

Post-2020 deliverables

EaP CSF contribution for the Platform 4 meeting

CIVIL SOCIETY ASSESSMENT OF THE DELIVERABLES 17-20

Deliverable 17: Progress on Visa Liberalisation Dialogues and Mobility Partnerships

There is a progress in the student academic mobility in the last few years, however the academic mobility can be strengthened if the EU and national governments, mainly Ministries of Education focus on the structural changes and internationalization of education. So far the numbers are so high mainly thanks to the big progressive universities in the EaP countries, however there are still many educational institutions, which are at the very beginning of the process of establishing regular exchanges. Thus, the civil society, hopes to see a two-way improvement via

- establishing, implementing and best practices sharing in the internationalization of education at the national level
- travel and visa mobility simplifications for certain categories of citizens (such as students, academics and civil society) via special visa categories and visa fee waivers
- focus on the capacity building of the regional universities in the EaP countries (especially regarding the new opportunities with the future KA 131)

Deliverable 18: Strengthen investment in young people's skills, entrepreneurship and employability

All 6 EaP countries have made achievements towards implementation of the Deliverable 18, even though with different paces. Georgia, for example, focused on promoting further integration into the European Higher Education Area, gaining recognition for Georgia as one of the most popular countries for credit mobility, supporting vocational education and training by introducing a state diploma, which certifies receipt of a vocational education and its outcome.

In Moldova, implementation of the system of validation of skills acquired in non-formal education was one of the priorities of the country when signing the Association Agreement. Ministry of Education, Culture and Research together with their partner - the Migration and Local Development II project – are developing tools to improve the interaction of the labour market and the national education system. In this regard, the Ministry of Education, Culture and Scientific Research adopted a Regulation on the recognition of the results of previous education. It outlines the regulatory framework for the functioning of the National Validation System for formal and Non-formal Education, through which the process of documenting, evaluating and certifying acquired knowledge and skills is carried out, in accordance with European standards for lifelong learning.

However, challenges remain in the following aspects:

- the need to reduce the mismatch between skills and labour market demands,
- and incorporation of a state Youth Agency in Georgia into the Association Agreement agenda, as well as a broader educational framework, the engaging of regional education institutions into the mobility initiatives. To advance the Action Plan, specific recommendations for strengthening interagency coordination and developing a concept for a National Youth Policy of Georgia should be drafted and submitted to the Parliament of Georgia for approval.
- Having near 30% of youth NEET (Not in Education, Employment, or Training) in Moldova, and integrated approach to solving the problem at the state level is still missing and should be addressed as the next policy priority.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 has exacerbated the situation. In the second quarter of 2020, the share of NEET youth in Moldova was 18.9% of the total number of young people aged 15-24, 27.6% among youth aged 15-29 and 32.6% among 15-34 years old. In all age groups, this indicator has higher values among women than men do.

Overall, in all 6 EaP countries, the pandemic has made a significant change into ongoing and planned civil society activities strengthening investments in young people's skills for employment and entrepreneurship. Many young people and civil society organisations providing assistance and activities to young people are facing new hardships such as financial/ human capital/ political/ economical/ health obstacles and slowing down the operations and activities putting many young people especially in rural and deprived areas in more vulnerable situation than before. For many young people access to online classes have become a challenge due to lack of computers or internet access or due to vulnerable social background.

Deliverable 19: Establish an Eastern Partnership European school

EaP European School this year admitted 30 outstanding students from 6 EaP countries. The level of education is high, and students satisfied. Last year most of the students got successfully enrolled to the best universities in the world.

Deliverable 20: Integrate Eastern Partnership and EU research and innovation systems and programmes

In RDI area in spite of strong EU support no convergence of RDI (and education) systems of Georgia (as well as of all EaP countries) with the EU systems and practices is observed. Rather there is a continuing divergence expressed in GERD values, which after 2017 were either left on the same very low level or declining.

At the same time several positive aspects of the implementation of deliverable 2020 can be observed:

- Based on the results of the held competitions of the Horizon 2020 program as of October 28, 2020 - 298 Ukrainian organizations are participating in 203 projects and will receive 38.36 million euros of funding for research and innovation activities. It is the best result in a comparison with other EaP countries.
- Representatives and experts in the program committees of the Horizon 2020 program have been determined by the government of Ukraine and have begun their activities and are now involved in discussing the format of Ukraine's participation in the next EU Framework Program HORIZON EUROPE.
- An audit of the national research and innovation system was carried out. The results of the audit recommendations were presented on January 30, 2019 at the final conference of the Horizon 2020 RI-LINKS2UA project with the participation of Ukrainian and European experts. In 2020, the first grant competition of the National Research Foundation was launched.
- The EaP Connect project provides access to the Pan-European Geant network, and data rates doubled in 2020.
- In December 2019, a joint conference was held with the EU representatives to develop opportunities for Ukraine to join European digital research infrastructures and the European open science cloud.

Despite continuous efforts from Moldovan side, there several shortcomings remain present, which prevent the achieving of this deliverable:

- Inefficient mechanisms of data analysis and on the future skills and market relevant skills in Moldova.
- The educational system is the most anachronic one on the European continent and must seek re-adjustment in the current crisis.

Priorities beyond 2020 – Investing in people – education, youth employment, civic engagement, culture

- Increase financial and logistical support to international and local youth events, with a view to increase the number and quality of such events, and facilitate greater opportunities for exchanges between young people in and between the EaP countries and the EU.
- Focus on evidence based youth participation programs/policy development at local and central level of national governance.
- Develop framework to recognize and ensure initial and continuous youth work formation.
- Increase the level of youth services/ infrastructure at the local level.
- Improve digital skills of young people, especially in rural areas.

- Run the Youth Index¹ in the Eastern Partnership as a quality metric for youth development
- Develop policy frameworks for transition from informal economy to formal and from informal employment to official work with social security for workers on the basis of Just Transition.
- Support the development of macro-data analysis of job market needs and institutionalize effective skills matching mechanisms.
- Ensure quality digital transition of the educational system through optimization, results-based management and student-centric approach.
- Facilitate vocational and higher education cooperation with the private sector, while integrating mandatory job market transition services.

Benchmarks:

- Ca. 70% of the target group has at least basic digital skills, has basic types of smartphones and are able to shop online and communicate with each other and their families, using such applications, as WhatsApp, Viber, etc.
- Min. 3 hubs/and digital civic spaces for youth efficient participation created in the region.
- Ca 50% of the countries in the EaP apply a co-management model of youth participation at the national level.
- Integrate digital education in the general educational system in all the countries from the region.
- By 2025, Eastern Partnership Youth Index is realized at the regional level.
- Ensure institutionalization of the occupational standard for the youth worker in at least 4 countries from the Eastern Partnership.
- Shrink by at least 3% the informal sector from each EaP country.
- Min. 2 policy/program interventions for supporting youth entrepreneurship in the region.
- 80% of the educational systems from the EaP has transitioned to digital educational infrastructure.
- Reduced youth unemployment by 5% by 2025 in the Eastern Partnership.
- Integrated career guidance for young people is included in the school curriculum in the general educational system from all 6 countries, by 2025.
- Institutionalized state mechanism in at least 3 countries that interoperates at the central level in matters of job market data analysis for jobs/skills anticipation.

¹ <https://moldova.unfpa.org/en/publications/youth-index-2015>

- Min. 40 % of the vocation and higher educational system have integrated career services by 2025.

Inclusiveness and Resilience:

- More emphasis on the vulnerable populations (women, people coming from rural areas etc.), enabling them access to high-speed internet (including respective training to develop their digital skills) in order to bridge the educational gap and strengthen the inclusive approach.
- Despite progress in promoting the role of women in decision making processes, with civil society successfully advocating for certain measures to be adopted by the EaP governments, the cross-sectoral priority on gender equality and non-discrimination - which is closely related to youth and people-to-people contacts in general - has not been covered sufficiently in the current deliverables. The new deliverables should therefore include a specific focus on increasing the number of women in decision-making positions in all spheres, to address their serious and systemic under-representation.
- Development of civic education programs and their inclusion into all educational levels of formal education should be on a par with development of digital skills.

Benchmarks:

- 90% of households including young women and women/girls of ethnic/religious minorities should have access to affordable high-speed internet and develop digital skills in all areas of life across the 6 EaP countries by 2025.
- Support the establishment of dedicated groups to monitor gender action plans at the national and local levels and provide feedback and input for the EaP governments and local bodies to act on.

Priorities beyond 2020 – Investing in people - Research and Innovation

- Enhance the development of National Strategies and further R&D processes as well as development of local research institutions.
- Provide assistance to support the widening participation of Eastern countries in the Horizon Europe program.

Benchmarks:

- At least 50% increase of **Gross Expenditure in Research and Development**.
- **R&I Strategies adopted by 2025** to increase the effectiveness of the national public research and innovation systems implemented.

Priorities beyond 2020 – Investing in people – mobility, visa issues, integrated border management

- Travel and visa mobility simplifications for students, academics and civil society via special visa categories and visa fee waivers.
- Based on this year's situation in Belarus, the EU should develop an EU-wide rapid reaction mechanism to facilitate the travel of migrants, activists, HRDs, media professionals, and other citizens who are temporarily fleeing their countries in times of crises or for fear of persecution.
- To finalize negotiations on lunching discussion on free visa regime between Armenia and EU.
- Continue development of the flagship initiative Integrated border management (IBM) that allows better interaction both for people to people contacts and trade.

Benchmarks:

- Number of platforms and hubs developed between different EU and EaP academic institutions
- Visa free regime for student, academia, civil society and media established
- Visa free regime with Armenia established