

Newsletter July 2025: EUSDR Priority Area 9 "People & Skills"

Dear stakeholders,

Before heading into your well-deserved summer breaks, we invite you to take a moment to look back at key activities and developments that shaped the first half of 2025. Wondering what will await you after the summer? We also have an outlook for you on exciting events and initiatives of Priority Area 9 (PA9) coming up later this year. What remains unchanged is our continuous solidarity with the people of Ukraine.

We truly appreciate your ongoing engagement and interest in the work of PA9!

Best wishes for the summer,

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

PA 9 | People & Skills

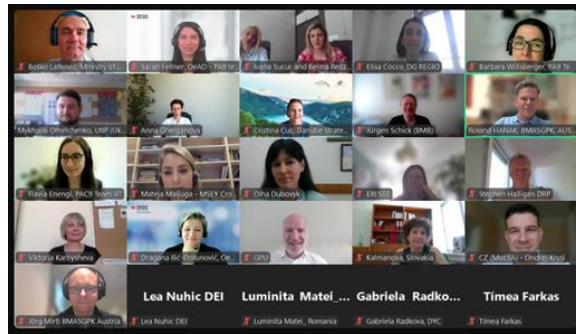
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HIGHLIGHTS – People & Skills

28th Steering Group Meeting of Priority Area 9 | 25 June 2025 | Online

Participants of our 28th Steering Group meeting shared updates on education and labour market developments and opportunities for cooperation in the Danube Region. The need for targeted investments, undergoing reforms in the context of EU accession, and challenges related to the Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine were addressed. Inputs were also provided by key partners, including the European Commission and the Interreg Danube Region Programme. The European Training Foundation, the Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe, and the Danube Youth Council briefed the Steering Group about their activities.

[More Information](#)



eTwinning Danube Region Seminar | 4-6 June 2025 | Linz, Austria

This year's seminar brought together 37 teachers from 11 Danube Region countries in Linz, Austria. Over the course of two days, they developed 12 creative school cooperation projects. These projects will be implemented through the Erasmus+ eTwinning online platform and connect classrooms across the Danube Region. The seminar was organized by OeAD – Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation in cooperation with the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education.

[More information](#)



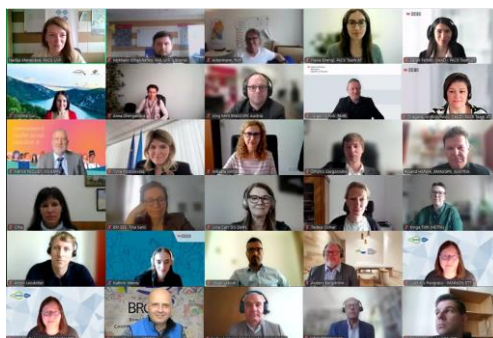
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13th Stakeholder Conference of Priority Area 9 | 12-13 May 2025 | Online

The conference was titled „**Towards an Innovative and Inclusive Danube Region through Unity and Cooperation**” and featured engaging speakers and panel discussions. Organised by the Ukrainian PAC9 colleagues, the event focused on transformations within education systems and labour markets in Candidate Countries such as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova, and the Danube Region countries of the Western Balkans.

The introductory keynote was delivered by the European Commission on the Union of Skills, with follow-up discussions examining how this initiative can be integrated into the work of PA9. The panel discussions revolved around key topics such as exploring means of enhancing the attractiveness and visibility of vocational education and training, and promoting upskilling, reskilling and lifelong learning initiatives. The conference also showcased impactful projects from the Danube Region, explored cooperation and funding opportunities, and in this context engaged in knowledge exchange with the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

[More information](#)



12th Meeting of the ESF Network in the Danube Region | 28 April 2025 | Online

The European Social Fund (ESF) Network in the Danube Region aims at fostering transnational cooperation as well as exchange of experience and expertise within the Operational Programmes in the Danube Region. Furthermore, it supports the accession process of Candidate Countries to enhance transnational cooperation and foster capacity building in the Danube Region. This joint initiative of PA9 and PA10 “Capacity and Cooperation” serves since 2015 as a knowledge hub for implementation, planning and exchange of experience with labour market and social policies. The 12th meeting involved both ESF Managing Authorities and colleagues from the Candidate Countries, and focused on operationalising green skills within EU funding frameworks, featuring examples from Croatia, Austria, and Montenegro. Furthermore, simplified costs options for projects were addressed in the frame of the meeting.

[More information](#)

HIGHLIGHTS – EUSDR

Bosnian EUSDR Presidency

With 1 January 2025, Bosnia and Herzegovina took over the EUSDR Presidency from Austria. Education, skills and labour market are again among the thematic priorities of this year’s presidency, in addition to EU enlargement, security, tourism, and connectivity. Priority Area 9 “People and Skills” will contribute to the EUSDR Annual Forum in November by organizing a session on addressing existing skills gaps in the Danube Region and strengthening the role of green and digital skills for European competitiveness. You can find out more about the Bosnian and Herzegovinian EUSDR Presidency [here](#).



Bosnia and Herzegovina Presidency
of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region

5th European Commission Report on EU Macro-Regional Strategies

The report underscored the role of macro-regional strategies in fostering cooperation across borders to address challenges related to demographic change, the green and digital transition, and Russia's war of aggression against Ukraine. For the EUSDR, a strengthened focus on EU enlargement, youth engagement, as well as support for Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova – also in the framework of PA9 – were highlighted. You can access the report and related Commission Staff Working Document [here](#).



Danube Strategy Flagships

In 2025, the PA9 Steering Group selected three projects funded by the Interreg Danube Region Programme as “Danube Strategy Flagships”, recognizing their strategic importance to the implementation of the EUSDR. The three new flagships are:

- [“Skills4Life – Supporting the socio-economic integration of youth leaving child protection systems by developing their skills and capacities through more inclusive leaving care policies in the Danube Region”](#)
- [“TransAC - Establishing a Danube training academy as measure against brain drain from rural and crisis regions”](#)
- [“WIN – Improving the position of Women in labour markets of peripheral Industrial regions”](#)



3rd Targeted Call of the Danube Region Programme

The Interreg Danube Region Programme will open its third call from mid-September to 15 December 2025. Projects are expected to start on 1 July 2026. Only proposals addressing the thematic focuses defined in the call pre-announcement will be funded. This includes capacity-building for employment support bodies, as well as support for and the development of centres of vocational excellence. You can find more information on the call website [here](#).



Save the Date: 1st International Conference of the Danube Labour Market Policy Platform for Roma Inclusion

It is a pleasure to inform you that the 1st International Conference of the Danube Labour Market Policy Platform for Roma Inclusion “Roma Empowerment for the Common Labour Market: 20 Years of Successful Project Implementation in the Danube Region” will take place on 16-17 October 2025 in Vienna, Austria. Please mark these dates in your calendar, and share this information with interested colleagues, partners and stakeholders. Further information will be published shortly.

OUTLOOK – 2nd half of 2025

- Update of the Danube Region Monitor “People & Skills” and related expert workshop on 22 September, online
- 13th Meeting of the ESF Network in the Danube Region, 25-26 September, Bratislava, SK
- 4th Meeting of the Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence, 30 September, online
- 14th EUSDR Annual Forum, 5-6 November, Sarajevo, BA, with a PA9 session
- 29th Steering Group Meeting, 6-7 November, Sarajevo, BA

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