable pathways for business growth and innovation.

Connect with us via  
[alumni@esmt.org](mailto:alumni@esmt.org)!

We are just getting started and welcome the initiative of engaged individuals and companies.

# Leading Sustainable Business Transformation

ESMT  
BERLIN

Gain comprehensive sustainability knowledge, frameworks, and techniques to lead sustainable business transformation in your company.

With guidance from experts and your peers in the program, learn how to integrate sustainability practices into the fabric of your organization.

Bridge the gap between your current expertise and the specialized skills needed by choosing from our specialization tracks:

- Chief sustainability officer
- Sustainable finance and investment
- Sustainable operations and supply chain
- Sustainable sales and marketing
- Sustainable strategy and R&D
- Sustainable human resources



Learn more

[esmt.berlin/execed/esg](https://esmt.berlin/execed/esg)



# Legacy and leadership: The evolution of the ESMT Alumni Council



Since its inception, the ESMT Berlin Alumni Network has stood as a shining example of collaborative community building, forged hand in hand with dedicated members. The first alumni meeting – inaugurated in 2009, a mere two years after the graduation of the pioneering MBA cohort – was the genesis of what has become a cherished tradition. Over the years, this gathering has blossomed into the crown jewel of our alumni events, drawing in record attendance with each passing year.

In the wake of this initial success, alumni swiftly banded together to form the Alumni Council, a dynamic assembly of elected volunteers committed to fortifying the bonds within our network. Tasked with providing strategic guidance to our alumni relations team, the council has played a

pivotal role in steering the evolution of our network. Their efforts have borne fruit in numerous alumni-driven initiatives. Chief among them is the Alumni Network Fellowship, a scholarship fund catering to MBA students hailing from the non-profit sector.

Building upon this foundation of shared purpose and camaraderie, 2023 marked a significant milestone with the introduction of a revitalized alumni value proposition. This strategic move underscores our commitment to enriching the alumni experience, amplifying the manifold benefits of our network, and fostering deeper community engagement. With a renewed focus on harnessing the collective power of our network, we are poised to usher in a new era of growth and mutual support within the ESMT Community.



**KRISTEN HERDE**  
 Founder & CEO, YeaHR! GmbH;  
 AC President (2010–2012)

My time as president was marked by pioneering work, and it was incredibly rewarding to watch the Alumni Network evolve. I am especially proud of our efforts to establish regional alumni chapters, promote the funding of the Alumni Network

Fellowship, and develop a comprehensive framework for the Alumni Council. These foundational efforts were part of a broader plan, which we refined annually to enhance alumni participation and impact.



**OLIVER BILAL**  
 Head of EMEA Distribution,  
 Invesco Asset Management;  
 AC President (2012–2014)

I was motivated to join the Alumni Council by my admiration for ESMT's outstanding leadership development and coaching. As a Berliner, I take pride in supporting our ESMT as a prominent international business school in our vibrant city.



**PHILIPP DENNIS NIEDERHAGEN**  
 Founder & CEO, DigitalValley GmbH;  
 AC Member (2012–2022);  
 AC President (2015–2022)

My time as president was marked by pioneering work, and it was incredibly rewarding to watch the Alumni Network evolve. I am especially proud of our efforts to establish regional alumni chapters, promote the funding of the Alumni

Network Fellowship, and develop a comprehensive framework for the Alumni Council. These foundational efforts were part of a broader plan, which we refined annually to enhance alumni participation and impact.



**OLIVER HASSE**  
 Managing Director, Innovation  
 Network for Advanced Materials;  
 AC President (2015–2017)

My fondest memory from my tenure as AC President is undoubtedly the 2017 Annual Alumni Meeting. It was a landmark event exceeding – for the first time – 200 attendees, featuring many old friends and new encounters, insightful sessions, distinguished speakers, and a fantastic celebration.



**ULRIKE HELBIG**  
 Head of Berlin Office, Deutsche  
 Krebshilfe; Strategic Advisory  
 Group (SAG) and AC Member  
 (2016–2022)

I engaged with the Alumni Council out of deep gratitude for the invaluable opportunities ESMT provided me, from life-changing education to personal development. The scholarship I received as a successful woman trained as surgeon and working in a non-

profit organization was pivotal, allowing me to pursue an EMBA I otherwise couldn't afford. It was important for me to give back and support ESMT, recognizing the potential impact and visibility the alumni network could bring to our institution.



**APARAJITH RAMAN**  
 Senior Consultant, x-markets; AC  
 Member (2022–present)

One of my proudest achievements was helping establish a new governance framework last year. Like planting a seed for a future tree, this framework aims to foster engagement, increase transparency, and involve more stakeholders, contributing to a lasting legacy.



**SHRUTI VASUDEV**  
 Head of Program Management  
 & Change, Merck Life Science  
 AC Member (2022–present)

Joining the Alumni Council felt like coming full circle – a wonderful opportunity to give back to the institution that significantly shaped

both my career and personal life. It's an absolute joy to collaborate with fellow alumni to ensure our alma mater continues to flourish.



**HILTRUD WERNER**  
 Chair of the Supervisory Board,  
 Mitteldeutsche Airport Holding;  
 AC Member (2022–present)

Looking ahead, I envision the AC expanding its reach with decentralized chapters and fostering a balanced approach to activities, including not only digital engagements but also regular in-person meetings to further strengthen our bonds.

Additional thanks to the following persons for their vital contributions:

- Benedict Aicher
- Hans-Peter Frank
- Dominic Runge
- Fernando Trigo

# ALUMNI BY THE NUMBERS

## TOTAL ALUMNI 10,230

The first cohort to graduate was the Full-time MBA Class of 2006



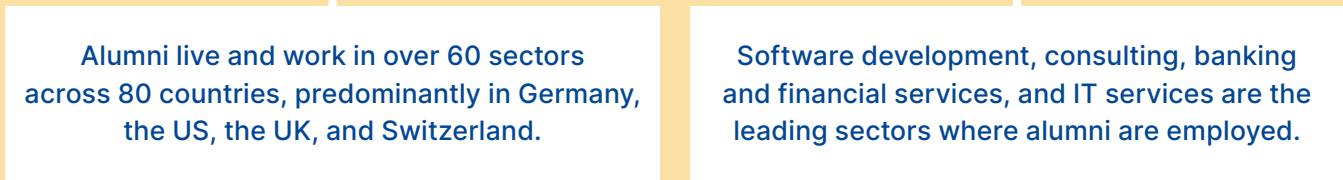
## DIVERSE ORIGINS 109 COUNTRIES



## ALUMNI STARTUPS



## GLOBAL PRESENCE IN DIVERSE INDUSTRIES



# ALUMNI AT THE HELM

With the help of the Career Development Center, ESMT alumni are leading the charge in mentoring, networking, and inspiring the next generation of business innovators.

“I am happy to help.” That’s how we ended a recent call with an MBA alumnus of the full-time program, who was offering an info session for students about his company’s strategy on AI and on product management roles. This would not only give students insights into his company’s culture as a potential new employer but would also be super helpful for MBAs moving into a product manager role. The date will be set soon.

The phrase “I am happy to help” is one we hear a lot in the Career Development Center (CDC).

In 2007, we had 29 alumni from the full-time MBA program. That was it! Don’t worry, I am not going to take you down memory lane. But where would the school now be without the generous support and engagement of our alumni? I still meet alumni from this class, who all understand how crucial their support has been over the years that followed. And not only this class, of course. I was happy to see so many familiar faces from the early MBA, EMBA, and MIM

classes at the last New Year’s Reception.

Since its inception, the CDC has organized and facilitated countless workshops and events for students. The majority by far were supported by alumni and mostly alumni from our degree programs. The list of their contributions is long: panel sessions in which alumni shared their stories and journeys about moving into new industries; workshops in which alumni advise current students on how to overcome their fears to build better, stronger networks; alumni practicing interviews with students just before their real interviews take place; and alumni returning to campus to share with students their real-world work experiences. Unbeatable!

Consider our annual career fair. It all started with a small number of companies, and those companies were represented by recruiters. At our last fair in February, there were never so many alumni involved! What is better than hearing from alumni why you should come and work for an organization? One company was even hosted only by alumni. You can be assured that we were thrilled with these developments!

Similarly, the consulting projects for MBA students show how pivotal alumni have become to career development. For the readers unfamiliar with this: Each MBA student is required to complement their classroom studies with a consulting project for a client. This takes place each year for 6/7 weeks from January to March. Nowadays, over half of all projects offered by companies are supported by alumni who all understand the important value of these projects.

To highlight one example: Two students of the MBA 2022 class started their own business in circular



**MARCEL KALIS**  
Director, Career Development Center,  
External Engagement  
ESMT Berlin





Pictured: Marcel Kalis, Menna ElGendy, Andreza André da Rocha, Ronja Zeisberg, Liza Tabliashvili, Sophie Schaefer, and Marco Stötzel

food production systems. The following year, these two entrepreneurs offered their sustainable business venture as a consulting project. The next MBA class had the chance to work on a project with them, specifically to research and develop a market entry strategy for two different business models.

The term “circular” doesn’t only apply to food systems! This cyclical mentorship model – students helping alumni, alumni helping students – is key to the success of our career development services.

Now, the good news is that we are not only looking for projects for MBAs but also for students from the Master in Analytics and Artificial Intelligence and from the Master in Innovation and Entrepreneurship. And this work is not limited to our Berlin campus. Each year we take students on the road to visit companies. The whole purpose, of course, is to give students a glimpse of working life in Germany. The CDC has taken students to startups, scale-ups, and

large corporates not only in Berlin but also in Munich, Frankfurt, Stuttgart, and Hamburg. And even the fact that the Germany national football team will play in Nike jerseys this summer won’t stop us from taking students to Herzogenaurach to meet with Adidas!

You won’t be surprised that, again, the majority of all these company visits are supported and hosted by ESMT alumni. They make it possible for recruiters and other decision makers to get involved, bridging the gap between business learning and business practice.

I could fill plenty of pages with beautiful examples of how the CDC works with alumni. But I think you get the picture.

The words “I am happy to help” make our day and work.



ESMT Career Fair 2024

## Happy to help?

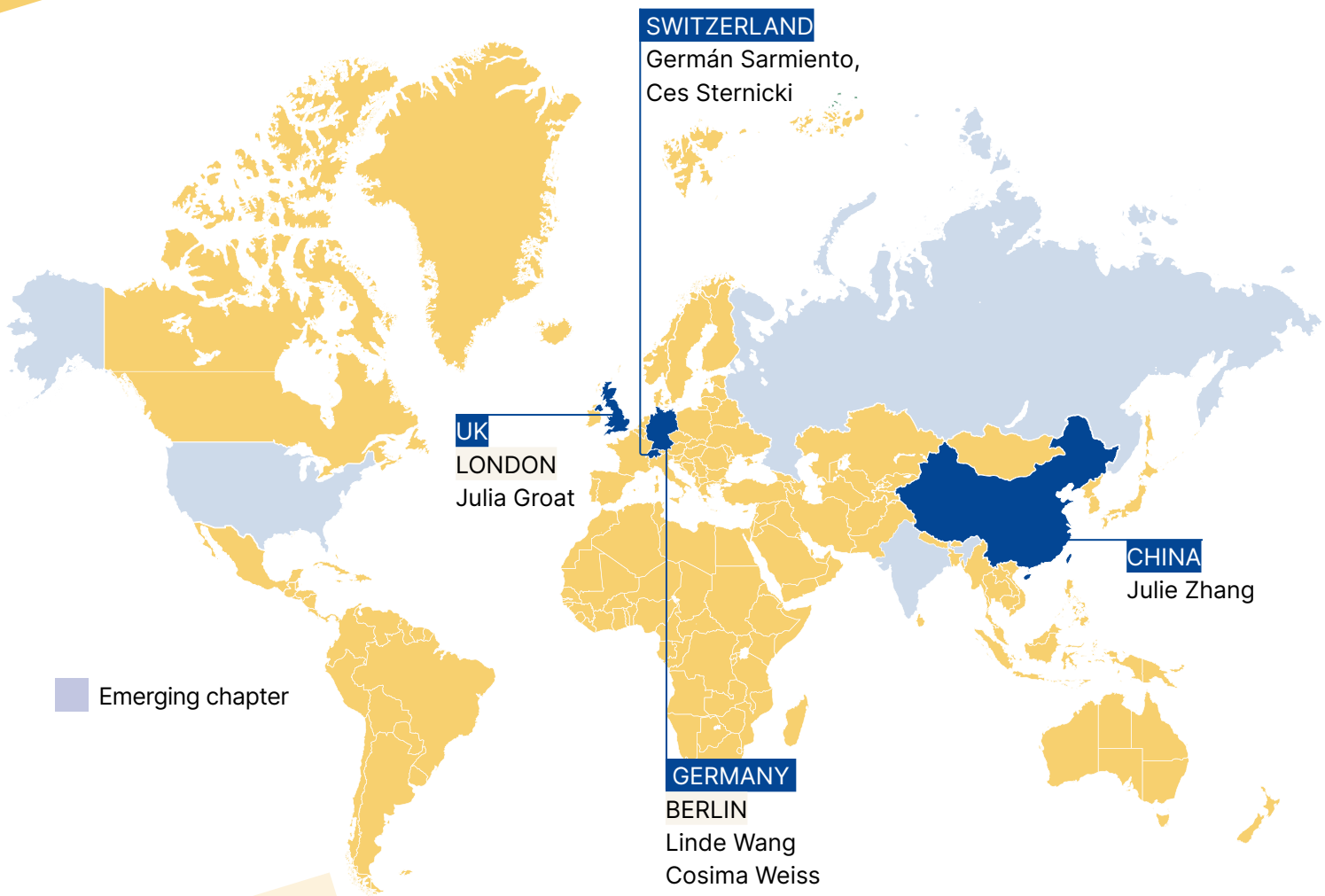
The Career Development Center at ESMT is keen to hear about opportunities at your company.

Reach us at [cdc@esmt.org](mailto:cdc@esmt.org)

# Our story, told chapter by chapter

Our vibrant, international alumni network boasts over 10,200 members spanning 109 nationalities. These alumni, residing across the globe, have formed 14 alumni chapters in China, Germany, India, Russia, Switzerland, Turkey, the UK, and the US. While some chap-

ters are larger and more active, others are currently undergoing revitalization. Regardless of size or activity level, each chapter fosters lifelong connections within our diverse and thriving community.



**UK**  
LONDON  
Julia Groat

**SWITZERLAND**  
Germán Sarmiento,  
Ces Sternicki

**CHINA**  
Julie Zhang

**GERMANY**  
BERLIN  
Linde Wang  
Cosima Weiss  
Adrian Willig  
Rashid Quddus  
Omar EIMaria  
Jan Malte Jeddelloh  
Ryan Krog  
FRANKFURT  
Costina Barbu  
Aparajith Raman  
Ana Maria Copotoiu  
Marina Dorn

**MUNICH**  
Joanne Wang  
Hannah Eirich  
Aiman Saeed  
Giulia Fagnano

**HAMBURG**  
Ralph Glätsch  
Thilo Weisner

Emerging chapter

ESMT UPDATE

We thank our chapter heads for our growth!

# INSIDE OUR CAMPUS TRANSFORMATION

We will begin the most transformative expansion of our campus since 2006, starting with the complete restoration of the west wing of our historic building. This renovation will mark a significant chapter in our commitment to both enhancing the learning experience and preserving the cultural and political heritage of our building.



**ALESSANDRA ANGELONI**  
Project Manager, President's Office  
ESMT Berlin

Our journey began in May 2023 with the launch of a fundraising campaign aimed at financing this vital project. As ESMT continues to grow, both in terms of our expansive degree programs and increasing student numbers, the need for additional space has become urgent. This renovation will address this need by adding approximately 2,000 square meters of new classroom and event space.

Once completed, the renovation will not only provide much-needed room for our expanding activities but will also reinforce ESMT's role as a vibrant educational hub at the heart of Berlin. Here, the unique confluence of business, politics, and academia creates an environment ripe for meaningful discourse and transformative change.

## A legacy of reunification

May 9, 2023, marked the launch of the campaign, highlighted by the dedication of the President George H.W. Bush Reunification Suite.

Notably, the George & Barbara Bush Foundation made the first financial contribution, while Pierce Bush, CEO of Big Brothers Big Sisters Lone Star, was among the distinguished guests.

### Preserving heritage, embracing modernity

The former GDR State Council meeting chamber will be converted into a teaching and event space and the former Screening Room will be redesigned into two modern auditoria that feature state-of-the-art hybrid technology alongside an aesthetic design.

The scope of the renovation will extend to the creation of a large multifunction room, two distinctive event spaces with views of Schlossplatz and the Humboldt Forum, and a magnificent colonnade designed for networking breakouts and receptions.

Once complete, this iconic building will serve as a premier venue for leading research and dialogue, bringing together diverse minds from academia, industry, and government to drive innovation and collaboration.

## Investing in tomorrow, together

With an international student body from 85 countries, our campus fosters a strong sense of community and belonging. ESMT is more than an educational institution; it is a vibrant community that serves as a second home. It is a place where creative dialogue thrives, and students – current and former – are encouraged to exchange ideas within a supportive environment.

***The ESMT campus is not just a place of learning – it is a hub where ideas flourish, friendships form, and knowledge expands. It's where aspirations take root and dreams unfold, leaving an indelible mark on each of us fortunate enough to be part of it and who graduate to shape a better future.***

Prashant Chiranjive Jain (EMBA Class 2018)

During the Annual Alumni Meeting in June last year, over 200 ESMT alumni could explore the building's west wing. This visit allowed them to appreciate the historical significance of the space and to learn about our transformative plans for its future.

As we embark on this journey, our focus extends beyond the bricks and mortar to a broader investment in our community – students, alumni, faculty, and staff. We will ensure that ESMT maintains its future-focused growth and creates a campus where we continue to develop entrepreneurial leaders capable of addressing today's global challenges.

**Our graduation really felt like the perfect day. Although it was our last day at ESMT, we all knew it was just the beginning. We could celebrate what we had achieved and look forward to everything we would do.**

Oloruntobiloba "Tobi" Onalaja, MIM Class of 2017



# BECOME A LEGACY MAKER

In the heart of Europe, where history meets innovation, ESMT Berlin will transform the iconic former Screening Room into two state-of-the-art auditoria. This offers a unique chance to contribute meaningfully to our legacy of educational excellence.

**We invite you, our valued community of supporters, to be a part of this transformation. Name a seat and immortalize your connection to ESMT:**

- Memorialize someone special
- Celebrate your journey as an alumni member
- Support educational excellence
- Acknowledge inspiring mentors of the faculty
- Gift a lasting legacy

With a contribution of €1,000, your personalized name plaque will be prominently displayed, ensuring that your support is recognized for the lifetime of the seats of the auditoria. Choose to contribute in a single payment or through convenient monthly installments. Your contribution may also be tax deductible, enhancing the impact of your gift.

This opportunity is not just about enhancing a building – it's about creating a sustainable future of our campus and nurturing the next generation of leaders. Only 147 seats are available in this campaign, creating a rare opportunity to leave your mark on a unique piece of European history.

**Join us in shaping the future of educational excellence. Together, let's make a difference that resonates for generations to come.**

With its history and setting in the center of Berlin, the iconic ESMT campus building is a unique home for a business school. I am grateful not only for the many great moments and close friends I made there, but also for the foundation ESMT provided to my career. I am proud to be an ESMT donor and believe it is our duty, as alumni, to ensure its full potential.

Anke Dassler, MBA Class of 2008



Scan to become a Legacy Maker today and watch as your investment in ESMT helps shape the global leaders of tomorrow.

# Executive Transition Program

Succeed in the transition to general management

- Expand your knowledge of the executive role and its responsibilities
- Build the confidence to lead others
- Understand what is happening across your organization and the wider market

Begin a learning journey that never stops

Alumni gain access to the exclusive ETP Salon for lifelong support from other top-level managers and change makers.

ESMT  
BERLIN

Earn your post-graduate diploma in advanced management

[esmt.berlin/execed/etp](https://esmt.berlin/execed/etp)



#8  
IN THE WORLD  
FOR CUSTOMIZED  
PROGRAMS

FT

EXECUTIVE EDUCATION  
RANKING 2024

# NEW YEAR'S ALUMNI RECEPTION 2024



**T**he inaugural New Year's Alumni Reception in January 2024 was a resounding success, drawing more than 270 guests from our diverse community. Alumni, soon-to-be graduates, staff, and faculty all gathered to celebrate, network, and reconnect with fellow members of the ESMT community. We are excited to announce that this event will become an annual tradition. Stay tuned for details on next year's edition!



WHEN  
WILL YOU  
LIVE THE  
LIFE  
OF YOUR  
DREAMS?





# Drawing on his experiences from “CAReer” – the top talent program of Daimler AG – and ESMT Berlin, Marius Kraus reflects on his transformative journey from corporate life in the automotive sector to personal coaching for peak performance.



“**T**here is no passion to be found playing small – in settling for a life that is less than the one you are capable of living.” These words, attributed to Nelson Mandela, have dominated my thinking in the last couple of years. Who are you, really? What kind of person do you want to be? What will be your legacy, your positive impact on the world?

## Finding direction

Before I could answer those questions honestly, I first had to find myself. After earning both bachelor’s and master’s degrees in business administration and completing internships at top DAX30 companies, I was far from knowing the right direction to take. Should I join a large corporation, a tech company, or a management consultancy? I had absolutely no idea.

To find my way, I went on a backpacking trip. It was March 2016, and for about four weeks, I walked the

Camino de Santiago – the Way of St. James – along the north coast of Spain. I wanted to get to know myself better and to finally choose a direction that fit my personality best.

## The wrong choice

In January 2017, I joined the future leadership trainee-program at a leading automotive company in southern Germany. Everyone around me was buzzing, “This is the start of a great career!”

Until this point, my professional career had been a success largely influenced by people who wanted the best for me: mentors, friends, and family. They gave me a lot of well-meaning advice and, like a good student, I dutifully followed it. The problem: I valued everyone else’s opinions above my own.

From an external perspective, I had everything I needed for a successful life: a very well-paid job, regular working hours, and all the other imaginable benefits that come with a corporate career. For three years, jumping from project to project, I should have been happy and satisfied. In reality, I was very far from it. I felt empty and burnt out. I craved more from life than what I had so far.

## The right choice but the wrong time

While these experiences were a formative part of my pursuit of happiness, I eventually recognized my genuine passion for developing people. So, I invested in further personal development and became a



**MARIUS KRAUS**  
Alumnus, Executive Education  
ESMT Berlin

**I have a clear vision of my future: my own coaching business focused on helping ambitious athletes, coaches, and top management to harness these factors to unleash their full potential and live energetic and fulfilling lives.**



certified systemic coach. By the end of 2019, I had developed my coaching concept and made plans to leave the automotive sector to start all over in a small coaching agency.

Then COVID hit. In 2020, the whole personal development sector shut down, and my plans along with it. Mentally, that was quite a difficult time. I clearly knew what I wanted, but also knew it would not happen.

I once again asked, "What should I do with my life?"

### **A new playing field**

Just one thing immediately came to mind: football. Yes, football. What should that job look like? I did not know. But I was excited to find out.

The decision to quit my job in the automotive industry was met with responses ranging from "Quitting a well-paid job in the middle of the pandemic?! Are you insane?!" to "Finally, you're doing it!"

Three weeks after the initial thought, I was on a plane to Copenhagen for my first taste of what it would be like to work in professional football. Since then, I have been educated as a professional scout, worked as a scout for a top German football club, and later worked for a leading scouting and game analysis platform.

### **My pursuit of happiness**

To others, my job in professional football is enviable. I work with professional athletes, coaches, and leaders who trust me. However, not a single day has passed without thoughts about my coaching concept. There is no way I won't work as a professional coach.

Why are the same people always at the absolute top? What do they do differently? How do they maintain peak performance without burning out? Are they really living fulfilled lives? These questions have haunted the last decade of my career journey. I am genuinely fascinated by the interplay of factors that determine how a person reaches their peak performance and can call on this performance time and time again.



So, after a lot of self-reflection on my status quo, I have a clear vision of my future: **my own coaching business ([herzkopfathlet.de](https://www.herzkopfathlet.de))** focused on helping ambitious athletes, coaches, and top management to harness these factors to unleash their full potential and live energetic and fulfilling lives.

### Creating the path to your dreams

As I look back on my journey to becoming a coach for high performers, some things have gradually become clear to me – insights that might also resonate with you as you pursue your dreams:

It's common to be showered in well-meaning advice – everyone, from mentors to family, has their say on what you should do with your life. While it's

important to listen, **finding the balance between their suggestions and your own voice is key.** It's your journey, after all, and learning to trust your own decisions is crucial.

How do you find a field that really interests you? Start by asking yourself what motivates you privately, what you would want to spend your time on if you knew it was limited. Don't worry if the first thing you try doesn't feel right. **It's perfectly fine to change direction** (even in a pandemic, as my own example shows). Remember, life isn't about getting it perfect on the first go.

We often set limits on what we think we can achieve, sometimes without even realizing it. I've learned that **we're capable of much more than we give ourselves credit for.** Facing new challenges can be daunting, but they're also opportunities to grow and learn about our strengths.

Taking care of your body is more than just a duty – it's about respect for the incredible things our bodies allow us to do. **Regular sleep, good nutrition, physical activity, and some mindfulness can go a long way** in keeping you at your best.

The people around us matter more than we sometimes acknowledge. They influence our thoughts, our choices, and the quality of our lives. It's important to **build relationships with people who support and uplift you**, who fit with the future you envision for yourself.


Life is unpredictable and not always smooth, but every obstacle is a part of the bigger picture. When things don't go as planned, it's not a signal to give up, but a challenge to overcome. **Each setback is a chance to learn and adapt.**

Being bold and taking risks can be scary, especially when doubt creeps in. But often, the risk of looking back with regret is far greater than the risk of moving forward. **Sometimes, stepping out of your comfort zone is exactly what you need to do.**

Lastly, saying “no” can be as powerful as saying “yes.” **Spend your time on what truly matters to you**, not just filling it with obligations. Choosing how and with whom you spend your time is one of your most significant decisions in creating your best life.

# IT'S WHO YOU KNOW

We have a thriving alumni community. Play the game to test your knowledge of who is who!

B I N G O				
Made the honors list	Hired a student	Married a classmate	Won an alumni award	Led the Alumni Council
Led a student club	Led an alumni chapter	Changed careers	Graduated 15 years ago	Graduate MBA Class of 2006
Attended two ESMT programs	Graduate PTMBA Class 2022		Fell asleep in class	Gave a graduation speech
Brought employer to Career Fair	Graduate MIM Class of 2016	Built a company	Graduate Telekom MBA	Hired a fellow alum
Graduate GOMBA Class of 2023	Brought their dog to campus	Mentors students or alumni	Graduate EMBA Class of 2009	Attended 8+ Annual Alumni Meetings

# PUTTING SOCIAL IMPACT FIRST

In this edition of ESMT Update, Jovana Panić, our head of alumni relations talks to Michael Tekabe, MBA 2022 alum and chief operating officer of Kubik Inc, an environmental technology company using plastic waste to make low-carbon, durable, and affordable buildings.

**Tell us about your post-graduate journey.**

After graduating from ESMT in February 2022, I went to East Africa as part of my Responsible Leader Fellowship. There, I was exposed to the ecosystem directly, specifically in Kenya and Ethiopia. Since I was not interested in pursuing a career at one of the big companies, I looked for how to combine my interests in entrepreneurship and my experience in doing my consulting project in Kenya and the RLF program. Realizing that climate and sustainability – the most pressing issues of the day – cannot be postponed, I decided to work where I could have the biggest impact: on the African continent, where I became chief operating officer at Kubik, Inc.

**Prior to coming to ESMT, were you planning to pursue a career in a social enterprise?**

Not really. My initial idea, which I outlined in my MBA application, was to build a venture capital studio in Ethiopia. I learned about venture capital and private equity and was exposed to this world. But during my studies, I realized that I like being operational. Not that I would never work in venture capital; for the time being, I truly enjoy being operational and experiencing life on the continent.

Every course at ESMT included the ESG component. Every course asked, “How is this topic connected to ESG?” That really trained my brain to think about it and to incorporate ESG into Kubik.



As we were building our company, we asked ourselves what our ESG strategy would be. In most cases, the ESG component is looked at as something that is nice to have after you conduct your core activities. But in our case, we realized ESG needs to be integrated into every part of our business: the environment, the people, and the way we operate. For me, this was not about being in the ESG field, but about really building a solution that is economically viable and has social impact.

**At ESMT, we teach about responsible leadership. What does it mean to you, and how is it applied to social entrepreneurship?**

Responsible leadership means that your leadership doesn't stop where your operations stop. It means looking at the preceding steps: What are your inputs? How are your inputs sourced? Are they ethically sourced? Who are the stakeholders most affected in this process? On the other side: How does your product affect society after you are done with the transformation? How do you ensure that no one is harmed – that your product is used safely and as intended?

If I could summarize it in one sentence: Responsible leadership does not stop at the boundaries where traditional leadership stops.

**Responsible leadership does not stop at the boundaries where traditional leadership stops.**

**Social enterprises, such as yours, have a more direct impact on society. What are the considerations that come with such responsibility, and how do you deal with the pressure of it all?**

This touches upon a topic that really bothers me. "Social entrepreneurship" is often considered a different form of entrepreneurship. In many instances, it is assumed that it is less economically viable than "regular" entrepreneurship, whatever that means.

People often think that Kubik is an NGO. We are not. We believe that the biggest impact you can make is to build an economically viable company that has a responsibility beyond its operational bounds. I do not think this should be called social entrepreneurship and responsible leadership, it should simply be called entrepreneurship and leadership. Same with ESG – if you have a separate ESG strategy outside of your daily operations, you are probably not a business that cares about the environment, social impact, or your governance. It should all be integrated.

If you were to operate any sort of company on the African continent, by just closing your eyes you are plugging into all the issues that we should be solving. Take, for example, the gender pay gap. In waste management, at the base of the pyramid, you see a lot of female waste collectors. But the minute you go into value addition and see transformation through sorting, crushing, etc., you see that gender balance shifts to predominantly male. Which means there are massive amounts of exploitation and price undercutting. So, if you are just a plug-in into that ecosystem and you close your eyes to the situation, you are not only promoting the problem, you are effectively magnifying it.

**What advice would you give to the readers and students who want to follow your path?**

Take risks and do not choose the safe path. Ultimately, a safe path is the riskiest one, as it leads to complacency and not expanding or challenging your own vision. If you never question what you are doing or why you are doing something, you are probably doing the wrong thing. It's good to take a chance and learn from the experience. In this way, I have gotten better at trusting myself and listening to my own voice.

I have experienced the biggest surprises of my personal and professional growth by taking risks. It is important to have desire and curiosity about what is behind the door and to not leave the door closed. You might open some doors and realize that it is something you definitely do not want to do. And that is fantastic too, because it is always easier to decide based on what you do not want to do rather than what you want. Explore! Take risks!



ESMT  
BERLIN

# Unlock your alumni potential

Nothing great was ever achieved alone – that's why the ESMT Alumni Network exists. Our global community of alumni offers support and human connection, along with practical advice and guidance to help you turn your passion into a meaningful pursuit. By investing your time and expertise in our network, you advance not only your own career but also contribute to a brighter future for us all.

ESMT Community offers an exclusive online platform to expand your professional network, connect with fellow graduates, discover or share career opportunities, and stay informed about ESMT news and events.

Join the ESMT Community

[esmtcommunity.org](https://esmtcommunity.org)



**ESMT Berlin**

ESMT European School of Management and Technology GmbH

Schlossplatz 1, 10178 Berlin, Germany

Phone: +49 30 212 31 0

info@esmt.org • www.esmt.berlin

