

SmartWB NEWSLETTER

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smartWB PARTNERS



Editorial

Welcome to the 2nd Newsletter issue of the SmartWB Project:

Curricula innovation in climate-smart urban development based on green and energy efficiency with the non-academic sector

We were all very excited about bringing this issue out, so that you could start knowing more about us, and getting updated about what we have been doing for the SmartWB project development.

The Newsletters will periodically publish information about the project partners' roles; the project progress; news and activities; as well as about the synergies we make with

other research and educational initiatives and activities.

The Newsletter of the SmartWB Project is edited by its dissemination partner Polytechnic University Of Tirana (UPT) including contributions from project partners and active stakeholders.

Enjoy your reading!

Comments and announcements for the next issues of the SmartWB Newsletter should be sent to the email address below with the subject: "Newsletter". Your feedback is very welcome. *Thank you!*

Email: genti.qirjazi@fin.edu.al
Website: <https://smartwb-eu.com/>



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Project Description

THE SMARTWB ERASMUS+ PROJECT

IN FOCUS

In this unprecedented era of increasing urbanization and the context of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Paris Agreement, the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change and other global development agreements and frameworks, cities should be well-planned and well-managed.

The broader objective of the SmartWB project is to improve the quality of higher education in the climate-smart urban development (CSUD) field, strengthen its relevance for the labour market and society, enhance relations between Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in Western Balkans (WB) partner countries (Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro) and the economic and social environment by establishing a technological platform for cooperation, exchange of knowledge, experience and good practices, modernizing universities' courses in line with EU trends and improving the level of competencies and skills of teaching staff. This broader objective fully complies with the priorities of the Capacity Building projects within the Erasmus+ program, i.e., Green Deal.

To achieve planned wider and specific objectives, the Project Consortium consists of six HEIs from EU Member States and third countries associated to the Programme: Austria, Croatia, Germany, Norway, Spain and Serbia and seven HEIs from targeted countries of Region 1: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro, supported by 5 non-academic partners from the West Balkans region.



WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA



<https://smartwb-eu.com/>



[@smartwb-erasmusplus-project](https://www.linkedin.com/company/smartwb-erasmusplus-project)



[@smartwb_erasmusplus_project](https://www.instagram.com/smartwb_erasmusplus_project)



[Smartwb Erasmus+ Project](https://www.facebook.com/SmartwbErasmus+Project)



[@smartwberasmusplusproject](https://www.youtube.com/@smartwberasmusplusproject)

WHAT WE HAVE DONE

WP2 is completed and it resulted in four reports Analysis of current status in climate-smart urban development

T2.1 Identification of WB regional issues related to urban development:

Report on WB regional issues related to urban development has been completed. 7 parameters of UD in all 3 countries were analyzed, compared and the conclusions are drawn.



T2.4 Workshop on climate-friendly and innovative solutions: current and future challenges:

Report on climate friendly and innovative solutions in EU states is completed and it will serve as an input for the innovation of curricula in WB HEIs.



T2.2 Analysis of EU initiatives and policies related to urban development and climate change:

Report on EU initiatives and policies related to urban development and climate change has been completed and it will serve as an input for the innovation of curricula in WB HEIs.



T2.3 Analysis of existing curricula related to CSUD in Programme countries and WB HEIs:

Report on existing curricula related to CSUD in all 9 countries has been completed. Results clearly show that harmonization of the WB HEIs curricula with the curricula of EU HEIs is needed.



WHAT WE HAVE DONE

WP3 is still in progress and is expected to be completed by April 2024 Capacity building of WB HEIs

T3.1 **Modernisation of university courses in collaboration with the industry sector:**

At least 20 university courses will be innovated on the basis of the results of WP2.

T3.2 **Development of training programme for students' internships:**

Training programmes for students' internships are currently in the process of design.

T3.3 **Theme-based training of teaching staff for acquiring new practical skills:**

4 from 6 theme-based training for teaching staff were organized and the knowledge and skills acquired will be disseminated in WB HEIs.

T3.4 **Providing agreements for the future cooperation between WB HEIs and the non-academic sector:**

43 agreements for providing students' internships were signed with business sector.

T3.5 **Purchasing of software and laboratory equipment, installation and activation:**

New laboratory equipments were purchased for 7 HEIs from WB countries. These will be used for innovating the teaching process and better acquisition of skills related to CSUD.

The project Activities completed so far:

- 1 Kick off meeting was held in Podgorica by University of Montenegro (UoM)
- 2 Theme-based training no.1 was organized in Dubrovnik by University of Zagreb (UNIZG)
- 3 Theme-based training no. 2 was organized in Niš by University of Niš (UNI)
- 4 Workshop on climate-friendly and innovative solutions in UD was held in Vienna by University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (BOKU)
- 5 Theme-based training no. 3 was organized in Oslo of Norwegian University of Life Sciences (NMBU)
- 6 Theme-based training no. 4 in Madrid was organized by Universidad Rey Juan Carlos (URJC)

Project Follow-up

SMARTWB PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Training at NMBU in Oslo

Theme-based training of teaching staff for acquiring new practical Skills, was held successfully in in Ås and Oslo, Norway, from 29th August 2023 to 31st August 2023. This event brought together partners from Western Balkans: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Montenegro. The primary objective of this intensive three-day training was to equip participants with essential practical skills geared towards enhancing the quality of higher education in the field of climate-smart urban development. Under the overarching theme of climate-smart urban development, the training program encompassed a diverse array of agenda items, categorized into three main sessions:

-First session in Ås – Sustainable architecture, geomatics and internationalizations which included presentations on these topics presented by NMBU professors.

-Second session in Oslo- Urban design in practice: water and building management. This was carried out through site visits to different places in

Oslo to show practical examples of green and blue infrastructure.

-Third session in Oslo- Innovations in education and water management where the participants were introduced to the innovative practices in water quality management by DOSCON as well as the innovative practices in education including using the ChatGPT and the digital tools

The organizers succeeded in comprehending all aspects needed to improve education in the climate-smart urban development field in this three-day event.

Above all, our NMBU colleagues strengthened our interpersonal relations and made the SmartWB team more coherent by creating a positive and pleasant atmosphere, encouraging everyone to actively participate and express their particularities and uniqueness.

In conclusion, great memories were made in these three days and valuable takeaways were added to enrich the education in the targeted countries.

Project Follow-up SMARTWB PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Training at URJC in Madrid

Theme-based training of teaching staff for acquiring new practical skills, was held successfully at the Rey Juan Carlos University, Spain, from 12th to 14th of December 2023. The training was face-to-face event and chaired by Carmen De-Pablos-Heredero.

The URJC has carried out training within the European project SmartWB to 30 teachers from different Western Balkan countries, such as Bosnia-Herzegovina, Albania, Montenegro, Serbia, from EU such as Germany, Austria, Croatia and from Norway. The initiative is aimed at modernizing curricular content in the WB countries, inspired by successful practices carried out in European and associated countries.

On Tuesday, December 12, the training was inaugurated with the welcome of the director of Projects and International Relations of the URJC, Pablo Salvadores, and the leader of the 'work package 3' of the project, Professor Carmen de Pablos Heredero. That same day, the participants visited the Municipality Housing Institute, where they were able

to learn about the projects carried out and planned for the last few years in Fuenlabrada in 'Smart Building'. In addition, they worked in the campus laboratories that the University has in the municipality using cutting-edge applications developed by teachers and researchers from the Smart-E2 Chair, among them Julio Ramiro, Cristina Rodríguez, Robert Novak and Marcos Delgado.



On Wednesday, December 13, the training was aimed at learning about educational innovation initiatives carried out at the URJC by Manuel Gertrudix and Alejandro Carbonell, members of the 'Ciberimaginario' research group and Cesar Cáceres, vice-rector for Transformation and Digital Education.

Project Follow-up

SMARTWB PROJECT ACTIVITIES



The 2nd Project Management Committee meeting

The 2nd Project Management Committee (PMC) meeting of the SmartWB Project, was held at the Rey Juan Carlos University, Fuenlabrada Campus, on the December 13th, 2023.



Marija Jevrić, University of Montenegro opened the meeting and briefly summarized all the tasks accomplished so far. She concluded that all work planned for the project's first year is carried out and expressed gratitude and appreciation to all partners involved. Besides, she provided critical insights and updates on the project progress while also discussing coordination. Then, she introduced the following tasks and plans.



According to the meeting agenda, all Work Packages currently in progress was presented – WP3 Capacity building of WB HEIs, WP4 Creating technological platform, and WP7 Impact and dissemination. Marija Jevrić, University of Montenegro, asked these WPs leaders, Carmen De-Pablos-Heredero, Universidad Rey Juan Carlos , Agim Kasaj, European University of Tirana and Genti Qirjazi, Polytechnic University of Tirana, to present the status of those WPs.

The 2nd Quality Assurance Committee meeting

The Second Quality Assurance Committee (QAC) meeting held at the Rey Juan Carlos University, Fuenlabrada Campus, on the December 13th, 2023.

Milan Gocić (UNI) opened the meeting by greeting all members and expressing his satisfaction with the work and results produced in the project's first year. The quality of all deliverables and reports carried out during this year is high. During the previous six months, the progress of current tasks and preparing plans for future activities were monitored by QAC.

Project Follow-up

SMARTWB PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Milan Gocić, University of Niš highlighted the need for all partners to contribute to creating a technological platform, which is a high priority in the coming months. The platform is intended to be utilized throughout the project's lifecycle and beyond, so its sustainability must be ensured.



The 2nd Steering Committee meeting

The Second Steering Committee (SC) meeting held at the Rey Juan Carlos University, Fuenlabrada Campus, on the December 13th, 2023.



Preparing for the inter-project coaching session in the M18 is also one of the following high-priority activities. He also emphasized the need to put more effort into dissemination and exploitation activities, along with their monitoring.



The purpose of the meeting was to evaluate the first project year and introduce future tasks, analyse the financial plan and its realization, and discuss current issues and future SmartWB challenges. One of the coordinators' goals for this meeting was to introduce a new Risk monitoring form to emphasize the significance of early risk anticipation and mitigation measures.

Online Workshop - Smart urban development from climate sustainability based on ecological and energy efficiency



The workshop was held on 29 November 2023, and was organized and financed by Academia Research Program at the Economics and Business Sciences Faculty URJC.

The objective of the workshop was to present the results of the Smart WB Project so far as well as to outline some of the main challenges and next steps in the project.

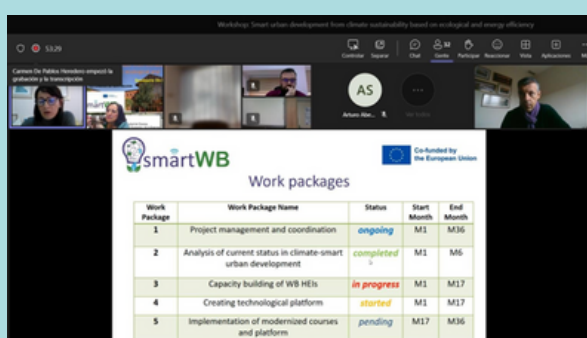
Carmen De Pablos-Heredero highlighted the importance of

training session that will be developed mid-December at URJC's with more than 30 participants attending coming from different Western Balkan, associated and European countries.

Marija Jevric from University of Montenegro, who is the person in charge of the general project's coordination, presented the objectives and scope of the project. She highlighted the importance of the courses modernization in Western Balkan universities and their harmonization with the Curricula in EU universities.

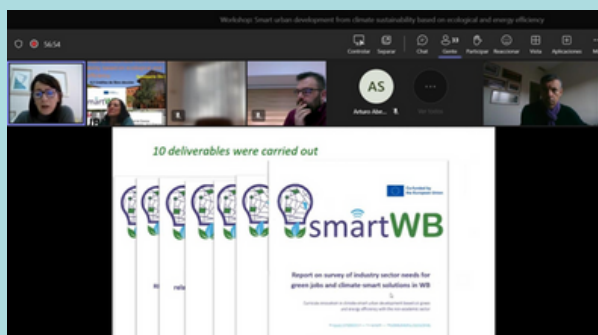
She also presented the activities developed in the project so far as well as the upcoming steps in the project.

Merima Shahinagic-Isovic from University of Mostar in Bosnia-Herzegovina presented the current situation in the complex cultural, social, and political context of her country. She highlighted the main challenges that they are facing such as very important car dependency as well as the potential



Project Dissemination

DISSEMINATION NEWS



solutions and plans that are being implemented in Bosnia-Herzegovina order to face those challenges.

Martin Oldenburg from THOWL University (Germany) presented the general lines of EU initiatives and policies related to urban development. He detailed the goals of EU initiatives and policies as well as explained the objectives that has been called “The European Green Deal”. He described some of the most relevant initiatives that are being implemented in the countries involved in the project Austria, Croatia, Serbia, Germany, Norway and Spain. Finally, he presented some good practices from different countries that can be used as benchmarks for the project.

Genti Qirjazi from Polytechnic University of Tirana, Albania, presented the Report on existing curricula on Climate Smart Urban Development in EU Member States and Third Countries not or

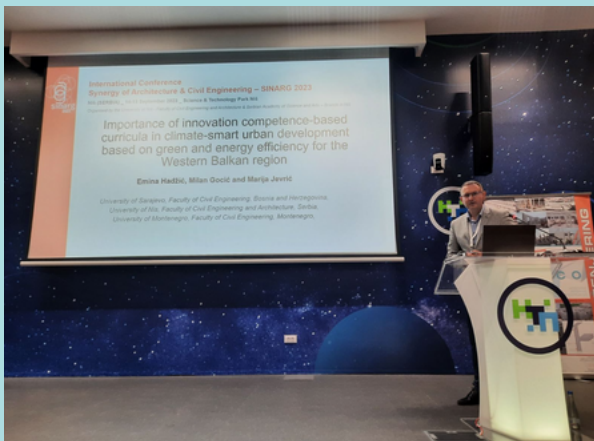
associated to the Programme. The report tries to present a general overview of the current situation as well as detect potential points, topics and issues that could be included in the modernization of Western Balkan Universities’ Curricula. He concludes that there is space for improvement, harmonization and modernization of curricula in Western Balkan’s countries involved in the project.

Florian Rheinwald from BOKU University in Vienna, Austria, presented the Report on Climate Friendly and innovative solutions in urban development. He presented some examples of advanced initiatives throughout the European Union – and particularly from Austria – that can help with the curricula modernization process. He highlighted the importance of Governance and Planning policies as well as the relevance of having the commitment and participation of citizens and people and the role that education can play on it.

Miguel Blanco closed the workshop stressing main elements for future discussion: the need to regulate properly and on time, more political support, reinforce education on CSUD, lack of institutional flexibility to change programs, and modernize curricular.

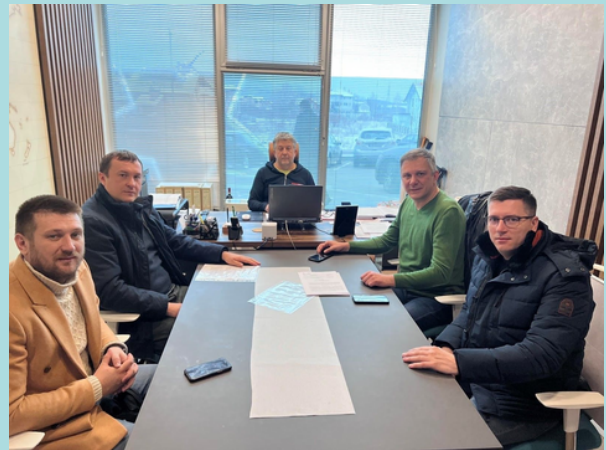
International Conference Synergy of Architecture and Civil Engineering

At the International Conference Synergy of Architecture and Civil Engineering (#Sinarg2023), held from 14 to 15 September in Nis. Emina Hadžić from the University of Sarajevo (Bosnia and Herzegovina), Milan Gocić from the University of Nis (Serbia) and Marija Jevrić from the University of Montenegro presented a paper titled Importance of innovation competence-based curricula in climate-smart urban development based on green and energy efficiency for the Western Balkan region.



Their presentation illuminated the pressing need for innovation in urban development, especially in regions like the Western Balkans grappling with rapid urbanization. Central to their discussion was the ongoing SmartWB project, which aims to revolutionize higher education by integrating innovative teaching methods prioritizing sustainability, green practices, and energy efficiency.

Implementation of courses, training of teaching staff, and student practice



Within the project, in addition to the implementation of courses, training of teaching staff, and student practice, it is necessary to achieve significant cooperation of university institutions with the non academic sector. Universities from Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Albania signed several agreements in the past year, solidifying our commitment to creating a dynamic network where knowledge meets real world challenges. Together, we strive to build bridges that empower students and professional skills, fostering a thriving exchange of ideas and opportunities.



International doctoral colloquium on sustainable development

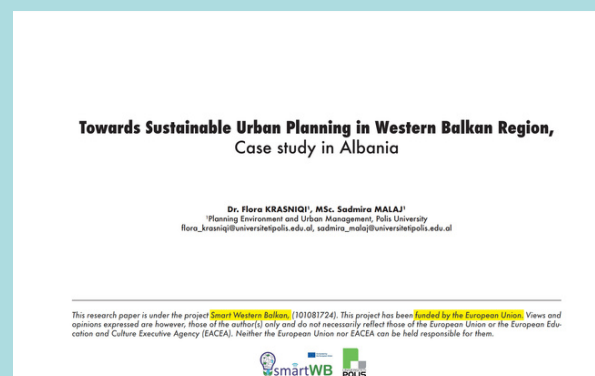


International doctoral colloquium on sustainable development", DOC-ME'2023 was held 2 - 3 October 2023 in Montenegro.

This event provides a unique opportunity for PhD students from Montenegro, Albania, the Western Balkans and international students to receive detailed feedback on their (ongoing) research from fellow PhD students, leading academics and researchers, and representatives of the non-academic sector.

The SmartWB project team members from the University of Montenegro, Milena Ostojić and Olga Čalasan presented a paper entitled Demands for Green Jobs in Montenegro vs Capacity of Higher Education Institutions: A Case Study from a Capacity Building Project. The paper provides an overview of an ongoing Erasmus+ capacity-building project, SmartWB, which aims to enhance higher education in climate-smart urban development and strengthen its alignment with the Western Balkans' labour market and society. The paper was published in the conference proceedings: <https://www.mards.ucg.ac.me/PhD/Proceedings22>

International Scientific Meeting - GREEN AGENDA FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS



At the International Scientific Meeting - GREEN AGENDA FOR THE WESTERN BALKANS (June 20-22, 2023, Belgrade, Serbia), the paper "Towards sustainable urban planning in the Western Balkans region, a case study in Albania" was presented as a research paper within the SmartWB project.

Days of Science and Innovation 2023 festival in Montenegro

Two Erasmus CBHE projects that are ongoing at the Faculty of Civil Engineering, University of Montenegro are presented to the interested audience. The necessity of curricula and teaching methods innovation, modernization of laboratories and continuous cooperation with the non-academic sector was recognized as a priority in both projects.



HOW TO CONTRIBUTE

SmartWB news is an e-newsletter of "Curricula innovation in climate-smart urban development based on green and energy efficiency with the non-academic sector" - SmartWB project.

If you wish to contribute with reviews or announcements for the next issues of the SmartWB Newsletter, please send an email with your contribution to the address below with the subject: "SmartWB Newsletter".

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