

4th Meeting of the Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence

VET EXCELLENCE FOR AN INCLUSIVE, GREEN, AND DIGITAL DANUBE REGION

Date: Tuesday, 30 September 2025 | 9.00-12.00 CET

Venue: Online

FORMAT

International online meeting bringing together national and EU policy makers, experts and VET stakeholders. The meeting will be held in English. It is hosted within Priority Area 9 “People & Skills” (PA9) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) by OeAD – Austria’s Agency for Education and Internationalisation in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and the European Training Foundation (ETF).

BACKGROUND

The Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) serves as a forum for cooperation on CoVEs. The platform was launched in 2021 by PA9 in cooperation with the ETF Network for Excellence (ENE)¹. ENE supports vocational excellence development together with currently more than 330 CoVEs and skills providers from over 50 countries.

As part of the initiative, a Policy Platform was established, promoting exchange among core stakeholders from responsible national institutions in Danube Region countries and experts from the European Commission, PA9 and ETF. The Danube Region Platform also facilitates the development of transnational CoVEs projects in the Danube Region. The platform’s efforts were recognised in 2022 and 2024, when it was designated a “Danube Strategy Flagship” for its contribution to the implementation of the EUSDR.

Concrete needs for VET excellence in the Danube Region identified in the 3rd meeting of the platform in 2024 include reaching a common understanding of CoVEs, developing cooperation at a national and transnational level (including public-private partnerships), supportive legal frameworks and autonomy, as well as information and knowledge sharing. Relevant areas of expertise identified include the development of green and digital skills, as well as social inclusion to make sure that no one is left behind.

CONCEPT

The aim of the 4th meeting of the Danube Region Platform on CoVEs is to provide an update on new developments regarding VET excellence and CoVEs. The meeting will also inform about funding opportunities in the context of the 3rd Call of the Danube Region Programme (DRP), which will be launched in September 2025, and *inter alia* support the cooperation and development of CoVEs.

Inputs from the European Commission will highlight the role of vocational excellence in promoting required skills and contributing to European competitiveness. Presentations from policymakers and practitioners will address regional challenges and showcase good practice examples. After a presentation of the 3rd call of the DRP, opportunities for project development and potential applications will be explored in an interactive session.

As a follow-up to the meeting, documentation on the meeting and further resources will be shared.

¹ <https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/what-we-do/vocational-excellence>

AGENDA

Time (CET)	Sessions
8.45 – 9.00	Log-in
9.00 – 9.15	Introduction by the Moderator -Sarah Fellner, OeAD - Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation Welcome Remarks -Jürgen Schick, Coordinator EUSDR Priority Area 9 'People & Skills', Federal Ministry of Education, Austria -Roland Hanak, Coordinator EUSDR Priority Area 9 'People & Skills', Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Austria -Gordon Purvis, Human Capital Development Expert, European Training Foundation Icebreaker
9.15 – 9.30	Union of Skills and the Role of Vocational Excellence -Anna Barbieri, Team Leader for Apprenticeships and Erasmus+, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission -Q&A
9.30 – 10.40	Good Practice Examples on Policy and Project Level -Liudmila Stihj, State Secretary for Vocational Education, Training and Lifelong Learning, Ministry of Education and Research, Republic of Moldova -Iryna Shumik, Director General of the Directorate of Vocational Education, Ministry of Education and Science, Ukraine -Milan Kuzma, Project Manager, State Institute of Vocational Education, Slovakia -Franz Riemelmoser, European Senior Research Manager, Carinthia University of Applied Sciences: TransAC (Establishing a Danube training academy as measure against brain drain from rural and crisis regions) and potential follow-up projects -István Lábodi, Project Manager, South Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency: SMF DANUBE COVES and potential follow-up projects -Updates from the European Training Foundation in the Area of Vocational Excellence: Jolien van Uden, Senior Human Capital Development Expert, and Susanne M. Nielsen, Human Capital Development Expert -Q&A / interactive discussion
10.40 – 10.55	Break
10.55 – 11.25	Funding Opportunities under the Danube Region Programme -Stephen Halligan, Senior Project Officer, Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat of the Danube Region Programme -Q&A
11.25 – 11.55	Interactive Session to Explore Project Ideas and Potential Partnerships
11.55 – 12.00	Closing -ETF & PA9