



1st Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region
Regensburg (Bavaria), Germany |27-28 November 2012

Bayerische Staatsregierung



Workshop 5 Report
“Promoting Empowerment, Smart Skills and Inclusive Growth“

• **Participants in the Panel**

Name		State	Institution/position	Position in EUSDR
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- **Main outcomes and conclusions of the workshop**

High quality education and training and well-functioning labour markets are more than ever of key importance in the Danube Region, for socio-economic development and growth, but also equitable and inclusive societies, for the well-being and personal fulfilment of its citizens.

- Investing efficiently in high quality and reformed **education and training** is urgent and will lay the foundation for the DR's long-term **prosperity and competitiveness** and also, by providing people with **more and better skills and competences**, help to respond to the effects of the crisis.
- Skills and competences **drive economies and transform lives**. Skills affect people's lives and the well-being of nations in ways that go far beyond what can be measured by labour-market earnings and economic growth. They are also essential components of efforts of improving the **well-being and personal fulfilment of citizens**. For example, the benefits of skills to an individual's health are potentially great. Skills also relate to civic and social behaviour as they affect democratic engagement and business relationships.
- Skills are also key **to promoting equitable and inclusive societies**. Investing in human capital is the single most effective way of not just promoting growth but also of distributing its benefits more fairly.

A comprehensive approach to skills development and putting skills to effective use is needed

- Skills must be continuously developed throughout life. In order to foster smart skills and competences, **lifelong learning opportunities for all and at every level of education and training** – from early childhood development to training programmes – need to be strengthened, notably by improving the attractiveness and relevance of **VET** and by increasing the participation in **adult learning**.
- **Skills comprise a broad set:** Besides technical skills, they also include cognitive skills, that is, the ability to read, write, understand, solve problems, acquire new knowledge, and apply knowledge; and non-cognitive skills, that

is, personally traits and social behaviour, ability for teamwork, perseverance, self-control, openness, extraversion, and so on.

- **To define serious shared vision of skills** for the Danube region and to define the future of occupation structures based on regional discussion and learning, evidence and insights from various stakeholders are required. A comprehensive strategy with benchmarks and several small scale initiatives are needed. Politics, companies and society must jointly face their responsibility. Industries and education institutions should therefore cooperate closely in order to respond to changing skills requirements in the economy. In this respect, skills forecasts are of utmost importance (cf. e.g. studies published by CEDEFOP on a yearly basis). A proactive education policy is needed which develops and utilizes all potential.
- **Improving the responsiveness of E&T systems** to better meet the skills needs of the labour market and the social and cultural challenges of a globalized world remains a challenge in the DR as in Europe as a whole. Effective policies for education, training and innovation need to be coordinated with **focused labour market and social protection policies** that facilitate **labour participation, mobility** and the **matching of skills and jobs**.
- Equally, stronger policies to promote **job creation** and **demand for labour** are needed.

The EUSDR has successfully increased cooperation in the Danube Region in the fields of labour market and education, with an innovative combination of both bottom-up and top-down processes. It is therefore a useful framework in order to strengthen on-going and enable future cooperation processes and projects.

- In PA9, a functioning **cooperation and communication structure** between all 14 Danube Region Countries, the EC, the European Training Foundation (ETF) has been established, involving existing cooperation platforms and networks as well as a wide range of stakeholders. Nevertheless, the involvement of some countries/actors could still be improved.
- There are: A **higher level of transparency** on relevant project activities and a clustering of knowledge; Willingness to cooperate; A consistent bottom-up approach ensuring that the ownership of projects and ideas is claimed and that not only funding alone fosters the topics; best use of existing cooperation projects
- EUSDR/PA9 has given projects and cooperation platforms in the Danube Region a **new momentum and additional visibility**.
- There is a particular added value in the **inclusion of third countries**. In this respect, the ongoing cooperation with the European Training Foundation has a particular value.

More needs to be done – where to focus?

- Ensure that education and training systems deliver the knowledge and skills needed in an increasingly macro-regional and globalised labour market. It requires **capacity-building and empowerment of people**, especially young people, **fighting poverty and modernising labour markets, education, training and social protection systems**.

- Key areas are activities to develop learners' **creativity, entrepreneurship** and capacity for innovation, to increase the **relevance of VET**, to promote **access to high-quality education** and reducing ESL, to foster **active citizenship and intercultural dialogue**, e.g. through people to people contacts and school projects, and to improve the **quality and efficiency in education**, e.g. through improving leadership and teacher education as well as by promoting the evidence-base for policy-making.

Some “To-Do’s” and considerations for the future

- The development of a **long-term coordination framework needs to be enabled** which promotes decentralised but also coordinated work. **A demand for professional exchange** and to develop ideas and to **collaborate in projects** is clearly visible.
- To that end, **efficient funding** for increased DR cooperation **both on policy** (e.g. thematic working groups) **and project level** in the field of education and the labour market **needs to be provided**, e.g. within the European Transnational Cooperation.
- In education, there is a particular need for **improving the access to funding for small (transnational) projects** as well as supporting activities of project development. Setting-up a **macroregional ‘small project fund’** and a **‘Project Preparation Facility’** with the ETC would help creating synergies across the Danube Region networks, exchanging know-how and disseminating results.
- Many very ambitious ideas were raised since the adoption of the Strategy. It should however be repeatedly examined **to what extent the Danube Region scope can give answers to questions about realistic next steps**, where the issues require solutions at local, national state or European level. Learning from others and joint development of projects can make very important contributions but will not replace policies.
- Where sustainable development is to be initiated it is necessary to undertake efforts to **go beyond isolated projects**. On the other hand, social innovations, e.g. through education projects, are mostly connected with a certain need for social recapitulation and adaptation. This requires time and, very importantly, **a long-term approach**, and it should not be confused with inefficiency.