

14th Steering Group Meeting

Priority Area 9 “Investing in People and Skills”

Date: 21 of June 2018

Venue: Jolly Alon Hotel, Chisinau, Republic of Moldova

Participants: see annex 1

Chair:

Anna Gherganova, Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection, Republic of Moldova

Jürgen Schick, Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Research, Republic of Austria

Barbara Willsberger, L&R Social Research

Ludmila Pavlov, Ministry of Education, Culture and Research, Republic of Moldova

Welcome and Introduction

Gherganova, Schick and Pavlov welcomed participants as Priority Area Coordinators of PA9.

Priority Area Coordinators welcomed the new SG member from Czech Republic.

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

Adoption of the Agenda

Agenda was adopted unanimously.

Reform Priorities in Education and Labor Market Policy in each Country

HR: Reiner stated that in Croatia new VET schools and regional competence centers were created. A new education act, with the main objective to improve the teaching processes in VET, including the development of new curricula, has been adopted. A new law on lifelong learning has been approved and a new curricula has been developed in order to adapt lifelong learning to the labor market needs. In the field of higher education, a new act on quality insurance, aiming at improving the curricula, has been approved; it made the process of funding of higher education more efficient. Financial agreements between the Ministry of Education and Universities have been introduced. In the field of general education a comprehensive curricula reform is under way. Further an E-school project is being implemented, providing digital equipment. The project is funded by the Ministry of Science and Education of Croatia and the European Social Fund.

BG: Kasparyan mentioned that in Bulgaria several events have been organized and new projects launched such as: the European Forum on Entrepreneurship with participation of universities, business companies, focusing on management of schools, stimulating entrepreneurship within teachers, increasing the interest of university teachers to be more entrepreneurial; events on recruiting young teachers, making the profession of teachers more attractive; project focusing on development of digital competences of pupils and teachers; project on development of innovative schools, focusing on improving the infrastructure of schools, the way of teaching, etc.; initiative “Your class”, focusing on enrollment of the pupils in extracurricular activities (ex: computer programming). Within the fields of science a new strategy on scientific researches has been developed.

SK: Auxtova mentioned that Slovak Republic is working on developing a more effective dual education system, increasing financial support for SME and practical training of pupils; simplifying certification for employers. Another important initiative is being drafted : a new act on teaching staff, providing requirements on qualification of teachers, development of educational plans, etc. A new act on quality insurance in high education and new system of accreditation has been approved, aiming at increasing the quality of higher education in the Republic of Slovakia. Kalmanova stated that in the labor market three important initiatives/projects are being implemented, such as: education for young jobseekers, focusing on innovative education and training, training of key competences; agreements on the labor market integration of long term unemployed, registered at NEA, focusing on training; demand oriented projects, aiming at the development of sectorial skills, focusing on training of jobseekers within the companies.

CZ: Malacova mentioned that new reform on regional education has started, focusing on changing the structure of financing of regional education. This reform should cease the disproportions in financing of regional education. The assessment of the reform for inclusive education has started (the reform was adopted in 2016). At the same time the assessment of the reform which made the last year of pre-primary education obligatory has also started (this reform was introduced in 2017) One week paid paternity leave has been introduced.

AT: Willsberger mentioned that the number of employees in Austria is increasing and the number of unemployed people is decreasing. In 2016 the AusBildung bis 18 (Education/Training till 18) programme was initiated. Starting with the school year 2016-2017, it is compulsory after year 9 for every young person to attend a higher secondary school or a training course. The main focus here should always be to provide individual support to young people, taking into consideration

their wide range of interests, abilities and needs. The programme Aktion 20.000 for elderly people will be evaluated and there are no new participants. Further ESF-projects of the Austrian Federal Ministry for Labour, Social Affairs, Health and Consumer Protection are 'Fit to work' with a focus on the target group of peoples with health problems, 'Demography Counselling" for enterprises with a focus on active ageing on the workplace and several ESF projects with focus on counseling and qualification of Roma.

Schick informed on the Educational Reform Act 2017, which is entering into force on a step-by-step basis. The Act i.a. grants more leeway and autonomy to schools in terms of teaching, organisation and human resources. Schools will be able to align what and how they teach more closely to the individual needs of students. The 2017/2018 school year saw the launch of the School 4.0 digital education strategy. Starting in 2018/2019, basic digital education will be added to the curricula of lower-level secondary schools as a compulsory subject. This new subject covers i.a. basic coding skills, as well as a critical approach to dealing with information on the internet. As from 2018/2019, German language support courses and classes will be set up to ensure that children lacking German language skills will be able to attend mainstream classrooms as quickly as possible. A project on Strengthening Basic Skills is underway, aiming at a sustainable reduction in the number of those students who fail to show sufficient basic skills after completion of primary level education or after the end of compulsory schooling.

MD: Gherganova stated that a new employment support law has been approved in the Republic of Moldova. It includes a new package of ALM (self employment, subsidies for job creation in rural areas, learning on the job , subsidized employment for vulnerable groups). Reorganization of NEA is a next priority; territorial employment agencies will have to be reorganized in order to implement new employment law. Another initiative is the adoption of the sectorial committees law and the regulation on financing from state budget of sectorial committees in the Republic of Moldova. Call for projects proposals on sectorial committees has been launched. The projects will be financed by Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection.

Pavlov mentioned the list of priorities in education. The priority in general education is the revision of the curricula for primary education; more practical curricula will be developed. Another priority is the revision of the framework plan. A new subject 'education for society' has been introduced. Further emphasis lies on the promotion of ICT education, new approach to human resources, focusing on motivating teachers and valorize the role of teachers in society. Concerning VET education Republic of Moldova is working on the development of a qualification

framework, qualitative insurance, promoting dual education, involving business in education process, career guidance and certification of non-formal competences. In high education the priority is development of qualification frame work, doctorate schools developing. A national agency for research has been created.

State of Play PA9: Recent projects and Events

Gherganova, Schick and Willsberger informed the participants about:

- Workshop “Creating a more efficient labor market in the Danube region”, that took place in Chisinau, on 22nd of May. The discussions during the workshop were focused on four topics: ways to improve the effectiveness of sectorial skills councils; the role of the labor market information system in improving labor market efficiency; the effectiveness of active labor market programmes, increasing the apprenticeship system efficiency and effectiveness of immigration in meeting the current labor market needs. The final report on the workshop will be circulated together with the minutes of SG meeting.
- e-Twinning conference – learning, teaching, exchanging – school cooperations in the Danube Region. The EUSDR Priority Area 9 in cooperation with the Austrian National Agency for Erasmus+ Education hosted the seventh edition of the “eTwinning Danube Region Conference” in Vienna, Austria on 14 and 15 June 2018. The conference revolved around the topic „Learning, teaching, exchanging - school cooperations in the Danube Region“. All together fifty teachers from twelve Danube Region countries, teaching pupils aged 11 to 19, participated at the event. Amongst the participants, were also teachers from European Neighborhood countries like the Republic of Moldova and the Ukraine. The Conference was a big success – twelve new transnational school cooperation projects have been registered and each of the eleven participating countries is involved in at least one project.
- New PA9 Projects: Willsberger mentioned that PA9 is able to support and facilitate meetings of potential applicants for project development and partnership establishing. Kasparyan mentioned that 2 new projects have been launched in Bulgaria. The first one is “Youth and entrepreneurship”, focusing on the development of entrepreneur skills of youth and second one “Increasing the wellbeing of the population by Robotic and ICT based innovative education – RONNI“. Kasparyan also mentioned the launch of the call for project proposal by Norway fund. Norway fund is funding projects focusing on youth employment and education, through a very competitive procedure, ensuring selection of very qualitative projects. Bulgaria applied for several projects, focusing on employment of youth with mental disabilities; training of vulnerable young people, especially orphan one; promoting entrepreneurship for single mothers. The Norway fund is open for ministries, companies, NGO, private sector.
- Danube Monitor Workshop: Willsberger informed that the first workshop took place in December, in Vienna. A list of indicators to measure relevant changes in the field of labor

market and education in the Danube region has been developed. As a product of the workshop the non-paper “Danube Region Monitor Education and Labour Market” has been presented. The next step is a study that will be prepared by an expert, which will be contracted in July. The study will be completed by the end of the year and by mid 2019 an event will be organized to present the results of the study. The Danube Region Monitor will display the developments in education and labor market in the Danube Region.

State of play: EUSDR

Gherganova, Schick and Willsberger informed participants about:

- Discussions within the PAC meeting (1st February) and PAC/NC meeting (25th May) in Sofia, mentioning the revision of EUSDR Action Plan, based on the roadmap developed by DG Region and the Bulgarian EUSDR Presidency.
- Danube Participation Day (17th of October 2018) and Annual Forum (18th and 19th of October 2018) in Sofia, mentioning the expo stands in the field of tourism that will be organized within the Annual Forum. Preliminary agendas of the events have been circulated. PA9 provided candidates to participate at planned panel discussions. Schick mentioned that during the forum also a meeting of ministers in charge of tourism will take place.
- Selection of Seed Money Facility projects. The selection of the projects will take place on 18 of July by Monitoring Committee of DTP.

The DSP Call has been published on May 8th, the decision will be taken in the course of the meeting of the DTP monitoring committee on July 18th. It is planned that the new DSP will start its activity in September 2019.

Revision of the 2010 EUSDR Action Plan

Schick presented the PA9 roadmap for the EUSDR Action Plan revision, which has been developed based on the roadmap of the EU Commission. Schick also mentioned that the revision of EUSDR Action Plan with a focus on PA9 actions will be discussed during the next PA9 Stakeholders Conference in Vienna on 29th of November 2018. SG members were asked to provide a written proposal for the future EUSDR Action Plan.

Schick mentioned that PA9 developed a consolidated opinion regarding the revision of EUSDR Action Plan for the next meeting with the commissioner in Brussels, 26 June 2018: PA9 supports the idea of revising the Action plan which must be done by taking into account the post-2020 discussions taking place on European level; not only regional and cohesion policy have to be taken into account, but all policy areas concerned in the strategy; the revision should be a

bottom-up process on all levels with all relevant stakeholders involved; the Action plan is a long-term document which should give some strategic guidance and the necessary flexibility for implementation, to react to certain dynamics, to react to certain developments, considering the fact that it will be in place for several years; there is not necessarily a need to include projects in the action plan, but to have certain action lines which can be implemented in various forms.

Adoption of the Work Programme

Sedlmayr presented the revised Work programme. New projects have been included such as : (ESF project – expected to start on September 2018) “Increasing the relevance of initial VET by anticipating training needs for the labour market and developing the work-based- learning component ” (Lead: RO – National Centre for TVET Development) and January 2018 – December 2018: Increasing the wellbeing of the population by RObotic and ICT based iNNovative education – RONNI (Lead: Institute of System Engineering and Robotics (ISER) - Bulgarian Academy of Sciences (BAS)); Tba – 2020: CODES - Competence-OrientED Education for Elementary Schooling in cross-border Regions (Lead: AT); January 2018 – December 2018: DIY-ACCEL - Piloting of Danube and Ionian Youth Entrepreneurship Acceleration (Lead: BG – Business Support Centre for SME, Ruse); 2018 – 2021 InnoSchool - Strengthening social innovation and entrepreneurial spirit of secondary school’s student in Danube macroregion using highly innovative learning system (Lead: CZ – DEX Innovation Centre)

The work programme will be approved via silence procedure.

Main outcomes:

- SG members exchanged information about main priorities in education and labor market,
- SG members were informed about the events that took place within the PA9
- SG members were informed about the discussions on the revision of EUSDR Action Plan, started by the EC and were asked to provide written proposal for the new EUSDR Action Plan
- SG members have been informed about the future events related to EUSDR, including Annual Forum, Participation Day
- The revised Pa9 work programme has been presented.

Annex 1

Participants of the SG meeting:

1. Anna Gherganova (MD)
2. Jürgen Schick (AT)
3. Barbara Willsberger (AT)
4. Ulrike Sedlmayr (AT)
5. Serghei Merjan (MD)
6. Anastasia Zaharia (MD)
7. Ludmila Pavlov (MD)
8. Petra Reiner (CR)
9. Cristina Kasparyan (BG)
10. Lucia Auxtova (SK)
11. Drahusa Kalmanova (SK)
12. Katerina Malacova (CZ)