



SMARTA-NET in-country training

Summary Report on the fourth module “Funding and Financing Opportunities”



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1. Introduction

Over the period October to November 2024, SMARTA-NET implemented the fourth round of training sessions in 12 sites in 11 target countries.

The training in Funding and Financing Opportunities for rural areas is closely aligned with the Guidance documents developed by MemEx, as task leader. The training content aimed to share the methodology, developed by the SMARTA-NET project, to guide rural municipalities in the development of project proposals for the implementation or extension of mobility services and solutions in their territory.

In this training module, the participants had the opportunity to:

- **Learn how to assess the finance needs**, both in terms of investment and maintenance over time.
- **Acquire know-how and awareness of the existing funding opportunities** (European and national ones) to support the development of rural mobility solutions, as well as explore non-subsidised financing alternatives.
- Identify **various funding and financing sources** for developing mobility solutions.
- **Apply their new knowledge** to strengthen current tender processes.

As in the previous modules, a train-the-trainer presentation was provided to guide trainers through this process. However, trainers have had the flexibility to adapt the contents to their specific needs and target audience.

After the welcome speech, introduction to the project and overview of the learning objectives of the training module, the lecture segment focused on presenting basic concepts on Funding and Financing rural mobility, as well as the main challenges and opportunities that rural communities might deal with. During this phase, participants were encouraged to engage in discussions about their legal, organisational, and financial framework to self-assess their capacity to implement different mobility solutions.

A stepwise approach was then introduced to guide the rural communities through funding and financing procedures. This ten-step approach was complemented by the presentation of different case studies related with rural mobility and tourism-oriented mobility.

Two different workshops in line with the learnings acquired in the lecture part were proposed:

1. Develop a financing strategy for the community mobility projects based on the set of mobility service/s chosen.
2. Draft a project proposal for the implementation or extension of mobility services and solutions on own-territory based on real available European/national/local funding call.

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National and European examples of funding and financing opportunities were developed by the Task 6 leader (MemEx), based on the country-based material produced by the SMARTA-NET Consortium, and included in the training materials. These examples were especially relevant for use by the trainers in the second workshop.

The Report summarising participants’ feedback on the fourth training session is reported as Annex I.

2. Train-the-trainer and Training events

2.1. Train the trainer sessions

The train-the-trainer sessions were held on 1st and 7th of October. The recordings of both sessions were made available for post-training viewing for those who, for any reason, were unable to participate in any of the sessions.

The train-the-trainer sessions were conducted by Andrea Lorenzini, Elena Bargagna and Eleonora Ercoli from Memex.

Errore. L'autoriferimento non è valido per un segnalibro. below shows the trainers and facilitators who participated in the different train-the-trainer sessions.

Some trainers and facilitators were unable to participate in these sessions, but they were invited to watch the videos and clarify any doubts with the consortium.

Table 1 | Train the trainer sessions of Module 4

Trainer / Facilitator name	Date	Country
Anita Baltace (Facilitator)	01/10/2024	Latvia
Brendan Finn (Facilitator)	15/10/2024	Ireland
Carmelo Rivero (Trainer)	01/10/2024	Spain
Claudio Mantero (Trainer)	15/10/2024	Portugal
Daša Farčnik (Trainer)	15/10/2024	Slovenia
Drazen Vinscak (Trainer)	01/10/2024	Croatia
Eleonora Ercoli (Facilitator)	01/10/2024	Italy
Giorgio Ambrosini (Facilitator)	01/10/2024	Italy
Holger Jansen (Trainer)	15/10/2024	Germany
Jaroslav Martinek (Trainer)	01/10/2024	Czechia
Lajos Dorner (Trainer)	15/10/2024	Hungary
Luciana Pereira (Trainer)	01/10/2024	Portugal
Maria Siti (Trainer)	15/10/2024	Greece
Mercè Taberna (Facilitator)	01/10/2024	Spain
Raitis Sijāts (Trainer)	15/10/2024	Latvia
Raluca Atanassov (Trainer)	01/10/2024	Romania
Roger Torrell (Facilitator)	01/10/2024	Spain
Susana Aladro (Facilitator)	01/10/2024	Spain
Tiago Pina (Trainer)	01/10/2024	Portugal

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2.2. Training Events

To date, the training events have been held in 12 sites in 11 of the 15 countries, as shown in **Errore. L'autoriferimento non è valido per un segnalibro..**

Table 2 | List of the training events of module 4 already held.

Country	Trainer / Facilitator name	Date	Place (municipality)
Austria	Jakob Britz / Philipp Schlemmer	25/11/2024	Online
Czechia	Jaroslav Martinek / Adela Pixová	26/11/2024	České Budějovice
Germany	Holger Jansen / Karl-Heinz Schoon	19/11/2024	Online
Greece	Maria Siti / Marina Michailidou	01/11/2024	Rethymno
Hungary	Lajos Dorner	08/11/2024	Lake Balaton
Ireland	Louise Weir / Brendan Finn	21/11/2024	Tralee, Kerry
Latvia	Anita Baltace / Raitis Sijāts	05/11/2024	Limbaži
Portugal (Alentejo)	TIS team	25/11/2024	Portalegre
Portugal (Madeira)	Claudio Mantero	22/11/2024	Câmara de Lobos
Slovenia	Daša Farčnik / Eva Erjavec	25/11/2024	Velenje
Spain	Factual Consulting	15/10/2024	Barcelona

The 4th training module has already been completed in 11 different lighthouse sites. It will be delivered in the remaining sites according to the schedule shown in Table 3, as in these sites, trainers and Lighthouse sites didn't manage to find a mutually-agreed date in November to run the events. It was noted that municipalities face normal end-of-year reporting and next-year planning/budgeting at this time of year, so participants were less flexible than usual.

Due to limited availability of the trainees, a date has not yet been set to complete the training programme in Croatia. Efforts are being underway to hold this module before Christmas.

Table 3 | Upcoming training sessions -module 4

Country	Trainer / Facilitator name	Date	Place (municipality)
Italy	Memex team	17/12/2024	Stroncone
Romania	Raluca Atanassov	12/12/2024	Online
France	Alexandre Fabry	18/12/2024	Lyon

2.3. Participation in the training sessions

The number of participants varied among countries, as shown in Table 4.

Higher participation was observed in Spain and Latvia, consistent with previous training sessions.

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In the other countries, small variations were observed from session to session, but consistently, the attendance was between 10 and 20 participants.

Training attendance in Ireland was impacted by weather conditions (although most persevered), while in Alentejo, a road accident involving three training participants disrupted attendance. Fortunately, no one was injured.

A few trainers expressed concerns that the normal in-person training could hinder participation for this last event. As a result, for the first time, the consortium allowed the possibility of delivering certain training sessions online. This approach was implemented in Austria and Germany. Participation in Austria remained particularly low, with only five participants, while participation in Germany increased, indicating that online sessions might be a viable option in specific cases.

The training in Romania will be held online as well due to trainer travel restriction at this period.

Table 4 | Participation in the module 4 training sessions

Country	Number of participants	Number of municipalities
Austria	5	4 municipalities
Czechia	11	5 municipalities
Germany	14	8 municipalities
Greece	16	5 municipalities
Hungary	11	5 municipalities
Ireland	13	1 municipality + 4 local links + 2 LEADER action groups + 1 community network group
Latvia	21	5 municipalities
Portugal - Alentejo	13	9 municipalities + 1 county councils + 1 NGO
Portugal - Madeira	18	7 municipalities
Spain	Waiting information	Waiting information
Slovenia	14	2 municipalities + 6 entities
TOTAL	136	66 organisations

3. Summarising observations for the upcoming training sessions

To date, feedback on the training has been received from 10 trainers. Some of the post-event reports were produced in a very short time, demonstrating a high level of commitment from the trainers to the Smarta-Net training programme.

This topic has been perceived as very interesting, with trainers expressing satisfaction with the documentation provided.

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As this is the final module, the lessons learned are essential for future projects of this kind. Nonetheless, the observations from previous modules remain largely valid and apply to this one as well.

In-person training sessions have proven to be highly effective, as they also provide opportunities for networking and strengthening connections between participants. However, the possibility of holding online events may also be effective in ensuring high levels of participation and attracting new people and municipalities to the project. This approach can overcome barriers such as distance, limited time availability, and travel expenses, among other factors.

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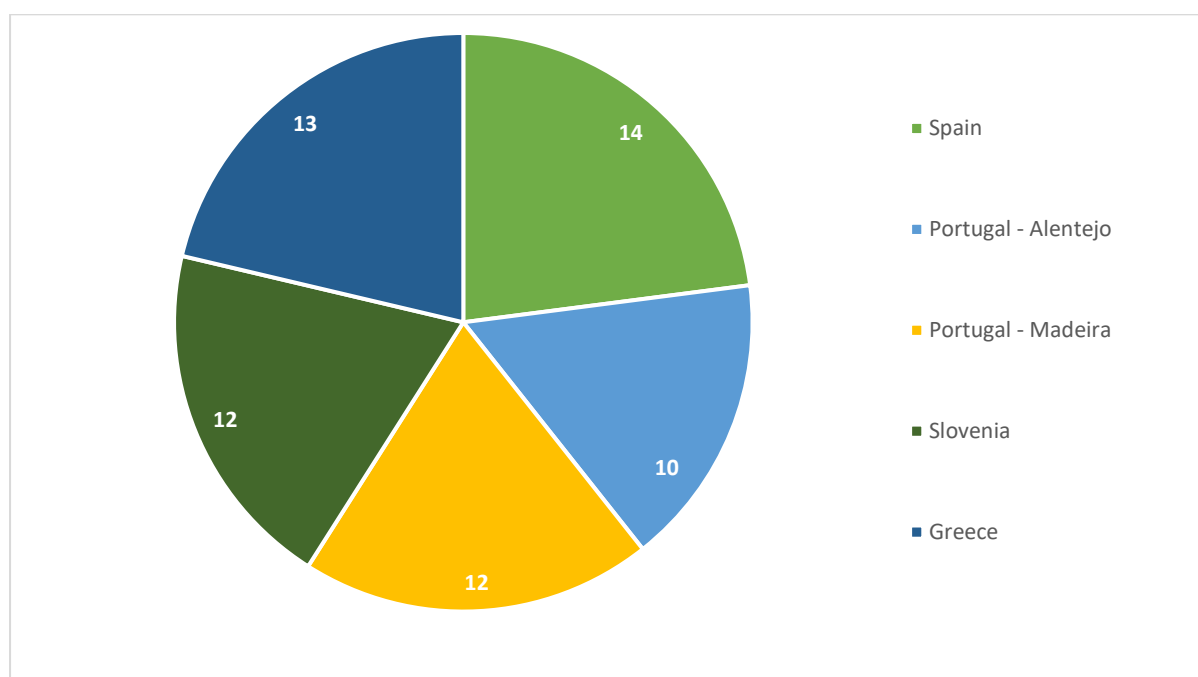
ANNEX I: Participants feedback report

Fourth round on Funding opportunities

Introduction

For the fourth round of trainings on Funding Opportunities, we received 61 answers to the satisfaction questionnaire, spread across 5 countries. Find below the division per country.

Figure 1: Numbers of answers received per country.



Participants, at the end of the training session, were asked to fill out a brief survey (in Annex) aimed at evaluating the training. Participants could access the survey via link, or QR code, and fill it out online or ask for a printed version. The following sections of the report will summarise the feedback provided, as well as suggestions forwarded by the participants for the improvement of the training.

General Feedback

Participants were asked to assign a value from 1 to 5 (1 = very negative/totally disagree, 5 = very positive/totally agree) to questions and elaborate with comments. Furthermore, the survey presented two open questions to provide participants with the opportunity to share suggestions for improvement.

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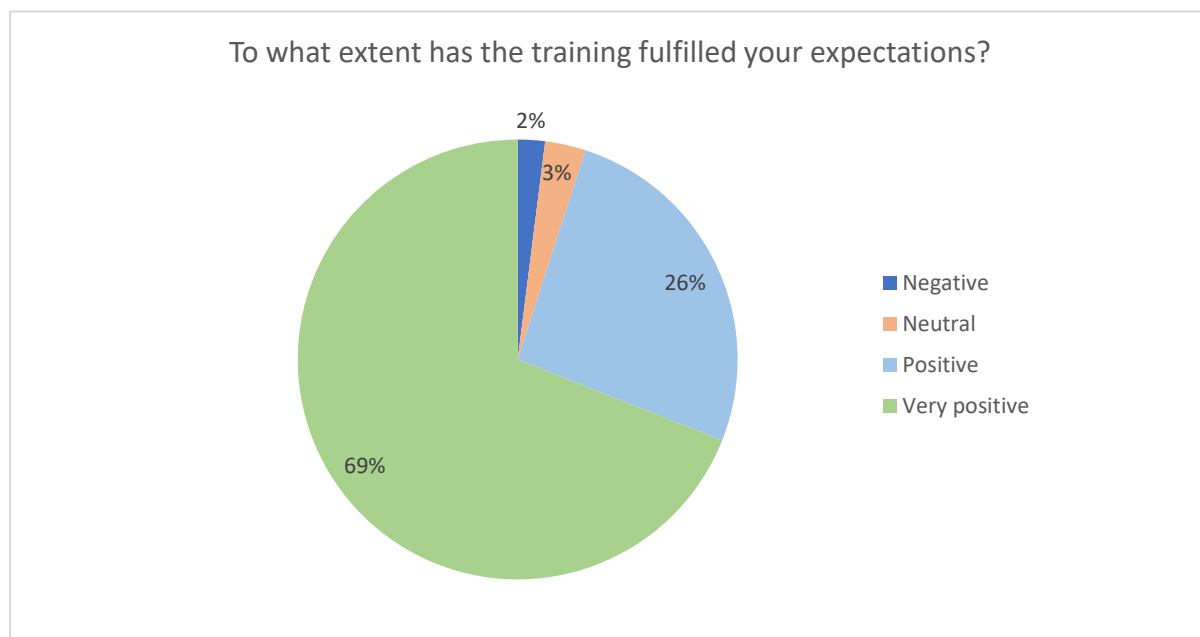


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On the training content

Figure 2: Evaluation of overall satisfaction.



The fourth session of trainings generated a satisfaction rate in line with the previous sessions of the SMARTA-NET trainings.

Participants provided generally positive feedback on the training, highlighting its comprehensive coverage of relevant topics, practical workshop sessions, and high-quality presentations. They appreciated the opportunity to deepen their knowledge of sustainable mobility funding, engage in meaningful discussions, and exchange ideas with peers from different organizations, finding the mix of theory and practical application particularly valuable. Some noted the training exceeded expectations in terms of both content and interactivity, praising the relevance of the themes and the practical approach to real-world challenges.

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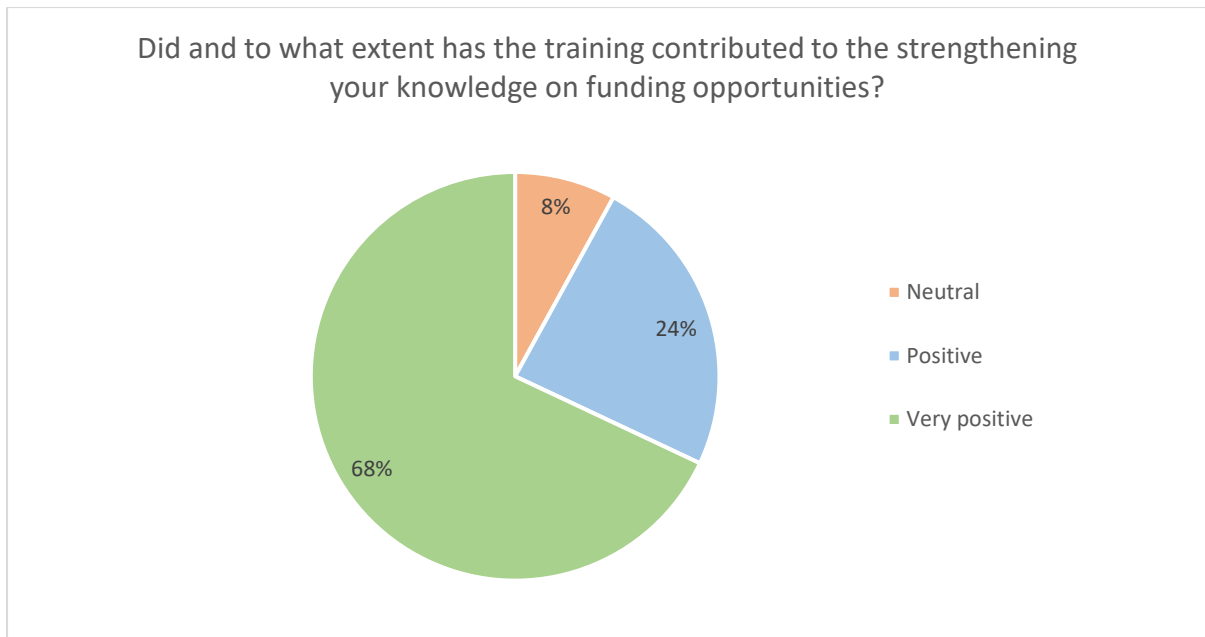


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Figure 3: Evaluation of added value of the training session.



Participants highlighted the training's value in broadening their understanding of sustainable mobility funding and practical solutions, with many noting the importance of learning from good practices and pilot projects from other countries. They appreciated the opportunity to deepen their knowledge in areas they were previously unfamiliar with, including financing options, demand-responsive transport management, and real-world case studies.

Some participants emphasised the clarity and relevance of the information for future work, including tools for proposing and securing funding for mobility projects. While a few were already familiar with some topics, they found the training helpful in offering new perspectives, practical insights, and opportunities to connect municipal realities with broader, supra-municipal strategies.

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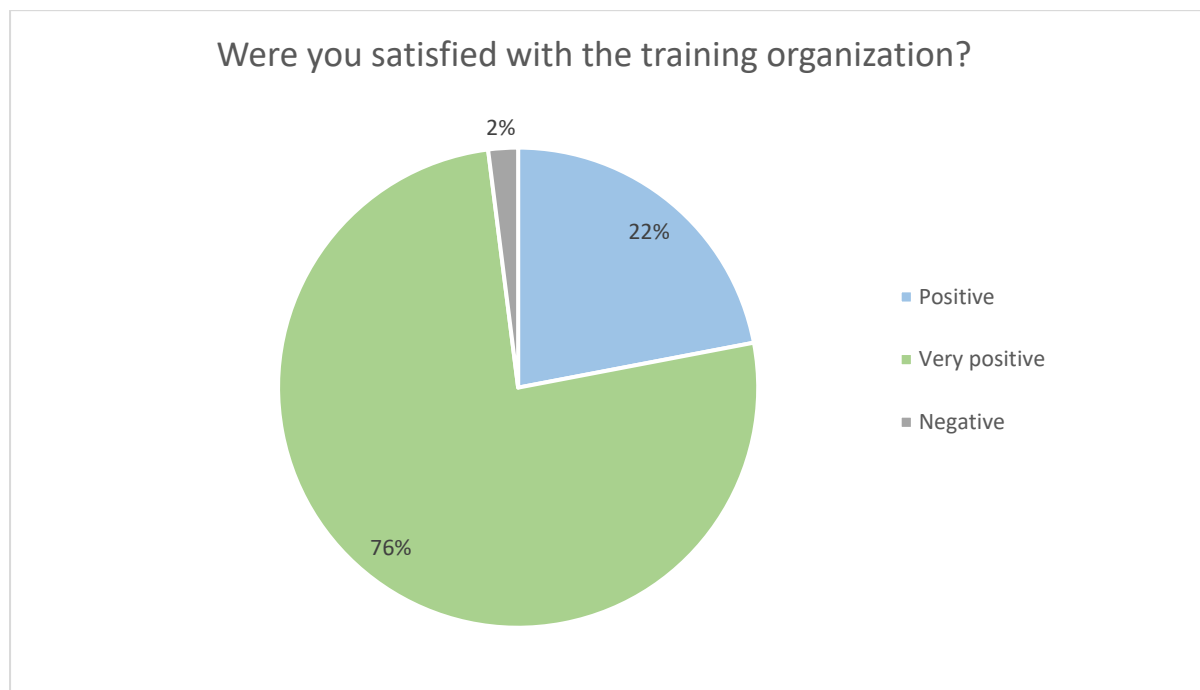


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On the organisation

Figure 4: Evaluation of satisfaction with the training organisation.



Participants were very satisfied with the organisation of the trainings, with regards to venue, refreshments, and travel.

The various trainers were found to be generally very competent with a positive satisfaction evaluation. Find below a table summarising the average score of the trainers, per country.

Table 5: Evaluation of the trainers.

COUNTRY	OVERALL SATISFACTION
Spain	4,6
Portugal - Alentejo	4,9
Portugal - Madeira	4,8
Slovenia	4,8
Greece	4,9

Suggestions

The last section of the questionnaire provided participants with the opportunity to give suggestions with regards possible improvements to the trainings and further topics they would like to explore.

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On topics

Participants generally found the training comprehensive and did not feel any major topics were missing. However, some expressed the need for:

- additional real-world case studies, including pilot projects and carpooling initiatives.
- more time in workshops and interactive sessions involving community engagement was noted.
- practical guidance on preparing funding applications and insights into relevant funding calls were suggested.

On other

Following, a list of suggestions to improve the trainings:

- additional time for workshops and presentations to allow deeper exploration of topics.
- adjusting breaks and session lengths to ensure more time for key discussions.
- more training sessions, including a real-world context day for practical experience.
- more detailed case studies covering the full project lifecycle.
- inclusion of more diverse topics, such as daily commuting and employer involvement, beyond tourism.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the feedback from participants in the fourth round of the Funding Opportunities training sessions indicates a generally very positive response to the content and organisation of the programme.

Participants praised the training for its comprehensive content, which included both theoretical insights and practical applications. They appreciated the opportunity to deepen their understanding of sustainable mobility funding, learn from international best practices, and engage in meaningful discussions with peers. Many noted that the training exceeded expectations in terms of interactivity and real-world relevance, especially in areas like financing options and demand-responsive transport management.

Regarding improvements, participants the inclusion of additional time for workshops and more real-world case studies, such as carpooling initiatives and pilot projects. They also requested more guidance on preparing funding applications and a better balance in session timing to allow for deeper exploration of topics. Other suggestions included adding more training sessions, including a practical, real-world context day, and expanding the focus to include broader topics like daily commuting and employer involvement in mobility projects.

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ANNEX II: Evaluation form

SMARTA-NET, sustainable rural mobility for resilience in support of ecotourism

Evaluation Form

Funding Opportunities

Dear Participant,

We would like to hear your opinion about the fourth training session, on Funding and Financing Opportunities, you have attended. Therefore, we would kindly ask you to answer a few questions.

Check your desired option and answer the open questions (where required):

1 = very negative/totally disagree, 5 = very positive/totally agree

1. In which country did you participate in the training on Funding and Financing Opportunities?

Drop down menu:

{Austria, Croatia, Czechia, France, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Italy, Ireland, Latvia, Portugal, Romania, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden}

2. To what extent has the training fulfilled your expectations?

1 2 3 4 5

i. Please elaborate on your choice.

3. How likely will you attend the following SMARTA-NET trainings?

1 2 3 4 5

4. Were you satisfied with the training organization (venue, refreshments, travel)?

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1 2 3 4 5

i. Please elaborate on your choice.

5. Did the training have networking value? Did you meet professionals you usually do not meet?

1 2 3 4 5

6. What is your opinion on the balance between workshops and presentations?

1 2 3 4 5

i. Please elaborate on your choice.

7. Were you satisfied with the level of materials used during the training?

1 2 3 4 5

i. Please elaborate on your choice.

8. Did and to what extent has the training contributed to the strengthening your knowledge on Funding and Financing Opportunities?

1 2 3 4 5

i. Please elaborate on your choice.

9. How do you rate the level of the trainer?

1 2 3 4 5

i. Please elaborate on your choice.

10. Which topics did you miss during the training?

{open question}

11. Do you have any suggestions to further improve the training?

{open question}

Thank you!

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