

HELP Objectives

The main objective of the HELP project is to connect education and business in the Great Plain area of Serbia, Croatia, Romania and Hungary in dialogue on the regional skills agenda. This area shares common issues associated with the transition process including:

- a shortage of skills required by business at the local level to support innovation, increase competitiveness and raise productivity in the growing knowledge society;
- increasing poverty and social exclusion which has arisen as a consequence of tensions in the transition process;
- structural problems faced by higher education institutions in the provision of training programmes to meet the changing skill requirements of business within the region;
- information constraints that inhibit an understanding of the nature and extent of skill shortages at the local and regional levels;
- institutional constraints between the education and business sectors that hinder a shared understanding of the key regional economic and social development problems;
- limited experience of cooperation between education and business in the formulation of strategies to improve access to appropriate skills-based learning and training.

To work with these issues the project has established learning partnerships (HELPS) between education and business to:

- identify and prioritise the main learning and training needs to promote local enterprise development;
- evaluate the existing learning and training opportunities at the local level and the ways these could be improved within HELPS in terms of the access, structure and content of learning and training programmes;
- share experience of local HELPS at the regional level and explore existing models of partnership for knowledge exchange between education and enterprise;
- increase the availability of relevant information at the regional level on the nature and extent of skill shortages affecting economic development;
- prepare certified learning and training programmes within HELPS tailored to local enterprise development needs and priorities;
- pilot, monitor and evaluate the learning and training programmes, especially the potential for sustainability based on private provision;
- disseminate results widely, particularly at the regional policy-making levels to support

economic transition.