

Minutes

13th Steering Group Meeting of PA 9, 10 of October, Chisinau

1. Welcome speech

Anna Gherganova greeted participants and welcomed the new SG members from Czech Republic.

Roland Hanak greeted participants and mentioned importance and actuality of the Stakeholders Conference.

Ludmila Pavlov, greeted participants and mentioned the Stakeholders Conference.

Jürgen Schick, welcomed participants and new colleagues from Czech Republic.

2. Reform Priorities in Education & Labour Market Policy

Moldova

Labour market policy: A new active labour market measure is being piloted – concerning the job training of unemployed registered by ANOFM. Training is organized both in the school (20%) and on the job, within the employers (80%). Challenges - resistance from professional schools.

A new program “Women in business” has been launched, providing training, consultation and financial support for women starting their business.

A model of collaboration between competent authorities has been developed (employment authorities, medical, educational institutions) in order to ensure socio-professional reintegration of Moldovan citizens working abroad and coming back to Moldova.

The Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection of Moldova and the office for migration and reintegration of France have signed an agreement aimed at providing support on reintegration of Moldovans, that have been working in France and: support for social integration of migrants (Moldovan citizens), support for employment and support for starting a business.

Ministry of Health, Labor and Social Protection of Moldova is trying to support service of Roma mediators from state budget. 48 Roma mediators will have to be hired.

Education policy: An Educational Strategy 2020 and a new code of education has been developed and is being implemented.

In the school curricula in general education is being evaluated and new curricula are being drafted for school subjects, focused on language, digital competences and entrepreneurial skills. Moreover, new methods of assessment in primary education and training of teachers are being implemented.

Further a reform for modernization of VET in Moldova within an EU project is being implemented. New nomenclature of specialties for VET, national qualification framework for VET and higher education have also been developed.

A legal framework on recognition of skills formed in non-formal context, which will support migrants and promote employability of people is being developed.

Czech Republic

Education policy: There are two main policy priorities at the moment.

1) Promotion of inclusive education: The aim is to strengthen collective education in regular mainstream schools, stipulate the entitlement of the child or pupil to free provision of supportive measures and set the basic parameters of changes regarding the education of these pupils.

2) Introduction of compulsory last year of pre-primary education and building capacities to assure compulsory last year of pre-primary education:

The final mandatory year of early childhood education should strengthen the involvement of children from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds. At the same time, special supportive measures will be available for children with special educational needs in early childhood education. These measures will prepare all children for a good start in regular schools. Compulsory last year of pre-primary education was introduced by an amendment to the Education Act, which came into effect as of September 2017. According to the Act amendment, children will have preferential places in kindergartens established by a municipality or a union of municipalities. Children from 4 years of age will get preferential placement in 2017, from 3 years of age in 2018, and from 2 years of age in 2020. To ensure the sufficient capacities of early childhood education, funds have been released from national as well as EU sources (IROP, OP Prague-Growth pole, OP Employment).

Slovakia

Education policy: A new minister of education has been appointed and a new educational and training development program is being implemented.

Multiannual strategy for development of digital skills has been approved, focusing on 3 pillars: digital skills of pupils, functional infrastructure and digital skills of pedagogical staff.

A Dual training elements in Slovakia and validation of non-formal education system has been introduced.

Labour market policy: 3 programs are being implemented:

- Plan for long term unemployed, including design and implementation of professional counseling, additional training.
- REPAS project aiming at supporting people who face difficulties in finding a job, needs to be retrained and young job seekers.
- Regional project Compas, aiming at supporting job seekers from less developed regions through development of different skills as computer, language skills, etc.

Hungary

Labour market policy. Quite good situation in the labour market. 73% of employment rate, 4,2% unemployment rate. Employment increased in private sector. In 2017 an increase of 15% of minimum wage has been registered. Labour demand is high, but low mobility of people. Measures are being implemented to improve labour force mobility within the country (houses for accommodation are being built). Further a job creation program is being implemented through providing financial support for employers. Public works for non qualified people are being organized and a student summer program is being implemented.

Croatia

Education policy: A new educational act has been drafted, focusing on improvement the quality of education. A qualification framework is being developed. The VET system is being improved - VET is gaining relevance after the introduction of amendments to existing legal framework. Work placement for students from high education and regulations in validation of formal and informal learning have been introduced. . A reform of school system and new curriculum for informatics are being implemented.

Austria

Education policy: Emphasis on recent education reform continued to be on promoting equity and quality. The socioeconomic status of parents and their level of education still have a greater influence on education outcomes in Austria than

in other EU countries, as illustrated by recent OECD Education at a Glance 2017. Several new reform packages were recently adopted:

School Autonomy Package: Adopted in summer 2017, the reform gives schools/school heads more autonomy and will allow administrative clustering of several schools. Class size and group sizes can be determined by schools according to pedagogical and didactical requirements. School heads will be allowed to select their teachers. It will also be possible, if parents and teachers agree by simple majority, to convert a school into a comprehensive school for pupils aged 10-14.

School 4.0: Austria has been making major efforts to improve the use of digital tools in education and to improve digital skills. In 2017 Austria adopted a national digital education strategy 'School 4.0 – let's get digital'. The digitalization strategy is based on four pillars: digital basic education, digitally competent pedagogues, infrastructure and IT equipment as well as digital learning tools.

Moreover the initiative for Adult Education has been prolonged until 2021 offering free courses for adults on compulsory and basic education. 27 000 people will benefit from this initiative.

AT Labour Market: Hanak informed the participants about the implemented program **Aktion 20,000**. The aim of the program is to create 20,000 jobs for long-term unemployed people 50+ per year in municipalities, non-profit support organizations and companies (no existing jobs should be replaced). 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.

Furthermore the so called **AusBildungspflicht (Compulsory Education/Training)** till 18 was decided in 2016. And now there are different measures for young people after compulsory school like Youth Coaching, apprenticeship in training measures (opportunities for about 12.000 participants) or counselling and coaching for apprentices and enterprises to reduce the drop out rate and support the success at the final examination.

Within the Public Employment Service in Austria various tools to facilitate the recognition of qualifications of non-EU nationals (assessment procedure, support-measures for labour market integration, etc.) were developed and implemented.

Education policy: Review of the curricula in initial VET for qualifications level 4 EQF/NQF: it aims to improve the VET curricula, in close cooperation with companies representatives;

it will be based on a learning outcomes approach and will further develop competence-based-assessment instruments, in order to support the set-up of valid and reliable IVET training programmes.

Development and implementation of a Strategy for the dual VET system. A Dual VET Strategy has been elaborated, for the development of a relevant, attractive and efficient dual system in Romania, where companies are actively involved in the elaboration and delivery of the training programmes and are included in the management team.

Business Plan competition: it is organized on a yearly basis in order to support the development of the entrepreneurial competences of IVET students, who develop and present a Business Plan in front of an Evaluation Committee formed by representatives of the business world.

SEE grants for VET partnership projects: starting in 2017, SEE will offer financial support for the development of partnerships between the VET schools and the companies. A call will be launched for applications aiming to improve the quality of work-based-learning. Rural VET schools will be encouraged to apply.

3. State of Play PA9: Recent Projects and Events

Work programme – Proposal to include current country-specific measures
Austrian PACs developed a reporting table to cover country-specific measures relevant for the achievement of the EUSDR PA9 targets. Each member of the Steering Group is invited to add 2 to 3 main measures corresponding to the actions of PA9. The short description of each measure shouldn't exceed more than 250 - 300 characters including spaces.

Furthermore, SG members were asked to check the listed projects in the Work programme and if necessary to send an update, including new running projects.

Lead partner seminar, Budapest

Barbara Willsberger informed the participants that the workshop was about the technical implementation of the PA9 activities within the Danube Transnational Programme project.

Workshop Dual learning and other modern forms of work based learning, Chisinau

Anna Gherganova thanked countries that supported the event and delegated experts and presented **main activities of the workshop**: participants have been divided in 3 working groups, having following tasks:

1. To identify core similarities and differences in some selected legal and operational regulatory frameworks in Danube region and to develop suggestions for the alignment and harmonization of these frameworks.
2. To identify new and future trades that have a special relevance for the Danube region and determines possibilities of cooperation in this regard (development of job profiles, curricula, training regulations, assessment rules etc.).
3. To summarize the similarities and differences of master instructors in countries of Danube region, with a special focus on qualification of the master instructors, training of master instructors, role and relevance of the master instructor in the context of work-based learning, certification and quality control for master instructors, to summarize ideas for improvement concerning master instructors and develop ideas and suggestions for the harmonization of master trainer training in the Danube region.

The results of the workshop:

Have been developed following project ideas:

1. Developing legal and operational regulatory framework in Moldova, taking into account good practices of Danube countries, which have established functioning dual learning system, focusing on determination of competent bodies in dual learning, including regulations regarding accreditation of companies involved in dual learning, status of apprentice, evaluation and certification in dual learning (apprentice, master instructor), admission in dual learning, developing of curricula, ect.
2. Developing and piloting of the common training program for master instructors in Danube countries, including creating of network of master instructors in Danube region.
3. Developing of a common module “Environmental education in Danube region”

New PA 9 Projects

Roland Hanak asked the members of the Steering Group to share information about new projects related to PA 9 and send the relevant information to the PACs.

Jürgen Schick mentioned projects under development:

1. CODES – Competence-oriented Education for Elementary Schooling in cross-border regions – Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic;
2. Erasmus+ project – follow up VET-project to the project called "Escape". The project data sheet will be available soon.

4. State of Play: EUSDR

Danube Financial dialog, Chisinau

Anna Gherganova mentioned that on 26-27 of October the "Danube Financing and Capacity Building Dialogue". will be organized in Chisinau by the PA10 and the Ministry of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of the Republic of Moldova. The aim is to bring together local and regional key stakeholders, public and private financing institutions and NGOs, involved in the development of capacity building on all levels of the Republic of Moldova as part of the Danube Region in the framework of the EUSDR.

One of the aims of this event is to identify different public and private funding sources and initiate better communication among funding institutions as well as better coordination and communication between funding instruments and project promoters.

Danube participation day, Budapest

Anna Gherganova mentioned the 4th Danube participation day of the EU Danube strategy. The Working Groups within the event will explore the possibilities of developing a Participation Partnership with the perspective of implementing the principles of participation and good governance in the EU macro regions. The Participation Partnerships should develop into sustainable cooperation networks throughout the EU macro-regional strategies between civil society, local actors and academia as well as international and European organizations and institutions.

Annual forum, expo stands, Budapest

Anna Gherganova informed the participants that PA 9 will organize an expo stands at the Annual Forum in Budapest and proposed to SG members to bring relevant materials to be exposed.

DSPF projects selection

Barbara Willsberger mentioned that the final decision about the selection process of DSPF is postponed and the decision will be announced in the middle of October.

SMF launch event

Barbara Willsberger informed about the **Seed Money Facility** launch event and compulsory requirements: Applicants will have to submit a Declaration of alignment signed by the relevant EUSDR PAC(s), stating that the proposal is in line with the restricted topics identified by the EUSDR PACs (included in the SMF Programme Manual). Within PA9 the topics focus on:

- Preventing early school leaving & re-integration of NEETS into education/labour market;
- Promoting inclusive education and labour markets, including second-chance education, focusing on marginalized communities (e.g. Roma);
- Improving skills and competences for employability, entrepreneurship and active citizenship.

Danube Region Monitor

Barbara Willsberger informed the SG about the first preparation workshop of the Danube Region Monitor that will be taking place at the beginning of December. Each country is expected to provide researches and experts in statistics and labour market, to discuss which indicators to include in the Danube Region Monitor. .

Jurgen Schick further went into detail about the background of the event. The monitor should focus on relevant benchmarks and indicators, corresponding to the 5 target of PA9. It is important to identify indicators that will be approved by all countries of the Danube Region. A first workshop will be organized on December 6th in Vienna to discuss relevant indicators and a possible focus of the Danube Region Monitor with experts and researchers of the Danube Region.

The SG members were asked to send their inputs and comments on the non-paper and every country should nominate 2 experts (ideally 1 researcher / statistic expert and 1 representative of the administration).

Work Programme

The work programme will be circulated via email. If no further changes are requested, this version will then be adopted under a silent approval procedure until the end of October.