

SEPTEMBER 2025

EVENT REPORT



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Consortium Meeting in Jimma

SEPTEMBER 23-25, Jimma (Ethiopia)

The second physical Consortium Meeting, hosted by Jimma University, brought together 21 participants (8 online) from all partner institutions, associated agencies, and ministries for three days of discussions, capacity-building, and networking. Participants included representatives from higher education institutions in Kenya, Ethiopia, the Netherlands, Germany, and Spain; European funding agencies from Belgium, Finland, and Germany; and the Ministries of Education of Kenya and Ethiopia.



Key achievements included:

- Presentation of the three WP2 mapping reports (EU partners' mapping, African partner universities' internal mapping, and national policy situation analysis).
- Collective agreement on training priorities for African universities, establishing a roadmap for capacity-building activities.
- Formal launch of the Training Programme Development Team (TPDT) to coordinate training activities under WP3.
- Bilateral meetings and workshops that strengthened collaboration between African and European partners, linking project outcomes to national higher education strategies.

The meeting highlighted Jimma University's strong leadership and commitment to the project, reinforcing the consortium's vision of universities as drivers of societal development.



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Key Sessions and Technical Discussions

DAY 1 - Laying the Groundwork : Presenting WP2 Mapping Results

The meeting opened with a warm welcome from Jimma University, highlighting the institution's role as a community-engaged university and emphasizing the significance of hosting the consortium in Ethiopia at a crucial juncture of the project. The President of Jimma University underscored the importance of honest dialogue, shared learning, and joint planning as the project transitions from mapping and analysis into training and tool development.



Following the welcome, Obreal's coordination team addressed participants online, stressing that the consortium was both a working meeting and an opportunity to learn from Jimma's local context. The project coordinator framed the project as a structural Erasmus+ initiative positioned within shifting global cooperation agendas, reminding partners of the need to articulate universities' societal impact and prepare for upcoming EU–AU dialogues.



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The core of Day 1 focused on Work Package 2 **deliverables (D2.1, D2.2, D2.3)**. **European partners** presented their mapping exercises, highlighting funding mechanisms, challenges, and impact assessment approaches. For instance, **MSM** emphasized their tradition of building projects from previous initiatives, the importance of impact measurement frameworks, and the need to “decolonize internationalization” by recognizing the distinct needs of different institutions. **UCM** presented its Africa School platform as a hub for long-term cooperation and knowledge sharing, while **HSWT** stressed agricultural cooperation and outlined administrative challenges, such as auditing and short project cycles, that undermine sustainability.

The **associated partners** complemented the session with their perspectives. **DAAD** highlighted nearly fifty projects in Kenya and Ethiopia across fields such as entrepreneurship, ICT, teacher training, and sustainability. **EDUFI** underlined the need for complementarity between national and EU programmes while stressing ethical partnerships. **VLIR-UOS** emphasised the value of long-term institutional collaboration, but also noted ongoing challenges in monitoring and coordination



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African partners from Ethiopia and Kenya presented their institutional mapping exercises, offering a candid view of internal challenges and priorities. **Hawassa** University pointed to gaps in project cycle management and coordination, while **AASTU** noted difficulties in tracking donor-funded projects and meeting reporting requirements. **Jimma** University highlighted its strong tradition of community engagement but stressed the need for training in funding diversification. **Haramaya** University raised concerns about insufficient institutional systems and limited staff capacity to manage complex donor projects, calling for stronger administrative frameworks. From Kenya, **Moi** University and **JOUST** underlined fragmented project coordination and the importance of strengthening international offices and staff capacities, while **JKUAT** called for improved tools to engage stakeholders and better link research outputs to policy-making.

These presentations allowed African partners to voice their institutional realities and reinforced the evidence base of D2.2: that knowledge gaps, limited structures, and staff training needs are common barriers to effective international cooperation.



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The day closed with a **plenary discussion** where Obreal stressed that impact reporting must always be audience-specific (ministries, funders, or society), while African and European partners collectively noted that mapping exercises should directly feed into the design of WP3 training modules. The consensus was clear: while WP2 deliverables require a final push to consolidate and review, they already provide a solid foundation for the next phase of the project.



Day 1 ended with a welcome dinner hosted by Jimma University, providing an opportunity for informal **networking** and **cultural exchange**.



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DAY 2 - Policy Perspectives and Institutional Needs

The second day of the consortium meeting shifted the focus from mapping results to policy dialogue and **institutional perspectives**. It began with interventions from the **Ministries of Education of Ethiopia and Kenya**, who emphasised the urgent need to strengthen national frameworks for coordinating international cooperation. Both ministries highlighted the proliferation of donor-funded projects, often running in parallel without alignment, and stressed the importance of creating mechanisms that link university initiatives with national strategies and priorities. This framing reinforced the project's relevance at the policy level and positioned the ministries as active stakeholders in the next phase of work.

MoE of Kenya outlined major funding from AfDB, World Bank, and EU programmes, noting alignment with Vision 2030 but persistent gaps in research funding, commercialization, and coordination. The Ministry called for a dedicated internationalization unit, better management systems, and stronger university–ministry linkages.



MoE Ethiopia, during its online intervention, described donor-driven cooperation poorly aligned with national priorities like agriculture and ICT, weakened by lack of institutionalization, sustainability, and project management skills. The Ministry urged stronger international offices, a centralized coordination body, and greater transparency and accountability.

Following the policy presentations, the consortium engaged in a **plenary discussion** facilitated by Obreal and WP2 leads. The debate underscored the disconnect between national strategies and donor-driven agendas, and the need for better data systems, accountability frameworks, and ministry–university dialogue. Universities echoed that without robust institutional offices and clear national guidelines, projects risk fragmentation and short-lived impacts.



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The late morning and early afternoon were devoted to **small group work**, partners split into three working groups to begin translating WP2 findings and policy analyses into capacity-building priorities for WP3. Each group prepared a short presentation, which was then shared in plenary at the start of Day 3.



In summary, Day 2 consolidated the evidence gathered in WP2 into a shared agenda for capacity-building. Ministries provided the national perspective, universities articulated their specific needs, and the consortium collectively agreed that WP3 training should directly address the gaps identified, with an emphasis on practicality, ownership, and alignment with policy frameworks.

The day concluded with a visit to Jimma University and the historic Abba Jifaar Palace, organized by the Jimma University team.



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DAY 3 - Translating Needs into Action: Training and Impact Tools

The final day opened with the **presentations** of the three working groups formed at the end of Day 2, each focusing on a specific theme.

1. **Group 1, on strengthening project management capacity and systems**, highlighted the need for dedicated Project Management Offices with units for M&E, finance, partnerships, and knowledge management. They called for skill-based training in grant writing, financial auditing, communication, and commercialization, to be delivered through hybrid formats, mentoring, and shadowing.
2. **Group 2, on enhancing efficiency through digitalisation and streamlined processes**, stressed the importance of ICT systems, simplified procedures, and metrics to measure performance such as processing time and cost savings. They also identified barriers such as low digital literacy, bureaucratic culture, and lack of sustainability planning.
3. **Group 3, on institutional learning and standardisation**, emphasised strengthening documentation systems, harmonising donor reporting frameworks, and embedding impact assessment and communication strategies into project design. They underlined that safeguarding institutional memory is key to sustainability.

After the group feedback, the consortium moved to the **launch of the Training Programme Development Team (TPDT)** under WP3, coordinated by HSWT and formed by JKUAT, Jimma University, and Obreal. The TPDT was tasked with designing the training syllabus, modules, and delivery methods. The session outlined selection criteria (one representative per institution, ideally with project experience) and initial responsibilities, covering content development, implementation modalities, monitoring, and certification.



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The agenda also included a forward-looking discussion on the **WP3 Leadership Forum**, planned for late 2026 on the theme of “decolonising partnerships.” The MoE Kenya stressed the need to embed the Forum in national policy dialogues, while JOOUST called for stronger visibility of African leadership in internationalisation. Partners also noted upcoming opportunities for positioning the project in policy debates, including the National Higher Education Week in Nairobi, the Annual Conference of the Commission for University Education, and the UNESCO Forum on Higher Education in Africa.

The final session introduced the **WP4 Self-Assessment Tool**, led by UCM Still at a conceptual stage, it will provide a framework for producing institution-level societal impact reports. Partners agreed it should build on existing systems, remain simple and adaptable, and focus on outcome-based, audience-specific reporting with clear social, economic, educational, environmental, and policy indicators. The session closed with a practical exercise to collectively identify the types of impact most relevant for the tool.

The meeting concluded with a presentation on the **roadmap for Year 2**. Partners agreed that WP2 deliverables require final consolidation, but the priorities for WP3 and WP4 are now well defined. The TPDT will immediately begin work on training design, while the WP4 team will refine the framework for the self-assessment tool using mapping results and international best practices.

As a final note, alongside the main program, **bilateral meetings** were held between Ethiopian and Kenyan partners and Obreal, offering space to raise practical questions on project management, financial procedures, and reporting. These exchanges allowed institutions to clarify administrative concerns and strengthen their operational alignment with the project’s coordination structures.

In closing, the consortium acknowledged that the Jimma meeting successfully bridged the analytical phase of the project with its operational phase, equipping partners with a **shared vision**, **defined responsibilities**, and a stronger **collaborative spirit** for the next stage of implementation.



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Publications of the event in social media

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1ZY1pWor3h/>

<https://ju.edu.et/erasmus-impact-he-consortium-meeting-concludes-at-ju-charting-the-course-for-enhanced-international-cooperation/>

<https://www.instagram.com/p/DPEDnC8iguM/>

<https://news.jooust.ac.ke/jooust-at-the-impact-he-consortium-meeting-in-ethiopia>

<https://x.com/Jooustonline/status/1971536041430671787>

<https://www.facebook.com/share/p/1A8XaheIsd/>

https://www.linkedin.com/posts/obreal_this-week-obreal-joined-partners-in-jimma-activity-7376974453945167872--_kF?utm_source=share&utm_medium=member_desktop&rcm=ACoAABZTLfsBCky7xD5doutC3K8-2iafpeOTEog



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