

Newsletter December 2024: EUSDR Priority Area 9 "People & Skills"

Dear stakeholders of Priority Area 9 of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)!

The holiday season is approaching rapidly and just in time, we have an early gift for you: The freshly wrapped PA 9 Newsletter of December 2024! Join us in looking back at the successful initiatives and exciting developments in the second half of 2024 and let us shake the snow globe to reveal an outlook of the upcoming events of PA 9 in 2025.

Continuing the holiday season theme, we want to tell you what we're grateful this year: Your continuous engagement, your unseizing interest and your adamant support of the work of PA 9. We hope to build further momentum in new year!

With the new year incoming we also want to reiterate the unwavering solidarity of PA 9 with Ukraine.

Best wishes for the holiday season,

The team of EUSDR Priority Area 9 "People & Skills"

HIGHLIGHTS - People & Skills

11th Meeting of the ESF Network in the Danube Region | 24-25 September 2024 | Split, Croatia



The **ESF Network in the Danube Region** aims at enhancing transnational cooperation within the Operational Programmes in the Danube Region and supports the accession process of Candidate Countries to foster transnational cooperation in the Danube Region. It serves as a joint knowledge hub for implementation, planning and exchange of experience with labour market and social policies. At the 11th meeting for the first time not only ESF Managing Authorities participated, but also colleagues from the Candidate Countries. Together we identified common policies for future cooperation and exchange, topics for capacity building, and issues we would like to address in view of planning the funding landscape post 2027.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

27th Steering Group Meeting of Priority Area 9 | 7-8 November 2024 | Budva, Montenegro



Participants of our **27th Steering Group Meeting** shared updates on education and labour market developments and opportunities for cooperation in the Danube Region. One of the main topics was the European Semester, with a focus on exchanging experiences between member states already implementing it and candidate countries preparing for their future participation. Furthermore, the role of the PA 9 in supporting the EU enlargement, particularly in light of the post-2027 programming period was discussed.

MORE INFORMATION

AT-UA eTwinning Partner-Finding Event | 2 October 2024 | Online

Within the EUSDR eTwinning Danube Strategy Flagship, the OeAD successfully hosted an **eTwinning Partner-Finding Event** connecting 20 teachers from Austria and Ukraine in an online format. Participants, teaching students across all levels, collaborated enthusiastically to establish partnerships for future cross-border projects. The event fostered creativity and collaboration, resulting in the development of four innovative eTwinning project ideas. These initiatives aim to strengthen educational cooperation between Austria and Ukraine, encouraging teachers and students to work together on a wide range of topics. We look forward to seeing the positive impact of these projects in the near future!

MORE INFORMATION

New Collaboration: Joint Coordination Group PA 7, PA 8 & PA 9 | 29 November & 11 December 2024 | Vienna, Austria



On 29 November, 2024, the first exchange of the **Joint Coordination Group** for PAs 7 (Knowledge Society), 8 (Competitiveness of Enterprises), and 9 explored how a future cooperation could take shape. Within the framework of the proposed Joint Coordination Group PA 9 sees a possibility for joint activities, especially in the area of vocational education and training (VET) across the Danube Region. The Joint Coordination Group stressed the importance of aligning these efforts with green, digital, and fair transitions, ensuring that future initiatives equip the workforce with the skills needed for sustainable economic

growth. A second follow up meeting was held at the NC-PAC Meeting on 11 December in Vienna, where the Joint Coordination Group reiterated their motivation to further collaborate.

HIGHLIGHTS - EUSDR

Austrian EUSDR Presidency



Austrian Presidency of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

With 1 January 2025, Austria will hand over the EUSDR Presidency to Bosnia and Herzegovina. But before passing the torch, the AT PCY engaged in serious efforts in the second half of 2024 according to their slogan **'Shaping Transformation, Creating Opportunities: A Prosperous, Resilient and Secure Danube Region'**. PA 9 continued to be represented as one of the thematic priorities of the presidency on 'Boosting skills and competences'. With the incoming European Commission assuming their role, the Austrian presidency has engaged in shaping the discourse of the EUSDR post 2027 by commissioning a study on "Regional and territorial trends in the Danube Region" and a "Think Piece on the need to step up cooperation for mastering future challenges in the Danube Region". It has furthermore sought close collaboration with the incoming EUSDR presidency, which will also have people and skills as one of their main priorities.

[MORE INFORMATION](#)

(NC-)PAC Meetings | 11-12 September & 10-11 December | Neusiedl am See & Vienna, Austria

The **PAC Meeting** on 11-12 September in Neusiedl am See addressed strategic priorities, including monitoring and evaluation, the EUSDR beyond 2027 and the role of the EUSDR in supporting EU accession. The meeting underscored the importance of aligning governance, funding, and monitoring efforts to strengthen the EUSDR's impact and inform future strategic priorities. The **NC-PAC Meeting**

on 10-11 December in Vienna reviewed key achievements under Austria's EUSDR Presidency and laid the groundwork for Bosnia and Herzegovina's Presidency in 2025. Looking ahead, Bosnia and Herzegovina's Presidency will emphasize EU enlargement, people and skills, security, tourism, and connectivity, shaping the next chapter of the EUSDR.

ESF Technical Working Group | 28 November | Budapest, Hungary



The ESF+ Technical Working Group Meeting on 28 November 2024 in Budapest was an important forum to present and discuss the latest developments in the EU Macro-Regional Strategies. PA 9 provided valuable insights into the Danube Region Strategy.

PA 9 Danube Strategy Flagships of 2024



In 2024, three key initiatives of PA9 received the designation as Danube Strategy Flagships, recognizing their significant macro-regional impact, multi-level governance approach, and contribution to economic, social, and territorial cohesion. These flagship initiatives are the [Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe \(ERI SEE\)](#), the [Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence \(CoVE\)](#), and the [EUSDR ESF Network](#).

OUTLOOK 2025

- Bosnia and Herzegovina EUSDR Presidency 2025: People & Skills priority
 - Update of the Danube Region Monitor and Online Monitor 2025
 - EUSDR Annual Forum 2025 in Sarajevo 5 and 6 November: PA 9 panel on green & digital skills (tbd)
 - 29th Steering Group Meeting back-to-back with Annual Forum 2025 in Sarajevo
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PA 9 | People & Skills

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