

GROWTH

GREENING RELEVANCE IN OPERATIONS IN WESTERN - BALKANS
TERTIARY - EDUCATION HABITATS

TOWARDS GREEN UNIVERSITY

LAUNCH OF THE GROWTH PROJECT

By GROWTH Project Management Team



KICK OFF MEETING

Marking the start to the GROWTH project, the kickoff meeting brought together EU institutions, stakeholders, and HEIs staff, paving the way for a transformative journey towards climate neutrality by tackling the issue of environmental awareness and green transition in the Western Balkans.

STUDY VISITS

In October, participants from eight HEIs gathered at the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra (SUA) to engage in discussions on green solutions for education, sustainability, and ecology. This was followed by a visit to Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences in November, where we further explored the integration of green practices into university environments. The final visit was to the Academy for Applied Preschool Teaching and Health Studies Krusevac (AVMSS), where we acquired valuable skills in green teaching and sustainability methodologies.



GAINING GREEN AND SUSTAINABILITY PRACTICES AT EU HEIS



PROJECT KICKOFF MEETING

March 29th-30th, 2023

A NEW CHAPTER IN SUSTAINABILITY AND CLIMATE CHANGE PRACTICES: ADVANCING THE GREEN AGENDA IN HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

➤➤➤ PIONEERING CLIMATE ACTION IN THE WESTERN BALKANS

The environmental crisis, marked by pollution, global warming, biodiversity loss, and deforestation, demands urgent collective action from individuals, institutions, and nations to achieve climate neutrality and reverse harmful human impacts. Therefore, the GROWTH project joins efforts to address the increasingly relevant and ubiquitous topics of environmental awareness and sustainable response to the threat of climate change. The meeting covered key objectives, including project presentations, work package (WP) updates, and discussions on the next steps.

GROWTH VISION IN ACTION

OVERALL OBJECTIVE: To assist Western Balkans green transition efforts

SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES:

- SO1) To make higher education and research in the Western Balkans more environmentally conscious
- SO2) To introduce green education methodologies and practices in four partner higher education institutions

➤➤➤ SPOTLIGHT ON THE GROWTH CONSORTIUM

The project brings together higher education institutions from the Western Balkans (Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro), the EU, and Serbia to implement key interventions in the region's higher education systems. These aim to raise environmental awareness and foster sustainability by transforming partner universities into green campuses and promoting digital education, aligning with the EU Green Deal's 2050 climate neutrality goal. A Montenegrin NGO connects these initiatives with the broader community for greater impact.





SUA
Slovak University
of Agriculture
in Nitra

SLOVAK UNIVERSITY OF AGRICULTURE IN NITRA

STUDY VISIT

October 16th-18th, 2023

>>> INSPIRING GREEN SOLUTIONS

The GROWTH team was introduced to several innovative green solutions focused on education, sustainability, and ecology in today's society. Alongside productive meetings, the SUA campus was explored, highlighting advanced waste management techniques, the natural beauty of the botanical garden, and exemplary green infrastructure practices. These experiences showcased how sustainability can be successfully integrated into educational institutions.

>>> EXPLORING LOCAL SUSTAINABLE INITIATIVES

In the final days of the visit, the Nitra waste management and recycling center, along with the eco-farm Adam in Podkylava, were explored. These visits offered valuable insights into sustainable development initiatives and highlighted how waste reduction and eco-friendly farming contribute to broader environmental goals.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Innovative waste management solutions are crucial for modern campuses.
- Green infrastructure and botanical gardens offer both ecological and educational benefits.
- Local recycling and eco-farming initiatives provide practical models for sustainable development.
- Sustainability practices can be applied across various sectors, enhancing environmental resilience.



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WEIHENSTEPHAN-TRIEDSDORF UNIVERSITY OF APPLIED SCIENCES

STUDY VISIT

November 13-17, 2023

»»» EXCELLENCE IN PRACTICAL EDUCATION

Within the GROWTH project, the team had the opportunity to visit the Weihenstephan Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences (HSWT) in Germany. Renowned for its excellence in practical education and research across various fields, especially in agriculture, life sciences, environmental engineering, and nutrition, HSWT offers a dynamic learning environment that fosters innovation, hands-on experience, and a strong industry focus.

»»» EXPLORING SUSTAINABILITY AND COLLABORATION

During the visit, the team explored the Triesdorf and Weihenstephan green campuses, gaining insights into their sustainability practices and discussing potential collaborations on green university initiatives. Additionally, attendance at Agritechnica 2023 in Hanover, the world's leading trade fair for agricultural machinery and innovations related to green topics, provided valuable insights. This experience broadened the team's understanding of sustainability and its applications across diverse sectors. Many thanks to the fantastic hosts, Prof. Dr. Johannes Holzner and Mr. Dragan Brković.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

Practical education, innovative sustainability practices, exposure to the latest agricultural machinery and innovations, and understanding of sustainability.



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ACADEMY FOR APPLIED PRESCHOOL TEACHING AND HEALTH STUDIES KRUŠEVAC

STUDY VISIT - WP3 MEETING

March 25-26, 2024

➤➤➤ GREEN AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES

The event gathered representatives from partner institutions across the Western Balkans and the EU, focusing on project progress. Key discussions emphasized ongoing work packages, particularly the introduction of green and sustainable practices in higher education. Participants also visited recycling and waste management companies, including the Recycling Center and Wastewater Treatment Plant, to familiarize foreign partners with the activities of JKP Kruševac and JKP Vodovod.

➤➤➤ ADVANCING GREEN INITIATIVES IN EDUCATION

By sharing innovative ideas and best practices, the consortium continues to work toward transforming campuses into green, sustainable environments, aligned with the EU's climate neutrality goals. The session concluded with partners reaffirming their commitment to achieving the project's objectives through collaborative efforts.

KEY TAKEAWAYS

- Green practices in higher education
- Integration of digital learning solutions
- Leverage visits to recycling and wastewater facilities for real-world insights into sustainable operations



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PROJECT TASKS WITHIN WORK PACKAGES

FIRST YEAR OF THE PROJECT



➤➤➤ DIGITAL AND SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

The online training session "Digital and Sustainable Mobility for Students and Staff," organized by the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra, was successfully held. Led by doc. Ing. Loreta Schwarczová, PhD, the training aimed to raise ecological awareness among higher education stakeholders by introducing concepts of green universities and sustainable practices. The program included theoretical and practical components, focusing on digitally enhanced (virtual) mobility—covering definitions, types, and the virtual mobility environment. Participants engaged in assignments to reinforce their learning. Conducted via MS Teams and Zoom on September 6-7, 2023, the training offered educators and students a chance to explore innovative approaches to sustainable mobility in higher education.



➤➤➤ POLICY BRIEF "TOWARDS GREEN UNIVERSITY"

University College CEPS, University Herzegovina, and Weihenstephan-Triesdorf University of Applied Sciences proposed the policy brief within WP5. A green policy aims to minimize environmental impact through responsible resource utilization. For HEIs, adopting a strategic approach to greening is essential, given their significant economic, social, and environmental footprints. This involves embedding sustainability efforts across governance, curriculum, research, operations, and outreach.

➤➤➤ WINTER CAMP ON ENERGY EFFICIENCY, SUSTAINABLE CONSTRUCTION, AND ENERGY MANAGEMENT

Faculty of Management at Herceg Novi University hosted a Winter Camp titled "Energy Efficiency, Sustainable Construction, and Energy Management in Addressing Modern Challenges" for students and young professionals. Over the course of seven days, participants attended numerous lectures and workshops covering topics such as architecture and construction, 3D printing, energy-efficient solutions for households, sustainable development, and renewable energy sources, led by various esteemed speakers.



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WEST BALKAN HEI ACTIVITIES AND TRAININGS

FIRST YEAR OF THE PROJECT



➤➤➤ RECYCLE THROUGH FUN



The RECYCLE THROUGH FUN workshops held at University Hercegovina enhanced awareness of recycling and reusing materials among teaching and administrative staff from educational institutions. In the **PAPER** workshop, guided by artist Lidija Tolj, participants repurposed newspapers, glass bottles, and nutshells into practical items like baskets and vases, with 83% of attendees being women. The **TEXTILE** workshop, led by lecturer Željka Čavar, taught participants to create flower bouquets and brooches from reused textiles, with 89% of attendees being women. Both workshops allowed participants to share experiences, learn new “green” skills, and transform waste into beautiful objects, with each receiving a certificate of participation. Reports summarizing the training topics and findings will be available in English.

➤➤➤ PEDALING TOWARDS SUSTAINABILITY



Professor Nermin Palić, the Head of the Transport Engineering program at University College “CEPS - Center for Business Studies” in Kiseljak, organized a cycling competition called “**CYCLING AROUND CEPS**”, attracting students and teaching staff from CEPS, as well as high school students from Kiseljak. CEPS provided prizes and certificates for the top competitors. Following the event, lectures on the importance of active mobility (cycling and walking) emphasized cycling as a reliable, clean, and sustainable mode of transportation. CEPS through the activity “**CYCLING CULTURE AS A FORM OF EVERYDAY MOBILITY IN THE CITY**” actively promoted sustainable mobility and environmental protection through initiatives such as traffic education sessions for elementary school students, where Professor Palić taught traffic rules and safe cycling practices, cycling culture. Engaging youth in traffic culture is crucial for promoting sustainable active mobility with zero emissions.

➤➤➤ EMPOWERING CHANGE THROUGH AWARENESS



Various initiatives raise awareness about the dangers of global pollution and encourage individuals to contribute to environmental preservation. Many view protecting the Earth as a monumental task for “superheroes,” but small changes can have a significant impact. University College CEPS Kiseljak recognizes the importance of environmental conservation and works to change the mindset of its students and staff regarding sustainable development. To celebrate Earth Day, CEPS staff and students planted flowers and organized a roundtable discussion titled “**WE CAN ALL DO SOMETHING TO PROTECT OUR PLANET**”, which began with the Earth Anthem. Prof. Hamza Šehović emphasized sustainable energy, while Prof. Nermin Palić presented on sustainable mobility, discussing 15-minute cities, where residents can meet essential needs—such as school or grocery shopping—by walking or cycling within 15 minutes.

GREEN MINDS, SUSTAINABLE ACTIONS: TRANSFORMING EDUCATION FOR TOMORROW!

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