ESG COMPETENCY NEEDS ANALYSIS REPORT

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Contents

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-
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Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

Introduction

This report presents the ESG Competency Needs Analysis carried out within the ESG4GLAM project. Its purpose is to establish a sound, evidence-based understanding of how galleries, libraries, archives and museums (GLAM) across Europe currently engage with Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) principles, which ESG-related competencies professionals and institutions consider most important, and where the most significant gaps between importance and current capacity lie. These findings are intended to directly inform the design of the ESG4GLAM competency framework, training course and Knowledge Box.

The scope of the analysis is deliberately broad, both geographically and methodologically. It draws on the perspectives of professionals and institutions from across the partner countries and beyond, covering all four GLAM sub-sectors, a range of organisational types, sizes and funding models, and all four ESG competency domains: cross-cutting, environmental, social and governance.

To capture this breadth reliably, the analysis combines three complementary research methods, each contributing a different vantage point on the same core questions — current ESG integration, competency needs, competency gaps, learning preferences and institutional barriers:

- an online survey of 120 valid responses, providing a quantitative, sector-wide measurement of the perceived importance and current level of ESG competencies;
- a series of focus groups with GLAM practitioners, offering a qualitative, discussion-based exploration of how these competency needs are experienced in daily institutional practice;
- 34 expert interviews with sector specialists and stakeholders across several countries, adding depth, national context and strategic perspective to the picture emerging from the survey and focus groups.

The report is organised into three parts that follow this same sequence — Part I presents the Survey Analysis, Part II the Focus Group Analysis, and Part III the Expert Interview

Analysis. Each part follows a similar internal structure (scope and methodology, respondent or participant profile, findings, and conclusions), so that results from the three methods can be read side by side. Rather than three separate, self-contained studies, the parts are designed to triangulate: where the survey, focus groups and interviews converge on the same competency needs and gaps, this convergence strengthens confidence in the finding; where they diverge or add nuance, this points to areas warranting particular attention in the design of the ESG4GLAM competency framework. Readers are encouraged to keep this complementary relationship between the three parts in mind when interpreting the detailed results that follow.

PART I

Survey Analysis

This part of the report presents the findings of the survey conducted within the ESG4GLAM project, with the aim of examining ESG-related competencies, institutional practices, and professional development needs across the GLAM sector. The analysis focuses on galleries, libraries, archives, museums recognising their specific public mission, organisational structures, and role in safeguarding cultural heritage, promoting access, and creating social value. In this context, ESG is not approached merely as a reporting or compliance framework, but as a broader capacity-building agenda relevant to the everyday work, governance, and long-term resilience of cultural institutions.

The survey was designed to capture both the perceived importance of ESG competencies and the current level of their application within GLAM organisations. It covered respondent demographics, organisational and professional profiles, formal ESG responsibilities, approaches to ESG engagement, external influences, and competency gaps across four domains: cross-cutting, environmental, social, and governance competencies. Based on 120 valid responses, the analysis provides insight into how cultural professionals understand ESG priorities and where the most significant gaps in institutional readiness are located.

Overall, the findings indicate that ESG principles are widely recognised as relevant for the GLAM sector, but that current organisational capacities remain uneven and insufficiently formalised. While many institutions already engage with sustainability, inclusion, ethics, and public accountability through their core missions and professional practices, these activities are often not embedded in systematic organisations strategies, data practices, planning processes, or reporting mechanisms. The analysis therefore highlights the need for sector-specific competency development that helps GLAM institutions move from implicit values and fragmented initiatives toward structured, measurable, and strategically governed ESG practice.

1 Survey Scope and Methodology

1.1 Scope: Description of the survey's focus areas

The scope of the survey was defined to capture a comprehensive view of ESG-related competencies, institutional practices, and professional development needs across the GLAM sector (Galleries, Libraries, Archives, and Museums) in Europe. Specifically, the survey focused on:

- Respondent Demographics: Collecting data on professionals' backgrounds, including their gender, age group, level of education, seniority level, and functional area within their organisations.
- Organisational Context: Gathering information on the type, size, age, legal status, and funding model of GLAM institutions represented by respondents, as well as their current ESG engagement practices.
- ESG Competencies: Assessing the perceived importance of specific ESG competencies across four domains — Cross-cutting, Environmental (E), Social (S), and Governance (G) — and evaluating organisations' current level of application of these competencies.
- Future Expectations and Training Needs: Exploring preferred formats for ESG professional development, barriers to training participation, and views on cross-sectoral learning.

The survey was conducted across European countries, ensuring representation from diverse cultural and institutional contexts within the EU. It targeted responses from:

- GLAM institutions (galleries, libraries, archives, museums,) across all partner countries.
- Cultural professionals at all seniority levels and functional areas, to ensure a broad and representative view of ESG competency needs across the sector.

In total, 142 survey submissions were collected. Following data cleaning and consistency checks, 120 responses were retained as the final analytical sample. This final sample includes four valid partial responses from respondents who chose not to provide personal, professional, or organisational background information, but did complete Part 3 of the questionnaire, focused on ESG competencies.

1.2 Methodology

1.2.1 Research Design: Overview of the research approach and design

The research design for the ESG4GLAM survey was grounded in a robust methodological framework to ensure the reliability and validity of the findings. The development of the survey instrument was informed by an in-depth review of existing ESG frameworks and standards relevant to the sector and enriched by the expert knowledge of academic specialists and GLAM practitioners from across the partner institutions.

The questionnaire was developed through collaborative discussions among project partners, with a dedicated design phase built into the project's early implementation activities. This process ensured that each survey question was carefully designed to capture relevant and actionable data reflecting the specific realities of GLAM institutions,

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

including their mission-driven nature, predominantly public funding, and relatively small organisational scale.

This approach ensured that the survey addressed the key objectives of the ESG4GLAM project, identifying current ESG-related competencies among cultural professionals, understanding institutional ESG practices and constraints, and mapping future training needs. The careful construction of the questionnaire, supported by expert input and thorough review, underscores the credibility of the data collected.

The questionnaire was prepared in English, with the decision based on the following considerations:

- Proficiency of GLAM professionals: Specialists in the cultural sector across the partner countries generally possess a sufficient level of English proficiency to complete the survey accurately, particularly at managerial and specialist levels.
- Consistency in data analysis: Utilising a single language facilitates more straightforward, consistent, and error-free analysis, eliminating potential discrepancies arising from translation.
- Terminological consistency: Many ESG-related terms do not have direct equivalents in other languages; maintaining them in English ensures clarity and precision in the interpretation of competency items.
- Efficiency in survey administration: Managing one version of the questionnaire reduces administrative overhead, simplifies the data collection process, and enhances data integrity.

1.2.2 Questionnaire Development: Details on the development of the survey questionnaire, including the sections covered

The survey was developed to gather comprehensive insights into ESG-related competencies among cultural professionals, with a focus on identifying gaps, trends, and future needs within the GLAM sector.

The survey utilised various measurement approaches to capture both quantitative and qualitative data:

- **Quantitative Data:**
  - Predominantly collected using 5-point Likert scales, where respondents rated the importance of specific ESG competencies (1 = 'Not needed' to 5 = 'Extremely important') and their organisation's current level of application of these competencies (1 = 'Very low' to 5 = 'Very high').
  - Closed single and multiple-choice questions were used for demographic, institutional, and ESG engagement variables.
- **Qualitative Data:**
  - Open-ended questions were included to gather detailed insights, personal experiences, and reflections on ESG challenges and core skills. These qualitative responses complement the quantitative findings, providing a richer understanding of respondents' perspectives and institutional contexts.

The questionnaire consists of the following main sections:

- Personal Information and Respondent Background.
  - Gender, age group, and highest level of education completed.
  - Interest in future project activities and ESG training opportunities.
- Part 1 — Respondent Background and Institutional Context.

  - Type of GLAM organisation (gallery, library, archive, museum, or other cultural institution).
  - Legal and organisational status, country of location, professional seniority level, and functional area.
- Part 2 — Organisational and Institutional Context.
  - Organisation age, size (number of employees), and primary funding model.
  - Existence of formal ESG responsibilities, approach to ESG engagement, and duration of engagement.
  - ESG mechanisms in place, dimensions addressed, integration into institutional planning, and degree of external ESG influence.
- Part 3 — ESG Competencies for Cultural Professionals in the GLAM Sector.
  - For each competency, respondents rated both the importance in their GLAM context and their organisation's current level, using the 5-point Likert scales described above.
  - Cross-cutting ESG competencies (5 items): basic ESG understanding, understanding E–S–G connections, organisational learning and change, avoiding 'checkbox' approaches, use of basic ESG data.
  - Environmental (E) competencies (8 items): environmental awareness and compliance, energy and climate control management, sustainable exhibition and programme production, preventive conservation, sustainable procurement, waste reduction and circular practices, environmental emergency preparedness, monitoring of environmental indicators.
  - Social (S) competencies (8 items): inclusive access and participation, community engagement and co-creation, diversity equity and inclusion (DEI), social impact evaluation, safeguarding and ethical participation, accessible communication, partnerships for social value, feedback and complaint mechanisms.

- ◦ Governance (G) competencies (8 items): ethics and integrity in cultural stewardship, transparency and accountability, risk management and internal controls, ESG integration into planning and management, stakeholder communication and reporting, data protection (GDPR), data management for ESG purposes, governance of partners and suppliers.
- Part 4 — Future Expectations, Training Needs and Key Challenges.
  - Preferred training formats for ESG professional development.
  - Value of certification and recognised formats.
  - Barriers to integrating ESG training into professional practice.
  - Views on cross-sectoral learning.
  - Open-ended reflections on core ESG skills and key institutional challenges.

1.2.3 Validation and Piloting: Steps taken to validate and pilot the survey

Following the initial design phase, the survey underwent a Validation and Piloting process to ensure its quality and effectiveness prior to full deployment.

- Pre-testing: The questionnaire was reviewed and tested by a small group of GLAM professionals and project team members to assess the clarity, relevance, and optimal length of the survey. Based on feedback received, adjustments were made to improve question wording, eliminate ambiguities, and streamline the overall flow.
- Ethical Considerations: A consent statement was included at the beginning of the survey, ensuring compliance with GDPR and applicable data protection regulations. The statement emphasised voluntary participation, data anonymisation, and the exclusive use of data for the purposes of the ESG4GLAM project (Agreement no. 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271).

- Expert Review: The survey was reviewed by members of the project consortium from Italy, Latvia, Serbia, and Finland, ensuring diverse national and professional perspectives. Content was evaluated for relevance, clarity, and alignment with the project's objectives.
- Technical Testing: The survey was tested across various devices and browsers to ensure correct display and functionality. Technical validation included checking compatibility across different operating systems and verifying accessibility for all respondents.

After incorporating feedback from both content and technical evaluations, the questionnaire reached its final form and was prepared for deployment.

1.2.4 Survey Implementation: Description of the survey platform, data collection process, and timeframe

The survey was implemented using Forminator, a widely used survey and form management plugin for WordPress, selected for its accessibility, flexibility, and ease of integration with the project's existing web infrastructure. Forminator enables the creation of structured questionnaires with multiple question types, supports conditional logic, and offers built-in CSV batch export functionality for systematic data collection and analysis.

Key aspects of the implementation included:

- **Platform Setup:**
    - The survey was hosted directly on the ESG4GLAM project website, ensuring a consistent and professional respondent experience aligned with the project's visual identity.
    - Forminator was configured to capture all submitted responses in a structured database, accessible to project administrators for monitoring and export.

    - CSV batch export was used to extract the full dataset for analysis, ensuring data integrity and compatibility with standard statistical software.
- **Data Collection:**
    - Target Participants: Cultural professionals working in GLAM institutions across the partner countries.
    - Target Responses: Each partner institution was responsible for disseminating the survey within its national GLAM network and collecting a minimum of 30 responses, with a collective target of 150 completed submissions across all partners.
- **Promotion Strategies:**
    - Direct email invitations and follow-up reminders to professional contacts and institutional networks.
    - Dissemination through professional associations, sector-specific mailing lists, and social media channels (including LinkedIn and partner organisations' official channels).
    - Leveraging the personal and institutional networks of project partners to reach practitioners across diverse GLAM sub-sectors.
- **Timeframe:**
    - The data collection period ran from mid-January to mid-May providing sufficient time to reach the target response numbers across all four partner countries.

2 Respondent Demographics

2.1 Geographic Distribution

The survey collected responses from professionals across 16 countries. It should be noted that the total sample of 120 respondents represents the number of valid responses obtained after a thorough data cleaning process, during which incomplete, inconsistent, and otherwise invalid submissions were identified and removed from the dataset. The four core partner countries account for the vast majority of the sample: Latvia contributed the largest share of responses (n = 33; 27.5%), followed by Italy (n = 28; 23.3%), Serbia (n = 23; 19.2%), and Finland (n = 20; 16.7%). Together, the four partner countries represent 86.7% of the total sample, reflecting the project's primary dissemination channels and institutional networks. The remaining 13 responses (10.8%) were collected from ten additional countries, including Spain, Sweden, Croatia, Germany, Estonia, Slovenia, Austria, Czech Republic, Albania, Greece, and the United States, indicating a degree of reach beyond the immediate project consortium.

Table 1 Survey Response Summary

Country	**N**	**%**
Latvia	33	27.5%
Italy	28	23.3%
Serbia	23	19.2%
Finland	20	16.7%
Spain	3	2.5%
Other countries (10)	13	10.8%

2.2 Gender Distribution

The sample is characterised by a pronounced gender imbalance, with women representing nearly three quarters of all valid respondents (n = 87; 72.5%). Male respondents accounted for 19.2% of the sample (n = 23), while six respondents (5.0%) chose not to disclose their gender. Four responses (3.3%) were recorded as missing for this variable. This distribution is broadly consistent with the wider demographic profile of the GLAM sector workforce in Europe, where women have historically represented the majority of employed professionals.

Table 2 Respondents' Gender Distribution

Category	N	%
Female	87	72.5%
Male	23	19.2%
Prefer not to say	6	5.0%
Missing / Part 3 only	4	3.3%

2.3 Age Distribution

The age distribution of the sample reflects a mature and experienced professional workforce. The two largest age groups are 45–54 and 55–64, each accounting for exactly one quarter of the sample (n = 30; 25.0%), meaning that half of all respondents are aged 45 or older. The 25–34 and 35–44 age groups each contributed 23 respondents (19.2%), while the youngest cohort (18–24) and the oldest (65+) were the least represented, with 6 (5.0%) and 7 (5.8%) respondents respectively. One response (0.8%) was recorded as missing for this variable. Overall, the age profile suggests that the survey captured perspectives predominantly from mid-career and senior professionals, which may be reflective of the seniority structure typical of GLAM institutions, as well as of the targeted dissemination approach adopted by project partners.

Table 3 Respondents' Age Distribution

Age group	N	%
18–24	6	5.0%
25–34	23	19.2%
35–44	23	19.2%
45–54	30	25.0%
55–64	30	25.0%

65+	7	5.8%
Missing / Part 3 only	1	0.8%

3 Organisational and Professional Profile of the Survey Sample

3.1 Type of GLAM Organisation

Libraries represent the most frequently reported type of organisation in the sample (n = 41; 34.2%), followed by museums (n = 25; 20.8%) and archives (n = 14; 11.7%). Galleries and art centres accounted for the smallest share of the core GLAM categories (n = 7; 5.8%). A notable proportion of respondents (n = 32; 26.7%) selected the "Other" category, indicating that a significant portion of the sample works in multi-functional cultural institutions or other types of cultural organisations that do not fit neatly into the four canonical GLAM designations. One response (0.8%) was recorded as invalid for this variable. Taken together, the distribution confirms that the survey captured a broad cross-section of the GLAM sector, with libraries and museums forming the core of the sample.

Table 4 Organization type

Organization type	N	%
Library	41	34.2%
Other	32	26.7%
Museum	25	20.8%
Archive	14	11.7%
Gallery / Art center	7	5.8%
Missing / Part 3 only	1	0.8%

3.2 Professional Seniority Level

The sample is predominantly composed of mid-to-senior level professionals. Specialists represent the largest group (n = 34; 28.3%), closely followed by managers (n = 32; 26.7%) and professionals (n = 21; 17.5%). Directors and executive-level respondents account for 15.8% of the sample (n = 19), while early-career professionals are the least represented group (n = 10; 8.3%). Four responses (3.3%) were classified as other for this variable. Overall, the seniority profile of the sample suggests that the survey successfully reached professionals with substantial institutional experience and decision-making responsibilities, which lends particular weight to the findings related to ESG competency needs and organisational practices.

Table 5 Seniority Level

Level	N	%
Specialist	34	28.3%
Manager	32	26.7%
Professional	21	17.5%
Director	19	15.8%
Early-career professional	10	8.3%
Missing / Part 3 only	4	3.3%

3.3 Functional Area

The distribution of respondents across functional areas reflects the diversity of professional roles within GLAM institutions. Education and audience engagement represents the largest functional group (n = 34; 28.3%), followed by collections and heritage management (n = 22; 18.3%) and research and knowledge production (n = 21; 17.5%). Strategy, policy, and governance functions account for 9.2% of the sample (n = 11), while administration and finance (n = 8; 6.7%), digital services and IT (n = 6; 5.0%), and operations and facilities management (n = 3; 2.5%) are less represented. Fifteen respondents (12.5%) indicated a functional area not covered by the predefined categories. The breadth of functional areas represented in the sample is particularly valuable for the purposes of this study, as it ensures that ESG competency needs are assessed from multiple professional perspectives rather than reflecting the viewpoint of any single organisational function.

Table 6 Functional area

Functional area	N	%
Education and audience engagement	34	28.3%
Collections / heritage management	22	18.3%
Research and knowledge production	21	17.5%
Strategy / policy / management	11	9.2%
Other	15	12.5%
Administration / finance	8	6.7%
Digital services / IT / data	6	5.0%
Operations / facilities management	3	2.5%

3.4 Organisation Age

The vast majority of respondents work in well-established institutions, with 82 respondents (68.3%) reporting that their organisation has been operating for more than 20 years. Organisations in the 5–10 year range account for 10.8% of the sample (n = 13), while those aged 11–20 years represent 9.2% (n = 11). Relatively new organisations, operating for less than 5 years, are the least represented (n = 10; 8.3%), and four responses (3.3%) were recorded as other for this variable. This distribution is consistent with the historical character of the GLAM sector, which is largely composed of long-standing public institutions with deeply embedded organisational cultures and governance structures. This institutional maturity is a relevant contextual factor when interpreting findings related to ESG integration, as it may reflect both the potential for well-established practices and the challenges associated with organisational change in institutions with long-standing traditions.

Table 7 Organization age

Organization age	N	%
More than 20 years	82	68.3%
5–10 years	13	10.8%
11–20 years	11	9.2%
Less than 5 years	10	8.3%
Missing / Part 3 only	4	3.3%

3.5 Organisation Size

Organisation size was classified on the basis of the number of employees, following the logic of the Eurostat and European Commission size-class framework, which distinguishes between micro, small, medium-sized and large organisations according to staff headcount/persons employed (European Commission, 2003; Eurostat, n.d.). As the response categories in the questionnaire were predefined, this classification was adapted to the intervals used in the survey.

The sample is dominated by smaller and medium-sized organisations. Organisations with up to 10 employees represent the largest group (n = 43; 35.8%), followed closely by organisations with 11 to 50 employees (n = 40; 33.3%). Together, these two categories account for 69.1% of the sample, indicating that a substantial proportion of surveyed GLAM organisations operate with limited or moderate staffing capacity. Larger organisations are less represented: organisations with 51–250 employees account for 13.3% of the sample (n = 16), while organisations with 251 or more employees account for 14.2% (n = 17).

The predominance of smaller and medium-sized organisations is an important contextual factor for interpreting the findings. In the GLAM sector, organisational size may shape the capacity to integrate sustainability principles into everyday operations, particularly in terms of available staff, financial resources, specialised expertise and dedicated ESG-related roles. Therefore, the structure of the sample suggests that many surveyed organisations may face capacity-related constraints when implementing ESG practices and developing sustainability-oriented professional competencies.

Table 8 Organization size

Size	N	%
Small (1–10 employees)	43	35.8%
Medium (11–50 employees)	40	33.3%
Very (251+ employees)	17	14.2%
Large (51–250 employees)	16	13.3%
Missing / Part 3 only	4	3.3%

3.6 Primary Funding Model

Public funding through core institutional budgets is by far the most common funding model among the organisations represented in the sample, reported by half of all respondents (n = 61; 50.8%). Mixed funding models, combining public and other sources, account for a further 11.7% (n = 14), while project-based public funding is reported by 8.3% of respondents (n = 10). Own revenues generated through tickets, services, or commercial activities represent 5.8% of the sample (n = 7), and funding through grants and foundations accounts for 4.2% (n = 5). Fifteen respondents indicated a funding model not covered by the predefined categories.

This strong reliance on public funding should be interpreted in light of the sample composition, as libraries and archives make up a substantial share of the respondents and are typically publicly funded cultural institutions. At the same time, organisational types that may rely more heavily on private, commercial, or mixed funding models, such as galleries, are less represented in the sample. Therefore, the findings suggest that the funding profile captured here primarily reflects the public and institutionally established segment of the GLAM sector. This has implications for ESG-related training and capacity-building, which, in this sample context, appear to depend largely on public budgets and externally funded project initiatives.

Table 9 Funding model

Funding model	N	%
Public funding (core budget)	61	50.8%
Other	19	15.8%
Mixed funding model	14	11.7%
Project-based public funding	10	8.3%
Own revenues	7	5.8%
Grants and foundations	5	4.2%
Missing / Part 3 only	4	3.3%

3.7 Legal Status

Public institutions represent the predominant legal form among the organisations in the sample, accounting for nearly half of all valid respondents (n = 55; 45.8%). Private non-profit organisations are the second most represented category (n = 21; 17.5%), followed by organisations with a hybrid or mixed governance model (n = 14; 11.7%) and private for-profit organisations (n = 10; 8.3%). Sixteen respondents (13.3%) indicated a legal status not captured by the predefined categories. The predominance of public cultural organisations in the sample should be interpreted within the European and project-partner-country context, rather than as a universal feature of the GLAM sector. In many European contexts, libraries, archives and a substantial share of museums are institutionally embedded in the public cultural sector and rely significantly on public funding and public governance structures. This interpretation is also consistent with the funding profile identified in the previous section, where core public funding represents the most common source of organisational support. Non-profit organisations are present in the sample as well, but they represent a distinct organisational model and should therefore not be grouped together with public cultural organisations as a single category. The findings should consequently be understood as primarily reflecting the perspectives of publicly embedded GLAM organisations in the project partner countries, rather than the global GLAM landscape, where non-profit models may be more prominent in some national contexts. This interpretation is supported by European cultural statistics, which frame cultural infrastructure and cultural services as closely connected with public cultural provision, including museums and public libraries, and by NEMO's work on European museums, which highlights the importance of public and EU-level funding mechanisms for museum capacity-building and project participation (Eurostat, Culture statistics; NEMO, 2019).This legal and governance profile has important implications for ESG integration, as public and non-profit institutions typically operate within specific regulatory frameworks, accountability structures, and public interest mandates that both shape and constrain their approach to sustainability governance.

Table 10 Lelag status

Legal status	N	%
Public institution	55	45.8%
Private non-profit organization	21	17.5%
Other	16	13.3%
Hybrid / mixed governance model	14	11.7%
Private for-profit organization	10	8.3%
Missing / Part 3 only	4	3.3%

4 Formal ESG Responsibilities: Structural Accountability in GLAM Institutions

The first dimension explored in the survey concerns the existence of formally assigned ESG responsibilities within respondents' organisations. Respondents were asked to characterise the degree to which their institution had established clear accountability structures for ESG-related work. The results, presented in Table 11 below, reveal a striking absence of formal governance structures in this area.

Table 11 Distribution of formal ESG responsibilities across surveyed GLAM organisations

ESG responsibility status	N	%
No formal responsibilities	43	35.8%
Unsure	35	29.2%
Yes, within existing roles	23	19.2%
Yes, dedicated role/unit	15	12.5%
Missing / Part 3 only	4	3.3%
Total	120	100%

The data indicate that the largest single group of respondents — 43 individuals, or 35.8% — reported that their organisation has no formal ESG responsibilities whatsoever. A further 35 respondents (29.2%) indicated that they were uncertain whether such responsibilities existed, suggesting either a genuine absence of formal structures or, alternatively, a lack of internal communication and transparency around ESG governance. Combined, these two categories account for 65% of valid responses, which represents a critical finding with direct implications for the design of sector-wide competency frameworks.

Only a relatively small proportion of organisations had moved beyond informal or ad hoc ESG engagement. Approximately 19.2% of respondents (n=23) indicated that ESG responsibilities existed within existing roles — that is, integrated into the broader job description of existing staff without a dedicated allocation. A further 12.5% (n=15) reported the existence of a dedicated ESG role or specialised unit within their organisation, representing the most institutionally advanced configuration. These figures suggest that, where ESG accountability structures do exist, they tend to be embedded rather than standalone, reflecting broader resource constraints and the cultural sector's preference for multi-functional professional profiles.

> ***Key Finding: Approximately 65% of surveyed GLAM organisations either have no formal ESG responsibilities assigned or are uncertain about the existence of such structures. This structural gap is a critical baseline for the development of any sector-adapted ESG competency framework.***

From an institutional theory perspective, the low level of formal ESG responsibilisation can be interpreted as part of a broader pattern whereby organisations formalise new governance practices in response to institutional pressures and legitimacy expectations, rather than solely through proactive internal reform. Neo-institutional theory suggests that formal organisational structures are often adopted to secure legitimacy in relation to external rules, norms and expectations (Meyer & Rowan, 1977), while DiMaggio and Powell (1983) identify coercive, normative and mimetic pressures as key mechanisms through which organisations come to adopt similar practices. This is particularly relevant for public and non-profit cultural organisations, whose governance and accountability arrangements are often shaped by public authorities, funders, professional norms and reporting requirements. In the non-profit context, Ebrahim (2003) further shows that accountability mechanisms tend to prioritise upward and external accountability to donors and funders, while more strategic internal accountability processes remain less developed. Accordingly, the limited formal assignment of ESG responsibilities in the present sample may indicate that ESG is still emerging as a formal governance domain and is likely to become institutionalised gradually as regulatory, funding and sectoral expectations become stronger. The data presented here suggest that the GLAM sector has not yet undergone a substantive process of ESG institutionalisation — a conclusion that has direct implications for workforce development and professional training.

4.1 Approach to ESG Engagement: Pathways of Integration

The second analytical dimension addresses the specific modalities through which organisations engage with ESG principles. Respondents were presented with a range of options describing how — if at all — their organisation approaches ESG-related activity. The results, summarised in Table 12, reveal a highly fragmented landscape, with no single dominant approach accounting for more than 30% of responses.

Table 12 – Approaches to ESG engagement reported by surveyed GLAM organisations

Approach to ESG engagement	**N**	**%**
Yes, through internal policies / strategic documents	35	29.2%
No formal approach	22	18.3%
Yes, indirectly through ethical codes / standards	19	15.8%
Yes, through an explicit ESG strategy	16	13.3%
Yes, mainly through projects	13	10.8%
Unsure	11	9.2%
Missing / Part 3 only	4	3.3%
Total	120	100%

The most frequently cited approach was integration through internal policies and strategic documents, reported by 35 respondents (29.2%). This finding suggests that, among organisations engaging with ESG-related issues, formal documentation represents an important entry point for institutionalising such concerns. These documents

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

may include explicit sustainability or ESG strategies, but also more focused policies that address specific ESG-related values, such as environmental policies, ethical codes of conduct, accessibility policies, inclusion and diversity frameworks, social responsibility strategies, or audience and community engagement strategies. Therefore, the absence of a single explicit ESG strategy should not necessarily be interpreted as the absence of ESG-relevant practice. Rather, ESG-related commitments may be embedded across several separate policy areas and organisational routines. However, the survey data do not allow us to determine the extent to which these documented commitments are translated into operational practice or professional competency development. This issue should therefore be interpreted cautiously and, where possible, further explored through qualitative responses or follow-up interviews.

The second most common response was the absence of any formal ESG approach, reported by 22 respondents (18.3%). This is consistent with the findings from Section 4.1 and confirms that a substantial minority of GLAM organisations have not yet developed even rudimentary engagement pathways. Notably, indirect engagement — via ethical codes, professional standards, or funding body requirements — was cited by 15.8% of respondents (n=19), suggesting that many organisations engage with ESG principles without explicitly framing them as such.

A formal and explicit ESG strategy, representing the most systematically developed form of organisational engagement, was reported by only 13.3% of respondents (n=16). Project-based engagement — that is, ESG activities implemented through specific initiatives or funded programmes rather than institutionally embedded practices — was reported by 10.8% (n=13). This pattern of project-led engagement is characteristic of the cultural sector, where time-limited funding cycles often incentivise programmatic rather than structural approaches to institutional change.

> ***Notable Pattern: ESG engagement in the GLAM sector remains predominantly informal, policy-adjacent, or project-specific. Fewer than one in seven organisations (13.3%) report having an explicit ESG strategy — a finding that underscores the need for sector-tailored strategic guidance and capacity support.***

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-
VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

Taken together, these findings suggest that ESG engagement in the GLAM sector is characterised by significant heterogeneity and a general lack of strategic coherence. The plurality of engagement pathways — ranging from formal policy documents to implicit professional standards to project-based activities — reflects the absence of a common sectoral framework or shared professional vocabulary for ESG. This is precisely the gap that a sector-adapted ESG competency framework could address by providing shared conceptual reference points and standardised approaches to institutional integration.

4.2 Duration of ESG Engagement: Temporal Depth and Institutional Maturity

The third dimension examined in this chapter concerns the temporal depth of ESG engagement — specifically, how long respondents' organisations have been actively engaged with ESG-related activities. This variable provides a proxy for institutional maturity in the ESG domain and enables a degree of longitudinal inference about the sector's developmental trajectory. The results are presented in Table 13.

Table 13 *Duration of ESG engagement among surveyed GLAM organisations*

Duration of ESG engagement	N	%
More than 3 years	65	54.2%
Not yet engaged	19	15.8%
1–3 years	18	15.0%
Less than one year	14	11.7%
Missing / Part 3 only	4	3.3%

Total	120	100%

The most notable finding from this dimension is that a substantial share of organisations — 65 respondents, or 54.2% — reported ESG-related engagement lasting more than three years. However, this result should be interpreted with some caution, as respondents may have understood ESG engagement in different ways. For some organisations, this may refer to an integrated ESG framework that combines environmental, social and governance dimensions. For others, it may reflect longer-standing engagement with one or more specific ESG-related areas, such as environmental responsibility, accessibility, inclusion, ethical conduct, community engagement, or governance and accountability practices. Therefore, the finding should not necessarily be read as evidence that more than half of the sample has implemented a fully integrated ESG approach. Rather, it suggests that many organisations have prior experience with practices that can be connected to ESG, even if these practices are not always labelled or managed under a unified ESG framework. This finding stands in notable tension with the data presented in Sections 4.1 and 4.2, which indicated widespread absence of formal responsibilities and strategic coherence. The apparent contradiction may be resolved by recognising that many GLAM organisations have long engaged with the substantive concerns of ESG — environmental responsibility, social inclusion, ethical governance — without framing these activities under the ESG label or embedding them within formal institutional structures.

This interpretation is consistent with the broader literature on sustainability in the cultural sector, which identifies a pattern of implicit sustainability practice: organisations that engage meaningfully with environmental stewardship, community access, and ethical governance but do so through established professional values and mission-driven practice rather than through explicitly ESG-coded frameworks. The survey data suggest that the challenge for the sector may therefore be less about initiating ESG engagement than about formalising, strategising, and communicating existing practices within a coherent ESG framework.

Approximately 15.8% of respondents (n=19) indicated that their organisation had not yet engaged with ESG in any meaningful sense. A further 15.0% (n=18) reported engagement of between one and three years — suggesting relatively recent adoption, likely in response to growing external awareness and funding-body requirements in the post-2020 period. A smaller proportion (11.7%, n=14) reported engagement of less than one year, representing the earliest-stage organisations in terms of ESG development.

> ***Contextual Insight: Over half of surveyed organisations have engaged with ESG-related activity for more than three years, yet most lack formal structures or explicit strategies. This points to a sector where substantive ESG practice exists but remains institutionally under-codified — a key finding for training programme design.***

The distribution of engagement duration has significant implications for professional development design. Organisations with more than three years of ESG engagement may benefit most from advanced competency development — including strategic integration, stakeholder communication, and impact measurement — while recently-initiated organisations will require foundational capacity building and conceptual orientation. A sector-adapted ESG competency framework must therefore be sufficiently modular and scalable to serve organisations at different stages of their ESG journey.

4.3 Impact of External Requirements on ESG Engagement

The fourth and final dimension examined in this chapter concerns the degree to which external requirements — including regulatory obligations, funder mandates, sector standards, and policy frameworks — influence ESG engagement within respondents' organisations. This dimension is particularly relevant for understanding the drivers and constraints of ESG adoption across the sector, and for anticipating future trends in ESG institutionalisation as the regulatory and funding landscape evolves. Table 14 presents the distribution of responses.

Table 14 Perceived impact of external requirements on ESG engagement

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

Level of external influence	N	%
Moderate	52	43.3%
Unsure	19	15.8%
Very strong	18	15.0%
Weak	14	11.7%
None	13	10.8%
Missing / Part 3 only	4	3.3%
Total	120	100%

The dominant response category was "moderately", reported by 52 respondents (43.3%), indicating that external requirements exert a noticeable but not overriding influence on ESG engagement in the majority of organisations surveyed. This pattern suggests that external pressures may function as enabling, legitimising or accelerating factors, rather than as the sole drivers of ESG-related activity. This interpretation is consistent with institutional theory, which explains how organisations respond to coercive, normative and legitimacy-based pressures from their external environment (DiMaggio & Powell, 1983; Meyer & Rowan, 1977). It is also supported by non-profit accountability research, which shows that public and non-profit organisations often navigate tensions between external accountability demands, particularly from funders and regulators, and internally defined mission-based priorities (Ebrahim, 2003; Christensen & Ebrahim, 2006). Therefore, the moderate influence of external requirements may indicate that ESG engagement in the surveyed organisations is shaped by a combination of external policy/funding expectations and existing organisational missions, values and professional commitments.

Notably, only 15.0% of respondents (n = 18) reported a very strong external influence on their ESG engagement. This is a relatively low figure given the rapid growth of sustainability-related regulatory and policy frameworks in the European context, including the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD), European Sustainability Reporting

Standards (ESRS), national transposition measures, and the increasing inclusion of sustainability criteria in public funding programmes. However, this result should be interpreted with caution. The CSRD primarily targets companies above certain size and listing thresholds, and many GLAM organisations, including public cultural organisations and non-profit institutions, are likely to fall outside its direct mandatory reporting scope (European Commission, 2026). At the same time, GLAM organisations may already be subject to multiple domain-specific requirements and professional standards related to heritage protection, collections care, accessibility, public accountability, emergency preparedness, environmental management, and institutional resilience. As a result, ESG-related expectations may be experienced less as a single, unified reporting obligation and more as a fragmented set of sectoral, funding-related, legal, and professional requirements. The relatively limited share of respondents reporting very strong external influence may therefore reflect the indirect and dispersed nature of ESG pressure in the GLAM sector, rather than the absence of external frameworks altogether.

Perhaps most strikingly, 10.8% of respondents (n=13) reported that external requirements have no influence whatsoever on their organisation's ESG engagement. This finding suggests that a non-trivial share of GLAM organisations remain largely insulated from the broader policy and regulatory environment driving ESG adoption across other sectors, and that their ESG engagement — where it exists — is driven primarily by internal values and professional commitment. This intrinsic motivation, while commendable, may also be associated with the fragmented and unstrategic character of ESG engagement documented elsewhere in the survey.

> ***Policy Implication:* *The relatively limited impact of external ESG requirements on GLAM organisations — with only 15% reporting very strong external influence and 11% reporting none at all — suggests that voluntary capacity-building and professional development initiatives will be essential complements to regulatory and funding-based incentives in driving ESG mainstreaming across the sector.***

A further 15.8% of respondents expressed uncertainty regarding the extent of external influence, and 11.7% reported weak external influence. These patterns collectively reinforce the picture of a sector in which ESG engagement is primarily self-directed, value-driven, and institutionally uneven — shaped more by the professional commitments of individual practitioners and organisational leadership than by systemic external pressure.

4.4 ESG Competencies: Analysis of Importance and Current Level

ESG competencies in the GLAM sector should not be understood simply as a list of technical skills. They represent the ability of galleries, libraries, archives, and museums to translate sustainability principles into everyday institutional decisions: how collections are preserved, how communities are included, how energy and resources are managed, how partners are selected, how risks are governed, and how public value is communicated. This is especially important because GLAM institutions are mission-driven organisations whose responsibilities go beyond financial performance and include cultural heritage stewardship, education, access, ethics, inclusion, and intergenerational responsibility.

In this analysis, respondents assessed each competency from two perspectives: its importance in the GLAM context and the current level of that competency within their organisation. Both were measured on a scale from 1 to 5. The difference between the average importance score and the average current-level score is interpreted as a competency gap. A higher gap indicates a stronger need for development.

5 Overall results by ESG competency area

The results show a clear and consistent pattern: ESG competencies are considered highly important across all areas, but the current level of organisational readiness is considerably lower. No area reaches a critical gap, which suggests that the sector is not starting from zero. However, the results also show that ESG integration remains uneven and incomplete.

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

Table 15 ESG Competency Areas: Importance, Current Level and Gap Intensity

ESG competency area	Average importance	Average current level	Average gap	Gap intensity
Cross-cutting ESG competencies	4.23	2.55	1.68	High
Environmental competencies	4.28	2.77	1.51	High
Social competencies	4.47	3.21	1.26	Moderate
Governance competencies	4.30	3.05	1.25	Moderate

The strongest gap appears in **cross-cutting ESG competencies**. This is an important finding because these competencies function as the "connective tissue" of ESG practice. Without basic ESG literacy, organisational learning, change management, and data use, environmental, social, and governance actions risk remaining isolated projects rather than becoming part of institutional strategy.

The second largest gap is found in the **environmental area**, where the average gap is 1.51. This suggests that GLAM institutions recognise the importance of environmental responsibility, but still lack sufficient capacities in areas such as climate-related emergency preparedness, environmental indicators, sustainable procurement, and ecological conservation practices.

The **social dimension** has the highest average importance score, at 4.47, and also the strongest current level, at 3.21. This reflects the traditional public mission of GLAM institutions: inclusion, access, community engagement, education, and social value are already close to their core work. Nevertheless, the moderate gap shows that these values are not always supported by systematic methods for impact assessment, DEI implementation, accessible communication, or feedback mechanisms.

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

Governance competencies also show a moderate gap. Respondents assessed ethics, integrity, and data protection relatively strongly, while weaker results appear in ESG integration into planning, stakeholder reporting, and ESG data governance. GLAM institutions often already possess ethical and accountability-oriented practices, but these are rarely translated into formal ESG systems, reporting frameworks, or integrated management models.

5.1 Cross-cutting ESG competencies

Cross-cutting competencies are the foundation of ESG maturity. They determine whether ESG is understood as a strategic approach or reduced to isolated activities, terminology, or reporting requirements. The average gap of 1.68 indicates a high-priority development area.

Table 16 Cross-cutting ESG competencies Importance, Current Level and Gap Intensity

Code	Competency	Importance	Current level	Gap	Intensity
cc1	Basic understanding of ESG in the GLAM context	4.29	2.62	1.67	High
cc2	Understanding connections between E–S–G dimensions	4.35	2.71	1.64	High
cc3	Organisational learning and change management	4.29	2.62	1.67	High
cc4	Avoiding a “checkbox” approach	4.36	2.61	1.75	High
cc5	Use of basic ESG data	3.85	2.20	1.65	High

The highest gap in this group relates to **avoiding a “checkbox” approach**. This is a particularly important result. It suggests that respondents are aware that ESG should not become a superficial exercise in which institutions merely use sustainability language without changing decision-making practices.

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

The weak current level in the **use of basic ESG data** is also significant. Data does not need to be complex to be useful. Even simple indicators, such as energy use, visitor accessibility, community participation, procurement criteria, staff training, complaints, or partnership quality, can help GLAM institutions understand where they stand and where improvement is needed. However, the low current score of 2.20 shows that many institutions still lack basic systems for collecting, interpreting, and using ESG-related information.

5.2 Environmental competencies

Environmental competencies form the second-highest priority area. GLAM institutions face specific environmental challenges because they often operate in historic buildings, preserve sensitive collections, require climate control, and organise exhibitions and public programmes that consume materials and energy.

Table 17 Environmental competencies Importance, Current Level and Gap Intensity

Code	Competency	Importance	Current level	Gap	Intensity
env1	Environmental awareness and regulatory compliance	4.47	2.98	1.49	Moderate
env2	Energy management and climate control	4.32	2.90	1.42	Moderate
env3	Sustainable production of exhibitions and programmes	4.22	2.93	1.29	Moderate
env4	Preventive conservation with an ecological approach	4.18	2.67	1.51	High
env5	Sustainable procurement	4.19	2.68	1.51	High
env6	Waste reduction and circular practices	4.39	3.06	1.33	Moderate
env7	Preparedness for environmental emergencies	4.36	2.48	1.88	High

env8	Monitoring basic environmental indicators	4.08	2.47	1.61	High

The largest environmental gap concerns **preparedness for environmental emergencies**. This includes the ability to respond to risks such as floods, fires, heatwaves, humidity fluctuations, pollution, and other climate-related threats. For GLAM institutions, environmental emergency preparedness is not only a building-management issue. It is directly connected to the protection of collections, public safety, institutional continuity, and long-term cultural heritage preservation.

Another high-priority area is **monitoring basic environmental indicators**. Without measurement, environmental sustainability remains difficult to manage. Institutions may be aware of the importance of reducing energy use, waste, or emissions, but without indicators they cannot easily identify trends, set targets, compare progress, or communicate results.

The gaps in sustainable procurement and ecological preventive conservation are important because they show that environmental sustainability cannot be treated as the responsibility of one specialist, department or unit. It affects curators, conservators, facility managers, procurement officers, educators, exhibition designers and leadership teams. In this sense, the findings point towards the need for an ESG-centred organisational design, in which sustainability considerations are embedded across institutional roles, workflows and decision-making processes. This is conceptually similar to audience-centred approaches in the cultural sector, such as Audience Centred Experience Design (ACED), which emphasise that organisational change requires a whole-organisation approach rather than isolated tools or role-specific interventions (Adeste+ ACED; ACED Blueprint). By analogy, ESG capacity-building in GLAM institutions should not be limited to specialist environmental knowledge, but should support the development of shared responsibilities, cross-functional collaboration and institutional routines that make ESG part of everyday organisational practice.

5.3 Social competencies

The social dimension is the strongest area in the analysis. This is not surprising, as GLAM institutions have long been associated with public access, education, cultural participation, and community value. However, the results show that the sector's social mission still needs to be supported by more systematic competencies.

Table 18. Social competencies Importance, Current Level and Gap Intensity

Code	Competency	Importance	Current level	Gap	Intensity
soc1	Inclusive approach and participation	4.63	3.25	1.38	Moderate
soc2	Community engagement and co-creation	4.61	3.44	1.17	Moderate
soc3	Diversity, equity, and inclusion	4.39	2.97	1.42	Moderate
soc4	Social impact assessment	4.46	3.02	1.44	Moderate
soc5	Protection and ethical participation	4.49	3.46	1.03	Moderate
soc6	Clear and accessible communication	4.38	2.99	1.39	Moderate
soc7	Partnerships for social value	4.54	3.56	0.98	Low
soc8	Feedback and complaint mechanisms	4.26	3.01	1.25	Moderate

The highest importance score in the entire dataset is found in **inclusive approach and participation**. This confirms that respondents see inclusion not as an optional activity, but as a defining responsibility of GLAM institutions. Similarly, **community engagement and**

co-creation received a very high importance score, showing that cultural institutions are increasingly expected to work with communities rather than only for them.

The most notable social gap is **social impact assessment**. Many GLAM institutions deliver socially valuable activities, but they may not have sufficient tools to evaluate their effects. For example, an exhibition, archive workshop, library programme, or museum education activity may contribute to learning, belonging, identity, trust, or empowerment. Yet such outcomes are often qualitative, long-term, and difficult to measure. This creates a challenge: the institution may create value, but struggle to demonstrate it.

The relatively low gap in partnerships for social value does not necessarily indicate that GLAM institutions are already strong in this area. Rather, it suggests that respondents may perceive partnership-building as more familiar or less urgent than other ESG-related capacities. However, the survey does not capture the depth, permanence, reciprocity, or impact of these partnerships. Since external cooperation may range from nominal project partnerships to sustained stakeholder engagement, partnership effectiveness should be treated as a separate capacity issue requiring further qualitative investigation.

5.4 Governance competencies

Governance competencies show a mixed picture. Traditional areas of institutional responsibility, such as ethics and data protection, appear relatively strong. However, competencies related to ESG integration, reporting, and data use show larger gaps.

Table 19. Governance competencies Importance, Current Level and Gap Intensity

Code	Competency	Importance	Current level	Gap	Intensity
gov1	Ethics and integrity in cultural heritage	4.41	3.55	0.86	Low
gov2	Transparency and accountability	4.48	3.32	1.16	Moderate

gov3	Risk management and internal control	4.30	3.06	1.24	Moderate
gov4	Integration of ESG into planning and management	4.12	2.49	1.63	High
gov5	Stakeholder communication and reporting	4.12	2.59	1.53	High
gov6	Data protection, including GDPR	4.62	3.68	0.94	Low
gov7	Data management for ESG purposes	4.12	2.88	1.24	Moderate
gov8	Partner and supplier management	4.23	2.84	1.39	Moderate

The two strongest governance gaps are **integration of ESG into planning and management** and **stakeholder communication and reporting**. This indicates that ESG is not yet sufficiently embedded into institutional strategies, annual plans, budgeting, internal responsibilities, or reporting practices.

At the same time, the low gaps in **ethics and integrity** and **data protection** show that GLAM institutions already possess important governance foundations. This is a strength that should be used as a starting point for ESG development. Rather than importing corporate governance models unchanged, GLAM institutions can build ESG governance from their existing ethical codes, public accountability duties, professional standards, and responsibilities toward collections, communities, and future generations.

5.5 Priority competencies for development

When all competencies are compared, the highest-priority areas are concentrated around environmental emergency preparedness, cross-cutting ESG literacy, anti-formalistic implementation, ESG data, and the integration of ESG into planning and reporting.

Table 20 Priority areas for ESG capacity building in GLAM institutions

Rank	**Code**	**Competency**	**Area**	**Gap**	**Priority level**
1	env7	Preparedness for environmental emergencies	Environmental	1.88	High
2	cc4	Avoiding a "checkbox" approach	Cross-cutting	1.75	High
3	cc1	Basic understanding of ESG in the GLAM context	Cross-cutting	1.67	High
4	cc3	Organisational learning and change management	Cross-cutting	1.67	High
5	cc5	Use of basic ESG data	Cross-cutting	1.65	High
6	cc2	Understanding connections between E–S–G dimensions	Cross-cutting	1.64	High
7	gov4	Integration of ESG into planning and management	Governance	1.63	High
8	env8	Monitoring basic environmental indicators	Environmental	1.61	High
9	gov5	Stakeholder communication and reporting	Governance	1.53	High
10	env4 / env5	Ecological preventive conservation / Sustainable procurement	Environmental	1.51	High

Note: The listed items should be understood as ESG competency and capacity-building areas, as several priorities extend beyond individual training needs and require organisational-level support, coordination, and change.

This ranking is closely aligned with the findings emerging from the interviews, where participants similarly emphasised that ESG-related needs are not limited to a single ESG pillar. Rather than representing only individual competences, the highest-ranked items should be interpreted as broader areas for institutional capacity building. Some refer to staff-level knowledge and skills, such as understanding ESG in the GLAM context, using basic ESG data, or communicating with stakeholders. Others point to organisational capacities, including environmental emergency preparedness, integration of ESG into planning and management, organisational learning and change management, and avoiding a purely "checkbox" approach. Taken together, the results suggest that the priority is not only to "do more ESG activities", but to strengthen the organisational conditions that allow ESG to become part of how GLAM institutions think, plan, decide, act, and learn.

5.6 Analytical interpretation

The results point to three main conclusions.

First, ESG is perceived as highly relevant for the GLAM sector. All four competency areas have average importance scores above 4.20, and the social dimension reaches 4.47. This confirms that respondents do not see ESG as an external or irrelevant agenda. They recognise that sustainability, inclusion, accountability, and responsible governance are closely connected to the public mission of GLAM institutions.

Second, current organisational capacities are not yet aligned with perceived importance. The current-level scores range from 2.55 in cross-cutting competencies to 3.21 in social competencies. This means that institutions may understand the importance of ESG, but still lack the internal structures, skills, data, routines, and leadership mechanisms needed for systematic implementation.

Third, the ESG competency gap is organisational rather than merely individual. The problem is not simply that employees need more information. The deeper issue is that ESG knowledge is not yet sufficiently embedded into institutional planning, management systems, reporting practices, professional roles, procurement procedures, conservation routines, community engagement methods, and emergency preparedness.

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

6 Implications for future competency development

The analysis suggests that ESG training for GLAM institutions should be designed as a practical, sector-specific capacity-building process. It should not only explain ESG terminology but help institutions connect ESG principles with their own missions, collections, audiences, buildings, communities, partners, and governance responsibilities.

Table 21. Development directions

Development direction	Why it matters for GLAM institutions
ESG literacy in the GLAM context	Helps staff understand ESG through cultural mission, public value, heritage stewardship, and community responsibility.
Integrated E–S–G thinking	Prevents fragmented initiatives and shows how environmental, social, and governance decisions influence one another.
Organisational learning and change management	Supports long-term transformation instead of one-off projects or externally driven compliance.
Basic ESG data and indicators	Enables institutions to monitor progress, communicate results, and make evidence-informed decisions.
Environmental risk and emergency preparedness	Protects collections, buildings, visitors, staff, and institutional continuity in the context of climate-related risks.
ESG integration into planning and reporting	Moves ESG from symbolic language into strategy, budgeting, responsibility allocation, and accountability.
Social impact assessment	Helps institutions demonstrate the public value they already create through education, particular GLAM organisation specific methods, inclusion, participation, and access.

Overall, the findings show that GLAM institutions are well positioned to engage with ESG, but they need frameworks that respect their specific nature. The sector already carries many ESG values in its everyday work. The next step is to make these values more visible, structured, measurable, and strategically governed. In this sense, ESG competency development should not be seen as an administrative burden, but as an opportunity to strengthen the public mission of galleries, libraries, archives, and museums in a rapidly changing social and environmental context.

7 ESG Competency Gap Analysis

This section presents the core empirical findings of the survey, examining the self-assessed importance and current organisational level of 29 ESG-related competencies across four domains: cross-cutting competencies, environmental (E), social (S), and governance (G). For each competency, respondents rated two dimensions on a five-point scale: the importance of the competency in their GLAM institutional context (1 = Not needed; 5 = Extremely important) and the current level at which their organisation applies or demonstrates the competency (1 = Very low; 5 = Very high). The competency gap is calculated as the arithmetic difference between the mean importance score and the mean current level score and serves as the primary indicator for prioritising professional development needs.

Gap intensity is classified according to the following thresholds:

≥ 2.0 — Critical	**1.5–1.99 — High**	**1.0–1.49 — Moderate**	**< 1.0 — Low**

Figure 1 provides a domain-level overview, comparing average importance and current level scores, and indicating the mean competency gap for each domain.

Agreement n° 2025-1-IT01-KA220-
VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

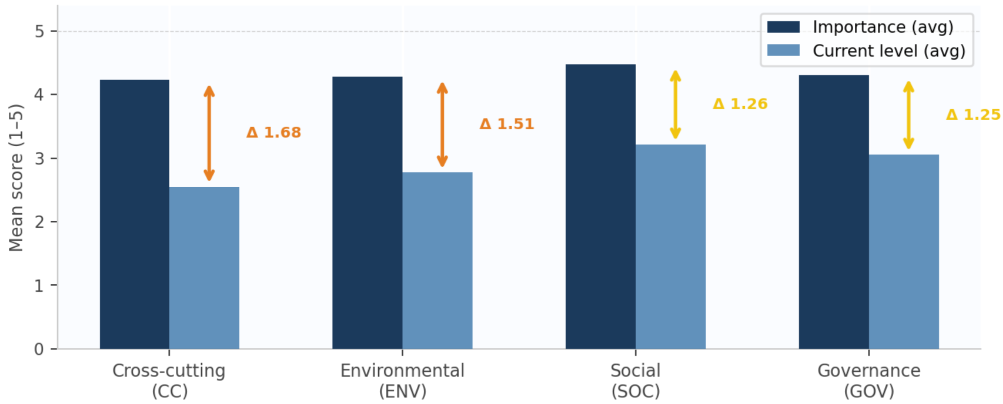

Figure 1 *ESG competency gap by domain — overview of mean importance, current level, and gap*

The domain-level overview reveals that all four ESG domains are characterised by substantial competency gaps, indicating a consistent pattern of high perceived importance combined with significantly lower current organisational capacity. The cross-cutting domain registers the largest average gap (Δ 1.68), followed by the environmental domain (Δ 1.51). The social and governance domains exhibit comparatively smaller but still meaningful gaps (Δ 1.26 and Δ 1.25 respectively), reflecting stronger pre-existing organisational engagement with social and governance-related principles in many GLAM institutions.

7.1 Cross-cutting ESG Competencies

Cross-cutting competencies encompass the foundational knowledge, cognitive frameworks, and organisational capacities that underpin ESG engagement across all three dimensions. Unlike domain-specific competencies, they represent the integrative and enabling layer of ESG literacy — the ability to understand, frame, and apply sustainability principles in a holistic and contextually appropriate manner.

	Domain average: Importance 4.23 | Current level 2.55 | Average gap 1.68 (High). The cross-cutting domain records the largest overall gap across all four domains.

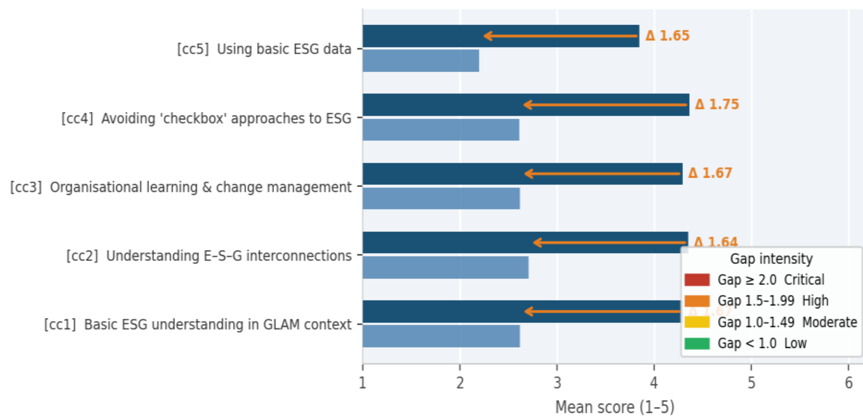

Figure 2 Cross-cutting ESG competencies — mean importance vs. current level

Table 22 *Cross-cutting ESG competencies — item-level descriptive statistics*

Code	Competency	Importance (M)	Current Level (M)	Gap	Intensity
cc1	Basic ESG understanding in GLAM context	4.29	2.62	**1.67**	**High**
cc2	Understanding E-S-G interconnections	4.35	2.71	**1.64**	**High**
cc3	Organisational learning & change management	4.29	2.62	**1.67**	**High**
cc4	Avoiding 'checkbox' approaches to ESG	4.36	2.61	**1.75**	**High**
cc5	Using basic ESG data	3.85	2.20	**1.65**	**High**

All five cross-cutting competencies record high-intensity gaps, with scores ranging from 1.64 (cc2) to 1.75 (cc4). The highest-rated item in terms of importance is cc4 — Avoiding 'checkbox' approaches to ESG (M = 4.36), reflecting a strong professional awareness of the risks associated with superficial or compliance-driven sustainability practices. This finding is particularly significant in the GLAM context, where ESG engagement is often driven by funding requirements rather than strategic commitment, creating conditions conducive to precisely the kind of formulaic adoption that respondents identify as problematic.

The item recording the lowest mean importance score in this domain is cc5 — Using basic ESG data (M = 3.85), while simultaneously exhibiting the lowest mean current level (M = 2.20). This combination indicates that data literacy for ESG purposes is both less prioritised and less developed than other cross-cutting competencies, pointing to a potential gap in the understanding of how quantitative evidence can support sustainability governance in GLAM institutions. The relatively lower importance rating for this item may also reflect the limited familiarity of many cultural professionals with data-driven approaches to institutional management.

The uniformity of gap scores across all five items (range: 1.64–1.75) suggests that the deficit in cross-cutting ESG literacy is broad and systemic rather than concentrated in any single area. This has direct implications for training design: rather than targeting isolated knowledge gaps, effective interventions in this domain must address the foundational ESG literacy of cultural professionals as a whole.

7.2 Environmental (E) Competencies

Environmental competencies encompass the knowledge, skills, and institutional practices required to manage the ecological footprint of GLAM organisations, integrate environmental considerations into core operational and programmatic activities, and respond effectively to climate-related risks and regulatory obligations.

! *Domain average: Importance 4.28 | Current level 2.77 | Average gap 1.51 (High). Seven of eight items record gaps in the Moderate-to-High range; env7 is the single highest-gap item across the entire survey (Δ 1.88).*

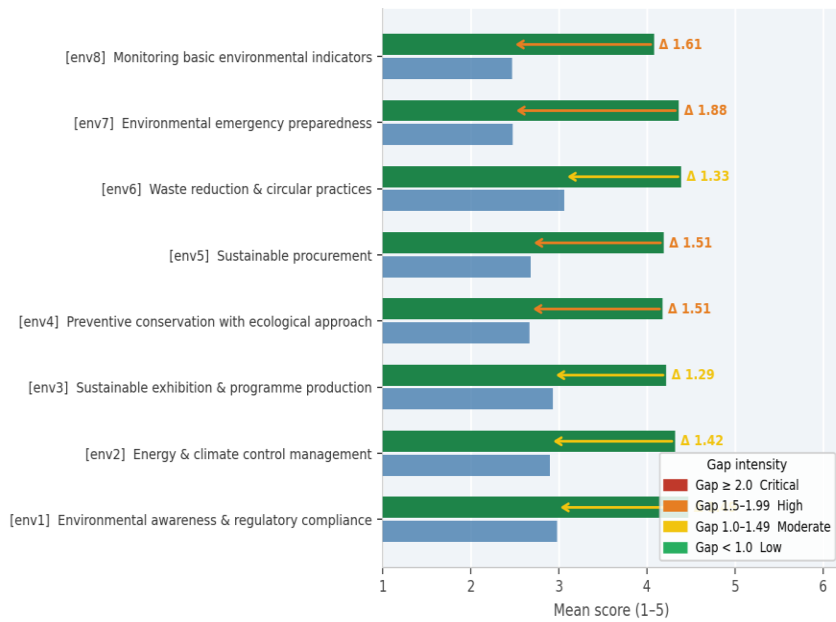

Figure 3. *Environmental (E) competencies — mean importance vs. current level*

Table 23*. Environmental (E) competencies — item-level descriptive statistics*

Code	Competency	Importance (M)	Current Level (M)	Gap	Intensity
env1	Environmental awareness & regulatory compliance	4.47	2.98	**1.49**	**Moderate**
env2	Energy & climate control management	4.32	2.90	**1.42**	**Moderate**
env3	Sustainable exhibition & programme production	4.22	2.93	**1.29**	**Moderate**
env4	Preventive conservation with ecological approach	4.18	2.67	**1.51**	**High**

env5	Sustainable procurement	4.19	2.68	**1.51**	**High**
env6	Waste reduction & circular practices	4.39	3.06	**1.33**	**Moderate**
env7	Environmental emergency preparedness	4.36	2.48	**1.88**	**High**
env8	Monitoring basic environmental indicators	4.08	2.47	**1.61**	**High**

The environmental domain is characterised by a wide spread of gap scores, ranging from 1.29 (env3) to 1.88 (env7), and by the highest single-item gap across the entire survey. The most critical finding concerns env7 — Environmental emergency preparedness (Δ 1.88), which combines a high importance rating (M = 4.36) with the second-lowest current level score in the domain (M = 2.48). This reflects a well-documented vulnerability in the GLAM sector: while awareness of climate-related risks to collections and infrastructure is growing, the institutional capacity to plan for and respond to environmental emergencies remains severely underdeveloped. This finding directly echoes the archives and museums related literature reviewed in Chapter 3, which identifies emergency preparedness as a persistent gap despite heightened risk awareness.

The second most significant gap in this domain is env8 — Monitoring basic environmental indicators (Δ 1.61, current level M = 2.47). This suggests that even the most operational dimension of environmental management — the systematic tracking of energy use, emissions, or resource consumption — is poorly developed across the sample. The absence of monitoring practices creates a structural impediment to ESG reporting and accountability, as any coherent sustainability governance framework requires reliable baseline data.

Environmental awareness and regulatory compliance (env1) records the highest importance rating in this domain (M = 4.47) and a relatively moderate gap (Δ 1.49), suggesting that general environmental awareness is more developed than specialised implementation capacities. Similarly, waste reduction and circular practices (env6) registers the highest current level score in the domain (M = 3.06) alongside a moderate gap (Δ 1.33), reflecting the relatively greater familiarity of GLAM institutions with everyday operational sustainability measures compared to more strategic or technical environmental management competencies.

7.3 Social (S) Competencies

Social competencies encompass the knowledge, skills, and practices required to foster inclusive access, meaningful community engagement, social accountability, and equitable participation in the activities and governance of GLAM institutions. This domain is closely aligned with the core missions of cultural organisations and reflects their long-standing role as public-interest institutions serving diverse communities.

!	*Domain average: Importance 4.47 | Current level 3.21 | Average gap 1.26 (Moderate). The social domain records the highest average importance rating across all four domains, but also the highest current level — reflecting stronger pre-existing practice.*

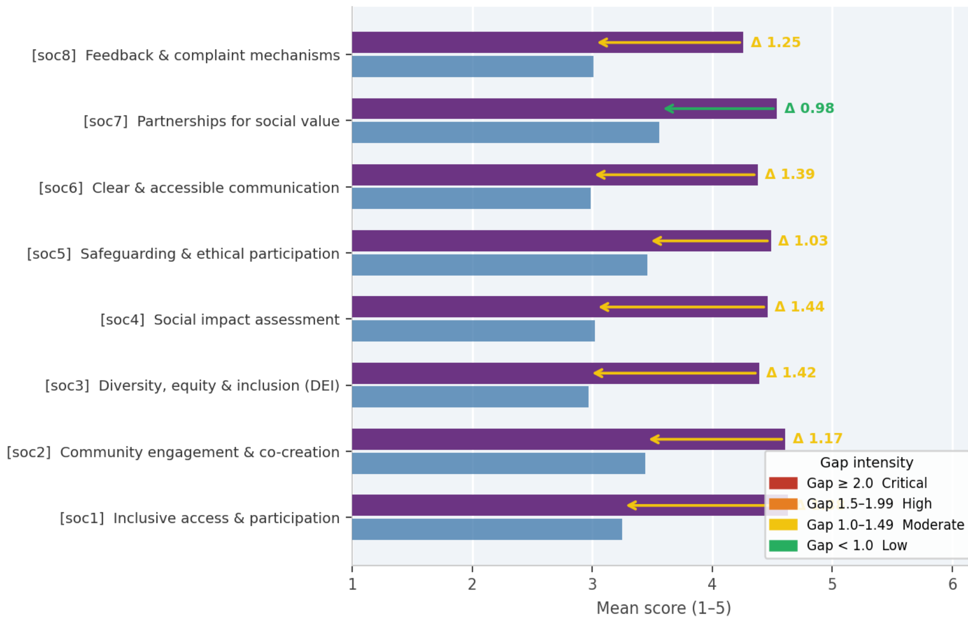

Figure 4. *Social (S) competencies — mean importance vs. current level*

Table 24. *Social (S) competencies — item-level descriptive statistics*

Code	Competency	Importance (M)	Current Level (M)	Gap	Intensity
soc1	Inclusive access & participation	4.63	3.25	**1.38**	**Moderate**
soc2	Community engagement & co-creation	4.61	3.44	**1.17**	**Moderate**
soc3	Diversity, equity & inclusion (DEI)	4.39	2.97	**1.42**	**Moderate**
soc4	Social impact assessment	4.46	3.02	**1.44**	**Moderate**
soc5	Safeguarding & ethical participation	4.49	3.46	**1.03**	**Moderate**
soc6	Clear & accessible communication	4.38	2.99	**1.39**	**Moderate**
soc6	Partnerships for social value	4.54	3.56	**0.98**	**Low**
soc8	Feedback & complaint mechanisms	4.26	3.01	**1.25**	**Moderate**

The social domain presents the most differentiated internal profile across all four domains, with gap scores ranging from 0.98 (soc7 — Partnerships for social value) to 1.44 (soc4 — Social impact assessment). Two items record low-intensity gaps below the 1.0 threshold: soc7 — Partnerships for social value (Δ 0.98) and soc5 — Safeguarding and ethical participation (Δ 1.03). These findings reflect areas of relative institutional strength in the GLAM sector, consistent with well-established professional practices related to inter-institutional collaboration and ethical community engagement.

The highest-priority items in this domain are soc4 — Social impact assessment (Δ 1.44) and soc3 — Diversity, equity and inclusion (Δ 1.42). The gap in social impact assessment is particularly significant, as it points to a persistent challenge identified in the state-of-the-art literature reviewed in Chapter 3: while GLAM institutions are strongly committed to generating social value, they lack the evaluation tools and methodological frameworks necessary to systematically assess and communicate that impact. The DEI gap, meanwhile, suggests that despite strong normative commitment to diversity and equity, practical implementation capacity remains uneven across the sample.

The two items recording the highest importance scores in the social domain — soc1 (Inclusive access and participation, M = 4.63) and soc2 (Community engagement and co-creation, M = 4.61) — correspond closely to the core public mission of GLAM institutions. Their moderate gap scores (Δ 1.38 and Δ 1.17 respectively) indicate that these are areas of genuine institutional strength, where existing practice is more developed than in other domains, yet further capacity development remains necessary. The relatively high current level for community engagement (M = 3.44) is the second-highest score recorded across all 29 competency items in the survey.

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

7.4 Governance (G) Competencies

Governance competencies encompass the institutional capacities required for ethical decision-making, transparent accountability, risk management, data protection, and the systematic integration of ESG principles into the planning and management structures of GLAM organisations. This domain reflects the extent to which ESG values are embedded in the governance architecture of cultural institutions, rather than addressed solely through operational or programmatic activities.

> **!** *Domain average: Importance 4.30 | Current level 3.05 | Average gap 1.25 (Moderate). The governance domain contains both the lowest-gap items across the entire survey (gov1, gov6) and two high-intensity items requiring urgent attention (gov4, gov5).*

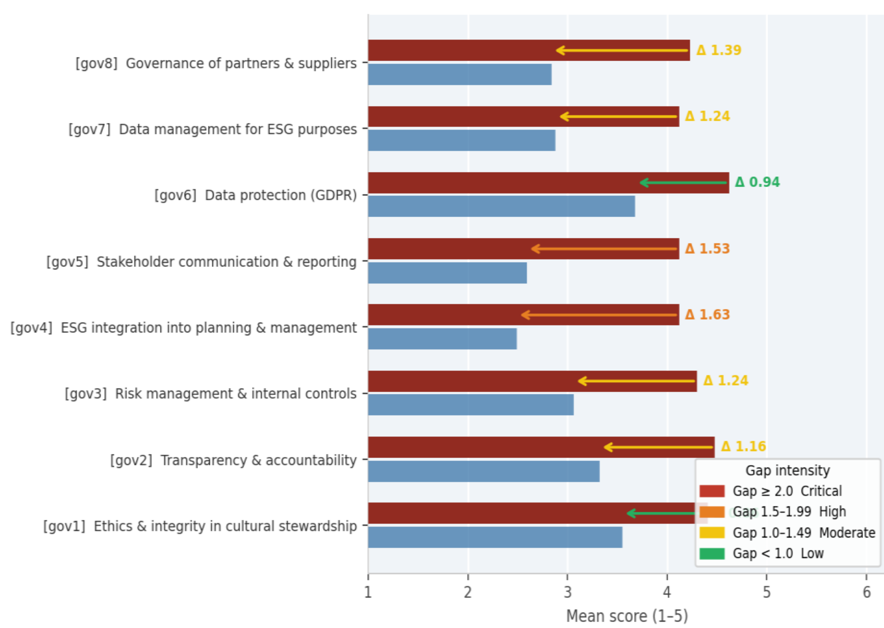

Figure 5. *Governance (G) competencies — mean importance vs. current level*

Table 25. *Governance (G) competencies — item-level descriptive statistics*

Code	Competency	Importance (M)	Current Level (M)	Gap	Intensity
gov1	Ethics & integrity in cultural stewardship	4.41	3.55	**0.86**	**Low**
gov2	Transparency & accountability	4.48	3.32	**1.16**	**Moderate**
gov3	Risk management & internal controls	4.30	3.06	**1.24**	**Moderate**
gov4	ESG integration into planning & management	4.12	2.49	**1.63**	**High**
gov5	Stakeholder communication & reporting	4.12	2.59	**1.53**	**High**
gov6	Data protection (GDPR)	4.62	3.68	**0.94**	**Low**
gov7	Data management for ESG purposes	4.12	2.88	**1.24**	**Moderate**
gov8	Governance of partners & suppliers	4.23	2.84	**1.39**	**Moderate**

The governance domain exhibits the most polarised internal profile of all four domains, juxtaposing two areas of established institutional strength with two items requiring urgent capacity development. Ethics and integrity in cultural stewardship (gov1) records the lowest competency gap across the entire survey (Δ 0.86), while Data protection — GDPR compliance (gov6) registers both the highest importance score in the governance domain (M = 4.62) and the highest current level score in the entire survey (M = 3.68), resulting in a low-intensity gap (Δ 0.94). These findings confirm that GLAM institutions have well-internalised ethical frameworks and data protection obligations, reflecting decades of professional norm-setting and the significant regulatory attention devoted to GDPR compliance across the European public sector.

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

In sharp contrast, the two items addressing the formal institutionalisation of ESG record high-intensity gaps. ESG integration into planning and management (gov4) registers a gap of 1.63, with a current level of only M = 2.49 — the lowest in the governance domain. Stakeholder communication and reporting on ESG (gov5) follows with a gap of 1.53 and a current level of M = 2.59. These findings are directly consistent with the ESG engagement data presented in Chapter 4, where formal ESG governance structures were found to be largely absent from the majority of surveyed organisations. The inability to integrate ESG into strategic planning processes and to communicate ESG performance to stakeholders represents a fundamental barrier to the systematic institutionalisation of sustainability in the GLAM sector.

Data management for ESG purposes (gov7), distinct from GDPR compliance, also registers a notable gap (Δ 1.24), suggesting that while data protection is well managed, the active and purposeful use of data to track, report, and improve ESG performance remains an underdeveloped capacity. Similarly, governance of partners and suppliers (gov8, Δ 1.39) indicates that value chain sustainability governance — an area of increasing importance in EU sustainability frameworks — has not yet been systematically addressed in most GLAM institutions.

8 Conclusion

The findings presented across this chapter reveal a consistent and structurally significant pattern: GLAM institutions recognise the importance of ESG competencies at a high level while simultaneously demonstrating a pronounced and pervasive deficit in organisational capacity to act on that recognition. With no domain recording an average competency gap below 1.25, and with the majority of individual items falling within the high-intensity range, the data do not support an interpretation of isolated or domain-specific weaknesses. Rather, they point to a systemic insufficiency in ESG readiness that cuts across all operational and governance dimensions of the cultural heritage sector.

The most analytically significant finding of this chapter is not any single competency gap in isolation, but the structural paradox observable within the governance domain. GLAM institutions demonstrate comparatively strong performance in areas grounded in long-established professional norms — ethics and integrity in cultural stewardship (gov1, Δ 0.86) and GDPR compliance (gov6, Δ 0.94) — yet record high-intensity gaps precisely where ESG governance must be formally institutionalised: in the integration of ESG into strategic planning and management (gov4, Δ 1.63) and in stakeholder communication and ESG reporting (gov5, Δ 1.53). This asymmetry indicates that cultural institutions possess the normative foundations for responsible governance but lack the institutional architecture necessary to translate those values into systematic and accountable practice.

The environmental domain further underscores this tension between awareness and capacity. Environmental emergency preparedness (env7) records the single largest competency gap across all 29 items surveyed (Δ 1.88), a finding that acquires particular urgency given the irreplaceable nature of the collections and infrastructure that GLAM institutions are responsible for safeguarding. That this gap co-exists with similarly underdeveloped competency in monitoring basic environmental indicators (env8, Δ 1.61) is especially consequential: without systematic measurement of environmental performance, institutions lack the evidential basis required for any coherent response to climate-related risk. The absence of monitoring practices thus constitutes a structural impediment not only to environmental management, but to ESG reporting and accountability more broadly.

The cross-cutting domain, recording the largest average gap of all four domains (Δ 1.68), presents a further diagnostic challenge. The near-uniform distribution of gap scores across all five items — with a range of only 0.11 — indicates that the deficit in foundational ESG literacy is both broad and undifferentiated, rather than concentrated in discrete areas amenable to targeted intervention. Particularly noteworthy in this context is the finding

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

that avoiding 'checkbox' approaches to ESG (cc4) is rated as the highest-importance item in the domain (M = 4.36), while simultaneously recording one of the lowest current level scores (M = 2.61). Respondents demonstrate acute awareness of the risks associated with compliance-driven or formulaic ESG adoption, yet the very conditions that produce such approaches — inadequate strategic commitment, limited data literacy, and the absence of integrative governance frameworks — remain substantially unaddressed.

The social domain provides the most nuanced picture, and the only one in which genuine areas of institutional strength are clearly discernible. The comparatively high current level scores for community engagement and co-creation (soc2, M = 3.44) and for partnerships for social value (soc7, M = 3.56) reflect decades of professional practice in community-oriented programming and inter-institutional collaboration, confirming that the core public mission of GLAM institutions has generated real and transferable organisational capacity. Nevertheless, the persistent gaps in social impact assessment (soc4, Δ 1.44) and diversity, equity and inclusion (soc3, Δ 1.42) indicate that existing practice has not yet been accompanied by the methodological frameworks and evaluation tools necessary to systematically assess, communicate, and improve social performance. The gap between doing and evidencing remains a defining challenge in this domain.

Taken together, the findings of this chapter do not describe institutions that are indifferent to ESG principles. They describe institutions that lack the operational and governance instruments required to embed those principles systematically. The priority for professional development and institutional capacity-building in the GLAM sector is therefore not the cultivation of awareness — which the importance scores across all domains confirm is already present — but the development of the concrete competencies through which ESG commitments can be measured, governed, reported, and continuously improved. Until that capacity is built, ESG engagement in the cultural heritage sector risks remaining a normative aspiration rather than an operational reality.

PART II

Focus Group Analysis

1.1 Introduction

This section presents the analysis of focus group sessions conducted within the ESG4GLAM project as part of the qualitative needs analysis phase. Focus groups were selected as a primary data collection method to capture collective, practice-based perspectives on ESG competency needs from groups of professionals sharing relevant institutional and professional contexts. The method enables the emergence of shared views, contested positions and experiential knowledge that may not surface through individual questionnaire responses.

The focus groups were organised and facilitated by each project partner in their respective country, following a common guide and reporting protocol developed by the consortium. This report synthesises the findings submitted by all six sessions, drawing on partner-compiled reports and, where available, full session transcripts. All findings presented in this part are grounded directly in the data submitted by partners; no interpretations have been introduced that cannot be traced to the underlying source material.

This part of the ESG Competency Needs Analysis Report should be read in conjunction with Part II, which presents findings from 34 individual expert interviews conducted across the same partner countries. The two methods were designed to be complementary: focus groups enabled depth through group deliberation and collective sense-making, while in-depth interviews added further depth through detailed one-to-one accounts, as well as breadth through the inclusion of diverse individual and organisational perspectives.

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

1.2 Objectives and Scope

The focus groups were designed to collect qualitative, practice-based insights that directly inform the ESG4GLAM project's core deliverables: the European ESG competency framework for the GLAM sector, the e-learning training course, and the ESG Knowledge Box. Specifically, the focus groups were designed to address the following research objectives:

- To assess the current level of ESG awareness and implementation across GLAM institutions in partner countries.
- To identify existing practices, strengths, challenges and limitations related to the environmental, social and governance dimensions of ESG in cultural institutions.
- To determine the most significant ESG competency gaps and unmet training needs among GLAM professionals.
- To understand stakeholder preferences regarding education formats, learning approaches and professional development pathways.
- To collect stakeholder-informed recommendations for the design of the ESG4GLAM training course and Knowledge Box.

The scope of the focus groups encompassed professionals working in or with the GLAM sector across four partner countries: Italy, Finland, Latvia and Serbia. Participants were identified by project partners based on their professional relevance to the project's target groups. Each partner was asked to focus on a specific stakeholder profile most relevant to their institutional context, while ensuring sufficient diversity of roles and perspectives within their session. The scope explicitly excludes perspectives from non-partner countries and from GLAM sub-sectors not represented in the participant groups.

A note on the scope of this analysis: because focus group findings were submitted by partners using a standardised reporting template (Section 3 of the Focus Group Guide), rather than being centrally coded from raw transcripts in all cases, the analysis reflects partner-reported findings rather than primary analysis of session recordings in all instances. Full transcripts were available and used for two of the six sessions (Latvia and Finland/HUMAK).

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Research design

The focus group component of the ESG4GLAM needs analysis was designed as a multi-site, multi-country qualitative study using a structured guide to ensure cross-partner comparability. The design adopted a "hybrid" focus group model in which all sessions were conducted online (via Microsoft Teams or equivalent platforms), enabling participation from geographically distributed professionals while maintaining the interactive, group dynamics that are central to focus group methodology. The decision to conduct sessions online was a pragmatic response to the multi-country structure of the project and the institutional constraints of participants.

A common focus group guide was developed by the consortium to ensure thematic consistency across all sessions. Each session was facilitated by the local partner, enabling culturally and linguistically appropriate moderation while adhering to a shared thematic framework. The guide included probing questions tailored to four stakeholder profiles, ensuring that discussions could be adapted to the composition of each group while covering the same substantive themes.

1.3.2 Development of the focus group guide

The focus group guide was developed collaboratively by the ESG4GLAM consortium and structured around five thematic areas of questioning, preceded by a standardised moderator introduction covering the project background and purpose of the session. The thematic areas were: (1) understanding ESG in the GLAM sector; (2) learning approaches and capacity-building interventions; (3) challenges and barriers to ESG competency development; (4) validation and assessment of ESG competencies; and (5) recognition of ESG competencies. A final open question invited additional reflections.

For each thematic area, specific probing questions were provided for four stakeholder profiles: GLAM professionals in operational and curatorial roles; GLAM management and leadership; education and training providers (HEIs and VET institutions); and policy and funding stakeholders. This design allowed moderators to direct discussion toward the perspectives most relevant to the composition of their session.

A standardised reporting template (Section 3 of the Focus Group Guide) was developed alongside the question guide, specifying the minimum reporting requirements for each session: a summary of key issues and ideas discussed by stakeholder category; notable unexpected findings; identified ESG competency needs; competencies grouped by stakeholder category; and final remarks. This template was used by all partners to submit their findings.

1.3.3 Participant selection and recruitment

Each project partner was responsible for recruiting approximately ten participants for their session, focusing on stakeholder groups most relevant to their institutional context and professional networks. The recruitment criteria required that participants share a common GLAM-related professional background while representing sufficient diversity to generate productive discussion of varying perspectives. Participants were recruited through partners' professional networks, institutional contacts and sector associations.

Across the six sessions, participants were drawn from a range of professional backgrounds including library directors and staff, museum curators and managers, archivists, university academics and researchers that work with GLAM organisations, policy and governance actors, and professionals from the cultural production and festival sector with experience of collaborating with the GLAM organisations. Partners were guided to record participants' roles, organisations and quintuple helix sector affiliations (Education, Industry, Policy, Society, Environment) in the standardised participant table, though not all fields were consistently completed across all submissions.

Consent for recording was confirmed at the start of each session, in accordance with the project's data management procedures.

1.3.4 Session conduct and recording

All six sessions were conducted online between March and May 2026. Session duration was not standardised but followed a common structure: brief project introduction and consent confirmation, followed by moderated discussion across the five thematic areas, and a closing invitation for final remarks. Sessions were recorded to support accurate reporting.

Two partners produced full verbatim transcripts of their sessions: Jelgava City Library (Latvia, 3 March 2026) and Humak University of Applied Sciences (Finland, 13 April 2026). The remaining four partners submitted findings using the standardised Section 3 reporting template without accompanying transcripts. These differences in documentation are taken into account in the analysis.

1.3.5 Data analysis approach

The analysis presented in this report is a thematic synthesis of all six partner submissions. Where full transcripts were available (Latvia and Finland/HUMAK), the synthesis was informed by direct reading of the transcript alongside the partner's Section 3 report. For the remaining four sessions, the analysis is based exclusively on the partner-submitted Section 3 reports.

The synthesis was organised thematically, following the five thematic areas of the focus group guide. Within each theme, findings were further organised by stakeholder category where the data permitted. Cross-session patterns — views shared across multiple sessions and countries — are distinguished from session-specific insights by the language used: "across sessions" or "consistently" for patterns, and "in the [country/session]" for session-specific observations.

Agreement n° 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

This analysis does not claim to represent the GLAM sector as a whole; it reflects the views of the participants recruited within the project's partner network. Caution should be exercised in generalising findings beyond the participant populations represented.

1.4 Overview of Focus Groups Conducted

1.4.1 Sessions

Six focus group sessions were conducted across four partner countries between March and May 2026. The table 1 below provides an overview of all sessions, including partner institution, country, session date, format, participant count and primary stakeholder focus.

Table 1

Partner institution	Country	Date	Format	Participants	Primary stakeholder focus
Jelgava City Library	Latvia	3 March 2026	Online	12	Cross-sector: GLAM professionals, management, education, policy and funding
Mazzini Lab (with Civita Mostre e Musei, Arte Generali, Museion, Muse, Archivio Storico Olivetti, ANAI)	Italy	26 March 2026	Online	10	Cross-sector: GLAM professionals, management, governance
Mazzini Lab (with Poltrona Frau Museum)	Italy	17 April 2026	Online	3	GLAM professionals and management (corporate museum context)
University of Novi Sad	Serbia	6 May 2026	Online	7	Education and training providers (university sector)
Forum Marinum	Finland	19 May 2026	Online	3	GLAM professionals (museum sector)

Humak University of Applied Sciences	Finland	13 April 2026	Online	8	GLAM professionals and management; education and training providers, and professional networks representives invited with a purpose of a special focus on Galleries situations.

Participant counts exclude session moderators and project team members. For the Italy sessions (26 March and 17 April 2026), moderators from Mazzini Lab (Michele Magini and Francesca Peyron) facilitated but are not counted as participants. For the Forum Marinum session, total confirmed participants were 3. Total across all sessions: 43.

1.4.2 Participant profile

The 43 participants across the six sessions were classified according to the quintuple helix framework used throughout the ESG4GLAM project (Education, Industry, Policy, Society, Environment). Classification was based on the primary sector designation recorded in partner submissions; where dual designations were recorded, the primary sector listed first was used for counting purposes.

Table 2.

Quintuple helix sector	No. of participants	Primary institutional base
Industry	17	Museum curators, gallery and festival professionals, corporate museum staff, archivists in professional roles, professional networks' leaders.
Society	15	Library directors and staff; cultural professionals with a primary social and community mandate
Education	10	University academics and researchers; education-sector professionals
Policy	1	National ministry-level public administration
Environment	0	No participants classified primarily under this sector; some held secondary environmental designations alongside Industry or Society

The low representation of Policy stakeholders and the absence of Environment-primary respondents reflects the composition of professional networks accessible through the project's partner institutions. These gaps should be noted in the interpretation of findings related to governance and environmental policy.

1.5 Findings

This section presents the thematic findings from the six focus group sessions, organised around the five thematic areas covered by the focus group guide. Findings are presented as a synthesis across all sessions; session-specific observations are attributed to their respective partners where relevant. Stakeholder category perspectives are distinguished within each theme where the data supports such differentiation.

1.5.1 Current ESG integration in the GLAM sector

Across all six sessions, participants described a sector in which ESG-relevant practices are widespread but remain largely unlabelled, fragmented and operationally unstructured. The dominant mode of engagement with ESG in the institutions represented was project-based, primarily through EU-funded initiatives and Erasmus+ partnerships. Strategic ESG integration — in the form of formal policies, institutional frameworks or ESG-linked reporting — was present in a minority of larger or publicly mandated institutions, while informal engagement — where sustainability values inform practice without a defined framework — was the most common condition across smaller institutions.

The "Social" dimension of ESG was consistently identified across all sessions and countries as the most developed. Participants described social inclusion, accessibility, community engagement and equal access to cultural resources as already embedded in the core mission and daily practice of GLAM institutions — particularly libraries. This embeddedness predates the ESG framework and does not depend on it; rather, participants noted that ESG offers a potential umbrella under which existing social practices could be made more visible and systematically assessed.

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

The Environmental dimension showed the widest variation. In sessions where participants came from institutions with direct environmental mandates or physically embedded sustainability responsibilities — the Italian science museum (MUSE, Trento), the corporate museum embedded in a furniture group with ongoing environmental KPIs, and the Austrian heritage castle with park management obligations — environmental practice was described as structured, measurable and strategically owned. In contrast, for library-focused sessions and art-oriented institutions, environmental practice was present but informal: recycling procedures, reduction of printed materials, energy-conscious operations, without formal indicators or reporting.

The Governance dimension was consistently identified as the least developed. Participants across all sessions noted that governance-related competencies — institutional transparency, accountability, ethical decision-making, stakeholder reporting and participation structures — receive the least explicit attention in GLAM institutions, despite being implicitly present in management and funding structures. The Italian session with Mazzini Lab highlighted that even at higher institutional levels, ESG governance is often treated as a bureaucratic or contractual requirement rather than a meaningful organisational practice.

Notable session-specific observations

The Poltrona Frau Museum session (Italy) introduced a distinctive institutional context: a corporate museum operating under the ESG strategy of its parent company, where environmental KPIs (emission reductions, renewable energy use) are tracked at group level rather than at the cultural unit. Management's primary concern was avoiding "greenwashing" risk in any training or certification it endorses on behalf of staff. The museum's most developed ESG practice was sustainability storytelling: translating corporate ESG values into visitor-facing narratives about circularity, material provenance and product durability, including cross-cultural adaptation for international visitor groups.

The Latvian session highlighted the particular position of libraries within the ESG landscape: as open public institutions with constant frontline engagement with all social groups, libraries described the social dimension not as a programme or project but as the structural condition of daily operations. Library professionals in the Latvian session also raised the broader idea of institutional resilience — including digital sustainability and preparedness for environmental disruptions — as a developing understanding of what sustainability means in a library context.

1.5.2 ESG competency needs

Participants across all sessions were broadly consistent in identifying the competencies they consider most essential for GLAM professionals today. These can be grouped into four clusters.

The first and most consistently named cluster concerns practical implementation competencies: the ability to translate ESG principles into concrete everyday institutional actions, including in service design, exhibition production, procurement, communication and community programming. Participants emphasised that theoretical understanding of ESG is insufficient; what is needed is operational capability to apply principles within the specific constraints of GLAM work.

The second cluster concerns social and inclusion competencies: accessibility and universal design, inclusive audience development, responsiveness to diverse and vulnerable communities, and the interpersonal skills needed to co-create services and programmes with the people they are designed to serve. These competencies were described as central across all stakeholder groups, reflecting the primacy of the Social dimension noted above.

The third cluster concerns governance and strategic competencies: ethical decision-making, institutional transparency and accountability, ESG integration into strategic planning and budgeting, and the management competencies needed to move ESG from isolated projects to systemic institutional practice. These were identified particularly by management-level participants and education providers.

The fourth cluster concerns impact assessment and reporting competencies: the ability to define relevant indicators, collect meaningful data, document outcomes, communicate institutional impact, and use evaluation results for continuous improvement. This cluster was identified as currently least present across all sessions.

Education and training providers in the Serbian session added a structural observation: ESG-related content is already present in university curricula through subjects such as cultural tourism, heritage management, environmental management and governance, but it is embedded implicitly and unevenly rather than as a defined, assessed ESG competency. The translation of existing disciplinary content into an explicit ESG competency framework — with defined learning outcomes and assessable criteria — was identified as the primary task for higher education actors in this field.

1.5.3 Competency gaps

Participants in all six sessions located the most significant competency gaps at two levels: the operational and the governance/management.

At the operational level, the central gap is the disconnect between awareness and action. Participants described a sector in which professionals broadly understand that ESG matters and can articulate its principles, but lack the specific procedural knowledge, tools and institutional guidance to act on that understanding systematically. Typical examples cited across sessions included: planning exhibitions or public events without structured consideration of environmental impact or resource use; implementing accessibility measures in isolated, ad hoc ways rather than through institutional frameworks; and engaging communities reactively rather than through deliberate co-design processes.

At the governance and management level, the gap lies in embedding ESG within institutional strategy, budgeting and culture rather than leaving it dependent on the motivation of individual staff members. A pattern identified across multiple sessions was the fragility of ESG-related initiatives: when the motivated individual who drove them leaves, or when management priorities shift, initiatives collapse. The Italian sessions in particular highlighted the risk that ESG becomes reduced to compliance or reporting obligations that do not change institutional practice.

Across these areas, impact measurement emerges as a key gap: the ability to define what ESG success looks like for a specific institution, collect evidence of progress, and communicate results credibly. This gap was described as both technical (lack of appropriate indicators and tools) and cultural (lack of a measurement orientation in professions historically focused on preservation and public access).

Causes of the gaps

When asked about the primary causes of competency gaps, participants across all sessions converged on structural and institutional explanations rather than individual deficits. The most frequently cited factors were: a lack of time and staff capacity, with ESG seen as an additional task on top of existing workloads; the absence of dedicated budgets for professional development in areas not legally mandated; the absence of clear sector-specific frameworks and tools that would tell practitioners what ESG practice looks like in a library, museum, gallery or archive; and the role of management in either enabling or blocking competency development, with management commitment described as the decisive variable.

In the Austrian and Finnish sessions (the latter available via transcript), structural factors specific to national contexts were also cited: the absence of a national library law in Austria, which leaves libraries without a formal mandate that would anchor ESG obligations; and in Finland, the dependence of most ESG-related development on project-based funding that cannot generate lasting systemic change.

1.5.4 Learning approaches and capacity building

Participants across all sessions expressed strong and consistent preferences for practical, applied and peer-oriented learning formats over theoretical or purely digital instruction. The key principles for effective ESG capacity building identified across sessions were:

- Grounding in real institutional tasks: the most valued learning takes place in direct connection with actual work situations, cases and institutional challenges rather than through abstract frameworks.
- Interactive and facilitated formats: dialogue, collective reflection and peer exchange were rated highly. Standalone materials (guides, videos) were noted as frequently underused without structured facilitated engagement.
- Mentoring and peer learning: learning from practitioners in similar institutions, including through Erasmus+ mobility, was described as among the most transformative development experiences available in the sector.
- Modular and flexible formats: short, targeted modules accessible around existing professional commitments were preferred over extended formal programmes. This reflected the significant time constraints reported universally.
- Blended learning: a combination of online modules for foundational knowledge and in-person or facilitated sessions for practical application and networking was endorsed as the most practical sustainable model.

E-learning was viewed positively as a vehicle for basic understanding and an efficient use of constrained time, but consistently described as insufficient on its own for developing operational ESG competencies, which are context-dependent and require practice, feedback and reflection.

Micro-credentials and certificates were broadly supported across sessions, with an important condition: they must be issued by a credible, recognised body. In the Italian corporate museum session, this was framed explicitly as a greenwashing risk management issue for institutional employers. In the Latvian session, the value of certification was linked to its capacity to create shared professional standards and enable recognition beyond the individual institution.

The Serbian session (education providers) highlighted the importance of designing training that enables educators themselves to translate ESG into GLAM-specific learning outcomes — not just communicating ESG concepts, but building the curricular and assessment competencies needed to embed ESG in professional training programmes.

1.5.5 Institutional and systemic challenges

The barriers to ESG competency development identified across the six focus groups were consistent in their structural character: they were not primarily barriers to motivation or understanding, but of resources, time, guidance and institutional conditions.

Financial constraints were the most universally cited barrier. Many GLAM institutions operate with limited public budgets that prioritise core functions, leaving little dedicated capacity for professional development in areas not mandated by law or required by funders. This constraint falls most heavily on smaller institutions, which are also those with the fewest staff and the least internal capacity to generate change.

Short-term and project-based funding cycles were identified as a systemic structural problem that affects every aspect of ESG capacity building. Participants across the Italian, Finnish and Latvian sessions described a pattern in which ESG-related initiatives are developed under project funding and collapse when that funding ends, because there is no sustainable institutional infrastructure to carry the work forward.

The perception of ESG as an additional compliance obligation was noted in multiple sessions as a significant cultural barrier. When ESG enters institutions primarily through external reporting requirements — funding criteria, regulatory obligations — it is experienced as an administrative burden rather than as an opportunity for institutional development. This framing limits engagement and reduces the likelihood of genuine competency development.

Internal communication and coordination barriers were described in several sessions: large institutions with complex multi-site structures found it particularly difficult to develop coherent sector-wide ESG competency strategies.

Governance structures and funding mechanisms were identified as having a decisive enabling or constraining influence. Where ESG is embedded in funding criteria, evaluation requirements or institutional strategies, it becomes operational and taken seriously. Where it remains optional, it competes unsuccessfully with more immediate priorities.

1.5.6 Validation and recognition of ESG competencies

Across all sessions, participants confirmed that no formal, standardised or sector-specific system for recognising or assessing ESG competencies currently exists in the GLAM sector. Where recognition does occur, it is indirect and usually linked to project outputs, performance reviews, institutional awards or qualification frameworks in adjacent disciplines.

Several examples of existing recognition mechanisms were identified. In Austria, sectoral awards and quality labels, such as the Museum Quality Seal and inclusion-related awards, were described as having practical institutional impact. These mechanisms can bring dedicated funding, support changes in staff attitudes and enable cross-institutional knowledge exchange. In Italy, another relevant example was the use of staff ESG training hours as a key performance indicator within corporate sustainability reporting frameworks.

When asked about preferred validation approaches, participants across the sessions converged around several shared principles. Validation should be based on evidence of practical application rather than attendance or course completion alone. It should be delivered through flexible and modular formats that are accessible to working professionals. Any credentials issued should be backed by a credible and recognised body in order to carry institutional value. At the same time, validation mechanisms should avoid creating reporting burdens that exceed the capacity of small or under-resourced institutions.

Alignment with European frameworks, particularly the European Qualifications Framework, was broadly regarded as important for ensuring the portability and comparability of ESG credentials across countries and institutions. However, participants also emphasised that such alignment should function as a structural reference point rather than as a limiting constraint. Competency definitions should be adapted to the specific realities of GLAM work, rather than forced into generic qualification descriptors that do not reflect professional practice in the sector.

Overall, the findings suggest that future ESG competency recognition in the GLAM sector should combine credibility, flexibility and practical relevance. Recognition systems should support professional development and institutional change without adding unnecessary administrative complexity.

1.5.7 Future outlook and recommendations

When asked about the changes most needed for more effective ESG integration in the GLAM sector, participants across sessions consistently identified the following priorities:

- A sector-specific, practical ESG competency framework that translates ESG principles into concrete professional roles, responsibilities and actions within GLAM institutions, without relying on generic corporate models that do not fit the cultural sector's operating conditions.
- An operational toolkit: checklists, templates, self-assessment instruments, practical examples and decision-support resources that institutions can use directly without requiring extensive prior ESG expertise.
- Cross-sector and cross-institutional networks for peer learning and knowledge exchange. Participants in multiple sessions noted that the GLAM sector remains divided by institution type, with libraries, museums, galleries and archives operating in separate professional circles. A shared learning infrastructure that bridges these divisions was identified as a significant missing resource.

- Longer-term and more predictable funding support for ESG capacity building, designed to outlast individual project cycles.
- National-language accessibility of ESG materials. Participants in Latvia, Serbia and Austria noted that materials only available in English limit the practical uptake of ESG tools by professionals in non-English-speaking institutional environments.

Looking ahead to the next five to ten years, participants identified digital sustainability and AI governance as the most rapidly emerging competency needs: understanding the environmental and social costs of digital infrastructure, AI tools and online services is currently underdeveloped across all sub-sectors and will become increasingly critical as digital adoption accelerates.

A successful outcome for the ESG4GLAM project was described consistently as a framework and toolkit that professionals recognise as naming and organising things they already do or aspire to do — not as a new external agenda, but as a shared language and practical structure for making existing sustainability commitments more visible, assessable and transferable.

1.6 Conclusions

The six focus group sessions conducted across Italy, Finland, Latvia and Serbia produced a coherent and internally consistent picture of the ESG competency landscape in the GLAM sector, despite the diversity of institutional contexts, national settings and stakeholder profiles represented.

The central finding of this part of the needs analysis is that ESG-related practice is already widespread in the sector, but remains structurally invisible, fragmented and unsustained. GLAM institutions engage with sustainability, inclusion and responsible governance as part of their core mission, but do so without frameworks that make these practices recognisable as ESG competencies, without tools that enable systematic assessment of current levels or progress, and without the institutional infrastructure to sustain competency development beyond individual motivation or project funding.

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

The Social dimension is the most developed and the most institutionally embedded, reflecting the inherent social mission of libraries, museums, archives and galleries. The Governance dimension is the least developed and the least visible, despite being structurally decisive: it is governance — in the form of management commitment, resource allocation and institutional decision-making — that ultimately determines whether ESG competency development is supported or left to individual initiative. The Environmental dimension is unevenly developed, most advanced where it is directly embedded in an institution's physical context or statutory mission.

The most significant competency gaps are structural rather than attitudinal: they reflect the absence of clear frameworks, practical tools, sector-specific guidance and institutional support — not a lack of motivation or interest. Closing these gaps requires systemic change at institutional, sectoral and policy levels, not only the provision of more training.

The ESG4GLAM project's response to these findings should prioritise: a practical, modular competency framework adapted to GLAM realities; an operational Knowledge Box built around tools that can be used without extensive prior expertise; learning formats that are short, flexible, peer-based and grounded in real institutional tasks; and a recognition system built on demonstrated capability rather than attendance, issued by credible bodies, and accessible to institutions of all sizes.

PART III

Expert Interview Analysis

1.1 Introduction

This section presents the analysis of expert interviews conducted within the ESG4GLAM project's qualitative needs analysis phase. Individual semi-structured interviews were designed to complement the focus groups conducted in parallel: while focus groups generated collective, deliberative perspectives within shared professional communities, the interviews were designed to gather detailed, individual accounts from a geographically and institutionally broader range of practitioners, researchers and sector representatives.

The interviews extend the geographic scope of partners countries: Finland, Italy, Latvia and Serbia of the needs analysis to include Austria, and broaden the institutional scope to encompass museum workers' unions, national museum associations, ICOM national committees and cross-sector research organisations — stakeholder types not represented in the focus group sessions. The combination of these two methods provides a richer and more differentiated evidence base for the ESG4GLAM competency framework and training design.

All findings presented in this part are grounded directly in the data collected from 34 respondents. No claims are made that exceed what the data supports, and appropriate distinctions are maintained between findings from verbatim interview transcripts and those from edited summaries or written questionnaire responses.

1.2 Objectives and Scope

The expert interviews were designed to address the same set of research objectives as the focus groups, enabling cross-method triangulation of findings:

- To assess the current level of ESG awareness and integration across GLAM institutions and related educational and representational bodies.
- To identify the most significant ESG competency needs and gaps at operational, management and governance levels.
- To understand practitioner and expert preferences regarding learning formats, capacity building approaches and professional development pathways.
- To identify the main institutional and systemic barriers to ESG competency development.
- To collect expert views on the validation and recognition of ESG competencies.
- To gather forward-looking perspectives on the ESG competencies that will become most critical in the next five to ten years.

The scope of the interviews encompasses professionals, researchers and sector representatives working in or with the GLAM sector across five countries: Latvia, Serbia, Finland, Austria and Italy. The Finnish interview programme, coordinated by Humak University of Applied Sciences, was particularly extensive and included respondents from museum associations, professional unions and ICOM Finland, giving the Finnish dataset a broader sectoral governance dimension than the interview data from other countries.

Three Austrian respondents explicitly requested that their names and institutional affiliations not be published. Their contributions are fully included in the thematic analysis; where their individual perspectives are highlighted, they are attributed as “an anonymous respondent” with their general professional context (country, institutional type, area of responsibility) indicated. This approach preserves the integrity of the data while honouring participants’ confidentiality requests.

The interview data does not constitute a representative sample of the GLAM sector in any of the five countries. Respondents were recruited through the professional networks of project partners and should be understood as purposive informants — individuals with relevant expertise and practice-based knowledge — rather than as a statistically representative population.

1.3 Methodology

1.3.1 Research design

The expert interview component of the ESG4GLAM needs analysis used a mixed-mode design in which a common structured questionnaire guide was administered in two formats: as a written online questionnaire (for respondents in Latvia, Serbia, Italy and Austria) and as a video interview conducted and recorded by Humak University of Applied Sciences (for Finnish respondents). This approach was chosen to maximise reach across partner countries while enabling the depth of spoken interaction that video interviews provide.

The use of a common guide across both formats ensures thematic consistency and comparability of findings. The qualitative differences between written and spoken responses are taken into account in the analysis: written questionnaire responses tend to be more structured and pre-edited, while video interview data captures spontaneous elaboration, nuance and conversational dynamics that written responses may not. Where these differences are analytically significant, they are noted.

1.3.2 Development of the interview guide

The interview guide was developed by the ESG4GLAM consortium and consisted of 21 questions structured across eight thematic blocks: (A) Background and context; (B) Current ESG integration in the GLAM sector; (C) ESG competency needs and gaps; (D) Education, training and capacity building; (E) Institutional and systemic challenges; (F) Validation and recognition of ESG competencies; (G) Future outlook and recommendations; and (H) Final open question. The guide was designed to elicit both descriptive accounts of current conditions and normative views about what is needed.

For video interviews, moderators used the guide flexibly, following respondent-led elaborations and returning to guide questions as appropriate. For written questionnaire respondents, all questions were presented in sequence. Both versions concluded with an invitation for any additional reflections the respondent considered relevant.

The interview guide was made available to respondents in advance of their session or questionnaire completion, enabling them to prepare considered responses.

The final interview guide used for data collection is provided in Appendix A.

1.3.3 Respondent identification and selection

Respondents were identified through the professional networks of project partners in each participating country. The aim was to include individuals with direct professional experience in or with the GLAM sector, covering different levels of engagement, including practitioners, managers, researchers, trainers and sector representatives.

No formal sampling framework was applied. Instead, the selection followed a purposive approach, designed to capture a range of institution types, professional roles and sub-sectors within the GLAM field.

The Finnish interview programme was expanded beyond the initial project tracking dataset to include additional respondents identified during the data collection phase. These additional respondents were recruited as part of the Finnish interview process and are fully included in the analysis, although they were not recorded in the project's initial tracking spreadsheet.
Three Austrian respondents completed separate interview documents rather than the online questionnaire and requested that their identities not be published. Their inclusion in the analysis was initiated by the Finnish partner – Forum Marinum and confirmed by the project team. Overall, the respondent group should therefore be understood as a purposively selected expert and practitioner sample rather than a statistically representative sample of the GLAM sector.

1.3.4 Interview conduct and recording

Written questionnaire responses were collected through an online survey platform between March and June 2026. Respondents completed the questionnaire independently and without a time limit. The majority of responses were submitted in English. One response was submitted in Latvian, while another was submitted partially in Italian. These non-English responses were translated and summarised into English for the purposes of the analysis.

The Finnish video interviews were conducted between March and June 2026 by the partner institution responsible for the Finnish data collection. The sessions lasted approximately 30 to 60 minutes. All interviews were recorded with participant consent.

A portion of the Finnish interviews was transcribed verbatim from the recordings, while the remaining interviews were compiled as edited summaries based on the recordings. For some interviews, AI-assisted translation from Finnish was used as part of the preparation process, followed by final review and correction by the interviewer.

One original video recording from April 2026 has been retained as source documentation alongside the corresponding edited summary. Together, the written questionnaire responses, verbatim transcripts, edited summaries and retained recording form the empirical basis for this part of the analysis.

1.3.5 Data processing and analysis approach

The analysis was conducted thematically, following the eight thematic blocks of the interview guide. All 34 responses were read in full; written questionnaire responses were analysed directly from the submitted text, while video interview data was analysed from verbatim transcripts (for Respondents 22–26) and from edited summaries (for Respondents 27–31). The distinction between verbatim and summarised sources is maintained in the presentation of findings: direct quotations are drawn only from written questionnaire responses and verbatim transcripts; findings from edited summaries are presented as paraphrased insights attributed to the named respondent.

Cross-respondent patterns — views expressed by multiple respondents independently — are distinguished from individual observations by phrasing such as “across respondents” or “multiple respondents noted.” Session-specific or individual observations are attributed by name or, where anonymity was requested, by general professional context.

The analysis does not apply formal thematic coding or quantitative content analysis methods. It is a qualitative synthesis designed to identify patterns, contrasts and notable individual contributions within the dataset, in service of the project’s competency framework and training design objectives.

1.4 Profile of Respondents

A total of 34 respondents are included in this analysis, representing GLAM institutions, higher education institutions, cultural sector associations, professional unions and research organisations across five countries. The table below provides the full respondent list. The inclusion of these three Austrian respondents was made possible through Forum Marinum, the Finnish project partner, who invited them to take part in the interview process.

#	Name / Attribution	Organisation	Country	GLAM type / Role profile
1	Danijela Ćirić Lalić	Univ. of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences	Serbia	HEI — Professor, Project Management
2	Aija Jankava	Olaine Secondary School No. 1	Latvia	Library — School library head
3	Iluta Stanga	Madona Regional Library	Latvia	Library — Head of Children’s Literature Dept.
4	Maja Petrović	Univ. of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences	Serbia	HEI — Researcher, environmental management

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

5	Ruta Bokta	Gulbene Regional Library	Latvia	Library — Adult education specialist
6	Vanja Pavluković	Univ. of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences	Serbia	HEI — Professor, tourism & heritage management
7	Marijana Topo	Videomedeja	Serbia	Gallery/Festival — PR & communications
8	Miroslav Vujičić	Univ. of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences	Serbia	HEI — Full Professor, cultural tourism
9	Milica Solarević	Minds Europe (MEI)	Serbia	Research/Museum sector — Head of Strategic Growth
10	Uglješa Stankov	Univ. of Novi Sad, Faculty of Sciences	Serbia	HEI — Lecturer, IT & cultural tourism
11	Baiba Ivane	Salaspils County Library	Latvia	Library — Director & local studies coordinator
12	Elīna Skutele	Ādolfa Alunāna Memorial Museum	Latvia	Museum — Museum head
13	Alina Puce	Valmiera Library	Latvia	Library — Head of adult services
14	Zigrida Gorsvane	Rezekne Central library	Latvia	Library — Director
15	Stefano Armellin ‡	The Opera Collection	Italy	Museum/Gallery/Library — Founder
16	Anne Holappa	Humak University of Applied Sciences	Finland	Library (HEI) — Library team lead
17	Timothy Kühn	Galleriaia & SaltFest	Finland	Gallery/Festival — Co-founder & gallerist
18	Kristine Deksne	National Library of Latvia	Latvia	Library — Library development expert
19	Māra Jēkabsone §	Jurmala Central Library	Latvia	Library — Director
20	Aiga Volkova	Miezītes Library	Latvia	Library — Library services specialist

21	Linda Langenfelde	Jelgava City Library	Latvia	Library — Deputy Director
22	Maija Mäki	University of Turku	Finland	Museum/HEI — University lecturer, museology
23	Lotta Höök	Library, University of Lapland	Finland	Library (HEI) — Cataloguer & sustainability group
24	Helka Ketonen	Assoc. for Rural Culture and Education	Finland	Gallery/Museum/NGO — Director
25	Sanna Karimäki-Nuutinen	Univ. of Jyväskylä / City of Rauma	Finland	Museum/Gallery/HEI — Researcher, cultural sustainability
26	Mirkka Kallio	Kymenlaakso Museum / Maritime Centre Velamo, Kotka	Finland	Museum — Curator, regional museum
27	Pauliina Kinanen ¶	Finnish Museums Association (Museoliitto)	Finland	Museum sector — Training Specialist
28	Minna Turtiainen ¶	Kerava Museum / Chair, ICOM Finland	Finland	Museum — Collection manager; ICOM Finland Chair
29	Timo Kuru ¶	Lappeenranta City Library	Finland	Library — Specialist librarian, events & exhibitions
30	Sonja Vistala ¶	KAMU Espoo City Museum	Finland	Museum — Project coordinator, learning services
31	Tuulia-Tuulia Tummavuori ¶	MAL — Union of Museum & Cultural Heritage Professionals	Finland	Museum/Heritage sector — Union professional
32	Anonymous (at respondent's request)	Library, Austria	Austria	Library — Head librarian; community museum network

33	Anonymous (at respondent's request)	Museum, Austria	Austria	Museum — Cultural heritage professional
34	Anonymous (at respondent's request)	Museum, Austria	Austria	Museum — Lead for inclusion and accessibility

By country: Finland 12 • Latvia 11 • Serbia 7 • Austria 3 • Italy 1. By primary institutional affiliation: libraries 14 • museums 10 • higher education institutions 5 • galleries/festivals 3 • research organisation 1 • sector representative bodies 2 (national training association; professional union). Several respondents hold cross-sectoral affiliations. The counts above reflect primary affiliation only.

1.5 Findings

This section presents the thematic findings from the 34 expert interviews, organised across the same six thematic areas used in Part I. This parallel structure enables direct comparison between focus group and interview findings. Findings are presented as a synthesis; individual respondents and session-specific perspectives are attributed where they add specificity or contrast to the cross-respondent pattern.

1.5.1 Current ESG integration in the GLAM sector

The interview data confirms and extends the focus group finding that ESG-relevant practice is widespread but largely unlabelled in the GLAM sector. The dominant pattern across all 34 respondents was project-based engagement: ESG-related activities are most systematically developed within EU-funded projects, particularly Erasmus+ partnerships, rather than through permanent institutional strategies or frameworks. This was consistent across countries and institutional types.

Agreement nº 2025-1-IT01-KA220-VET-000364271
CUP G81B25000690006

The Finnish interview data revealed a more developed landscape of institutional ESG integration than was apparent in the data from other countries, reflecting the relative maturity of Finland's cultural sustainability ecosystem.

Several Finnish institutions operate within city-level sustainability frameworks that provide ESG-related work with institutional anchoring. Examples include cultural institutions working under municipal sustainability programmes or benefiting from dedicated city-level sustainability competence structures. Environmental certification programmes, including Ecocompass, Green Office, Sustainable Travel Finland and Green Key, are also in active use across the Finnish museum sector. These programmes provide structured frameworks for environmental ESG integration and are not dependent solely on short-term project funding. Comparable levels of institutional embedding were largely absent from the contexts described by respondents in Latvia, Serbia and Austria.

The Social dimension was consistently identified as the most developed aspect of ESG practice. Written questionnaire responses from Latvia and Serbia described social inclusion, community engagement, accessibility and audience development as areas already embedded in institutional work, often predating and existing independently of the ESG framework.

The Finnish data further supports this finding. Accessibility was described as an area of sustained professional attention in the Finnish museum sector over a long period, supported by established professional networks and educational practice. At the same time, respondents also identified important gaps within the social dimension. Workforce diversity remains limited, and neurodiversity in relation to both audiences and staff is still insufficiently addressed, despite growing awareness.

The Governance dimension was again identified as the least developed. The data indicates that sustainability is increasingly entering formal institutional and professional frameworks, including through updated sectoral definitions and sustainability programmes adopted by professional organisations. However, governance-oriented sustainability thinking remains at an early stage in operational practice.

Across countries, respondents noted that governance transparency, accountability structures and stakeholder participation in decision-making are formally recognised as important values, but are rarely translated into practical ESG competencies, procedures or institutional routines. This suggests that governance remains the area requiring the most substantial development if ESG is to become fully embedded in GLAM institutions.

1.5.2 ESG competency needs

Respondents across all 34 interviews identified a consistent set of essential ESG competencies for GLAM professionals. The following competency areas emerged as most consistently important across the full dataset:

- Practical translation of ESG principles into everyday institutional actions: the ability to apply ESG thinking concretely in programming, procurement, exhibition production, service design and organisational decision-making. This was the most universally cited competency need across all countries and institutional types.
- Accessibility, universal design and social inclusion: designing and delivering services, spaces and programmes that are genuinely accessible and responsive to diverse audiences, including people with disabilities, older adults, marginalised communities and non-traditional visitor groups. The anonymous Austrian respondent responsible for inclusion and accessibility at a museum described empathy as a foundational and learnable professional competency underlying all ESG-related social practice.
- Governance and ethical leadership: transparent institutional decision-making, accountability to stakeholders and communities, ethical management of partnerships and public resources, and the leadership competencies needed to move ESG from rhetorical commitment to institutional practice.

- Environmental literacy and resource management: understanding and addressing the environmental impacts of institutional operations, including energy use, sustainable procurement, the carbon footprint of exhibitions and events, the environmental costs of digital infrastructure and AI tools, and circular use of materials.
- Impact assessment and ESG reporting: defining relevant indicators, collecting meaningful evidence, documenting institutional outcomes and communicating impact credibly to stakeholders and funders.
- Digital competence with sustainability awareness: Uglješa Stankov (UNS) and Lotta Höök (Lapland University Library) both noted that the environmental and social impacts of digital transformation — including AI adoption, data centre energy use and digital equity — represent an urgent and currently underdeveloped competency area.

The Finnish interviews introduced an additional competency dimension that was largely absent from the written questionnaire responses: social and emotional competencies as organisational requirements.

The findings indicate that GLAM institutions increasingly engage with contested and emotionally charged topics, including climate change, cultural conflict and animal welfare. In such contexts, staff require more than technical ESG knowledge. They also need institutional clarity regarding the organisation's position, as well as professional confidence and support in responding to difficult or critical audience reactions. This suggests that ESG competency development should include emotional preparedness, communication skills and organisational support structures for handling sensitive public engagement.

The interviews also highlighted the importance of understanding ESG's social dimension from the perspective of working conditions, not only visitor services or public accessibility. Equitable treatment of cultural workers emerged as a core ESG concern.

This includes adequate working time, safe working environments, fair career pathways, recognition of neurodiversity and broader attention to staff wellbeing.

Survey data from the Finnish museum and heritage sector further reinforces this finding. According to occupational safety network data, 38% of museum and heritage workers reported that their working time was poorly sufficient for completing assigned tasks, while 29% reported it as very poorly sufficient. Only 1% reported their working time as very well sufficient. These findings suggest that workload pressure is not only an operational barrier, but also a social sustainability issue within ESG practice.

Overall, the Finnish data broadens the understanding of ESG competencies by showing that effective implementation requires both outward-facing and inward-facing capacities. Institutions need to be able to address complex social and environmental issues with audiences, while also ensuring that their own staff work under fair, safe and sustainable conditions.

1.5.3 Competency gaps

The most significant competency gaps identified across the 34 interviews are consistent with the focus group findings, while providing greater institutional specificity and practical detail.

At the operational level, the central gap remains the distance between understanding what ESG requires and having the practical tools, processes and institutional conditions needed to act on that knowledge. Several respondents, particularly from Serbia, described this as a transition from awareness to operational competence. In this context, operational competence refers to the ability to apply ESG principles in concrete institutional situations, under real constraints related to resources, time, staffing and stakeholder expectations. The findings suggest that the main challenge is not the introduction of ESG as a concept, but its translation into usable, practical and institutionally relevant processes.

At the governance and management level, resource allocation emerged as a decisive gap. The interviews indicate that management may support ESG in principle, but such support remains limited unless it is accompanied by dedicated working time, a clear mandate and institutional responsibility. A recurring pattern was identified in which motivated staff members attempt to advance sustainability-related initiatives, but progress is limited by the absence of formal institutional resourcing and managerial follow-through.

A specific governance and technical competency gap was identified in relation to collection storage climate control and its energy implications. For many years, museums have operated according to strict temperature and humidity standards that required energy-intensive infrastructure. Revised European-level guidance has relaxed some of these parameters, creating potential for significant energy savings. However, implementing such changes requires staff to update long-established professional assumptions and accept that some previously required infrastructure may have been over-engineered. This represents both an educational and cultural challenge, and cannot be addressed effectively through a single training intervention.

A further gap concerns measurement and evaluation. The interviews indicate that the evaluation of cultural and sustainability-related work often relies heavily on quantitative output indicators, such as activity counts, visitor numbers or completed actions. However, institutions lack practical tools for assessing effectiveness, long-term impact and systemic change. Several respondents also noted that their organisations are already carrying out work that relates to ESG principles, but lack frameworks that would allow them to make this work visible, understandable and communicable as ESG.

The causes of these competency gaps are primarily structural, while attitudinal or knowledge-related factors appear to be secondary. The most frequently identified structural causes across the interviews include insufficient working time and staff capacity, limited professional development budgets, lack of clear sector-specific guidance and tools, short-term project-based funding structures, and weak translation of management-level commitment into concrete resource allocation.

Overall, the findings suggest that competency development cannot be separated from institutional conditions. ESG training will have limited impact if practitioners are expected to apply new knowledge without adequate time, resources, authority or organisational support. Addressing competency gaps therefore requires not only educational provision, but also changes in governance, funding, management practices and sector-level guidance.

1.5.4 Learning approaches and capacity building

The interview data on learning preferences closely mirrors the focus group findings, while providing additional institutional and country-specific detail, particularly from the Finnish respondents.

Practical, hands-on learning connected to real institutional tasks emerged as the most widely supported format across all 34 respondents. Written questionnaire responses from Latvia, Serbia and Austria expressed this preference in similar terms: theoretical frameworks alone are insufficient, and practitioners need to leave training with concrete tools and methods that can be applied within their specific institutional contexts.

The Finnish interview data further reinforced this finding. Respondents emphasised that museum professionals are generally open to creative and applied methodologies, particularly when these can be transferred into their own educational, communication or organisational work. Training was therefore understood as most valuable when it produces actionable tools rather than abstract frameworks.

A sector-wide competency survey conducted in Finland in 2024 provides quantitative support for these format preferences among museum and heritage professionals. The findings show strongest interest in shared sector events, such as thematic days and seminars, which were supported by 83% of respondents. Short online courses were supported by 80%, short blended formats by 73%, broader online modular programmes by 70%, and short in-person courses by 55%. By contrast, only 27% expressed interest in broader in-person programmes. This significant drop in interest for extended in-person formats reflects practical constraints related to geography, study leave availability and employer support.

The interview data also identified structured peer learning as a promising but underdeveloped format. One proposed model involved partner institutions engaging in structured exchanges, visiting each other, observing practices and identifying transferable approaches. Another effective model identified in the data was embedded specialist support, in which a sustainability expert works directly alongside institutional staff rather than delivering external lectures. Both examples point to the value of peer accompaniment and situated learning as formats with strong potential for lasting institutional change.

E-learning was consistently viewed as a necessary complement, particularly for foundational knowledge and for practitioners with limited time or restricted access to in-person training. However, it was not considered sufficient on its own for developing the contextual, decision-based competencies required for ESG practice.

Micro-credentials and certificates were also supported across the dataset, provided that they are issued or endorsed by a credible body. Respondents emphasised that institutional legitimacy is essential: without sufficient credibility, employers may be reluctant to sponsor or endorse ESG-related training due to concerns about reputational risk and possible association with greenwashing.

1.5.5 Institutional and systemic challenges

The interview data confirms and extends the focus group findings on barriers to ESG implementation, with the Finnish data providing additional institutional and structural specificity.

Financial constraints and workload pressures emerged as the most consistently cited barriers across all 34 respondents. In the Finnish context, particular concern was raised regarding the position of very small museums, especially institutions with only one or two staff members. For these organisations, any ESG-related requirement would need to be low-cost, highly concrete and directly applicable. A framework that cannot function within such limited organisational capacities would have restricted relevance across the Finnish museum sector.

Workload was also identified as a significant practical barrier. Even where organisations support ESG in principle, limited staff time means that additional ESG-related tasks compete directly with core institutional responsibilities. Frameworks that introduce new reporting, monitoring or administrative requirements without addressing the underlying resource constraints risk becoming counter-productive.

Municipal governance structures represent another important constraint for many Finnish GLAM institutions included in the interviews. Several respondents described operating within city-level administrative systems in which building maintenance, sustainability investments and major operational decisions are controlled by municipal departments rather than by the cultural institutions themselves. As a result, institutions may be unable to independently implement physical or operational ESG improvements, even when there is willingness to do so.

The interviews also highlighted a sector-wide supply chain challenge related to conservation and packaging materials. Sustainable alternatives to commonly used materials, such as bubble wrap, are not always available at equivalent cost, while the reuse of certain materials may be prevented by contamination risks. This indicates that some ESG challenges cannot be addressed through institutional capacity-building alone, but require broader sectoral or supply chain-level solutions.

Across the dataset, ESG was most commonly framed as a matter of compliance rather than opportunity. This perception appeared particularly strong when ESG entered institutional agendas through funding requirements or reporting obligations. At the same time, respondents expressed a desire for ESG to be reframed as a tool for recognising, organising and making visible practices that institutions are already undertaking, rather than as an additional external agenda.

The findings further suggest that economic and operational framing may be especially effective in supporting institutional change within the Finnish museum sector. Presenting ESG in terms of cost savings, efficiency, risk reduction and practical organisational benefits appears more likely to generate engagement than relying on ethical arguments alone.

1.5.6 Validation and recognition of ESG competencies

The 34 interviews confirmed that no formal, standardised or sector-specific system for validating or recognising ESG competencies exists in the GLAM sector across any of the five countries represented. Where recognition occurs, it is indirect and institution-specific.

In the Finnish context, environmental certification programmes (Ekokompassi /Ecocompass, Green Office, Sustainable Travel Finland, Green Key) provide a degree of structured external recognition for environmental ESG practice. Minna Turtiainen noted that the Kymenlaakso Museum is in the process of adopting the Ekokompassi certification and described such programmes as valuable for their practical measurement tools and accountability structures, while acknowledging that they are often beyond the reach of the smallest organisations.

Among the Austrian respondents, the anonymous museum professional responsible for inclusion and accessibility described two recognition mechanisms that had produced real institutional impact: the Museum Quality Seal (Museumsgütesiegel) and the Austrian Inclusion Prize. These awards were credited with bringing dedicated funding, shifting staff attitudes and enabling cross-institutional knowledge exchange. This example illustrates the potential of sector-specific recognition as a driver of ESG practice rather than merely a certificate of existing achievement.

Preferred validation approaches across the dataset converged on the following principles: evidence of practical application rather than course completion; portfolio-based or project-output assessment; flexible modular formats that do not require extended in-person time; issuing bodies with institutional credibility; and minimum administrative burden for small organisations. Alignment with the EQF was broadly supported for ensuring international portability and comparability, with the caveat that alignment should operate at the structural level and not constrain the sector-specific content of competency definitions.

Tuulia-Tuulia Tummavuori offered an additional perspective: the union's collaboration with universities and the sector-wide competency survey represents an existing infrastructure through which ESG-related competency development could be systematically channelled, if connected to the ESG4GLAM framework.

1.5.7 Future outlook

Looking ahead to the next five to ten years, respondents across the 34 interviews identified a consistent set of emerging ESG competency priorities, alongside recommendations for the systemic changes needed to enable more effective ESG integration in the GLAM sector.

Digital sustainability and AI governance emerged as the most rapidly developing competency need, consistently cited across countries and institutional types. As GLAM institutions increasingly rely on digital collections, AI-powered tools, online services and data-intensive infrastructure, the ability to critically evaluate the environmental and social implications of these technologies becomes essential. Mirkka Kallio (Kymenlaakso Museum) identified the competency to maintain institutional trustworthiness in the context of AI-generated content as a specific challenge for archives and museums: as AI tools are applied to large collections, the ability to verify, correct and contextualise AI outputs becomes a core curatorial and archival competency. Lotta Höök (University of Lapland) and Uglješa Stankov (UNS) independently raised the largely unaddressed question of the sustainability costs of digital infrastructure, including energy-intensive data storage and AI computation.

Climate and environmental competencies will become more critical as regulatory, funding and public expectations intensify. Minna Turtiainen identified a concrete near-term development in this area: the revision of European collection storage climate control standards, which will require museum professionals across Europe to unlearn embedded professional standards and adopt new practices aligned with more efficient infrastructure. This represents a sector-wide competency development challenge with a concrete and imminent timeline.

Strategic thinking, long-term planning and change management were identified by multiple respondents as the competencies most needed to shift from project-based to systemic ESG integration. The ability to connect ESG principles to institutional strategy, multi-year planning, budget cycles and staff development — and to sustain that connection beyond individual project periods — was named as a critical management-level capability.

Maija Mäki offered a framing that extended beyond individual or institutional competencies: museums and archives are “memory institutions” and “institutions of hope,” and their capacity to protect collections and sustain continuity itself matters as a sustainability function. This perspective frames the institutional mission of the GLAM sector as intrinsically connected to long-term sustainability — not as an external obligation but as the core purpose of the sector's existence.

For the ESG4GLAM project, respondents consistently described a successful outcome as a framework and toolkit that practitioners recognise as naming and structuring what they are already doing — not a new agenda, but a shared language and practical scaffold for making existing commitments more visible, measurable and transferable. Pauliina Kinanen articulated this clearly: the ESG framing makes sense for the cultural sector when understood as a lens that connects existing practices rather than a corporate framework imposed from outside.

1.6 Conclusions

The 34 expert interviews provide a detailed, multi-country and multi-stakeholder picture of ESG competency needs in the GLAM sector that is consistent with and complementary to the focus group findings presented in Part I. The key conclusions from this part of the analysis are as follows.

First, the gap between ESG awareness and ESG capability is the defining challenge across all countries and institution types in this dataset. Respondents consistently described a sector that understands the importance of sustainability, inclusion and responsible governance, but lacks the operational tools, institutional structures and professional frameworks to act on that understanding systematically. Closing this gap requires practical tools and structured support, not primarily more information or conceptual frameworks.

Second, the structural causes of this gap — insufficient working time, underfunded professional development, short-term project cycles, and the absence of sector-specific guidance — cannot be addressed through training provision alone. The ESG4GLAM project can contribute to reducing these barriers through tools that minimise administrative burden, through network-building that reduces the isolation of individual institutions, and through advocacy for funding and policy conditions that support long-term ESG capacity building. The project cannot substitute for the systemic changes that only funders and policy actors can make.

Third, the Finnish interview programme introduced two stakeholder perspectives that significantly enrich the dataset: the museum workers' union perspective (MAL ry), which establishes that the Social dimension of ESG must encompass working conditions and staff wellbeing as well as visitor accessibility; and the national training association and ICOM perspective, which situate ESG competency needs within the formal professional development infrastructure of the Finnish museum sector. These perspectives should inform the design of the ESG4GLAM training course and the stakeholder engagement strategy for the Knowledge Box.

Fourth, the Finnish data reveals that sector-specific environmental certification programmes (Ecocompass, Green Office, Green Key) already provide a partial validation infrastructure for environmental ESG competencies in at least one partner country. The ESG4GLAM project should consider how its competency framework and credentials can be positioned in relation to existing certification ecosystems rather than in competition with them.

Fifth, the three Austrian anonymous respondents contributed perspectives that illuminate specific gaps not prominent in other national datasets: the structural constraints of voluntary-sector library and museum networks; the motivating and capacity-building role of sector-specific awards and recognition mechanisms; and the role of disability inclusion and empathy as foundational ESG competencies rather than specialist add-ons. These perspectives should be reflected in the competency framework's treatment of the social dimension.

The ESG4GLAM competency framework, training course and Knowledge Box should be designed in direct response to the needs identified in this analysis. The guiding design principles that emerge from the interview data are: maximum practical usability with minimum administrative burden; peer learning and mentoring formats alongside structured modules; evidence-based recognition mechanisms from credible bodies; national language accessibility; and an explicit acknowledgement that sustainable ESG integration in institutions of all sizes depends on enabling conditions — time, resources and management commitment — that the project can advocate for but not itself provide.

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Overall Conclusions

This report has examined ESG competency needs in the GLAM sector through three complementary methods: an online survey of 120 respondents, six focus group sessions with 43 participants, and 34 individual expert interviews. Read together, these three parts converge on a consistent picture of the sector, while each also contributes evidence the others could not have produced alone.

What the three methods jointly show:

- ESG principles are widely recognised as relevant to the mission of GLAM institutions, but current organisational **capacity to act** on that recognition remains limited across the board.
- No competency domain records an average gap below 1.25 (survey data); the **cross-cutting and environmental domains** carry the highest-intensity gaps — above all in environmental emergency preparedness and in translating ESG values into strategic planning, data use and reporting.
- ESG-relevant practice is already widespread — in sustainability, inclusion, ethics and public accountability — but remains **informal, project-dependent and structurally invisible**, sustained more by individual motivation than institutional systems.
- Recurring structural barriers, named across the survey, focus groups and interviews alike: insufficient working time, short-term project-based funding, and the fragility of initiatives that depend on individual champions rather than institutional infrastructure.

What each method adds that the others could not:

- **The survey** establishes the scale and relative priority of competency gaps across the sector as a whole.

- **The focus groups** add the texture of shared, practice-based understanding within professional communities.
- **The expert interviews** add depth and national specificity — e.g. the more developed Finnish institutional landscape (including existing environmental certification schemes and a distinct union perspective on the social dimension), and the Austrian findings on voluntary-sector network constraints, the motivating role of sector-specific recognition schemes, and disability inclusion/empathy as foundational competencies.

Overall conclusion:

GLAM institutions are not starting from zero, and do not lack awareness or values. What is missing is the operational and governance infrastructure - tools, data practices, dedicated time, credible recognition mechanisms, and management commitment - needed to turn existing values into systematic, measurable ESG practice. Addressing this gap calls for a sector-specific approach: practical rather than theoretical, modular and flexible rather than time-intensive, and grounded in the real institutional constraints of a mission-driven, often publicly funded and resource-limited sector.

These triangulated findings - priority competencies and gap intensities from the survey, practice-level barriers and learning preferences from the focus groups, and depth, context and forward-looking perspectives from the expert interviews - together form the evidence base and starting point for the design of the ESG4GLAM competency framework, training course and Knowledge Box.

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