



UNDERGROUND4VALUE

Evaluation of First Underground4value Training School

1. Introduction

Underground4value Training School was an intensive programme in Underground Built Heritage (UBH) valorisation, based at Castel dell'Ovo, Naples, Italy, and managed by the Institute for Studies on the Mediterranean – National Research Council of Italy. The Programme funded by the European Commission in the framework programme of the COST Association lasted a total of six days and included 30 graduated trainees from 12 countries across Europe and Turkey. All trainees who completed the programme received an attendance certificate.

The programme consisted of lectures in the mornings, managed experts and professors, members of the COST Action CA18110, with relevant multi-disciplinary competencies, and research teamwork modules tutored by six researchers with at least a UBH living lab experience, which produced six research posters benefitting of a range of trainee's skills.

Underground4value Training School allowed trainees, trainers, tutors, professors, and other professionals to work alongside each other, express their opinions and either share or gain more knowledge relating to underground built heritage, conservation technics, valorisation strategies, and planning and participation tools. The diverse range of people from multiple European countries, both eastern and western meant that there was a vast range of culture differences, not just on a personal basis but also in their knowledge, opinions, and ways of teaching. At the end of the programme, trainees and trainers completed two online surveys, and from these we are able to see the positive and negative aspects of the programme. Through these surveys, we can draw an overall conclusion and give recommendations to the organisers of the next U4V Training School.

2. Trainees participation

The training school was open to all COST member states that confirmed the participation to the COST action CA18110 at the time of the call deadline. On 28 MS, 38 candidates from 14 MS applied, and finally 30 candidates from 12 MS were selected. The most represented MS is the host country, with eight trainees (27%), followed by Turkey (six trainees, 20%), Spain (14%), Malta (10%), and Serbia (7%). Each of the other seven MS (AL, AU, BA, CY, IL, SI, and UK) were represented by one trainee. Inclusiveness Target Countries (ITCs) were 58,3% and ITC trainees 50% of the total. The Early Career Investigators (ECIs) represent 20% of all trainees. In terms of gender balance, trainees were most women (66,7%).

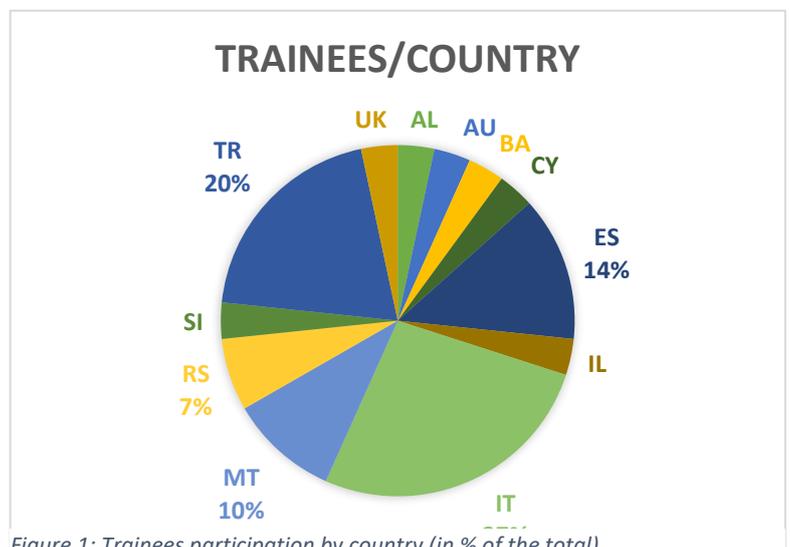


Figure 1: Trainees participation by country (in % of the total)

3. Training school evaluation: the trainees' assessment

3.1 Lectures

The lecture programme was split into day blocks. Each morning contained lectures from professors, researchers and experts, each lecture lasted approximately 45 min, which included the time taken for trainees to ask questions relevant to the topic. On average, there were four lectures per each day. Each day was based on a different topic within the underground built heritage valorisation theme. The order of topics was as follows:

- Case Studies Storytelling: The first 4 experiences (Day 1)
- Developing and managing a Knowledge base on UBH (Day 2)
- Technologies for UBH conservation and monitoring (Day 3)
- Strategies for UBH reuse and valorisation (Day 4)
- UBH Planning approaches (Day 5)

At the end of the training school, we asked to the trainees to fill an online questionnaire, based on ten questions. 25 trainees on 30 answered to it.

The first question In order to rate the level of their satisfaction per day-lectures, trainees answered to the question “How would you rate the overall quality of the lectures by day?”, using a five point scale, 1 being very poor and 5 being very good.

In general, the overall average rating of the five days was definitely positive, as shown in Fig. 2, with a minimum in Day 3 (4.17, little more than good) and a maximum in Day 5 (4.54).

The responses have shown that Day 5: UBH Planning approaches (Fig.) has the highest percentage of trainees giving a rating of ‘very good’ at 58.33%, followed by ‘good’ at 37.50%, in comparison con Day 3: Technologies for UBH conservation and monitoring, with ‘very good’ at 34.78, and a slight increase with ‘good’ at 47.83%. Day 1 was the only day to have a rating of ‘poor’ at 4.17%, which is however no cause for concern as it is equivalent to one trainee view from a total of 25.

In particular, it is not clear if differences between days depend on the topic (which could demand for a change) or on the driving effect of some key presentations. However, ‘Which lecture/topic did you enjoy best? Why?’ had multiple responses (14 lectures were mentioned) and Day 3 had three lectures, more than Day 2 (two lectures), although this last got a better weighted average, because of “New Museology and Design Thinking methodology” by Tony Cassar, which follows closely behind the most voted lectures by C. Smaniotto and G. Pace. This indicates that the lower rating of lectures on Day 3 was due to individual lectures, not the general topic of ‘Technologies for UBH conservation and monitoring’.

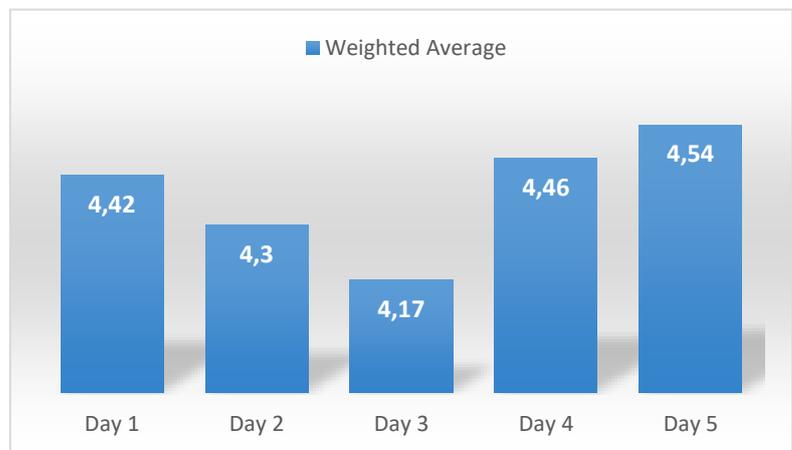


Figure 2: How would you rate the overall quality of the lectures by day?

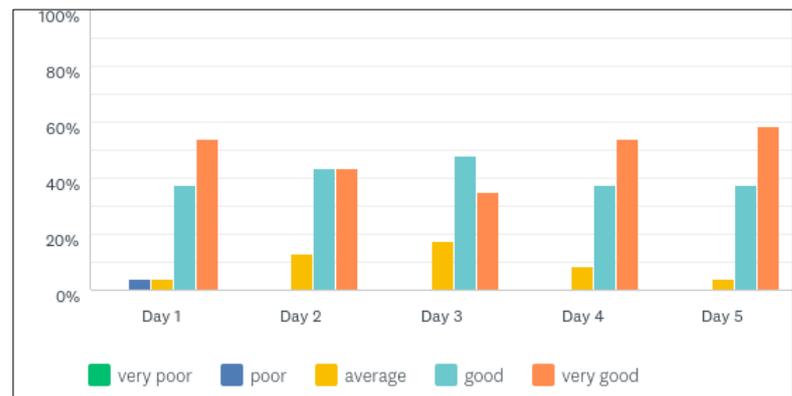


Figure 3: How would you rate the lectures by day?

methodologies many topics breaks Maybe approaches good
 improve lectures together lecturers UBH time groups
 working suggest

Trainee responses to ‘How could we improve the lectures in 2021?’ are shown with a word cloud in Figure 4. Over 4/5ths of the trainees thought that lectures more focused on UBH would be an improvement, and that maybe it would be better to

Figure 4: How could we improve the lectures in 2021

have less lectures and more time for working together.

3.2 Research Groups

During the afternoons, trainees worked in organised groups with given tutors. Each group consisted of five trainees, selected taking into account different countries, gender, and competencies. Each were given a different topic of research. The aim of the research project was not only to gain, share and develop the trainees own knowledge, but to build upon their own skills, with activities involving team work and communication.

Figure 5 shows that working on research projects was very welcomed by trainees, which voted to ‘How would you rate the quality of the research groups?’ in a positive way (36% ‘good’ and 48% very good). A further 16% still had a ‘neutral’ response.

The trainees’ satisfaction of the research experience is demonstrated also by their answers to ‘Should there be more time allocated for research groups?’, with a 64% positive and very positive, and only 4% (one respondent) very negative.

Trainees gave a very positive response to the question ‘Were you happy with the support received from the tutor?’. Figure 6 shows there was 92% of trainees who responded with ‘satisfied’ or ‘very satisfied’, and only 4% (one respondent) was ‘very dissatisfied’.

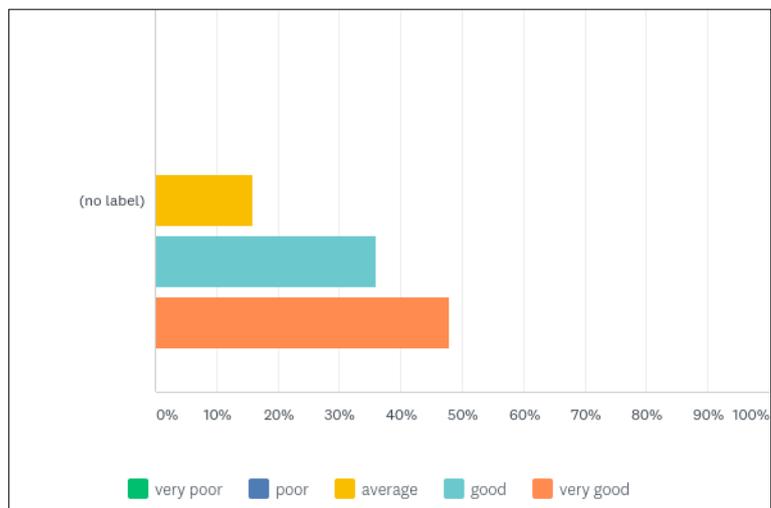


Figure 5 How would you rate the quality of the research groups?

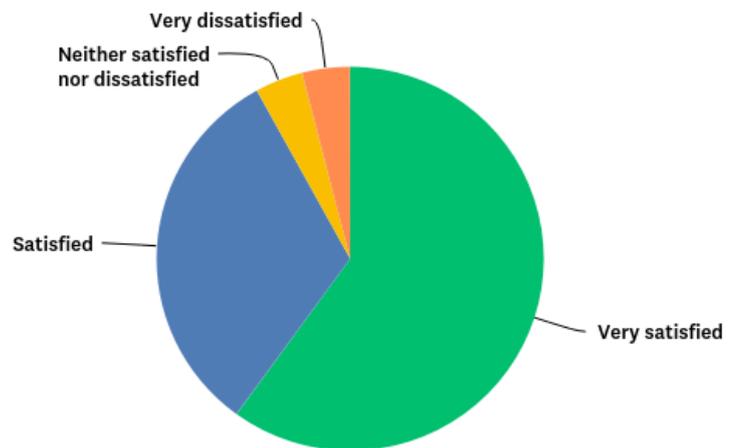


Figure 6: Were you happy with the support received from the tutor?

3.3 Trainees outcome

Trainees were asked ‘How would you judge general and personal learning outcomes of the TS?’ Figure 7 shows that 72% of them responded with ‘extremely valuable’ and ‘very valuable’, and a further 28% with ‘somewhat valuable’. Considering the difficulties due to the challenge, producing a poster of ideas in five afternoons, and some concern about it expressed by the trainees, such as ‘more time needed for project’ and ‘very ambitious outcomes for just one week’.

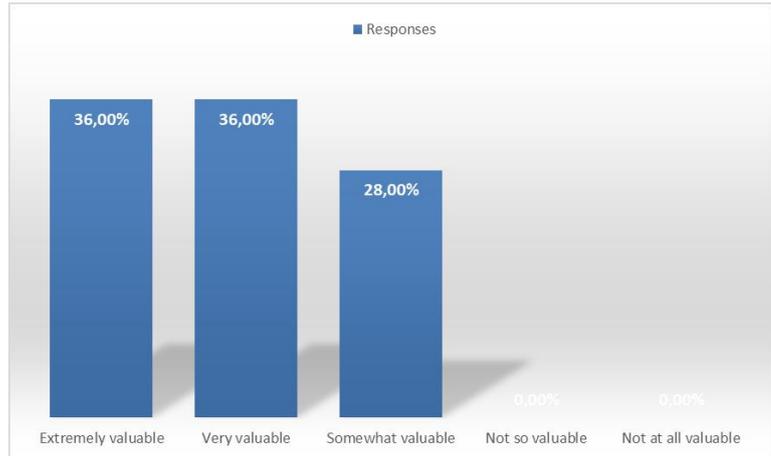


Figure 7: How would you judge general and personal learning outcomes of the TS?

4. Organisation and infrastructure

Trainees were asked ‘Would more social events be an improvement to the programme?’ and Figure 8 shows that 92% responded ‘definitely would’ and ‘probably would’. Only two of them (8%) answered ‘probably would not’. This so concordant judgement has not any need to be explained, the only problem is how to reduce working time for improving social event, and how to find budgetary resources from the host institution or the COST programme. The integration of more social programmes within the programme would most likely have a beneficial outcome, as it would allow trainees from different countries to interact more outside of the learning environment. A few trainees commented about how the TS ‘was often too intense’ and therefore allowing social events could allow the academic aspect of the school to be more enjoyable as it would be broken up slightly. Finally, the choice of a fascinating castle on the sea, missing many basic facilities and definitely cold, was not a successful choice, according for the trainees. Figure 9 shows that 44% of them answered negatively to ‘How do you judge location and facilities?’, 24% were neutral and 36% positive. However, many comments pointed out on the need of more comfortable places.

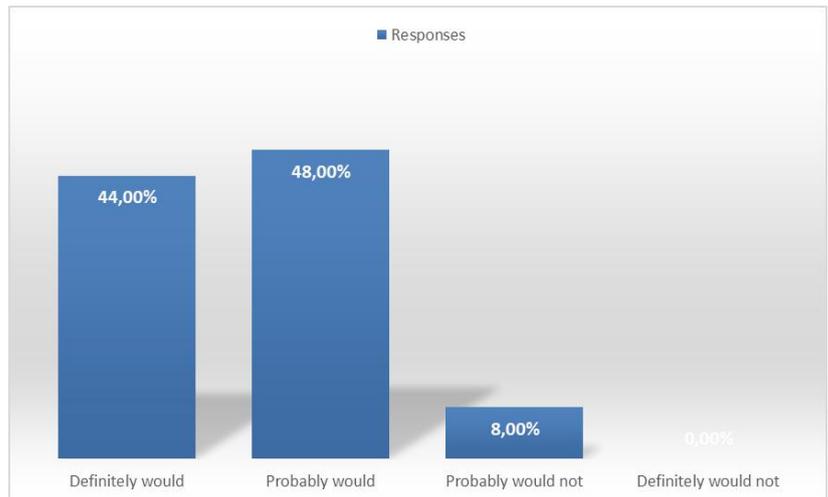


Figure 8: Would more social events be an improvement to the programme?

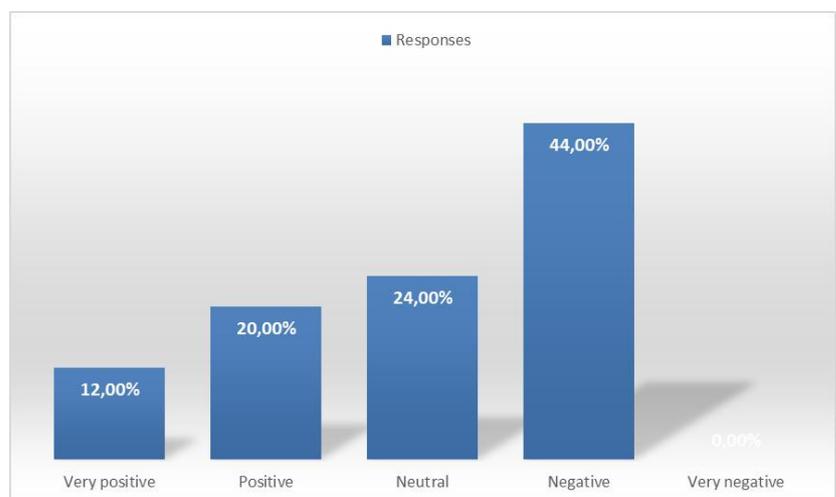


Figure 9: How do you judge location and facilities?

5. Trainees recommendations

In terms of lectures, some trainees pointed out a need for structuring the lectures in a more proactive and topic-oriented way, and providing methodological and technical tools for dealing with the on-field research. In particular, it would be better to move planning lectures at the first day “to make people from other disciplines grasping the general topic more”. Similarly, others suggest to “start the training school with the presentation of the project structure and introducing the Short Term Scientific Mission tool, and giving a special focus “on living labs experiences to provide trainees with methodological tools for their research on field”. In order to optimise the TS time, it would be better to provide the documentation to trainees at least one week before the school starts.

Whilst participating in the research groups, one trainees’ concern is about ensuring a certain homogeneity among and within research teams. It would be important to have more time for improving the outcome, and getting critics from tutors of all groups. I would also like to hear other groups present their work so that we would all have better opportunities to learn from each other. The trainees would like to find available some meeting supplies like colour markers, post-it notes, flipchart etc.

For the final competition, the trainees would like to present the poster, and maybe to be voted through some smart app in real time. That would definitely increase the level of competition between trainees. However, presentation of research posters would definitely become a social event, as an actual exhibition, possibly with drinks, etc.

The study facility was a major concern for many trainees as they complained that it was ‘too cold’ and ‘not very comfortable’. Castel dell’Ovo was a magnificent place but it was too cold inside, and many complained about services, internet, and some about food location. In addition, some trainees pointed out on the interference of COST action meeting with the TS, which in fact will become from the next period two separate events, organised in two different periods.

Finally, for the trainees more social events should be organised “to get to know better the all participants” and more time for touristic tours would be interesting, also for deepening the knowledge about local underground built heritage.

Trainees’ responses to ‘Recommendations’ are shown with a word cloud in Figure 10.



Figure 10: Trainees recommendations