**STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS IN THE FIELD OF EDUCATION, TRAINING AND YOUTH**

**WHAT ARE THE AIMS AND PRIORITIES OF A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP?**

Strategic Partnerships aim to support the development, transfer and/or implementation of innovative practices as well as the implementation of joint initiatives promoting cooperation, peer learning and exchanges of experience at European level.

Depending on the objectives and the composition of the Strategic Partnership, projects may be of two types:

- **Strategic Partnerships supporting innovation:**
  Projects are expected to develop innovative outputs, and/or engage into intensive dissemination and exploitation activities of existing and newly produced products or innovative ideas. Applicants have the possibility to request a dedicated budget for Intellectual Outputs and Multiplier Events in order to directly answer to the innovation aspect of the Action. These types of projects are open to all fields of education, training and youth.

- **Strategic Partnerships supporting exchange of good practices:**
  The primary goal is to allow organisations to develop and reinforce networks, increase their capacity to operate at transnational level, share and confront ideas, practices and methods. Selected projects may also produce tangible outputs and are expected to disseminate the results of their activities, although in a way that is proportional to the aim and scope of the project. These results and activities will be co-financed through the standard budget for project management and implementation. Strategic Partnerships relevant to the field of higher education will not support these types of projects. In addition, some specific Strategic Partnership formats may be realised under this type of partnerships:
    - **School Exchange Partnerships:** Only schools may participate in this type of Strategic Partnerships. The projects can use mobility opportunities for pupils and staff to help the participating schools develop as organisations and increase their ability to work in international projects. In addition, combining mobility and physical exchanges with virtual cooperation through eTwinning is strongly encouraged.
    - **Transnational Youth Initiatives:** These Strategic Partnerships in the field of youth aim to foster social commitment and entrepreneurial spirit of young people. The distinctive feature of this format of Strategic Partnerships is that a Youth Initiative is initiated, set up and carried out by young people themselves.

More information about the characteristics of these specific project formats can be found under the section "Specific Strategic Partnerships Formats".

Irrespective from the field impacted by the project, Strategic Partnerships are open to any type of organisation active in any field of education, training and youth or other socio-economic sectors as well as to organisations carrying out activities that are transversal to different fields (e.g. local and regional authorities, recognition and validation centres, chambers of commerce, trade organisations, guidance centres, cultural organisations). Depending on the priority and the objectives addressed by the project, Strategic Partnerships should involve the most appropriate and diverse range of partners in order to benefit from their different experiences, profiles and specific expertise and to produce relevant and high quality project results.

To be funded, Strategic Partnerships must address either a) at least one horizontal priority or b) at least one specific priority relevant to the field of education, training and youth that is mostly impacted, as described below. Among these priorities, National Agencies may give more consideration to those that are particularly relevant in their national context ("European priorities in the national context"). National Agencies must duly inform potential applicants through their official websites.

**HORIZONTAL PRIORITIES**

- **Supporting opportunities for all in acquiring and developing key competences, including basic skills:** In order to foster employability, socio-educational and personal development, as well as participation in civic and social life. Priority will be given to projects that support and reinforce the development of key competences for all individuals from early childhood and throughout life. In a fast-changing world, this includes multilingual competences, entrepreneurial mindset, critical thinking and creativity, cooperation in science, technology, engineering, arts and mathematics (STE(A)M).
fields, as well as skills in fields such as climate action, artificial intelligence, but also social and learning-to-learn competences. This would include actions of cooperation with players in the research and innovation sector, civil society as well as in the private and public sector.

- **Social inclusion**: Social inclusion is an overarching priority across all sectors of the programme. Promote – in particular through innovative and integrated approaches – ownership of shared values, equality, social inclusion, diversity and non-discrimination. Priority will be given to projects that support and assess new approaches to reducing disparities in accessing and engaging with formal and non-formal education, as well as projects that tackle discrimination, segregation and racism. The programme will support the integration of people with migrant backgrounds, including gathering and disseminating good practices on the issue. Priority will also be given to projects that encourage the establishment of sustainable links between organisations active in education, training, youth and sport and the society at large, including at local and regional level.

- **Common values, civic engagement and participation**: The Programme will support active citizenship and ethics in lifelong learning; it will foster the development of social and intercultural competences, critical thinking and media literacy. Priority will also be given to projects that offer opportunities for people’s participation in democratic life, social and civic engagement through formal or non-formal learning activities. The focus will also be on raising awareness on and understanding the European Union context, notably as regards the common EU values, the principles of unity and diversity, as well as their social, cultural and historical heritage.

- **Environmental and climate goals**: the programme aims to support, across all sectors, awareness-raising about environmental and climate-change challenges. Priority will be given to projects aimed at developing competences in various sustainability-relevant sectors, developing green sectorial skills strategies and methodologies, as well as future-oriented curricula that better meet the needs of individuals. The programme will also support the testing of innovative practices to prepare learners, staff and youth workers to become true factors of change (e.g. save resources, reduce energy use and waste, compensate carbon footprint emissions, opt for sustainable food and mobility choices, etc.). Priority will also be given to projects that – through education, training, youth and sport activities - enable behavioural changes for individual preferences, consumption habits, and lifestyles.

- **Innovative practices in a digital era**: The Programme will support the taking up of digital technologies and of innovative and open pedagogies in education, training, youth and sport. Particular attention will be given to promoting gender equality and addressing differences in relation to the access and use by underrepresented groups. The Programme will also support the use of the European frameworks on digital competences of educators, citizens and organisations, including the development and use of open educational resources, open textbooks, and free and open source educational software. Priority will be given to actions that promote innovative methods and tools for teaching, training, learning and assessment as drivers of improvements in lifelong learning.

- **Supporting educators, youth workers, educational leaders and support staff**: Priority will be given to actions that strengthen the recruitment and professional development of educators (e.g. teachers, trainers, professors, tutors, mentors, coaches, staff in early childhood education and care), youth workers, educational leaders (e.g. school heads, rectors, department heads) and support staff (e.g. teaching assistants, career counsellors, human resource specialists in companies). Particular attention will be given to actions that allow to better deal with inclusion and diversity, including cultural and linguistic, through the use of more diverse and more adapted teaching, training and youth work styles.

- **Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications**: Priority will be given to actions that support learning and labour mobility; actions that facilitate transitions between different levels and types of learning, transitions to the world of work as well as transitions between different jobs. The programme will support in particular better services and information or guidance for learners, exploring the potential of digital technologies to facilitate automatic mutual recognition and the validation - at local, regional, national, European or international level - of competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning. The programme will also support the effective launch and implementation of the new Europass framework and the access to tools and services for skills and qualifications.

- **Sustainable investment, quality and efficiency of education, training and youth systems**: Priority will be given to actions that promote sustainable funding models, including exploring innovative approaches, to ensure adequate and sustainable investment in education, training and youth, including performance-based funding and cost-sharing, where appropriate.

- **Social and educational value of European cultural heritage, its contribution to job creation, economic growth and social cohesion**: Priority will be given to actions contributing to raising awareness of the importance of Europe’s cultural heritage through education, lifelong learning, informal and non-formal learning, youth as well as sport, including actions to support skills development, social inclusion, critical thinking and youth engagement. New
participatory and intercultural approaches to heritage, as well as educational initiatives aimed at fostering intercultural dialogue involving teachers and pupils from an early age will be promoted.

**FIELD-SPECIFIC PRIORITIES**

**In the field of higher education**, priority will be given to actions that are key to achieving the objectives of the European Education Area, notably the new European Universities initiative and the European Student Card. This means, inter alia, reinforcing internationalisation and mobility, strengthening links between education, research and innovation where relevant, as well as implementing the Council Recommendation on promoting automatic mutual recognition of qualifications. In line with the challenges identified in the renewed EU Agenda for higher education, initiatives to enhance the performance of Europe’s higher education systems will be supported, including the implementation of the Council Recommendation on tracking graduates and the Digital Education Action Plan. The Programme will also support the implementation of the Ministerial Communiqué of the Bologna Process.

- **Promoting internationalisation**: The programme will aim to strengthen the strategic and structured cooperation between higher education institutions through: a) support for various types of cooperation models, including the most ambitious ones such as the European Universities; b) contributing to removing obstacles to mobility by implementing automatic mutual recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes, and by embedding mobility in curricula; c) support for higher education institutions to implement the Bologna principles and tools to enhance mobility for all and to develop a successful multilingual European Education Area by 2025.

- **Tackling skills gaps and mismatches** through: a) supporting the development of learning-outcomes-oriented curricula that better meet the learning needs of students, while also being relevant for the labour market and for the wider society; b) implementing trans-disciplinary approaches and innovative pedagogies such as student-centred learning, inverted learning and research-based learning which support the acquisition of transferable forward-looking skills; c) developing, testing and implementing flexible and modular course design (part-time, online or blended) and appropriate forms of assessment; d) increasing attractiveness and reforming curricula for STEM with a STEAM approach including real-world applications, inquiry-based and ICT-enriched learning, collaborative practices, including university-business cooperation.

- **Rewarding excellence in learning, teaching and skills development**, through a) developing and implementing strategies and quality culture to reward and incentivise excellence in teaching b) training of academics in new and innovative pedagogies, including trans-disciplinary approaches, new curriculum design, delivery and assessment methods linking education with research and innovation where relevant, c) fostering an entrepreneurial, open and innovative higher education sector, by promoting learning and teaching partnerships with commercial and non-commercial organisations in the private sector; e) developing of new practices based on educational research and creativity.

- **Building inclusive higher education systems** The programme will foster inclusive approaches for the mobility and cooperation activities such as a) increased access, participation and completion rates of underrepresented and disadvantaged groups; b) development and implementation of flexible mobility formats (short, virtual and blended); c) active support to incoming mobile participants throughout the process of finding accommodation, including through collaboration with the relevant stakeholders for the provision of appropriate and affordable housing. Particular attention will be given to achieving appropriate gender balance.

- **Fostering civic engagement**: promotion of civic and social responsibility of students, researchers and universities including through extra-curricular activities and recognition of voluntary and community work in academic results where appropriate.

- **Supporting the implementation of the European Student Card** initiative through secure electronic transfer of students’ data between higher education institutions, in full respect of personal data protection and linking where possible with the new Europass. The objective is to enable students to manage online the entire set of administrative steps of their mobility abroad (from selection up to their ECTS credits recognition), while at the same time facilitating an easier access to a wide range of student services - including libraries, catering and accommodation - when on a campus abroad. The main components of the European Student Card initiative are being developed through Erasmus+ projects funded under Key Action 2: Strategic partnerships and Key Action 3: Forward-looking projects.
o Consolidation and further development of higher education data tools and data sources to monitor progress towards reaching the objectives of the European Education Area and the renewed EU agenda for higher education.

o Fostering effective, efficient and sustainable system-level funding and governance models, rewarding excellent teaching, innovation and community-relevance.

In the field of school education, priority will be given to:

o Reinforcing the development of key competences (in line with the Council Recommendation on key competences for lifelong learning) for example by promoting cross-curricular collaboration, creativity and innovative learning approaches and environments, cooperating with stakeholders in local communities and abroad, supporting teachers in delivering competence based teaching and developing assessment and validation of key competences.

o Strengthening the profile of the teaching professions, including teachers, school leaders and teacher educators, for example by: making careers more attractive and diverse; strengthening selection, recruitment and evaluations (models of staff appraisal, assessment and feedback); enhancing teachers’ initial education and continuous professional development and linking its different phases; facilitating and significantly increasing teacher mobility, including by overcoming remaining obstacles; supporting teachers in developing innovative teaching and assessment methods, especially to promote competence-oriented teaching and learning; strengthening leadership in education, including distributed leadership and teacher leadership.

o Promoting a comprehensive approach to language teaching and learning (in line with the Council Recommendation on language teaching and learning), building on the increasing linguistic diversity in schools, for example by: encouraging early language learning and awareness; developing bilingual teaching options, especially for border regions and/or in areas where inhabitants use more than one language; mainstreaming the use of new technologies to support language learning; supporting the integration of the language dimension across the curricula; focusing on reaching adequate competence levels by the end of compulsory education; promoting the creation of language aware schools.

o Increasing the levels of achievement and interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM). This priority will include, among others: promoting the development of national STEM strategies; developing partnerships between schools, businesses, higher education institutions, research institutions, and wider society; promoting effective and innovative pedagogies and assessment; promoting the STE(A)M approach to education through interdisciplinary teaching of STEM in cultural, environmental, economic, design and other contexts, with the involvement of all academic disciplines.

o Tackling early school leaving and disadvantage, enabling success for all learners, including children with a migrant background, for example by: strengthening collaboration among all actors within schools, as well as with families, and other external stakeholders; improving transitions between different stages of education; fostering preventive and early intervention approaches; supporting networking of schools which promote collaborative and holistic approaches to teaching and learning; improving evaluation and quality assurance.

o Developing high quality early childhood education and care systems (in line with the ECEC Council Recommendation), for example by: supporting initial and continuing professional development of all staff involved in organising, leading and providing early childhood education and care; creating, testing or implementing strategies and practices to foster participation of all children in early childhood education and care, including children in need of special support (e.g. children with disabilities, or children from disadvantaged socio-economic backgrounds, children from a migrant background); promoting the implementation of the EU quality framework for quality early childhood education and care.

o Building capacity for promoting and facilitating recognition of learning periods abroad (including follow-up to the Council Recommendation on automatic mutual recognition), including promoting recognition of formal education and transversal competences developed through non-formal and informal learning, for example by:

---

building administrative capacity of schools to support participation of pupils in transnational projects and peer exchanges, including by exploring the potential of intermediary bodies pooling the capacity of several schools; establishing sustainable partnerships between organisations setting cross-border learning exchanges in general education; promoting embedded class exchanges or pupil mobility in school programmes; ensuring appropriate safety standards for pupils participating in transnational mobility; developing and disseminating tools and mechanisms for the preparation, monitoring and recognition of periods abroad; and sharing and promoting good practices.

- **Developing strong quality assurance systems** to achieve high-quality inclusive education and enhance trust among countries in relation to the quality of their respective school education systems, for example by: supporting countries in developing synergies between internal and external evaluations, in engaging stakeholders in quality assurance processes, or in designing their quality assurance strategies in ways to support broad competence development.

In the field of **vocational education and training (both initial and continuing)**, priority will be given to:

- Developing partnerships supporting the setting up and implementation of **internationalisation strategies for VET providers**\(^\text{40}\), aimed at putting in place the necessary support mechanisms as well as contractual frameworks to promote quality mobility of VET staff and learners\(^\text{83}\), including **promoting** the automatic mutual recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes; developing student support services to foster VET internationalisation and learner mobility, through actions aimed at informing, motivating, preparing and facilitating the social integration of the VET learner in the host country, while enhancing their intercultural awareness and active citizenship;

- Developing partnerships aimed at promoting **work-based learning in all its forms**, for both young and/or adults and in particular for the implementation of the Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships\(^\text{82}\). These partnerships can also aim at developing new training content and joint VET qualifications that integrate periods of work-based learning, opportunities to apply knowledge in practical workplace situations, and embedding international mobility experience whenever possible.

- Increasing the **quality in VET** through the establishment of feedback loops to adapt VET provision, including by setting-up or testing graduate tracking arrangements as part of quality assurance systems in line with the Council Recommendation on tracking graduates, and the Recommendation on the European Quality Assurance Reference Framework for Vocational Education and Training (EQAVET)\(^\text{83}\);

- Enhancing **access to training and qualifications for all**, with a particular attention to the low-skilled, through continuing VET, notably by increasing quality, supply and accessibility of continuing VET, validation of non-formal and informal learning, promoting work-place learning, providing for efficient and integrated guidance services and flexible and permeable learning pathways; includes developing partnerships between micro, small and medium sized companies and VET providers aimed at promoting joint competences centres, learning networks, support to pooling of resources, and providing initial and/or continuing training to their staff.

- Further strengthening **key competences** in initial and continuing VET, in particular literacy, numeracy, digital, entrepreneurship, as well as languages, including common methodologies for introducing those competences in curricula, as well as for acquiring, delivering and assessing the learning outcomes of those curricula.

- Supporting the uptake of innovative approaches and digital technologies for teaching and learning, as outlined in the Digital Education Action Plan, including the effective use of the SELFIE self-reflection tool to support a comprehensive approach to innovation, and the use of digital technologies for pedagogical, administrative, technical and organisational change.

- Introducing systematic approaches to, and opportunities for, the initial and continuous professional development of **VET teachers, trainers and mentors** in both school and work-based settings (including apprenticeships), as well as through the development of effective digital, open and innovative education and pedagogies, as well as practical tools; raising the attractiveness of the professions for VET teachers, trainers, mentors and leaders.

---


\(^{83}\) The specific rules and information relating to VET learner mobility activities, as described in Annex I of the Programme guide, should be applied


\(^{83}\) OJ C 155, 8.7.2009, p. 1–10
- Developing sustainable partnerships to establish and/or further develop national, regional and sectoral skills competitions organisations, as a form of raising the attractiveness and excellence in VET. These partnerships could also develop and support the practical arrangements for the preparation, training and participation of VET learners and staff in international, national, regional and sectoral skills competitions, while working closely together with businesses, VET providers, chambers and other relevant stakeholders.

In the field of adult education priority will be given to:

- Improving and extending the supply of high quality learning opportunities for adults by making available flexible learning offers adapted to their learning needs (e.g. blended learning, digital learning applications), and by the validation of skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning.

- Supporting the setting up of and access to upskilling pathways for adults with a low level of skills, knowledge and competences allowing them to enhance their literacy, numeracy and digital competences, as well as other key competences, and to progress towards higher qualifications, including through skills identification and screening or tailored learning offers.

- Increasing learning demand and take-up through effective outreach, guidance and motivation strategies which support the Upskilling Pathways by encouraging and supporting low-skilled and/or low-qualified adults or through developing guidance as a service to ensure that adults have access to relevant learning throughout life.

- Extending and developing the competences of educators and other personnel who support adult learners, in particular in assessing their prior knowledge and skills and in motivating them to learn; improve teaching methods and tools through effective use of innovative solutions and digital technologies.

- Developing mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness and improve quality assurance of adult learning policies and provision, and to track the progress of adult learners.

- Promoting Erasmus+ among all citizens and generations, including by offering activities of education and exchanges of experiences to seniors, with view to building and adding solidity to the European identity.