

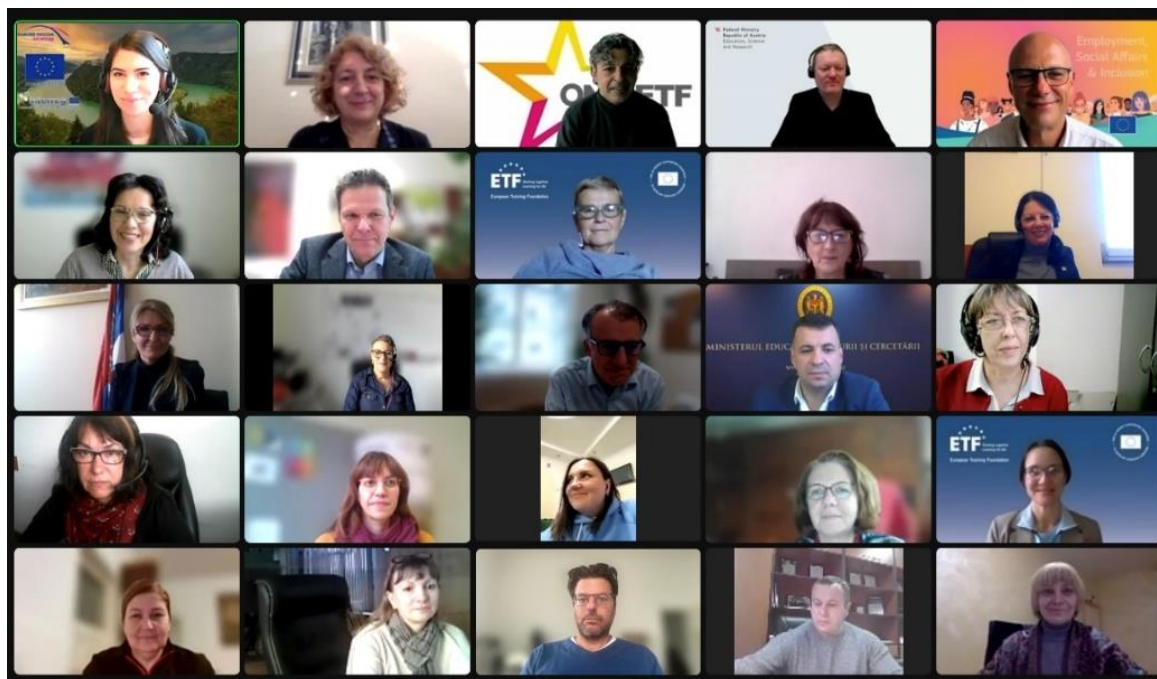
REPORT

2ND MEETING OF THE DANUBE REGION PLATFORM ON CENTRES OF VOCATIONAL EXCELLENCE

8-9 NOVEMBER 2022, ONLINE

The second meeting of the Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) was organized by Priority Area 9 “People & Skills” (PA9) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region in cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF). 48 participants from 11 Danube Region countries¹ and partner institutions joined (see Annex).

DAY 1



Updates by the partners

During the opening of the meeting, the **Austrian PA9 Coordinators Jürgen Schick** and **Roland Hanak** gave an update on PA9 initiatives and Platform activities. Since the last

¹ Austria, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czechia, Germany (Bavaria), Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, and Ukraine. Croatia is also part of the Platform but could not attend the meeting.

meeting in November 2021, the Platform has primarily served as an information hub on cooperation opportunities on VET excellence. The importance of the platform was also highlighted recently, when it was selected as one of the [flagship initiatives](#) of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region.

J. Manuel Galvin Arribas (ETF) provided updated information on the evolving implementation of – and operational approaches on – VET Excellence and CoVEs concepts by using the example of the [ETF Network for Excellence \(ENE\)](#). This is a worldwide network (259 CoVEs from ETF partner countries, EU Member States and beyond) that also includes CoVEs from six² Danube Region countries. He emphasized the importance of international partnerships and the transmission of excellence among VET institutions, experts, policymakers, practitioners, etc. This is a *flagship* ENE approach working with CoVEs towards an inclusive perspective to Vocational Excellence and the good role of CoVEs, which might help on VET system change and inspiring further policy reforms.

João Santos from the **Commission's Directorate General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion** shared information on the European initiative on CoVEs and related [Erasmus+ funding](#). He also highlighted the role of CoVEs in many National Implementation Plans (NIPs) (following the 2020 Council Recommendations and Osnabrück Declaration) and the Commission's proposal to make 2023 the European Year of Skills.

Updates by the members of the Policy Platform

Eduard Staudecker (AT) shared information on the Austrian NIP that focuses on the topics of skills change, green jobs, digitalization, social dimension, internationalization, and institutional change. Projects that may also provide opportunities for cooperation are planned for instance on green skills, social inclusion and mobility for diploma theses.

Daria Duilović (BA) highlighted key principles of the latest VET strategy of Bosnia and Herzegovina (based on the Riga Conclusions), including work-based learning, quality assurance, qualifications for all, development of key competences and training of teachers, trainers, and mentors. There is currently no initiative to establish CoVEs in the country.

Vanya Tivosheva (BG) informed that 28 VET schools have been identified as CoVEs – through self-assessment and evaluation – to act as leaders in their regional ecosystems. Investments in infrastructure, equipment and green energy through the National Recovery and Resilience Plan budget, and capacity-building through ESF projects are planned.

Marta Stará (CZ) provided an update on the implementation of the Czech Strategy for Education Policy up to 2030+ on the second day of the meeting. Priorities of the strategy include providing relevant education over a lifelong perspective, ensuring equal access, developing the potential of each individual, and responding to environmental changes.

Andrea Schwertfirm (DE, Bavaria) shared information about initiatives of the Chamber of Crafts of Upper Bavaria. Sustainability is a topic in VET courses and energy concepts for

² Germany, Republic of Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia, Slovenia, and Ukraine.

training centres are being developed. The Chamber also implements projects to support the inclusion of people with special needs and disadvantaged backgrounds in VET and SMEs.

Silviu Gîncu (MD) briefed about initiatives to promote green skills and social inclusion in the Republic of Moldova. The 13 CoVEs in the country include CoVEs on ecology and electronics that aim to provide green skills to learners and teachers. Furthermore, with the support of partners, guides on inclusive VET have been developed for teachers.

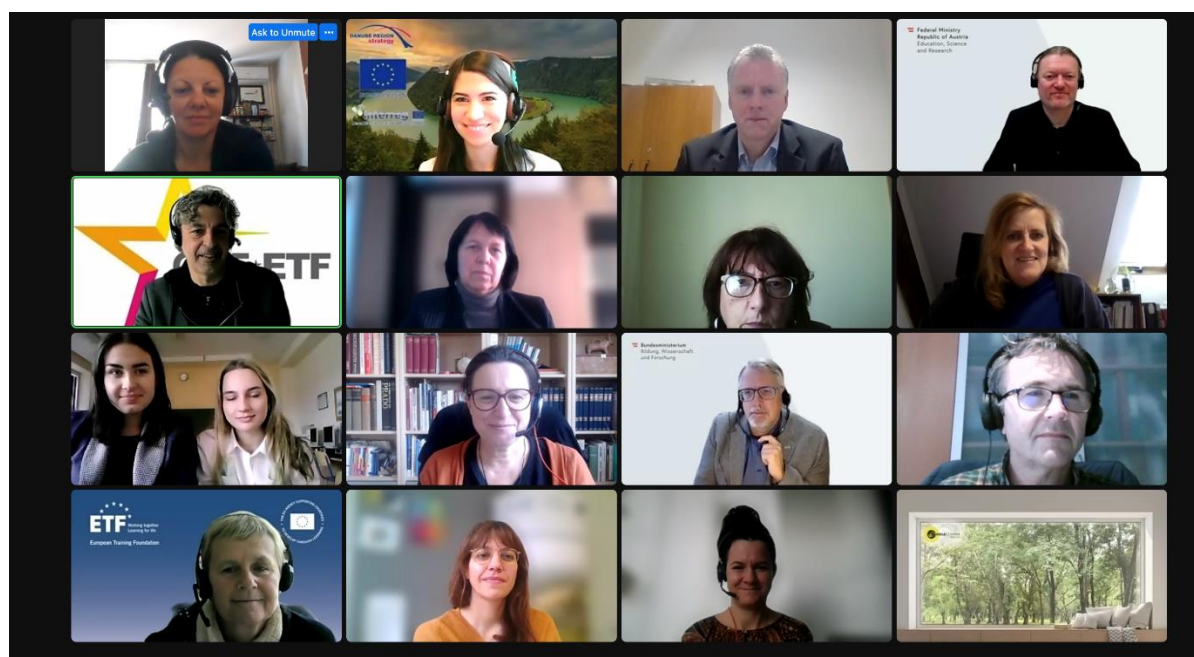
Carmen Muşat (RO) informed about the plan to set up ten regional consortia (with VET schools, HEIs, companies, etc.) and ten campuses. She also mentioned a partnership on agricultural education, training programmes on energy storage, and the introduction of new qualifications on renewable energy, urban greening and ecological agriculture.

Gabrijela Grujić (RS) reported on the establishment of regional training centres within secondary VET schools under the Serbian Education Development Strategy. A first regional training centre, the Aviation Academy, was established in 2020. Content on environmental protection and the dual model allow learners to contribute to the green transition.

Monika Rybova (SK) briefed about the plan to transform some existing VET centres into CoVEs in specialized segments and with a wide range of partners. CoVEs will also support teacher training, professional orientation, and the verification of qualifications. She also mentioned the current draft for the Global Education Strategy for 2022-2030.

Iryna Shumik (UA) reported that despite the difficulties and destruction caused by the Russian invasion, more than 85% of Ukrainian VET schools continue their activities. A public online platform with VET courses is being finalised. Initiatives to set up CoVEs are ongoing. Energy efficiency and the integration of internally displaced persons are a priority.

DAY 2



Opportunities for funding and cooperation

Astrid Terreng and **Magdalena Marchhart (OeAD, AT)** gave an overview of funding opportunities under Erasmus+. Key Action 1 supports the learning mobility of individuals in EU and/or associated countries through short-term projects (6-18 months) and worldwide through Erasmus accreditation (15-24 months). Key Action 2 supports partnerships, with the possibility of including non-associated countries in cooperation partnerships (KA 220; 12-36 months), but not in small-scale partnerships (KA 210; 6-24 months). “[Accessible Work 4 All](#)” and “[UPWOOD](#)” are examples of Erasmus projects on social inclusion and going green. Further funding opportunities include [Alliances for Innovation](#), the [CoVEs initiative](#) and [Capacity-building in VET](#) (the latter two are also open to non-associated countries).

Stephen Halligan (Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat of the Danube Region Programme) introduced funding opportunities under the Danube Region Programme 2021-2017 and shared information on the first call for proposals. Under [Priority 3 \(A More Social Danube Region\)](#), the Danube Region Programme funds projects to promote accessible and inclusive labour markets and education and training systems. Activities may include, for example, the development of labour market strategies, educational programmes and tools, best practices and networks.

Workshop to identify areas for cooperation on going green and social inclusion

Facilitated by **Rainer Stifter**, the workshop provided an opportunity to take a look at existing initiatives, including projects such as [GREENOVET](#), [UPWOOD](#), and the Slovak ENVIROPROJECT (presented by students from the Slovakian VET school OA DMJ Čadca, see presentation [here](#)). Ideas for cooperation included international exchange on environmental education and green skills in VET (with the involvement of young people), combined with awareness-raising measures at the national level.

The second workshop, facilitated by **Martina Marterer**, focused on social inclusion. Project examples, such as [Talents](#) and [GIOVANISI](#), show the importance of providing support, coaching, and opportunities to disadvantaged learners. Target groups identified include early school leavers, NEETs, and learners with disadvantaged socioeconomic, rural and/or migrant background and/or language barriers. Cooperation opportunities could involve exchange of experiences and best practices between VET stakeholders or learning mobility.

The concluding poll confirmed the interest of participants in the development of concrete project ideas, as well as in best practice examples from VET representatives, networking in person, further policy exchange, and more inputs on going green and social inclusion.

The agenda and presentations are available here: <https://peopleandskills.danube-region.eu/events/2nd-meeting-of-the-danube-region-platform-on-centres-of-vocational-excellence/>

Annex – List of participants:

	Last Name	First Name	Country	Institution
1	Fellner	Sarah	Austria	OeAD - Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation
2	Hanak	Roland	Austria	Ministry of Labour and Economy
3	Koscak	Visnja	Austria	Holzcluster Steiermark GmbH
4	Marchhart	Magdalena	Austria	OeAD - Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation
5	Marterer	Michaela	Austria	Styrian Association for Education and Economics
6	Pachatz	Wolfgang	Austria	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research
7	Schick	Jürgen	Austria	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research
8	Staudecke	Eduard	Austria	Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research
9	Stifter	Rainer	Austria	Energion
10	Terreng	Astrid	Austria	OeAD - Austria's Agency for Education and Internationalisation
11	Weigend	Willibald	Austria	BULME GRAZ
12	Duilović	Daria	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ministry of Civil Affairs
13	Džaferović	Aida	Bosnia and Herzegovina	Ministry of Civil Affairs
14	Tivosheva	Vanya	Bulgaria	Ministry of Education and Science
15	Slivková	Helena	Czechia	National Agency for International Education and Research
16	Stará	Marta	Czechia	Ministry of Education, Sports and Youth
17	Bär	Adriana	Germany	Chamber of Trade and Crafts for Munich and Upper Bavaria
18	Leyendecker	Martina	Germany	Chamber of Trade and Crafts for Munich and Upper Bavaria
19	Schwertfirm	Andrea	Germany	Chamber of Trade and Crafts for Munich and Upper Bavaria
20	Coceas	Sergiu	Moldova (Rep. of)	Center of Excellence in Energy and Electronics
21	Gîncu	Silviu	Moldova (Rep. of)	Ministry of Education and Research
22	Plamadeala	Valentina	Moldova (Rep. of)	Ministry of Education and Research
23	Fetahovic	Armin	Montenegro	Ministry of Labor and Social Welfare
24	Iancu	Daniela	Romania	National Erasmus+ Agency in Romania (ANPCDEFP)
25	Ivan	Margareta	Romania	National Erasmus+ Agency in Romania (ANPCDEFP)
26	Matei	Alexandra	Romania	"Tara Bârsei" College for Agriculture and Food Industry
27	Muşat	Carmen	Romania	National Center for TVET Development
28	Nedeljkovic	Vanja	Serbia	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development

29	Grujic	Gabrijela	Serbia	Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development
30	Manic	Danijela	Serbia	College of Applied Studies Aviation Academy
31	Kubalová	Marta	Slovakia	OA DMJ Čadca (VET school)
32	Rybová	Monika	Slovakia	Ministry of Education, Science, Research and Sport
33	Lajcakova	Dominika	Slovakia	OA DMJ Čadca (VET school)
34	Majtanová	Aneta	Slovakia	OA DMJ Čadca (VET school)
35	Afanasieva	Nadija	Ukraine	Ukrainian Institute for International Politics
36	Karbysheva	Viktoriia	Ukraine	Ministry of Education and Science
37	Savchuk	Oleksandr	Ukraine	Kvasyliv vocational lyceum
38	Shumik	Iryna	Ukraine	Ministry of Education and Science
39	Yatsina	Mykola	Ukraine	Higher Vocational School No. 7 of Kremenchuk
40	Halligan	Stephen	DRP	Danube Region Programme (Managing Authority/Joint Secretariat)
41	Hauder	Nicole	DSP	Danube Strategy Point
42	Leuner	Vera	EC	European Commission, DG EMPL
43	Santos	Joao	EC	European Commission, DG EMPL
44	Damyanovic	Ulrike	ETF	European Training Foundation
45	Galvin Arribas	Jose Manuel	ETF	European Training Foundation
46	Nielsen	Susanne	ETF	European Training Foundation
47	Jones	Tobias	Journalist	Freelance
48	Sassmann	Philipp	Technical Support	Sassmann new media film