

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 individuals in acquiring and developing basic skills and key competences⁸¹**, in order to foster employability and socio-educational and personal development, as well as participation in civic and social life; in a fast-changing world, this also includes language skills, entrepreneurial mind-set, critical thinking and creativity, as well as forward-looking skills in fields that are strategic for smart economic and social development. This priority will include, among others, actions to: develop partnerships between learning institutions, businesses and intermediary bodies; support work-based learning; improve the quality and effectiveness of learning mobility experiences; support effective and innovative pedagogies, teaching, assessment and learning environments; apply competence-based approaches and assess their quality, impact and relevance; promote interdisciplinary co-operation in science, technology, engineering, arts and maths (STE(A)M) fields; support the development of national and cross-country sectoral skills strategies. This can contribute to higher quality of education and training and support permeability between the different education and training pathways.
- **Social inclusion:** priority will be given to actions that help address diversity and promote –in particular through innovative and integrated approaches– ownership of shared values, equality, including gender equality, and non-discrimination and social inclusion, including for people with health-related conditions, through education, training, youth and sport activities. The Programme will support projects that aim to foster the development of social, civic and intercultural competences, online safety and digital well-being, and tackle discrimination, segregation, racism, bullying (including cyberbullying), violence, fake news and other forms of online misinformation. The Programme will also support and assess new approaches to reducing disparities in access to and engagement with digital technologies in formal and non-formal education. Particular attention will be given to addressing gender differences in relation to the access and use of digital technologies and the uptake of studies and careers in ICT by female students.
- **Open education and innovative practices in a digital era:** priority will be given to actions that promote innovative pedagogies and methods for teaching, learning and assessment, and that support educators and learners to use digital technologies in creative, collaborative and efficient ways⁸². Priority will be given to supporting educational and training institutions to take up digital technologies as set out in the European Framework for Digitally Competent Educational Organisations⁸³, and the Digital Education Action Plan, including in particular the use of the SELFIE self-reflection tool for general education and VET schools at all levels. A further priority will be updating and developing digital learning materials and tools, in particular Open Educational Resources, open textbooks, and Free and Open Source Educational Software, as well as supporting the effective use of digital technologies and open pedagogies in education, training, youth and sport. This will include fostering synergies with research and innovation activities, and therefore includes Open Science and promoting new technologies as drivers of improvements in education, training, youth and sport policies and practices. The Programme will also support new teaching methods and tools and the use of the European frameworks on the digital competence of educators, citizens and organisations.
- **Supporting educators:** priority will be given to actions that strengthen the recruitment, selection and professional development of educators (e.g. teachers, trainers, professors, tutors, mentors, coaches), 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) as well as to actions supporting high-quality and innovative teaching and learner assessment. This includes professional development on such issues as communication, collaboration and exchange among educators, linking education with research and innovation, work-based and informal learning, dealing with early school leaving, supporting learners from disadvantaged backgrounds, and dealing with cultural and linguistic diversity.
- **Transparency and recognition of skills and qualifications:** priority will be given to actions that support learning and labour mobility and facilitate transitions between different levels and types of education and training, between education/training and the world of work, and between different jobs. Priority will be given to actions enabling and promoting automatic mutual recognition, as well as transparency and comparability of qualifications and learning outcomes, including through the provision of better services and information/guidance on skills and qualifications. This includes promoting innovative solutions to improve recognition and supporting the validation –at local, regional, national or European/international level– of competences acquired through informal and non-formal learning, including the use of digital badges and blockchain technologies.

⁸¹ ALSO IN LINE WITH THE RECOMMENDATION OF THE EUROPEAN PARLIAMENT AND THE COUNCIL OF 18 DECEMBER 2006 ON KEY COMPETENCES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING. THIS RECOMMENDATION WAS REVIEWED IN 2016 AND 2017, LEADING TO A PROPOSAL FOR A REVISED COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION. SEE: PROPOSAL FOR A COUNCIL RECOMMENDATION ON KEY COMPETENCES FOR LIFELONG LEARNING (COM(2018) 24 FINAL).

⁸² In line with the Digital Education Action Plan of 17 January 2018 (COM(2018) 22 final).

⁸³ SEE: [HTTPS://EC.EUROPA.EU/JRC/EN/DIGCOMPORG](https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/digcomporg).

- **Sustainable investment, quality and efficiency of education, training and youth systems:** priority will be given to actions supporting the implementation of the Investment Plan for Europe, including by promoting funding models attracting private actors and capital such as the European Student Loan Guarantee Facility; supporting the development of evidence-based policies and reforms that aim at delivering quality education and training more efficiently; exploring innovative ways to ensure 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 reinforce internationalisation and mobility, as well as links between education, research and innovation, in line with the challenges identified in the Renewed EU Agenda for higher education, the Council Recommendation on tracking graduates, the Communication on Strengthening European Identity through Education and Culture and the Digital Education Action Plan:

- **Promoting internationalisation**, inter alia through automatic mutual recognition of qualifications and learning outcomes, and supporting higher education institutions to implement Bologna principles and tools to enhance mobility for all and develop a successful European Education Area;
- **Tackling skills gaps and mismatches** through: a) supporting new innovative pedagogies to design and develop learning-outcomes curricula that meet the learning needs of students whilst also being relevant to the labour market and societal needs, including through better use of open and online, blended, work-based and multi-disciplinary learning; to enable more flexible learning, increase the variety of courses and to develop the digital competences of educators and students; b) activities to increase the uptake of subjects where skills shortages exist and improve career guidance, c) activities which support acquisition of transferable, entrepreneurial and digital skills;
- **Promoting and rewarding excellence in teaching and skills development**, including through a) promoting effective incentive structures and human resources policies at national and institutional levels, b) encouraging training of academics and exchange of good practices (for instance through collaborative platforms) in new and innovative pedagogies, including multi-disciplinary approaches, new curriculum design, delivery and assessment methods; c) enable institutions to provide a wider variety of (online) courses to full-time, part-time or lifelong learning students; d) linking education with research and innovation, fostering an entrepreneurial, open and innovative higher education sector; and promoting learning and teaching partnerships with commercial and non-commercial partners in the private sector;
- **Building inclusive higher education systems**, connected to surrounding communities, by increasing fairness in access and the participation and completion rates of under-represented and disadvantaged groups and refugees; developing, testing and implementing flexible and modular course design (part-time, online or blended); promoting the civic and social responsibility of students, researchers and universities and recognising voluntary and community work in academic results;
- Consolidating and improving **evidence-building** on higher education by measuring the performance of higher education policies, systems and individual institutions; building evidence on the skills needs of the economy and the society through skills anticipation, graduate tracking and foresight studies including supporting further development of graduate tracking systems in Programme countries in line with the Council Recommendation on tracking graduates and improving the availability of comparable data on graduate outcomes within Europe;
- **Fostering effective and efficient system-level funding and governance models**, rewarding good teaching, innovation and community-relevance;
- **Supporting the implementation of the EU student card** to simplify and facilitate student mobility in Europe, by substantially reducing the administrative burden in terms of time, expense and effort, associated with the physical registration; ensuring secure transfer of students' data between higher education institutions, from students selection up to their ECTS credits recognition, in full respect of protection of personal data.

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

- **Strengthening the profiles of the teaching professions**, including in particular teachers, school leaders and teacher educators, for example by: making careers more attractive and diverse; strengthening selection, recruitment and appraisal; enhancing teachers' education and professional development and linking its different phases; facilitating teacher mobility; supporting teachers in developing innovative teaching and assessment methods; strengthening leadership in education, including distributed leadership and teacher leadership.
- Promoting a comprehensive approach to 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.
- **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 transition between different stages of education; supporting networking by schools which promote collaborative and holistic approaches to teaching and learning; improving evaluation and quality assurance.
- **Increasing access to affordable and high quality early childhood education and care**, and enhancing the quality of systems and provision, in order to foster age appropriate development of children, to achieve better learning outcomes and ensure a good start in education for all, for example by: taking the EU quality framework further; ensuring that the benefits of early childhood education are carried through to other school education levels; and developing new models of implementation, governance and funding.
- **Building capacity for organisation and recognition of learning periods abroad**, including recognition of formal education and transversal competences developed through non-formal and informal learning, for example by: developing and disseminating recognition tools and mechanisms; sharing and promoting best practices; building administrative capacity of schools to support participation of pupils in transnational projects and peer exchanges; ensuring appropriate safety standards for pupils participating in transnational mobility; and establishing sustainable partnerships between organisations organising cross-border learning exchanges in general education.

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 providers⁸⁴, aimed at putting in place the necessary support mechanisms as well as contractual frameworks to promote quality mobility of VET staff and learners⁸⁵, including the recognition of their 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, and in particular for the implementation of the Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships⁸⁶. These partnerships can also aim at developing new training content and Joint VET qualifications, that integrate periods of work-based learning, including 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)⁸⁷;
- 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

⁸⁴ See guidance document "Go international: Practical Guide on Strategic Internationalisation in VET", https://eacea.ec.europa.eu/erasmus-plus/emjimd-catalogue_en

⁸⁵ The specific rules and information relating to VET learner mobility activities, as described in Annex I of the Programme guide, should be applied.

⁸⁶ Proposal for a Council Recommendation on a European Framework for Quality and Effective Apprenticeships (COM(2017) 563 final).

⁸⁷ OJ C 155, 8.7.2009, p. 1–10

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, 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), including through the development of effective digital, open and innovative education and pedagogies, as well as practical tools;
- 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 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**, in line with the ET2020/European Agenda for Adult Learning priorities⁸⁸ and the Council Recommendation on Upskilling Pathways: New Opportunities for Adults, priority will be given to:

- Improving and extending the **supply of high quality learning opportunities** tailored to the needs of individual low-skilled or low-qualified adults so that they enhance their literacy, numeracy and digital competences, key competences and/or progress towards higher qualifications, including through the validation of skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning, or progress towards higher qualifications;
- Supporting the setting up of, and **access to, upskilling pathways** by making available skills identification and screening, learning offers adapted to individual learning needs, recognition of flexible modes of learning (e.g. Massive Open Online Courses: MOOCs), and through the validation of skills acquired through informal and non-formal learning;
- Increasing **demand and take-up** through effective outreach, guidance and motivation strategies which encourage low-skilled or low-qualified adults, to develop and upgrade their literacy, numeracy and digital competences, other key competences and/or progress towards higher qualifications;
- Extending and developing **the competences of educators** and other personnel who support adult learners, particularly in motivating adults to take part in learning and in the effective teaching of literacy, numeracy and digital skills to low-skilled or low-qualified adults, including through the effective use of digital technologies to improve the learning experience;
- Developing **mechanisms to monitor the effectiveness** of adult learning policies or to track the progress of adult learners.

In the field of **youth**, in line with the proposed EU Youth Strategy 2019-2027, priority will be given to:

- Projects contributing to the EU Youth Work Agenda, by promoting quality, innovation and recognition of youth work. Priority will be placed on projects that:
 - Support the capacity building of youth workers and in youth work;
 - Support youth workers in developing and sharing effective methods in reaching out to marginalised young people, in preventing racism and intolerance among youth, and in addressing the risks, opportunities, and implications of digitalisation;
 - Foster the inclusion and employability of young people with fewer opportunities (including NEETs), with particular emphasis in young people at risk of marginalisation and those with a migrant background.
 - Promote intercultural dialogue and strengthen knowledge and acceptance of diversity in society;

⁸⁸ Council Resolution on a European agenda for adult learning, OJ C 372/1, 20.12.2011.

- Open up youth work to cross-sectorial cooperation allowing greater synergies across all fields of actions concerning young people;
 - Ease transition of young people from youth to adulthood, in particular the integration into the labour market; develop their competences, setting quality standards, ethical and professional codes;
 - Reinforce links between policy, research and practice; promote better knowledge about the situation of young people and youth policies, recognition and validation of youth work and informal non-formal learning at European, national, regional and local levels.
- Promoting projects aiming at engaging, connecting and empowering young people. Priority will be given to projects that strengthen cross-sectorial cooperation, allowing for greater synergies across all fields of actions concerning young people, with a special focus on access to rights, autonomy, participation –including e-participation– and the active citizenship of young people, notably those at risk of social exclusion, through projects that:
 - Foster stronger participation of all young people in democratic and civic life in Europe, including in connection with the 2019 European elections;
 - Broaden and deepen political and social participation of young people at local, regional, national, European or global level;
 - Foster volunteering among young people;
 - Increase social inclusion of all young people, taking into account the underlying European values;
 - Promote diversity, intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, as well as the common values of freedom, tolerance and respect of human, social and economic rights;
 - Enhance critical thinking and media literacy among young people to strengthen democracy and fight manipulation, propaganda and fake news;
 - Strengthen young people's sense of initiative, notably in the social field;
 - Enable young people to connect with, express their opinions to and influence elected policy-makers, public administrations, interest groups, civil society organisations, or individual citizens within any of the political or social processes affecting their lives.
- Promoting entrepreneurship education, social entrepreneurship and not-for-profit activities among young people. Priority will be placed on projects in the form of transnational youth initiatives that allow groups of young people to put ideas into practice, including through social enterprises, tackling challenges and identified problems in their daily lives.

