

14th Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, 5-6 November 2025, Sarajevo

Agenda and Concept – PA9 Event on “Closing the Skills Gap: Green and Digital Skills for a Competitive Europe”

6 November 2025, 11.30 to 13.00 – Hotel Holiday, Zmaja od Bosne 4, 71000, Sarajevo, BA

Widening skills gaps and the need for more and better skills pose significant challenges within the Danube Region. The loss of young people through outward migration and skilled labour shortages hinders economic development, innovation, and social progress. Targeted and inclusive education, skills and labour market policies can help build attractive offers to attract and retain talent in the region. Building skills for life through strong educational foundations and a focus on green and digital skills are essential to meet the rapidly changing skill demands and employment needs in the green and digital transition. Promoting these skills through cooperation can help bridge the skills gap, foster economic growth, retain talent in the region, and contribute to a sustainable and more competitive Danube Region.

Following the keynotes that will provide context and strategic direction, the panel discussion will bring together experts who will share insights on EU strategies, trends in education and labour market systems in the region, and good practice examples on international cooperation in the fields of education and labour market policy. Panellists will first discuss key challenges around brain drain and the growing skills gap, showcase current initiatives addressing these issues, and highlight the role of transnational cooperation and the promotion of green and digital skills. The audience will have the opportunity to ask questions and share experiences.

Session Title	Closing the Skills Gap: Green and Digital Skills for a Competitive Europe
Moderators	Jörg Mirtl, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Austria Jürgen Schick, Federal Ministry of Education, Austria Coordinators of EUSDR Priority Area 9 – People & Skills
Keynotes	Maryna Tverdostup, Economist, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (wiiw) – Findings of the Danube Region Monitor Nathalie Lahire, Senior Economist for Education, World Bank – Assessment of green skills, foundational skills and skill gap profiles for the green transition in the Western Balkans
Panellists	• Susanne M. Nielsen, Human Capital Development Expert – Country Liaison for Ukraine – Green Skills Expert, European Training Foundation • Nathalie Lahire, Senior Economist for Education, World Bank • Elisabeth Augustin, Head of Department for International Cooperation Offices and Foreign Language Teaching, OeAD – Austria’s Agency for Education and Internationalisation – input on the educational cooperation programme with East and Southeastern Europe

	• Franz Riemelmoser, European Senior Research Manager, Carinthia University of Applied Sciences, Interreg Danube project “TransAC” – input on the establishment of a Danube training academy on additive manufacturing as a measure against brain drain and the potential to develop a Centre of Vocational Excellence (project VET 5.0) • Janja Rimac, Employment Mediation Specialist, Employment Office of the Herzeg-Bosnian Canton, Interreg Danube project “WIN” – input on project measures aimed at closing skills gaps and career development opportunities for women in peripheral industrial regions with a focus on green jobs
Contact	Barbara Willsberger, willsberger@lrsocialresearch.at Flavia Enengl, enengl@lrsocialresearch.at Sarah Fellner, sarah.fellner@oead.at Dragana Ilić-Đotunović, dragana.ilic-dotunovic@oead.at