



Report of EU funding and support opportunities for education and training

11/11/2020 10:00 – 12:30

European Vocational Skills Week 2020

09-13 November 2020

EUROPEAN **VOCATIONAL
SKILLS WEEK** 2020





The screenshot shows a presentation slide titled "Overview" with a list of five items:

- 1) European Social Fund (Plus)
- 2) European Regional Development Fund
- 3) Recovery and Resilience Facility
- 4) Invest-EU #investEU
- 5) Technical Support Instrument

Below the list is a checkmark and the text "Conclusions and Q&A". To the right, there is a purple box containing a list of topics:

- Objectives
- Budget
- Support to VET & AE
- How to get involved

Other elements on the slide include logos for "COMMISSION POLICY" and "Recovery and Resilience Facility", a "COM Proposals" circle, and a video feed of a woman speaking. At the bottom, there are social media icons for Facebook, Twitter, and LinkedIn, and the hashtags #EUVocationalSkills and #DiscoverYourTalent.

Format:

Online

Speakers:

Otilia Ciobanu, Policy Assistant, Inclusive Growth, Urban and Territorial Development Unit, DG Regional and Urban Policy, European Commission

Lyubomira Derelieva, Policy Officer, Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Ivan Ebejer, Policy Officer, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Claire Herrmann, Policy Officer, Schools & Multilingualism Unit, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission

Henriette Horvath, Blue book trainee

Trine Jakobsen, Policy Officer, Recovery and Resilience Task Force, Secretariat-General, European Commission

Marion Kadoch, Director of Studies, Hansa Berufskolleg in Unna, Germany

Malgorzata Kozak, Policy Officer, Schools & Multilingualism Unit, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission

Andrea Leruste, Deputy Head of Unit F.1, DG Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, European Commission

Andrew McCoshan, Associate Faculty Member, Further Education and Training Research Centre, and Senior Research Associate, Educational Disadvantage Centre, Dublin City University, Ireland



Jacqueline Pacaud, Head of Sector, Erasmus+ programme – vocational education and training, school education and adult education, Directorate-General for Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission

Patricia Perez-Gomez, Team leader Education Unit 4, Directorate General for Structural Reform Support (DG REFORM), European Commission

Ioana Simona Rotariu, Blue Book Trainee, DG Education, Youth, Sport and Culture, European Commission - Chat moderator

Number of Participants:

372 – included a wide range of organisations and companies, most of them with previous experience in carrying out transnational activities.

Main Message:

The European Union offers various and complementary funding and support opportunities for education and training, including but not limited to Erasmus+ and ESF+. Participants had an occasion to identify the most appropriate matching between their needs and available support.

Detail of the Meeting:

In her opening remarks, Mrs Pacaud stressed the timeliness of the event, on the eve of the new EU programming period. She recalled the recent adoption of several key initiatives at EU level such as the Communication on the European Education Area setting common objectives towards 2025. This common roadmap is working in synergy with the new European Skills Agenda, the Recommendation on Vocational Education and Training, to be adopted by the Council of Ministers on 30 November, and the Youth Employment Support (in particular as regards apprenticeships). The European Commission expects an adoption of the future Erasmus programme legal basis by the EU co-legislators soon before the end of the year, thus allowing launching the programme in early 2021 as foreseen.

Part I of the session focused on the opportunities provided by Erasmus+. Mrs Herrman (EC) presented the **support to mobility** in both areas of VET and Adult education. She illustrated the modalities for applying for mobility projects grants under the future Key Action 1:

- Either through a new “accreditation scheme”, available for organisations expecting to participate in the programme on a regular basis, aiming to build a community of organisations regularly exchanging staff and learners, and committed to respect “quality standards”;
- Or through “short-term projects” (6 to 18 months and a limited number of participants), expected to be less demanding from applicants.



Both schemes propose mobility for learners and staff; “accredited organisations” will be able to organise mobility for VET learners and staff to third countries.

Mrs Kozak (EC) presented the outlines of the future Erasmus Key Action 2 to **support cooperation projects** linking for VET and adult education stakeholders throughout Europe. There is a great variety of possibilities: Partnerships for Cooperation (2 sizes scales available), Partnerships for Excellence (Centers of Vocational Excellence, Erasmus Teachers Academy), Partnerships for Innovation (Alliances, Forward looking projects). The possibility for organisations to link their Erasmus internationalisation potential strategy to the European Social Fund to support their skills development further was also highlighted.

A video illustrating the experience of Krzysztof Symela and his team (Lukasiewicz Institute for Sustainable Technologies) explained in concrete terms how they have found their Erasmus partners, which benefits their organisation have gained from this international cooperation and how they built synergies with the European Social Fund

Mrs Kadoch enthusiastically and convincingly described the **experience of her VET school in Germany**, sending trainees to a growing number of companies in Ireland to acquire dual vocational qualifications as “Industrial Clerk”. She underlined the benefits of the programme for her institution (attractiveness, staff motivation), its partner enterprises (higher competitiveness) and for learners (new skills acquired). She expects her College to be accredited under the new programme.

The audience raised several **questions** regarding timing, availability of the 2021 programme guide, quality labels for accredited organisations, possibility to make job-placement in Europe and beyond, and future positioning in the programme of the United Kingdom.

Despite the current COVID-linked mobility restrictions, the questions raised by the audience showed a strong appetite for VET and adult education stakeholders throughout Europe for benefitting from the programme cross-borders cooperation opportunities.

Part II of the session was dedicated to funding sources other than Erasmus +.

Mrs Derelieva (EC) gave an overview of the opportunities, objectives, budget and type of support provided by European Social Fund+ (ESF+) and other funding and support instruments for education and training, as well as the concrete modalities for participants to apply :

- The European Social Fund (ESF+), having education and training among its 11 specific objectives and covering the entire cycle of education and training, with a particular attention to green and digital priorities. ESF + has a double dimension of instrument for direct support to people and tool to fund reforms. Some concrete examples were given for VET and adult education, including the regional dimension.



- The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), funding equipment and infrastructure; investment for the development of skills for smart specialisation; employability and adaptation to labour market changes. A video clip provided an example from Poland showing the increased access to and improved quality of VET activities in the area of construction of schoolrooms.
- REACT EU 2021-2023, providing additional resources to ESF, ERDF and the Fund for European Aid to the Most Deprived (FEAD) for crisis repair in the context of the pandemic and for a green, digital and resilient recovery.
- The Recovery and Resilience Facility, financing (via both grants and loans) measures in the national recovery and resilience plans by Member States in the framework of the Next Generation EU. The Facility is triggered on a voluntary basis at national level and focuses on social territorial cohesion; economic and social resilience; mitigating impact of the crisis; and supporting the green and digital transitions.
- InvestEU, a demand-driven programme (with no pre-allocated resources per MS) aimed at triggering private investments under a EU budgetary guarantee, which includes a Social Investment and Skills Window, in synergy with the Structural Funds.
- The Technical Support Instrument, implemented directly by the European Commission, offering technical support/expertise to improve Member States' administrative capacity to design, develop and implement reforms.

In terms of involvement and participation both ESF+ and ERDF work on the basis of calls for proposals, with an extensive consultation of partners and stakeholders, and partnerships between the Commission, Member States, local and regional authorities, social partners, and civil society.

Mrs Derelieva concluded by stressing that this outline proves that VET and adult education are key priorities for the European Union, with significant resources available in the 2020-2027 period.

Answering to the questions from the participants:

- On InvestEU, Mr Ebejer specified that:
 - The possibility to issue social impact bonds is under consideration, among other options, with market demand being a main factor;
 - VET providers will be able to seek funding through implementing partners (European Investment Bank or national promotional Banks) once the financial products are launched;
 - An Advisory Hub will be established in order to, amongst others, guide project promoters when seeking financing.
- On ERDF, Mrs Ciobanu confirmed that:



- Funding is reserved for EU Member States;
- Eligible expenditures will depend on the programming, as agreed by the Commission and the MSs;
- In principle, expenditures for the development of skills for smart specialization by companies are eligible.
- On ESF, Mrs Derelieva specified that:
 - The Fund is mostly under shared management;
 - However, ESF+ inherited the Employment and Social Innovation programme (EaSI) and this part will remain under the direct management of the Commission;
 - The coherence between ESF+ and REACT EU will be ensured in the programming, as agreed by the Commission and the MSs.

Conclusions:

In the closing, Mrs Leruste (EC) noted that VET and adult learners have been particularly affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with distance learning methods unable to fully overcome the related difficulties, especially in some sectors.

The digital transition is only part of the changes brought about by the need for a climate neutral economy, artificial intelligence, robotics and demographic factors.

In this respect, the current crisis can be seen as an opportunity that the European Institutions are not missing, putting in place different instruments and a comprehensive and adequate range of funding tools.

The added value of EU funding for Member States is widely proven, also in terms of policies and reforms, and provides a clear example of how objectives can be achieved in partnership.

As soon as the next Multiannual Financial Framework is approved, EU funding will help the Europeans not only to overcome the crisis, but to develop the skills they need and find fulfilling work.