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STRCUU

Report on Activities Implemented by the University of Pavia during the First Year of Project Implementation

August 2026

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(ERASMUS -EDU-2025-CBHE-STRAND 1)

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Project Title: Strengthening Teaching and Research Capacities in Recently Established Uganda Universities to Deliver Climate Resilience and Green Energy Solutions to Farming Communities

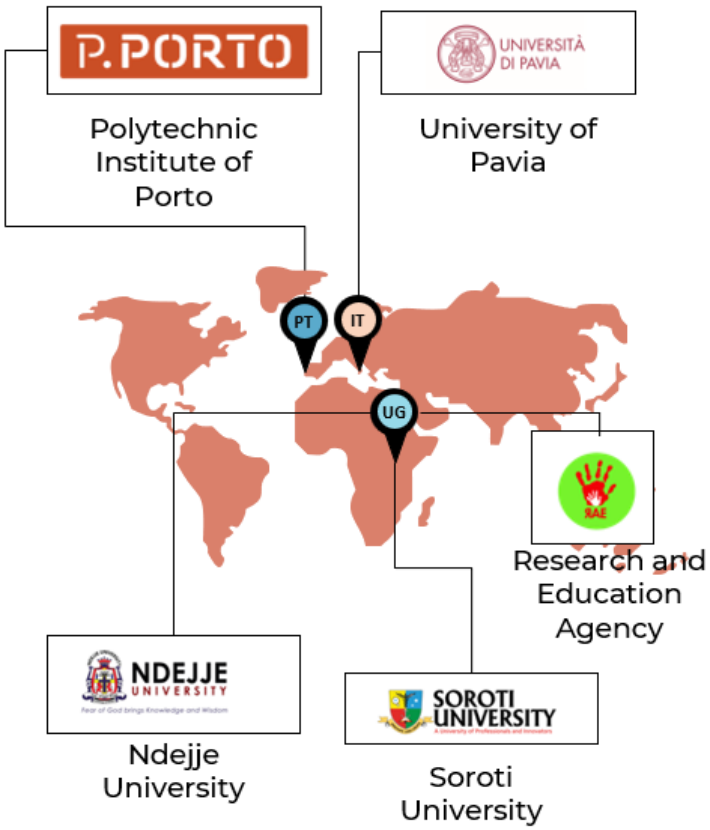
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STRCUU

Report on Activities Implemented by the University of Pavia

during the First Year of Project Implementation

Project: STRCUU – Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education, Strand 1

Grant No.: 101237180

Partner: University of Pavia (UNIPV), Italy

Reporting period: First year of project implementation

Institutional representative: Prof. Maria Sassi, University of Pavia

1. Introduction

This report summarises the activities carried out by the University of Pavia (UNIPV) during the first year of implementation of the STRCUU project. It documents the contribution made by UNIPV to project start-up and governance, management arrangements, capacity building, training, communication and dissemination, and relates these activities to the overall objectives and Work Packages of the project.

The overall objective of STRCUU is to establish a robust academic system in emerging Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Uganda for the effective delivery of sustainable climate change and adaptive green energy solutions. The project addresses identified limitations affecting emerging Ugandan HEIs, including insufficient resources, limited research and training capacity, insufficient global connectivity, and the need for more adaptive curricula and institutional frameworks.

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The project pursues four major areas of action: adjusting academic programmes to support training and research addressing climate change and the energy crisis; enhancing the delivery of training and research in climate resilience and green energy solutions; promoting stronger collaboration among HEIs and relevant stakeholders; and enhancing inclusiveness in access to climate resilience and green energy solutions in HEIs.

The implementation strategy is structured around three Work Packages:

- WP1 – Project Management and Implementation, including project governance, coordination, monitoring and management arrangements;

- WP2 – Capacity Building, including curriculum development and the enhancement of research, teaching and professional skills among staff and graduate students;

- WP3 – Sustainability, Dissemination and Exploitation, covering communication, dissemination, sustainability, knowledge management and exploitation of project results.

Within this framework, the University of Pavia, together with the other European partner, brings academic and institutional expertise to support the Ugandan partner universities in project management, capacity building and the development of sustainable academic structures.

During the first year, UNIPV's contribution concentrated on two mutually reinforcing dimensions. The first concerned the establishment of the institutional and operational foundations required for sound project implementation. The second concerned academic capacity building, particularly in research design and methodology and Competency-Based Education (CBE). These activities were complemented by contributions to project communication, web presence and social-media dissemination.

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2. Contribution to Project Inception and Launch

The University of Pavia participated actively in the STRCUU Project Inception Meeting and Launch, thereby contributing to the formal start of project implementation and to the establishment of a common understanding among partners concerning the project's objectives, approach and expected contribution.

Prof. Maria Sassi participated in the event on behalf of the University of Pavia and delivered an institutional speech presenting the University's perspective on STRCUU and its commitment to the partnership. The intervention emphasised the shared responsibility of the participating institutions in addressing the interconnected challenges of climate change, energy insecurity and sustainable development.

The contribution also highlighted the changing role of universities in responding to climate and energy challenges. Universities were presented not simply as providers of higher education, but as institutions expected to generate scientific knowledge, technological innovation, skilled professionals and evidence-based solutions capable of contributing to societal transformation.

Within this framework, the University of Pavia identified key areas in which its experience could contribute to STRCUU, including the strengthening of research ecosystems and academic structures, methodological training, responsible data management, postgraduate research capacity, curriculum development, scientific visibility and international collaboration.

The intervention therefore helped to clarify from the outset the strategic contribution expected from UNIPV. In particular, it positioned the University's involvement within a broader capacity-building approach aimed not only at delivering individual activities but also at contributing to sustainable institutional strengthening.

Participation in the inception phase was also fully consistent with Task T1.2 of WP1, which provides for the organisation of an inception workshop involving the project consortium, including UNIPV.

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3. Contribution to Project Management, Governance and Institutional Arrangements

A substantial component of the work undertaken by the University of Pavia during the reporting period concerned the establishment and consolidation of the project's management and governance framework.

This activity was particularly important during the first months of implementation, when common procedures, roles, responsibilities and operating arrangements needed to be translated from the project proposal into practical instruments to be used by the consortium.

3.1 Development of the Project Management System

The University of Pavia prepared the Project Management System (PMS) for the Implementation of the STRCUU Project.

The document was subsequently discussed, reviewed and finalised together with the project partners. This collaborative process was important to ensure that the management system reflected the operational requirements of the entire consortium rather than those of an individual institution.

The activity corresponds directly to WP1 – Task T1.3, Design Project Management System, which aims to establish a functional framework for project management, coordination and reporting and identifies UNIPV among the partners involved in this task.

The PMS contributes to creating a shared operational framework for implementation and, more broadly, to strengthening accountability, transparency and coordination among project partners.

This contribution is particularly relevant because the STRCUU implementation methodology explicitly recognises organisational structure, coherent activities, effective communication and sharing of project outputs as essential conditions for successful project implementation.

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3.2 Rules and Operating Procedures of the Project Steering Committee

UNIPV also prepared the Rules and Operating Procedures of the STRCUU Project Steering Committee.

As with the Project Management System, the document was discussed and finalised jointly with project partners.

The purpose of this activity was to translate the project's governance structure into practical operating arrangements supporting transparent and effective decision-making.

This work directly supported WP1 – Task T1.4, which provides for the establishment of the Project Steering Committee and Technical Working Groups to provide strategic guidance and technical expertise.

The contribution is also consistent with the wider governance approach of STRCUU, under which coordination mechanisms include the Lead Applicant, a Project Steering Committee and implementing structures at partner institutions.

3.3 Development of a Common Project Document Cover

The University of Pavia developed a common cover/template for STRCUU project documents.

The template was subsequently finalised together with the project partners. Although operational in nature, this activity contributed to establishing a consistent visual identity for project documentation and to improving the standardisation and recognisability of outputs produced by different consortium members.

The common template also supports project visibility and facilitates the consistent presentation of project outputs, reports, training materials and other documentation.

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3.4 Contribution to the STRCUU Risk Mitigation Strategy

UNIPV contributed to the development of the STRCUU Risk Mitigation Strategy.

Risk management is particularly important in a multi-country, multi-institutional capacity-building project, where implementation may be affected by institutional, administrative, financial and external factors.

The project proposal had already identified potential risks including political instability, policy changes affecting technology adoption, bureaucratic processes in fund disbursement and possible restrictions on physical mobility. Proposed mitigation measures included strong partnerships, stakeholder engagement, early planning, effective communication and coordination, and the use of online platforms when appropriate.

The development of the Risk Mitigation Strategy during the initial implementation phase helped operationalise this approach by providing the consortium with a more systematic basis for anticipating, monitoring and responding to risks.

3.5 Contribution to the Partnership Agreement

The University of Pavia contributed to the preparation and finalisation of the Partnership Agreement, which was subsequently formally signed by the University of Pavia.

The Partnership Agreement represents an important institutional foundation for cooperation among STRCUU partners, formalising their respective commitments and supporting clear and transparent collaboration.

This activity is directly connected with WP1 – Task T1.1, which foresees the formalisation of the agreement among the Ugandan HEIs and European partners.

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The project framework envisages such an agreement as an instrument for defining collaboration duties, partner roles, contributions, financial management and reporting arrangements and mechanisms for reviewing project progress.

UNIPV's contribution to its development and subsequent signature therefore represented an important step towards consolidating the institutional basis of the consortium.

4. Contribution to Capacity-Building Planning

In addition to the establishment of management arrangements, the University of Pavia contributed to the definition of the STRCUU Training Plan.

This activity was important for translating the broad capacity-building objectives contained in the project proposal into a coherent sequence of training interventions.

Capacity building represents a central component of STRCUU. WP2 specifically foresees the development of skills-enhancement modules for staff and graduate students covering areas including grants sourcing, proposal development, research management, scientific data management, publication, digitalisation, Competency-Based Education and inclusiveness.

The contribution of UNIPV to the Training Plan was therefore directly related to the project's objective of improving the delivery of research and training programmes in partner HEIs.

During the reporting period, UNIPV moved beyond planning and directly implemented two major areas of capacity building: Research Design and Methods and Competency-Based Education.

5. Research Design and Methods Training

5.1 Design and preparation of the training

One of the main academic contributions of the University of Pavia during the reporting period was the design and delivery of the training programme:

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"Research Design and Methods for Developing Individual Research Projects."

The training was designed to address methodological challenges commonly encountered by early-stage researchers when moving from a broad research interest to a structured, coherent and feasible research project.

The programme adopted a progressive approach covering the major stages of research development, beginning with identification of the research problem and formulation of research questions and subsequently addressing literature review, research design, data collection and analysis.

UNIPV prepared the training programme and the PowerPoint presentations used during the sessions. In addition, a dedicated training handbook, Research Design and Methods for Developing Individual Research Projects, was prepared and distributed to participants.

The preparation of a structured handbook was intended to increase the usefulness and sustainability of the training by providing participants with a resource that could continue to support their research activities after completion of the synchronous sessions.

5.2 Delivery of the training

The training was delivered online from **9 to 13 March 2026**.

It was structured as a five-day programme combining theoretical explanation with practical application. The training covered:

- research problems and research questions;

- literature review and identification of research gaps;

- research design and data sources;

- data collection and methodological choices;

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- development and consolidation of individual research proposals.

The approach was deliberately practice-oriented. Participants were encouraged to apply each methodological concept directly to their own research ideas and progressively develop the components of their research projects.

The training therefore went beyond knowledge transmission and promoted the immediate application of methodological skills.

5.3 Participation and international reach

The Research Design training achieved a particularly significant level of participation.

A total of 880 participants registered, representing 41 countries, while 303 participants actively attended, representing 29 countries.

The scale and international reach of the initiative extended the visibility and impact of STRCUU beyond the immediate partner institutions and created opportunities for knowledge exchange among researchers from different academic and geographical contexts.

5.4 Outputs and results

The practical orientation of the training generated tangible participant-level outputs.

Participants progressively developed components of their individual research projects and ultimately produced mini research proposals. The outputs demonstrated direct application of the methodological concepts addressed during the training.

The evaluation included in the training report indicates a high level of perceived usefulness. Overall satisfaction was estimated at approximately 90%, while around 80% of participants identified methodology as a key benefit. Approximately 70% reported improvement in research problem/gap formulation. At the same time, requests for more practical sessions and longer training duration

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highlighted opportunities for further development, while approximately 75% expressed demand for follow-up training.

These results provide useful evidence not only of participation but also of the perceived relevance of the training and the potential for further capacity-building activities.

5.5 Contribution to STRCUU objectives

The Research Design training directly supported the STRCUU objective of strengthening teaching and research capacities in partner institutions. The training report specifically identifies its contribution to capacity building in research design and methodology, development of high-quality research outputs and strengthening of academic skills relevant to climate resilience and sustainable development.

It also contributes directly to the project activities aimed at strengthening research management, proposal development and professional research skills within participating HEIs.

6. Training on Competency-Based Education

6.1 Rationale and objectives

A second major capacity-building contribution implemented by the University of Pavia during the reporting period concerned Competency-Based Education (CBE).

The training was developed in response to the need to strengthen the capacity of university lecturers to move beyond predominantly content-based approaches towards teaching and assessment models centred on the competencies that students are expected to demonstrate.

The training was designed to strengthen lecturers' ability to design, deliver and assess teaching and research activities according to a competency-based approach. Its objectives included understanding the principles of CBE, designing competency-based curricula and learning outcomes, promoting

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active learning, developing authentic assessment methods, using rubrics and integrating research into teaching.

This activity was particularly relevant to STRCUU because WP2 explicitly includes competence-based teaching among the areas for skills enhancement of staff and graduate students.

6.2 Preparation of training materials

UNIPV developed the training content and associated teaching materials, including the presentation "Integrating Competency-Based Education (CBE) in University Teaching and Research in Africa."

The programme addressed both the conceptual foundations of CBE and their practical application. Topics included competencies as combinations of knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours; outcome-oriented education; learner-centred approaches; curriculum design; measurable learning outcomes; constructive alignment; active learning; authentic assessment and rubrics.

The training materials explicitly linked CBE to challenges facing African universities, including skills mismatch, graduate employability, weak university-community linkages and the need for graduates capable of applying knowledge to real-world challenges.

6.3 Delivery and participation

The training programme was implemented from 13 to 15 July 2026. It involved 342 participants from 160 universities and higher education institutions across Africa.

The first stages addressed the theoretical foundations of Competency-Based Education and their practical application to curriculum design, including formulation of measurable learning outcomes and constructive alignment.

The training adopted an interactive and participant-centred methodology consistent with the pedagogical model it promoted. Conceptual inputs were combined with discussion, reflection and practical work, enabling participants to analyse and reconsider their own teaching practices.

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6.4 Practical outputs

A particularly important feature of the CBE training was its emphasis on producing concrete outputs rather than limiting the activity to theoretical knowledge.

By the end of the training, participants had completed a first full design of one of their own university courses using a Competency-Based Education framework.

The products developed included:

- competency statements;
- measurable and action-oriented learning outcomes;
- aligned teaching and learning activities;
- authentic assessment strategies;
- assessment rubrics;
- constructive alignment between competencies, teaching methods and assessment.

Participants therefore completed the training with a practical product capable of being further refined and potentially implemented within their institutions.

This represents an important initial contribution to the longer-term STRCUU objective of curriculum reform and improved pedagogical capacity.

7. Contribution to the STRCUU Web Presence

The University of Pavia also contributed to the organisation of the STRCUU project web page.

This activity supported the development of the project's external visibility and the creation of a central point through which project objectives, activities, training opportunities and results can be communicated to stakeholders.

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The contribution is directly aligned with the communication and dissemination dimension of STRCUU. The project proposal specifically envisages a dedicated project website and a broader promotion and visibility strategy providing information about the project and its activities.

The web presence is particularly important for a project involving institutions in different countries and seeking to reach audiences beyond the formal consortium, including academic staff, students, researchers and other stakeholders.

8. Social Media Communication and Dissemination

Throughout the reporting period, the activities in which the University of Pavia participated were also communicated through social media posts.

Project-related activities were posted on social media to increase visibility, communicate implementation progress and disseminate training and other project initiatives. These posts were subsequently reposted through the University of Pavia's institutional channels, extending their reach and connecting STRCUU activities to the University's broader academic and international community.

This continuous communication activity contributes to WP3 – Sustainability, Dissemination and Exploitation, which includes dissemination of project activities and results, communication, knowledge management and strategies for increasing project visibility.

Communication during the first year has therefore complemented technical implementation by making the activities and emerging results of STRCUU visible beyond the immediate participants.

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9. Summary of Activities and Contribution to Work Packages

Activity implemented/contributed to by UNIPV	Main output	STRCUU area
Participation in STRCUU Inception Meeting and Launch	Institutional contribution and presentation of UNIPV's role and commitment	WP1
Development of Project Management System	PMS prepared and finalised with partners	WP1 – T1.3
Development of Rules and Operating Procedures of the Project Steering Committee	Governance and operating procedures prepared and jointly finalised	WP1 – T1.4
Development of common project document cover	Harmonised project-document template	WP1 / Visibility
Contribution to Risk Mitigation Strategy	Risk-management framework	WP1
Contribution to Partnership Agreement	Agreement developed and subsequently signed by UNIPV	WP1 – T1.1
Contribution to Training Plan	Framework for capacity-building activities	WP2
Research Design and Methods training	Five-day training, handbook, presentations and training report; 880 registrations and 303 active participants	WP2
Competency-Based Education training	Training materials and practical CBE curriculum-design activity; 342 participants from 160 HEIs	WP2
Contribution to project web page organisation	Support to project web presence	WP3
Social-media dissemination	Communication of project activities and institutional reposting by University of Pavia	WP3

10. Overall Contribution of the University of Pavia during the First Year

The activities implemented during the first year demonstrate a broad contribution by the University of Pavia to the initial development of STRCUU.

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Three dimensions are particularly evident.

First, UNIPV contributed to the institutional consolidation of the project. The preparation of the Project Management System, Steering Committee Rules and Operating Procedures, contribution to the Partnership Agreement and Risk Mitigation Strategy, and development of common project-document standards provided practical instruments supporting project governance and implementation.

These contributions are particularly important because the first phase of a multi-institutional capacity-building project requires clear management structures and commonly agreed procedures before the more extensive academic and capacity-building activities can be fully implemented.

Second, UNIPV made a substantial contribution to academic capacity building. The Research Design training addressed methodological capacity among researchers and graduate students and achieved significant international participation. The CBE training subsequently addressed pedagogical capacity and curriculum design, allowing university staff to translate competency-based principles into concrete course structures.

These two training areas are mutually reinforcing. Research Design strengthens the capacity of academic institutions to generate rigorous knowledge, while Competency-Based Education strengthens their ability to translate knowledge and skills into effective learning processes and graduate competencies.

This combination is consistent with the STRCUU approach, which seeks simultaneously to strengthen research and training capacities and to realign curricula towards climate resilience, green energy and emerging societal needs. WP2 specifically provides for reviewing and developing curricula and strengthening staff and graduate-student competencies through dedicated modules and blended or face-to-face training.

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Third, UNIPV contributed to project visibility and dissemination through its involvement in the project web page and communication of project activities through social media, complemented by dissemination through the University of Pavia's institutional channels.

11. Contribution to Expected Project Impact

Although the present report covers only the first year of implementation, the activities already undertaken contribute to several of the short- and medium-term changes expected under STRCUU.

The project proposal anticipates that participating HEIs will strengthen their governance, administrative, academic and research capacities in the short term, while graduate students and trainees will acquire enhanced knowledge and skills. In the medium term, stronger research activities and curricula are expected to contribute to the relevance and employability of graduates and to consolidate institutional collaboration.

The management and governance instruments developed during the reporting period contribute to the first of these expected effects by strengthening the institutional architecture within which the project operates.

The Research Design training contributes to strengthening research capability and methodological rigour, while the CBE activity provides academic staff with tools for designing education around measurable competencies, applied learning and authentic assessment.

The strong international participation achieved by both training initiatives also provides an additional networking and internationalisation dimension. In particular, the Research Design activity reached participants from numerous countries, while the CBE programme brought together participants from 160 universities and HEIs across Africa. These results contribute to the wider STRCUU ambition of strengthening academic collaboration and knowledge exchange.

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12. Priorities for the Subsequent Implementation Period

The work undertaken during the first year has established important foundations for the subsequent phases of STRCUU.

The governance and management instruments developed under WP1 provide a framework that can now support implementation, monitoring and reporting throughout the remaining project period.

Under WP2, the experience gained through the Research Design and CBE training activities provides a basis for continued skills enhancement and for linking capacity building more closely to the planned review, development and harmonisation of curricula.

This is particularly relevant because WP2 foresees the review of existing MSc programmes, the development of new graduate programmes, harmonisation of curricula and further skills enhancement for staff and graduate students.

The strong demand for follow-up activities emerging from the Research Design training also indicates potential for continued methodological capacity building.

Communication and dissemination activities should similarly continue alongside technical implementation so that project outputs, training opportunities, lessons learned and emerging results remain visible to the broader academic and stakeholder communities.

13. Conclusion

During the first year of STRCUU implementation, the University of Pavia made a substantive contribution to both the institutional consolidation and the capacity-building dimensions of the project.

At the institutional level, UNIPV contributed to transforming the project framework into practical management and governance arrangements through the preparation or development of the Project Management System, Steering Committee Rules and Operating Procedures, common project-

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document cover, Risk Mitigation Strategy and Partnership Agreement, together with its contribution to the Training Plan.

At the academic level, the University designed and delivered significant capacity-building activities in Research Design and Methods and Competency-Based Education. These initiatives combined conceptual learning with practical application and generated tangible participant-level outputs. Their scale — including 303 active participants in the Research Design training and 342 participants from 160 HEIs in the CBE activity — also demonstrates the potential of STRCUU to reach academic communities beyond the immediate consortium.

Finally, UNIPV supported project communication and visibility through contributions to the STRCUU web presence and dissemination of activities through social media and the institutional communication channels of the University of Pavia.

Taken together, these activities show that the contribution of the University of Pavia during the first year has addressed WP1, WP2 and WP3 in an integrated manner, combining institutional strengthening, academic capacity development and project visibility.

The first reporting period has therefore established important foundations for the next phases of implementation, particularly curriculum development and harmonisation, continued skills enhancement, strengthened research capacity and deeper cooperation among the participating institutions. These activities contribute to STRCUU's broader ambition to strengthen the capacity of emerging Ugandan HEIs to deliver relevant education, research and innovation in response to climate resilience, green energy and sustainable-development challenges.

Pavia, August 2026

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