

## Minutes

### 12<sup>th</sup> Steering Group Meeting

### Priority Area 9 “Investing in People and Skills” (PA9)

Date: 08 – 09 June 2017

Venue: Otto-Wagner-Schützenhaus, Vienna Austria

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Participants: see annex I

**Minutes** by Barbara Willsberger, L&R Social Research and Matthias Makula, KulturKontakt Austria

#### **Chair:**

Roland Hanak; Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection

Jürgen Schick; Federal Ministry of Education, Austria

Anna Gherganova; Ministry of Labour, Social Protection and Family, Republic of Moldova

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#### **Welcome and Introduction**

Hanak and Schick opened the SG meeting and welcomed the participants as Priority Area Coordinators of PA 9. Hanak shortly reflected on the past six years of the EUSDR and reiterated that the strategy is a good opportunity to bring the participating states closer together, however further European collaboration is very much needed. Hanak and Schick invited the SG members to host one of the following Steering Group Meetings in their respective countries.

Gherganova from the Moldavian Ministry of Labour, Social protection and Family, in her function as a Priority Area Coordinator of PA 9, also welcomed the participants.

The opening session was closed with a short introduction round by the participants.

#### **Adoption of Agenda**

The Agenda was adopted unanimously.

#### **Commission information on PA 9-relevant developments**

Körner, from the European Commission DG EAC, referred in his presentation to the European semester and EU 2020 with specific targets in education as well on the financing instrument Erasmus+. For more details, see presentation.

The following discussion focused on the topic “digitalization”, in which it was argued that digitalization does not only lead to a loss of jobs, but also creates new ones which require other skills. Körner mentioned that digitalization is not predictive, but the qualifications needed are changing and the speed of the changes is varying.

Körner also ensured his support in identifying relevant data/information describing the contribution of Erasmus+ to fostering transnational cooperation in the DR which can be made available to our Priority Area.

## Reform Priorities in Education & Labour Market Policy in each Country

**AT Labour Market:** Hanak informed the participants that the employment rate in Austria is increasing and in the last two months the unemployment rate started to decrease after a long time of increase. In 2016 in Austria the so called AusBildungspflicht (Compulsory Education/Training) till 18 was decided. After compulsory school for all youth there is the possibility of qualification with accompanying measures:

- Youth Coaching: Counselling during the transition phase between school and job (about 35,000 participants annually)
- 60 Production Schools for around 4,000 youngsters annually
- Apprenticeship in training measures (Überbetriebliche Lehrausbildung): Opportunities for about 12.000 participants
- Counselling and Coaching for apprentices and enterprises to reduce the drop out rate and support the success at the final examination

Furthermore, there was an initiative for elderly people planned, but this has to be decided after the elections in October 2017: Within the **Aktion 20,000** the creation of 20,000 jobs for long-term unemployed people 50+ per year in municipalities, non-profit support organizations and companies is planned. Only employment relationships are created which would not be feasible without granting aid. The wage and supplementary wage costs are subsidized for a period of maximum 2 years. The extent of the aid can be up to 100%, in contrast to previous employment promotion schemes of the AMS. Further there will be a coaching for the participants. At the moment, there is a pilot phase in 9 regions of Austria. „**Beschäftigungsbonus**“ – employment bonus: In order to combat unemployment companies that create new jobs will be given half of the additional wage costs for a period of 3 years. This applies to persons who are registered at the PES or attended an Austrian educational institution. Job changers - persons who have already been employed in Austria - as well as owners of red-white-red cards are eligible. There should be no funding for people who are only moving to Austria. The bonus can only be distributed if the employment relationship lasts at least 6 months.

**AT Education:** Schick informed that Austria has already achieved its national Europe 2020 target on ESL (9.5%) with 6.9% (2016), which is markedly better than the EU average. However, national and international tests show a strong impact of socioeconomic and migrant backgrounds on education results. Consequently, Austrian education policy places great emphasis on improving education opportunities and outcomes for disadvantaged youths. In November 2015 the Austrian Government agreed on a comprehensive package of reforms, starting from early childhood education, better transitions and improvements in the school entry stage. In a further package of the reform, schools will be given greater autonomy in terms of educational, organisational, personnel-related and financial decision-making. Schools will be able to focus more on the regional level and get freedom to design on how to promote and support Austria's pupils individually. To this end, the education authorities are also being modernized. Austria's digitalisation strategy "School 4.0" aims at promoting digitalisation in the education sector as a whole. From 2017 onward, all pupils in the fifth school year and in the ninth grade as well as the teachers will be equipped with adequate digital terminals along the broadband internet. An integration package was assembled in order to expand the promotion of language skills at schools that have taken in larger numbers of refugees and to enlarge school

psychology service with additional staff (“Mobile intercultural teams”). For younger refugees above the compulsory school age, tailor-made preparation courses for VET schools provide offers for refugees with strong educational backgrounds, while the Initiative for Adult Education caters for basic education courses focusing on literacy for youths with weaker educational backgrounds. A continued emphasis is also put on the further expansion of all-day school forms. An additional EUR 750 million will be invested as of school year 2017/18 following the adoption of the Education investment law in December 2016. In VET, the curriculum has been reformed in dual education, in particular in terms of unified compulsory hours for education.

**MD:** Gherganova informed about the situation on the labour market in Moldova, which is characterized by a low employment and unemployment rate due to high labour migration. This results in a lack of qualified labour force. Furthermore, the number of NEETs is increasing (rate of 30%). In December 2016 the new employment strategy was accepted and is currently being implemented (accompanied by a new law for employment). From 2018 on new active labour market measures will be implemented with a focus on internships and self-employment. Furthermore, the reorganisation of PES (national and regional level) is still ongoing. Another focus lies on the improvement of skills matching and the forecast of labour market needs (with the support of ETF and World Bank). Collaboration on the labour market at sectorial level is being developed. Sectorial committees are developed, including development of legal framework. In the field of education, the reorganisation of VET schools is implemented and centres of excellence are created. MD is working on the development of the National Qualification Framework. A further focus is inclusive education, concepts for distance learning, Life Long Learning and a framework for the certification of non-formal skills.

**DE:** In Baden-Württemberg, so Eberz, the focus is on Digitalization/New Media, e.g. tablet projects in vocational schools (apprenticeship), upper secondary vocational schools, upper secondary general schools, elaboration of materials for digitalisation. Industry 4.0. and learning labs 4.0. are another focus with laboratories of vocational schools to train industrial automation processes. Further emphases are on the increase of the number of participants in higher education, fostering the attractiveness of dual education, inclusive education in primary and secondary schools and the integration of refugees into the education systems with a special focus on language courses and vocational training.

**HR:** Reiner stated that in Croatia the institutional framework for implementing the Croatian Qualifications Framework is being further developed. Trainings were organised for 8 appointed sectoral councils. One focus lies also on the enhancement of VET – Amendments to the Act on Vocational Education are going to be adopted, the goal of this measure being the increase of relevance of VET based on the market demands. Within the field of higher education, a new Act on Quality Assurance in Science and Higher Education should be adopted, as well as the Ordinance on recognition and validation of non-formal and informal learning. Also, a Call for Proposals for carrying out work placements will be published in November 2017. Within the field of adult education, a Draft Proposal for Adult Education Act is being prepared. The implementation of the school reform is continued, and members of the Expert Working Group for Curricular Reform Implementation were proposed to the Minister. In the area of work, a Plan for the Education of Unemployed Persons for 2017 has been adopted.

**BG:** Kasparyan stated that there is a new government in office and it has announced its priorities. Regarding labour market, social payments will be linked to work. In education, the Ministry has started a new big project with 70% of schools in the country included with two strands: 1)

support for children with learning difficulties and 2) forming groups of interests in schools. Another initiative is called “Together in class” active in 10 regions in cooperation with NGOs for a common teaching of people with different professions together with teachers. BG also focuses on innovative schools, methods of learning and didactic with EU funding.

**RO:** The priorities of RO, so Clapan, lie on social measures to guarantee children qualitative studying, new curricula for early education (0-3 years), new programmes for entrepreneurship for all levels of education (from vocational schools up to competitions on university level), changes in the law of education, e.g. in dual education each child signs an individual contract for dual education with a company and gets a scholarship for VET schools. On the labour market there is an employment bonus implemented for companies that create jobs and for employees who commute, as well as a financial support for young people through start up programmes .

**HU:** Tölgyes pointed out that the Job Protection Action Plan focuses on the reduction of taxes for special target groups (50+, women before the pension, mothers after parental leave) and employers and support of income for hiring unemployed people from the special target groups. In the Summer Student Job Programme (youth between 16-30) about 26.000 students took part and profited from the work experiences. The youth unemployment rate is under 11%. Within the Public Work Scheme, the focus is now on the transition from the public labour market to the first labour market. There are vocational trainings, e.g. building houses or ESF founded trainings for young women to come back to the labour market. A focus is also on job orientation in schools through workshops and information of enterprises about CSR.

**SK:** Auxtova and Kalmanová summarized the Slovakian priorities. There is a wide range of programmes and national projects to reduce unemployment, especially of long-term unemployed, disadvantaged groups and young people: Increase of employability, support job creation, projects in restoration of cultural heritage sites. In the field of education there is the phase of public consolidation for the Action Plan for Educational Development. An important topic is the professional education of teaching staff and the motivation of teachers (increase of salaries of +6%).Further emphases are on Roma education, VET transforming processes in cooperation of VET schools and employers and the quality assurance in higher education.

**CZ:** Bernkopfová introduced the focus of the Educational Strategy 2020: The professional development of the pedagogical staff is of high relevance and thus a sophisticated design was established, including workshops, trainings and assessments in 3 stages. Further emphases are on inclusive education (each child is guaranteed to receive support measures) and financing scheme of regional education.

The following discussion focused on the post 2020 topic and it has to be highlighted the education, training and labour market issues are essential for all targets and structural funds for the futures. Therefore every participant has to make a strong voice on the national level, but also on EU-level.

## State of Play PA9: Recent Projects and Events

Schick informed the participants about:

- Macro regional report from the EC, which will be published every 2 years and includes information on all macro-regional strategies of the EU. The report will be circulated with the minutes of the SG meeting.
- Macro regional strategies study – On behalf of DG Regio a private entity called COWI is conducting a survey on Macroregional Strategies and their links to Cohesion Policy. Schick informed that SG Members might be contacted in order to give an interview.
- During the Hungarian Presidency 2017 there are two NC-Meetings, 1 PAC-Meeting, a photo-competition and the Annual Forum. The 6th edition of the EUSDR Annual Forum will take place in Budapest on 18th and 19th of October 2017. The event is co-organized by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade of Hungary and the European Commission, in close cooperation with the Danube Transnational Programme (for more information see enclosed presentation).
- On 17<sup>th</sup> of October the next participation day will take place in Budapest. The event aims at including the civil society in different policy areas of the EUSDR.
- The PA9 / OeAD eTwinning cooperation event: thematic seminar on learning, teaching, exchanging, which will take place on 22. / 23. June 2017 in Vienna.

Makula and Willsberger informed about the Capitalisation Strategy of the Danube Transnational Programme: The aim is to reinforce the existing networks of relevant stakeholders and create new ones, to fill in knowledge gaps by linking actors with complementary thematic specialisation, experiences, methodological approaches or territorial relevance. Each Thematic Pole shall identify the synergies among the projects in the same TP. Each project shall deliver key words and common denominator / features / thematic field. This shall be a starting point in understanding what is the capital potential of the TP. PA9 is involved in Thematic Pool 9 “Education” and Thematic Pool 10 “Migration and Inclusive Governance”.

Willsberger shared the information about the 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting of ESF Managing Authorities in the Danube Region which took place on 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> of May in Vienna. The meeting was organised by PA9 in cooperation with PA10 and the Managing Authorities of Baden-Württemberg and Bavaria. The aim of the meeting was to share good practice on transnational cooperation, to discuss possibilities of transnational cooperation and to discuss synergies between ESF and EUSDR.

Gherganova invited all members of the Steering Group to the next thematic workshop of the PAC Moldova “**Dual training and other modern work-based learning strategies in the Danube region**”, which will take place on 22 June 2017 to 23 June 2017 in Chisinau, Republic of Moldova. The SG members were also asked to send suggestions for experts from their countries to take part. The aim of the workshop is the exchange practices on dual learning and other forms of work based learning in Danube Region and the identification of common issues and develop first project ideas.

Information about the next event will be shared by PACs.

## **State of Play: DTP Project – PA9**

Hanak and Willsberger informed the participants that in the period 2017 – 2019 the technical assistance for PACs of the EUSDR is provided by the Interreg - Danube Transnational Programme (DTP). PACs had to apply for funding with a formal application and PA9 is still waiting for the contract because of the special partner constellation with Austria and Moldova, which means that there are ERDF-funding and ENI-funding means included and therefore the Operational Programme of the DTP has to be adopted. This process is not finished till now.

Willsberger with the help of an internal information sheet explained the PA9 DTP project, including the objectives, the partner structure and activities.

### Discussion on the activities:

#### *WP2 – Indicators and Monitoring*

The intention of this WP is to define relevant indicators in the fields of education and labour markets on the basis of already existing data (e.g. Eurostat, European Semester etc.) and install a monitor “light” for PA9. Subsequently the gathered data should provide a sound basis for policy discussions in the PA.

Bernkopfová remarked, that there are some implementation limits in her ministry, therefore an added value of this initiative is questionable. Hanak emphasised that PA9 does not ask for the allocation of further resources of any ministry in the countries. PA9 will only collect existing data material from each country, summarize it and put it into PA9/EUSDR context. Clapan suggested to collect possible topics, thoughts and wishes on this monitor from all SG members. Schick stressed that the “monitor” ideally should take into account both major EU targets/benchmarks and bringing a DR-specific added value, e.g. through a focus on specific aspects. SG agreed to send to the Austrian PACs until the end of July suggestions for relevant topics for the monitor, existing relevant data material of the ministries (if possible) and relevant experts (ministries and research). PACs will then prepare and circulate a first draft concept for further discussions.

#### *WP3 – Stakeholder Conference*

The next conference will be in Chisinau in October 2017. Gherganova asked the members of the Steering Group to send suggestions, e.g. the topic digitalization was discussed.

#### *WP3 – Thematic Workshops:*

The thematic workshops i.a. aim at supporting the development of new projects. The Steering Group Members were invited to get into contact with the PACs, if there is need for support in their respective countries or for sending suggestions in the course of know-how exchange on specific topics, e.g. measures for NEETS or for Roma were discussed.

## **Seed Money Facility (SMF)**

According to the DTP Cooperation Programme, one of the actions to support the governance and implementation of the EUSDR is the establishment of a seed money/project development fund facility. This instrument is meant to provide support to strategic projects in the thematic fields of the Strategy. Small scale financial assistance is available for EUSDR-relevant project ideas – regardless the financial instrument to be addressed with the project developed, be it national, mainstream EU, transnational or cross border or by any other public or private investor (such as IFIs) or public-private partnership.

- Seed money project should be composed of three compulsory outputs:
  - Analysis of needs and challenges
  - Main project plan
  - Report on funding possibilities
- 1st call available amount: 1,500,000.00 EUR of EU funds
- Financial Report based on real costs
- Project duration: 12 months
- The first seed money call will address all EUSDR Priority Areas, per PA 4 projects will be financed (selection criteria: quality); A letter of support from the relevant PA is obligatory to be assessed.
- Topics of PA9:
  - Preventing early school leaving & re-integration of NEETS into education/labour market
  - Promoting inclusive education and labour markets, including second-chance education, focusing on marginalised communities (e.g. Roma)
  - Improving skills and competences for employability, entrepreneurship and active citizenship.

First call in September 2017, SMF-Conference on 27<sup>th</sup> of September in Vienna

With regard to the envisaged involvement of PACs/SG in the pre-selection of projects, the SG concluded that an efficient procedure without disproportionate requirements needs to be set up and guaranteed.

## **Danube Strategic Project Funds (PAC10)**

Makula informed the SG about the evaluation procedure of PA9 and reiterated the projects selected by the PACs and SG (8 projects in total). Furthermore, he explained the next steps of final selection of projects that will be funded and stated that the final decision on the projects is not done yet and that there is no information up until now. In case of any developments PACs will inform the SG about them.

## **Update on the PA9 Work Programme**

The update of the Work Programme was unanimously adopted by the SG with two corrections, in line with the Guidelines for the functioning of the SG.

It has been decided to add the key policy developments of each country to the next Work Programme. The PACs will draft a format for this purpose.



## **Main Outcomes**

- **SG discussed and presented main reform priorities**
- **SG took note of the various thematic events**
- **SG took note of the Capitalisation Strategy of the DTP and the two relevant Thematic Pools**
- **SG took note of the DTP-Project PA9**
- **SG discussed the development of a “PA9 Monitor” within the DTP Project and agreed on further steps**
- **SG took note and the Seed Money Facility (SMF of DTP) and the Danube Strategic Project Funds (PA10)**
- **SMF selection process: An efficient procedure without disproportionate requirements for PACs/SG needs to be set up**
- **SG adopted the updated work programme**