

EDHEC launches the Centre for Net Positive Business to develop new business models and drive systemic transformation

Press release

Paris, 25 April 2025 - The EDHEC Business School is delighted to announce the launch of its Centre for Net Positive Business (CNPB) at the ChangeNOW summit of which the school is an academic partner.

A year ago, EDHEC presented *Generations 2050*, its new strategic plan with a major ambition: to rethink business models for the common good. The school is currently detailing the vision and roadmap for its new Centre, led by [René Rohrbeck](#), PhD, and dedicated to exploring ways in which companies can adopt net positive impact models.

Introduced by Paul Polman and Andrew Winston¹, the *net positive* concept refers to companies that don't just stop at minimising their negative impact, but instead seek to create tangible, measurable benefits - giving more to society and the environment than they take from them. They are companies that restore ecosystems, promote social fairness, and generate long-term economic value that, beyond shareholders, benefits a wide range of stakeholders including employees, suppliers, customers, and the communities in which they operate.

"In the face of accelerating environmental, economic and social crises, approaches focused on minimising damage are proving insufficient. While remaining profitable, companies must actively contribute to regenerating their environment. By creating the CNPB, EDHEC wants to leverage its academic strengths and ecosystem to accelerate the transition towards net positive business models capable of driving systemic change", emphasises Emmanuel Métails, Director of the EDHEC Business School.

Standardised measurement frameworks

The transition to net positive business models begins with the introduction of clear, standardised measurement frameworks that go beyond the traditional indicators. With that in mind, the Centre is going to develop a benchmark to measure progress towards net positivity at company level, while making it possible to identify global tipping points and take into account planetary limits. It draws on the expertise of EDHEC's *Foresight, Innovation and Transformation* (FIT) Chair, and a database of over 600 companies developed with the World Economic Forum (WEF).

¹ Authors of *"Net Positive: how courageous companies thrive by giving more than they take"*

The initiative includes a Future FITness Index, a library of real life cases (with over 50 examples from the field), and a self-assessment tool that generates automated reports featuring recommendations and best practices.

The aim is to enlighten corporate decision-making by showing both immediate performances and impact trajectories to guarantee that short-term actions are in line with the long-term benefits.

Sustainable pathways: tangible, sector-based roadmaps

The transition to a regenerative economy is hampered by systemic barriers, whether in supply chains or market structures, which can hold back even the most ambitious companies. By applying foresight methods and a so-called *future-back* (retroactive) approach, the Centre's mission is to help companies imagine long-term trajectories, allowing them to anticipate and overcome those obstacles.

Aware that every sector faces specific issues, the Centre is starting by focusing its efforts on targeted initiatives in the construction and nutrition sectors, drawing on the experience of the *Future of Buildings* and *Future of Wellbeing and Nutrition* programmes co-developed with FIT Chair partner companies. Rather than applying a one-size-fits-all methodology, the Centre's aim is to adapt the measurement frameworks to sector-specific contexts and develop customised roadmaps called *Sustainable Pathways*.

Training courses to embed net positive principles in corporate culture

In addition to measurement difficulties and market dynamics that encourage short-termism, there is another slowing factor that needs to be taken into account: organisational inertia or even resistance. The transition also requires the transformation of mindsets and skills to progressively internalise net positive principles as a foundation for decision-making processes and leadership practices. If they are not to remain theoretical, those principles must be fully built into the education of tomorrow's leaders.

By capitalising on the FIT Chair and the foresight methodology at the heart of its expertise, the Centre will develop educational programmes to endow managers with the necessary strategic foresight, systemic thinking, and change management skills to successfully complete this transition to net positive.

Projects in synergy with the CRE

The CNPB's action plan also includes working with the *Centre for Responsible Entrepreneurship* (CRE), which federates all entrepreneurial-related initiatives at EDHEC. This joint approach is especially based on the *Responsible Entrepreneurship by Design* (RED) methodology, an approach that allows startups incubated at EDHEC to build economic, social and environmental performance issues into the core of their model from the moment they are created.

The centres will join forces to develop two innovating systems:

- The *Net Positive Factory*: designed to encourage the emergence and growth of net positive startups using ideation boot camps followed by an incubation programme at Station F for the selected projects. The purpose is to create a living research laboratory

to analyse, monitor and continuously share the processes involved in creating net positive impact projects.

- The *Impact Track*: a new programme bringing together different players - companies, startups, researchers, students and public institutions - to create a structured innovation ecosystem around a major sectoral challenge.

"The Centre for Net Positive Business positions itself as a hub for reflection, research and action. It will act as a catalyst for the emergence of business models geared towards positive impact, mobilising strategic foresight methodologies to anticipate, steer and accelerate systemic transformations", emphasises René Rohrbeck, Director of the Centre for Net Positive Business.

Press contacts

Angèle Pellicier - angele.pellicier@edhec.edu - 06 68 11 39 04

Audrey Bouchard - audrey.bouchard@edhec.edu - 06 17 25 03 77

About the EDHEC BUSINESS SCHOOL

With 120 years of history behind it, the EDHEC Business School has imposed itself as a leading institution in France, ranked 7th business school by the Financial Times since 2022. Its 2024-2028 "Generations 2050" strategic plan is entirely focussed on accelerating the world's major transformations through its impact research and teaching. The entire EDHEC community's commitment, with over 55,000 alumni and students, will allow us to successfully meet this challenge.

The EDHEC has developed a unique model based on research that is useful to society, to businesses, and to students. Today, the EDHEC is a place of excellence, innovation, experience and diversity, capable of having an impact on future generations in a world of profound changes. Having a positive impact on the world is our *raison d'être*.

The EDHEC in numbers:

- EDHEC is a leading institution recognised as an Établissement d'Enseignement Supérieur Privé d'Intérêt Général (EESPIG) under the French 1901 Not for profit Act. For the past two decades, it has been renewing the international accreditations that recognise its quality (AACSB-EQUIS-AMBA) for the maximum period.

- 10,000 students, 175 professors and researchers, 14 centres of expertise, 130 nationalities.

- A complete portfolio of 29 programmes to teach how to transform: Bachelors (BBA and BSc), the Grande Ecole programme, a Master in Management, Masters of Science (MSc), MBAs (Full time, Executive MBA and Online MBA), a PhD in Finance. Its EDHEC Executive Education offering proposes a rich portfolio of degree and diploma programmes for managers, executives and entrepreneurs. EDHEC Online, created in 2018, combines the strength of a top ranking school with the flexibility of distance learning.

- 3 French campuses, in Lille, Nice and Paris, offering a unique student experience and a recognised distinguishing feature. Its entrepreneurial ambition is deployed across three sites dedicated to inventing the companies of tomorrow: the Jean Arnault campus in Roubaix, its EDHEC Entrepreneurs programme at Station F, the largest start-up campus in the world, and the 'Techforward' programme in Sophia Antipolis, in partnership with Eurecom and the Institut les Mines-Telecom.

- 2 campuses in London and Singapore dedicated to climate finance research and development.

Find out more: <http://www.edhec.edu>