

Chapter Six

EU Education and Research Programmes

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Introduction

This chapter is about the EU programmes on education and research in Europe and in Western Balkan countries. It will present:

- EU multiannual programmes of work;
- EU policy on education and education programmes;
- EU policy on research and research programmes;
- EU programmes in the Western Balkans and Kosovo.

The basis for financing of EU programmes are multiannual programmes of work. The programme period 2014–2020 is now running out while the programme period 2021–2027 is about to start. As reported by European Commission (2020e; 2020d) and European Parliament (2020), the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for 2021–2027 amounts to €1.074 trillion, and is combined with the temporary recovery instrument, the Next Generation EU of €750 billion. The long-term budget for innovation, education and research 2021–2027 is made up of:

- Erasmus+ will have a budget of €30 billion for the 2021–2027 programme. This is more than double the budget of the 2014–2020 period, which was €14.7 billion.
- The new EU research and innovation programme Horizon Europe will have a budget of around €95.5 billion for 2021–2027. This repre-

sents a 30% increase vis-à-vis the current research and innovation programme, Horizon 2020.

- More than 50% of the amount will support modernisation through policies that include research and innovation. Research and innovation is an investment in our future and therefore put at the heart of EU's blueprint for smart, sustainable and inclusive growth and jobs. The main programmes are: Horizon Europe, Just Transition Fund, Digital Europe, Recovery and Resilience Facility, resCEU and a new health programme EU4Health;

EU Education Policy and Programmes

Policy: European Education Area (EEA) by 2025 and Digital Education 2021–2027

The European policy cooperation framework for education and training (European Union, 2020a; European Commission, 2020c, 2020i) supports Member States in their efforts to provide the best education and training for their citizens. The focus of the EU framework for cooperation beyond 2020 is on creating policies and initiatives in the following areas: early childhood education and care, school policy, vocational education and training, adult learning, higher education, international cooperation and policy dialogue on multilingualism, education and migrants. The framework is based on the lifelong learning approach. It therefore addresses outcomes from early childhood to adult vocational and higher education, and is designed to cover learning in all contexts: formal, non-formal and informal.

The EU sets out the framework for EU countries to exchange best practices and learn from each other, with the aim of:

- Making lifelong learning and mobility a reality;
- Improving the quality and efficiency of education and training;
- Promoting equity, social cohesion and active citizenship;
- Enhancing creativity, innovation and entrepreneurship.

The framework is implemented through a variety of tools and instruments: Working Groups, Peer Learning Activities (PLAS), Peer Reviews, The Annual Education and Training Monitor reports on Member States' progress towards achieving the Education and Training objectives and benchmarks, consultation and cooperation activities

with stakeholders, funding for policy support activities and innovative projects through the Erasmus+ programme.

The European policy cooperation framework is presented and discussed in documents by European Commission (2017, 2020f, 2020h) and DAAD Brussels (2020), mainly through two areas:

- European Education Area (EEA) by 2025 and
- Digital Education Action Plan 2021–2027.

Creation of EEA by 2025

The creation of EEA by 2025 has its basis in 2017, during the meeting at the Social Summit in Gothenburg. On 30 September 2020, the European Commission presented its vision for the creation of an EEA by 2025 and announced concrete measures to achieve it. This communication places education at the heart of the European Union's economic and social development and focus on:

- *Quality.* In addition, to improve teaching of basic knowledge and transversal skills, mobility and cross-border cooperation is highlighted as a motor for improving the quality of education. Existing obstacles to this must be removed. At the same time, the report calls for mobility to be made more sustainable in future and to be able to tackle digital challenges.
- *Inclusion and gender equality.* In the future Erasmus+ programme, inclusion, equality and diversity will play a prominent role, for example through new, more flexible mobility formats and support measures. An increasingly diverse student landscape and the demand for lifelong learning will be met by new teaching formats such as micro-credentials. To this end, the Commission is planning a proposal for Council Recommendations in 2021. In higher education, the main aim is to increase the number of women in management positions.
- *Green and digital transition.* The transition to an environmentally sound, sustainable and climate-neutral economy in Europe can only succeed with the development of necessary skills and awareness raising through education. At the end of 2020, the Commission will launch a coalition 'Education for Climate' to promote innovative projects and raise awareness in educational institutions. In 2021, the Commission will present Council recommenda-

tions on sustainability in education and develop a European Competence Framework for environmental skills and competences. The Action Plan for Digital Education details the measures to prepare for the digital transformation. The EU education programme Erasmus+ will become digital and greener. Virtual mobility is to complement physical mobility, environment and digital are to be treated as priorities in the cooperation projects and a sustainable implementation of the projects as well as climate-friendly physical mobility is to be promoted.

- *Teachers.* Teachers are at the centre of a sustainable education system. The profession should be upgraded. In this context, the Commission also mentions the need to make mobility an integral part of teacher education and training. Under the new Erasmus+ programme, the Commission plans to develop, from 2021 onwards, 25 ‘Erasmus Teacher Academies,’ which will network teacher training institutions and their associations to exchange good practice in initial and in-service training.
- *Higher Education.* Universities are described as central players in the knowledge quadrangle: education, research, innovation and society. The focus is on developing a policy framework that allows unhindered mobility and close cross-border cooperation between universities (as in the European Universities Initiative), and that promotes inclusion, digitalisation, sustainability and new teaching formats such as micro-credentials. The Commission is currently working on a transformation agenda for universities, which it will present in 2021. A public consultation will be published later this year. Other measures include support for the development of higher education curricula in the field of technology and ICT, the development of a ‘European Degree’ and a quality assurance system for new modular study programmes and degrees, and a feasibility study on a European statute for alliances of higher education institutions in Europe, such as the European Universities. Mobility will be further developed through the European student card, the Erasmus+ app and a further development of the automatic mutual recognition of credits.
- *Geopolitical dimension.* Together with the Member States, the European Commission wants to set new targets for 2030 to achieve the European Education Area. For higher education, it is proposed

to increase the proportion of 30–34 year olds with a university degree to at least 50%.

Digital Education (2021–2027)

The Digital Education Action Plan (2021–2027) outlines the European Commission’s vision for high-quality, inclusive and accessible digital education in Europe. It is a call to action for stronger cooperation at European level to:

- Learn from the COVID-19 crisis, during which technology is being used at an unprecedented scale in education and training;
- Make education and training systems fit for the digital age.

The new Action Plan on Digital Education was built on the Digital Education Plan 2018–2020 which had the following priority areas: making better use of digital technology for teaching and learning, developing digital competencies and skills, improving education through better data analysis and foresight.

The new Action plan has two strategic priorities:

- Fostering the development of a high-performing digital education ecosystem;
- Enhancing digital skills and competences for the digital transformation.

EU Education Programmes (Inside the EU and Cooperation with EU Neighbouring Countries)

Roots of Programmes Inside the EU

The first EU exchange programmes was the COMETT Programme for Industry-University links and exchanges (1987–1995). Other programmes: Socrates I (1994–1999) and Socrates II (2000–2006) programme, Lifelong Learning Programme (2007–2001), Erasmus+ 2014–2020, Erasmus+ 2021–2027.

Cooperation with non-EU Member States enhances the quality of education and training in the EU and beyond by promoting peer learning and comparative analysis between national education systems worldwide. It boosts innovation and job creation through mobility, and offers opportunities for staff and students to broaden their horizons through participation in EU programmes.

Europe's universities have a strong record of internationalisation (European Commission, 2020k). They have facilitated the development of international curricula and joint degrees, fostered international research and innovation projects, and supported the exchange of students, staff and knowledge. This has all been made possible by the Bologna Process, under which European countries have agreed to restructure their higher education systems to make cross-border cooperation more feasible and more effective.

The EU's international policy dialogues with countries outside Europe, therefore, often draw on this expertise and the experience of the need for internationalisation to go hand in hand with policy reform. The first programme that supported cooperation with EU neighbouring countries was the Tempus programme. The programme was initiated in 1990 to support balanced cooperation and improvement of higher education in the EU Member States and Partner Countries. Recent relevant programmes are of some components the Erasmus+ programmes with its international dimensions.

Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the key programme on education (it supports activities in the fields of education, training, youth and sport), and is managed by the Education, Audio-visual and Culture Executive Agency (EACEA). The general objective of the Erasmus+ programme is 'to support the educational, professional and personal development of people in education, training, youth and sport, in Europe and beyond, thereby contributing to sustainable growth, jobs and social cohesion and to strengthening European identity.' Three specific objectives of the programme are: (1) to promote the learning mobility of individuals in the field of education and training; (2) to promote non-formal learning mobility and active participation among young people; and (3) to promote the learning mobility of sports coaches and staff. In addition, the promotion of cooperation, inclusion, excellence, creativity and innovation is also one of the specific objectives targeting the three areas of activity (European Commission, 2020g).

The Programme is made up of three so-called 'Key Actions' and two additional 'Actions.'

- *Key action 1: Mobility.* It supports mobility in the education, training and youth sectors and aims to bring long lasting benefits to the participants and the organizations involved.

- *Key action 2: Cooperation.* It makes it possible for organisations from different participating countries to work together, to develop, share and transfer best practices and innovative approaches in the fields of education, training and youth.
- *Key action 3: Policy.* Supports actions aimed at stimulating innovative policy development, policy dialogue and implementation, and the exchange of knowledge in the fields of education, training and youth.
- *Action: Jean Monnet.* Jean Monnet Activities are designed to promote excellence in teaching and research in the field of European Union studies worldwide. The activities also foster the dialogue between the academic world and policy-makers, in particular with the aim of enhancing governance of EU policies.
- *Action: Sport.* Programme aims to support European partnerships on grassroots sport in order to pursue different activities. The most important: tackle cross-border threats to the integrity of sport; promote and support good governance in sport and dual careers of athletes; promote voluntary activities in sport, together with social inclusion, equal opportunities and awareness of the importance of health-enhancing physical activity, through increased participation in, and equal access to sport for all.

Erasmus 2021–2027

The focus of the new programme is on being inclusive and on doing more to reach young people with limited opportunities. The same ambition is reflected in the 2025 vision for a European Education Area, which calls for the number of participants to be doubled and for efforts to be made to reach out to learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. The budget for 2021–2027 is €30 billion, while Erasmus+ 2014–2020 had a budget of €14.7 billion.

EU Research Policy and Programmes

Policy: The European Research Area (ERA)

The European Commission launched the ERA in 2000, with the idea of developing attractive opportunities for researchers within Europe. Today, ERA is at the heart of the EU innovation agenda of the 2021–2027 Strategy and of the Innovation Union (IU) where it can help contribute to growth and jobs. It is the ambition to create a single, borderless market for research, innovation and technology across the EU.

Over the past 20 years, ERA has seen major achievements (European Commission, 2020a):

- The work of the European Strategy Forum on Research Infrastructures (ESFRI) resulted in the development of plans for 55 European Research Infrastructures, of which 37 have already been implemented, across all fields of science, mobilising close to EUR 20 billion in investments.
- Jointly addressing common challenges through coordination and pooling of resources has resulted in more than EUR 7 billion of national investments in joint research programmes since 2004, with current annual joint spending of EUR 800 million.
- Significant progress has been made in removing the geographical barriers to researchers' mobility and the fragmentation of research careers in Europe, driven by the European Charter for Researchers and a Code of Conduct for the Recruitment of Researchers already adopted by 1242 organisations. ² In addition, the EURAXESS ³ initiative supports researcher mobility and career development by delivering information and support services to professional researchers.
- The ERA has enhanced access to open, free of charge, re-usable scientific information through the Open Science Initiative ⁴ and the recently launched European Open Science Cloud (EOSC) creating a cloud area for research data in Europe allowing for better science through open and collaborative knowledge sharing.

Nowadays, we simply cannot imagine the EU without research cooperation among its Member States, its research institutions, researchers and industry. This cooperation grows by the day and has over the decades evolved into a wide spectrum of areas where basic research and innovation activities are intertwined and feed into entrepreneurship, industry, thereby representing an important cornerstone in the EU's economic strength and global competitiveness. Legal basis of research cooperation in Europe can now be found in Articles 179 to 190 the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union. The Lisbon Treaty thereby recognised research, alongside space, as a shared competence between the EU and Member States, and made the completion of the European Research Area (ERA) a requirement (Consolidated Versions of the Treaty on the European Union and Consolidated Version

of the Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union, 2016). ERA is expected to importantly contribute to growth and jobs in Europe. It is composed of research and development activities, programmes and policies, which all include a strong transnational angle. In addition, ERA encourages the national research centres to be more open to each other and the world, supports more inter-connectedness and interoperability.

Traditionally, national research systems tend to be inward oriented as Member States in the past wished to protect their research findings and commercial innovations. However, with the high level of European integration and the common EU market, changing such practices and coupling them with more inter-European cooperation could lead to important improvements in EU's economic growth as well as its competitiveness at the global scale. Allowing ideas to circulate among EU Member States gives them more potential to be successfully followed up and followed through, as well as a higher likelihood that they turn into a commercial innovation. Furthermore, opening our minds and borders to circulation of researchers allows the brightest minds of the whole of Europe to work together solving global challenges. ERA is defined by the Lisbon Treaty and the European Council as 'a unified research area open to the world based on the Internal Market, in which researchers, scientific knowledge and technology circulate freely and through which the Union and its Member States strengthen their scientific and technological bases, their competitiveness and their capacity to collectively address grand challenges' (Majcen & Trunk Širca, 2020).

As part of the EU response to the coronavirus pandemic, the Commission introduced the ERA vs corona Action Plan in April 2020. Building on the overall objectives and tools of the European Research Area, the action plan is a working document developed jointly by the Commission and national governments. It covers short-term actions based on close coordination, cooperation, data sharing and shared funding efforts (European Commission, 2020j).

New Challenges for R&I Policy

Europe is currently facing deep societal, ecological and economic challenges, aggravated by the coronavirus crisis. Delivering on Europe's recovery is a pressing priority, while the green and digital transitions (twin transition) are more important than ever.

The new European Research Area, from 2021 on (European Commis-

sion, 2020b) is building on Europe's innovation leadership and scientific excellence; it aims to incentivise better coordination and cooperation among the EU, its Member States and the private sector, leading to more investment in research and innovation, and strengthening the mobility of researchers, their expertise, and the flow of knowledge. The ERA (2021–2027) defines four strategic objectives:

- Prioritise investments and reforms in research and innovation towards the green and digital transition, to support Europe's recovery and increase competitiveness.
- Improve access to excellent facilities and infrastructures for researchers across the EU.
- Transfer results to the economy to boost business investments and market uptake of research output, as well as foster EU competitiveness and leadership in the global technological setting.
- Strengthen mobility of researchers and free flow of knowledge and technology, through greater cooperation among Member States, to ensure that everyone benefits from research and its results.

The EU will work towards accomplishing the above strategic objectives, in close cooperation with the Member States, through 14 actions that are linked to each other and will be instrumental in realising the European Research Area:

1. Reaffirm the target of 3% of GDP on EU research and development investment and propose a new EU 1.25% GDP public effort target to be achieved by Member States by 2030.
2. Support Member States in the coordination and prioritisation of national research and innovation funding and reforms through an ERA Forum for Transition. Voluntarily commit 5% of national public research and development investments to joint programmes and European partnerships by 2030.
3. Support Member States that are below the EU average level of research and innovation investments to increase their investment by 50% in the next 5 years.
4. Support Member States that have lower performance in training their researchers to access and develop excellence and increase their number of highly cited publications by one-third over 5 years.
5. Develop common industrial technology roadmaps to maximise

innovation in strategic areas like Artificial Intelligence, circular industries and resilient health industries.

6. Develop and test a networking framework in support of Europe's research and innovation ecosystems, building on existing capacities, to strengthen excellence and maximise the value of knowledge creation, circulation and use.
7. Update and develop guiding principles for creating value from knowledge and a code of practice for the smart use of intellectual property.
8. Deliver a toolbox of measures to support researchers' careers, through a mobility scheme, trainings and more, in order to make Europe more attractive for talent.
9. Launch a platform of peer-reviewed open access publishing and incentivise open science practices by improving the research assessment system.
10. Support the creation of world-class research infrastructures and establish an updated governance structure for research and technological infrastructures.
11. Develop a roadmap of actions for creating synergies between higher education and research, notably building on the dual role of universities.
12. Develop concrete plans with Member States to promote gender equality, as well as diversity and inclusiveness, in science, research and innovation.
13. Organise citizen science campaigns and hackathons to engage citizens, especially young people, in science and innovation.
14. Develop with Member States a new approach to set and implement strategic priorities for the European Research Area, through a Pact for Research and Innovation in Europe

EU Programmes on Research and Horizon Europe

The EU's long-term budget for 2021–2027, the large-scale recovery plan 'Next Generation EU' will lay the foundations of a modern and more sustainable Europe, while promoting an inclusive recovery and social fairness. Research and innovation provide new knowledge and innovative solutions to overcome our societal, ecological and economic challenges. Horizon Europe helps researchers and top class innovators to develop and deploy their ideas. It supports excellent science by team-

TABLE 6.1 Three Pillars for the Implementation of Horizon Europe

Excellent Science	Global Challenges and European Industrial Competitiveness	Innovative Europe
European Research Council	Clusters: Health; Culture, creativity, and inclusive society; Civil security for society; Digital, industry, and space; Climate, energy, and mobility; Food, bioeconomy, natural resources, and environment.	European Innovative Council
Maria Skłodowska-Curie Actions		European Innovation Ecosystems
Research Infrastructures		European Institute of Innovation and Technology.
Joint Research Centre		
Widening Participation and Strengthening the European Research Area		
Widening Participation and Spreading Excellence	Reforming and Enhancing the European R&I System	

NOTES Adapted from European Union (2020b).

ing up the best talent and equipping them with world-class infrastructures. Moreover, it supports breakthrough innovations and helps to create new services and markets.

Horizon Europe 2021–2027 (European Union, 2020b) is the world's largest research and innovation programme, and the key instrument of the Union for supporting research and innovation. It builds on Horizon 2020 (2014–2020) by tapping the innovation potential of EU member states and associated countries with more specific targeted actions funding projects for both public and private sector organizations. It is seen as a mean to drive economic growth and create jobs.

- Horizon Europe will finance thousands of research and innovation projects every year up to 2027 in all thematic areas such as, climate change, transport, health, agriculture, energy efficiency the humanities and many others. The key vision is to transfer more practically applicable innovative solution to benefit society and introduce new products and services to the market.
- Horizon Europe will have a budget of around €95.5 billion for 2021–2027 which is 30% more than Horizon 2020. The first Horizon Europe Strategic Plan will define the strategic orientations for our research and innovation investments over the period 2021–2024.

Horizon Europe, compared to Horizon 2020, foresees more and better collaboration with other EU financial instruments, namely the EU Cohesion Policy, the new European Defence Fund (€13 billion, €4.1 billion of which will be devoted to defence research), the international fusion energy project (ITER), Digital Europe Programme and Connecting Europe Facility Digital. The implementation is foreseen through three pillars (see Table 6.1):

- Pillar 1: Excellent science;
- Pillar 2: Global challenges and European industrial competitiveness;
- Pillar 3: Innovative Europe;

EU Programmes in Western Balkan and Kosovo

The European Union has long supported its partners in the Western Balkans (WB) on their respective integration paths. Direct participation in EU programmes such as Erasmus+, Horizon 2020, Creative Europe, COSME, and Interreg, help the Western Balkans partners boost their development by creating opportunities for young people and researchers (European Commission, 2020l).

Policy Background. The WB consists of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, North Macedonia, Montenegro, Kosovo and Serbia (European Commission, 2020l). All have a perspective to accede to the EU and hence are called ‘enlargement countries.’ A European Council meeting in 2003 adopted the Thessaloniki agenda for the Western Balkans.

- The EU’s enlargement policy (European Commission, 2015, 2016) underlines the necessity to invest in peace, security and stability. It stresses that an accession process offering a credible prospect of EU membership is vital to enhance the resilience of countries in the Western Balkans (European Union, 2016) and to spur transformation in these countries.
- As of 2016, the innovation dimension was added to the structural reform agenda of the national Economic Reform Programmes (as of 2015, all candidate countries and potential candidates submit annual Economic Reform Programmes (ERPS) that mimic the European Semester process). These programmes contain a structural reform agenda to boost competitiveness and improve conditions for growth and job creation.

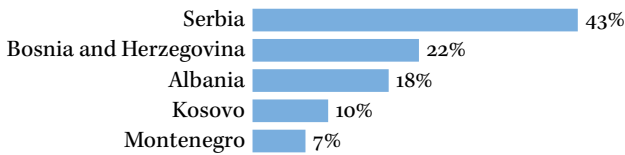


FIGURE 6.1 Percentage of Mobilities in Western Balkan Countries (adapted from European Commission, 2019)

- The *Western Balkans Regional R&D Strategy for Innovation* study (World Bank, 2013) claims that unleashing the Western Balkans' innovative potential would generate important economic gains (e.g. investing 3% of GDP into research and innovation will generate a 6% increase of GDP and a 13% increase in exports).

Below we will present key information about participation of WB countries (WBCS) in:

- Erasmus+, the largest programme for education, and
- Horizon 2020 the largest multinational programme dedicated to research and innovation.

WB Countries in Erasmus+ (2014–2020)

All the WBCS have previous experience since the beginning of the 1990s in the framework of TEMPUS programme and the experience gathered through this programme created the human capacity for similar programmes. Tempus programme (2007–2013) now as Erasmus+ (2014–2020) have played a significant role for 'regional research excellence', also with regard to equipment.

Statistics on EU-Western Balkan cooperation through Erasmus+ (European Commission, 2019) include data from Montenegro, Kosovo, Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia but no data from North Macedonia (see Figure 6.1).

Mobility. Student and staff mobility between Western Balkans and Europe 2015–2018:

- 17,081 mobility from Western Balkan to EU;
- 10,026 mobility from EU to Western Balkan.

Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees. From 2014 to 2018, 8 institutions from the Western Balkans were involved in seven of the 153 selected

EMJMDS. The country with highest participation was Serbia involved with four institutions in five of the selected projects. The rest of the countries in the region participated with one university each.

Capacity Building in Higher Education. Between 2014–2018 institutions from the Western Balkans took part on 504 occasions in 68 projects for the region: Serbia (40%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (24%), Albania (15%), Kosovo (12%), Montenegro (9%).

Jean Monnet Activities. Out of 1,218 successful applications worldwide between 2014 and 2018, 24 are from the Western Balkans, managed by institutions from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Serbia, Montenegro and Albania. They comprise 17 Chairs, Modules and Centres of Excellence, 5 Networks and 2 Support to Associations projects.

WB Countries in Horizon 2020

Some milestones of West Balkan cooperation in science and technology: in 2006 was launched Steering Platform, on Research for the Western, Balkan countries, 2013 was adopted Western Balkans Regional R & D Strategy for Innovation (European Commission, 2019)

All Western Balkans (except Kosovo) are fully associated to the European Union's Horizon 2020 Framework Programme for Research and Innovation. Kosovo is participating in the programme as a non-associated third country.

Key facts on participation of Western Balkan countries in Horizon 2020:

- Funding of Western Balkan research projects has tripled since 2014 to 2020;
- Participation of Western Balkan researchers has increased by 50 % since 2016;
- 339 researchers from Western Balkan countries involved In Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions;
- In WBCS €169.9 millions of EU contribution were allocated. Absorption of funds per country: Serbia (79%), North Macedonia (8.2%), Bosnia and Herzegovina (5.6%), Albania (3%), Montenegro (2.5%), Kosovo (1.7%).

Data of participation in Horizont 2020 from 2014–2020 (European Commission, 2020l) show that Kosovo has the lowest level of absorption of funds under the Horizon 2020 program, which represents a pure

scientific research program. This means that Kosovo's researchers need significant financial support in order to be qualified and to participate in deep exchange of experiences between regional and European scientific researchers

The Western Balkans Agenda on Innovation, Research, Education, Culture, Youth and Sport (WBC-RTI.info, 2020) outlines a comprehensive, long-term strategy for cooperation with the Western Balkans. It will contribute to the economic development and regional cooperation in the Western Balkans alongside the overall EU support for a rapid restart of the region's economy. The Commission has launched an ambitious Economic and Investment Plan for the region proposing to mobilise up to EUR 9 billion of IPA III funding for the period 2021–2027. Including a new Western Balkans Guarantee facility, with the ambition to potentially raise investments of up to EUR 20 billion (IPA I budget for the six Western Balkan countries amounted to €5.3 billion for the period 2007–2013, IPA II instrument for Western Balkan countries amounted to €6.9 billion the period 2014–2020). This is complemented by the European Commission's proposal on vocational education and training for sustainable competitiveness, social fairness and resilience as well as the New European Skills Agenda³ as well as the European Pillar of Social Rights (WBC-RTI.info, 2020).

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