

13th International Stakeholder Conference of Priority Area 9 “People and Skills” of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region

“Towards an Innovative, Resilient and Inclusive Danube Region through Unity and Cooperation”

Date: May 12-13, 2025

Venue: Videoconference via Zoom (link will be sent to registered participants)

Registration link: <https://forms.gle/F4MUgqyVmLhbzWXN6>

The conference is hosted by the Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine and Ukrainian Institute for International Politics in partnership with the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection and Federal Ministry of Education of the Republic of Austria, the Ministry of Education and Research and the Ministry of Labour and Social Protection of the Republic of Moldova, OeAD – Austria’s Agency for Education and Internationalisation and L&R Social Research.

Background. The general objective of the conference is to be an open, transparent and inclusive platform to stimulate the emergence of new ideas and best practice exchange among the diverse list of Danube Region stakeholders. Therefore, participants are invited to bring along questions, ideas, and initiatives.

Since the previous stakeholder conference in June 2024, the European Commission has further strengthened its focus on creating a fair and inclusive social market economy by signing the Pact for European Social Dialogue and introducing the Union of Skills. It is high time to start embedding key principles of more social Europe – in the light of middle- and long-term consequences of the war in Ukraine as well as the EU accession process of Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and the Balkan states. Education, social and labour systems have been under significant pressure for several past years and thus require innovative approaches and increased resilience to be able to resolve current issues and face the approaching challenges.

Participants to be involved:

- EU and international institutions;
- Representatives of the EU macroregional strategies;
- Representatives of Priority Area 7 and 8 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR);
- State institutions responsible for labour market, educational and social policies;
- National educational institutions;
- Agencies of the vocational education;
- Representatives of civil society and NGOs;
- Institutions of social research.

Selected topics for panel discussions:

1. Education and Labour Market Policies in the Context of EU Accession of the Danube Region Candidate Countries
2. Increasing Vocational Education and Training (VET) Attractiveness and Visibility in the Danube Region
3. Upskilling, Reskilling, Lifelong Learning and Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups through Employment in the Danube Region
4. Cooperation and Financial Instruments to Support Innovative, Resilient and Inclusive Transformation of the Danube Region

AGENDA

May 12th, 2025, 12.00-15.00 CET

11.45-12.00	Connection of Participants
12.00-12.20	<p>Welcome Speech</p> <p>Dmytro Zavhorodniy, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine for Digital Development, Digital Transformations and Digitalization</p> <p>Iryna Postolovska, Deputy Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine for European Integration</p> <p>Introduction by Priority Area Coordinators PAg "People and Skills"</p> <p>Roland Hanak, Head of Staff Unit, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Austria</p> <p>Jürgen Schick, Deputy Head of Department, Federal Ministry of Education, Austria</p> <p>Ludmila Pavlov, Deputy Secretary General, Ministry of Education and Research, Republic of Moldova</p> <p>Anna Gherganova, Head of Department, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Republic of Moldova</p>
12.20-12.35	<p>Introductory Input</p> <p>Patrick Paquet, Head of Unit Jobs and Skills Germany, Austria, Slovenia and Croatia, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), European Commission</p>
12.35-12.40	Online Poll (Mentimeter)
12.40-13.40	<p>Panel Discussion 1. Education and Labour Market Policies in the Context of EU Accession of the Danube Region Candidate Countries</p> <p><i>How is the process of EU accession transforming the education and labour market spheres in the Danube Region candidate countries?</i></p> <p>Moderator: Nadija Afanasieva, Ukrainian Institute for International Politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dmytro Zavhorodniy, Deputy Minister of Education and Science of Ukraine for Digital Development, Digital Transformations and Digitalization Dariia Andriunina, Director, Department of Employment, Ministry of Economy of Ukraine Johan Magnusson, Team Leader and Senior Expert, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), European Commission

- Liina Carr, International Relations Officer, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion (DG EMPL), European Commission

13.40-13.50 Coffee Break

13.50-14.50 Panel Discussion 2. Increasing Vocational Education and Training (VET) Attractiveness and Visibility in the Danube Region

What factors of the VET system and institutions (aesthetical, organizational, communication, inclusion and other) should be improved for increasing VET attractiveness and visibility for key audiences in the Danube Region? How can these factors be improved?

Moderator: Dragana Ilić-Đotunović, OeAD – Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation

- Tina Šarić, Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe (ERI SEE)
- Anton Leodolter & Kathrin Wenny, OeAD - Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation. Project presentation: "VET CONNECT"
- Yuliia Yepifanova, Swisscontact, "Public-Private partnership to improved professional education in Ukraine" (EdUP). Project presentation: "The New VET. A Guide to Renovation Works in Vocational Education Institutions"
- István Lábodi, South Transdanubian Regional Innovation Agency. Project presentation: SMF DANUBE CoVES

Discussion

14.50-15.00 Wrap-up of Day 1

May 13th, 2025, 12.00-15.00 CET

11.45-12.00	Connection of Participants
12.00-13.30	<p>Panel Discussion 3. Upskilling, Reskilling, Lifelong Learning and Inclusion of Vulnerable Groups through Employment in the Danube Region</p> <p><i>How do upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning influence the supply of the Danube Region with qualified workforce needed for greener and prosperous economies?</i></p> <p><i>What governmental and civil society initiatives are there in the Danube Region for guaranteeing fairer labour market policies, including for vulnerable groups?</i></p> <p>Moderator: Jörg Mirtl, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health, Care and Consumer Protection, Austria</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Iryna Shumik, Director General of the Directorate of Vocational Education, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine • Olena Kulchytska, Advisor to the Minister of Social Policy of Ukraine • Martina Klapan Štambuk, Ministry of Labour, Pension System, Family and Social Policy, Croatia • Jelena Zlojutro, Adult Education Centres Vienna. Project presentation: AMARO DROM <p>Discussion</p>
13.30-13.45	Coffee break
13.45-14.45	<p>Panel Discussion 4. Cooperation and Financial Instruments to Support Innovative, Resilient and Inclusive Transformation of the Danube Region</p> <p><i>What financial instruments are there in the Danube Region and the EU for resolving all the issues discussed during the previous three panel discussions?</i></p> <p><i>What cooperation opportunities are there in the Danube Region and beyond for supporting the stakeholders with relevant experience and best practices?</i></p> <p>Moderator: Mykhailo Omelchenko, Ukrainian Institute for International Politics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Gordon Purvis & Susanne Nielsen, European Training Foundation, ETF priorities and ETF Network for Excellence (ENE) presentation • Anders Bergström, Norden Association, EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), Policy Area Education • Pavol Krempaský, European Education and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA), Erasmus+ Capacity Building for Vocational Education and Training (CBVET) <p>Discussion</p>
14.45-15.00	Wrap Up of Day 2 and 13th SHC