

**10<sup>th</sup> International Stakeholder Conference of Priority Area 9 “People and Skills” of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region**

## **Young People in Times of Crisis:**

# **Building Responsive Education, Training and Labour Market Systems in the Danube Region**

**Date:** Thursday, 9 June 2022, 9.00-16.30 CET

**Venue:** Flemings Conference Hotel, Vienna, Austria and online

[Neubaugürtel 26-28, 1070 Vienna, Austria](#)

**Format:** International conference in a hybrid format on challenges and future priorities with respect to effective education, training and labour market policies and related projects to support young people in the Danube Region in the context of the war in Ukraine, the COVID-19 pandemic and climate change. The conference will be held in English and no interpretation will be provided. Participants may attend in person in Vienna or follow the conference online. The conference is hosted by the Federal Ministry of Labour and the Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research of the Republic of Austria.

The European Union has designated 2022 as the European Year of Youth (EYY), highlighting the role of young people for the future of Europe. Supporting young people in acquiring relevant knowledge and competences, as well as promoting opportunities for their personal, social, economic and professional development are among the objectives of the EYY.<sup>1</sup>

The war in Ukraine has disrupted the lives of young people in Ukraine and has forced many to leave the country. This has particularly affected areas in the Danube Region, both in Ukraine itself and in other Danube Region countries. Providing psychosocial support to young Ukrainians and integrating Ukrainian refugees into education and labour market systems in these extremely challenging times is essential.

The compounding impact of the COVID-19 crisis on educational outcomes, mental health, early school leaving and employment opportunities demands specific focus to young people during the process of recovery. Support is needed to ensure that no one is left behind, including young people not in education, employment, or training and those from vulnerable groups.

Priority Area 9 (PA9) “People and Skills” of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) covers key areas that affect the lives of young people: education, training, labour market and inclusion. Actions agreed on within the framework of PA9 are essential for post-COVID-19 recovery and beyond: In the area of education and training, these include ensuring high-quality education, promoting relevant skills, strengthening vocational education and training, and reducing early school leaving. The labour market actions of PA9 include cooperation, innovation and digitalisation of the labour market in the Danube Region, as well as the integration of vulnerable groups, the fight against poverty and inclusion for all.

<sup>1</sup> [Decision of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European Year of Youth \(2022\)](#)

Education is also essential for the empowerment of young people. It teaches the civic competences needed to participate in democratic life, to address discrimination and to contribute to an inclusive society. Moreover, it is essential to provide young people with employment opportunities and the transition from school to work has a crucial role to play in this endeavour. Participation of young people in the governance structures of the EUSDR has been a key priority under the Slovak and Ukrainian presidency. In addition to this, attention must be paid to bottom-up initiatives and the overall socio-economic situation of young people in the Danube Region.

Young people play a key role in supporting the digital and green transition. The United Nations 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development acknowledges the role of young people as critical agents of change<sup>2</sup>. Promoting young people's digital and green skills equips them for jobs in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and drives innovation and creativity, which are imperative in finding solutions for addressing complex challenges, such as climate change.

The 10<sup>th</sup> International Stakeholder Conference of PA9 takes stock of existing initiatives and developments on EU and macro-regional levels and discusses how empowering young people through education and training, as well as labour market policies in times of crisis can contribute to a more responsive Danube Region.

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<sup>2</sup> [United Nations General Assembly resolution of 25 September 2015 entitled 'Transforming our World: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development'](#)

## Draft Programme -

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### Wednesday, 8 June 2022

19.30-21.00 Dinner buffet at the Flemings Conference Hotel (registration required)

### Thursday, 9 June 2022

08.30 **Setting up and checking in**

09.00 **Start of conference**

Welcome and introductory words

Moderator: Gabriele Stöger

09.05 **Welcome to the meeting**

- Roland Hanak, Priority Area Coordinator, Federal Ministry of Labour, Austria
- Jürgen Schick, Priority Area Coordinator, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Austria
- Felicia Bechtoldt, Secretary of State, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Republic of Moldova
- N.N., Priority Area Coordinator, Ukraine (tba)
- Johan Magnusson, Team Leader Danube and Baltic Sea Regions, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG REGIO), European Commission

09.30 **Keynote speeches**

- Mario Steiner, Institute for Advanced Studies Vienna (IHS): “Impact of the Pandemic on Education, Employment and Equity – Making Sure Young People Are Not Left Behind”
- Maryna Tverdostup, Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies (WIIW): “Education and Labour Market Systems in Times of Crisis – Early Findings Regarding Young People in the Danube Region”

#### Q&A

10.30 **Coffee Break**

11.00 **Panel discussion**

‘Challenges of and responses to the crises in the field of labour market and education systems’

- Stefaan Hermans, Director – Policy Strategy and Evaluation, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture (DG EAC), European Commission
- Veerle Miranda, Senior Policy Analyst, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, OECD Directorate for Employment, Labour and Social Affairs
- Anna Gherganova, Priority Area Coordinator, Ministry of Labour and Social Protection, Republic of Moldova

- Representative from Ukraine (tbc)

**Q&A**

**12.00**

**Lunch break**

**13.30**

**Working Group 1**

Integrating refugees in labour market and education

**Presentations:**

- Gabriela Sonnleitner, MAGDAs HOTEL – a social enterprise for or people with a refugee background
- Sergiy Bogdanov, Centre for Mental Health and Psychosocial Support, National University of Kyiv-Mohyla Academy
- Dominik Eisenmann, Austrian Educational Coordinator (Ukraine) (tbc)

**Facilitator:** Barbara Willsberger, L&R Social Research

**Working Group 3**

Strengthening skills and empowering young people in the COVID-19 recovery and beyond

**Presentations:**

- Stefaan Hermans, DG EAC, European Commission
- Lyuben Georgiev, Re-Act, Bulgaria: Danube Youth Network
- Astrid Edinger, WUK, Austria: Job Assistance

**Facilitator:** Tina Šarić, ERI SEE Secretariat

**Working Group 2**

Promoting green and digital skills and jobs for young people

**Presentations:**

- Stephan Waba, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research of Austria
- Abayomi Ogundipe, TEKEDU, Republic of Moldova: Project “GirlsGoIT”
- Margit Helene Meister, State of Lower Austria: Project “Green jobs for you”

**Facilitator:** Sarah Fellner, OeAD – Austria’s Agency for Education and Internationalisation

**Working Group 4**

Overcoming marginalization: Young Roma in times of crisis  
**(online participation possible)**

**Presentations:**

- Milisav Milinkovic, EHO, Novi Sad, Serbia: Project “With and for Roma in the Danube Region“
- Tamara Muhič, RIS Dvorec Rakičan, Muska Sobota, Slovenia: DREAM ROAD project
- Vera Messing, Central European University, Budapest, Hungary: Bridging Young Roma and Business project

**Facilitator:** Jörg Mirtl, L&R Social Research

**15.00**

**Coffee Break**

**15.30**

**Reports from the Working Groups**

**16.00**

**Conclusions & outlook by the Priority Area Coordinators**

**16.30**

**End of conference**