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International Cooperative Alliance – Global Office

Concept Note — Session 4

EU Compliance, Organisational Readiness and Practical Next Steps

Online Training Series: EU Delegations and EU Compliance for the Cooperative World

Session Details

Date(s): Morning cohort: Thursday, 29 October 2026 | Afternoon cohort: TBD

Cohorts: Morning cohort 09:30–12:00 CEST | Afternoon cohort TBD

Duration: 2.5 hours per cohort

Format: Live online session, delivered separately to each time-zone cohort

Overall Training Objective

This session is part of a four-session online training series for ICA member Apex bodies and cooperative organisations (national apex federations and individual cooperatives, large and small) on engaging EU Delegations and Member State institutions in support of participation in the Global Gateway initiative. The series aims to equip participants to understand the EU institutional landscape (notably DG INTPA and the EEAS), understand how EU grants work and how they differ from the blended (grant/loan/guarantee) financing of Global Gateway, follow how Global Gateway is being rolled out in practice, and build the practical value-proposition and compliance skills needed to be represented in EU-backed investment mechanisms.

Rationale and Positioning of this Session

This is the closing session of the series. It moves from positioning and communication (Session 3) to the practical financial and compliance requirements that cooperatives must meet to actually receive and manage EU funding — whether through grants or through Global Gateway's blended instruments — and closes with a concrete, individualised action plan.

Note that, exceptionally, this session is delivered on two different dates (morning cohort on 29 October, afternoon cohort on 30 October) rather than the same day as the earlier sessions; content and depth should remain identical across both deliveries.

Learning Objectives

- Understand general EU financial rules applicable to grants: eligibility of costs, financial-capacity checks, and procurement rules.
- Gain hands-on experience preparing a realistic project budget for an EU-funded proposal.
- Understand organisational readiness requirements: legal registration, financial capacity, due diligence, and EU partner/participant registration systems.
- Clarify, in practical financial-management terms, the compliance differences between EU grants and Global Gateway's blended instruments (loans and guarantees).
- Leave with a concrete, individualised action plan and readiness checklist for next steps.

Detailed Content Outline

1. General EU financial rules for grants

- Key principles: eligibility of costs, co-financing requirements, the non-profit rule, and sound financial management.
- Overview of the Practical Guide to procedures for EU external actions (PRAG): what it covers, in plain language, and why it matters for applicants.
- Common compliance pitfalls encountered by first-time cooperative applicants.

2. Hands-on budgeting

- The anatomy of an EU grant budget: direct costs, indirect/flat-rate costs, staff costs, equipment, and unit costs or lump sums where applicable.
- Guided practical exercise: participants build or review a simplified sample budget for a realistic cooperative project.
- Common budgeting errors and how they are typically flagged during appraisal.

3. Organisational readiness and due diligence

- Legal entity requirements and registration.
- EU partner/participant registration and validation systems — what they check and how organisations should prepare.
- Financial-capacity assessment: the evidence typically requested by Delegations or the EU (e.g. audited accounts, statutes, bank guarantees for larger grants).
- Procurement rules that cooperatives must follow once funding is received.

4. Grants vs. Global Gateway blended finance: compliance differences

- Recap of the grants-vs-Global-Gateway distinction introduced in Session 2, revisited here from a compliance and financial-management perspective.
- Grants: cost eligibility, reporting and audit requirements.
- Loans and guarantees under Global Gateway: creditworthiness assessment, repayment capacity, the role of intermediary financial institutions, and how due-diligence standards differ from grant funding.
- Practical implications: which pathway — grant, blended finance, or intermediated lending — is realistic for different types and sizes of cooperative organisation.

5. Practical next steps

- Individualised action-plan and readiness-checklist exercise: participants assess their own organisation's current readiness (legal, financial, technical) against everything covered across the four sessions.
- Signposting to further support: ICA, Delegation civil-society focal points, national cooperative apex support structures, and relevant EU helpdesks.

Practical Example / Case Study Expected

- A worked, simplified sample budget for a realistic cooperative-sector project, used as the basis for the hands-on budgeting exercise.
- If feasible, a short illustrative comparison of a grant-funded project and a blended-finance (loan/guarantee) project, showing how compliance requirements differed in practice.

Suggested Materials to be Handed Out

- Slide deck.
- Plain-language, PRAG-based compliance checklist (a summary, not the full PRAG document).
- Editable, simplified sample project budget template (spreadsheet).
- Organisational readiness self-assessment checklist covering legal, financial and technical registration.
- Comparison note: compliance requirements for EU grants vs. Global Gateway blended instruments.
- Action-plan template for participants to complete during or immediately after the session.

Expectations of the Service Provider

- Expert(s) with direct, hands-on experience in EU grant financial management and compliance, ideally including some exposure to blended-finance or development-finance-institution due diligence, given the Global Gateway dimension.
- The session could include a genuinely hands-on budgeting exercise – when the registered number of participants is small; for larger audiences, watching how to fill an EU budget template should suffice
- The budget template and self-assessment checklist should be shared with ICA in advance for review, in addition to the slide deck.
- As the closing session of the series, the expert should include a short synthesis at the end connecting back to Sessions 1–3 and signposting concrete next steps.
- Materials submitted to ICA for review at least 3 working days before delivery.
- The Service Provider should confirm whether the optional Q&A / consultation clinics foreseen under the contract will draw on this session's themes and flag any additional expert input required for those clinics.

Suggested Methodology and Time Allocation

- Approximately 30% presentation.
- Approximately 40% hands-on budgeting exercise (depending on number of registered participants) .
- Approximately 30% organisational readiness self-assessment and closing Q&A.