VULCA SEMINAR 2025

Comprehensive outcomes of the 8th VULCA Seminar, featuring sprint results, our 2026-2030 roadmap, and financial analysis.

REPORT

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❯ INTRODUCTION

Context & Venue

The 8th edition of the **VULCA Semina**r was held in **Ispra** at the **European Union's Joint Research Center (JRC)**, marking the association's 11th anniversary. This location was highly symbolic, acknowledging **the pioneering work** of the JRC and **Paulo Rosa's team on the Maker Movement**. Their research has highlighted how makers are reshaping education, innovation, and manufacturing, positioning the movement as a key driver for a sustainable and inclusive **European future**.

Seminar Objectives

While the Maker Movement has actively contributed to **European funding** programmes over the last decade, **many labs** still **face challenges** in accessing these opportunities. This seminar was designed to bridge that gap. The primary objective was to empower makers and networks to scale their impact by providing a comprehensive **overview of EU funding trends**. The sessions offered practical insights on how FabLabs can effectively engage with European policies and **unlock new opportunities** for growth and social progress.

⊙ EVENT OVERVIEW & ORGANIZATION

The seminar took place from **November 1st to November 6th** and was designed around a **two-part structure**. The initial phase was exclusively dedicated to VULCA members, while the second phase was open to all participants.

This distinction was a **strategic choice**: rather than being exclusive, it aimed to create a dedicated space to strengthen internal bonds and cohesion among members before opening the dialogue to the wider ecosystem.

2.1. Local Vulca Tour: Exploring a Regional Ecosystem

Visiting local makerspaces is a core pillar of the Vulca philosophy. While hosting the seminar at the JRC provided a strong connection to European institutions, it was strategic to connect participants with the diverse reality of the surrounding ecosystem.

Therefore, we organized visits to two distinct makerspaces deeply involved in European projects: **We Do FabLab** (in Omegna) and **OpenDot** (in Milan). These visits were designed to illustrate the dual impact of European projects across different contexts—from a community-focused lab in a semi-rural area to a professional hub in a major metropolitan city.

Visit of We Do FabLab (Omegna)

This visit was the first maker activity of the seminar, setting the tone for the event by welcoming participants into a well-equipped makerspace located within a school and supported by a large group of volunteers.

The session began with a comprehensive presentation of the lab's initiatives, outlining We Do FabLab's approach to innovation through three key stages:

- **Institutional Framework:** We Do FabLab was introduced as a hub for open innovation. Inside a school, the foundation focuses on participatory design and digital inclusion.
- **Proposal Development (PNRR Case):** The session analyzed the "Virtual Lab" bid to illustrate how to align grant proposals with social inclusion goals. It highlighted how the lab can leverage "digital transition" funding to engage under-represented groups often absent from makerspaces. By developing remote machine control systems and interactive virtual tours, the project successfully removed physical barriers, ensuring accessibility for people with disabilities and remote communities.
- **Program Implementation (FISH Project):** The final section demonstrated how to translate EU proposals into active programs. Using the Erasmus+ FISH project, the speakers showed how to design hands-on activities that align with strategic goals, specifically combining aquaponics with IoT environmental monitoring.

Following the presentation, participants were given a guided tour of the facilities to see how these concepts are applied in a daily makerspace environment.

Finally, to foster active participation, we co-organized four specific workshops with the local team:

- **Technical Workshops:** Participants engaged in a Weather Station build and an Introduction to Bio-materials, illustrating the lab's technical capabilities.
- **Vulca Strategic Sessions:** Two key discussions were held regarding the future of our network: one dedicated to defining our **Code of Conduct** and another debating the **specificities of individuals** within the ecosystem.

Visit of OpenDot (Milan)

We concluded our seminar with a visit to OpenDot, offering a distinct contrast to the volunteer-led model seen earlier. Here, participants explored a professional makerspace model, structured as a foundation with a dedicated staff focused on high-level design and European cooperation.

The visit kicked off with a guided tour of the space. This allowed participants to observe how a professional-grade lab is organized to balance daily prototyping needs with complex, long-term research projects.

Following the tour, the team delivered an in-depth presentation on managing their dual identity as a creative hub and a project partner. They detailed their approach through three key areas:

- **Institutional Identity:** OpenDot was introduced as a foundation supporting innovation through participatory design, open-source technologies, and active community involvement.

- **Proposal Development Strategy:** The team shared their internal methodology for EU calls, outlining the writing process, main challenges, and the specific "tips and tricks" they have learned over time to secure funding.
- **From Proposal to Program:** They explored the practical side of "translating" abstract proposals into concrete, long-term programs. Two case studies were detailed: Making Fashion Last (focused on durability in the fashion sector) and SeWith (co-design in Fashion and Disability), illustrating how they align projects with their core mission.

To close the session, the floor was opened for a Q&A and networking session. This exchange allowed participants to discuss directly with the OpenDot team, gaining valuable insights into the operational reality of a makerspace relying on a dedicated team and large-scale European grants.

2.2. Fast Talks

2.2.1. Fadia Elgharib | Make-a-thek: Libraries as Hubs for Circular Creativity

"make-a-thek" is a 2025-2028 EU project that reimagines libraries as community hubs for creativity and sustainability against fast fashion. It connects European libraries to promote circular craft practices (like repair and reuse) through workshops and open courses. A key feature is the 2026 launch of a mobile makerspace bus to bring circular innovation to rural areas.

2.2.2. Remy Ducros | "Communs d'Urgence": Citizen Infrastructure for Resilience

"Communs d'Urgence" is a project by RFFLabs, supported by the Fondation de France, that establishes fablabs as citizen infrastructures for crisis resilience. Building on the collective response seen during the COVID-19 pandemic, it works to preserve this knowledge and develop shared tools. The project aims to strengthen local territories against future crises, from climate events to social vulnerabilities.

2.2.3. Roberto Vdović | Adriatic resilience

Adriatic GreenLab is an initiative dedicated to transforming remote islands and rural communities into self-sustainable hubs of creativity. By connecting makers, scientists, and locals through summer camps and collaborative workshops, the project utilizes digital fabrication and circular economy principles to develop concrete, replicable solutions for specific local challenges.

2.2.4. Nicolas deBarquin | Building the Network's Brain: Using AI and Graph Databases to Forge Collective Intelligence

This fast talk addressed the challenge encountered during a recent Erasmus+ grant application, which was rejected due to an administrative "red flag" concerning the lack of a formal employee structure. The presentation highlighted how this "secret intel" about failures often remains siloed in private inboxes , preventing the Open source community of FabLabs (like Openfab in Brussels) from achieving shared memory and collective learning.

The proposed solution involves developing a personal data vault utilizing a graph database and AI as a form of "super-advanced documentation". The AI helps extract key evidences from notes and manage privacy rules during the data ingestion phase.

The ultimate vision is a shared commons space where peers can contribute their successes and failures, effectively becoming a "network's brain, updated by everyone". This collective intelligence would allow users to find immediate solutions to administrative obstacles, greatly enhancing the resilience of the community.

2.2.5. Rafael Calado | How to "Contaminate" Your Lab:

Discover how to bring biology into your makerspace! This fast talk introduces the idea of creating small "bio corners" for experimenting with biomaterials. BioLab Lisboa invites European labs to join a growing network of bio-curious makers and share open-source tools, knowledge, and inspiration for sustainable innovation.

2.2.6. Gülbahar Coşkun | Bridging Disciplines - Integrating Design Practices and Digital Fabrication Across Fields

As a FabLab within the university, we collaborate with different departments such as gastronomy, business, engineering, and design. I would like to share experiences in this field and discuss potential new collaborations. I am writing my thesis on the integration of design practices and digital fabrication tools into applied sciences. I would like to include my research and academic papers in this presentation. I would like to hold a workshop following this presentation, I will make another application for workshop.

2.2.7. Delia | Vulca Seminar 2026

Scheduled for November 9–13, the 2026 Vulca Seminar proposes a hybrid format designed to balance community engagement with professional growth. The week is structured around two key dynamics: an initial phase dedicated to open discovery, networking, and internal collaboration, followed by a professional focus on structured workshops and upskilling. This versatile framework allows for the integration of specialized resources, such as a mobile fablab, to support both interactive demonstrations and technical training.

2.3. Vulca moment

2.3.1. General assembly

Date and Venue: November 3, 2025, at 10:30 AM (Ispra, Italy / Manzat, France / Videoconference). Participation: Quorum was reached with 26 voters out of 46 members (representing the Individuals, Makerspaces, and Networks colleges).

Agenda and Deliberations: Presided over by Alexandre Rousselet and under the supervision of Roberto Vdović, the Assembly adopted the following resolutions:
1. Approval of the 2024-2025 Moral Report: Adopted (Near unanimity with 1 abstention).
2. Approval of the 2024-2025 Financial Report: Adopted unanimously.

Governance: As no terms of office were expiring this year, the Board composition remains unchanged for the coming year:
- President: Alexandre Rousselet (Individual College)
- Secretary: Roberto Vdović (Makerspace College - FabLab HR Croatia)
- Treasurer: Remy Ducros (Network College - RFFLabs)
- Board Members: José Peralta Guerrero (Individual College) and Uroš Topić (Makerspace College - Center Rog Slovenia).

Adjournment: The session was adjourned at 11:33 AM.

2.3.2. VULCA FUTURE: A Collective Vision from our Members

This session was designed as a collaborative brainstorming exercise to envision the trajectory of the association over the next five years (2026–2030). The following points summarize the ideas, aspirations, and reflections shared by the working groups. They represent the collective voice of the participants and their desires for the future of VULCA.

A Phased Timeline of Aspirations
Participants projected their vision across three key milestones, emphasizing a progressive evolution of the network's activities:

- **In the Short Term (1 Year - 2026):** The priority expressed is to maintain the "friendly feeling" and human connection. Members suggested instituting monthly virtual meetups and informal "Makers Trips" on weekends to keep the bond alive between physical events. There is also a strong desire for VULCA to apply for KA1 funding to support individual mobility immediately and become lead for ESC.
- **In the Medium Term (3 Years - 2028):** Several groups proposed the creation of a "Spring Seminar" dedicated to the Board, staff, and core active members (potentially co-financed by KA1-ADU). This period could also see the launch of online "Policy Clinics" organized by EU sectors to professionalize the network's advocacy.
- **In the Long Term (5 Years - 2030):** The vision for 2030 includes a standardized routine: one main Physical VULCA Seminar, one specialized Spring Seminar, and regular online clinics.

Preserving the "Family Spirit" vs. Critical Mass
A central theme of the discussions was the balance between growth and intimacy.

- The "Critical Mass" Concern: Groups identified a potential tipping point at around 250 members. Participants expressed a strong wish to establish new rules or structures before reaching this size to avoid becoming an impersonal institution.

- **The "Safe Place":** Members envisioned VULCA as a nurturing ecosystem for emerging national networks, acting as a bridge to established ones like RFFLabs
- **Human Connection First:** To protect the network's DNA, participants suggested creating smaller thematic groups and a Platform for Residencies to help individuals find allies and projects within the larger network.

Ideas for Funding & Project Positioning

The working groups reflected on how VULCA should navigate European funding landscapes:

- **Diversification:** Beyond Erasmus+ (KA1 for mobility, KA2 for partnerships), members encouraged VULCA to explore the C.E.R.V program (Democracy in Makerspaces) and Creative Europe.
- **Strategic Roles:** Participants suggested that VULCA should position itself as a leader in Work Packages (WP) related to Cascade Funding, Advocacy, and Community Management.
- **Opening Up:** There was a consensus that KA2 partnerships should ideally include non-members, allowing VULCA to expand its scope beyond its immediate circle.

Sectoral Expansion & Storytelling

Finally, members highlighted the need to clarify VULCA's external image and reach:

- **Clearer Narrative:** Groups noted that terms like "Clubs" can be confusing for institutions or any external contact person. They recommended a clearer presentation of the network's composition (Makerspaces, Networks, Individuals).
- **New Horizons:** A bold idea emerged to create specific "VULCA Branches" to address key sectors such as Health, Education, and Culture, and even to approach humanitarian organizations (like the Red Cross).
- **Standardization Tools:** To support this professionalization, members expressed a need for shared tools such as OpenBadges, standardized welcome procedures, and automated resource mapping.

2.4. Vulca Sprint

During the sprint, participants divided into working groups to draft concrete project proposals based on shared needs and complementary expertise. Below is a summary of the 7 concepts developed:

2.4.1.Emergency Commons (KA220)
- **Focus:** Crisis Resilience & Civic Engagement.
- **Concept:** Addressing the lack of preparedness in makerspaces during crises. The project aims to train FabLab managers and co-develop an "Emergency Toolkit" (serious games, mobile units, communication protocols) to empower citizens and support civil protection.
- **Consortium:** RFFLabs (FR), Center Rog (SI), GIG (Intl).

2.4.2. Active Aging (KA210)
- **Focus:** Social Inclusion & Health.
- **Concept:** Tackling the lack of engaging activities in retirement homes. The solution involves transferring "pop-up maker" expertise to care home staff, training them in digital fabrication to offer stimulating activities for the elderly.
- **Consortium:** Digijeunes (FR), De Creatieve STEM (BE),

2.4.3. The Unicorn Project (KA210)
- **Focus:** Digital Transformation & Upskilling.
- **Concept:** Bridging the digital divide for artisans and creative entrepreneurs. The project proposes a peer-learning program to modernize traditional businesses through digital skills and social inclusion techniques.
- **Consortium:** LouvreLens (FR), FABO3 (FR), ROGcenter (SI)

2.4.4. Rustica Centauri (KA210)
- **Focus:** Rural Vitality & Heritage.
- **Concept:** A "symbiosis" between traditional rural crafts and digital fabrication. The project connects rural FabLabs and artisans to co-develop open-source tools and hybrid techniques, preserving heritage while fostering innovation.
- **Consortium:** FarmLab (AT), Fablab Cuenca (ES), SynFablab (GR)

2.4.5. SPARC (KA210)
- **Focus:** Green Skills & Circular Economy.
- **Concept:** Professionalizing volunteer-led repair communities. The project addresses the lack of pedagogical training and spare parts management. It includes "Train-the-trainer" programs on 3D scanning for repair and piloting the "OpenStock" management system.
- **Consortium:** La Machinerie (FR), University of Évora (PT), TOG Hackerspace (IE).

2.4.6. Our Precious Communities (KA210)

- **Focus:** Plastic Pollution & Community Building.
- **Concept:** Scaling up plastic recycling initiatives (Precious Plastic). The project combines FabLab Cuenca's community-building expertise with 8Fablab's educational content to create a replication guide and a gallery of hands-on recycling activities.
- **Consortium:** Fablab Cuenca (ES), 8Fablab (FR).

2.4.7. Cross-Border Bio-based Approach (KA210)

- **Focus:** Sustainability & Bio-Materials.
- **Concept:** Overcoming the lack of knowledge in setting up "Bio-Labs." The project aims to standardize safety rules, share methodologies for sustainable workshops, and create a shared "Materials Library" to broaden lab portfolios.
- **Consortium:** FarmLab (AT), Openfab (BE), BioLab Lisboa (PT).

THE SEMINAR IN NUMBER

Immediately following the seminar, a survey was distributed to all participants to ensure future editions align more closely with their evolving needs. Our goal is to maintain a "dynamic" seminar format that adapts to the diversity of our network, which spans various countries and member types (both organizations and individuals).

Below is a summary of the feedback and the organization's strategic takeaways.

3.1 Summary of Satisfaction Survey Results

Global Satisfaction & Content

Widespread Acclaim: The event received widespread acclaim, with 100% of respondents reporting being "Very satisfied" or "Extremely satisfied." Verbatims highlighted an "unmatched" quality, specifically praising the balance between **high-level professionalism** and a **warm "family feeling."** *As organizers, we identify this balance as our core strength; our goal for future editions is to continue navigating this fine line, ensuring we maintain professional delivery while preserving the community-driven spirit that defines our network.*

The KA2 Sprint (Core Program): Deemed relevant by 100% of participants, the sprint was described as a **highly valuable** training exercise that successfully transformed vague ideas into concrete action plans, despite being "**intense**" and "**mentally exhausting**." *Acknowledging that European programs are complex mechanisms, we aim to address this intensity in the future by designing progressive workshops. This will allow us to offer a more flexible pace adapted to the participants' varying levels of expertise.*

Local Vulca Tour (We Do FabLab & OpenDot): The visits were highly appreciated for their complementarity: We Do FabLab was praised for its community focus and bio-materials workshop, while OpenDot provided a valuable institutional perspective on EU projects. This confirms that the "Local Vulca Tour" is essential for anchoring the seminar in its territory. *Consequently, we intend to solidify this component as a permanent pillar of the **"Seminar Identity."***

Logistics & Rhythm

Duration and Schedule: The duration was judged "Suitable" by the majority and the rhythm "Well-balanced," though a minority found it "Too dense." *We recognize that the distinction between "members-only" and "open" moments impacted the distribution of activities, and we intend to optimize this flow in the future to ensure a smoother experience.*

Need for "Breathing Space": Several comments suggested lightening the daily schedule to allow for more informal networking or active breaks—specifically mentioning the popularity of the impromptu **"bachata" lessons**. *While specific access restrictions at the JRC limited our flexibility for active breaks this year, we are committed to integrating them into the next edition.*

Accommodation: Hotel Europa received very positive reviews regarding comfort and location. *This sentiment is shared by the organization, as we found the staff to be extremely diligent and helpful throughout the event.*

Economic Model

Pricing Policy: The core principle of "Paid for non-members / Free for members" was unanimously supported by the attendees, validating our current membership strategy.

Ticket Price : While the €150 ticket was deemed "Affordable" by the vast majority, a crucial point of vigilance was raised regarding inclusivity. While appropriate for organizations, this cost may act as a barrier for independent individuals or participants from countries with lower average incomes. *To address this in future editions, we will investigate implementing a tiered pricing structure adapted to different participant profiles.*

Towards Cuenca 2026 (Key Suggestions)

Participants shared clear, actionable ideas to shape the next edition:

- **More "Making":** There is a strong desire to reintroduce practical hands-on time—such as machine workshops and building sessions—to create a better balance with the theoretical sessions.
- **Local Anchoring:** Participants requested a stronger connection with the host city, suggesting the inclusion of local challenges or more direct interactions with citizens and the local ecosystem.
- **Onboarding:** A clear need was identified to provide better support for newcomers. For the next edition, we plan to implement a dedicated onboarding session right from the start to explain VULCA's history, tools, and values.

3.2. Analysis of the Participation

Unlike previous editions which hosted between 80 and 120 participants (ex: in Germany or Slovenia), we intentionally designed this year's event as a smaller, more intimate gathering. This decision was driven by two main factors: firstly, the **logistical complexity of accessing the JRC** venue; and secondly, **a strategic shift towards "professional empowerment."** This new framework differed from our usual, more informal programming. Limiting attendance to **33 participants** allowed us to provide dedicated attention to each attendee, although we acknowledge this may have resulted in fewer "individual" makers attending.

Attendance Overview

A total of 33 attendees participated in the seminar. The group consisted of **23 Members (70%)**, **8 Non-members (24%)** discovering the network, and **2 Partners (6%)**.

These figures differ from our usual statistics, primarily because our membership process is becoming more structured, leading people to clearly identify the value of officially joining Vulca. Furthermore, the policy for this edition—prioritizing members through a specific "Pay what you want" pricing model and exclusive member-only moments—naturally shifted the balance. Reflecting the association's current profile, the breakdown was primarily composed of Makerspace representatives **(21 participants)**, followed by Individual makers **(10 participants)** and Network representatives **(2 participants)**.
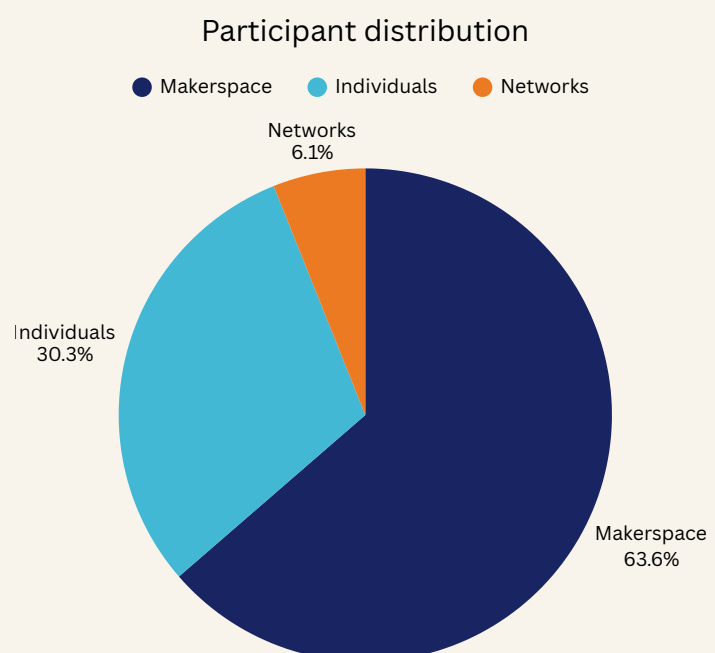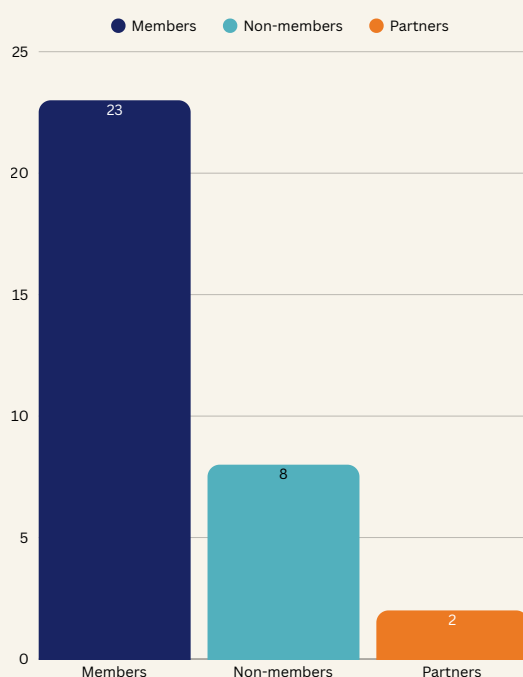
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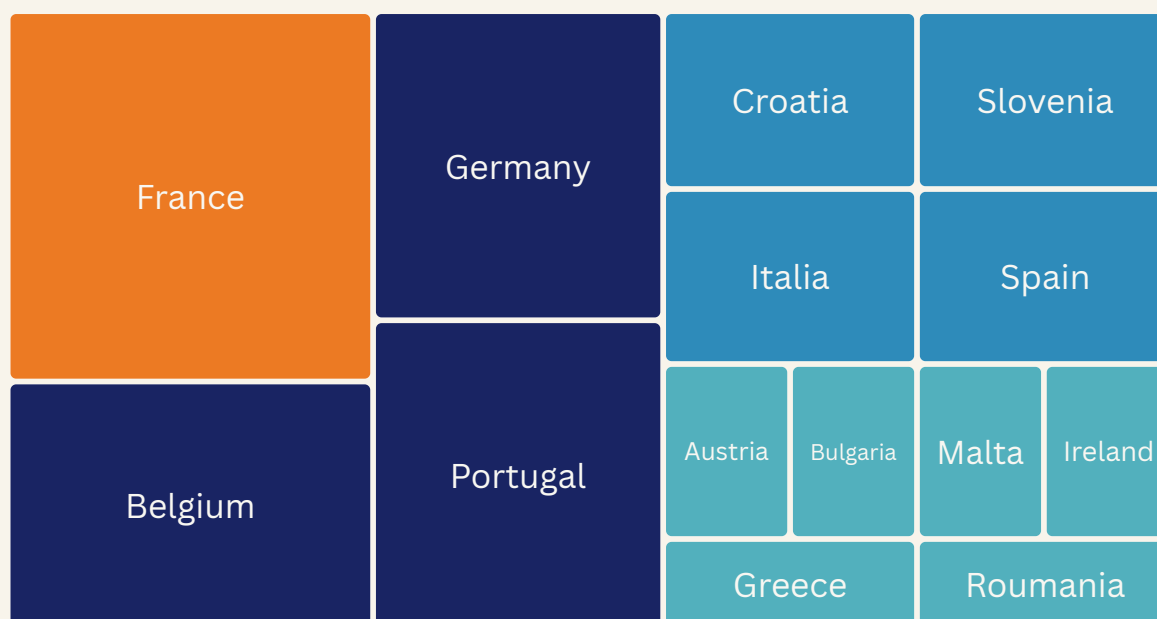
For this edition, we successfully gathered participants from 14 different countries. While the total number of attendees was lower than in previous years, we maintained a strong representation of our diverse membership.

Moving forward, our strategic goal is to increase engagement from Northern European countries, which were underrepresented in this edition. The main delegations were **France (7 members)**, **Belgium (4 members)**, and **Germany (4 members)**.

3.3 Financial summary

Budget Overview & Strategic Context

The financial management of this seminar reflects a transition towards a sustainable economic model. We closed the exercise with a positive balance **(surplus of €184.35)**, validating our ability to organize high-level European events with optimized cash flow.

It is important to note that this cash budget (€4,525.65) represents only the direct costs managed by the association. The real value of the event is significantly higher, as major logistical costs (venue rental, security, main catering) were absorbed directly by our partners (JRC & Digijeunes) as in-kind contributions. We can estimate

Category	Amount	Notes
Total Products (Income)	**€4,710.00**	Mix of Grants & Ticket Sales
Total Expenses	**€4,525.65**	Logistics & Coordination
Net Result (Surplus)	**+ €184.35**	Positive Balance

Analysis of Income (Resources)

A key achievement of this edition is the diversification of funding sources:

- **Self-Financing Capacity:** We generated €2,250 in "Sales of Services" (Ticket sales for non-members). This validates the hybrid economic model and proves the event's perceived value.
- **Operating Grants:** We secured €2,460 in operating support, covering the structural costs.

Products		Amount
70 – Sales of products and services		**€2,100.00**
706	Sales of services	€2,100.00
74 - Operating Grants		**€2,460.00**
741	Operating Support Grants	€2,460.00
TOTAL PRODUCTS EXCLUDING CVN		**€4,710.00**
Shortfall (deficit)		0
TOTAL INCLUDING CVN		**€4,710.00**

Analysis of Expenses

Expenses were focused on professionalizing the event structure while keeping logistics lean:

- **Coordination Investment (Line 6226):** The main expense (€3,000) was the freelance coordination. This was a strategic choice to manage the complex JRC protocols and ensure high-quality workshops.
- **Cost Optimization:** Logistics (Accommodation/Meals) cost only €1,175.97 thanks to the in-kind support from our partners (JRC & Digijeunes) who covered venue and catering costs directly.
- **Compliance:** Travel and accommodation reimbursements were strictly monitored to comply with the defined caps (€175 for travel, €200 for accommodation).

Expenses		Amount
62 - Other external services		**€4,525.65**
6226	Fees / external services	€3,000.00
6233	Advertising / communication	€0.00
6251	Transportation, travel reimbursements	€349.68
6257	Accommodation/meals	€1,175.97
6271	Bank maintenance fees	€0.00
6272	Bank charges	€0.00
TOTAL EXPENSES EXCLUDING CVN		**€4,525.65**
Surplus (profit)		€184.35
TOTAL INCLUDING CVN		**€4,710.00**

Financial Note

At the time of writing this report, a balance of €400 in pending invoices is currently being regularized. This does not impact the structural balance of the project.

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