

SWARM – Strengthening of Master Curricula in Water Resources Management for the Western Balkans HEIs and Stakeholders. Capacity-Building projects in the field of Higher Education (E+CBHE)

Summary

The SWARM project, "Strengthening of Master Curricula in Water Resources Management for the Western Balkans HEIs and Stakeholders," concluded as a capacity-building initiative co-funded by the Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union. Executed in alignment with the Regional Priorities for Joint & Structural Projects, it addressed the "Learning and teaching tools, methodologies, and pedagogical approaches including learning outcomes and ICT-based practices" in the context of environmental protection.

Project Overview and Objectives

The overarching aim of SWARM was to enhance the quality of higher education in Water Resources Management (WRM) in the Western Balkans (WB) region. It sought to strengthen the relevance of education for the labour market and society, elevating the competences and skills of WRM experts in WB partner countries. The project focused on developing new competence-based master curricula, improving existing ones, and aligning them with EU trends.

Curriculum Development and Implementation

The project's core activities included the analysis of regional water resource management issues, innovation analysis in the EU water sector, and the development of specific competencies and learning outcomes. New laboratories were designed and implemented in collaboration with EU partners. The project facilitated the training of teaching staff in innovative methods, the creation of learning materials, and the accreditation of master curricula. A focus on adapting to national frameworks ensured widespread applicability.

Training Programs for Water Sector Professionals

The project identified needs in the water sector, created a list of existing Lifelong Learning (LLL) courses in EU countries, and developed effective training programs for professionals in the water sector. The trainings were tailored to address specific gaps and were conducted with the participation of interested professionals, governmental bodies, and stakeholders. The initiative aimed to reach a broad audience through digital marketing and promotional campaigns.

Implementation and Quality Assurance

The implementation phase enrolled students in master studies, providing a comprehensive educational experience with newly formed laboratories. Quality assurance and monitoring were integral, incorporating internal and external assessments. A robust Quality Assurance Committee oversaw regular evaluations, and external evaluators were engaged for an impartial perspective. Inter-project coaching facilitated knowledge exchange with similar Erasmus+ projects.

Dissemination, Exploitation, and Sustainability

Project dissemination involved activities at institutional, national, and international levels, emphasizing promotion, awareness, and benefits. A project website was developed, and social networks were leveraged for outreach. WB HEIs envisioned the sustainability of the project through the continued implementation of developed master curricula, LLL courses, and maintenance of laboratories. The dissemination plan included diverse activities such as roundtables, info days, and symposiums.

Project Management

The University of NIS, ensuring effective project management through committees and support groups, spearheaded the leadership and coordination. The Steering Committee and Project Management Committee played pivotal roles in decision-making, evaluation, and overall project governance. Regular meetings, including a kick-off meeting and a Brussels meeting, ensured communication and coordination among consortium members.

Conclusion

SWARM successfully achieved its objectives, leaving a lasting impact on higher education in WRM in the Western Balkans. The project's legacy includes enhanced curricula, trained professionals, and a sustainable framework for continued development and collaboration in the water sector. The Universidade de Lisboa's pivotal role in the Quality Assurance and Monitoring work package underlines its significant contribution to the project's success.



Project Reference

597888-EPP-1-2018-1-RS-EPPKA2-CBHE-JP

Leading Institution

University of NIS (Serbia)

Partners

ULisboa – Universidade de Lisboa (Portugal), BOKU – University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences (Austria), NMBU – Norwegian University of Life Sciences (Norway), AUT – Aristotle University of Thessaloniki (Greece), UACEG – University of Architecture, Civil Engineering and Geodesy (Bulgary), UNIRIFCE – University of Rijeka Faculty of Civil Engineering (Croatia), UNS – University of Novi Sad (Serbia), UNSA – University of Sarajevo (Bosnia), UNMO – Dzemal Bijedic University of Mostar (Bosnia), UPKM – University of Pristina in Kosovska Mitrovica (Kosovo), TCASU – Technical College of Applied Sciences Urosevac with temporary seat in Leposavic (Kosovo), UoM – University of Montenegro (Montenegro), PWMC VV – Public Water Management Company "Vode Vojvodine" (Serbia)

CERIS Principal Investigator

Maria Manuela Portela
(maria.manuela.portela@tecnico.ulisboa.pt)

CERIS Research Team

Luís Ribeiro, Rodrigo Proença de Oliveira

Funding

Erasmus+ Programme of the European Union

Period

2018-2021

Total

931 289.00€

CERIS

33 920.00€

Project Website

www.swarm.ni.ac.rs