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EU Grant Sourcing, Financial Management and Compliance

Final report

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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

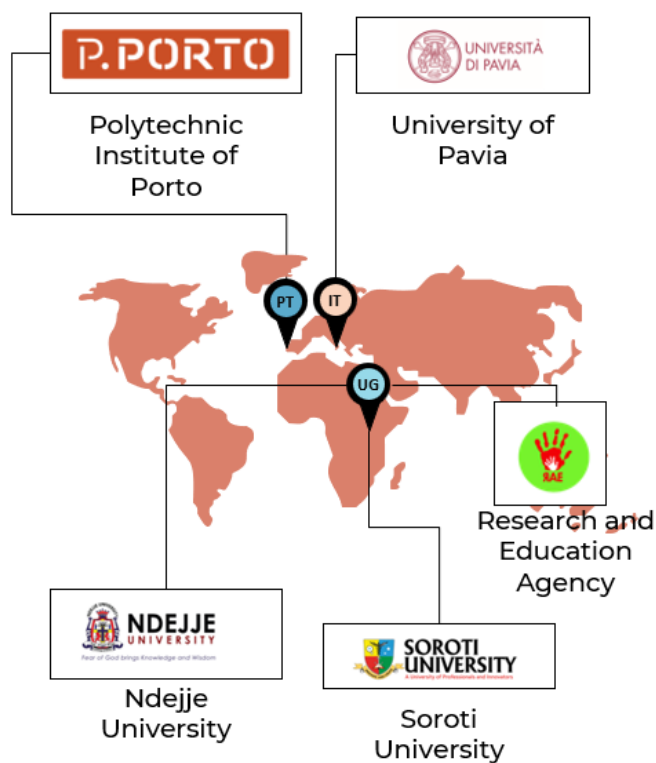
Acronym: STRCUU

Grant Call: ERASMUS -EDU-2025-CBHE-STRAND 1

Grant Number: 101237180

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Partner institutions





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1 Summary of the training activity

The training activity *EU Grant Sourcing, Financial Management and Compliance* was delivered in three online sessions between 12 and 15 of May 2026 under the STRCUU project. This training was designed to promote the capacity of university staff to successfully identify, manage, and comply with EU funding requirements, ensuring effective project implementation, financial sustainability and audit readiness.

The training successfully engaged a large and diverse international audience, with 123 attendees from 19 countries. The activity combined theoretical input with practical exercises, enabling participants to apply the subjects discussed and to experience the templates and the tools that were provided during the training.

2 Purpose

This training aimed to strengthen the ability of university staff to engage effectively with European Union funding programmes, from identifying suitable opportunities to managing projects in line with financial and administrative requirements. It was focused on building practical competencies in navigating the EU funding landscape, understanding funding models, and aligning project ideas with institutional priorities. Particular attention was given to budget design, financial management during implementation, and compliance with key rules on cost eligibility, procurement, documentation, reporting, and audit preparedness.

An important component of the training was the development of practical tools that can be readily used within participants' institutions. These include a funding opportunity analysis template, a basic project budget and justification, a compliance checklist, a structured document management system to ensure clear audit trails, and a risk self-assessment tool. Together, these outputs support both individual project implementation and broader institutional capacity in managing EU-funded activities.

This training empowered participants to (1) identify and assess relevant EU funding opportunities aligned with institutional priorities, (2) navigate key EU platforms, including the EU Funding & Tenders Portal, (3) describe and compare the main EU funding models (lump sum,

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unit costs, actual costs), (4) design and manage project budgets aligned with planned activities, (5) apply key financial management principles during project implementation, (6) explain and apply EU rules on cost eligibility, procurement, and documentation, (7) prepare for reporting and audit processes, and (8) identify and mitigate financial and compliance risks in EU-funded projects.

3 Content

The training was structured into three main components covering a briefing of the EU funding landscape, providing guidelines for the financial management of projects, and for monitoring and reporting costs.

3.1 Part I: EU grant sourcing and strategic positioning

This component introduced participants to the EU funding landscape and supported them in identifying and selecting appropriate funding opportunities. It covered:

- Overview of key EU programmes (Erasmus+, Horizon Europe)
- Differences between education, capacity-building, and research funding
- Navigating EU funding platforms and tools
- Understanding call documents (objectives, scope, eligibility, budget rules)
- Strategic alignment between institutional capacity, project ideas, and funding opportunities

3.2 Part II: Financial management of EU projects

This component focused on the financial dimension of EU-funded projects, from budget design to implementation. It addressed:

- EU funding models (lump sum, unit costs, actual costs)
- Principles of budget design and cost allocation
- Linking activities, deliverables, and costs
- Budget categories (staff, travel, equipment, subcontracting)
- Financial monitoring and budget control during implementation

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- Managing budget changes and reallocations

3.3 Part III: Compliance, reporting, and audit readiness

This component focused on ensuring compliance with EU rules and preparing for audits. It included:

- Eligibility of costs and supporting documentation
- Procurement rules and procedures
- Timesheets and staff cost justification
- Technical and financial reporting requirements
- Audit processes and expectations
- Common errors and risks in EU project management
- Internal control mechanisms and risk mitigation strategies

4 Methodology and pedagogical approach

The training adopted a practical, participant-centred, and interactive approach, combining conceptual input with applied learning activities. It integrated short theoretical sessions to introduce key principles, followed by hands-on exercises such as call analysis and budget design, allowing participants to engage directly with real funding scenarios. The methodology also incorporates case studies based on actual project and audit situations, fostering a deeper understanding of common challenges and risks.

Learning was further reinforced through group discussions and peer exchange, encouraging participants to share experiences and perspectives, as well as through guided reflection on their own institutional practices. Overall, the training emphasised a “learning by doing” approach, enabling participants to immediately apply acquired knowledge and tools within their professional contexts.

The training was structured as a three-day programme combining synchronous sessions with individual and group work. Each day included approximately three hours of live training, complemented by one and a half to two hours of homework, resulting in a total workload of around fifteen hours.

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5 Resources

As part of the training, participants used, and suited to their particular needs, a set of practical outputs that can be directly applied within their institutions for designing grant applications. These deliverables are intended to serve as institutional tools, supporting not only individual projects but also strengthening overall project management capacity.

Funding opportunity analysis template: a structured analysis of a relevant EU call, including objectives, eligibility, budget conditions, and strategic relevance.

Basic project budget template: a draft budget aligned with project activities, including cost categories and justification delivered as an Excel tool specifically tailored for Erasmus+ CBHE - Capacity Building for Higher Education – grant applications under the European Program Framework running between and 2021 and 2027.

Budget justification note: a short narrative explaining the logic and allocation of costs.

Compliance checklist for EU projects: a practical tool to support ongoing financial and administrative compliance.

Document management structure: a system for organising financial and supporting documents.

Risk and compliance self-assessment tool: a checklist to identify potential financial and compliance risks at the institutional level.

Besides these tools, the **course manual** and **presentations** were delivered as PDF files.

6 Participants

This training was suited to address for academic staff willing to coordinate or participate in EU-funded projects, project coordinators and managers, students, mainly at doctoral and master's levels, early-career researchers interested in project management, financial officers and administrative staff, international relations and research support offices.

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The training successfully engaged a large and diverse international audience, with 228 registered participants from 23 countries, that turned to 123 attendees – 83 male and 40 (Figure 1) – from 19 countries. The majority of participants (95 out of 123) came from Uganda, Zimbabwe and Ethiopia. Four participants came from Europe and South America; the remaining came from Sub-Saharan Africa, mainly from the Eastern region (Figure 2, Table 1).

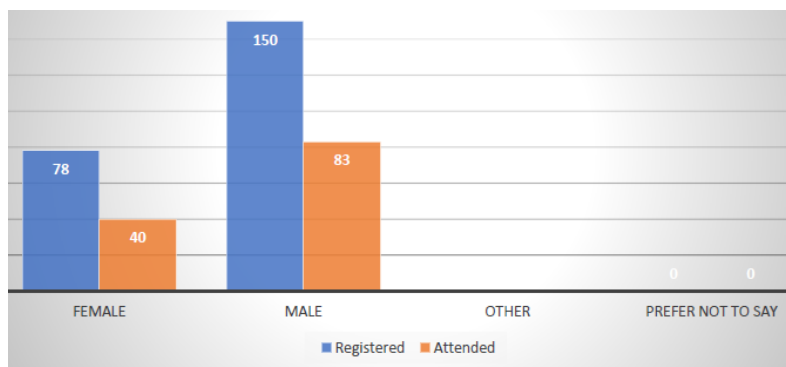


Figure 1: gender distribution

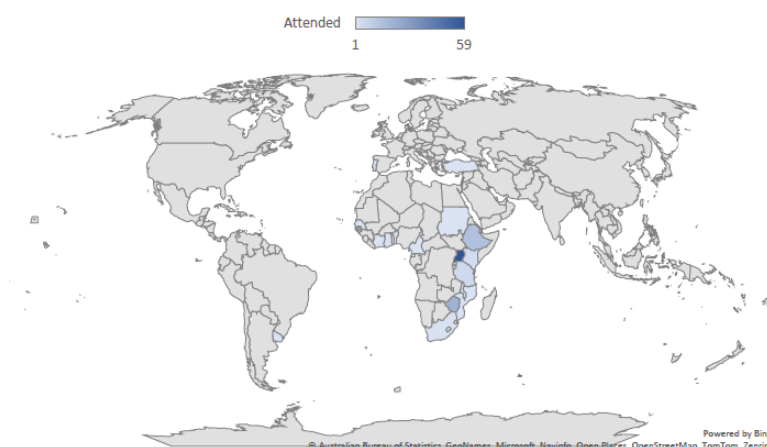


Figure 2: distribution of webinar attendees



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Table 1: participant distribution by country

Country	Registered	Attended
Uganda	78	59
Zimbabwe	54	21
Ethiopia	46	15
Kenya	9	4
South Africa	7	2
Tanzania	7	5
Malawi	5	3
Côte d'Ivoire	3	1
Ghana	3	2
Mozambique	2	1
Rwanda	2	2
Belgium	1	1
Benin	1	1
Cameroon	1	1
Democratic Republic of Congo	1	0
Germany	1	0
Nigeria	1	0
Portugal	1	1
Senegal	1	1
Somalia	1	0
Sudan	1	1
Turkey	1	1
Uruguay	1	1
Grand Total	228	123

7 Participants feedback and reflection

We have asked participants to reflect on their learning and to provide feedback every day. On the first day we started with a diagnostic assessment questionnaire (Section 7.1), at the end of the second day participants were asked to share their thoughts on a 3-2-1 exit card (Section 7.2), at the end of the training, on day 3, participants were requested to fill in an overall evaluation questionnaire (Section 7.3).

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7.1 Diagnostic assessment, Day 1

At the beginning of day 1, a total of 45 participants completed the diagnostic survey, providing a useful overview of the group's experience, confidence levels, expectations, and concerns regarding participation in EU-funded projects.

The majority of the participants in the training are teachers or researchers, followed by students, administrative staff and other roles (Figure 3). The responses revealed a highly diverse audience, composed mainly of teachers and researchers, alongside administrative staff, students, and other institutional stakeholders. This diversity was particularly valuable for the training, as successful EU-funded projects require collaboration between academic, technical, administrative, and management profiles.

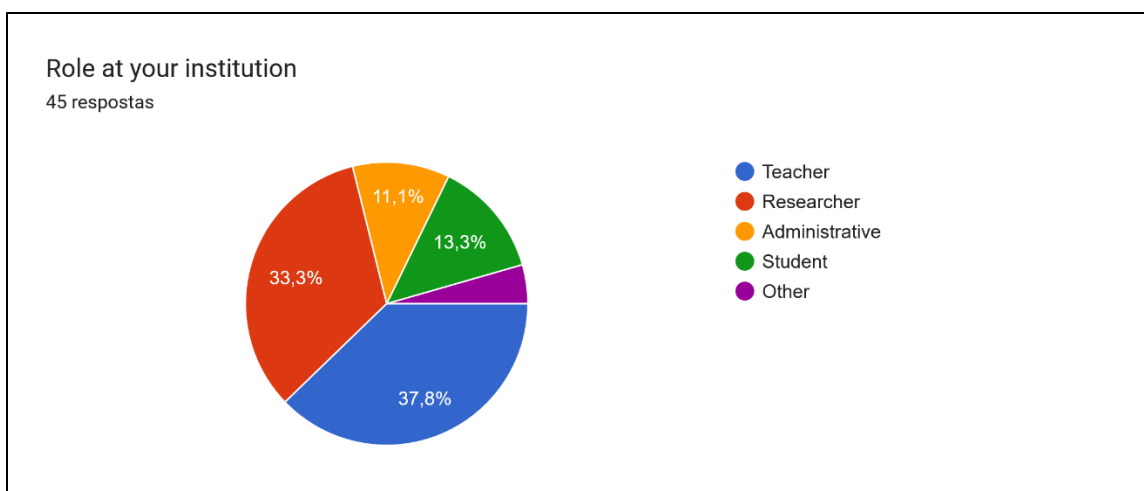


Figure 3: participants institutional role

Participants generally demonstrated a positive level of confidence regarding EU projects (Figure 4). Most respondents (above 85%) rated their confidence between 3 and 5 on a 5-point scale, with a particularly strong concentration at levels 4 and 5. This indicates both strong interest and motivation to engage with EU funding opportunities, although some participants still felt uncertain and were looking for practical guidance and institutional support.

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On a scale from 1 to 5, how confident do you currently feel about applying for, and managing EU-funded projects? 1 - not confident at all 5 - very confident

45 respostas

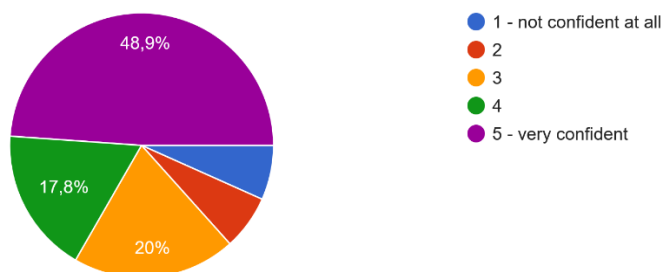


Figure 4: self-confidence on managing EU-funded project

In terms of previous experience (Figure 5), half of the participants indicated that they had never participated in funded projects before. At the same time, a significant number reported previous involvement in EU-funded or other externally funded projects, and a smaller group already had experience coordinating EU projects. Overall, this suggested a mixed group combining beginners with more experienced participants, which created good conditions for peer learning and exchange of practices.

Although these two indicators are not necessarily correlated, and these answers are based on individual self-perception, apparently there is a mismatch between the high level of self-confidence and the low level of previous involvement in fund raising and grant managing.

The survey also highlighted the main challenges and concerns faced by participants. The most frequently mentioned issues were proposal writing, finding appropriate international partners, budgeting, project management, and understanding compliance requirements. Several respondents also referred to institutional capacity limitations and difficulties in identifying suitable funding opportunities. These findings confirmed the importance of combining strategic, financial, and compliance dimensions within the training programme.



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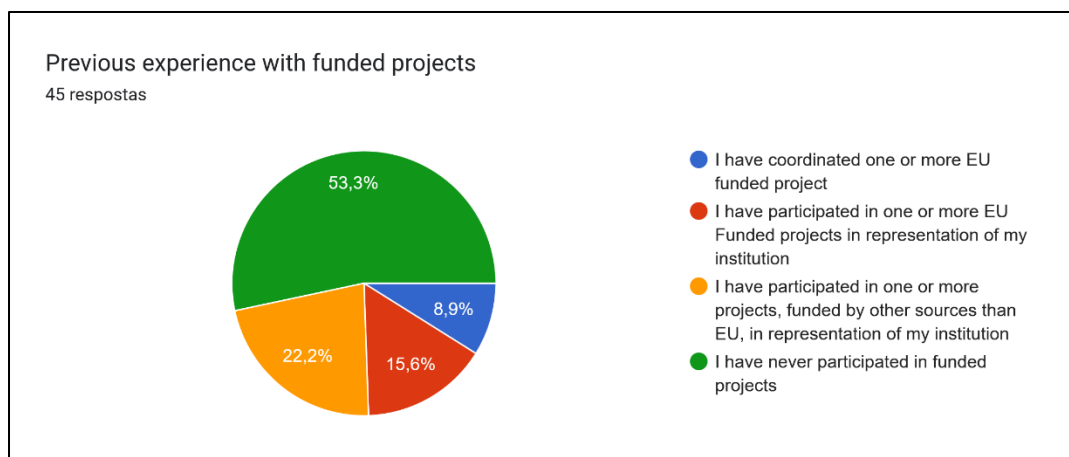


Figure 5: previous experience with grants

The project ideas participants reported as those they would like to implement show strong alignment with the objectives of STRCUU and broader EU priorities. Many responses focused on climate resilience, sustainable agriculture, green energy, digital learning, capacity building, research development, and community-oriented innovation. This demonstrates significant potential for future project development aligned with programmes such as Erasmus+ and Horizon Europe.

Overall, this diagnostic assessment suggested that the group was highly motivated, already aware of many of the practical challenges associated with EU-funded projects, and particularly interested in acquiring concrete skills related to grant sourcing, budgeting, compliance, partnership development, and project implementation.

7.1.1 Emerging trends and patterns

The diagnostic survey revealed clear differences in perspective depending on participants' institutional roles. Teachers and researchers formed the largest groups, but their concerns and expectations were not entirely the same.

Researchers generally showed higher confidence regarding participation in EU-funded projects and demonstrated stronger interest in research infrastructure, innovation, laboratory



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modernization, and international collaboration. Many of their proposed project ideas were closely aligned with research capacity building and scientific networking.

Teachers, although highly motivated, tended to express greater concern about proposal writing, budgeting, compliance requirements, and lack of experience with EU procedures. Their project interests were more frequently connected to curriculum development, teaching innovation, digital learning, and internationalization of education.

Students showed surprisingly high confidence and strong enthusiasm for international opportunities, mobility, digital education, entrepreneurship, and innovation-related projects. Their responses suggest strong openness to international engagement and future participation in project activities.

Administrative staff highlighted operational and institutional concerns, particularly related to financial management, reporting, compliance, audit readiness, and institutional support structures. Their responses confirm the importance of involving administrative services early in project preparation and implementation.

Another important pattern identified was the strong relationship between previous experience and confidence levels. Participants with prior exposure to funded projects, especially EU-funded projects, showed significantly higher confidence and more strategic thinking regarding funding opportunities and partnerships. In contrast, participants without prior experience were more concerned about where to start, how to identify opportunities, and how to manage complex procedures.

Across all roles, however, several common themes emerged:

- strong interest in international collaboration,
- recognition of institutional capacity gaps,
- concern about proposal competitiveness,
- and high demand for practical, hands-on guidance.

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Overall, the responses suggest that the group was not only interested in funding itself, but also in developing broader institutional capacity for internationalization, research development, and sustainable project management.

7.1.2 Key characteristics per role/profile

Teachers

- Strong interest in curriculum development, teaching innovation, and international collaboration
- Main concerns focused on proposal writing, budgeting, and finding suitable partners
- High motivation to access funding despite limited previous EU project experience

Researchers

- Strong orientation toward research capacity building, innovation, and international networking
- Higher average confidence regarding EU-funded projects compared to other groups
- Main concerns related to proposal competitiveness, identifying experienced partners/consortia, and project leadership

Students

- Strong enthusiasm for mobility, innovation, entrepreneurship, and digital learning opportunities
- Interest in participating in internationally connected projects and research activities
- Main concerns focused on funding access, proposal writing, and project management skills

Administrative staff

- Strong focus on compliance, budgeting, reporting, and institutional procedures
- Concerned with operational capacity and audit readiness

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- Recognize the importance of institutional support systems for successful project management

Other profiles

- Broad interest in understanding the overall EU project ecosystem
- Compliance and institutional readiness emerged as key concerns
- Need for general capacity-building and orientation on EU funding processes

7.1.3 Recommendations for participating universities

The survey responses suggest that, while there was strong interest and motivation to participate in EU-funded projects, several institutional barriers continue to limit effective engagement. To address these challenges, participating universities may consider the following actions, ordered from most to least mentioned in the survey:

1. **Strengthen institutional project support structures** by establishing or reinforcing research support, grants, or international project offices capable of assisting staff throughout the project lifecycle.
2. **Invest in continuous staff capacity development** on proposal writing, budgeting, compliance, project management, and audit readiness through regular internal training and mentoring schemes.
3. **Promote interdisciplinary and cross-functional collaboration** between academic, financial, administrative, and internationalization units to improve project preparation and implementation.
4. **Develop institutional partnership strategies** to facilitate participation in international networks and increase opportunities for consortium building and collaborative research.
5. **Create internal project development support mechanisms**, such as peer-review systems, proposal development workshops, and seed funding for project preparation.
6. **Recognize and incentivize participation in international projects** within staff workload models, career progression systems, and institutional evaluation frameworks.

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7. **Improve internal compliance and document management systems** to strengthen financial accountability and audit preparedness.
8. **Support early-career researchers and students** through involvement in project activities, proposal development exercises, and mobility opportunities, thereby creating a stronger future pipeline of project participants.
9. **Align project development with institutional strategic priorities** to ensure that funding applications contribute to long-term institutional development goals and sustainability.
10. **Encourage a culture of internationalization and innovation**, where participation in externally funded projects is seen not only as a funding opportunity but also as a mechanism for institutional transformation and global engagement.

7.2 Reflection and feedback, Day 2

Participants reflected on the first two days of the training and reported their thoughts through a 3-2-1 exit card provided through a Google Form; participants were asked to share “3 things you have learned”, “2 questions you have”, “1 thing you found interesting”. The main findings are reported in Sections 7.2.1 to 7.2.3.

7.2.1 3 things learned

Budgeting and financial management was the strongest learning area (9 responses), particularly budget design, lump sum budgeting, budget tracking, budget templates, Excel organization, and alignment between budgets and workplans

Understanding EU funding opportunities and calls was a major takeaway (5 responses), especially navigating funding platforms, interpreting calls for proposals, understanding priorities and deadlines, and matching project ideas with funding opportunities

Compliance and project implementation requirements emerged as an important learning topic (3 responses), particularly documentation of expenses, implicit EU funding rules, and the importance of international collaboration and consortia.

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7.2.2 2 questions pending

Further training opportunities: grant writing, key EU funding concepts and rules, future EU training schedules, understanding calls for proposals.

Institutional support to grant holders.

7.2.3 1 interesting thing

Budgeting became less intimidating and more practical (3 responses), particularly through understanding lump sum budgeting and seeing budgeting as a strategic and operational tool rather than just working with numbers.

7.3 Final evaluation of the training, Day 3

On Day 3, at the closure of the training, participants were asked to fill in an evaluation questionnaire. Although based only on the 3 responses that were provided (Figure 6 to Figure 15), the results are encouraging to replicate the training in the future.

Two thirds of the respondents give 5 points (the maximum mark) to all questions and one third gives 4 points. Answers are on a 5-point Likert scale.

At three questions – Relevance of the training content, Practical exercises and case studies, and Overall evaluation – 100% of the responses give the maximum mark.

This training has been disseminated in international events and we have had requests to organize it in several institutions. We are planning to have two more editions of the STRCUU EU Funding training still during 2026, one in Soroti, Uganda, in October 2026, and another in Dakar, Senegal, in November 2026.



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The training content was relevant to my professional and institutional need

3 respostas

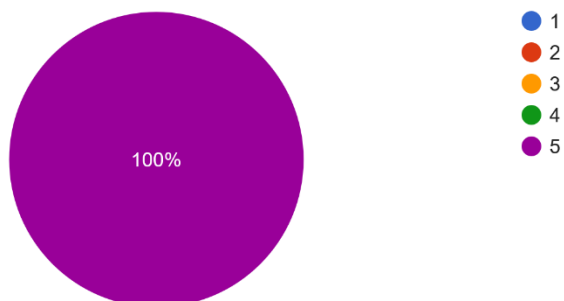


Figure 6: relevance of training content

The presentations and explanations were clear and easy to follow

3 respostas

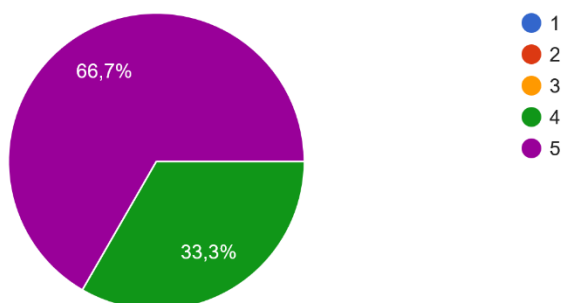


Figure 7: clarity of training



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The pace and duration of the sessions were appropriate
3 respostas

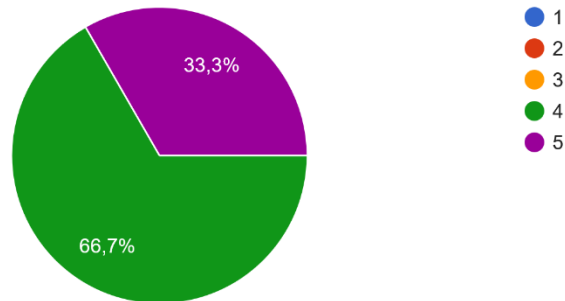


Figure 8: pace and duration

The practical exercises and case studies helped me understand the topics better
3 respostas

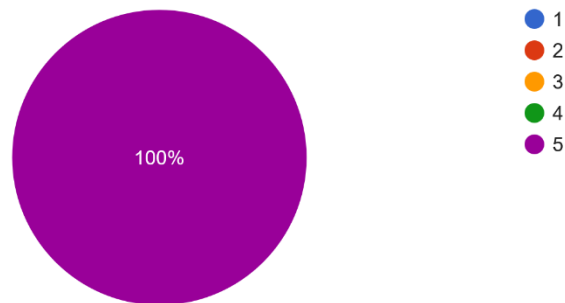


Figure 9: hands-on training activities



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The training materials and supporting documents were useful and well organized

3 respostas

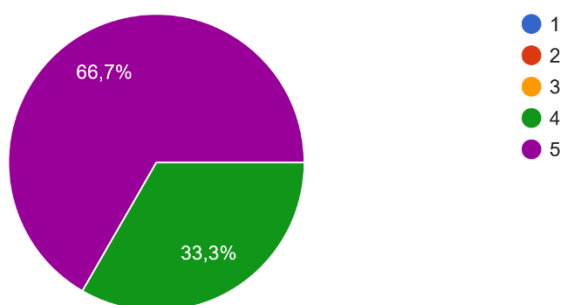


Figure 10: training materials

The training improved my understanding of EU funding opportunities and project management

3 respostas

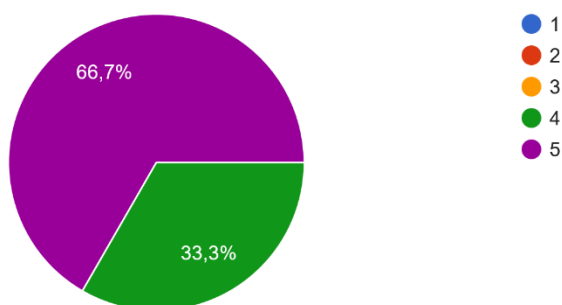


Figure 11: impact on participants' knowledge

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I feel more confident about participating in or managing EU-funded projects after this training
3 respostas

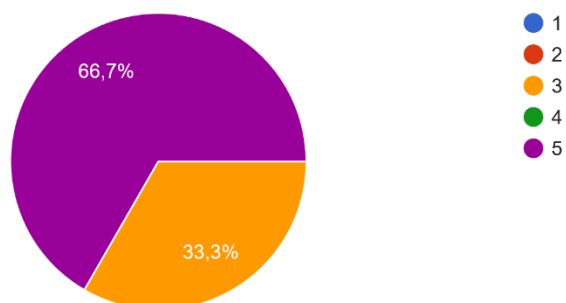


Figure 12: impact on participants' competence

The training enhanced my understanding of financial management, compliance, and audit requirements
3 respostas

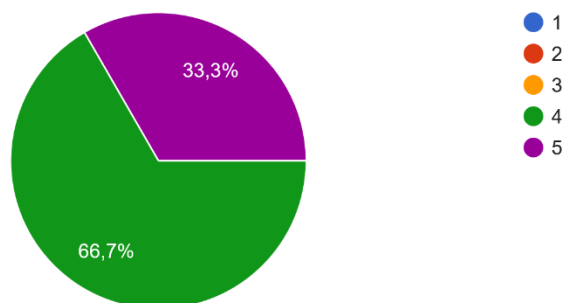


Figure 13: impact on participants' knowledge on financial issues



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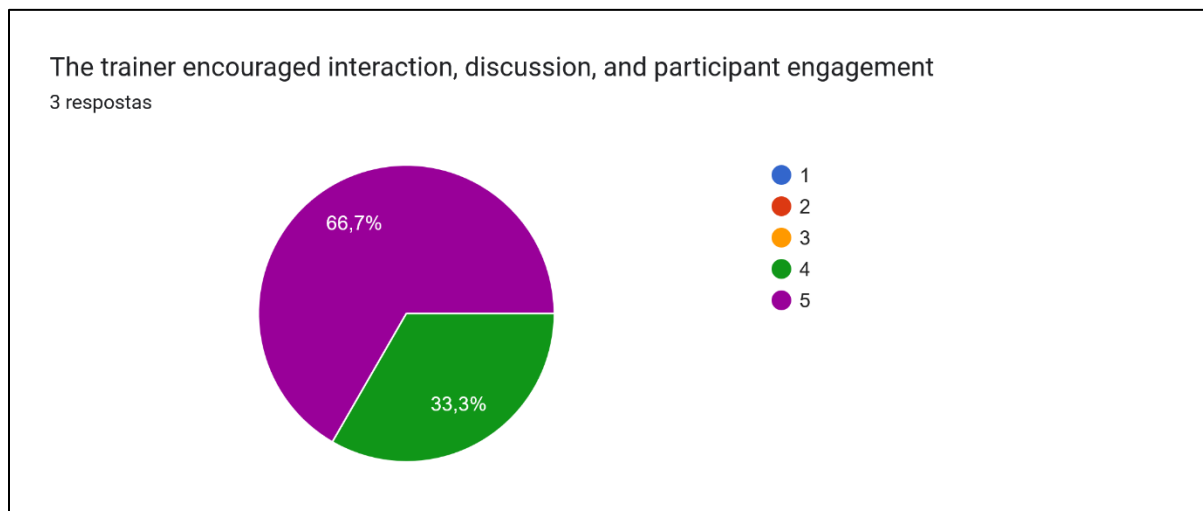


Figure 14: training dynamics



Figure 15: overall quality perceived by participants