

## 10<sup>th</sup> Meeting of ESF Managing Authorities in the Danube Region | 4-5 July 2022 | Vienna

### Introduction

Roland Hanak, Priority Coordinator of the EU Strategy of the Danube Region of the Priority Area 9 “People and Skills” and Claudia Singer 10, Priority Coordinator of Priority Area 10 “Institutional capacity and Cooperation”, welcomed all participants.

### Transnational Cooperation in the Context of ESF+ – News from the EC

Risto Raivio, DG Employment

Transnational cooperation in the ESF+ will focus on the facilitation of transfer and scaling of innovative projects and solutions.

The entrusted entity to implement the European competence centre for social innovation is the Managing Authority of Lithuania. The budget for the period 2021-2027 is 197 Mio Euro and around 75% are reserved for grants 6 9 calls are planned during the programming period and the first call will focus on piloting the ALMA scheme.

The competence centre will focus on mutual learning and capacity building, networking, networking, data and knowledge transfer and support mechanisms, like the social innovation database.

### Potential Synergies in ESIF Embedding

Robert Lichtner, Danube Strategy Point (DSP)

Robert Lichtner gave an overview of the embedding process accompanied by the DSP, which focus on ERDF/CF and IPA/NDICI; In 2020 an EUSDR task force for embedding the EUSDR into EU Programmes was formed and several embedding tools, like a shortlist of strategic projects, or the MA LEAFLET were developed. In 2021 MA Network meetings (ERDF/CF and IPA/NDICI) were held and in July 2021 the EUSDR Embedding week was initiated within the framework of MA networks with PACs, MAs and further EUSDR actors.

In July a new guidance paper for embedding the EUSDR into EU Programmes – From Actions to Funding was published – for more information: <https://danube-region.eu/projects-and-funding/embedding-2021-2027/> and the attached presentation.

### State of Play ESF+ Programming

Each participating MA gave a short update of the status quo of the ESF+ Programming – the inputs are summarized in the attached ppt. So, far just the ESF Programme of

Baden-Württemberg is approved, but all participating MAs expect the improvement within the next months.

## **Danube Regional Programme - A More Social Europe**

Stephen Halligan, MA/JS, Danube Transnational Programme

The Danube Region Programme is an “Interreg Fund” (ERDF, IPA, NDICI) with the 14 EUSDR Countries. The cofinancing rate for 2021-2021 is 80:20. The DRP focuses on 4 Priorities, whereby priority 3 “A more Social Europe” is from interest for the ESF. 3 Specific Objectives are defined for Priority 3:

- SO 3.1 - Accessible, inclusive and effective labour markets: Enhancing the effectiveness and inclusiveness of labour markets and access to quality employment through developing social infrastructure and promoting social economy
- SO3.2 - Accessible and inclusive quality services in education: Improving equal access to inclusive and quality services in education, training and lifelong learning through developing accessible infrastructure, including by fostering resilience for distance and on-line education and training
- SO3.3 - Socio-economic development through heritage, culture and tourism: Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation

The first call will be launched in September (2-step procedure). For more information: <https://www.interreg-danube.eu/> and attached presentation.

## **Discussion on the Topics for Transnational Cooperation**

The list of topics for transnational cooperation was discussed during the 9<sup>th</sup> network meeting and the aim was to define up to 4 topics with high priority to the participating MAs:

- Women in the Labour Market
- Digitalisation
- Vocational Training
- Social Entrepreneurship
- Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups/Roma
- Ageing Population
- Life-long Learning
- Social Innovation

The participants selected the following topics:

- Vocational training and youth employment
- Women in the labour market;
- Inclusion of Roma and vulnerable groups
- Ageing population;

The focus of the next meetings will be on these topics.

### **Projects in the context of the war in Ukraine**

Matthias Holzner, NC Baden-Württemberg

The observations so far show, that the development is very dynamic and the support structures and measures must be flexible. Furthermore, there are too many actors and institutions with their own priorities and actions --> a great need for information, exchange and network, e.g. platforms would be needed.

Examples for funded projects:

- Support the Supporters, Mother Centers International Network for Empowerment: The goal is to promote care and reception of mothers and families who fled through already existing and active reception centers in the neighbor countries of Ukraine. The activities include community building, counseling and learning programmes.
- Smarter Together4Ukraine, City of Ulm: The goal is to provide assistance to refugees through mediation between supply and demand for information, skills and support: An internet support point for Ukrainian women, children and older people with supervised internet services was created.
- A possible funding source is the Bade-Württemberg Small Project Funds

### **Needed support for Ukraine**

Nadija Afanasieva, Ukrainian Institute for International Politics (UIIP)

Digital solutions for schools:

- Provide possibilities for online lessons – not only hardware for teachers and pupils, but also infrastructure in case of destroyed schools, e.g. centers for teachers to prepare and to hold lessons
- Training programmes for teachers (in Ukraine but also abroad) for psychological support of traumatized pupils
- Online permissions for pupils to attend online lessons, e.g. for children without parents --> here an information exchange with existing practices in Europe would be fruitful

Integration of refugees: Beside language skills, psychological support and sharing the European values – also to raise the awareness how the “European family” functions.

Problem of timeline: many projects have a quite long preparation phase – and the help would come too late --> new funding schemes are needed, like the Small Project Funds of Baden-Württemberg;

VET-Education in Ukraine: New regulations are developed – an exchange of know-how and experiences would be supporting.

## Needs and Challenges in Transnational Cooperation in the Danube Region

Results of the group discussion:

Opportunities	Risks
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Huge Value</li> <li>– Personal Contact/Trust</li> <li>– Network to exchange information</li> <li>– Sharing knowledge/learn from other countries</li> <li>– Support Structure for MA</li> <li>– MA has to promote good practice</li> <li>– More concrete topics for information; e.g. financing TC; more concrete projects, preparation fo calls, simplification, (financing of) project preparation, lump sums</li> <li>– Spread info with practitioners of each country</li> <li>– Beneficiaries workshops on concrete topics</li> <li>– Exchange at the EUSDR Annual Forum (on VET/Youth employment)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>– Pre-financing for Beneficiaries</li> <li>– Preparation Costs</li> <li>– Measurable Results for TC(?)</li> <li>– Finding (potential) partners</li> <li>– Funding Structures of Programmes (e.g. application of unit costs)</li> <li>– It takes time to set up TC</li> </ul>

## Outlook and Next steps

- The next meeting will offer the opportunity to exchange on good practice examples on the topic of youth employment and VET, but also on administrative aspects like unit costs;
- With a focus on youth employment the next meeting could eventually be organized as a side event of the annual form – it will be discussed with the UA NC and the DSP
- A standardized sheet to collect good practice examples on the different topics will be prepared by PA9 and PA10