

SustainX

D2.1 Consortium Group Training Documentation

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Author(s):	Hanna Kim (IMP ³ ROVE)		
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1. Executive Summary

This Deliverable 2.1 documents the design, implementation and outcomes of the consortium-wide training series conducted under Work Package 2: Skills Development. The trainings aim to build the internal capacities of consortium partners to act as multipliers for innovation and sustainability support in their respective regions, in line with the project's overarching goal of fostering sustainable digital innovation investment in less developed regions. Between April and June 2025, a total of 5 regional training sessions was conducted across the 5 consortium partner countries, Romania, Latvia, Greece, Canary Islands and Bulgaria – each tailored to the specific needs of each partner. These sessions were attended by a total of 64 participants. The training series was led by IMP³ROVE with contributions from Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible on sustainability topics. The series included interactive modules on the IMP³ROVE methodology, innovation life cycle management, stakeholder engagement, and the Sustainable Business Model Canvas. Participants were equipped with tools to support SMEs in developing innovation strategies and sustainability roadmaps. Each training session spanned two days and was delivered in the 'train-the-trainer' format, combining theoretical input with practical exercises, case studies and breakout discussions.

Feedback from participants was overwhelmingly positive. Across all sessions, participants reported increased confidence in applying the methods learned, with many expressing interest in deeper content on topics, such as sustainability, Artificial Intelligence, ESG reporting and sector-specific case studies.

This deliverable confirms that the consortium is well-prepared to deliver SME-focused training in the next project phase coming Q1 2026. It also highlights the importance of continuous adaptation and regional customization in capacity-building efforts. The training series has laid a strong foundation for the upcoming SME engagement activities and the broader goals of the SustainX project.

2. Digital Innovation Zone & Technical University Iasi Training

The Digital Innovation Zone and the Technical University of Iasi are treated as one group for the sake of training as they reside in the same region of Romania and closely collaborate on a daily basis. While they have access to different networks, they are a very well-designed group contributing to the distribution of knowledge and thus further supporting innovation acceleration in the region. The competence mapping analysis that we conducted in Q1 of 2025 revealed that the highest training priorities were in the areas of “Business Advisor Skills”, “Action Plan Development”, and “Introduction to the IMP³ROVE Approach”. However, since the “Introduction to the IMP³ROVE Approach” training would be delivered separately through a dedicated webinar series for all consortium partners anyhow, it was excluded from their specific training agenda. The partners had initially expressed interest in involving SMEs in their training sessions to raise awareness and foster early engagement, which also played a role when constructing a suitable training agenda. However, after further consideration and to avoid redundancy with future SME-specific trainings, they decided against including SMEs in the consortium training. Given this change, the training program was adjusted to focus on “Innovation Strategy Development,” a topic identified as a medium priority but highly relevant for both consortium partners and SMEs. This topic was chosen because SMEs in the region often struggle with creating comprehensive and effective innovation strategies. The training aimed to equip DIZ and TUIASI with the skills to support SMEs in developing such strategies, ensuring they are robust, scalable, and aligned with broader innovation goals. The training also included a dedicated session on sustainability, delivered by Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible, to ensure that sustainability considerations are integrated into innovation planning. The Spanish partner was kind enough to offer their additional support by conducting these sustainability-focused sessions for all consortium trainings. With the exclusion of SMEs from the training, the program was further refined to include discussions on the qualities and methodologies that define effective business advisors, addressing previously identified needs in this area. The training for DIZ and TUIASI was carefully tailored to their regional context and strategic goals, focusing on enhancing their capacity to support SMEs in innovation strategy development and sustainability integration, while also strengthening their own advisory competencies.

2.1 Preparation

As we had very early on aligned on the training dates and were continuously in contact from January to April 2025, preparations for this training ran smoothly. The training took place at the premises of the university which lent itself to a workshop setting as classrooms were available. While DIZ and TUIASI moved on to collect registrations from their colleagues to join the training, we aligned with them on the suggested agenda, the timing and any logistical matters, like dietary requirements, etc. Once we had received the final list of



participants, we emailed everyone the training materials beforehand including some useful information, e.g. that participants should bring their laptops as we would work on them during the breakout sessions. In an effort to be as sustainable as possible, we printed out very few and only the necessary pages, such as the attendance sheet and some templates for the breakout sessions. However, for the most part we managed to go ‘paperless’ which has proven to be just as efficient for conducting the training. Thus, we decided to keep this modus operandi for the remaining trainings as well. At the same time, we aligned with the Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible on the training contents for their sustainability part on day 2. This partner prepared quite a lot of content for this session, which they tested with us in several rounds to achieve the optimal balance between input and breakout sessions. Furthermore, they spent additional efforts into researching and selecting regional best practice examples for Romania, while also keeping the S3 priorities in mind.

The finalized training agenda that was conducted was as follows:

Agenda (Day 1)	
10:00 – 10:30	Welcome and introduction to the workshop
10:30 – 11:15	The direction-setting role of innovation strategies within innovation management
11:15 – 11:30	Convincing SMEs to think about the distant future – with leading examples, “former” companies, and a view on the competitive environment
10 min	Coffee break
11:40 – 12:00	10 steps to develop an innovation strategy – An overview
12:00 – 12:30	Step 1: Trend analysis
12:30 – 13:00	Breakout session: Trend analysis
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break
14:00 – 14:30	Presentation and discussion of breakout session results
14:30 – 15:30	Step 2: Customer needs analysis Step 3: Competitor and technology watch Step 4: Ambition analysis
10 min	Coffee break
15:40 – 16:20	Breakout session: Customer needs analysis
16:20 – 16:45	Presentation and discussion of breakout session results
16:45 – 17:00	Summary of learnings & wrap-up day 1

Innovation Strategy
Development

Figure 1 DIZ/TUIASI Training Agenda Day 1



Agenda (Day 2)

Innovation Strategy
Development

09:00 – 09:15	Welcome and introduction to Day 2
09:15 – 09:45	Step 5: Innovation lifecycle analysis Step 6: Competency assessment
09:45 – 10:15	Defining the innovation strategy Step 7: Vision and mission
10:15 – 11:00	<i>Breakout session: Vision and mission incl. discussion</i>
11:00 – 12:15	Step 8: Search fields Step 9: Competence Roadmap Step 10: Business case
12:15 – 13:00	Discussion on Steps 8-10 and Q&A
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break

Figure 2 DIZ/TUIASI Training Agenda Day 2 (1/2)

Agenda (Day 2)

Sustainability in the SMEs

Sustainability Training	
14:00 – 14:20	Concept of Sustainability Sustainability in the SMEs
14:20 – 14:35	Circular Economy
14:35 – 14:50	<i>Breakout session: Circular Economy - "The Infinite Loop"</i>
14:50 – 15:15	Sustainable Technology Sustainable Agriculture
15:15 – 15:30	<i>Breakout session: Technology for Sustainability in the Agri-Food Sector</i>
10 min	Coffee break
15:40 – 15:50	Sustainable Business Model Canvas
15:50 – 16:30	<i>Breakout session: Sustainable Business Model Canvas</i>
16:30 – 16:45	<i>Results breakout session</i>
16:45 – 17:00	Summary of learnings & wrap -up – Day 2

Figure 3 DIZ/TUIASI Training Agenda Day 2 (2/2)

2.2 Conducting the training

The two-day train-the-trainer session in Romania focused on enabling participants, primarily advisors to SMEs and innovation support professionals, to develop and implement structured innovation strategies tailored for SMEs. Anchored in the IMP³ROVE methodology



and frameworks, the training offered a highly interactive, hands-on, ten-step approach covering internal and external analysis, customer needs mapping, trend identification, ambition assessment, and strategic roadmap design. The session emphasized the critical role of innovation strategy as a directional tool within innovation management, providing SMEs with a coherent path toward sustainable and competitive growth.

Overall, the example- and discussion-heavy session-built participants' capacities to act as multipliers of innovation management practices in their respective ecosystems, thereby advancing the objectives of the broader EU innovation agenda. By equipping trainers with both conceptual tools and facilitation techniques, the workshop strengthens institutional capacity to drive innovation among SMEs across participating regions. The training was attended by a total of 18 participants.

After a vivid collection of initial definitions of innovation and strategy, the group aligned on a common ground and led multiple outcome-oriented discussions throughout the training. One major discussion aspect right from the start was the stretch for SMEs to learn about and apply innovation strategy along a structured method, while often being forced to act and react in a more ad-hoc way to successfully overcome business-related challenges. Building the mindset of innovation and resilience as core strength and necessary part of daily business seems to not yet have gotten into every C-levels mind. With the given examples from smaller companies but also grown corporates, the participants and future trainers were highly involved in this discussion, understanding the underlying need and were already planning how to talk to and convince SMEs in the region. The significance of the role of the facilitator in steering innovation strategy discussions emerged as a key theme. Participants reflected on managing resistance from SME leaders, especially when fact-based strategy work challenged entrenched opinions. There was also a lively exchange on sequencing, i.e. whether to begin with market trends or internal capabilities - and how best to involve SME employees in defining vision and mission statements. During the included break-out sessions, the selected agriculture case led to valuable insights on how to apply macro trend analysis (with examples climate change and digitalization) intersect with specific customer needs (such as soil health and traceability). The participants mapped implications to similar examples in their group work and discussed required competences, potential skill or tech-related gaps and the aspect that digital operations in SMEs are not always on the expected level of performance.

The training closed with consensus that structured methodologies, when adapted with sensitivity to SME constraints, are both feasible and impactful. The participants left with increased confidence in using the presented innovation strategy framework not only as a diagnostic but as a co-creative process with clients, highly likely leading to more interregional innovation investment projects from and with the Region around Iasi, Romania. Based on the resulting questions and the received feedback by the participants



(overall a highly satisfied group in Iasi), the main request for next steps was around the topic of more business modelling and to include even more sustainability aspects in future trainings. Both aspects crystalized to be main aspects of work in Iasi, requested by the typical clients from the regions.

2.3 Training Follow-up

After the training, we shared a follow-up email with the participants, sharing once more any updated training materials as well as some photos we took during the training. Participants were also asked to fill in the feedback form, if they had not done so during the training already. We received exceptionally positive feedback from participants. All twelve participants (that filled in the feedback form) stated they would recommend the training to colleagues, friends, and network partners. They particularly valued the integration of sustainability with digital tools, which was seen as highly relevant and applicable to SMEs. The customer needs analysis and the use of the business model canvas were also highlighted as especially insightful and comprehensive. Participants expressed a strong interest in expanding the training to include additional topics. Suggestions included the use of artificial intelligence for innovation, consulting, and digital tools for ESG reporting and compliance. There was also a clear demand for deeper exploration into sustainable product design, lifecycle assessment, green marketing, and communication strategies tailored for SMEs, as well as business model analysis in public organizations. On the first day, which focused on innovation strategy development, 83% of participants strongly agreed and 17% agreed that the training covered all key elements of innovation strategy development. Similarly, 67% strongly agreed and 33% agreed that the session provided them with approaches to support clients or their own organizations in developing innovation strategies. Furthermore, 75% strongly agreed and 25% agreed that the training provided comprehensive methods for innovation strategy development. When asked whether they felt sufficiently prepared to start using these methods, 33% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 17% moderately agreed. The structure of the training was also well received. Regarding the balance between presentations, interactive elements, and breakout sessions, 58% strongly agreed and 42% agreed that it was appropriate. When asked if they felt prepared to manage the breakout session tasks, 25% strongly agreed, 58% agreed, and 17% moderately agreed.

The second day, focused on sustainability provided by Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible, further enhanced participants' understanding of the topic. A combined 83% of participants reported they now very much or completely understand what sustainability is and how to apply it in the context of SMEs. The sections on the concept of sustainability, sustainable business models, and real success stories were rated as very or extremely useful by the majority. Notably, 42% found the sustainable business model canvas extremely useful, and

50% rated the breakout session “Sustainable Technology and Agriculture” as extremely useful. Overall, the SustainX training was considered a highly valuable and impactful experience. Participants not only gained practical tools and insights but also expressed strong interest in further developing the program to include more advanced and specialized content.

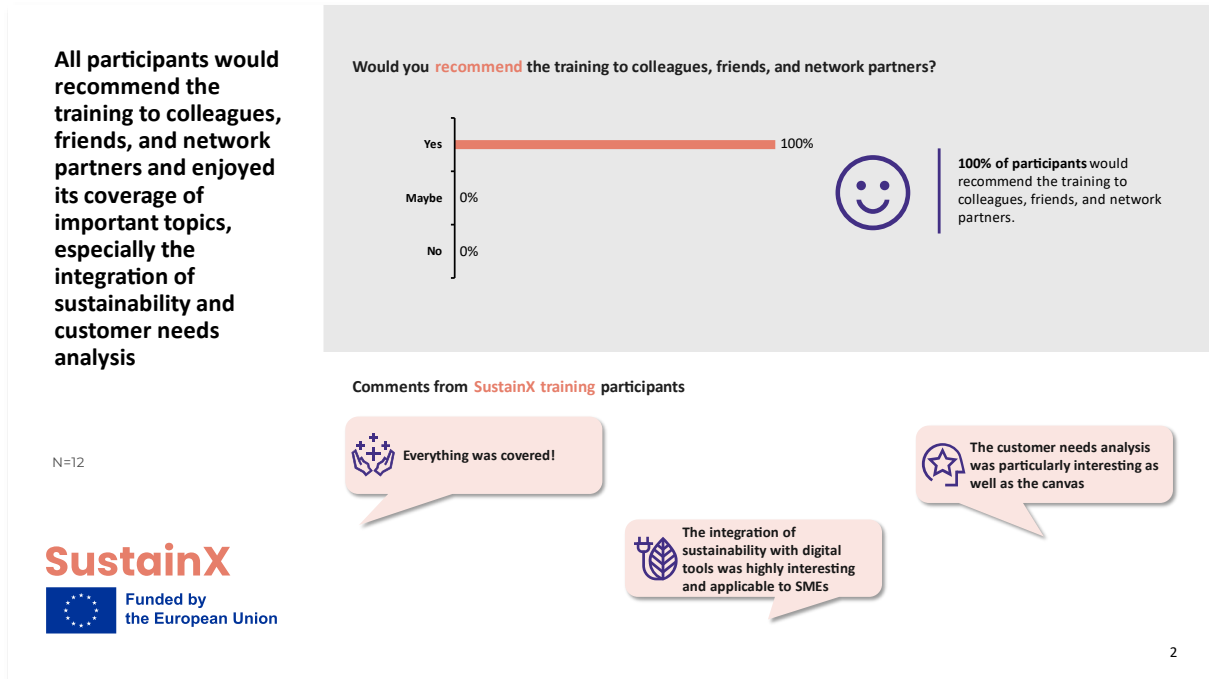


Figure 4 Training Feedback DIZ/TUIASI (1/8)

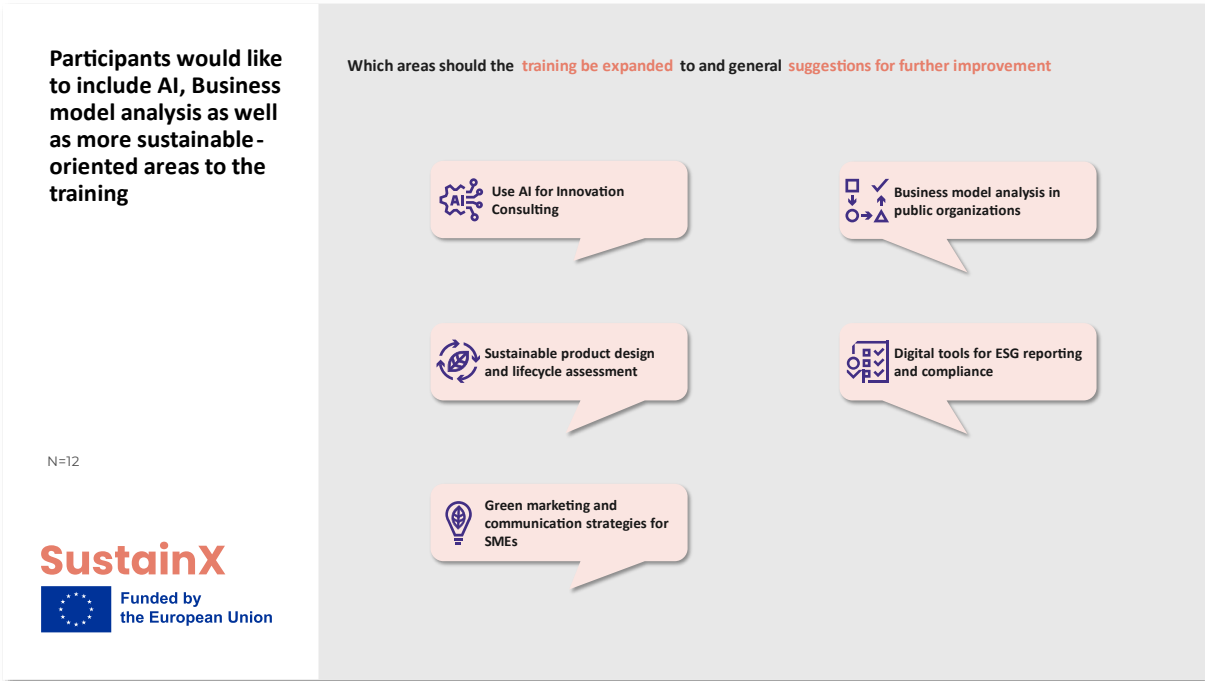


Figure 5 Training Feedback DIZ/TUIASI (2/8)

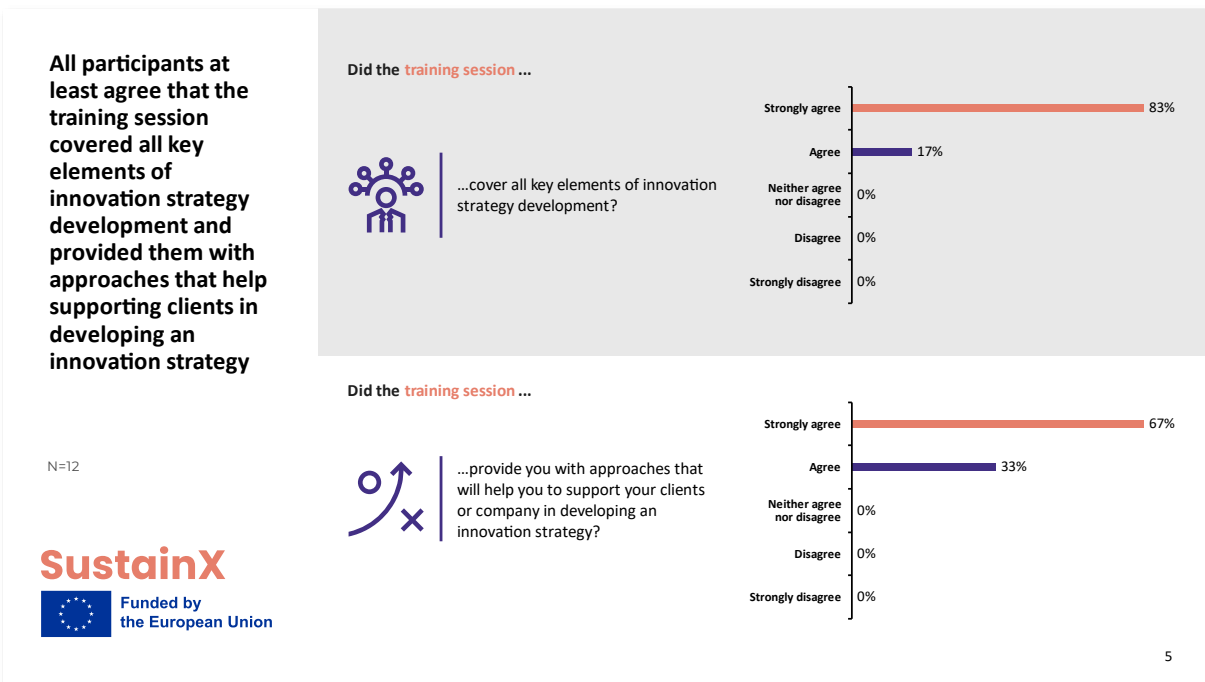


Figure 6 Training Feedback DIZ/TUIASI (3/8)

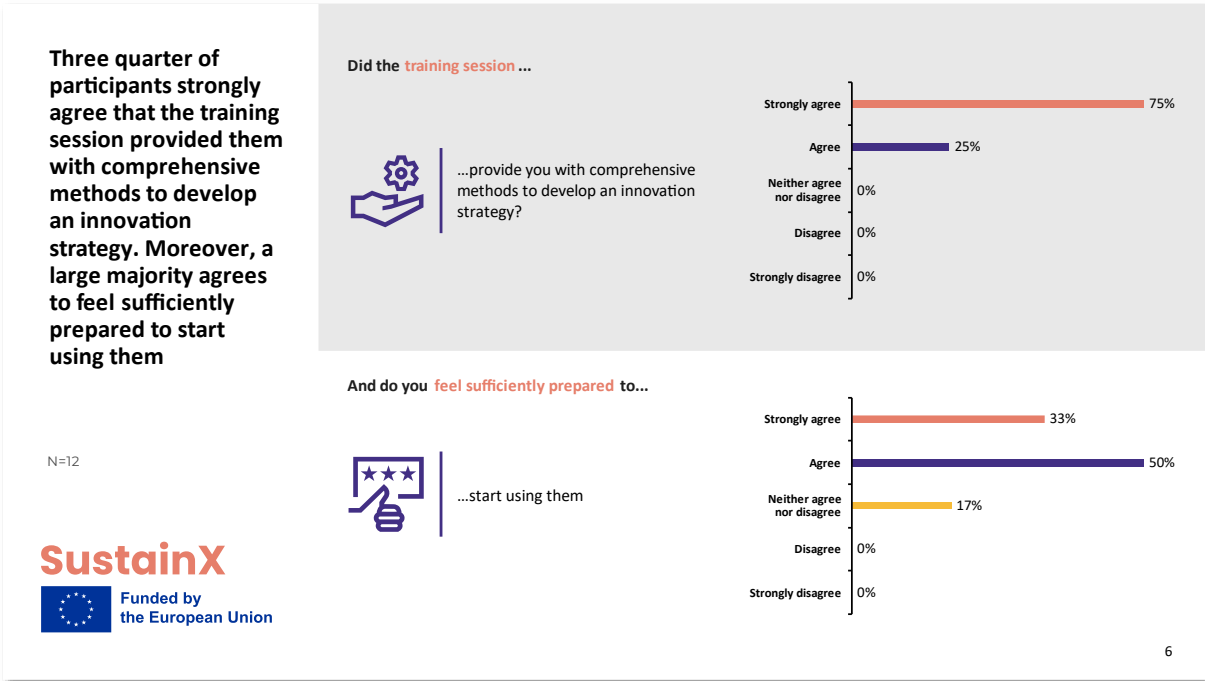


Figure 7 Training Feedback DIZ/TUIASI (4/8)

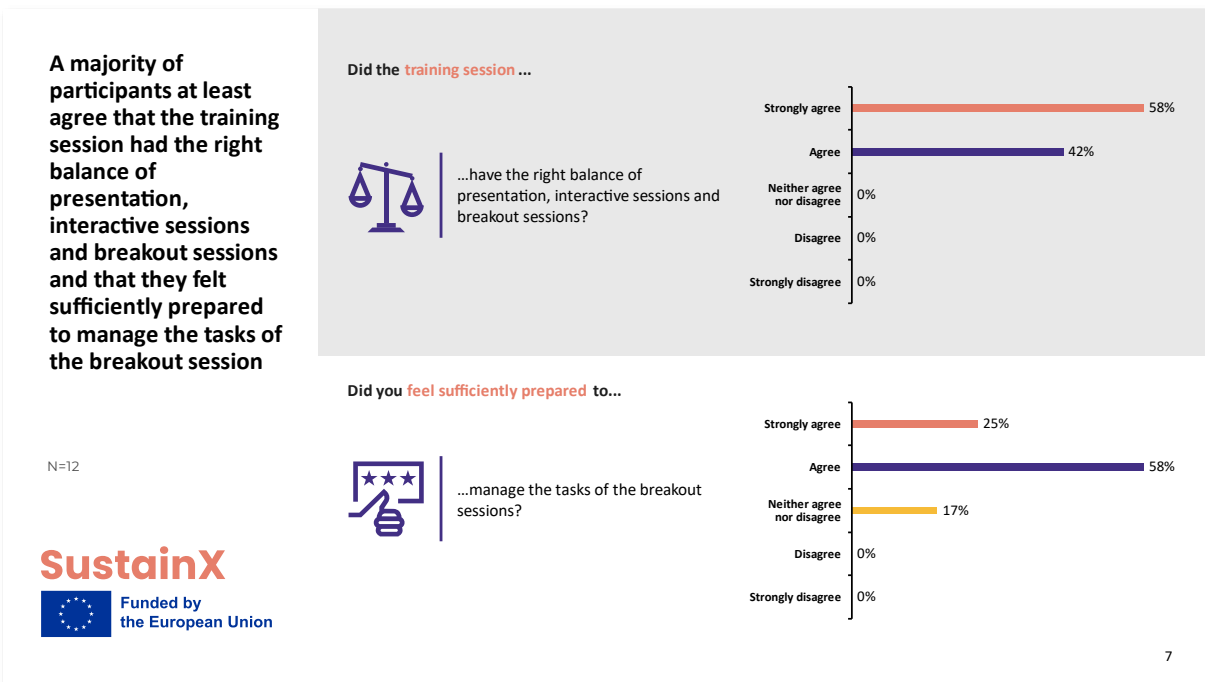


Figure 8 Training Feedback DIZ/TUIASI (5/8)



Figure 9 Training Feedback DIZ/TUIASI (6/8)

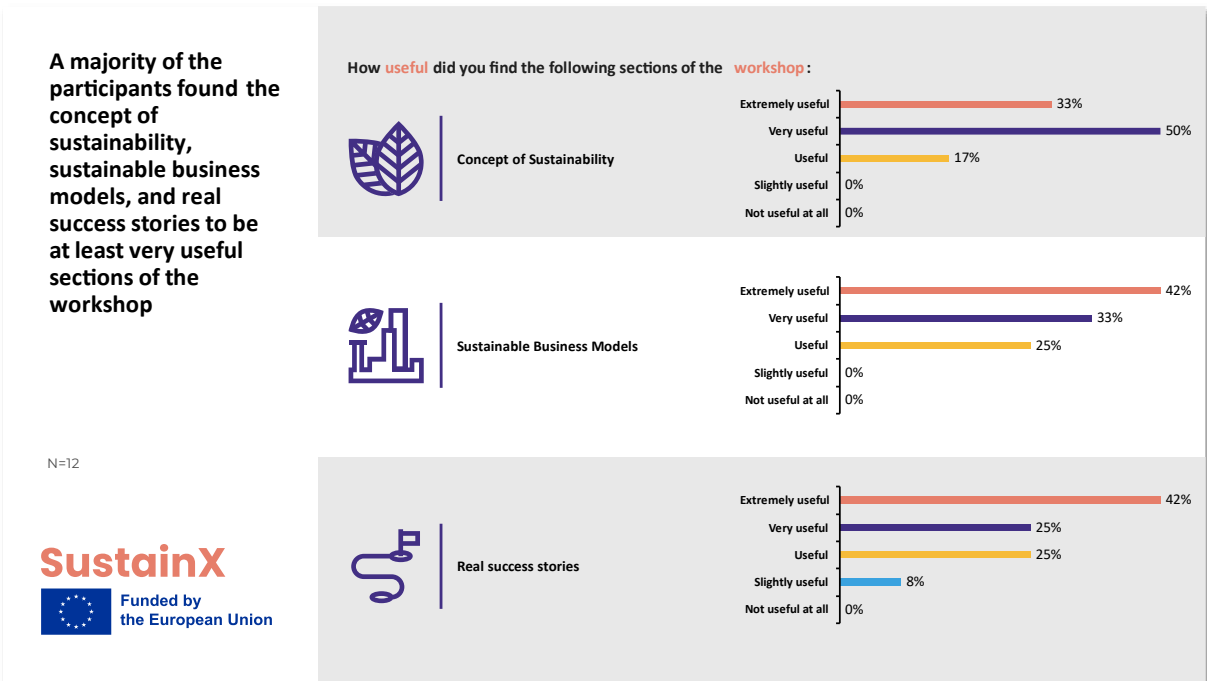


Figure 10 Training Feedback DIZ/TUIASI (7/8)

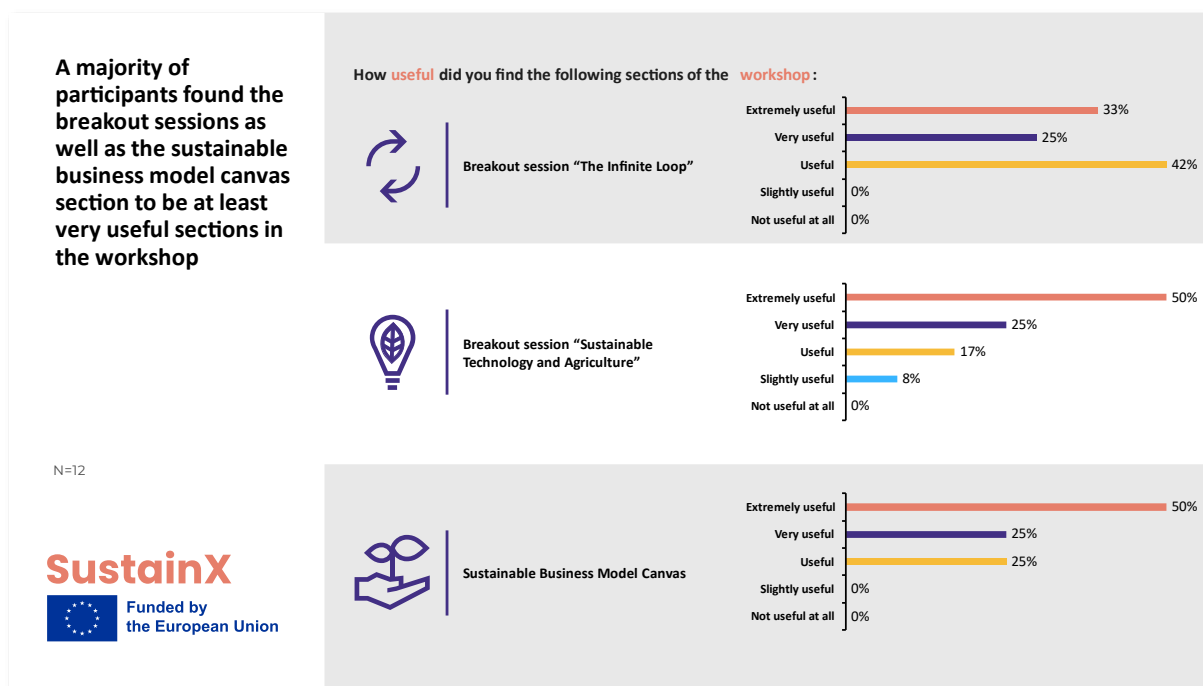


Figure 11 Training Feedback DIZ/TUIASI (8/8)

3. Latvian Technology Center Training

Our Latvian partner, the Latvian Technology Center in Riga, has an especially advanced position within the consortium due to their extensive prior experience with the IMP³ROVE trainings through other past projects over the years. Thanks to this experienced background, LTC did not identify any high-priority training needs in the needs analysis. Instead, several topics were marked as medium-priority, including topics, such as "Innovation Life Cycle Management Processes", "Business Model Innovation", "Business Advisor Skills" and "Action Plan Development". A few other areas, such as "Innovation Strategy Development" and "Open Innovation" were considered low-priority as they had already been trained in those topics in another project. Given LTC's already high level of expertise, the training program was designed to avoid redundancy and instead focus on areas not previously covered, most notably sustainability. Thus, the training we compiled for LTC centered around our Corporate Sustainability Navigator (CSN), a tool designed to assess and benchmark sustainability performance in SMEs. The training program included hands-on work, with real-life data from the CSN, guiding participants through interpreting results, drawing conclusions, and developing actionable sustainability strategies tailored to SMEs. As the general topic of the two training days was sustainability, it was indeed a perfect fit to include the partners from Fundaci3n Santa Cruz Sostenible. Even though within the consortium we had agreed that due to the significance of the sustainability topic, every consortium partner would get to experience the additional input from Fundaci3n Santa Cruz Sostenible as part of the 2-day training, it was an exceptionally great fit in the case of LTC in terms of topic coherence.



Unlike other consortium partners, LTC’s training was not completely intended to be replicated as is directly with SMEs. Instead, the plan is to develop a combination of different training topics which the partner already has experience in, which then true to the ‘train-the-trainer’ approach will be conducted with SMEs next year. This way, we were able to further draw on the LTC’s experience, while still sharing new knowledge with them. All in all, we focused on enhancing LTC’s ability to support SMEs in integrating sustainability into their innovation strategies, while reserving more SME-relevant content for future training sessions.

The finalized training agenda that was conducted was as follows:

Agenda Day 1	
Introduction to sustainability - driven innovation management and tools	10:00 – 10:15 Welcome and introduction – Welcome, expectations and objectives – Introduction to the topic and role of the consultant
	10:15 – 11:00 Raising awareness part 1: Understanding sustainability in the international context – Overview on the most prominent international frameworks and standards – Breakout session: Applying the frameworks
	11:00 – 11:45 Raising awareness part 2: Examining sustainability as a lever for innovation – The relationship between sustainability and innovation – Guesstimate: the integration of sustainability
	11:45 – 12:30 Garnering interest: Case examples from industry: – A deep dive into the textile industry – Breakout session: examples from your industry
	12:30 – 13:30 Lunch break
	13:30 – 13:45 Generating desire part 1: Overview on using IMP³ROVE tools – Overview on the IMP ³ ROVE Corporate Sustainability Navigator Tool – Positioning the tool in the IMP ³ ROVE Process
	13:45 – 15:30 Generating desire part 2: Conducting the Corporate Sustainability Navigator Tool – Using the IMP ³ ROVE platform – Breakout session: The case study – Interpreting the results of the tool
	15:30 – 16:00 Spurring to action: Developing recommendations for your client – How to generate and read the report – Preparing for your feedback workshop
	16:00 – 16:15 Wrap-up and outlook

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Figure 12 LTC Training Agenda Day 1



Agenda Day 2

Action Plan Development
with focus on Sustainability

09:00 – 09:15	Welcome and introduction to Day 2
09:15 – 09:45	Structured problem -solving for effective action plan development
09:45 – 10:15	Introduction to break-out session “structured problem -solving” based on CSN report
10:15 – 11:15	Break-out session (Part I): “Structured problem -solving” – Development of 2 -3 hypotheses and finding supportive facts
11:15 – 12:15	Break-out session (Part II): “Structured problem -solving” – Development of conclusions and recommendations
12:15 – 12:45	Visualisation of cases
12:45 – 13:00	Wrap-up and Q&A
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break

Figure 13 LTC Training Agenda Day 2 (1/2)

Agenda (Day 2)

Sustainability in the SMEs

Sustainability Training	
14:00 – 14:20	Concept of Sustainability Sustainability in the SMEs
14:20 – 14:35	Circular Economy
14:35 – 14:50	<i>Breakout session: Circular Economy - “The Infinite Loop”</i>
14:50 – 15:15	Sustainable Technology Sustainable Agriculture
15:15 – 15:30	<i>Breakout session: Technology for Sustainability in the Agri-Food Sector</i>
10 min	Coffee break
15:40 – 15:50	Sustainable Business Model Canvas
15:50 – 16:30	<i>Breakout session: Sustainable Business Model Canvas</i>
16:30 – 16:45	<i>Results breakout session</i>
16:45 – 17:00	Summary of learnings & wrap -up – Day 2

Figure 14 LTC Training Agenda Day 2 (2/2)

3.1 Preparation

Training preparations with LTC were also very seamless. We proposed a draft agenda based on the analysis and with their particular training background in mind and they approved immediately. Over the weeks following, they organized the location and catering,



etc. while we communicated to the participants as well by sending them the materials beforehand. In a very similar fashion, we aligned further with the Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible team to further finetune their contents to address the Latvian colleagues accordingly. All in all, the proven structure of organizing trainings with partners has yet again made the process very easy.

3.2 Conducting the training

The interactive two-day training in Latvia provided a comprehensive and practical approach to equipping intermediaries and SME consultants with the tools, methods, and frameworks required to guide companies through sustainability transformation. The session introduced participants to sustainability as a strategic lever for innovation, embedding the IMP³ROVE methodology to build awareness, interest, desire, and actionable plans (following the AIDA model). The training covered international frameworks such as the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), the EU Green Deal, and the ISO 26000 standard, as well as models like the Triple Bottom Line and the Doughnut Economy to define and contextualize sustainability in business. Being based on successfully proven projects and an in-depth benchmarking assessment, the SDGs were the basis for the following content parts.

The workshop employed interactive methods, including case-based learning and hands-on exercises using IMP³ROVE's Corporate Sustainability Navigator tool, which allowed participants to benchmark SME sustainability performance and formulate evidence-based recommendations. By the conclusion, participants were able to co-develop actionable sustainability roadmaps, anchored in analytical rigor and SME realities. This capacity-building effort directly contributes to advancing regional innovation ecosystems and aligns with EU sustainability policy and competitiveness priorities. During both days and after having settled the initial discussion on definitions, especially the Triple Bottom Line perspective was an important framework and part of multiple discussions, opening up the often very green-only discussion of sustainability to also social and economic sustainability in total.

During the training, the participants actively engaged in examining how their regional SMEs currently approach sustainability. A recurring insight was that while many companies address environmental compliance and energy efficiency, very few do so in a strategic, innovation-oriented manner. Several participants acknowledged that their clients often associate sustainability with cost burdens or regulatory constraints rather than business opportunity, which led to discussions on how to reposition the narrative around competitive advantage and stakeholder expectations.

The use of the Corporate Sustainability Navigator tool prompted reflection on how to translate benchmarking data into tangible client recommendations. Participants shared experiences on managing resistance to change, particularly when SME owners perceive



sustainability as a threat to core operations. The structured problem-solving methodology resonated strongly, with advisors noting that the issue tree logic provided much-needed clarity in breaking down complex client challenges into actionable elements and meanwhile proving a solid argument structure for client discussions or the presentation of final results. While certain participants within the group explored how to link sustainability with market differentiation in traditional sectors such as textiles and manufacturing, others debated the role of sustainability in attracting investment and talent. There was shared recognition that the advisory role must extend beyond assessment toward long-term transformation facilitation. The session concluded with a strong call for regional networks to champion sustainability as a growth strategy rather than a compliance burden, resulting in the need to shift the mindset of some SME leaders to a more opportunity-oriented perspective.

3.3 Training Follow-up

After the training, we shared a follow-up email with the participants, sharing once more any updated training materials as well as some photos we took during the training. The training with LTC was met with strong approval and constructive feedback. Out of the eight participants, 88% stated they would recommend the training to colleagues, friends, and network partners. Participants praised the training for its well-balanced structure and comprehensive coverage of relevant topics. Real-life examples and interactive breakout sessions were particularly appreciated, with one participant noting that these elements encouraged deeper thinking and engagement. Participants suggested that the training could be further enhanced by incorporating more case studies and conducting deeper analyses of the companies involved. Additionally, there was interest in expanding the training to address sustainability in specific sectors such as construction, IT, and the creative industries, reflecting a desire for more tailored and sector-specific content. On the first day, which focused on sustainability-driven innovation management and tools, 63% of participants strongly agreed and 37% agreed that the training sufficiently presented all key elements of sustainability. When asked whether the training provided comprehensive methods to apply sustainability-driven approaches, 38% strongly agreed and 62% agreed. Regarding their readiness to apply these methods, 25% strongly agreed, 63% agreed, and 12% moderately agreed, indicating a high level of confidence among participants. All participants at least agreed that the training equipped them with approaches to support clients in leveraging sustainability for strategic positioning and improvement. Specifically, 25% strongly agreed and 75% agreed with this statement. When it came to managing breakout session tasks, 25% strongly agreed, 63% agreed, and 12% moderately agreed, suggesting that the training effectively prepared participants for practical application. The second day, which focused on action plan development and sustainability (again delivered by Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible), reinforced participants' understanding of

sustainability in the context of SMEs. A combined 88% of participants reported that they now very much or completely understand how to apply sustainability principles, with 25% selecting “completely” and 63% “very much.” The sections on the concept of sustainability, sustainable business models, and real success stories were rated as at least useful by all participants, with 75% finding the sustainable business model section very useful and 50% rating the success stories as extremely useful. Breakout sessions such as “The Infinite Loop” and “Sustainable Technology and Agriculture,” along with the Sustainable Business Model Canvas, were also well received. For example, 50% of participants found the “Sustainable Technology and Agriculture” session extremely useful, and 50% rated the Canvas as very useful. In summary, the SustainX training was a valuable and impactful experience for LTC participants. It provided practical tools, enhanced understanding of sustainability, and inspired suggestions for further development, particularly in terms of sector-specific content and deeper case study analysis.

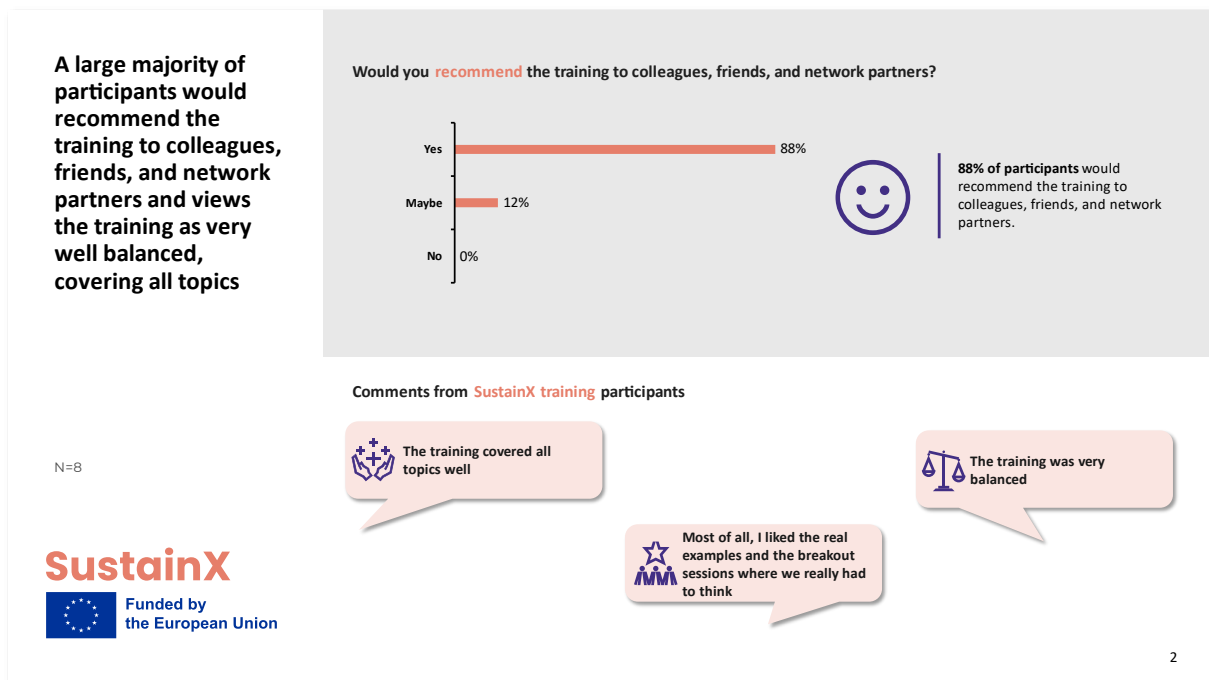


Figure 15 Training Feedback LTC (1/8)

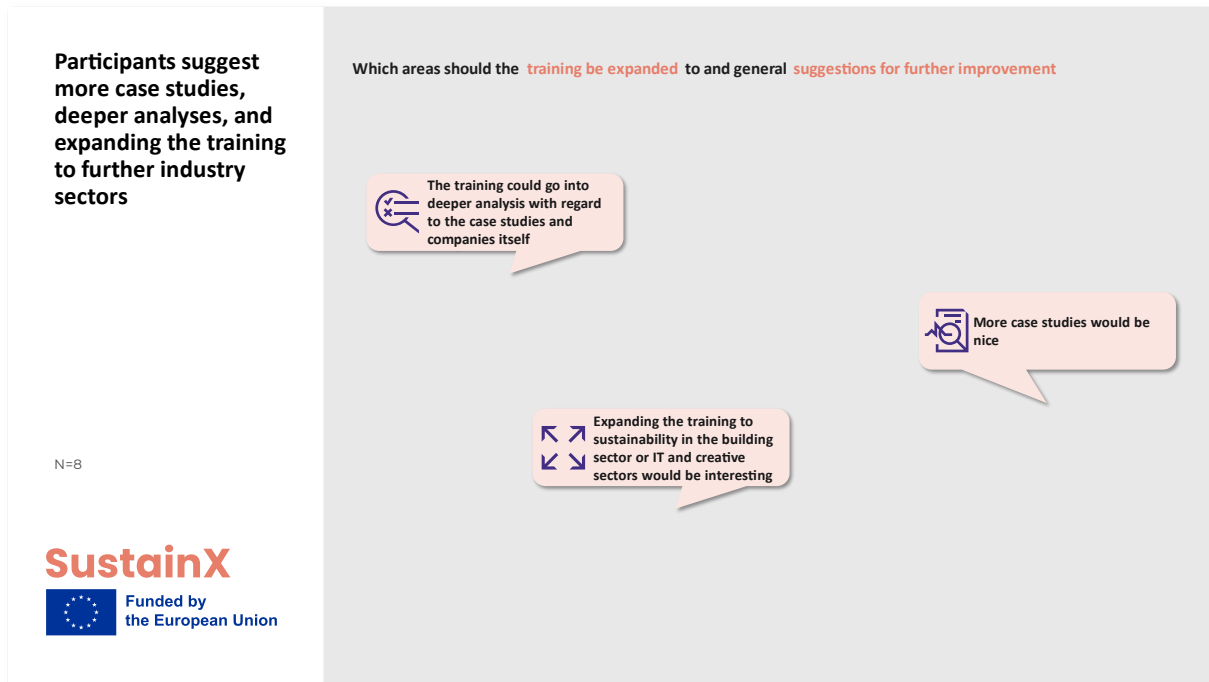


Figure 16 Training Feedback LTC (2/8)

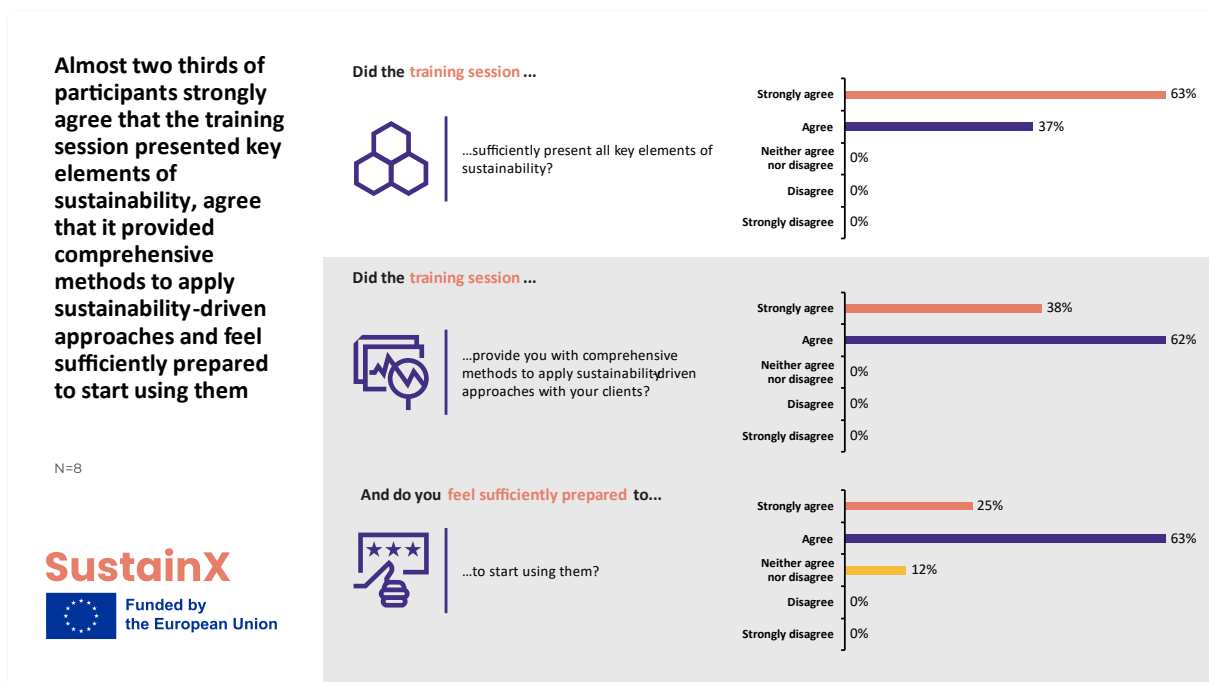


Figure 17 Training Feedback LTC (3/8)

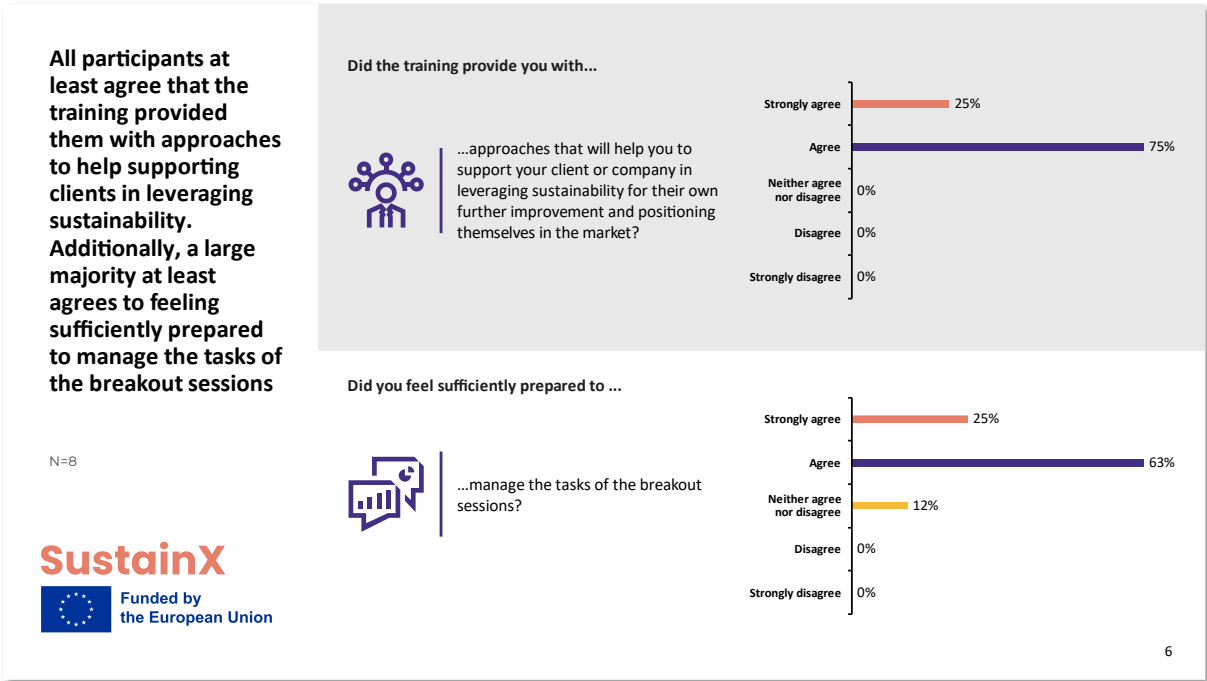


Figure 18 Training Feedback LTC (4/8)

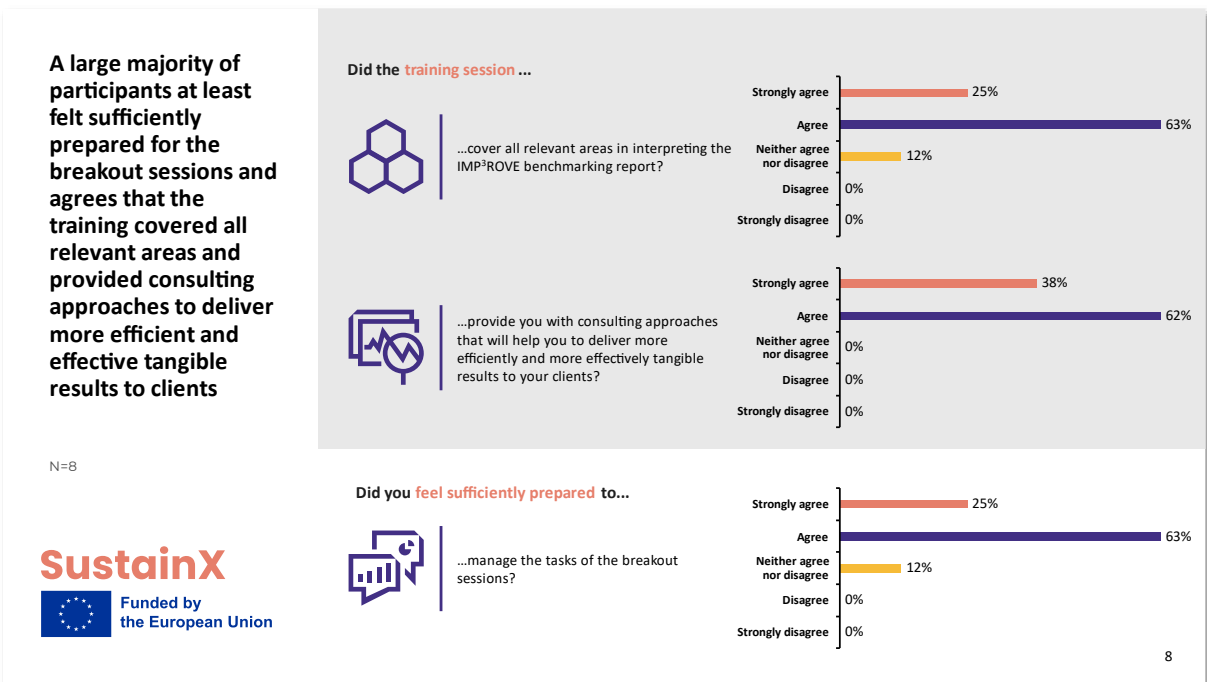


Figure 19 Training Feedback LTC (5/8)



Figure 20 Training Feedback LTC (6/8)

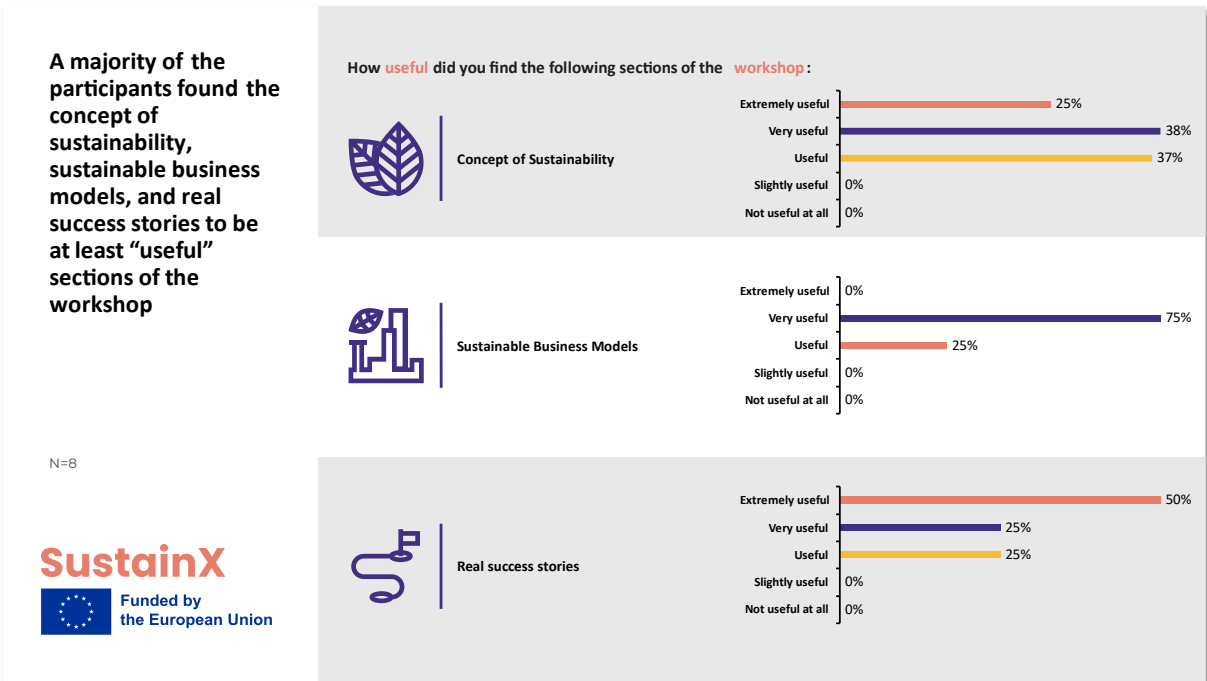


Figure 21 Training Feedback LTC (7/8)

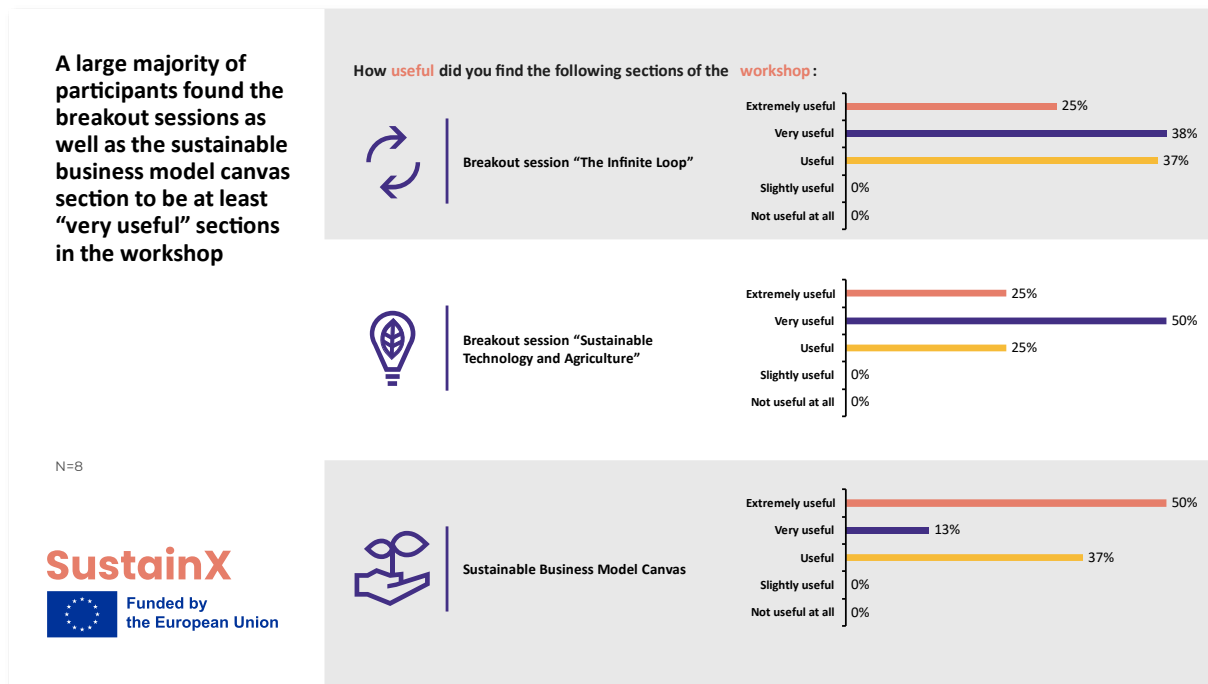


Figure 22 Training Feedback LTC (8/8)

4. Institute of Entrepreneurship Development Training

Our Greek consortium partner, the Institute of Entrepreneurship Development (iED) had previously participated in several IMP³ROVE trainings through other projects, same as LTC, which was taken into account when designing their training program to avoid redundancy. The capability mapping exercise revealed that iED had no high-priority training needs, but several areas were identified as medium-priority. These included topics such as “Open Innovation”, “Business Model Innovation”, “Business Advisor Skills”, “Action Plan Development”, and the “Introduction to the IMP³ROVE Approach”, which is our tool training. These topics collectively reflect a need to strengthen both advisory and analytical skills, particularly in guiding SMEs through collaborative ideation, revenue model design, and structured innovation planning. Given iED’s extensive prior training, the program was designed to build on their existing knowledge. The training program we designed, combined two key areas: business advisor skills and action plan development, with a specific focus on innovation management. Participants worked with real data from the IMP³ROVE Innovation Management benchmarking report, practicing how to analyze the data, draw conclusions, and develop actionable recommendations for SMEs. This hands-on approach was intended to reinforce both strategic thinking and practical advisory capabilities. The second day of the training concluded with a session on sustainability, delivered by Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible again, which we kept as a crucial part of the training program for all



consortium partners. This session aimed to deepen participants’ understanding of integrating sustainability into innovation strategies and business models, aligning with the broader goals of the SustainX project. In summary, the training for iED was tailored to enhance their dual role as advisors and analysts. It focused on refining their ability to support SMEs through data-driven innovation planning and sustainability integration, while leveraging their prior experience to ensure the training was both relevant and impactful.

The finalized training agenda that was conducted was as follows:

Agenda Day 1	
	10:00 – 10:30 Welcome and Introduction
	10:30 – 11:00 What makes great advisers? Overview and discussion of key business advisor skills
	11:00 – 11:45 Breakout session Individual reflection on measures to develop your business advisor skills
	11:45 – 12:15 Selecting + engaging clients
	12:15 – 13:00 Breakout session: Selecting + engaging clients
	13:00 – 14:00 Lunch
Business Advisor Skills	14:00 – 14:30 Interviewing for success
	14:30 – 15:15 Break out session on interviewing
	15:15 – 15:30 Communicating to clients
	15:30 – 16:30 Breakout session: Communicating with clients
Agenda	16:40 – 17:00 Wrap-up and Outlook

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Figure 23 iED Training Agenda Day 1



Agenda Day 2

Action Plan Development with focus on Innovation

09:00 – 09:15	Welcome and introduction to Day 2
09:15 – 09:45	Structured problem -solving for effective action plan development
09:45 – 10:15	Introduction to break-out session “structured problem -solving” based on IMA report
10:15 – 11:15	Break-out session (Part I): “Structured problem -solving” – Development of 2 -3 hypotheses and finding supportive facts
11:15 – 12:15	Break-out session (Part II): “Structured problem -solving” – Development of conclusions and recommendations
12:15 – 12:45	Visualisation of cases
12:45 – 13:00	Wrap-up and Q&A
13:00 – 14:00	Lunch break

Figure 24 iED Training Agenda Day 2 (1/2)

Agenda (Day 2)

Sustainability in the SMEs

Sustainability Training	
14:00 – 14:20	Concept of Sustainability Sustainability in the SMEs
14:20 – 14:35	Circular Economy
14:35 – 14:50	<i>Breakout session: Circular Economy - “The Infinite Loop”</i>
14:50 – 15:15	Sustainable Technology Sustainable Agriculture
15:15 – 15:30	<i>Breakout session: Technology for Sustainability in the Agri-Food Sector</i>
10 min	Coffee break
15:40 – 15:50	Sustainable Business Model Canvas
15:50 – 16:30	<i>Breakout session: Sustainable Business Model Canvas</i>
16:30 – 16:45	<i>Results breakout session</i>
16:45 – 17:00	Summary of learnings & wrap -up – Day 2

Figure 25 iED Training Agenda Day 2 (2/2)

4.1 Preparation

As the processes we implemented for the first two trainings proved to work very well, we followed the same modus operandi for the remainder of the trainings. This means, we received a list of participants from the hosting organisation and sent all necessary materials to the participants beforehand. As working mostly digitally has not posed any



issues and was very well received, we continued doing so as well, which enabled us to minimize the printing needs. The host iED prepared everything wonderfully, from the location to the equipment, all was very well prepared before arrival of the trainer, thus the training was conducted efficiently.

4.2 Conducting the training

This two-day on-site training session in Larissa, covering the topic of “Business Advisor Skills” and “Action Plan Development”, aimed to enhance the consulting competencies of intermediaries supporting innovation in regional SMEs and support them in finding new (international) business partners for innovative projects. The session combined foundational advisor training with advanced consulting methodologies rooted in the IMP³ROVE framework and best practices. Participants were introduced to the key characteristics of high-impact business advisors, including communication, technical insight, client empathy, and structured thinking. The program focused not only on individual capabilities but also on how to systematically apply them throughout the consulting lifecycle, i.e. client selection, engagement, diagnosis, solution development, and presentation.

Particular emphasis was placed on structured problem-solving techniques, such as issue tree analysis, hypothesis formulation, and logic diagramming. Using multiple real-world examples and interactive case-based breakout sessions, participants practiced designing tailored action plans and synthesizing recommendations from innovation assessments. The morning session concluded with the application of analytical storytelling in client settings and a guided reflection on personal skill development, contributing to the strengthening of regional innovation supporters’ capacity, thereby supporting the EU’s objectives of fostering innovation and competitiveness among SMEs across member states. In Greece, 10 participants from the Joist Academy and the iED participated in the training. One recurring discussion topic (also known from previous trainings) was how to overcome initial resistance from clients who either underestimate their need for external advice or distrust the value of structured consulting methodologies. The participants agreed that building trust quickly in initial meetings, particularly through active listening and understanding client pain points, is key. Without trust, none of the potentially following support offerings would work the way they should. The training-specific framework was welcomed as a practical way to communicate value while maintaining a client-centric focus. During the interactive breakout sessions on structured problem-solving, the three groups debated how to formulate hypotheses that engage rather than alienate SME client –opting for positively framed insights that encourage ownership and action. The interviews exercise generated discussion on navigating different influencing styles and how to adapt questioning strategies to draw out useful insights. Participants shared that one of the most challenging aspects was striking a balance between listening deeply and driving the conversation toward diagnostic clarity – often within a tight or at least somewhat limited



time, as SME leaders rarely take the additional time besides their core business. Another key discussion centered around the role of consultants and innovation supporters in moving from data analysis to strategic recommendation without losing sight of SME constraints. The action plan development module emphasized the importance of tangible, measurable actions. Participants concluded that strong advisory skills must bridge technical expertise with human connection and structured thinking. In the afternoon session we were again accompanied by the colleagues from Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible. This training section, similar to the previous iterations, introduced participants to key concepts and tools for integrating sustainability into SMEs. It emphasized the balance between environmental, social, and economic dimensions and explored how sustainability could drive innovation, improve compliance, open new markets, and strengthen long-term resilience. Participants examined real-world examples such as Interface, Coffeeco, and Greek TravelTellers, which demonstrated how sustainability could be embedded into business operations. The Sustainable Business Model Canvas was yet again introduced as a tool to design and evaluate strategies that create environmental and social value alongside economic returns.

Participants engaged in interactive breakout sessions where they applied the 9Rs of circular economy to real SME scenarios. These exercises encouraged critical thinking and collaborative problem-solving. The training concluded with case-based applications of the canvas, helping participants reflect on how to tailor sustainable strategies to their own contexts. Overall, the program equipped them with practical knowledge and frameworks to support sustainability-driven transformation in business. As the previous iterations of these sustainability sessions were very well received, we continued to replicate the main pillars of this session, while special attention went into researching and exploring regional cases, specific to the hosting organisation, in this case Greece. One major take-away for potential future improvement is to dive even deeper into the use of data, business analytics and potentially AI to support advisors in their work, but also to make this a major skill for SME leaders and have them benefit from and rely on data even more strongly, to lead to the most promising innovation projects and to further foster innovation across Europe.

4.3 Training Follow-up

After the training, we shared a follow-up email with the participants, sharing once more any updated training materials as well as some photos we took during the training. This training was no exception in terms of satisfaction rate. It was met with unanimous approval and enthusiasm. All 8 participants confirmed they would recommend the training to colleagues, friends, and network partners, describing it as a very insightful initiative and a valuable source of inspiration for future practice. Participants particularly appreciated the techniques on client management and the practical relevance of the content, which they



found directly applicable to their advisory work. Participants suggested expanding the training to include additional topics such as risk management and the R's of sustainability, indicating a desire for deeper and broader coverage of sustainability-related themes. These suggestions reflect a forward-looking mindset and a commitment to integrating sustainability more holistically into advisory practices. On the first day, which focused on business advisor skills, 75% of participants strongly agreed and 25% agreed that the training helped them understand the key steps in client interaction. Similarly, 63% strongly agreed and 37% agreed that the training supported their development of business advisor skills. When asked about the application of business advisor tools, 50% strongly agreed, 38% agreed, and 12% moderately agreed. These results highlight the training's effectiveness in enhancing both conceptual understanding and practical capabilities. The training's emphasis on business impact was also well received. Half of the participants strongly agreed and the other half agreed that this focus is essential for success as a business advisor. Additionally, 50% strongly agreed and 38% agreed that the training gave them confidence in applying and developing their skills, with 12% moderately agreeing. The training's practical orientation - particularly its focus on implementing recommendations and overcoming client barriers - was seen as a key success factor, with 68% strongly agreeing and 32% agreeing. On the second day, which covered action plan development and sustainability, participants again responded positively. Half strongly agreed and half agreed that the training covered all relevant areas and provided effective consulting approaches. Regarding their preparedness for breakout sessions, 38% strongly agreed and 62% agreed. In terms of understanding sustainability in the context of SMEs, 38% reported complete understanding and 62% very much, resulting in 100% of participants feeling well-informed. The workshop sections on sustainability concepts, business models, and real success stories were rated as extremely useful by at least half of the participants. For example, 75% found the sustainable business model section extremely useful, and 63% rated the "Sustainable Technology and Agriculture" breakout session as extremely useful. All participants found the breakout sessions and the Sustainable Business Model Canvas to be at least very useful. In conclusion, the SustainX training was a highly impactful experience for iED participants. It provided practical tools, strengthened advisory skills, and deepened understanding of sustainability, while also inspiring ideas for future content expansion.



Figure 26 Training Feedback iED (1/10)

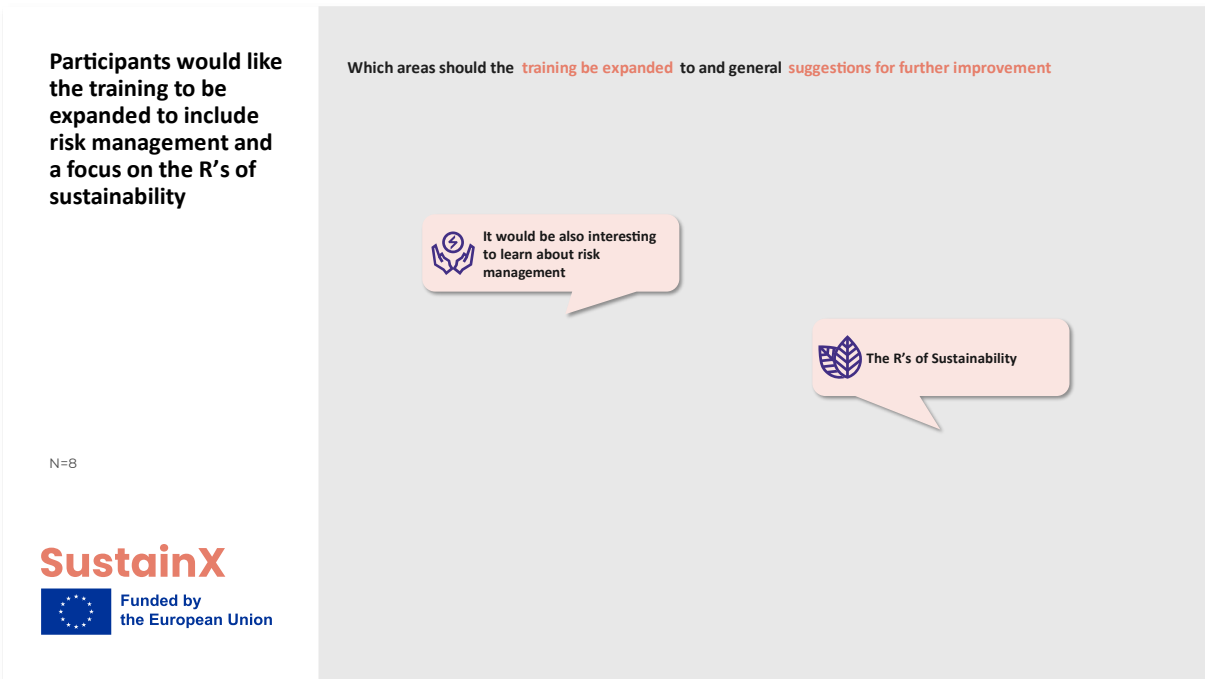


Figure 27 Training Feedback iED (2/10)

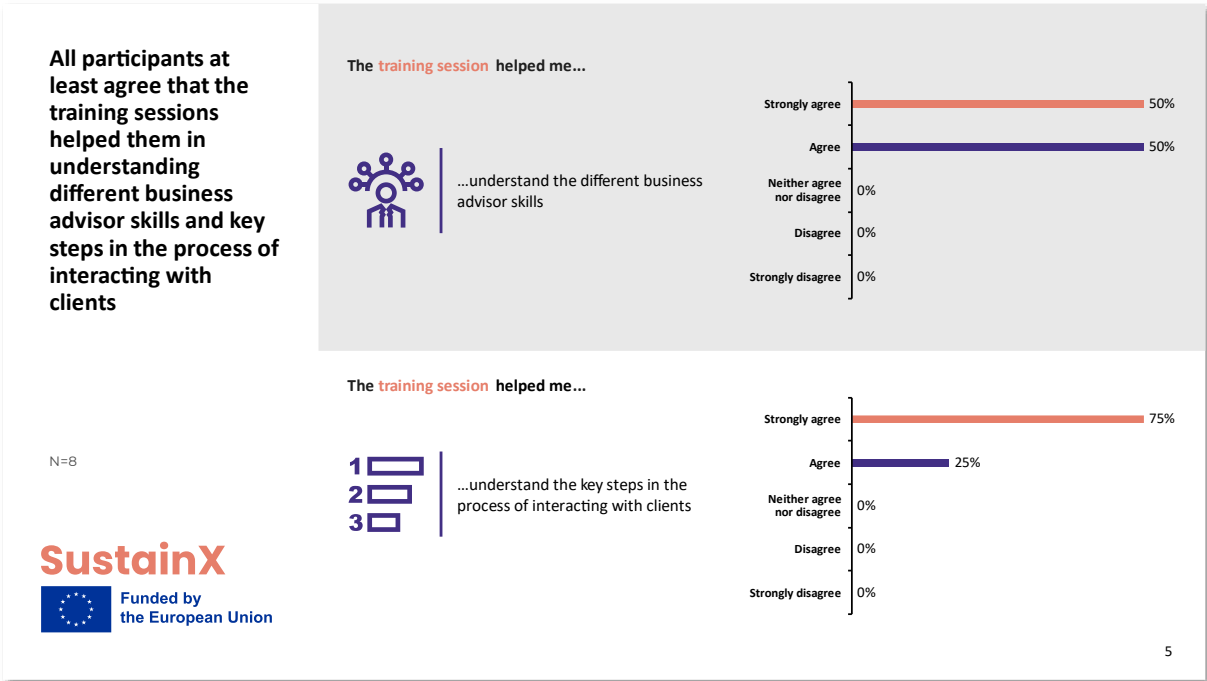


Figure 28 Training Feedback iED (3/10)



Figure 29 Training Feedback iED (4/10)



Figure 30 Training Feedback iED (5/10)

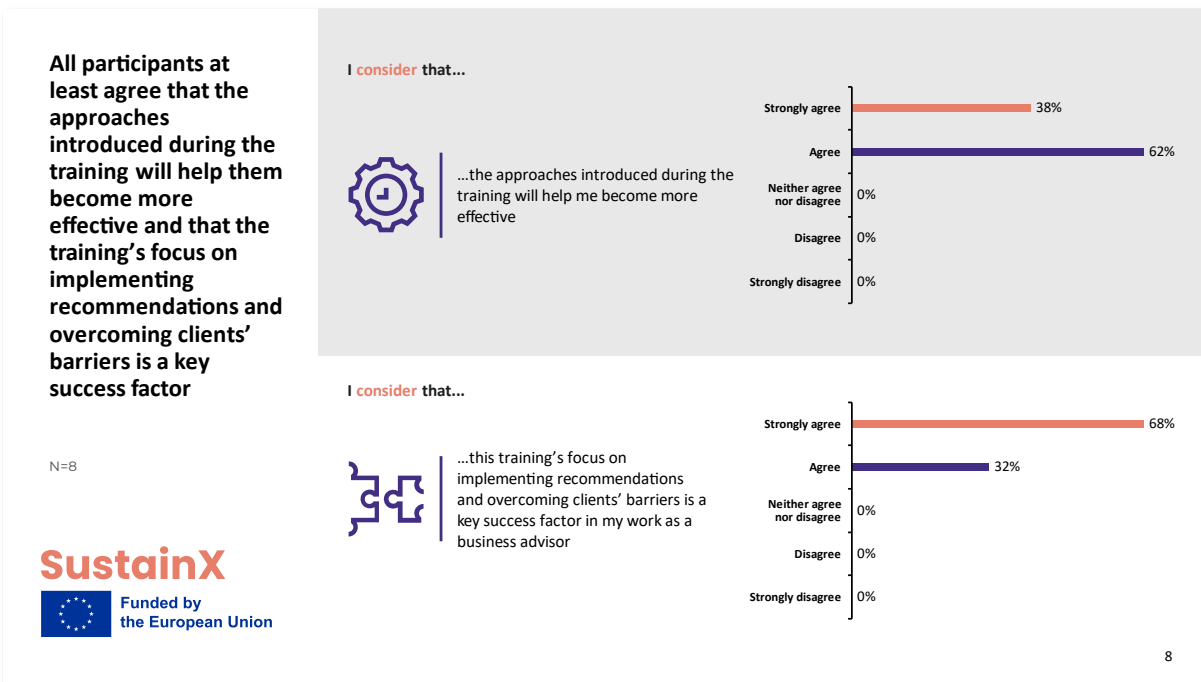


Figure 31 Training Feedback iED (6/10)

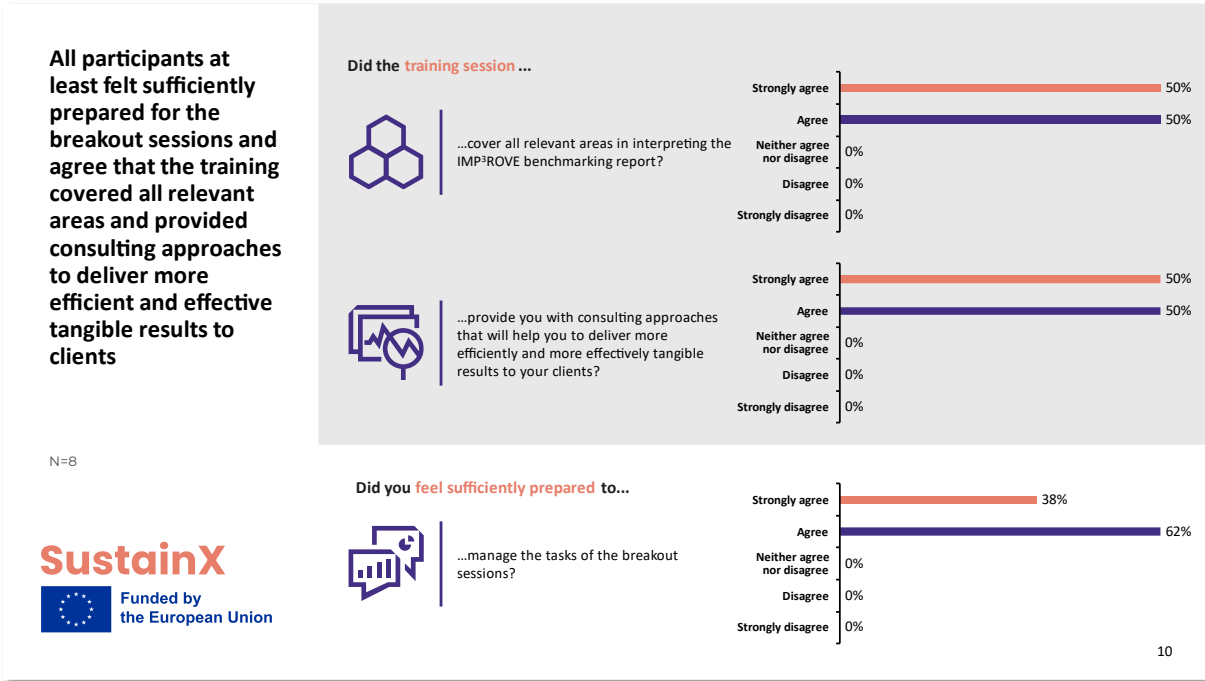


Figure 32 Training Feedback iED (7/10)



Figure 33 Training Feedback iED (8/10)

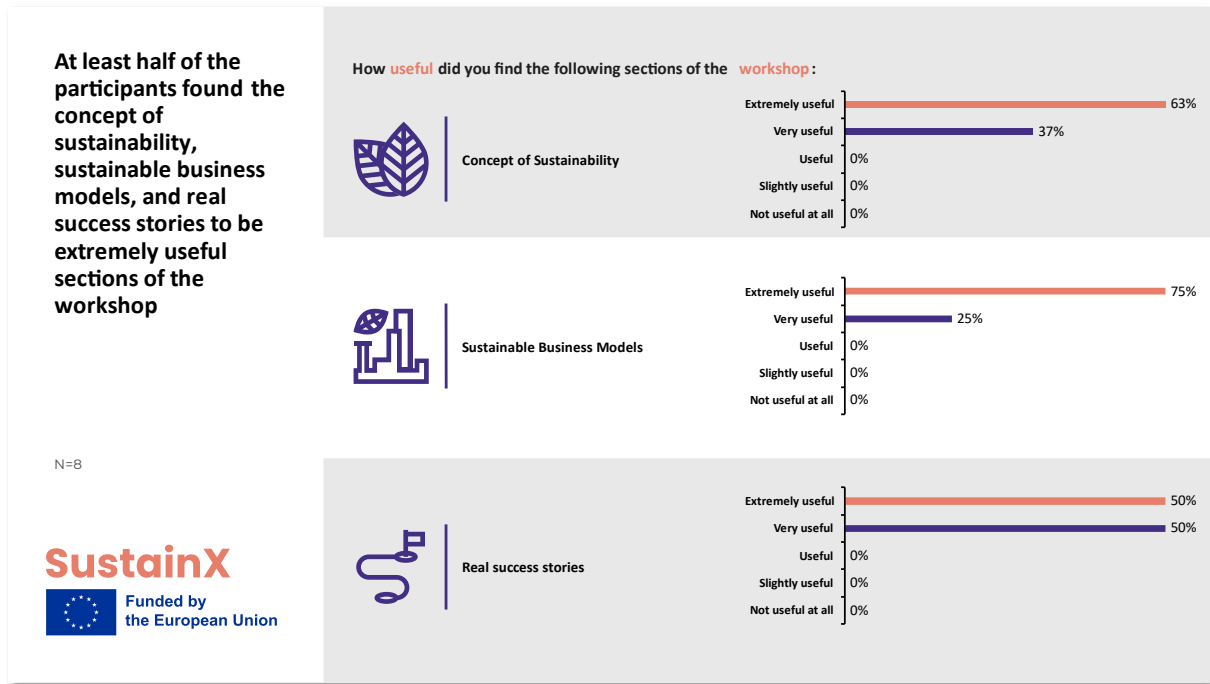


Figure 34 Training Feedback iED (9/10)

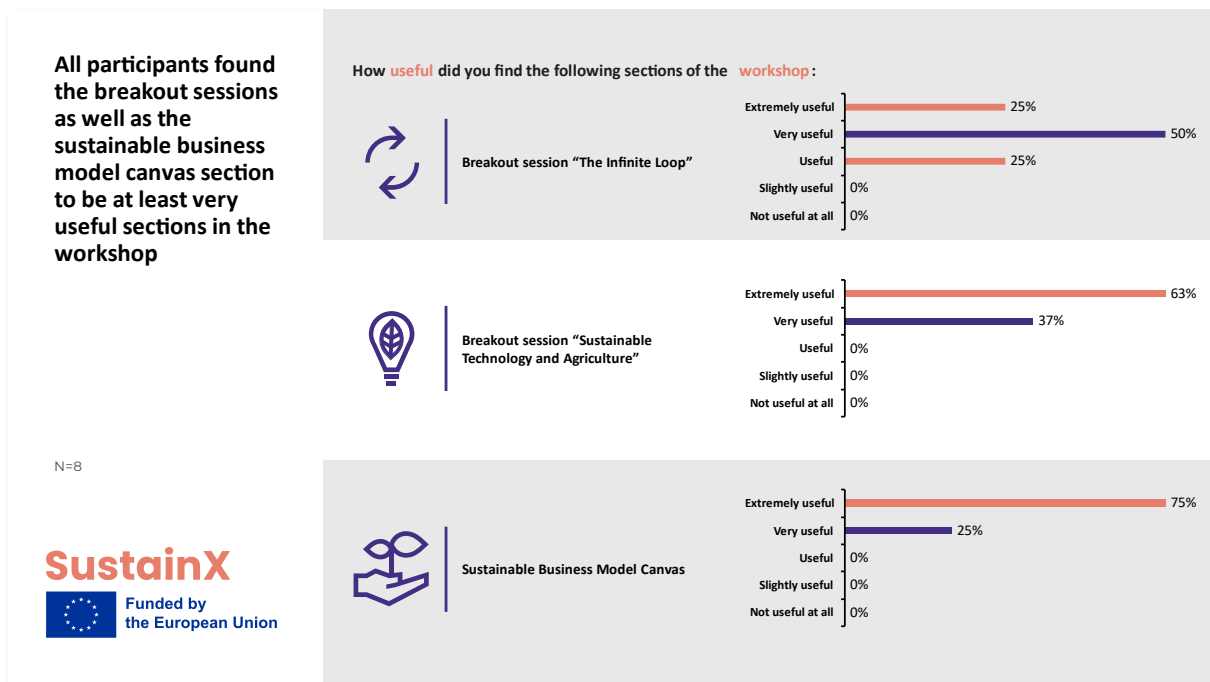


Figure 35 Training Feedback iED (10/10)

5. Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible Training

For our Spanish partner, Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible from the Canary Islands, the capability analysis revealed that their training needs were primarily in the medium-priority



range, with no areas marked as high-priority. The topics identified as medium-priority included “Innovation Lifecycle Management Processes”, “Business Advisor Skills”, “Action Plan Development” and the “Introduction to the IMP³ROVE Approach”. However, due to the unique nature of FSS as a public municipal foundation closely tied to local government, the training program was tailored to reflect their specific role. Unlike other partners, FSS does not operate as a typical business advisor seeking to recruit SMEs. Therefore, the training did not focus on advisor skills but instead emphasized innovation management capabilities that align with their public-sector mission. The training program centered on innovation lifecycle management processes, helping FSS strengthen its ability to support SMEs in structuring and managing innovation activities. Additionally, the second day of the training was initially planned to be dedicated to sustainability. However, as this topic is a core area of expertise for FSS already, we collaboratively decided to spend the day on “Action Plan Development” instead to further help them in improving their analytical and data-driven skills when working with SMEs. In summary, the training for Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible was designed to enhance their capacity to support innovation and sustainability from a public-sector perspective. It focused on practical tools and methods that align with their institutional role, enabling them to better assist SMEs in embedding hands-on data as well as sustainability into their innovation processes.

The finalized training agenda that was conducted was as follows:

Agenda (day 1)	
Innovation Life Cycle Management Processes	09:00 – 09:15 Welcome and introduction to the training course
	09:15 – 09:30 5 steps to excel with innovation life cycle management
	09:30 – 09:45 Step 1: Mapping the innovation life cycle (“what happens in which stage ”)
	09:45 – 10:00 Step 2: Developing strategic focus for process activities (“what areas are in focus”)
	10:00 – 10:45 <i>Breakout session and discussion: the process strategy chessboard</i>
	10:45 – 11:45 Step 3: Fostering idea creation and selection (“how are ideas created”)
	11:45 – 12:30 <i>Breakout session: idea management techniques including discussion</i>
	12:30 – 13:30 Step 4: Fostering the development and phasing out process (“how to turn ideas into new/ better offerings – and when to phase -out offerings”)
	13:30 – 14:30 <i>Lunch break</i>
	14:30 – 15:30 Step 5: Developing enabling factors (“how to measure and enhance the process”)
15:30 – 15:45 Summary of learnings and wrap -up	

Agenda

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Figure 36 Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible Training Agenda Day 1

Agenda (day 2)

Action Plan Development

09:00 – 09:15	Welcome back and recap
09:15 -09.30	Short overview/ re-cap on IMP ³ ROVE benchmarking reports
09:30 – 10:30	Structured problem -solving for effective action plan development
10:30 – 10:45	Introduction to break-out session "structured problem -solving"
10:45 – 11:45	Break-out session (Part I): "Structured problem -solving" – <i>Development of 2-3 hypotheses and finding supportive facts</i>
11:45 – 12:15	Discussion of hypotheses
12:15 – 13:15	Break-out session (Part II): "Structured problem -solving" – Development of conclusions and recommendations
13:15 – 14:15	Lunch
14:15 – 14:45	Discussion of conclusions and recommendations
14:45 – 15:15	Structuring your findings for a powerful presentation to your client
15:15 – 15:30	Summary and wrap -up

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Figure 37 Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible Training Agenda Day 2

5.1 Preparation

Again, as per process, we closely aligned with the hosting organisation way in advance. Interestingly enough, we decided to invite other innovation multipliers outside of Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible as the partner's organisation is fairly small and we wanted to spread the word across the Canary Islands early on. Thus, we collaboratively decided to also invite other stakeholders to the training to help them build their capabilities when working with SMEs already, which will benefit us later in gathering SMEs to the project. Other than that, the processes were the same and the training was very well prepared by the hosting organisation. All participants received materials and additional information beforehand to be best prepared for the training, which was especially crucial given the heterogenous group.

5.2 Conducting the training

The 2-day training in Santa Cruz, Tenerife held on 12–13 June 2025 focusing on the topics of "Innovation Management", "Innovation Life Cycle Management" and "Action Plan Development" provided a structured, comprehensive hands-on methodology to strengthen the capacity of regional innovation intermediaries in supporting SMEs. We were welcomed by a heterogenous group of participants as we had consortium colleagues from the hosting organisation Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible, but also representatives of a regional university and of the regional maritime cluster. As the number of colleagues from the hosting organisation was very small, we utilized this opportunity to draw in significant regional multipliers to onboard them in these topics as well. This will support us in spreading the knowledge throughout the region and also in drawing in even more SMEs for our own

SME trainings in 2026. Thus, the training group was a total of 10 participants (2 out of which were not able to join on the second training day). We welcomed 2 colleagues from the University of Laguna, 2 colleagues from the Cluster Excelencia Tecnologica and 4 colleagues from the Cluster Maritimo Canarias.

Delivered through the IMP³ROVE framework and Kearney's House of Innovation, the training focused on equipping participants with practical tools and consulting techniques to enhance innovation performance across the full life cycle of innovations, from ideation to phase-out. The training started by introducing a five-step approach: (1) mapping and balancing the innovation life cycle, (2) developing strategic focus using tools like the Process Strategy Chessboard, (3) fostering idea creation and selection through the Idea Wheel and structured creativity techniques, (4) optimizing development and phase-out processes using agile and stage-gate models, and (5) strengthening enabling factors such as KPIs, incentives, and IT tools. Participants applied these tools in breakout sessions, using real-world case studies (e.g. Adobe Kickbox, LEGO IDEAS, Neue Masche) to explore best practices in innovation culture, stakeholder engagement, and time-to-market acceleration.

During day 2 of the training, a core component was the structured problem-solving methodology, guiding participants from issue tree analysis and hypothesis formulation to evidence-based conclusions and actionable recommendations. This approach was reinforced through exercises using IMP³ROVE benchmarking reports, enabling participants to translate diagnostic insights into tailored action plans for SMEs. As majority of the participants was new to the IMP³ROVE assessment methodology, we spontaneously deviated from the predefined agenda and took a more detailed look at the different assessment tools, what they do, whom they would be most suitable for and how to leverage the data. This short detour helped the participants in getting a comprehensive view of the data-driven and structured problem-solving approach.

The training also addressed innovation governance, including the use of dashboards for performance monitoring, lifecycle maturity assessments for phase-out decisions, and incentive systems to foster innovation culture. Emphasis was placed on aligning innovation activities with strategic growth ambitions, using both "push" and "pull" techniques for idea generation, and leveraging digital tools to support collaborative innovation management. By combining analytical rigor with participatory learning, the workshop enhanced participants' ability to deliver high-impact advisory services aligned with EU innovation policy objectives. The outcome is a strengthened ecosystem of multipliers capable of supporting SMEs in navigating innovation challenges, improving competitiveness, and driving sustainable growth across European regions. Participants were very engaged and interested in the different sessions, even though the group reflected different background and day-to-day activities, it was truly a great opportunity to jump-start the regional



ecosystem and address different stakeholders that would further support us through activating their networks of SMEs.

5.3 Training Follow-up

After the training, we shared a follow-up email with the participants, sharing once more any updated training materials as well as some photos we took during the training. This training as well was met with unanimous approval and appreciation. All eight participants that filled out the feedback form confirmed that they would recommend the training to colleagues, friends, and network partners. The workshop was described as a great help, with participants highlighting its practical value and expressing gratitude for the experience. Comments such as “Everything was perfect” and “The workshop has been of great help” reflect the high level of satisfaction among attendees. The first day of the training focused on innovation life cycle management processes. Half of the participants strongly agreed and the other half agreed that the training covered all key elements of this topic. When asked whether they felt sufficiently prepared to manage the tasks of the breakout sessions, 25% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 25% were neutral. This indicates that while the majority felt confident, there is room for further strengthening the practical application component. Participants also evaluated the comprehensiveness of the methods introduced during the training. Half strongly agreed and half agreed that the training provided them with effective methods to enhance innovation life cycle management. Regarding their readiness to start using these methods, 25% strongly agreed, 50% agreed, and 25% were neutral, again suggesting a generally positive reception with some participants seeking additional reinforcement. The second day of the training, which focused on action plan development, further reinforced participants’ confidence. When asked whether the training covered all relevant areas for interpreting the IMP³ROVE benchmarking report, 50% strongly agreed and 50% agreed. Similarly, 38% strongly agreed and 62% agreed that the training provided consulting approaches that would help them deliver more efficient and effective results to clients. Regarding their preparedness for breakout sessions, 38% strongly agreed, 38% agreed, and 24% were neutral. Overall, the SustainX training was a highly valued experience for Fundación Santa Cruz participants. It provided practical tools and consulting approaches, strengthened understanding of innovation life cycle management, and equipped participants with actionable strategies for client engagement. The feedback suggests a strong foundation for future sessions, with opportunities to deepen hands-on components and further tailor content to participant needs.

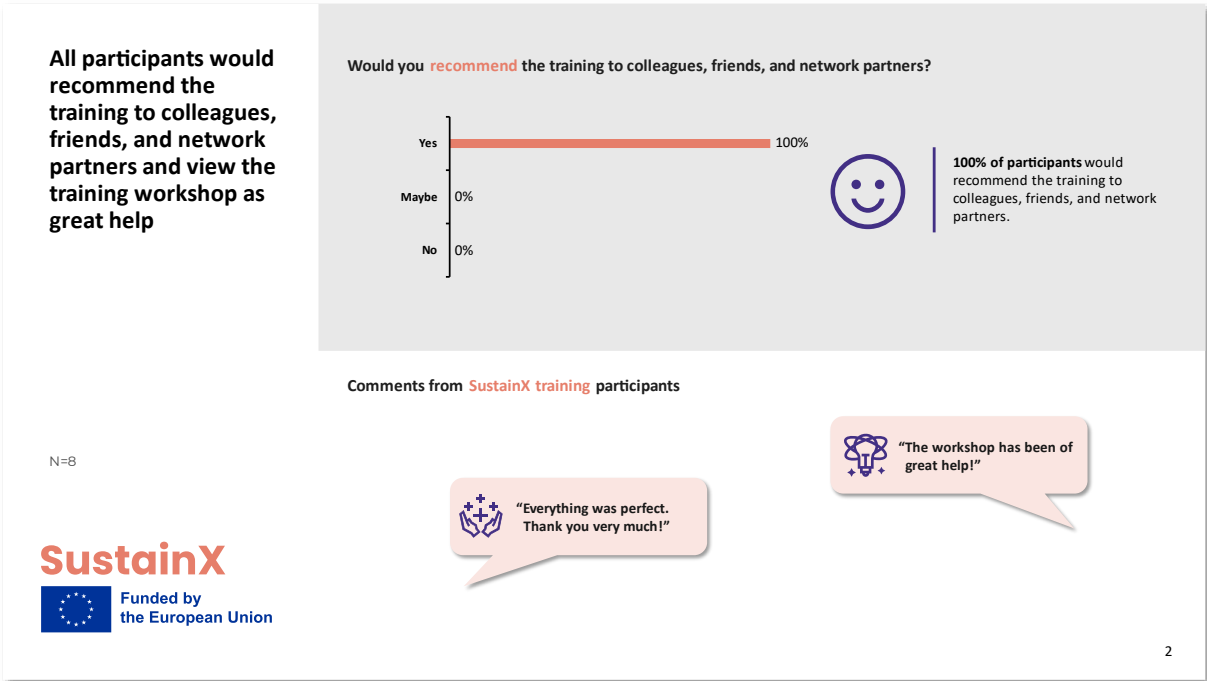


Figure 38 Training Feedback Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible (1/4)

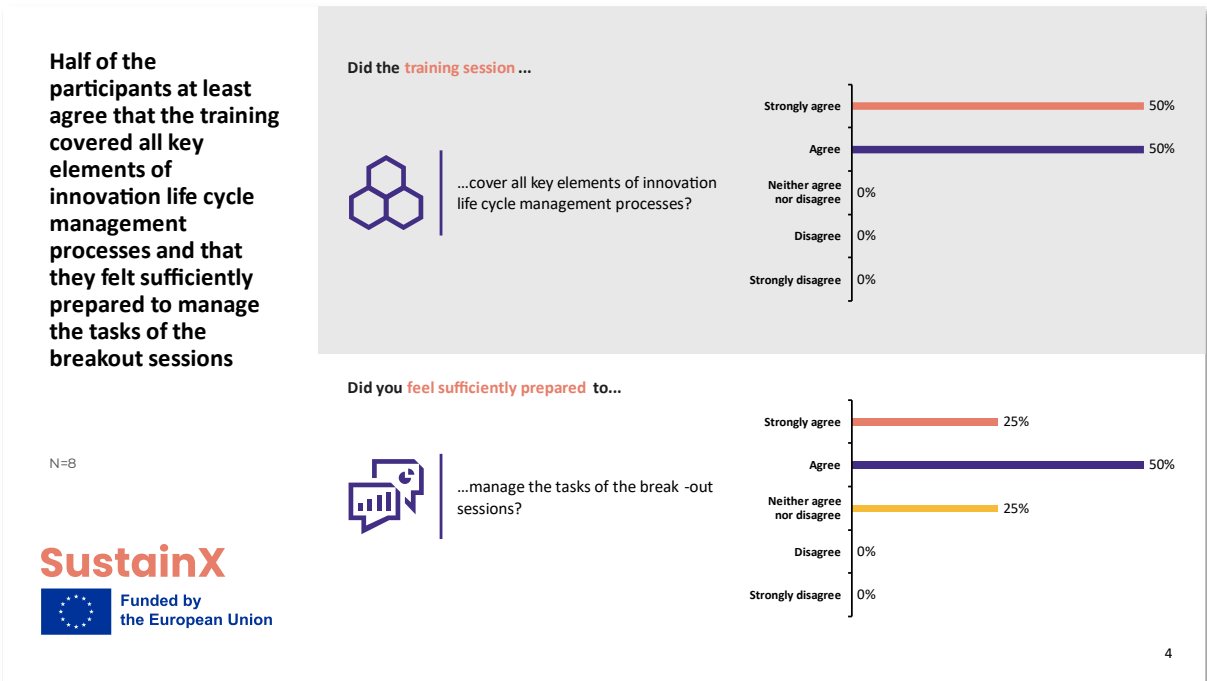


Figure 39 Training Feedback Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible (2/4)

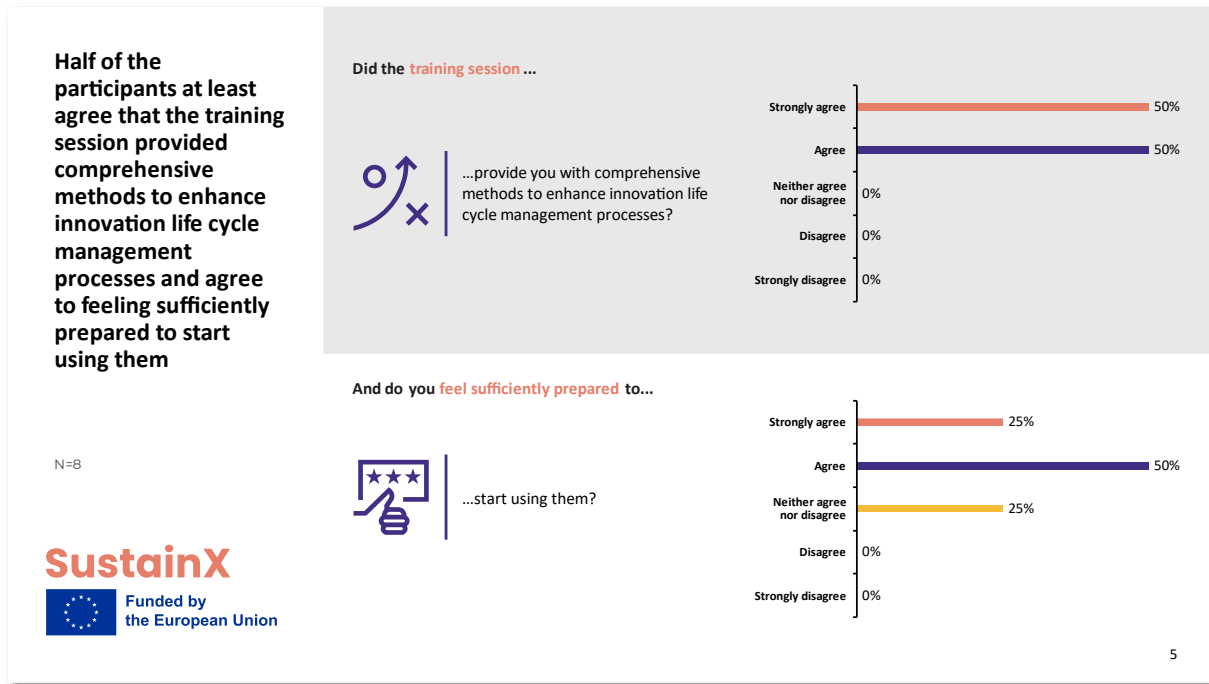


Figure 40 Training Feedback Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible (3/4)

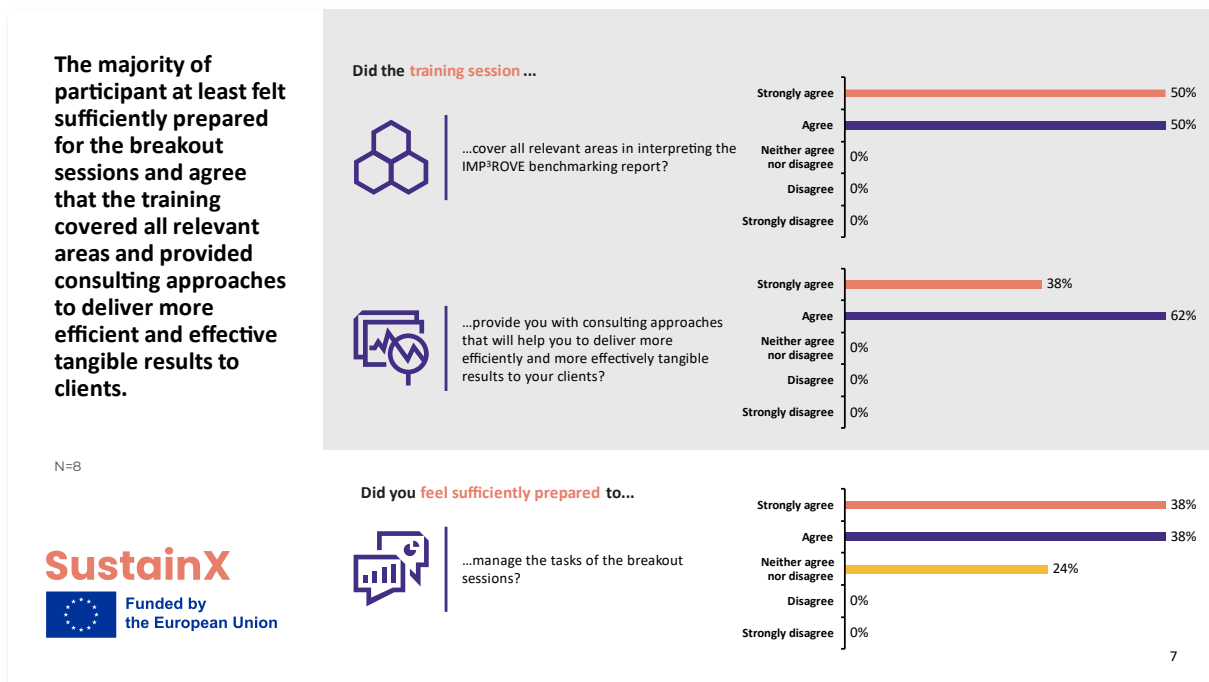


Figure 41 Training Feedback Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible (4/4)

6. ARC FUND Training

With regards to our Bulgarian consortium partner, ARC FUND, the results of the capability analysis revealed that ARC FUND had a mix of training needs, with one area marked as high-



priority and several others as medium-priority. The highest priority was assigned to the “Introduction to the IMP³ROVE Approach” training. This training introduces a comprehensive innovation management assessment tool that helps organizations analyze their internal innovation structures and benchmark them against a global database of over 8,000 companies. Since this tool is ISO-compliant and widely used for deriving data-driven recommendations, it was considered essential for ARC FUND. However, because this training was scheduled to be delivered to all consortium partners through a separate webinar series, it was excluded from ARC FUND’s specific two-day training agenda. Among the medium-priority topics identified were “Open Innovation,” “Introduction to business advisor skills,” “How to win SMEs for innovation management support services,” and “Action Plan Development.” After evaluating the relevance and potential impact of these topics, the training program for ARC FUND was designed to focus on “Open Innovation” and “Action Plan Development.” These topics were selected because they offered a logical and impactful progression: first introducing collaborative innovation methods and then guiding participants through the process of turning insights into actionable strategies. The training also included a dedicated session on sustainability, delivered by Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible. This session aimed to enhance ARC FUND’s ability to support SMEs in integrating sustainability into their innovation strategies, aligning with the broader goals of the SustainX project. In summary, the training for ARC FUND was tailored to address both strategic and practical needs. It focused on equipping the team with tools and methodologies for fostering open innovation and developing actionable plans, while also reinforcing sustainability as a core component of innovation support.

The finalized training agenda that was conducted was as follows:

Agenda Day 1	
	10:00 – 10:15 Welcome and introduction to the training Welcome, expectations and objectives
	10:15 – 11:00 Introduction to open innovation
	11:00 – 11:15 Mapping open innovation – understanding the structure, control points, and innovation opportunities
	11.15 – 12.00 <i>Breakout session and discussion: open innovation analysis</i>
	12:00 – 13:00 Lunch break
	13.00 – 13.15 Identify how to address open innovation focus areas – innovate yourself, team -up or buy
Open Innovation	13.15 -13.45 Identifying the right partners – which type of partners can help you to drive innovation for your ambition, per focus area and innovation process step
	13.45 – 14.15 Designing value propositions to attract 'dream team' partners
	14.15 – 15.00 <i>Breakout session and discussion: value proposition design</i>
	15:00 – 15:30 Reaching out, selecting innovation partners, and collaborating
	15.30 – 16.00 Measuring results of open innovation
	16.00 – 16.15 Wrap-up and Q&A

Figure 42 ARC FUND Training Day 1



Agenda Day 2

09:00 – 09:15	Welcome and introduction to Day 2
09:15 – 09:45	Structured problem -solving for effective action plan development
09:45 – 10:45	Break-out session (Part I): "Structured problem -solving" – Development of 2 -3 hypotheses and finding supportive facts
10:45 – 11:45	Break-out session (Part II): "Structured problem -solving" – Development of conclusions and recommendations
11:15 – 12:00	Wrap-up and Q&A
12:00 – 13:00	Lunch break

Action Plan Development with focus on Innovation

Figure 43 ARC FUND Training Day 2 (1/2)

Agenda (Day 2)

Sustainability Training	
13:00 – 13:20	Concept of Sustainability Sustainability in the SMEs
13:20 – 13:35	Circular Economy
13:35 – 13:50	<i>Breakout session: Circular Economy - "The Infinite Loop"</i>
13:50 – 14:15	Sustainable Technology Sustainable Agriculture
14:15 – 14:30	<i>Breakout session: Technology for Sustainability in the Agri-Food Sector</i>
10 min	Coffee break
14:40 – 14:50	Sustainable Business Model Canvas
14:50 – 15:30	<i>Breakout session: Sustainable Business Model Canvas</i>
15:30 – 15:45	<i>Results breakout session</i>
15:45 – 16:00	Summary of learnings & wrap -up – Day 2

Sustainability in the SMEs

Figure 44 ARC FUND Training Day 2 (2/2)

6.1 Preparation

As the previous training preparations were run in the same way, we chose to keep the same modus operandi and aligned with the hosting organisation very closely on an ongoing basis. Therefore, preparations were done very smoothly. The hosting organisation ARC FUND



took care of the logistics and sent us the participants list. Following that, we shared the training materials with everyone as it was a very small group.

6.2 Conducting the training

The “Open Innovation and Action Plan Development” training, held on 17–18 June 2025, provided a comprehensive, hands-on framework for enabling SMEs to leverage open innovation effectively. This training group was very small. There were a total of 4 participants on site, one of which was not able to attend the second day. Spontaneously, we also had another 2 additional co-workers join us virtually and follow the training that way. They also managed to engage in the discussions and ask questions during the sessions.

Delivered under the IMP³ROVE methodology, the workshop focused on equipping participants with practical tools to map innovation ecosystems, identify strategic opportunities, and develop actionable implementation plans. Day 1 introduced the concept of open innovation as a collaborative ecosystem involving suppliers, customers, universities, startups, and intermediaries. Participants explored the structure of innovation networks in terms of width (diversity of partners) and depth (tiers in the value chain), and learned to identify control points and innovation areas. Through case studies (e.g. P&G, Adobe Kickbox, LEGO IDEAS), the training highlighted how open innovation can address common SME challenges such as limited speed, resources, and openness to external ideas. Participants engaged in breakout sessions to map their own innovation ecosystems, assess control points, and derive innovation search fields. A structured framework was introduced to evaluate whether to innovate in-house, team up, or buy solutions, based on business impact and ease of implementation. Day 2 focused on partner identification, value proposition design, and measuring innovation outcomes. Participants learned to tailor value propositions to different partner types (e.g. customers, suppliers, academia), using a 10-point value framework (e.g. access to markets, know-how, funding, brand). Real-world examples (e.g. Phonebloks, Local Motors, Novartis–Google) illustrated how value alignment drives successful collaboration. Finally, the workshop addressed KPI development for open innovation. We paid special attention to looking into different types of KPIs, covering input (e.g. investment, staff involvement), process (e.g. time-to-market, partner diversity), and output (e.g. new products, revenue from innovation). Overall, the training empowered participants to guide SMEs in building robust, collaborative innovation strategies – balancing internal capabilities with external partnerships to drive sustainable growth and competitiveness.

In the afternoon of the second day, we were yet again virtually joined by the colleagues from Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible with new best practice examples from the region of Bulgaria. The selected case was a local manufacturer of plastic foil alternative made from



corn. The manufacturer was very well known to the participants and also to the general public for being a forerunner of sustainability. This encouraged the group, albeit very small group, to engage in the discussions during the breakout sessions and also to brainstorm for more ideas. Participants indicated they were satisfied with the training contents and welcomed the different topics.

6.3 Training Follow-up

As always, we shared a follow-up email with the participants to share the updated materials and some photos. Similar to the previous trainings, this training was also met with unanimous praise and appreciation. All three participants confirmed they would recommend the training to colleagues, friends, and network partners. The workshop was described as very well structured, perfectly conducted, and highly valuable for consulting SMEs on innovation management. Participants particularly appreciated the open format that encouraged discussion and experience sharing, with one noting that the training provided a structured approach to supporting SMEs. Participants offered constructive suggestions for enhancing the training. They expressed interest in including a dedicated segment on idea selection, which they identified as a common challenge for many companies. Additionally, they recommended incorporating a real SME case study to explore tool application in a practical context. Another suggestion was to ask participants to prepare examples in advance, allowing for tailored feedback and more interactive learning. On the first day, which focused on open innovation, all participants strongly agreed that the training covered all key elements and provided a comprehensive structure for identifying open innovation opportunities. They also unanimously agreed that the session equipped them with approaches to support the development of successful partnerships and innovations. Regarding their preparedness for breakout sessions, 67% strongly agreed and 33% agreed, indicating a high level of confidence in applying what they had learned. The second day, dedicated to action plan development, reinforced this positive experience. All participants strongly agreed that the training covered all relevant areas for interpreting the IMP³ROVE benchmarking report and provided effective consulting approaches for delivering tangible results to clients. When asked about their readiness to manage breakout session tasks, 67% strongly agreed and 33% agreed, further confirming the training's practical value. The sustainability-focused components of the training were also highly appreciated. All participants found the sections on the concept of sustainability, sustainable business models, and real success stories to be extremely useful. The breakout sessions, "The Infinite Loop" and "Sustainable Technology and Agriculture", as well as the Sustainable Business Model Canvas, were unanimously rated as extremely useful. In terms of understanding sustainability in the context of SMEs, 33% of participants reported complete understanding and 67% very much, resulting in 100% feeling well-informed. In summary, the SustainX training was a highly successful experience for ARC Fund participants. It provided a strong foundation in innovation and

sustainability consulting, fostered peer learning, and inspired ideas for further enhancing the training's interactivity and relevance.

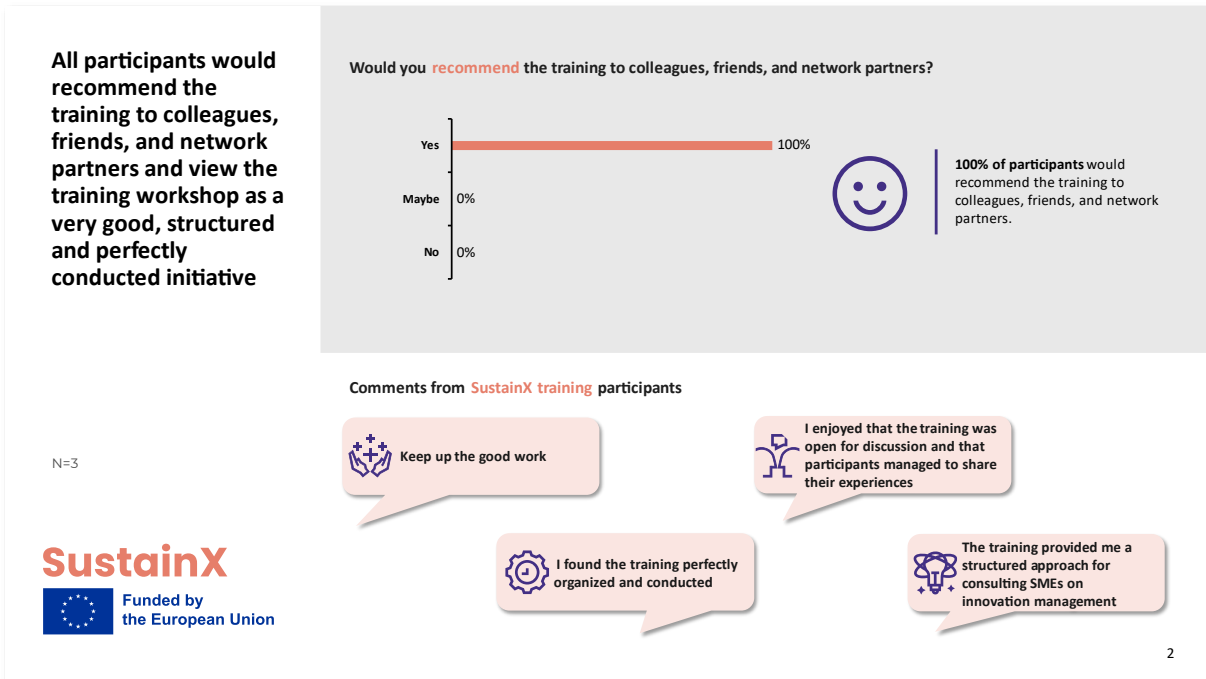
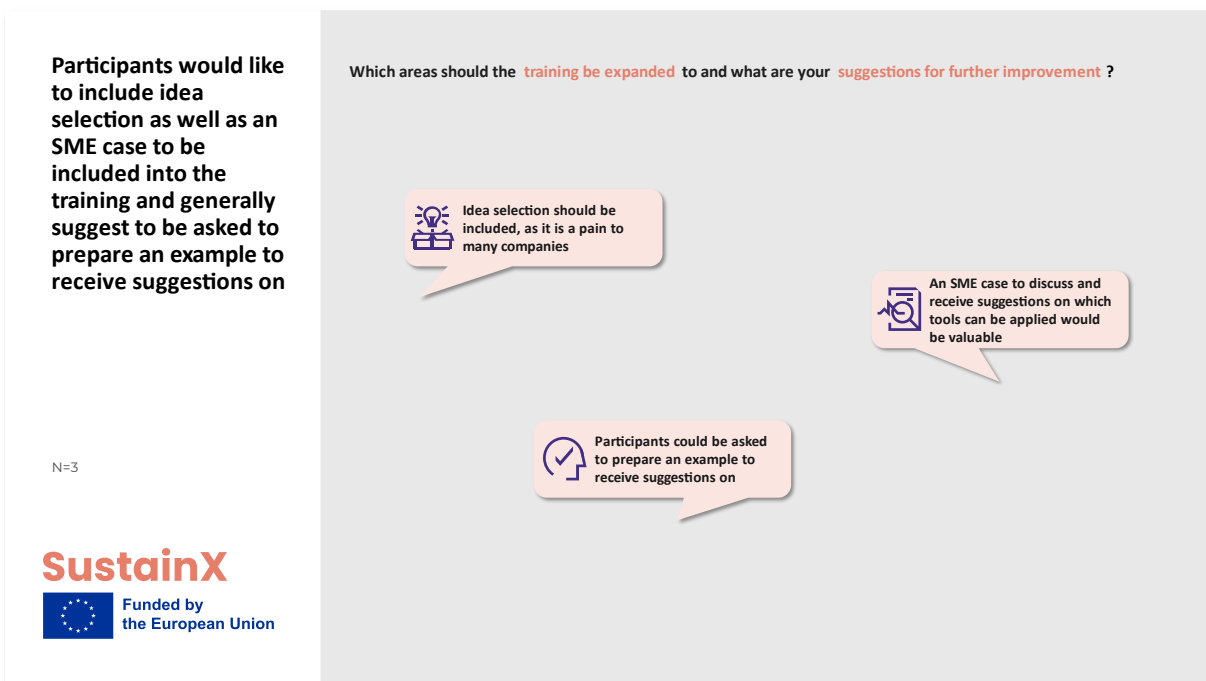


Figure 45 Training Feedback ARC FUND (1/8)



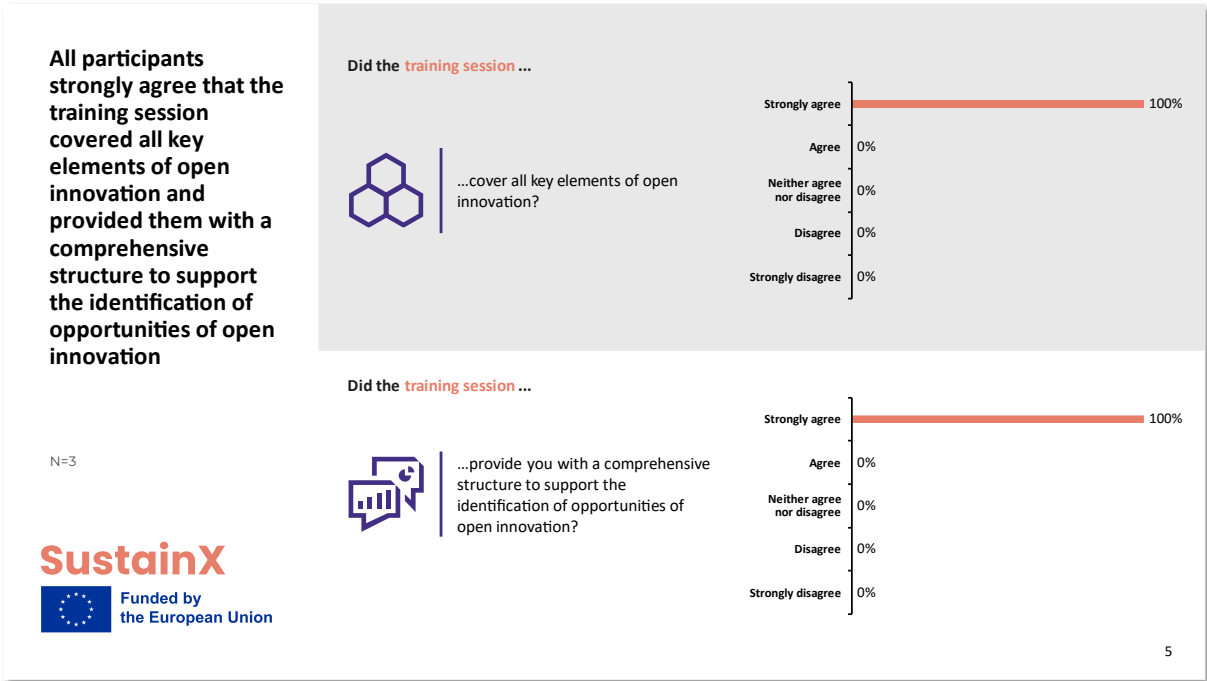


Figure 47 Training Feedback ARC FUND (3/8)

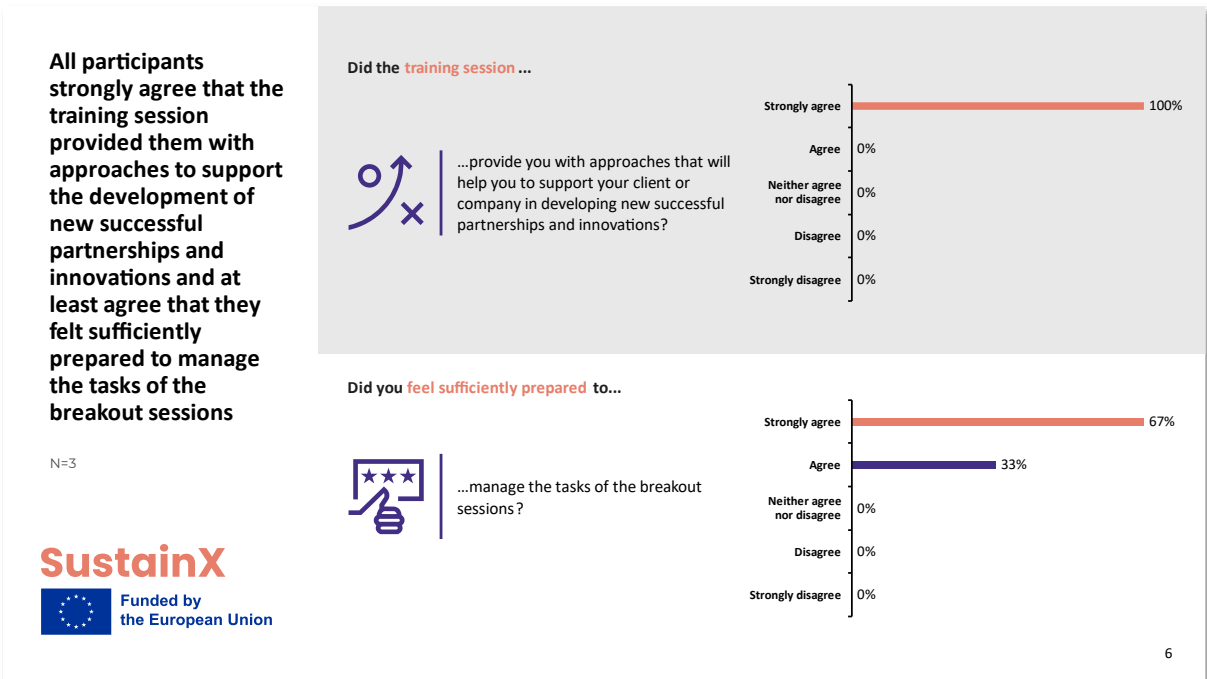


Figure 48 Training Feedback ARC FUND (4/8)

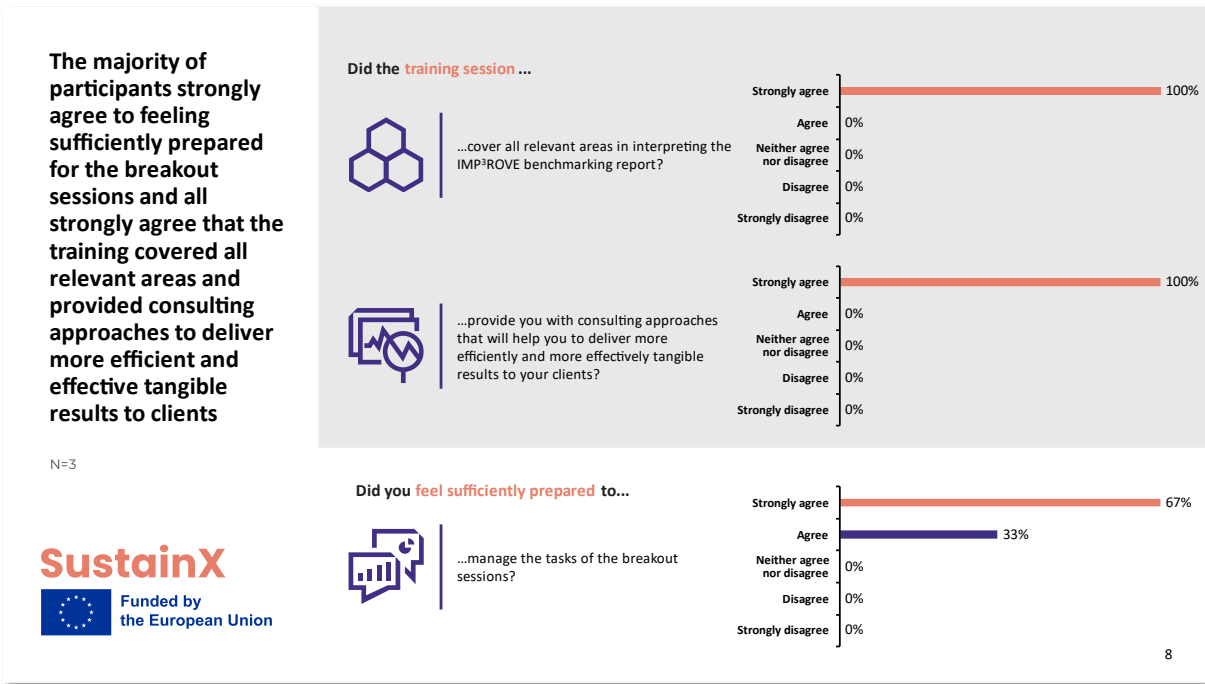


Figure 49 Training Feedback ARC FUND (5/8)

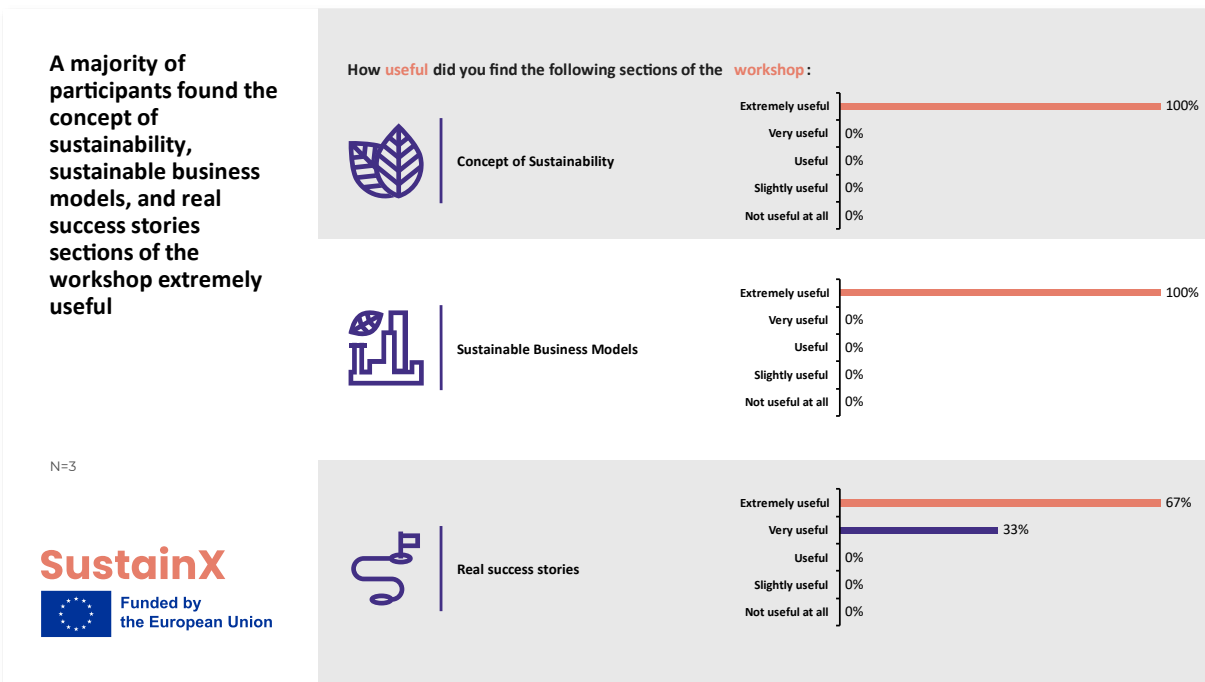


Figure 50 Training Feedback ARC FUND (6/8)

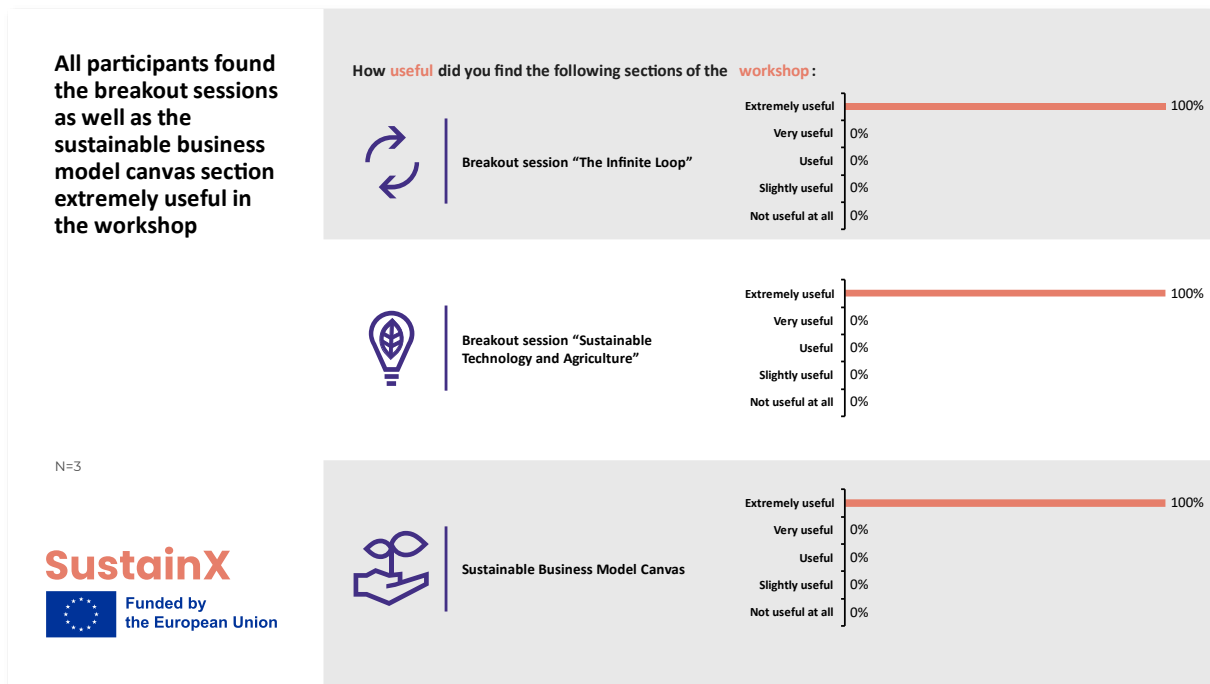


Figure 51 Training Feedback ARC FUND (7/8)



Figure 52 Training Feedback ARC FUND (8/8)

7. Next Steps

Following the successful completion of the consortium-wide training series, the SustainX project now transitions into a critical implementation phase aimed at directly engaging SMEs across the participating regions. The primary objective of this next stage is to activate the 'train-the-trainer' model by enabling each consortium partner to deliver tailored training support to SMEs, thereby multiplying the impact of the knowledge and tools acquired during the consortium sessions. The consortium trainings, which concluded in June 2025, have laid a strong foundation for this transition. Each partner is now expected to organize a series of SME-focused training activities during the first and second quarters of 2026. Specifically, each region will host two in-person training sessions and one virtual training session. These sessions will be designed to reflect the regional context, sectoral priorities and the specific maturity levels of the participating SMEs. While the content will be based on the consortium training modules, it will be adapted to ensure accessibility, relevance and practical applicability for SME audiences.

To identify and select participating SMEs, an open call will be launched at the beginning of September 2025 and will remain open for a period of at least six weeks. This call will be promoted through a multi-channel outreach strategy, including a dedicated webinar held in June 2025 already, a second technical webinar scheduled for late September and ongoing communication via newsletters and social media platforms. The second webinar will focus on the practical aspects of the application process, such as eligibility criteria, benefits of participation, and step-by-step guidance on how to apply. Consortium partners will provide hands-on support to SMEs throughout the application period to ensure inclusivity and clarity.

The evaluation of the applications will be conducted by each regional partner, based on a combination of clearly defined eligibility criteria and more flexible internal evaluation parameters. This dual approach is intended to strike a balance between ensuring quality and avoiding unnecessary barriers for SMEs. Once selected, SMEs will be asked to complete a follow-up questionnaire to provide insights into their current capabilities, strategic goals and specific training needs. This information will be used to further tailor the training content and delivery formats.

In parallel with the open call, consortium partners will begin preparing the SME training materials during the summertime. While much of the content will be drawn from the consortium sessions, it will be refined to include simplified frameworks, more hands-on exercises, and regionally relevant case studies. The SME training sessions will be delivered between November 2025 and March 2026, with each partner coordinating directly with their regional SMEs to schedule and implement the sessions in a format that best suits local needs and capacities. Following the SME training phase, SustainX will launch a virtual peer learning and training series between April and May 2026. This interregional component will



consist of five virtual training sessions, each hosted by a different consortium partner. Topics will include sustainability, innovation management, digital tools and business model innovation, among others. These sessions will be complemented by peer learning events where SMEs will have the opportunity to share best practices, discuss challenges, and explore collaborative opportunities. Best practice SMEs will be identified during the application and training phases and will serve as peer learning champions during these sessions.

To ensure long-term impact and sustainability, SustainX will also prepare consortium partners and SMEs for the upcoming I3 open call expected in May 2026. A dedicated webinar will be held between January and March 2026 to raise awareness about the call, provide detailed guidance on the application process, and equip consortium partners to support SMEs in preparing competitive proposals. This proactive approach is intended to ensure that the SMEs supported through SustainX are well-positioned to access further EU funding and scale their innovation projects. In summary, the next steps of the SustainX project are designed to build on the momentum generated during the consortium training phase and to translate that momentum into tangible outcomes for SMEs. Through a combination of targeted training, strategic outreach, and interregional collaboration, SustainX aims to strengthen regional innovation ecosystems, foster sustainable growth, and contribute to the broader objectives of the European Union’s innovation and cohesion policies.

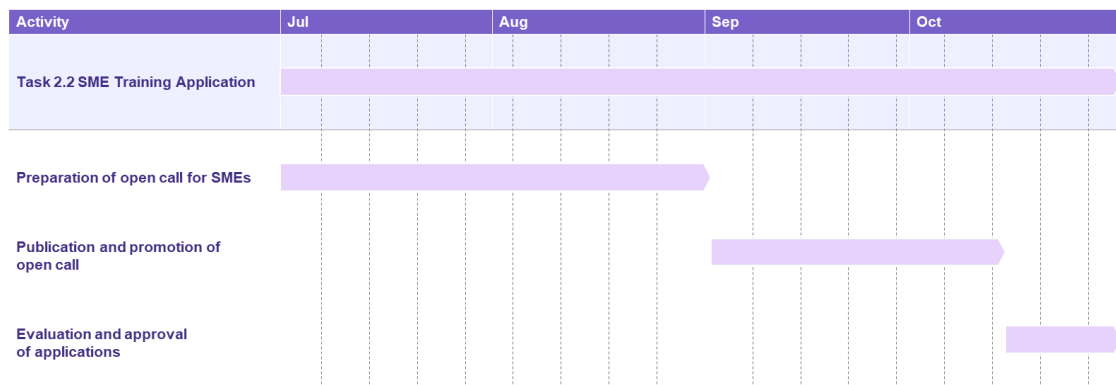


Figure 53 SME Training Application Open Call

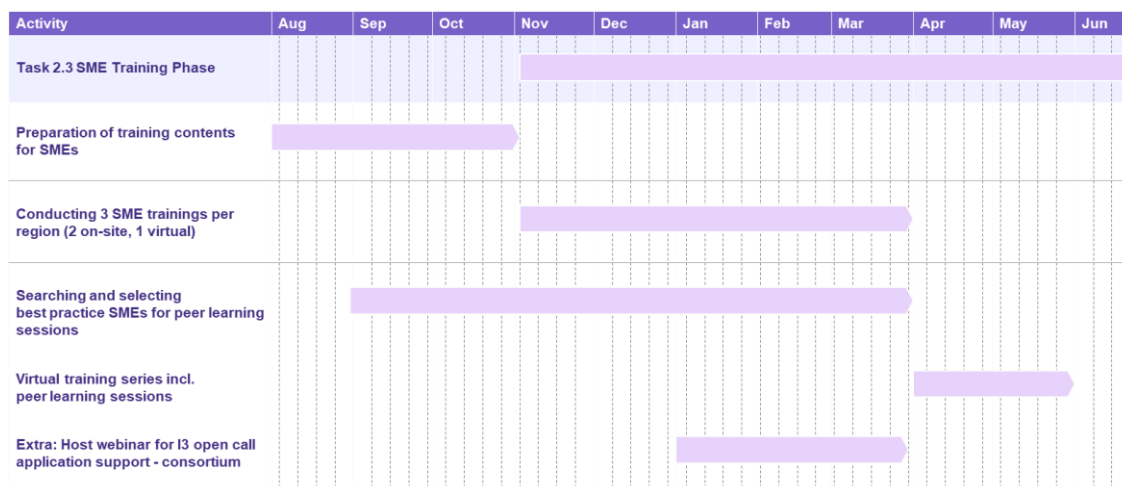


Figure 54 SME Training Planning 2026

Appendix

Event Report Exports on Consortium Trainings

Event Title	Date(s)	Location	Organising Partner	Event Type	What was the event about?	Who attended? (number & type)	What were the key highlights or results?	Did you use the sustainability checklist?	Roughly what % of sustainability actions were implemented?
Consortium Training ARC FUND	17.06.2025	Sofia, Bulgaria	ARC FUND	Training	Open Innovation, Action Plan Development and Sustainability	3 in person and 2 online, all colleagues from ARC FUND	As a small group we shared lively discussions and were very efficient in the timing as well as in brainstorming throughout the training	Yes	70-85%
Consortium Training Fundacion Santa Cruz Sostenible	12.06.2025	Santa Cruz, Tenerife	Fundacion Santa Cruz Sostenible	Training	Innovation Life Cycle Management Processes, IMP ² ROVE benchmarking tools and action plan development	10 participants from the University of Laguna, Cluster Maritimo Canarias, Cluster Excelencia Tecnologica and Fundacion Santa Cruz Sostenible	Discussions were very vivid as participants came from different backgrounds. We discussed the different meanings of innovation as well as innovation life cycle and the IMP ² ROVE benchmarking tools	Yes	70-85%



Event Title	Date(s)	Location	Organising Partner	Event Type	What was the event about?	Who attended? (number & type)	What were the key highlights or results?	Did you use the sustainability checklist?	Roughly what % of sustainability actions were implemented?
Consortium Training Latvian Technology Center	21.05.2025	Riga, Latvia	LTC	Training	Sustainability-driven Innovation Management & Action Plan Development & Sustainability:	10 participants attended. 1 participant joint online, the remaining 9 participated in-person.	The key results of the training is to a) increase the knowledge of all participants regarding sustainability, b) their skill level to assess sustainability as an innovation lever with a measurable approach and c) to formulate a clearly structured action plan to create impact.	Yes	70–85%
Consortium Training Institute of Entrepreneurship Development	13.05.2025	Larisa, Greece	iED	Training	Business Advisor Skills and Action Plan Development	10 participants and everyone participated in-person.	Key results were individual take-aways for all participants, realizing that business advisor skills start from a homogeneous set of possibilities, but include topic, industry and character details that are different for everyone.	Yes	85%
Consortium Training Digital Innovation Zone + Technical University Iasi	4.29.2025	Iasi, Romania	DIZ & TUASI	Training	Innovation Strategy Development and Sustainability	18 participants in total. All participants received/ contributed to the training in-person.	The main learning of this training was the fact that innovation strategy as a topic does not only support the client work and might lead to potential new offerings, but also that innovation strategy development could potentially help DIZ/ TUASI to work on internal aspects as well, to improve one's own positioning in the innovation ecosystem.	Yes	70–85%



Figure 55 DIZ/TUIASI Training

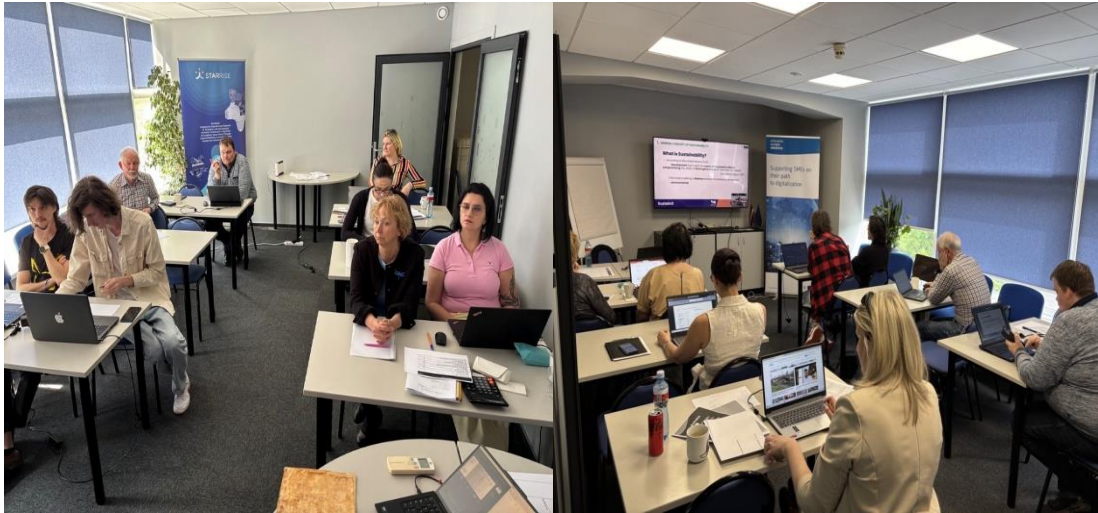


Figure 56 LTC Training



Figure 57 iED Training



Figure 58 ARC FUND Training



Figure 59 Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible Training

Sustainability Event Checklist

Sustainability Checklist DIZ/TUIASI

Type Measure	Priority	Action	Done (x)	
Environmental Measures				
1	PI	Encouragement of sustainable transportation for the event	x	
1	PI	Election of accessible locations for the event	x	Type of Measures:
1	PI	Compostable packaging	-	1. Reducing the project's environmental footprint



Type Measure	Priority	Action	Done (x)	
1	P1	Minimal Packaging	x	2. Promotion of diversity and social inclusion
1	P1	Avoidance of Plastic	x	3. Promoting innovative and sustainable business models
1	P1	Provision of vegetarian/vegan food options	x	
1	P1	Avoid printing brochures and materials	x	Priorities to implement the Sustainable Measures:
1	P1	Ensure proper waste disposal	x	P1 - Priority measures with easy implementation
1	P1	Donate leftovers to local charities or organizations	-	P2- Alternative and voluntary measures as a complement
1	P1	Use second-hand or recycled materials for event decorations and furniture	-	
1	P1	Favor vendors with environmental certifications	-	
1	P1	Promote sustainable practices among participants	x	
1	P2	Organic food supply*	x	
1	P2	Local food supply*	x	
1	P2	Use eco-friendly spaces*	x	
Social Measures				
2	P1	Incorporation of underrepresented groups in the event	-	
2	P1	Foster of dialogue and participation	x	
2	P2	Inclusion of social stakeholders to give their insights*	x	Level of Implementation:
		* Voluntary measures		>70 % - Good
TOTAL Number of Actions			13	>85% - Very Good
TOTAL Number of Actions (%)			72,22	100 % - Outstanding!

Table 1 Sustainability Checklist DIZ/TUIASI

Sustainability Checklist LTC

Type Measure	Priority	Action	Done (x)	
Environmental Measures				
1	P1	Encouragement of sustainable transportation for the event	x	
1	P1	Election of accessible locations for the event	x	Type of Measures:
1	P1	Compostable packaging	x	1. Reducing the project's environmental footprint
1	P1	Minimal Packaging	x	2. Promotion of diversity and social inclusion



Type Measure	Priority	Action	Done (x)	
1	P1	Avoidance of Plastic	x	3. Promoting innovative and sustainable business models
1	P1	Provision of vegetarian/vegan food options		
1	P1	Avoid printing brochures and materials	x	Priorities to implement the Sustainable Measures:
1	P1	Ensure proper waste disposal	x	P1 - Priority measures with easy implementation
1	P1	Donate leftovers to local charities or organizations		P2- Alternative and voluntary measures as a complement
1	P1	Use second-hand or recycled materials for event decorations and furniture	x	
1	P1	Favor vendors with environmental certifications	x	
1	P1	Promote sustainable practices among participants	x	
1	P2	Organic food supply*	x	
1	P2	Local food supply*	x	
1	P2	Use eco-friendly spaces*	x	
Social Measures				
2	P1	Incorporation of underrepresented groups in the event		
2	P1	Foster of dialogue and participation	x	
2	P2	Inclusion of social stakeholders to give their insights*		Level of Implementation:
		* Voluntary measures		>70 % - Good
TOTAL Number of Actions			14	>85% - Very Good
TOTAL Number of Actions (%)			77.7777778	100 % - Outstanding!

Table 2 Sustainability Checklist LTC

Sustainability Checklist iED

Type Measure	Priority	Action	Done (x)	
Environmental Measures				
1	P1	Encouragement of sustainable transportation for the event	x	
1	P1	Election of accessible locations for the event	x	Type of Measures:
1	P1	Compostable packaging	x	1. Reducing the project's environmental footprint
1	P1	Minimal Packaging	x	2. Promotion of diversity and social inclusion
1	P1	Avoidance of Plastic	x	3. Promoting innovative and sustainable business models



Type Measure	Priority	Action	Done (x)	
1	P1	Provision of vegetarian/vegan food options	x	
1	P1	Avoid printing brochures and materials	x	Priorities to implement the Sustainable Measures:
1	P1	Ensure proper waste disposal	x	
1	P1	Donate leftovers to local charities or organizations	x	P1 – Priority measures with easy implementation
1	P1	Use second-hand or recycled materials for event decorations and furniture		P2– Alternative and voluntary measures as a complement
1	P1	Favor vendors with environmental certifications	x	
1	P1	Promote sustainable practices among participants	x	
1	P2	Organic food supply*	x	
1	P2	Local food supply*	x	
1	P2	Use eco-friendly spaces*	x	
Social Measures				
2	P1	Incorporation of underrepresented groups in the event	x	
2	P1	Foster of dialogue and participation	x	
2	P2	Inclusion of social stakeholders to give their insights*		Level of Implementation:
		* Voluntary measures		>70 % - Good
TOTAL Number of Actions			16	>85% - Very Good
TOTAL Number of Actions (%)			88.88888889	100 % - Outstanding!

Table 3 Sustainability Checklist iED

Sustainability Checklist ARC FUND

Type Measure	Priority	Action	Done (x)	
Environmental Measures				
1	P1	Encouragement of sustainable transportation for the event		
1	P1	Election of accessible locations for the event	x	Type of Measures:
1	P1	Compostable packaging	x	
1	P1	Minimal Packaging	x	1. Reducing the project's environmental footprint
1	P1	Avoidance of Plastic	x	2. Promotion of diversity and social inclusion
1	P1	Provision of vegetarian/vegan food options	x	3. Promoting innovative and sustainable business models



Type Measure	Priority	Action	Done (x)	
1	P1	Avoid printing brochures and materials	x	Priorities to implement the Sustainable Measures: P1 - Priority measures with easy implementation P2- Alternative and voluntary measures as a complement
1	P1	Ensure proper waste disposal	x	
1	P1	Donate leftovers to local charities or organizations	x	
1	P1	Use second-hand or recycled materials for event decorations and furniture		
1	P1	Favor vendors with environmental certifications	x	
1	P1	Promote sustainable practices among participants		
1	P2	Organic food supply*	x	
1	P2	Local food supply*	x	
1	P2	Use eco-friendly spaces*	x	
Social Measures				
2	P1	Incorporation of underrepresented groups in the event		
2	P1	Foster of dialogue and participation	x	
2	P2	Inclusion of social stakeholders to give their insights*		Level of Implementation:
		* Voluntary measures		>70 % - Good
TOTAL Number of Actions			13	>85% - Very Good
TOTAL Number of Actions (%)			72.22222222	100 % - Outstanding!

Table 4 Sustainability Checklist ARC FUND

Sustainability Checklist Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible

Type Measure	Priority	Action	Done (x)	
Environmental Measures				
1	P1	Encouragement of sustainable transportation for the event	x	
1	P1	Election of accessible locations for the event	x	Type of Measures:
1	P1	Compostable packaging	-	1. Reducing the project's environmental footprint
1	P1	Minimal Packaging	x	2. Promotion of diversity and social inclusion
1	P1	Avoidance of Plastic	x	3. Promoting innovative and sustainable business models
1	P1	Provision of vegetarian/vegan food options	x	
1	P1	Avoid printing brochures and materials	x	Priorities to implement the Sustainable Measures:
1	P1	Ensure proper waste disposal	x	P1 - Priority measures with easy implementation



Type Measure	Priority	Action	Done (x)	
1	P1	Donate leftovers to local charities or organizations	-	P2- Alternative and voluntary measures as a complement
1	P1	Use second-hand or recycled materials for event decorations and furniture	x	
1	P1	Favor vendors with environmental certifications	-	
1	P1	Promote sustainable practices among participants	x	
1	P2	Organic food supply*	x	
1	P2	Local food supply*	x	
1	P2	Use eco-friendly spaces*	x	
Social Measures				
2	P1	Incorporation of underrepresented groups in the event	-	
2	P1	Foster of dialogue and participation	x	
2	P2	Inclusion of social stakeholders to give their insights*	-	Level of Implementation:
		* Voluntary measures		>70 % - Good
TOTAL Number of Actions			13	>85% - Very Good
TOTAL Number of Actions (%)			72,22	100 % - Outstanding!

Table 5 Sustainability Checklist Fundación Santa Cruz Sostenible

SustainX



<https://sustainx.digital-innovation.zone/>

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