



**Interreg
Danube Region**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

 **Federal Ministry
Education, Science
and Research**

 **oead**

 **ETF**
Working together
Learning for life
European Training Foundation

 **ETF
Network for
Excellence**

Meeting Report on the 3rd Meeting of the Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence “Greening of VET in the Danube Region: Changing skill demands and the role of Centres of Vocational Excellence”

18 April 2024, Vienna

The Danube Region Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence is a forum for policy and practice exchange on Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs) with a thematic focus on green and social inclusion. The platform was launched in 2021 by Priority Area 9 (PA9) of the EUSDR (EU Strategy for the Danube Region) in cooperation with the European Training Foundation (ETF) Network for Excellence (ENE). ENE supports vocational excellence development together with 300 so-called Centres of Vocational Excellence (CoVEs). Its green partnership - GRETA - Greening Responses to Excellence through Thematic Actions – supports CoVEs in greening education and training for a green and just transition. In 2022 and 2024, the initiative was awarded as a Danube Strategy Flagship for its contribution to the implementation of the EUSDR.

The objective of the third platform meeting was to contribute to the policy developments and discussions on the emerging topic of the green transition resulting in changing skill demands and the role of VET and VET Excellence. A particular focus of the meeting was on the sectors of Green Energy and Green Construction. Taking these two sectors as example the meeting focused on how to answer to the increased importance of greening economic sectors and meeting the arising green skills demands. Green Energy prominently features in the recent EU policy agenda since the launch of the Green Deal in 2019 and since Russia’s attack on Ukraine this now includes a geopolitical component.

The construction sector is one of the major contributors to climate change due to its resource-intensive nature. Given these environmental concerns, the importance of enhancing the sector’s resource efficiency and environmental sustainability has grown significantly. This centres on needs and demands of re- and upskilling and new green skills.

The meeting that brought together a range of experts, practitioners and policy makers first focused on the construction and energy sectors looking at key sectoral developments in light of the green transition, and the skill demands and the response at EU policy level. The panel discussion looked at the response that VET Excellence and CoVEs can give to meet the changing skill needs noting the importance of mutual learning.

During the afternoon session policy makers gave overviews of good practice examples on policy developments in greening VET in the Danube Region. All of this had a focus on sharing know how and expertise while underlining the added value of the Danube Platform on Centres of Vocational Excellence while looking ahead to the future development of the Platform. It underlined the challenges, opportunities and potentials of VET arising from the changing skill demands while identifying areas for future greening of VET & VET Excellence in the Danube Region, in particular the construction and energy sectors.



**Interreg
Danube Region**



**Co-funded by
the European Union**

 **Federal Ministry
Education, Science
and Research**

 **oead**

 **ETF**
Working together
Learning for life
European Training Foundation

 **ETF
Network for
Excellence**

Conclusions

- There are challenges but also opportunities in the ongoing conceptualisation and the role of (Centres of) Vocational Excellence in an evolving economic and social (post-COVID) environment with a potential huge impact on the labour market and education, on young people, people with disabilities, on women, and on minorities, and vulnerable groups.
- There is a need for reforms in the EU and in all Danube Region countries, given the reinvigorated EU Enlargement and Reform Agenda context, in particular in the Western Balkan countries, as well as Moldova and Ukraine.
- Against the conclusion of the European Year of Skills the ever changing evolving nature of Vocational Education into Lifelong learning is a fact, underlining the importance of promoting innovation and increased cooperation with industry and business sector – particularly in relation to Green and Digital Skills.

Recommendations

- To build on the Danube Region Platform on CoVES to enhance and promote collaboration and opportunities through these centres so to bring about broader cooperation, ensuring their sustainability and resilience for both the present and future. This approach must ensure that these centres address innovation in green and digital fields while properly addressing social inclusion.
- To transfer existing knowledge leading to capacity building within the Danube Region countries and beyond.
- To continue bringing together policy makers and practitioners (VET providers and company representatives) in meetings or workshops.
- To engage in further promoting and facilitating cooperation, addressing a large range of stakeholders, including governments, local and regional authorities, VET providers, companies, academia and EU services working with the green, digital and social transitions.
- To engage ETF as an ever more active actor in the region – via multi country work, on labour activation, on youth guarantee, for the skills and jobs survey, on qualifications, Osnabrueck – but particularly through work on ENE, on COVES and on Greta for the Green and Digital Agenda.
- To also build on the success of Erasmus+ – and develop this and build stronger links to policy makers in order to embed and secure sustainability.
- To further discuss the role of CoVEs models for the region in order to fully explore potential benefits which could help bring about and leverage systemic VET and skills policy reforms.