

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.



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Project Follow-up

SMARTWB PROJECT ACTIVITIES



SmartWB Final Conference in Mostar Concludes with Strong Focus on Climate-Smart Urban Development and Lasting Regional Impact

The SmartWB Final Conference, held on **6–7 November 2025 in Mostar**, marked the official conclusion of the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education project SmartWB. The conference was hosted by Džemal Bijedić University of Mostar, bringing together representatives of Western Balkan and EU universities, students, industry, NGOs, and international experts.



The main scope of the conference was to present the final results, impacts, and sustainability of SmartWB, demonstrating how curriculum modernisation, practical training, and cooperation with the non-academic sector can strengthen higher education and better prepare graduates for climate-smart urban development challenges in the Western Balkans.

Day 1 – Project Vision, Results, and Educational Transformation

The first day of the SmartWB Final Conference opened with registration and official welcoming remarks by representatives of the Džemal Bijedić University of Mostar, the City of Mostar, and the project coordination team. The opening session set the context of the conference, underlining the urgency of addressing climate change, urbanisation, and energy efficiency through higher education reform and stronger links with society and industry.

The morning plenary session focused on green infrastructure and sustainable water management, presenting European experiences and applied research directly linked to SmartWB. Case studies and a SmartWB-related final master thesis demonstrated how academic work can translate climate-smart principles into practical urban solutions.



Project Follow-up

SMARTWB PROJECT ACTIVITIES

After the lunch break, the programme moved to the core SmartWB results, presented in a structured thematic block. Partner universities showcased achievements in modernised curricula in climate-smart urban development, enhanced teaching staff competences, and upgraded laboratory and equipment infrastructure, highlighting how these investments support hands-on learning and applied research.

Further sessions addressed the SmartWB technological platform, emphasizing open educational resources, digital content, and collaboration tools, followed by presentations on stronger HEI–industry and NGO partnerships and the concrete outcomes of student internship programmes. The day also included contributions on policy awareness, community engagement, and the role of NGOs in sustainability and innovation, demonstrating SmartWB's broad societal reach.



Day 1 concluded with a summary of key messages and reflections, reaffirming the project's main scope: to modernise higher education in climate-smart urban development by integrating education, practice, and policy, and to ensure that SmartWB results remain sustainable beyond the project's lifetime.

Day 2 – Strategic Dialogue, Quality Assurance, and Future Perspectives

The second day of the SmartWB Final Conference, held on 7 November 2025 at Džemal Bijedić University of Mostar, focused on reflection, governance, and the future of capacity building in higher education.

The morning session opened with a round table on Erasmus+ CBHE calls, moderated by representatives from EU partner institutions. The discussion provided insights into trends, experiences, and lessons learned from recent CBHE project applications, highlighting success factors, evolving priorities, and opportunities for Western Balkan universities in upcoming calls. This session positioned SmartWB as a valuable reference point for future project development and regional cooperation.



Following the round table, the conference programme continued with internal project governance meetings, including the Steering Committee, Project Management Committee, and Quality Assurance Committee sessions. These meetings reviewed overall project implementation, final deliverables, and quality assurance outcomes, confirming that SmartWB activities were completed in line with Erasmus+ requirements and European quality standards.

Project Follow-up

SMARTWB PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The conference concluded with a general discussion and official closing session, summarising key achievements and reaffirming SmartWB's long-term impact. Speakers emphasised that SmartWB has strengthened institutional capacities, regional networks, and trust between academia, industry, NGOs, and policymakers, while laying the groundwork for new collaborative initiatives.



The final activity of the conference was a city tour of Mostar, offering participants an informal setting for networking and cultural exchange, and symbolically linking the project's academic discussions with the real urban context SmartWB aims to improve.

Together, the two conference days confirmed that SmartWB has achieved its core mission: to advance climate-smart urban development in the Western Balkans through modernised education, strong partnerships, and a shared vision for sustainable cities.



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DISSEMINATION NEWS

UoM Faculty of Civil Engineering – Partner in a New Erasmus Mundus DM

At the Faculty of Civil Engineering, University of Montenegro, we strive to bridge education, research, and practice. Through the SmartWB project, we learned how to build curricula in collaboration with the non-academic sector, how to translate real-life challenges into learning assignments, and how to prepare students for an industry rapidly evolving under climate targets.



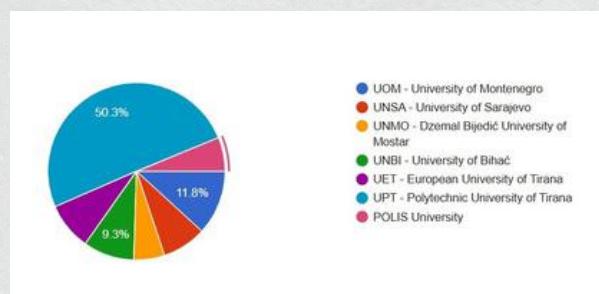
The experience we gained through SmartWB – particularly in connecting universities with the non-academic sector – has been recognized by the European University Alliance EUT+, which invited us to join the Erasmus Mundus Design Measures project aimed at developing a joint master's program in Low Carbon Structures (LowCarb-S). The goal is clear: to educate a new generation of engineers who will design more resilient, sustainable, and carbon-efficient structures from buildings and bridges to urban infrastructure.

SmartWB gave us a strong foundation validated models of cooperation with industry, pilot modules ready for scaling up, and a partner network that facilitates knowledge transfer from the classroom to practice.

SmartWB Courses Receive Excellent Student Feedback

Modernised university courses implemented during the winter semester as part of the Erasmus+ SmartWB project have received overwhelmingly positive feedback from students.

An impressive 98% of students responded positively to interactive teaching methods such as group work and problem-oriented learning. Student engagement was notably high, with 95% expressing increased interest in the subject matter. The infrastructure and teaching equipment were rated as very good by 88%, although some students suggested further improvements.



Students found the course workload appropriate (95.6%) and appreciated opportunities for practical application through lab work, case studies, and project-based learning (92%). Additionally, the course materials were seen as comprehensive and accessible by 98% of respondents, while 97% recognised the promotion of critical thinking and problem-solving skills.

These findings indicate a high level of satisfaction with the teaching approach, resources, and overall course design. The positive outcomes serve as a strong foundation for further innovation in academic delivery and student-centred learning.

Project Dissemination

DISSEMINATION NEWS

International Online seminar titled Climate Smart Urban Development: Best Practices Evidenced by Final Results of the EU SmartWB Project



The European SmartWB Project has reached its final phase, and its results were presented at the Faculty of Economics and Business Sciences (FCEE) of Rey Juan Carlos University.

Last Friday, 21 November, an international seminar titled Climate Smart Urban Development: Best Practices Evidenced by Final Results of the EU SmartWB Project – ONLINE International Seminar was held at the Faculty of Economics and Business Sciences of Rey Juan Carlos University. The seminar presented the impact of the SmartWB project and how representatives of the productive sector have perceived its results.

Following the opening of the event by Carmen de Pablos Heredero, leader of the work package responsible for the modernisation of bachelor's and master's courses within the SmartWB project, Professor Milan Gocić from the University of Niš (Serbia) presented the results of the implementation of more than 29 bachelor's and master's degree courses at universities in the Western Balkans, as well as the platform developed to share experiences and project results.

Professor Genti Qirjazi from the Polytechnic University of Tirana provided detailed information on all dissemination activities carried out throughout the project's lifetime. Professor Marija Jevrić from the University of Montenegro, and general coordinator of the SmartWB EU Project, presented new collaborations, projects, and doctoral theses that have arisen directly from SmartWB and have contributed to improving sustainable urban development in Montenegro.



In addition, an engaging debate was held, moderated by Professor Miguel Blanco from FCEE and SmartWB project researcher, focusing on the contribution of universities to companies through the SmartWB project. The debate included participation from the project's industrial partners: Nikola Perović (OZON Montenegro), Nataša Stanišić (ACE BH, Bosnia and Herzegovina), and Kejt Dhrami (Co-Plan, Albania).

The discussion highlighted the benefits of university–industry collaboration synergies developed within the project. The seminar can be viewed on URJC TV at: <https://tv.urjc.es/video/692438afae7edfc586680b7>

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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