

Press Release

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UNIHUBS REPORT REVEALS URGENT TRAINING NEEDS TO BOOST DIGITAL INNOVATION AND EMPLOYABILITY IN AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

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Press Release #2



For more information about the project, visit www.unihubs.eu

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UNIHUBS is a three-year project (2024–2027) uniting African and European universities and innovation hubs. It aims to build inclusive, digitally driven education systems that enhance graduate employability and foster regional innovation.

The UNIHUBS consortium has reached a major milestone in its work to transform higher education across Africa: the release of the Needs Analysis Report (Deliverable D3.1). Funded by the European Union under the Erasmus+ Capacity Building in Higher Education programme, this report provides an in-depth assessment of the skills gaps and capacity-building priorities among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) and Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) in Ghana, Kenya, and Tanzania. If African universities are to prepare their students for success in a rapidly evolving digital economy, staff and institutions need practical, targeted training in digital teaching, entrepreneurship, and collaboration with the private sector.

UNIHUBS (project) aims not only to connect academia with innovation but also to empower educators and innovation professionals to actively shape Africa's digital future.



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A Grounded, Collaborative Approach

The Needs Analysis Report is the result of several months of collaborative research and fieldwork. The team used a triangulated methodology that combined:

- Desk research and literature reviews on digital innovation and pedagogy.
- Analysis of successful educational and innovation models in Europe and Africa.
- 41 in-depth interviews with staff from HEIs and DIHs across the three countries.

Their results were consistent with what the program aims to achieve. That is, there is growing interest in entrepreneurship, digital tools, and student-centred learning, but most institutions lack the structured support, skills, and infrastructure to implement these ideas effectively.

Five Key Capacity Gaps Identified

- **Digital Pedagogy** – Educators need training in designing and delivering engaging digital content.
- **Entrepreneurship Education** – Faculty require skills in innovation pedagogy and project-based learning.
- **Technical Digital Skills** – Coding, data analytics, and cybersecurity are critical but underdeveloped.
- **Human Skills** – Communication, teamwork, and leadership are essential and need development.
- **Collaboration & Partnership** – Skills in co-creation and public-private engagement are vital.

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Gaps Between Vision and Reality

Despite some promising examples, many institutions, particularly those in rural areas, continue to encounter significant challenges. These include outdated curricula, inadequate internet connectivity and access to devices, bureaucratic bottlenecks, and insufficient incentives for faculty to engage in innovation.

What Comes Next

The UNIHUBS consortium will now begin developing flexible, modular training materials tailored to African contexts. These will be adapted from existing EU resources and tested with real users for effectiveness. Key activities include curating existing resources, developing new content, piloting materials, and refining content based on feedback.

A Living Document for a Dynamic Landscape

The Needs Analysis Report will be updated throughout the project to ensure continued relevance. It reflects the dynamic needs of African higher education and digital innovation ecosystems.

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UNIHUBS Strengthens Innovation-Driven Pedagogy

The training also reinforced the pedagogical foundations of the UNIHUBS initiative. These foundations include experiential learning, problem-based learning, structured reflection, and ecosystem immersion. The project uses these approaches to equip students with the technical, entrepreneurial, and soft skills needed to succeed in a rapidly evolving digital economy.

By embedding these principles into teaching and learning practices, UNIHUBS supports a shift towards more interactive, student-centred, and innovation-driven higher education systems.

Partners Review Progress and Set the Next Steps

Alongside the training, the 4th Partners' Meeting gave consortium members the opportunity to review progress and coordinate the next phase of implementation. Discussions focused on finalising the Action Learning Scheme, developing pilot implementation and evaluation frameworks, and strengthening dissemination and communication activities under Work Package six. The partners agreed on clear timelines and responsibilities, which will help maintain alignment across the consortium and sustain momentum towards key project deliverables.

Key Outcomes of the Nairobi Engagement

The Nairobi engagement produced several important outcomes. First, it created a trained cohort of educators and Digital Innovation Hub practitioners who are now equipped to implement the UNIHUBS framework within their institutions. Second, it enabled the consortium to validate and refine educational materials and digital platforms through real-user testing. Third, it strengthened collaboration between universities and innovation ecosystems, laying a solid foundation for sustained partnerships and joint initiatives. The feedback gathered during the training will guide ongoing improvements to the project's tools and methodologies and will help ensure their effectiveness across diverse institutional contexts.

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UNIHUBS Responds to Identified Capacity Gaps

This phase of the project directly addresses the capacity gaps identified in earlier research, including weaknesses in digital pedagogy, entrepreneurship education, and university industry collaboration. By focusing on applied training and practical implementation, UNIHUBS continues to respond to these challenges through targeted, evidence-based interventions that aim to transform higher education systems across the participating countries.

Looking Ahead to the Next Phase

The UNIHUBS consortium will now proceed with the pilot implementation of its educational framework across partner institutions, supported by continuous monitoring and evaluation. The project will also continue to refine its digital learning platforms, expand its international course offerings, and strengthen collaboration between universities, innovation hubs, and industry stakeholders. The next consortium meeting is scheduled for November 2026 in Tanzania, where the partners will further assess implementation progress.



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Conclusion

The successful delivery of the International Training Activity and 4th Partners' Meeting in Nairobi shows that the UNIHUBS project has moved decisively from planning to action. By translating innovative ideas into practical solutions, the project is enhancing the relevance and impact of higher education. Through collaboration, capacity building, and innovation-driven learning, UNIHUBS continues to contribute to more inclusive and future-oriented higher education systems in Africa and Europe

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