



*Österreichisches Institut für  
Berufsbildungsforschung*

## **International Open Space Conference:**

**“Skills, Competences, Inclusion:  
Developing Innovative Human  
Capital Policies and Projects in  
the Danube Region”  
(5-6 December 2013, Vienna)**

Conference Report

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Wien, Jänner 2014

On behalf of KulturKontakt Austria, the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture and the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection.

*The views of the participants do not necessarily coincide with those of the organisers.*

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**Abstract de**

Am 5. und 6. Dezember 2013 fand im Rahmen der EU-Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) – Priority Area (PA) „Investing in People and Skills“ in Wien, Österreich die „International Open Space Conference: Skills, Competences, Inclusion – Developing Innovative Human Capital Policies and Projects in the Danube Region“ statt. Die Finanzierung erfolgte durch Mittel der Europäischen Union, des Bundesministeriums für Arbeit, Soziales und Konsumentenschutz (Österreich) und des Bundesministeriums für Unterricht, Kunst und Kultur (Österreich). Das Ziel der Veranstalter (dies waren die Priority Area 9 „Investing in People and Skills“ Coordinators im Rahmen der EUSDR) war es, die Diskussionen und bestehenden Kooperationen in den Feldern Bildung und Arbeitsmarkt in der Region zu vertiefen und auszubauen. Entsprechend wurde im Design der Konferenz die Methode „Open Space“ implementiert, um einen möglichst breiten und vielfältigen Ansatz an Ideen und Diskussionen sicherzustellen, neue und gemeinsame Ansätze zu entwickeln sowie die Teilnehmenden in die Weiterentwicklung der Donauraumstrategie einzubeziehen.

**Abstract en**

On 5 and 6 December 2013 the international Open Space Conference: “Skills, Competences, Inclusion – Developing Human Capital Policies and Projects in the Danube Region (EUSDR) – Priority Area 9 (PA) “Investing in People and Skills” took place. Funding was supplied by European Union funds, the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (Austria) and the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (Austria). The organisers (these were the Priority Area 9 “Investing in People and Skills” Coordinators within the framework of the EUSDR) pursued the objective of widening and deepening discussions and existing cooperation ventures in the fields of human capital in the region. Accordingly, the conference programme focused on providing sufficient space for exchanges and discussions. The open space design provided a laboratory of ideas and a fully collaborative approach which put the ownerships of the participants at the heart of the Strategy. Thus, the conference required that all participants discuss, reflect and interact to develop new and unique approaches.

**Schlagworte**

[Österreich, Europa, Donauraum, Bildungspolitik, Arbeitsmarktpolitik, Modernisierung in der beruflichen Bildung, Bildungs Kooperation]

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## I. Conference Report

### I. 1 Preamble

On 5 and 6 December 2013 the international Open Space Conference: “Skills, Competences, Inclusion – Developing Human Capital Policies and Projects in the Danube Region” was held in Vienna, Austria, as part of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) – Priority Area 9 (PA) “Investing in People and Skills”. Funding was supplied by European Union funds, the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection (Austria) and the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture (Austria). The organisers (these were the Priority Area Coordinators within the framework of the EUSDR) pursued the objective of widening and deepening discussions and existing cooperation ventures in the fields of human capital in the region. Accordingly, the conference programme focused on providing sufficient space for exchanges and discussions. The open space design provided a laboratory of ideas and a fully collaborative approach which put the ownerships of the participants at the heart of the Strategy. Thus, the conference required that all participants discuss, reflect and interact to develop new and unique approaches.

Roughly 140 participants – from 13 of 14 Danube Region countries, non-governmental organisations active in the field of human capital building, education and labour market experts, researchers, international donors and media representatives – worked on joint issues and possibilities of future cooperation at strategic level. Overall there were **24 working sessions** within three phases of Open Space along collected questions and issues for the discussion. To retain the outcomes of the working session participants decided in **9 groups** of collected topics which should be the most relevant items to be followed up after the conference.

**Open Space is a working method** for meeting of large groups requiring little structural pre-settings, an interested and committed group and a high level of self-organisation. It is based on the “creativity of informality” and insofar objects to accustomed roles of conferences and meetings. Participants of Open Space Conferences create the agenda at the beginning of the event by expressing their interest to talk about certain questions and raise their own subject which in traditional conferences would sometimes pass almost unnoticed.

The contents of the conference’s contributions and work stages were oriented towards the Priority Area’s objectives which are to improve cooperation within education and labour market policies, foster creativity and entrepreneurship and support strategies of lifelong learning and mobility. Furthermore, the Priority Area encompasses topics of social inclusion of marginalised groups, migration and gender equality.

### I. 2 Objectives and structure of the conference

Within the implementation of the EUSDR, the Coordinators of Priority Area 9 (PA9) “Investing in People and Skills”<sup>1</sup> have established an efficient and well-functioning working structure with eight Working Areas aiming at a concrete support for transnational education and labour market policies in the Danube Region. In 2012, an integrated and coordinated stock-taking process was initiated in Vienna with the first PA9 Stakeholder Conference to collect and develop new ideas and to assemble motivated people in an inspirational meeting. The aim of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Stakeholder Conference was to continue these efforts. It reassembled actors and promoters of the EUSDR from thirteen of fourteen Danube Region

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<sup>1</sup> Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture, Austria; Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria

countries in order to develop innovative regional human capital policies, projects and networks in the thematic field. A common topic to discuss was the question of setting a commitment on the Danube Region Strategy (EUSDR) and to formulate a framework which defines the roles on transnational programmes and impacts for the region.

In particular, the conference wanted to improve the information flow and transfer **good practice** in the **design and implementation of policies and projects** among actors in the Danube Region in the fields of education and the labour market. It tried to highlight key policy issues with long-term impact on the prosperity of the Danube Region and how to **generate synergies** and create links between different networks.

The conference was opened by **Roland Hanak**, Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria and **Jürgen Schick**, Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture, Austria as the Priority Area 9 coordinators within the framework of the EUSDR. They pointed out that the conference setting is broad-minded about the questions and issues of the participants as experts in the thematic field. They were also looking forward to the results to bring the EUSDR in the heart of regional and European policies and find common approaches.

After the welcome by hosts and the introducing to the subjects of the conference there were three Open Space working sessions. The evening panel collected the main outcomes from all working groups on flipcharts. The second day of the conference started with the question on most relevant items to be followed up after the conference.

In the closing session **Peter Schlögl**, Austrian Institute on Vocational Training (*öibf*), Rapporteur of the conference gave a brief overview about the main topics and results in attendance of **Rudolf Hundstorfer**, Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, **Hanspeter Huber**, Representative of the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture, **Pierre Mairesse**, European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Director Europe 2020 – Policy Development and Country Analysis, and **Evelyn Regner**, Member of the European Parliament.

The conference was closed by high-level representatives of the host country, the European Commission and the European Parliament. Federal Minister **Rudolf Hundstorfer** (Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria) pointed out that the Danube Strategy has a broad thematic approach, e.g. strengthening social economic and industrial development, strengthening human resources and qualification, access to communication systems. Since the last Stakeholder Conference on EUSDR in June 2012, working groups of experts were established in particular on the issues labour market, demography, migration and fighting poverty and social exclusion of marginalised communities, especially with Roma communities. On the other hand there are requirements to revise the design of the Strategy. One point regard to the field of governance of the Strategy. The implementation of the Strategy should be discussed to find a common view on projects and policies included in the Strategy as well as such not included. An added point is the key role of the DANUBE PROGRAMME as a funding instrument closely referring to multilateral projects. It will be necessary to ensure the funding of projects in all Priority Areas, especially in the thematic fields employment, social affairs and education. If we fail to give Priority Area 9 the same footing as the other Priority Areas, the entire Danube region Strategy in terms of labour market, social issues and education is to question.

**Mr Hanspeter Huber** (Director General in the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture, on behalf of Federal Minister Claudia Schmied, who was unable

to attend the conference) highlighted the important role of vocational training in context to the EUROPA 2020-Strategy and the strategic framework “education and vocational training” as well as the “SOUTHEASTEUROPE 2020-Strategy”. Innovate work based learning can strengthen the employment and the competitiveness in the DANUBE region. It means that educational systems should be organised in a European approach. He mentioned the new funding period and the link to the EUSDR to other relevant European funding programmes, in particular ERASMUS+. Just as Minister Hundstorfer pointed out Mr Huber accentuated the DANUBE Programme as an instrument in the case of developing education and vocational training for Member States and Non-Member States in the region.

Mr **László Andor**, Member of the European Commission in charge for Employment, Social Affairs and inclusion sent a video message and stressed the importance to get really into the DANUBE Strategy and bring the issues in Priority Area 9 on a par with other Priority Areas in the DANUBE Programme. Related to the video message Mr **Pierre Mairesse**, European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Director Europe 2020 – Policy Development and Country Analysis, pointed out the relation between the Danube Strategy and the new funding period. **Evelyn Regner**, Member of the European Parliament described the significance of the Danube Region and the common initiatives from Member States and Non-Member States within the work of the European Parliament.

### I. 3 Working Groups

Participants had suggested 32 themes altogether. The discussion focused on 24, some were merged into one, some of themes did not find a follower and were left over (2).

#### I.3.1 Working Sessions Phase 1 (05/12/2013 11.00 – 12.45)

1. Developing multilateral projects in the field of higher education (Room 7)
2. VET – Worked based Learning (Room 8)
3. Linking formal and non-formal education (Room 4 + 5)
4. Sustainable and social ecological production for strengthening the Danube Region (Room 3)
5. Migrant workers and their rights – how to strengthen them (Room 2)
6. Mobility (VET) / Knowledge transfer (general further education) (Room 6)
7. Demographic change and migration at the local level – evidence based and multilevel approaches and policies (Room 1)
8. Entrepreneurship (room 9)
  - a. Programs for entrepreneurship development along the Danube
  - b. Creativity and entrepreneurship projects and ideas
  - c. Innovators for sustainability – and eco-social entrepreneurship programme for creating green jobs
  - d. Education and labour market – connecting employability
  - e. Learning journeys – implementing innovative non-formal learning approaches bases on people needs

#### I.3.2 Working Sessions Phase 2 (05/12/2013 14.00 – 15.45)

1. Inclusion of segregated groups (incl. Roma) via youth programmes (Room 6)
2. Ageing population (Room 9)
3. Preparations for establishing a youth Danube region network (Room 7)
4. EU-level cooperation between economy and institutions (in social matters)

and between economy and official authorities – value creation through appreciation (Room 2)

5. Tools and skills for innovation (including social innovation) (Room 1)
6. How to use the existing financial instruments (e.g. ESF) to develop together social projects in the Danube Region (Room 8)
7. Make transition from school to the labour market easier (Room 4 + 5)
8. Cultural heritage as driver for economic growth through education and training (Room 9)
9. Coordination of stakeholders on national level for the PA9 agenda (not discussed)
10. Profiling new jobs/companies for Danube communities (not discussed)

#### I.3.3 Working Sessions Phase 3 (05/12/2013 16.15 – 18.00)

1. Roma – Non-Roma dialogue trans-national network (Room 1)
2. Sustainability of the projects aimed to integration of the Roma people through the labour market (Room 9)
3. SONDAR – sustainable operations network in the Danube Region – from soil to sustainability (Room 6)
4. Alphabetisation in VET and general further education (Room 3)
5. TVET: Adjusting/reorienting TVET towards competences for sustainable development (multilateral project LEONARDO, proposal 2014) (Room 2)
6. Develop joint projects on introducing dual TVET system for selected industries in Danube Region countries (Room 4 + 5)

#### I.3.4 Evening News

After the working sessions, participants were invited to meet again in the plenary room to exchange the main outcomes of today's work and to get a perspective of past and future discussions.

It was not intended to have reports from each group. As a conclusion of today's work and to find the best links for tomorrow's discussions, everybody was invited to contribute a statement, either to emphasize importance or new findings (signified by "exclamation mark") or to keep in mind open questions and issues that need further attention (signified by "question mark"). There was no demand that everybody should speak, only those who wished to contribute did so.

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labour market -> education improvement of labour mobility	structural problems of labour market
respecting labour laws (migrants)	Roma
pilot project on dual TVET	How to get people in DR to do a pilot project on TVET, dual system or WBL
institution responsibility for Roma people	facilitating employment of Roma
"Sustainability" as issue only in PA6, PA8 and PA9 – should got together	EU programme for DRS (ETC) "Danube" will start about 2015
Further cooperation	youth
List of email addresses and themes of interest (summary) for follow up (networking)	elderly people
open space format	



#### I. 4 Results from the working groups – Day 2: Morning Session

A major part of the conference was to develop innovative regional human capital policies, projects and networks within a transnational framework and also linked to the upcoming DANUBE PROGRAMME.

The participants collected the different issues out of the working groups and estimated nine topics of enhancements both at projects level and in regard to policy development in the Danube region.

The following key issues can be identified over all working groups: Acknowledgement of qualification, know-how-transfer, creating jobs and the funding of projects. Also the role /part of the Danube Strategy in the DANUBE PROGRAMME and the new funding period, especially for the ESF and the ERDF, were important issues during the two conference days.

##### TOPIC 1:

##### Labour market and labour market policies, know-how transfer, recognition of qualification

In this working group, the goal of a joint labour market for the Danube Region was discussed. In the opinion of the participants, the basis for targeted further development is empirical analyses of the skills and competences of the inhabitants and also considerations of employment. The aim is to extend greater flexibility of the institutions with regard to the labour market, and elements considered crucial in this respect are intensive exchange across borders and also know-how transfer within the region, which could lead to cooperation between stakeholders, including between trade unions, employment services and social partners. One particular aim is cooperation between private and state employment services. The development of a joint labour market in the region has to coincide with the guarantee of EU standards in the area of labour and collective agreement/bargaining legislation.

##### TOPIC 2:

##### Education system – dual system, work-based learning and transition

With regard to these key terms, in the Open Space session the important questions were collected so that these could be included in the discussion after the conference.

Here the focus was on the question of the possibilities of including strong partners in platforms, measures and projects. The use of resources and the acquisition of partners from a pool, which comprises both the national and the European levels and also involves companies, was considered an important component for a reform process of the education system towards a greater share of vocational training and work-based learning. The cooperation with companies in this reform process was expressed as a priority including with regard to transitional systems between the individual stages of education. The establishment of work-based learning is connected with the question of the role of companies within the education and training system.

Selected Project linked with Topic 2:

“Enhanced Competitiveness & Employability through Innovative WorkBased Learning in VET”

The planned project “Enhanced Competitiveness and Employability through Innovative Work-Based Learning in VET” should i.a. support the establishment of national and (macro-)regional platforms of dialogue on WBL and the piloting of policy measures at national levels in selected partner countries. The project also builds on the work of our PA9 VET Working Group coordinated by Romania. We are currently envisaging that the project –

once developed – could be submitted to the forthcoming ETC Danube Programme. For more information, please consult the draft application document you will find enclosed.

Contact: KulturKontakt Austria [www.kulturkontakt.or.at](http://www.kulturkontakt.or.at),

National Centre for TVET Development Romania [www.tvet.ro](http://www.tvet.ro)

#### TOPIC 3:

##### Transition education and employment system (initial learning, LLL approach, further education, job training, green jobs, company-based learning)

Under the above key words the connection between education and employment was discussed. One level here is the transition from school to working life. First of all forms and instruments need to be developed which make it possible to integrate elements of vocational training in the education systems. Here it was important for the participants in this working group to stress that it cannot be a matter of merely adopting the existing dual system because the education systems and institutional requirements of the countries in the Danube Region are too different. For example, those countries which have a long tradition of integrating the dual system in their education and training system are characterised by aspects including the establishment of the social partnership. This is not the case in other countries of the Danube Region. Therefore, with regard to the question of establishing work-based learning, it would have to be a matter of different solutions – depending on the design of the education system – which would still need to be developed.

As well as the transition from school to career, adult education is also an important area under the key aspect of career to school in order to counteract the de-qualification of the working population or also unemployed people. Company-based learning in the form of a connection of education with training and work is another way of increasing qualifications and preventing de-qualification. Here the field of green jobs could be an interesting area in the further development of approaches because it is an innovative, self-developing and learning area of employment. Overall in this question, better use still needs to be made of the possibilities of the LLL approach.

#### TOPIC 4:

##### Youth platform on formal and non-formal learning

The results of the work on this theme have been displayed in 3 sub-items – Needs/Structure, Topics and Tools. In the discussion, work has already been done specifically on the establishment of a Danube Region youth network. Important areas of the network's work from today's standpoint are orientation towards knowledge (instead of just towards formal qualification) and the planning of the entry into working life from the perspective of competences. Here it is decisive to take the further steps while thinking out of the box.

Needs/Structure: For the establishment of such a network, according to the participants, meeting points and scope for development are required to be able to work on the further development in the different sectors and also across different sectors and be able to exchange experience and knowledge. In addition, frameworks for inviting the different stakeholders in all topics and possible sub-topics are being considered. The platform/the network has to define its own clear communication structure so that all actors and stakeholders, youth and young people can be included in the debate about developments and measures of formal and non-formal learning.

Topics: Raising awareness of the topics of youth in the area of education and training on a broad level is a focus of the considerations on the establishment of the Danube Region youth network, and a key concern here is the cross-sectoral recognition of qualifications and competences from non-formal education.

Tools:

Existing and new programmes such as Erasmus+ and the ERDF are tools which can be used to set up such a network, other tools need to be developed though.

TOPIC 5:

Elderly people (target group within the employment system)

In this working group, experiences and questions for the further discussion after the conference were identified.

Experiences: Participants from various countries in the Danube Region have formulated shared challenges with regard to elderly people on the labour market based on their experiences. They identified similar problems for people aged 50+ both in the area of low qualified people and migrants and also with well qualified and highly qualified employees and unemployed people. For example, they see age-based salary systems, i.e. consideration of age when classifying someone in a salary scheme or advancement to the next salary level in this scheme because of age, as problematic for employees aged 50+. Here they mention a lack of possibilities of (re)qualification for senior employees and too few offers in the area of continuing training in ICT which are aligned with elderly people and their needs. From their perspective, age management is ignored by companies and policymakers, and in some cases this is also because of a lack of information.

Suggestions for change were formulated as questions.

Questions: From their perspective, there is the question of why companies are not interested in age management and the situation of their older employees. Since at first glance there would be no plausible explanation for this, studies and analyses of this phenomenon would be important, and these should refer to the Danube Region and the specific challenges in the region.

Since there are already projects which are seen as examples of good practice, in the next step it has to be considered how these approaches of good practice can be developed further and become established. This also includes persuading companies that a reform of the current way they deal with older employees is required.

TOPIC 6:

Respecting labour laws and mobility (migrants, vulnerable groups)

The increasing mobility of employees leads to violations against labour law in general and for migrants and vulnerable groups in particular. In this working group, measures to support those affected have been developed as well as tools at the strategic level in order to ensure compliance with labour law in the longer term. At the strategic level, in addition to the close cooperation of trade unions, a transnational network is also required in the Danube Region to ensure compliance with labour law for the target group of migrants and vulnerable groups in particular.

For those affected, in particular the low qualified, easy access to legal representation in their mother tongue is required so that they receive support in the enforcement of their rights. Another suggested aid is an emergency number which can provide advice in work and labour law problems of employees. Such a number should be introduced throughout Europe.

In connection with the compliance with labour law and migration, the risk of de-qualification also has to be countered. Migrants are often highly qualified but employed below their qualification levels. One step in this direction could be an improvement in the recognition of degrees. But of course societies also have to face up to the challenges of the intercultural approach and integration.

The problem of the brain drain must not be overlooked in countries faced with the emigration of qualified employees. More offers and support to help people

return to their country of origin would also be important to counteract the brain drain.

TOPIC 7:

Integration of Roma population – Empowerment

For the participants in the working groups, the responsibility of the institutions, i.e. the public sector, establishments of social partners and also trade unions, is an important point in the question of improving the situation of the Roma communities. The exclusion of the Roma community, and not only in the Danube Region, can be fought only at the institutional level. This has to be done as part of a transnational cooperation which pools together its resources and involves those affected as well as NGOs.

Alongside this strategic approach, for the social inclusion of the Roma communities the priority is, in particular, to support their immediate daily lives. In this respect, activities and initiatives to fight against poverty, housing, improvement of the educational level and equal access to labour markets have to be carried out to an increased extent. To end the long-lasting exclusion of the Roma communities in Europe and reverse the process, all actors and stakeholders are called on to sit down with those affected and NGOs and push ahead with the implementation of programmes for this target group.

It is crucial for the Roma communities to be treated equally with all other population groups/citizens of the European Union, both at a legal and also at a practical level.

TOPIC 8:

Industrial relations

In the area of trade unions it is mainly a matter of empowerment and support in the establishment of strong structures. Here countries with a strong tradition of trade unions and an established collective agreement/bargaining system are called on to work together with countries which do not have the same conditions.

Capacity-building to establish a functioning and institutionally integrated social partnership is seen by the participants as a basis for further developments, including in the area of the reform of training systems, and in particular in questions of work-based and company-based learning.

Strengthening the collective agreement/bargaining as an instrument of labour law and also the legal and social protection of employees is seen as a priority with regard to the harmonisation of employment relationships of the respective countries at a high level.

TOPIC 9:

Entrepreneurship

Entrepreneurship was also ascribed great potential for the further development of the Danube Region during the conference. For example, start-ups are seen as a possibility of connecting sustainability and innovation, which should also be promoted by means of target-oriented programmes. The potential of these start-ups is seen as capable of development specifically along the Danube Region. Via start-ups, education and the labour market could make a contribution to employability and the associated measures. Opportunities are also seen to implement an innovative non-formal learning approach based on the needs of those affected. In this respect, this form of entrepreneurship also has to make full use of its possibilities of a transitional labour market which has to lead from unemployment to employment in the first labour market.

In connection with the different programmes for the Danube Region and the link to other priority areas in the EUSDR, eco-social entrepreneurship in conjunction with the creation of green jobs is an area which should be promoted in particular.

Selected Project linked with Topic 9:

Innovations-Cluster

Organisations: Plattform SoPro, ÖGB, AK Sustainability, BIENE, Federal Ministry of Science and Research, University of Vienna

- Collecting best practice examples on cooperation between the social and the profit economy
- Focused working on the question of the role of social economy in the second and third labour market
- Working group on sustainability in the Danube Region
- Key issues on this working group are the sustainability in work and consume as well as the inclusion of people with special needs focused on the climate change, ending resources and the aging society

Contact: [www.sozialproduziert.at](http://www.sozialproduziert.at)

## I. 5 Overall Conclusions

As well as the findings obtained in the course of the conference in terms of contents, which cover a very wide and varied range of topics, it is also worth making some basic comments.

At the **strategic level** it became clear during the conference that all levels – the political, economic, institutional, trade union and those of the support organisations and the organisations for the affected groups – need to be active together in a network in the Danube Region. The Danube Region and also the EUSDR need to see the vision for the region as a joint development area and break down national borders. Here it is necessary for **all actors and stakeholders** to see the Strategy as an instrument to be filled and designed by themselves, and therefore participate in it while using synergies. The Strategy creates a framework in which the associated possibilities are in the hands of the participants. Here it cannot be a matter of fulfilling requirements top-down, instead the bottom-up process needs to have priority. With the open space format of the conference, already existing approaches and cooperation ventures have been consolidated and new ones have also been established.

The **equality of marginal groups and minorities** and their full participation in society and the working world is an important prerequisite for the stabilisation and expansion of social prosperity in the Danube Region.

The measure and project level is under the same focus. For the further development of the region, learning from each other in the sense of exchange and know-how transfer is just as important as the joint development of innovative approaches on the same level. In the area of training in particular and also national labour markets, it can be seen that merely adopting systems which are established and successful in other countries is not the right way because the requirements differ too much.

**Education and the labour market** are decisive elements for the entire region. This is because without functioning education systems which are also adapted to some extent to the needs of the labour markets, the other PAs can also be inhibited in taking initiatives. At the same time, if the education and labour market systems fail to develop further, this will be associated with high social costs. In this respect it will be necessary, including in future initiatives and programmes such as the Danube Region programme, to see education and the labour market as crucial thematic fields/PA which influence all other thematic fields and, accordingly, to grant this thematic field the same significance as others within the Danube programme.

A main point was the **relationship between the Danube Strategy and the DANUBE Programme**. For the participants it was not clear which instruments at which level should or could be used for policies and projects. Also the question of funding for Member- as well as Non-Member States was a general question. For that it will be necessary to define obligations in the Strategy and to establish a framework of requirements for policies and projects combined with the Strategy.

For future activities related to the Danube Strategy it will be very important to **transmit the thematic field in Area 9 “Investing in People and Skills** - to strengthen labour market access, social inclusion, education and to promote equity, social cohesion, active citizenship – at the equal level as other Priority Areas in the **DANUBE programme**. Also, the access to additional funding instruments like the ESF, ERASMUS+, etc. will be an important point for implementing the Strategy in the Danube Region.

## I. 6 Participants Feedback

Before the closing session there was a Summing up of the Open Space experiences. The feedback from the participants highlighted the method of open space as a great and useful experience. There was enough space for deepened discussion, for exchange and for setting up projects and policies. The broad approaches give the possibility to mark existing problems and challenges within the new funding period. Also some participants mentioned as a result of the conference that new projects and policies plans were set up during the conference.

## II. Addendum

### II. 1 Context of the conference

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), endorsed in June 2011 by the European Council, is the second EU macro-regional strategy after the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Strategy was jointly developed by the Commission, together with to Danube Region countries and stakeholders, in order to address common challenges collectively. It seeks to create synergies and coordination between existing and recent policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube Region. The area covered by the Strategy stretches from the Black Forrest (Germany) to the Black Sea (Romania-Ukraine-Moldova) and is home to 115 million inhabitants. 14 Countries, Member States, Accession Countries and Neighbourhood Countries participate in the EUSDR<sup>2</sup>.

The common action plan is subdivided in **11 Priority Areas (PA)** each Area has **Priority Area Coordinators (PAC)**, who ensure the implementation of the action plan. They also provide technical assistance and advice. The coordinators work in consultation with the Commission, and relevant EU agencies, and national /regional bodies.

The Priority Areas are:

- PA 1) to improve mobility and intermodality
- PA 2) to encourage more sustainable energy
- PA 3) to promote culture and tourism, people to people contacts
- PA 4) to restore and maintain the quality of waters
- PA 5) to manage environmental risks
- PA 6) to preserve biodiversity, landscape and quality of air and soils
- PA 7) to develop the knowledge society (research, education, and ICT)
- PA 8) to support the competitiveness of enterprises
- PA 9) to invest in people and skills
- PA 10) to step up institutional capacity and cooperation
- PA 11) to work together to tackle security and organised crime

The **Open Space Conference** held on 5-6 December 2013 in Vienna was part of in **the activities of EUSDR/Priority Area 9** – Investing in People and Skills, education and training, labour market and marginalised groups, coordinated by the Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection, Austria and by the Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture, Austria. The action/working areas for PA 9 – “Investing in People and Skills”, are:

Work area 1) “to enhance performance of education systems through closer cooperation of education institutions, systems and policies”

Work area 2) “to foster cooperation between stakeholders of labour market, education and research policies in order to develop learning regions and environments”

Work area 3) “to support creativity and entrepreneurship”

Work area 4) “to support life-long learning and expanding learning mobility”

Work area 5) “to promote equity, social cohesion and active citizenship through education and training”

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<sup>2</sup> Member States: Austria Bulgaria, Croatia, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovak Republic, Slovenia; Accession Countries: Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia; Neighbourhood Countries; Moldova, Ukraine



Work area 6) “to improve cross-sector policy coordination to address demographic and migration challenges”

Work area 7) “to fight poverty and social exclusion of marginalized communities in the Danube Region, especially Roma communities”

Work area 8) “to promote gender equality on the labour market, especially in payment”

For each working area in the PA 9 thematic working groups were established, projects and policies planned and ideas collected. The Open Space Conference was the second Stakeholder Conference in PA 9.

## II. 2 Agenda

International Open Space Conference “Skills, Competences, Inclusion – Developing Innovative Human Capital Policies and Projects in the Danube Region”, 5-6 December 2013, Vienna

### 5 December 2013

9:00	Registration
9:30-9:45	Welcome by hosts and introducing to the subject of the conference <b>Roland Hanak</b> , Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection <b>Jürgen Schick</b> , Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture
9:45-10:30	Open Space Warming up – Collection of questions and issues for the discussion Setting the agenda – participants chose working groups
10:30-11:00	Coffee break
11:00-12:45	Working session Phase 1, 12 Parallel working sessions
12:45-14:00	Lunch break
14:00-15:45	Working session Phase 2, 10 Parallel working sessions
15:45-16:15	Coffee break
16:15-18:00	Working session Phase 3, 8 Parallel working sessions
18:00-19:30	Evening news – collecting and clustering of main outcomes from all working sessions
19:30	Dinner

### 6 December 2013

8:30-10:30	Morning news – forming new groups; participants on most relevant items to be followed up after the conference
10:30-11:00	Summing up of the Open Space experiences; conference reflections
11:00-11:30	Coffee break
11:30-13:00	Closing session <b>Peter Schlögl</b> , Austrian Institute for Research on vocational training – öibf as Rapporteur of the Open Space Conference <b>Rudolf Hundstorfer</b> , Federal Minister of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection <b>Hanspeter Huber</b> , Director, Federal Ministry for Education, the Arts and Culture on behalf of Claudia Schmied, Federal Minister for Education, the Arts and Culture

	<p><b>László Andor</b>, Member of the European Commission in charge of Employment, Social Affairs and inclusion – video message</p> <p><b>Pierre Mairesse</b>, European Commission, DG Education and Culture, Director Europe 2020 – Policy Development and Country Analysis</p> <p><b>Evelyn Regner</b>, Member of the European Parliament</p>
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II. 3 Table of Open Space Session results

<p><b>Topic 1: labour market and labour market policies, know-how transfer, recognition of qualification</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- More flexibility at the institutional level (labour market policies)</li> <li>- Empirical analysis of skills, competences an occupation -&gt; Danube Area of skills, competences and occupations</li> <li>- Assessment of Danube Region -&gt; labour market – cohesion</li> <li>- Exchange of information about labour market needs</li> <li>- Knowledge management within and between labour market institutions</li> <li>- Cooperation between stakeholders (trade unions, employment services, etc.) -&gt; knowledge transfer</li> <li>- Securing EU standards (collective bargaining)</li> <li>- Empowering trade unions</li> <li>- Cooperation between private and public employment services</li> </ul>
<p><b>Topic 2: educational systems – dual system, work based learning and transition</b></p>	<p>Main questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to create reform processes /projects with strong partners</li> <li>- Get all relevant stakeholders involved at an early stage</li> <li>- Combine funding from different sources (national, companies, EU, ...)</li> <li>- Share experience: create platforms/networks</li> <li>- Develop pilots with strong partners/change-agents in urban and rural areas</li> <li>- Selected Project: “Enhanced Competitiveness &amp; Employability through Innovative WorkedBased Learning in VET”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Topic 3: transition education and employment system (initial learning, LLL approach, further education, job training, green jobs, company based learning)</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transition from school to work (initial vocational education and training)</li> <li>- LLL approach</li> <li>- Further education (from work to school) to combat dequalification</li> <li>- Work-based learning: different solutions</li> <li>- Company-based learning: inte-</li> </ul>

	<p>gration of education, training and work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Training for green jobs</li> </ul>
<p><b>Topic 4: Youth platform on formal and non-formal learning</b></p>	<p>Needs/Structure</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Need of meeting points/space for different sectors</li> <li>- Sharing experience</li> <li>- one or more platforms for “sub-topics”</li> <li>- Inviting different stakeholders</li> <li>- Clear communication structure for/to all actors involving youth/young people</li> </ul> <p>Topics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Streamline youth topics</li> <li>- Awareness-raising -&gt; importance of cross-sectoral recognition of qualification</li> </ul> <p>Tools:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Erasmus+</li> <li>- ERDF</li> <li>- Other tools to be developed</li> </ul> <p>Preparations for establishing youth Danube Regions network:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Orientation knowledge</li> <li>- Career planning out of the talents</li> <li>- “Thinking out of the box”</li> </ul>
<p><b>Topic 5: elderly people (target group within employment system)</b></p>	<p>Experiences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Not enough re-qualification options for the senior employees</li> <li>- Salary policies often based on ageism</li> <li>- Not only low qualified and migrants. 50+ have issues on the labour market, also over/highly qualified ones</li> <li>- Many companies (and politicians) ignore the age management topic, partially due a lack of information</li> <li>- ICT-technology for elderly</li> </ul> <p>Questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- How to make the best of good practice?</li> <li>- Why aren't the companies interested? – Analysis needed</li> <li>- How do we change that/what kind of info/facts will convince</li> </ul>

	them?
<b>Topic 6: Respecting labour laws and mobility (migrants, vulnerable groups)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transnational networks within the Danube Region</li> <li>- Easy access to counselling in every languages, also for low skilled workers</li> <li>- Prevention of de-qualification</li> <li>- Emergency number – overall in Europe, for workers related problems</li> <li>- Brain drain problems and coming home services</li> <li>- Integration of immigrants, acknowledgement of degrees</li> <li>- Immigrants are “overqualified” and underemployed</li> <li>- Intercultural challenges, integration challenges</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 7: Integration of Roma population – Empowerment</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Social inclusion</li> <li>- Enhance education</li> <li>- Facilitate employment</li> <li>- Fighting poverty</li> <li>- Housing</li> <li>- Transnational cooperation</li> <li>- Institutional responsibility</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 8: Industrial relations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Different governance structures/know-how-transfer</li> <li>- Empowerment of trade unions</li> <li>- Capacity building for social partnership</li> <li>- Institutional setting of social partnership</li> <li>- Collective bargaining</li> </ul>
<b>Topic 9: Entrepreneurship</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Transversal competences</li> <li>- Start up: funding and supporting</li> <li>- Programmes for entrepreneurship development along the Danube</li> <li>- Creativity and entrepreneurship projects and ideas</li> <li>- Innovators for sustainability</li> <li>- Eco-social entrepreneurship programme for creating green jobs</li> <li>- Education and labour market – connecting employability</li> <li>- Learning journeys – implementation innovative non-formal learning approach bases on people needs</li> <li>- Selected Project: “Innovation Cluster”</li> </ul>

