Macadam Europe: from local operations to a pan-European financial platform

TriFinance
BEYOND ADVISORY

Leveraging ERP, Fabric, and Vena to streamline international operations

Macadam Europe: from local operations to a pan-European financial platform

As vehicle inspection specialist Macadam accelerated its European expansion, the need for a robust financial backbone became increasingly clear. Greater scale demanded structure. Growing complexity demanded oversight. The response came in the form of an accelerated rollout of several strategic optimization initiatives

Three closely integrated software solutions were central to this effort: **ERP, Fabric, and Vena**. Each project followed its own scope and pace, yet all were deliberately managed as parts of a single, integrated landscape. TriFinance supported the full rollout. Not only at the operational level, but also from a helicopter view. With a clear focus on alignment, governance, and long-term resilience.

Macadam Europe, originally rooted in the logistics sector, is now positioned as a leading specialist in end-of-lease vehicle inspections and digital tools for fleet management. With more than 4,000 inspections per day, a strong emphasis on innovation, and operations in 24 countries, Macadam is widely recognized as a benchmark within its niche.

In 2023 we seized the opportunity to acquire the inspection activities of competitor SGS and evolved from four to twenty-four countries.

- Dorien Crauwels -

TOWARD A MULTI-COUNTRY STRUCTURE

Macadam's European growth has accelerated significantly over the past two years. *"While we had already expanded from Belgium into neighboring countries, it was only in 2023 that we developed a strategy to truly put ourselves on the European map,"* says CFO **Dorien Crauwels** from the company's headquarters in Vilvoorde. *"Around the same time, we seized the opportunity to acquire the inspection activities of competitor SGS. After that, things moved extremely fast. Within a few months, we evolved from four to twenty-four countries."*

A rapid transition to a **multi-country structure** is anything but straightforward for a Finance department. That may sound obvious, but it does not make the challenge any less real. *"Our role became more complex, but also more interesting,"* says controller **Jeroen Welvaert**. *"Where we previously worked mainly with a limited number of familiar Western European languages, we now also process invoices in Hungarian and Turkish. This increases complexity and requires greater maturity in systems, processes, and compliance."*

The differences between countries extend well beyond language alone, Crauwels adds. *"Our activities are concentrated in a limited number of core markets, but every entity must be fully compliant. Central steering, combined with local insight, is essential. That balance is challenging, as each country has its own rules when it comes to **taxation** and **compliance**."*

Dorien Crauwels
CFO Macadam Europe

Jeroen Welvaert
Controller, Macadam Europe

MONTHLY CLOSINGS IN ROMANIA, VAT TURNED UPSIDE DOWN IN FRANCE

Europe has no unified legal framework. The Macadam finance team experiences this reality during every monthly close. *"In Belgium, we are statutorily required to close our books once a year, whereas in Romania this happens on a monthly basis,"* says Welvaert. *"That calls for a tight grip on all deadlines and adapted processes, especially with a different currency in play."*

The complexity does not stop there. *"Not everyone is using e-invoicing yet, and VAT legislation varies significantly from country to country,"* he continues. *"In France, VAT becomes due when the payment is received; in Belgium, at the moment of invoicing. And that's without even mentioning the specific Turkish credit notes or volatile exchange rates."*

Dorien Crauwels and her team evolved accordingly. *"Our Finance team grew from two to eight people. In addition, we work with an international compliance partner across the different countries. That is essential to keep everything under control."*

At the same time, the expansion to 24 countries accelerated the digitalization of financial processes. *"We already had an accounting system, but a lot was still done in Excel. That was no longer sustainable,"* Crauwels explains. The decision was made to roll out the Business Central ERP platform, along with the proven processes from the more mature markets, across the broader organization. A significant, but necessary, undertaking.

DYNAMICS 365 BUSINESS CENTRAL

Rolling out Microsoft Dynamics 365 Business Central across all countries was anything but simple. *"The biggest challenge was that everything had to happen simultaneously,"* says Crauwels. *"We had only two to three months to set up accounting and payroll processes in all new countries, and to apply for VAT and company registration numbers."*

That pace was only possible thanks to a strong foundation. *"My predecessor had already done an excellent job, with a solid chart of accounts and a well-developed analytical accounting structure,"* Crauwels concludes.

> **The ERP foundations were designed with intercompany transactions, consolidation, and management reporting in mind.**
>
> - Johan Hermans -

Johan Hermans
Senior Project Manager, TriFinance

ERP EXPERT JOHAN HERMANS DRIVING A FAST AND STRUCTURED ERP ROLLOUT ACROSS MACADAM EUROPE

The European rollout of Macadam's new ERP system came with significant challenges. *"Once it became clear that our original implementation partner was not suited for a Europe-wide rollout, we chose a partner with a more international profile,"* Crauwels explains. *"But progress was still too slow. The first three countries each took roughly three months."*

The project only reached full speed with the involvement of TriFinance ERP expert **Johan Hermans**. *"With **intercompany transactions, consolidation, and management reporting** in mind, I set up the system's foundations,"* he says. *"This included configurations such as posting groups, dimensions, the (consolidation) chart of accounts, and exchange rates."*

Hermans also developed clear corporate guidelines that each country was required to follow. *"These guidelines enabled implementations across the different countries to proceed very quickly. Data in Business Central was immediately ready to support reporting."*

He further accelerated the rollout by establishing the right connections. *"He connected us with an **external shared service center** that also works with Business Central and has experience with similar rollouts,"* Crauwels notes. *"Thanks to that collaboration, the remaining countries were rolled out within a single month."*

This acceleration was made possible by the solid foundations previously laid by TriFinance, combined with the ERP and compliance expertise of the external shared service center. The setup could be efficiently replicated and fine-tuned to Macadam's specific context.

BETTER TO PREVENT THAN CURE

In the period following the rollout, significant issues occurred only in the first three countries. "*Italy was a real nightmare with its complex invoicing, XML requirements, and regulations, and in Poland it took us several months to stabilize everything. Something always went wrong in the finance processes,"* says Crauwels. The root causes were mainly in the **initial setup** by the less experienced implementation partner. *"Because everything had to happen so quickly, the system wasn't sufficiently tested. It's only logical that obstacles appear later."*

PROCESSES AND SYSTEMS IN BALANCE

In the meantime, the ERP landscape operates in a stable and scalable way. Optimizations are always possible, but the foundation is strong. *"And we owe that in large part to Johan Hermans,"* Crauwels emphasizes. *"He knows the system inside and out and was a huge help in the preparatory planning. That ensured processes and systems are optimally aligned."*

Johan Hermans
Senior Project Manager, TriFinance

FOUNDATIONS, BRIDGES, QUICK WINS AND AHA MOMENTS

*"Having been a CFO myself, I knew exactly what questions Dorien had and what goals she was aiming for. I also want to credit her and the team for their **professionalism** and **work ethic**. Working with them has been fantastic.*

A strong foundation in Belgium was key to extending the system successfully across other countries. Foreign currencies and local regulations were challenging, but the result is robust.

> **A system only works when the people are on board. It's about spotting quick wins and creating aha moments that highlight the value of the innovation and quickly overcome resistance.**
>
> **- Johan Hermans -**

"In projects like this, we act as a bridge. We ensure alignment and mutual understanding between the client and implementation partner, across departments, and between entities. That builds trust."

*"Although a system must first meet technical expectations, it only works when the people are on board. It's about spotting **quick wins** and creating **aha moments** that highlight the value of the innovation and quickly overcome resistance."*

THE LAKEHOUSE SOLUTION: MICROSOFT FABRIC

Once the foundation was in place, it was time for the next step. *"Before the acquisition of SGS, we worked with a separate Excel file for each country, linked to Dynamics and each with its own Power BI,"* says Dorien Crauwels, describing the data setup at the time. *"That configuration worked for four countries, but it required a lot of manual work and wasn't scalable. To enable business management across all countries, we needed a data warehouse."*

Macadam turned to TriFinance again. *"After analyzing our needs, they recommended Fabric. It's a modern data platform (a lakehouse) that combines the latest technological capabilities with ease of use. Fabric also integrates seamlessly with our ERP system, both part of the Microsoft ecosystem."*

DATA QUALITY AND BUSINESS RELEVANCE

"Being able to access, structure, and enrich all data in one place is a huge advantage," says Jeroen Welvaert. According to him, Fabric also reduces the risk of reporting errors, but it is crucial to maintain data quality. *"It's a cliché, but garbage in, garbage out. Without good source data, a platform like this has little value. Consistency across countries was critical at multiple levels. Ongoing maintenance remains essential; data quality is an action, not a given."*

"We still need to take further steps, for example with a control dashboard," adds Crauwels. At the same time, Macadam recognizes the need to avoid an overload of data and insights. *"Reports that don't add business value are better left out."*

INTERACTION BETWEEN FINANCE AND BUSINESS

The first phase after the rollout of Fabric was not without challenges. *"The stability of the system, which requires a certain level of know-how, was an issue. It occasionally went down. With the help of TriFinance, we were fortunately able to streamline everything."*

This allows Macadam to look ahead. A top priority now is to involve the business teams more closely in the analyses. Welvaert explains: *"It's useful for analyses to be conducted centrally so we can maintain control over the figures, but there is definitely room for better interaction with each business. This way, we can align the bigger picture with the reality on the ground."*

Dorien Crauwels
CFO Macadam Europe

> **To enable business management across all countries, we needed a data warehouse.**
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> **- Dorien Crauwels -**

Jonas Arnout
Expert Lead, TriFinance

STREAMLINING INTERNATIONAL REPORTING WITH FABRIC AND VENA

"During the ERP project, Johan Hermans quickly identified the need for **consolidation** and **improved reporting mechanisms**. In an international environment, it is essential to process data in a uniform and structured way.

We immediately started working with Fabric. The platform was still young – even a preview version – and had a few initial issues. Yet both we and the Macadam team were firmly convinced of its value and compatibility with Business Central. Truly admirable was Macadam's openness to new technologies.

The Lakehouse serves as a **central hub** within a connected ecosystem, where data from all countries comes together. This makes it possible to generate a single report, with clear Power BI models and visualizations. Thanks to the automation it provides, specialists can fully focus their time and energy on analyzing the reports.

Just as Macadam was open to bringing me on board at Johan's request to guide the move to a Data Lakehouse with a mix of technical knowledge and business insight, there was also a positive response to my proposal for Sophie Van Lier to give a demo of Vena. Budgeting had already been discussed in one of the first meetings and seemed a logical next step, with Fabric feeding Vena.

VENA SOLUTIONS

Macadam is currently working with TriFinance on a third project: the implementation of the Enterprise Performance Management platform **Vena Solutions**. It is not a Microsoft product, but as an official **Microsoft partner**, it integrates seamlessly with their **ecosystem**.

"After setting up reporting, the annual budgeting cycle was next," says Crauwels. *"Previously, this was Excel-driven and time-consuming. In search of an efficient way to provide a consistent template for 24 countries, linked to the database and actuals from reporting, TriFinance recommended using Vena. We followed their advice and are now rolling out the tool gradually."*

In the first phase, the **sales budget**, **HR budget**, and **OPEX budget** were set up. In a second phase, this was expanded to include **capacity planning** and **reporting**.

CHANGE

Why take a phased approach? *"Vena can do much more than just generate an annual budget. Rolling forecasts, work-flow procedures, cash flow forecasting, project tracking: the possibilities are endless. But because it is a new tool that requires some change management, we opted for a phased rollout. Everything in its own time."*

"Where accounting and data are often finance-driven, our budgeting process is organization-wide," explains Crauwels. *"More stakeholders mean a higher risk of resistance and slower adoption. We experienced this firsthand. In addition, Vena is a new chapter for us. Unlike with our ERP system and Power BI, we had no prior experience here."*

Vena therefore required a shared learning curve. TriFinance consultants supported this by providing training and extensive supporting documentation.

Sophie Van Lier
Senior Manager, TriFinance

Sophie Van Lier
Senior Manager, TriFinance

VENA AS A DRIVER FOR UNIFORM BUDGETING

"Vena was introduced as a tool to standardize the budgeting process and improve control. When each entity uses its own documents and formats, consolidating information at the group level becomes extremely difficult, and audit trails are often missing.

*One of the platform's key strengths is its seamless integration with data from Fabric. Microsoft does not have its own EPM tool and therefore works closely with Vena Solutions. Actuals are loaded into Vena as a reference for **planning**, **budgeting**, and **forecasting**. At the same time, planned and budgeted data is automatically exported to the lakehouse, where it can be used for Power BI reporting. This creates a complete data cycle, with fully integrated systems and processes. The Vena front-end also feels familiar to users, as it is based on Excel.*

Macadam understood that digitalization and transformation always require change management. They actively invested in this. During the initial workshops, they worked closely with entities and end users, involved the right people, and promoted internal alignment even before the first sessions with TriFinance began. Equally thoughtful was the decision to start small in terms of scope. In the 2025 exercise, only the most critical elements were included, creating a solid budgeting foundation that can be gradually expanded in the coming years. TriFinance continues to support Jeroen and his team with documentation and coaching, enabling them to work independently.

"For every project, TriFinance has the right experts in place to add real value," praises Dorien Crauwels. Jeroen Welvaert shares her enthusiasm: *"They combine deep expertise with direct accessibility, which is crucial."*

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INSPIRED BY THE MACADAM STORY?

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This article is part of a series of longread articles and solution
papers that TriFinance has developed in co-creation with clients.

We want to thank all participants for their contributions.

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