

3rd International Stakeholder Conference
Investing in People and Skills in the Danube Region
Impact – Projects – Future Developments

Draft Concept Paper

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hosted by the Austrian Federal Ministry of Education and Women's Affairs and
the Austrian Federal Ministry of Labour, Social Affairs and Consumer Protection

Venue: MuseumsQuartier Wien (Museumsplatz 1, 1070 Vienna, Austria)

In order to boost the development of the Danube Region and face its specific challenges, the EU Member States have endorsed the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) in April 2011. Since then, Priority Area 9 (PA9) "Investing in People and Skills" have worked towards the common goal of the Strategy to create synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives in the field of education and training as well as labour market and marginalised communities taking place across the Danube Region.

In 2012, an integrated and coordinated stock-taking process was initiated in Vienna with the 1st Stakeholder Conference to collect and develop new ideas and to assemble motivated people in an inspirational meeting. The 2nd Stakeholder Conference in 2013 with around 140 participants from all over the Danube Region has boosted the discussion and provided space to the different participants for developing new and unique approaches. The aim of this years' Stakeholder Conference is to provide a framework to review the last three years of implementation, to present and discuss results and issues and to set the right steps for future developments. It will reassemble actors and promoters of the EUSDR from fourteen Danube Region countries in order to address common challenges for the future and to discuss and develop innovative policies, projects and networks in the fields of performance and quality of education systems; cooperation in the labour market; creativity and entrepreneurship; lifelong learning and learning mobility; equity, social cohesion and active citizenship; demography and migration; poverty and social inclusion; and gender equality.

IMPACT

Since the start of the EUSDR, PA9 had established a network of different stakeholders guaranteeing cooperation between relevant actors, i.a. through the involvement of existing regional cooperation networks and initiatives. In this way, PA9 serves as a common umbrella and provides a common reference point for many organizations, initiatives and networks in the Danube Region. Activities are also focussing on the implementation of projects and the development of project ideas.

At the outset of the 3rd Stakeholder Conference participants are invited to report about the impact, activities and achievements of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) during the past three years. Rather than a series of lectures on the

item, participants will be expected to talk informally and to share their experiences with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region in their area of work. Therefore, participants are asked to be prepared to discuss the following issues during the workshop:

- Actions implemented in your country in the course of EUSDR: Please think of outstanding projects, co-operations or policies you wish to emphasize!
- Which impact did EUSDR have on the work in your institution?
- What do you consider the most sustainable effect of the EUSDR in your country, both at projects level and in regard to policy development in the Danube Region?
- Any other issue to be highlighted?

PROJECTS

So far, more than 55 cross-border and transnational Danube networks, projects and project ideas were started or labelled in the framework of PA9. These projects were aligned by eight Working Areas set out in the Work Plan which are aiming at concrete support for education and labour market policies in the Danube Region. In this context the aim of the conference is to provide sufficient space to discuss, to reflect and to interact regarding innovative projects, partnerships and networks.

FUTURE DEVELOPMENTS

The budget period 2014-2020 provides a unique opportunity to make the Strategy a success on all levels of intervention (policies, politics and projects). Participants will be invited to discuss how efficient and targeted funding for increased Danube Region cooperation in the field of education and the labour market can be secured (in particular EU programmes such as Erasmus+ or the upcoming ETC DANUBE Transnational). Furthermore, questions of the future EUSDR governance and the role of the European Commission and the Danube Region countries will be addressed too.

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