

Minutes

18th Steering Group Meeting

Priority Area 9 “Investing in People and Skills” (PA9)

Date: 19th June 2020

Venue: Online

Chair:

Roland Hanak, Federal Ministry of Labour, Family and Youth, Austria

Jürgen Schick, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Austria

Anna Gherganova, Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Republic of Moldova

Ludmila Pavlov, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, Republic of Moldova

Valeriya Izhyk, Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine

Welcome and Introduction

Hanak, Schick, Gherganova, Pavlov and Izhyk opened the Steering Group Meeting and welcomed the participants as Priority Area Coordinators of PA 9 to the first online meeting.

New Guidelines for the Functioning of the SG

Schick informed that the Steering Group had approved the revision of the Guidelines for the Functioning of the Steering Group in accordance with Article 4(h) of the Guidelines for the Functioning of the Steering Group. The new guidelines apply for this Steering Group Meeting so that it can be held online.

Adoption of Agenda

The Agenda was adopted unanimously.

Update on Impacts of the Covid-19 Pandemic in Education and Labour Market Policies in each Country

Tour de table

CZ – Katerina Malackova (labour market): Unemployment has increased by 0,2% to 3,6 % in May. The number of job seekers increased by 12,000 to approx. 266,000. The number of job vacancies has slightly decreased. Unemployment has increased, but not yet dramatically. There were several measures adopted to keep these figures acceptable. A short time work scheme programme called Antivirus has been launched. Either 60% or

80% compensations, depending on the situation, will be paid to the employers for wage costs related to work obstacles on the side of both employees and employers. The government also introduced a new strand of this programme, which consists of forgiving the social insurance payments to employers with up to 50 employees. The government decided to prolong this programme until the end of August. By the end of May 650,000 employees were supported. Care allowance for parents staying at home with children due to the closed schools has been prolonged and increased and similar measures are also used for self-employed people. Households and people can easily apply online for social benefits like immediate social assistance. Other measures have been also adopted by other Ministries, e.g. for self-employed people – flat rate payments.

CZ - Marie Taltynová (education): The Czech Republic announced a 30-day state of emergency on 13 March, and afterwards it was extended until 17 May. Therefore, all levels of schools were closed for face-to-face education, except for early childhood education and care institutions (March 10). All schools switched to distance education and the ministry launched the website “distance education” with useful links to on-line educational tools, guidelines and updated information. In addition, the ministry started a cooperation with the Czech national TV and launched the project „Učitelka “. The Czech TV has also published an online archive with educational videos. In addition, libraries opened their sources for free usage and private companies provided free software. The education system also received support from various NGOs. The Czech government applied a gradual approach for the return to schools. On 14 April the roadmap for gradual re-opening was announced. As the infection curve continued to fall, the process of return was speeded up. In the beginning, it focused on final grade students, followed by primary schools opening at the end of May/beginning of June, mainly for consultation. School attendance is not yet obligatory and distance schooling will be continued until the end of the school year. Kindergartens could also re-open. Classes follow the so-called “school group system”, where no more than 15 pupils per class are allowed. Strict hygienic standards apply and guidelines were distributed to the schools.

HU – written contribution (labour market): According to statistical data labour market effects of the pandemic could be experienced even in April this year. The number of employed totally decreased by 56 000, which means that 21 000 persons in regular employment lost their jobs, number of workers in public employment decreased also by 21 000, and number of Hungarians working abroad decreased by 14 000. Employment rate decreased to 69.2%. Lost in workplaces could be observed first of all in transport, tourism, and service sector. Between March-April 2020, number of registered job seekers increased by 50 000 which resulted all together 330 000 unemployed in April, which means an unemployment rate of 3.8%.

Changes in adult training and vocational education: Public education: The digital work schedule outside the classroom in schools was introduced after the announcement of pandemic; it stayed indefinitely till the end of the school year. VET: From 2 June 2020, at the discretion of the school head, VET institutions could operate either in full-time or in evening work schedule they used to apply before the emergency situation or they can operate out-of-class digital work schedule as well. Higher Education: On March 11, the Government ordered in its Decree the prohibition of students attending Hungarian higher education institutions. From 23 March, all higher education institutions had to switch to distance education. The government decided to have school exit exams (matura) only in written form. Depending on the nature of the given the profession and the

necessary tools, vocational practical training was completed in a digital work schedule or by individual preparation, prescribing a project task.

Regarding employment measures following extra/new subsidies were introduced:

- Wage subsidy for job protection was introduced for employees working in Research + development + innovation area. Wage subsidy is provided for three months, the amount is 50% of the salary but maximum 318.900,-Ft and the employer has an another 3 months further employment obligation. Subsidy can be
- Wage subsidy for “Kurzarbeit” was also introduced with same conditions.
- Extension of public work supported the most vulnerable groups.
- Lightening of rules regarding seasonal work provided a greater possibility for working in the agriculture.

SK – written contribution (education): Overcoming the months of pandemic COVID-19 brought lots of lessons for all actors in the school system. In Slovakia, continuity of learning was ensured by decentralized distance teaching. From the very beginning, the ministry, teachers, pupils, students and families took actions towards distance teaching and learning, which made the learning process attainable in spite of the insufficiency of digital experience and occasional shortage of digital devices. Particular challenge during the distance teaching was to reach out to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. Concerning the very low numbers of those infected, on 18th May, the Security Council decided that kindergartens, primary schools (1st – 5th grade) and afterschool care facilities could reopen as of 1st June. Soon after that, on 9th of June, the reopening of the upper grades of primary school was allowed (as of 22nd 2020). Still, we are being cautious when it comes to safety, therefore we have proposed the enrolment of children to school as voluntary, so that the parents could choose whether their children continue with distance learning or return to school. In order to stay updated, the ministry continues operating the online platform called “We learn from a distance”. So far, it has delivered a range of educational materials and distance learning sources and tools. In addition to that, it displays the list of updates on the organisation of the school year, recommendations, guidance, counselling and support for teachers, professional staff, learners and parents. To compensate for the time lost, an opportunity to take on summer school scheme has been offered. We assume that last months’ experiences will be reflected in the development and adaptation of numerous policies and strategies. We have learnt to recognize the importance of modern forms of digital distance learning and virtual mobility. Taking into account the pandemic's impact on education and training we need to support further development of teachers’ and trainers’ digital skills and competences and facilitate teaching by providing possibilities for distance, digital and blended learning.

SK – written contribution (labour market): The registered unemployment rate in Slovakia in April rose by 1.38 percentage point to 6.57% and the Labour Offices registered 204,480 unemployed. Despite the rise in unemployment Labor Offices recorded tens of thousands of vacancies. Currently, there are 73,602 vacancies reported, which is 11,072 less than in March. In response to the coronavirus crisis, which is seriously impacting the Slovak economy and employment, the Government of Slovakia has introduced aid measures to help employers, employees and self-employers overcome the negative impacts of the crisis through an amendment to the Employment Services Act. To avert mass redundancies, there was introduced an allowance

scheme aimed at two types of employers: (i) employers whose operations were prohibited or closed during the emergency situation based on measures issued by the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic; and (ii) employers whose revenues decreased during the emergency situation. To be eligible for the allowance, the employer must be unable to assign work to the employees (an obstacle on the part of the employer must be present). An employer who retains its employees during the Emergency Situation despite its operations being prohibited or closed based on a measure issued by the Public Health Authority of the Slovak Republic can claim an allowance to cover 80 % of the employee's average salary (max. EUR 1,100). An employer who retains its employees during the emergency situation despite a decrease in its revenues compared to the same period in 2019 (or 2019 average) or in comparison with February 2020 (if the employer did not operate business in 2019), can claim an allowance to partially cover the employees' wages. The maximum claimable allowance for one employer is EUR 200,000 per month. For the employer to claim the aid, it has to pay wage compensation to the employee equalling 80 % of average earnings and commit itself not to terminate the respective employees due to the redundancy or dissolution of the employer for two months after the month for which the aid is claimed. The employer is also obliged to prove that certain other conditions are met and fulfil other obligations

HR – Filip Milcevic (labour market): The main focus during lockdown was job preservation. Additional funds of € 100.000.000,00 were mobilised from ERDF and ESF each, as well as national co-financing. Discussions with EC in this regard (ReactEU, recovery plan) are being held, 150-200 Mio € could potentially be mobilised. Several 100.000 workers have received subsidies for the last 3 months. This measure will continue, but just in the fields of tourism, transport and event industry. At the moment there are discussions with the EC about loans for short term schemes. We will need in total about 1 Billion for this scheme. Regarding the ESF, the government requested from the EC for 100% co-financing, which would lower the financing burden. In addition, we plan to establish a new priority access in line with the reactEU regulation, focussing on employment. We already received some proposals from the Ministry of Education, of Social Policy, of Culture, of Health, so probably some measures will be there also.

HR - Petra Reiner (education): Pre-primary education institutions, schools and higher education institutions closed on 16th of March. Distance learning was launched. It had taken around 2 weeks to establish the system. Online tools were used for distance teaching (Moodle, Teams, Yammer, Google Classroom, Edmodo). Teachers and pupils who lacked technical devices were equipped with laptops. Schools were reopened at the beginning of May, but only pre-primary institutions and lower grades of primary schools. Learning at schools was performed as a mixed teaching model, partially at home, partially at school. In higher education, practical work in laboratories etc. started again, as well as for VET students in schools or at the employer's premises. Higher education institutions will finish their work most probably by the end of September (they decide autonomously). School-leaving exams (State Matura) will end at the beginning of July. There is no need for compensation measures. E-learning was considered to be a success; e.g. around 95% of teachers said they were entirely/mostly satisfied with the way they perform distance learning.

DE – written contribution (education): Due to the closing of all educational institutions on 17 March 2020 Baden-Württemberg has met an immediate need to enhance its financial and education-related engagement in the fields of digitalization, teacher training, adult education and general support of all educational institutions. Digitalization has been already in the focus of the latest school-related policies for some time and several projects have been initiated long before Covid-19 appeared. With the pandemic, however, the digital equipment and the use of digital media has received much broader attention in the entire field of training and education in Baden-Württemberg. For instance, the state government has approved an extra budget for schools to distribute tablets or laptops to pupils, who do not have sufficient IT-equipment for home-schooling of their own. Further projects have been drafted and launched, especially with a focus on teacher-training, pedagogical methods and the support of staff to enable distance-teaching over the internet. The ministry of education, youth and sports Baden-Württemberg will maintain its support of the following projects with all partners from the Danube region:

- In-service training for German teachers from Bulgaria, Croatia, Hungary, Romania and the Czech Republic
- International Youth encounter
- Participation in the joint programme of the federal government and the German Länder to support the promotion of the German language in the States of Eastern and Southeastern Europe
- Danube Youth Camp-light and sound 2021 in Timisoara and Novi Sad
- Danube Online project with students from Bulgaria, Hungary, Romania and the Czech Republic

MD – Ludmila Pavlov (education): Educational institutions of all levels in the Republic of Moldova have been closed on 11 March and schools switched to online learning. A lot of work was done within weeks to elaborate and implement a regulatory framework for online learning. The government implemented regulations, guidelines and instructions, how to organise and provide online learning and the evaluation and assessment of knowledge. Main issues concern the promoting of online education, the internet connection in remote regions and the availability of technical equipment. A study showed that 15% of students as well as teachers experience a lack of internet connection or technical devices to participate in online lessons. In this regard the government receives support from international partners like UNICEF, Soros and the World Bank. Moreover, the government allocated 20 Mio. Lei to support schools with computers. The government recently launched the national campaign “Donate a Computer for Education”, to mobilise donations from the society. An online map was created to see in real time the need for computers in the regions of the country. Another problem concerns IT competences of teachers. Thus, the ministry organised a large number of online trainings for teachers and is preparing a national digital literacy programme for teachers, will be launched soon. To assure equal and equitable access to education, and solve problem of students and teachers without access to IT technology, the government started to implement an online education project. In this project the best teachers from the country were selected and started to record lessons for general education to be made available to teachers. The government intends to create an online library that will be constantly improved. Regarding final exams in VET and higher education: the parliament recently adopted a law of cancellation of the exams in general education, gymnasium and high school and at the end of VET programmes for this year. Diplomas will be issued on average annual rates for the period of study in high schools and VET schools and these diplomas will have the same value to access higher education in Moldova and abroad.

MD – Anna Gherganova (labour market): There is no statistical data for the first quarter of 2020 available now, therefore just conclusions based on the figures provided by the national employment agency are possible: At present, there are about 40.000 job seekers registered. This figure is quite low, so there is not a very big pressure on the labour market. A reason for this is the specific structure of the economy in Moldova – import prevails over export. There is only a quite low number of exporting companies, which had to close. The Republic of Moldova has still a quite high rate of informal work, about 40%. Because of the corona crisis a return of migrants was expected, but did not happen in the expected way: In March 1 million people came back to Moldova, the same number left the country in May, because the destination countries, mostly Spain and Italy, changed their permits to work. The COVID19 crisis had a paramount consequence on local labour markets, especially on SMEs: The employment rate will decrease by 10% in 2020 and an increase of 11 % of inactive people is expected in 2020. Measures in the context of the corona crisis: the government tripled funds for unemployment benefits including persons who did not have a social insurance; the budget for active labour market measures was increased. Some LM measures were stopped – e.g. trainings for unemployed people. For the future, the focus must be on the low digital skills of job seekers and low digitalisation of employment services. As a result, many job seekers were not able to apply and receive the benefits and the employment agencies could hardly cope with the situation. Therefore, a new information system for the employment agencies should be developed. There are no sufficient funds to compensate the costs for SMEs, this caused a big number of dismissed people.

RO – written contribution: All schools at all levels were closed in Romania since 11 March, and the courses continued online until 12 June, when the summer vacation begun. In order to support distance learning activities, teachers and pupils/students and parents most often used simple applications for communication, such as Whatsapp or Messenger or even phone calls. They also used open educational resources and digital content, like web sites with information and illustrations, online libraries, simulations, educational software, virtual laboratories, virtual museums, LearningApps and other e-learning platforms and applications, and courses/classes on national TV channels. The main lessons learned are related to:

- the important role of teachers and their continuous training;
- the importance of family support for the online learning process;
- the involvement of local communities in actions that support those pupils facing the risk of exclusion;
- the need for innovative approaches in the field of education and training, both from a technological and pedagogical perspective.

Concerning higher education, the universities acted independently based on their autonomy, but the transition from physical mobility to virtual mobility has been a smooth one in all HEIs and we did not have any problems. The admission will be organized online in most universities this year. Exceptions will be the universities of medicine and pharmacy and some faculties (e.g. vocational ones) that have opted for the classical exam.

Looking to the future, any further action will be taken in accordance with the evolution of the epidemiological context. For the next school year we are considering several types of interventions, as follows:

- increasing the capacity of schools to support pupils facing the risk of exclusion, among others by providing IT equipment;
- teacher training and development of digital skills for the use of virtual teaching and learning platforms;
- continuing the “Teleschool” project in an extended form, with recorded classes for several subjects and creation of a Virtual Library.

RS - Danijela Stojanovic (labour market): Unemployment rate is 9,7 percent, and employment rate is 48,7 percent. All labour market indicators were improved in first quarter of 2020. The government introduced a set of some economic measures to support employers. There are almost 7,000 people more employed until 15 May. So far there was no significant impact on the labour market observed: At the end of May there were around 10,000 unemployed persons more than in the end of April. Nevertheless, we will assess the impact of the crisis and the priority will be to address the impact especially for long term unemployed, unqualified persons and persons with disabilities. A new national employment strategy with a new action plan will be worked out.

Bosko Latkovic: In the context of corona, business got fiscal advantages through the possibility to postpone tax payments and social security payment until the end of the year. All large private enterprises who have been able to refer the employees to absence leave due to the discontinuation of work during the state of emergency can be granted with a compensation of 50% of the minimum monthly wages of the employees.

UA Valeriya Izhyk (education): The biggest obstacle to launch online learning was the lack of digital competences of students and teachers, the lack of access to internet and digital devices and the lack of consolidated digital education content. Thus, the government launched a website, where it uploaded all information about changes in educational institutions. National TV channels broadcasted video lessons, that were also made available on the official Youtube channel. Many schools distributed tablets and portable PCs for the period of summer holidays to teachers. Now the ministry is starting the organisation of public-private partnership for the distribution of digital devices wireless internet to students and teachers. Almost 80% of principals in Ukrainian schools organised digital ICT training for teachers during the quarantine. Concerning higher education, institutions organised the student assessment online. For September the ministry scheduled an index of digital readiness for schools, that is been developed now. Ukraine joined “Learning Passport”, a global education platform, aimed to help students to use distance learning. The Covid-19 crisis revealed big problems with regards to digital competences and access to digital content. Hence, the government decided to elaborate a digitalisation strategy for the country by the end of September. For now, the government is negotiating with the European Commission to add some financial contributions for the online platform.

UA Igor (labour market): In Ukraine, the most vulnerable branches are tourism, arts, sports, entertainment. A huge increase of unemployed persons was observed: about 300.000 people are registered (almost twice as in the previous year). But around 110.000 people already found a work again. The Ministry and the Government are planning further measures, e.g. the introduction of a new form of assistance for employers and individual entrepreneurs in the field of SMEs. They get benefits to cover the costs of wages of workers whose working

hours were reduced. 156 Million EURO were allocated for the support. There is the possibility of submitting the applications form online, or register as unemployed or apply for assistance through a system called "ACTIONS". The bound of the unemployment benefits for uninsured persons was increased. Also, benefits are now paid from the first day of registration. Therefore, additional 141 Million EURO were allocated to finance the support in case of unemployment.

AT Jürgen Schick (education): Austrian schools were closed as of 16 March, but now schools are reopened. This reopening process was conducted in a gradual manner. It started on 4 May beginning with the final year of upper secondary classes and other graduation classes, followed on 18 May by all compulsory schools (age 6-14 years). As of 29 May, all other schools have reopened. The ministry introduced a shift system that is now being implemented until the end of school year. This means, all classes are divided into two equally sized groups. One part is in school and the other half at home or at school in only a care-based manner. The reopening of schools is accompanied by hygiene rules and safety instructions.

The crisis time was characterised by distant learning and the ministry is quite satisfied with how schools, teachers, students and parents dealt with it. Multiple digital learning platforms have been set-up already before and with the beginning of school closures additional offers were rolled out to facilitate learning and provide material for pupils of all ages. A need for well-equipped teachers for online learning became obvious. Therefore, new platforms were opened and online lessons offered to teachers, who were less familiar with digital learning. A challenge is to counteract learning disadvantages of pupils, for example due to a lack of infrastructure at home, language barriers or skills gaps. To mitigate these issues the government has set a number of measures during the crisis phase, e.g. by intensifying counselling through school social workers and psychologists. The ministry also made available digital devices to disadvantages pupils. Furthermore, the ministry decided to start summer schools that will be offered for pupils who need additional support in order to safeguard basic skills. In addition, a new 8-point plan to improve digital education was presented by the Minister. The plan includes i.a. a standardization of platforms and communication tools, teacher training to work with digital tools and the expansion of IT infrastructure in schools. Digital devices will gradually be made available to pupils and teachers.

AT Roland Hanak (labour market): On March 16, the Austrian labour market changed abruptly: within 16 days, almost 194,000 people were registered as unemployed. By April 13, the number had risen by 223,105 and peaked at 533,621. Since April 14 the unemployment has been falling (slightly). At the end of May, the number of registered unemployed was around 473,300 (including people in training 517,221). The construction industry, tourism industry and good production were particularly affected. In May, the number of unemployed people in the construction industry decreased more quickly than in sectors with a high proportion of women (tourism and personal services) - there the positive development is much slower (also due to the requirements).

With the Covid 19 short-time work, the development on the labor market was stabilized, around 1.2 million jobs were secured by the end of April 2020. The first registered unemployed persons started working again in April, especially in construction industry, temporary employment and trade. Short-time working means that the working hours of all employees in a company are reduced (maximum by 90%) for a certain period of time.

Short-time work is granted for 3 months and can be extended to a maximum of 6 months. The Austrian Labour Market Service (AMS) reimburses the employer for the costs of the reduced hours according to fixed flat rates. Depending on the net remuneration, the employees receive between 80 and 90% of the previous net remuneration. At the beginning of June there were still around 1.16 million people working on short-time work (around 121.00 applications).

State of Play EUSDR and PA9

The Team of PA9 informed the participants about:

EUSDR: New Action Plan

Hanak and Schick informed the participants that the the revised Action Plan of the EUSDR had been adopted by the EC as the Commission`s Staff Working Document (SWD (2020) 59 final on 06.04.2020. The revised Action Plan is an orientation framework for cooperation in the Danube Region and a result of an intensive coordination process of the PACs and the Steering Group Members (for more information <https://peopleandskills.danube-region.eu/actions-of-priority-area-09/>). Schick underlined the importance of the decision not to narrow down the actions, but see them as strategic guidelines what can be done within PA9 in the future and to be able to flexibly respond to new challenges like the current crisis.

Within PA9 8 concrete actions were defined:

- Action 1: Intensify Cooperation in Labour Market Policies
- Action 2: Digitalisation and Innovation in the World of Work
- Action 3: Integration of Vulnerable Groups into the Labour Market
- Action 4: Fighting Poverty and Promoting Social Inclusion for All
- Action 5: Quality and Efficiency of Education and Training Systems
- Action 6: Relevant and High-Quality Knowledge, Skills and Competences
- Action 7: Lifelong Learning and Learning Mobility
- Action 8: Inclusive Education, Equity, Common Values and Sustainable Development

Embedding and SMF

Sieber informed the participants that PA9 identified 3 topics to be included into Interreg Programmes, IPA- and ENI-Programmes as well as the SMF-call of the DTP:

1. Promote the acquisition of digital skills and competences and to avoid the digital divide on labour markets and in education and training;
2. Enhancing Vocational Education and Training;
3. Equal opportunities in education and training as well as inclusion of marginalised and vulnerable groups.

These topics were identified by the PACs of PA9 in cooperation with the members of the Steering Group.



In the case of the ESF, we would like to point out that a Network of ESF Managing Authorities in the Danube Region already exists, which is organized by PA9 together with PA10.

Schick added that the chosen priorities are very relevant in the current crisis. In particular, issues like digital skills and equal opportunities came to the forefront during this challenging situation.



DTP-PAC Assistance 2020-2022

Willsberger informed that the DTP-PAC application for 2020-2022 had been submitted by the Austrian Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection as Lead Partner on 7th of October 2019. The Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine will be financing project partner within this project. Moldova as well as the Austrian Ministry for Education, Science and Research will participate as associated partner. At the moment, the Joint Secretary of the DTP is preparing the contractual phase of the project, which is expected in the coming weeks. Namely, by the end of June, the Ukrainian authorities will finalise the compliance of their management and control system to the programme requirements.

Online Stakeholders Conference

Jörg Mirtl provided the SG with an overview of the discussions at the 8th Stakeholder conference of PA9 “Smart and Social Responses to the Crisis: How Education, Training and Labour Market Policies can Contribute towards a Resilient Danube Region”, which was held online on 18 June 2020. The discussion focused primarily on the reaction to the COVID19 crisis, its immediate and long-term effects on policy making and design, as well as the digitalization of the world of work and education systems. About 70 participants attended the conference. The panelists and speakers provided perspectives from both international and national organisations, as well as from academia.

More info: <https://peopleandskills.danube-region.eu/report-presentation-and-recordings-of-pa-9-stakeholder-conference-now-online/>

6th Meeting of ESF Managing Authorities in the Danube Region (9/10 March 2020, Vienna)

On 9/10 of March the 6th Meeting of ESF Managing Authorities in the Danube Region was held together with PA10. The aim of this meeting was to identify common policy areas and objectives for transnational cooperation within the European Social Fund 2021-2027 in the Danube Region. Furthermore, a joint text module related to the EUSDR/transnational cooperation in the upcoming MFF 2021-27 was defined.

More info: <https://peopleandskills.danube-region.eu/esf/>

eTwinning conference: Conference - School cooperation in the Danube Region: Online Edition (4 June 2020)

Jakob Sieber briefly presented the main content of the annual eTwinning Conference “School cooperation in the Danube Region”, which took place on 4 June, this time online. The conference gathers motivated teachers from all over the Danube Region, who are willing to elaborate cross-national project ideas and connecting their schools and pupils. Around 40 participants from 12 Danube Region countries were present and 11 eTwinning projects emerged from the online conference. During the event Jürgen Schick, Priority Coordinator of PA9, gave an overview of the main activities of the EUSDR and the Priority Area 9 in particular.

More info: <https://peopleandskills.danube-region.eu/events/thematic-conference-school-cooperation-in-the-danube-region-online-edition/>

Revision of the Work Programme

The Work Programme of PA9 will be adapted to the new Action Plan of the EUSDR and will be sent to the Steering Group members by September 2020.

AOB

ETF Georgios Zisimos: The ETF launched the campaign “Learning Connects” to collect information from all partner countries how they dealt with Corona crisis in the area of education, notably in VET. As of this year the ETF started with 3 initiatives:

1. New learning initiative, which concerns curricula development and teacher development.
2. Skills lab initiative, concerning skills need in the labour market.
3. Centres of Excellence: 17 countries were invited to this initiative. Ministers from each country nominated Centres of Excellence. The ETF started to work on the deliverables of the programme. It launched the assessment tool to identify needs of CoEs. It has also launched 3 partnerships in the last 2 months. The first one related to the business-education relationship the second concerning institutional partnership with skills providers and the third working on autonomy of CoEs and public-private ownership. EUSDR countries can participate in the network – PA9 and the ETF welcome and encourage further cooperation.

At the beginning of July the European Commission will adopt the before-called “Spring Package” including a new skills agenda and a proposal for VET recommendations. In July the adoption of the declaration regarding VET development is expected to happen in Osnabrück, Germany as a successor of the “Copenhagen process”.

Conclusion and Next Steps

Hanak thanked the participants for their attendance and mentioned that we all had to adapt to these new forms of communication. However, he hopes to see everyone again in the real world one day or another.

Schick summarised that the conference and the SG meeting were fruitful events, also when considering the fact that they were held online for the first time. It became clear that the priorities chosen by PA9 for the embedding process are highly relevant in the current situation. A conclusion from the conference was that cooperation within PA9 in the field of education should focus on structural weaknesses like digitalisation, teachers training and equal opportunities.

Participants of the SG meeting:

First Name	Last Name	Institution	Country
Roland	Hanak	Ministry of Labour, Family and Youth	Austria
Jörg	Mirtl	L&R Social Research	Austria
Jürgen	Schick	Ministry of Education, Science and Research	Austria
Jakob	Sieber	OeAD	Austria
Barbara	Willsberger	L&R Social Research	Austria
Martin	Karlík	Ministry of Labour and Social Affairs	Czech Republic
Kateřina	Maláčová	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports	Czech Republic
Marie	Taltnová	Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports of the Czech Republic	Czech Republic
Mihaela	Florea	Danube Strategy Point	Danube Strategy Point
Gabriella	Tölgyes	Ministry of Innovation and Technology	Hungary
Filip	Miličević	Ministry of Labour and Pension System	Republic of Croatia
Petra	Reiner	Ministry of Science and Education	Republic of Croatia
Anna	Gherganova	Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family	Republic of Moldova
Ludmila	Pavlov	Ministry of Education, Culture and Research	Moldova
Carmen	Clapan	Ministry of Education and Research	Romania
Boško	Latković	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs	Serbia
Danijela	Stojanovic	Ministry of Labour, Employment, Veteran and Social Affairs	Serbia
Lucia	Auxtová	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport	Slovak Republic
Drahuša	Kalmanova	Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Family	Slovak Republic
Nataliia	Savchenko	Ministry for Development of Economy, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine	Ukraine
Ihor	Tereschenko	Ministry for Development of Economy, Trade and Agriculture of Ukraine	Ukraine
Valeryia	Izhyk	Ministry of Education and Science	Ukraine
Olha	Dubovyk	Ministry of Social Policy	Ukraine
Rostyslav	Tomenchuk	Ukrainian Institute for International Politics	Ukraine
Viktoriia	Karbysheva	Ministry of Education and Science of Ukraine	Ukraine