



### WORKSHOP SUMMARY REPORT (template)

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**Workshop Title:** Enhancing skills and competences through educational cooperation

**Date:** 29 October 2015, 16.00 – 17.30

**Panelists / Facilitators:**

- *Mr Jürgen Schick, Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs, EUSDR PAC 9, Austria (Chair)*
- *Ms Ivana Cenerić, Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development, Serbia*
- *Ms Cristina Mereuta, European Training Foundation*
- *Ms Monika Mott, KulturKontakt Austria*
- *Ms Zoica Vladut, National Centre for Technical and Vocational Education and Training Development, Romania*
- *Ms Christina Kasparyan, Business Support Centre for SMEs, Bulgaria*
- *Mr Marco Frimberger, Interkulturelles Zentrum, Austria*
- *Mr Miomir Rajcevic, Media Education Centre, Serbia*

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**Summary of the session** (max. 200 words)

The workshop "Enhancing skills and competences through educational cooperation" focused on EUSDR Priority Area 9 actions to raise the performance of education and training systems, to support creativity and entrepreneurship, to promote lifelong learning and mobility, as well as to foster equity, social cohesion and active citizenship. It highlighted the importance of improving education and training systems' performance to provide people with the right skills and competences which are vital to the development of the Danube Region. The session was chaired by PAC Jürgen Schick (Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs, Austria).

The workshop provided space to discuss key initiatives within EUSDR PA 9 from both a policy- and project-based perspective. It was kicked-off by Ms Ivana Cenerić (Ministry of Education, Science and Technological Development) tackling the importance and benefits of regional cooperation in education and by Ms Cristina Mereuta (European Training Foundation) discussing responses to skills matching. In the following, project presentations set the focus i.a. on improving the quality and attractiveness of VET through innovative work-based learning, entrepreneurial learning and the promotion of green competences in tourism education as well as learning pathways to foster social cohesion, active citizenship and inter-regional dialogue, especially among young people.

### Key messages / lessons learnt (max. 200 words)

- Education and training provide individuals with the knowledge, skills and competences that enable them to grow and to influence their situations, by broadening their perspectives, equipping people favourably for their future lives, laying the foundations for active citizenship and democratic values and promoting inclusion and equality. The quality and relevance of learning outcomes are key for the development of skills and competences
- Regional platforms such as ERI SEE (Education Reform Initiative of South Eastern Europe) are important instruments for the implementation of EUSDR actions as they support sustainable education reforms on national levels through regional and international cooperation and act as an interface in education thematic areas. The planned secretariat to be established at CEP (Centre for Education Policy, Belgrade) will further strengthen the role of ERI SEE in the fields of regional cooperation. The importance of such cooperation was also recently recognized by the West Balkan Summit in Vienna on 27<sup>th</sup> August 2015.
- Efficient skills anticipation and matching need the involvement of key-stakeholders (e.g. policy makers, employers' associations and trade unions) as well as access to relevant information (lacking regular data). Furthermore, a proper policy response requires flexibility to influence labour market and education policy at different level (e.g. national / local level).
- Work-Based Learning (WBL) in VET is seen as an important concept for enhancing competitiveness and employability in the Danube Region. As there are many different formats of WBL clarity about which goals can be achieved with which format is needed. The scope and relevance of WBL differs in most countries. In all countries quality assurance in work based learning is a challenge.
- "Greening" the economy is vital to the sustainable growth of the region and contributes to job creation and increased competitiveness. Managing the transformation towards "green" jobs requires bringing together labour market actors and education and training providers in order to provide the necessary skills and competences.
- Entrepreneurship and creativity are a prerequisite for innovation which contributes to the competitiveness of the Danube Region. Introducing innovative learning programmes or promoting intercultural dialogue through language training are important tools to foster entrepreneurial thinking and creativity. Bringing education closer to business is therefore a crucial prerequisite.
- The cooperation between formal and non-formal education in regards to the educational pathway of young people is being fostered through the Danube Region Youth Platform. Coordinated by Interkulturelles Zentrum (IZ), the platform contributes to social cohesion in the region as well as supports the recognition of youth work and non-formal education as an important contribution to the development of necessary skills and competences.
- Strengthening youth by providing necessary skills and required competences is also a topic followed by the project "Danube Peace Boat E.U.R.O.P.E". The project enabled students to participate in workshops in order to gather knowledge in media and digital tools.

## Next steps / recommendations (max. 200 words)

### Recommendations

- Education and training are essential for promoting social cohesion, equality, non-discrimination and civic competences. Effective action to cater for diversity in all its forms and to provide inclusive education and training for all learners is needed, focusing on disadvantaged groups such as people with a migrant background and Roma.
- The role of regional platforms such as ERI SEE need to be further strengthened through i.a. stronger political commitment and involvement of other key stakeholders. Donor activities and regional initiatives should be more coordinated in order to avoid duplication and to secure synergy effects.
- SEE countries who are striving to establish integrated and evidenced mechanisms on future skills need to go beyond skills trends identification. A well established permanent, systemic and multi-sectoral mechanism for monitoring and forecasting labour market demand is necessary.
- Raising awareness of companies for the relevance of WBL and identifying possible incentives for companies for participating in the training process of young people are important actions to be further addressed in this field.
- Linking formal and non-formal education as well as providing the necessary skills and competences (e.g. green competences) is vital to the region in order to tackle the challenge of early school leavers and youth unemployment.

### Next steps

- PA9 will continue its efforts in the area of education and training in 2015-16, i.a. by organising further Steering Group meetings, a strategic conference as well as relevant thematic workshops. Work-based learning will be an important topic.
- "ERI SEE seminar on removing obstacles to recognition of qualifications" on 5-6 November 2015 in Zagreb, Croatia and "Joint Seminar of the Cluster of Knowledge on Vocational Education and Training and South East Europe Regional VET Network (SEEVET-Net)" on 19-20 November 2015 in Belgrade, Serbia.
- Promoting Green Competences was the aim of an international conference followed by a first meeting of an expert group that took place in June 2015 in Romania. The expert group acts i.a. as a facilitator for knowledge sharing and policy recommendations and works on a common project application relevant for the Erasmus+ Programme under Key Action 2: "Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices".
- Coordinated by BSC Ruse Thematic, Working Group 3 "Creativity and Entrepreneurship" will continue its efforts by linking creative learning methods and creative thinking to businesses and innovation and by identifying new ideas for partnerships. The START funded project "Danube Competence Centres for Creativity and Entrepreneurship" allows for further

networking and will be submitted for implementation to the 1<sup>st</sup> call of the ETC Danube Programme 2014-2020.

- A 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting of the Danube Region Youth Platform is planned for April 2016 in Vienna. The aim is to bring educators from formal and non-formal field together and to continue the thematic focus on social cohesion. In addition, an Expression of Interest (EoI) – dealing with learning pathways to social cohesion – was elaborated by IZ for the 1<sup>st</sup> call of the ETC Danube Programme 2014-2020.

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Appendices:

- List of participants
- PPT Presentations
- Useful links / other relevant information