

SmartWB NEWSLETTER

IN THIS ISSUE

Editorial	1
Project Description.....	2
Project Follow-up	3
Project Dissemination	5
How to Contribute	8



Editorial

Welcome to the 5th 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!*

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THE SMARTWB ERASMUS+ PROJECT

Project Description 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



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Project Follow-up

SMARTWB PROJECT ACTIVITIES



Shaping the Future of Green Urban Careers – Insights from the SmartWB Workshop 2025

On 22 May 2025, the Polytechnic University of Tirana became a vibrant meeting point for academics, professionals, policymakers, and industry leaders during the **SmartWB Workshop on Green Job Opportunities in Urban Development**. The event, organized under the ERASMUS+ SmartWB project, delivered far more than a traditional academic gathering—it became a catalyst for reimagining the future of urban development careers in the Western Balkans.



From the moment participants entered the hall, the workshop's energy was unmistakable. More than 80 attendees representing universities, public institutions, municipalities, businesses, NGOs, and students gathered with a shared purpose: *to explore how climate-smart urban development can unlock meaningful employment pathways for the region's next generation.*

The workshop unfolded across three dynamic sessions, each reflecting a distinct dimension of the green transition.

Low-Carbon Solutions: Setting the Stage for Innovation

The morning session opened with a series of compelling presentations led by European experts from Germany, Spain, Croatia, and Montenegro. Topics ranged from micropollutant management in water systems to intelligent tourism planning, illegal construction challenges, and community-driven co-housing models.

These international best practices underscored a powerful truth: climate-smart urban development requires solutions that blend technology, governance, sustainability, and community participation. The examples sparked lively discussions among Western Balkan participants eager to adapt these insights to local contexts.



Project Follow-up

SMARTWB PROJECT ACTIVITIES

Green Jobs in Urban Development: Local Actions, Regional Opportunities

The second session shifted the focus from technology to people—specifically, how sustainable urban practices can foster new forms of employment. Presenters showcased groundbreaking initiatives from Albania and Montenegro, including:

- Circular packaging systems transforming local businesses
- Urban metabolism analysis creating demand for data-driven urban planners
- Elbasan's Climate City Contract, inspiring jobs in renewable energy and green infrastructure
- Low-carbon campus projects cultivating skills in energy auditing and retrofitting
- Eco-tourism development in protected areas, connecting conservation with community livelihoods

These examples demonstrated that green jobs are not theoretical—they are emerging in real cities, supported by real institutions, and aligned with real community needs.



Interactive Dialogue: Confronting Skill Gaps and Building Capacity

The workshop's final session brought everyone into the conversation. Students, faculty members, municipal officers, and private companies openly discussed the skills needed in the green economy and the gaps that universities must address.

Key themes surfaced repeatedly:

- The need for interdisciplinary knowledge
- The importance of practical experience through internships and hands-on projects
- The role of universities as bridges between students and employers
- The necessity of policy alignment to support sustainable urban careers

This interactive exchange not only reinforced the workshop's academic goals but also strengthened ongoing partnerships between higher education and the labor market.



A Milestone for SmartWB—and a Roadmap for the Future

Beyond the formal program, the workshop served as a platform for relationship-building. Informal conversations during breaks and the closing networking session highlighted the growing ecosystem of institutions working together to advance climate-smart urban development in the Western Balkans.

The 2025 SmartWB Workshop made clear that the Western Balkans stand at a pivotal moment. The green transition is not just an environmental imperative—it is a social and economic opportunity. By modernizing curricula, empowering students with emerging skills, and strengthening university-industry-government collaboration, the SmartWB project is building the foundations for a resilient and future-ready workforce.

Project Dissemination

DISSEMINATION NEWS

Polis University Hosts Forum on Environmental Sustainability

On April 22, 2025 — Earth Day — Polis University, in collaboration with Co-Plan, organised a major forum titled "Knowledge, Responsibility, and Action for Environmental Sustainability." Held under the Smart WB project, the event gathered academics, urban planners, and environmental experts to address climate change challenges in the Western Balkans.



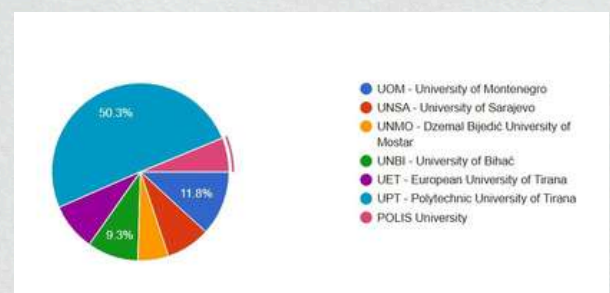
Discussions centred on climate adaptation, public environmental awareness, conservation standards, and the use of technology in environmental monitoring. The forum emphasised the power of cross-disciplinary collaboration and produced actionable strategies for promoting sustainability across the region.



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

Panel Discussion in Podgorica Highlights Role of Blue-Green Infrastructure in Climate-Resilient Cities



A panel discussion on “Towards Climate-Resilient Cities: The Role and Importance of Blue-Green Infrastructure” was held on May 20, 2025, at the Faculty of Civil Engineering, University of Montenegro.

The event gathered experts, policymakers, and academics to explore sustainable urban development strategies.

Opening remarks were delivered by Prof. Milivoje Rogač, followed by a keynote from Prof. Dr. Florian Kretschmer (BOKU University, Vienna) on stormwater management and nature-based solutions.

Ms. Olga Čalasan presented preliminary research on climate-smart development, after which representatives from Podgorica, the Ministry of Spatial Planning, the Environmental Protection Agency, and UNDP joined a moderated panel discussion on opportunities and challenges for implementing blue-green infrastructure in Montenegro.

The event concluded with a Q&A session and key recommendations, contributing to the broader SMARTWB initiative on climate-smart urban development.

UoM Student Impressions: Valuable Insights from Engineering Practice

Student Impressions: Valuable Insights from Engineering Practice

Marta Lalošević, a third-year undergraduate student at the Faculty of Civil Engineering, described her internship at Maljat Stone as a highly enriching experience. She believes it has significantly boosted her motivation and desire to continue expanding her engineering knowledge and skills. Her direct interaction with the industry allowed her to grasp the engineering profession's complexity and beauty.



Speaking for SmartWB website, Marta shared:

"I had the opportunity to see how a serious, well-organised company operates, and I truly believe that internships are incredibly valuable because they provide real-world experience that will be crucial when starting my first job."

This experience is a testament to the transformative role of internships — not only as a bridge between academia and industry, but also as a source of inspiration for future professionals. Through hands-on learning, students like Marta gain invaluable insight into the real-world challenges and innovations shaping modern engineering.

Project Dissemination

DISSEMINATION NEWS

SmartWB Sarajevo 2025: Innovating Urban Planning for a Greener Future



As part of the 5th International Conference on Urban Planning, a joint promotional event for the Erasmus+ project SmartWB – was held on June 17, 2025, in Sarajevo.

The event provided an opportunity to present the key achievements of the SmartWB project, including the development and implementation of updated university courses and enhanced collaboration with the non-academic sector. It also initiated an open dialogue on the critical role of higher education institutions in responding to the challenges of climate change and promoting sustainable, energy-efficient urban development.

The event was jointly organised by the University "Džemal Bijedić" of Mostar, the University of Bihać, the University of Sarajevo, and UKI/ACE B&H, and gathered representatives from academia, public institutions, professional organisations, and the private sector.

SmartWB Project Event: Exploring CBAM and Its Implications for Bosnia and Herzegovina

The University of Bihać successfully organized a promotional event within the SmartWB project on Thursday, June 19, 2025, at 11:00 AM, held at the Faculty of Technical Sciences, University of Bihać.

As part of the program, a professional lecture was delivered on the topic:

“CBAM – Application in Bosnia and Herzegovina”

The lecture provided an in-depth overview of the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) and examined its potential implications for economic entities in Bosnia and Herzegovina, with particular emphasis on the impact on small and medium-sized enterprises.



The event brought together representatives of relevant ministries and public institutions, non-governmental organizations, professionals from the SME sector, as well as professors and students. Their participation contributed to a highly engaging and fruitful discussion on this significant topic.

The University of Bihać extends its appreciation to all participants for their involvement and valuable contributions.

The background of the page is a vibrant, futuristic cityscape. It features tall, modern buildings with green facades and terraces. Wind turbines are visible on the right side, and several flying cars are seen in the sky. The overall theme is sustainable urban development.

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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This project has been funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or the European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). Neither the European Union nor EACEA can be held responsible for them.



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