



ANCHOR PROJECT

E-NEWSLETTER
ISSUE 3 • SEPTEMBER 2026



ENHANCING LABOUR MARKET GOVERNANCE IN THE DANUBE REGION

The ANCHOR project has now entered an exciting new phase: we are moving from planning towards action. After more than a year of intensive cooperation, research, capacity building and joint strategic work, the foundations are in place for partners to translate our shared vision into tangible local solutions. Since our previous eNewsletter, another important milestone was reached when the partnership gathered in Varaždin for the 3rd Partner and Steering Committee Meeting. Partners reviewed the first year of implementation, further developed their Local Action Plans, discussed the preparation and communication of pilot actions, and exchanged experiences with local stakeholders. The meeting also hosted the first Transnational Labour Market Forum, strengthening dialogue beyond the local level.

Meanwhile, pilot partners have made significant progress in preparing their local activities. Local Labour Market Forums and stakeholder cooperation are helping ensure that the pilots respond to real local needs, while dedicated communication campaigns are being developed to support their visibility, participation and impact.

The coming period will therefore be particularly exciting for ANCHOR. Ideas developed over the past months will increasingly become visible on the ground, allowing us not only to test innovative approaches but also to learn which solutions work best in different territorial and institutional contexts.

In this third edition of our eNewsletter, we invite you to discover how the partnership has progressed since our last issue and how our partners are preparing for the next major chapter of ANCHOR.



ANCHOR
E-NEWSLETTER

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Interreg
Danube Region



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MEETING #3

On 12-13 May 2026, partners from across the Danube Region gathered in Varaždin for two intensive and highly productive days dedicated to reviewing progress, strengthening cooperation, and preparing the next phase of the ANCHOR project. It was a great honour for the partnership that the participants were welcomed by the Mayor of Varaždin, Neven Bosilj, whose greeting highlighted the importance of cooperation, innovation, and effective labour market governance for the future of the region. The meeting began with a presentation of Varaždin and its local policy challenges, followed by discussions on the ANCHOR Transnational Strategy and the development of Local Action Plans. Partners presented and jointly reviewed their draft LAPs during interactive sessions that helped refine local approaches and strengthen the shared strategic framework of the project.



12-13 MAY
VARAŽDIN (CRO)

The second day focused on the project's First Year Review together with the DRP MA/JS Project Officer. An important milestone of the meeting was the moderated discussion with local stakeholders and the first meeting of the Transnational Labour Market Forum, creating a valuable space for dialogue between project partners and external actors. The programme also included sessions on upcoming SO3 activities and the development of the Transnational Labour Market Observatory, highlighting the project's long-term vision and future-oriented approach. The meeting once again demonstrated the strength of the ANCHOR partnership and its shared commitment to building more inclusive, resilient, and future-ready labour markets across the Danube Region.



PARTNERS' NEWS

INTRODUCTION OF THE ANCHOR PARTNERSHIP

BULGARIAN ASSOCIATION FOR TRANSFER OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION (BUL)



Since the publication of the previous ANCHOR eNewsletter, the Bulgarian Association for Transfer of Technology and Innovation (BATTI) has continued working with local stakeholders to turn the strategic objectives of the ANCHOR project into practical solutions for Varna's labour market. The main focus has been on strengthening the Local Labour Market Forum, finalising the Local Action Plan for Varna, and preparing two pilot activities that respond directly to challenges identified by local institutions, employers, education and training providers, and civil society organisations.

The Local Labour Market Forum has played a central role in this process. Through a series of meetings and discussions, stakeholders jointly identified key labour market challenges, selected the most relevant pilot activities, defined priority target groups, and agreed on the main thematic focus of the planned interventions. The discussions highlighted issues such as skills mismatches, insufficient practical preparation for employment, difficulties faced by employers in recruiting adequately prepared staff, and the need for stronger cooperation between institutions, employers, education providers, and civil society.

Based on this participatory process, BATTI has prepared the Local Action Plan for Varna as a practical framework for coordinated local action. The Plan focuses on strengthening labour market governance, improving support for vulnerable groups, increasing direct contact between jobseekers and employers, and ensuring that local support activities are better aligned with real labour market needs. It also aims to reinforce the Local Labour Market Forum as a functional mechanism for regular dialogue, joint planning, monitoring, and follow-up.

The first pilot activity, "Open Workplace Days in Varna, Aksakovo and Devnya," is designed to bring jobseekers and young people closer to real working environments and local employers. The planned activities include workplace visits, company presentations, information about specific job roles and working conditions, and direct interaction between participants and employers. Companies such as Eco-Tex, Plastchim-T and Solvay have been identified as relevant employers for the pilot. The initiative is expected to improve participants' understanding of local employment opportunities and workplace expectations while strengthening cooperation between businesses and labour market stakeholders.

The second pilot, "Workshops for Vulnerable Groups," will provide practical employability support to three priority groups identified through the Local Labour Market Forum: young people, persons aged 55+, and people with completed education but without professional qualifications. The workshops will focus on motivation and confidence in job searching, professional CV and profile development, interview preparation, and financial literacy for employees. Through practical and interactive sessions, the pilot aims to strengthen participants' labour market readiness, confidence, and ability to navigate employment opportunities more effectively.

The implementation of these two pilots will provide valuable practical experience and feedback that can be used to further strengthen local cooperation and improve future labour market interventions. Through ANCHOR, Varna is moving from stakeholder dialogue towards concrete, locally adapted solutions and a more coordinated, inclusive, and responsive approach to labour market governance.



PARTNERS' NEWS

INTRODUCTION OF THE ANCHOR PARTNERSHIP

NETWORK FOR REGIONAL DEVELOPMENT FOUNDATION (HUN)

Period 3 marked an important step forward for ANCHOR, as the partnership moved from developing a common strategic framework towards putting ideas into practice. As Lead Partner, HÁRFA continued to coordinate this process, supporting partners in turning the ANCHOR Transnational Strategy into concrete Local Action Plans and preparing for the implementation of the pilot actions.

A key milestone was the launch of the Transnational Labour Market Forum (TLMF), bringing together delegates of the Local Labour Market Forums and knowledge providers representing relevant labour market stakeholders from across the partnership. The first meeting provided an opportunity to exchange experiences and perspectives from different territories, with contributions from organisations such as LEGO, Tenzor, Dorssen and the Academy of Applied Sciences Western Serbia.

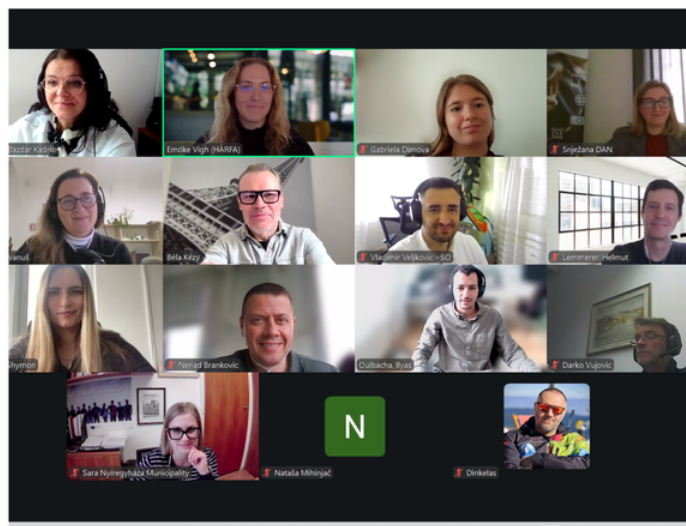


ANCHOR Transnational Strategy

D1.2.1 Transnational strategy to improve labour market governance

Version 1.0 (March 2026)

This project is supported by the Interreg Danube Region Programme co-funded by the European Union.



Another major milestone was the First Year Review of ANCHOR, held alongside the third partner meeting in Varaždin, Croatia. The review provided an important opportunity to reflect on the achievements of the first year, take stock of the progress made and look together at the next phase of the project. It also offered valuable feedback and guidance for the partnership as ANCHOR moves further into the implementation of its practical solutions. Alongside this substantive work, HÁRFA continued coordinating the partnership and supporting partners with implementation, reporting, financial and administrative matters. With the strategy now taking shape at local level and the pilot actions approaching implementation, ANCHOR is steadily moving from shared vision towards concrete action.



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MODERN EDUCATIONAL APPROACH (SRB)

As the ANCHOR project continues to advance, the Association “Savremeni pristup obrazovanju” (Modern Approach to Education) has further solidified its role as Knowledge Provider and coordinator for Specific Objective 2: Designing, testing, and assessment of innovative solutions. A key milestone during this period was the transnational partnership meeting held in Varaždin, where we presented a comprehensive overview of the achievements delivered under SO2 over the past year, while clearly outlining the current implementation phase and immediate priorities.



Following the submission of initial pilot action drafts by all territorial partners, our primary focus shifted toward a thorough and structured review process. As the main coordinator for SO2, our association conducted a detailed analysis of each partner's draft pilot plan to ensure full strategic alignment with the overarching objectives and scope of the ANCHOR project. Based on this evaluation, we provided tailored guidance and constructive feedback, offering specific recommendations regarding necessary adjustments, technical corrections, and potential risk areas to keep in mind. In line with the collaborative spirit of the project, all advisory inputs remain non-binding, ensuring that territorial partners retain complete autonomy and the final say on the ultimate design and execution of their pilot activities.

Throughout this review and refinement phase, our team has maintained continuous communication and technical support, remaining fully available to assist partners whenever additional consultation or clarification was needed. With the foundational preparation completed, we are now entering what is undoubtedly the most dynamic phase of the project: the execution of pilot actions in real-world conditions. We are eager to see these tested solutions brought to life across the target territories, observing firsthand how their results and practical outcomes will contribute to addressing territorial needs and strengthening labour markets throughout the region.



PARTNERS' NEWS

INTRODUCTION OF THE ANCHOR PARTNERSHIP

ACADEMIA D.O.O. (SLO)

SUPPORTING SMOOTHER ONBOARDING & RETENTION OF INTERNATIONAL EMPLOYEES

WORKING TOGETHER FOR BETTER INTEGRATION IN VARAŽDIN

Multilingual
Integration Videos



Life, Work
& Rights
Information

Interactive
Workshops



Communication
& Onboarding

Mentor
System



Guidance for
Newcomers

Guide for Life
& Work in Varaždin



In Croatian,
English, Nepali
& Hindi

BUILDING SOCIAL CONNECTIONS, UNDERSTANDING RIGHTS &
WORKPLACE ADAPTATION



BETTER INTEGRATION FOR
A STRONGER COMMUNITY

Generated by Microsoft Copilot

Academia as a key knowledge partner supporting Development Agency North - DAN Ltd. in developing a stronger and more inclusive Local Action Plan (LAP) for Varaždin.

Academia helped refine priority areas by highlighting the growing importance of foreign workers in Varaždin's labour market and making sure that the integration of international employees is properly addressed. This includes not only language learning, but also adapting to the workplace, building social connections, understanding rights and responsibilities, and strengthening cooperation between employers and other local stakeholders.

To support this work, Academia proposed several practical activities:

Multilingual integration videos about everyday life, workers' rights, workplace culture, and public services;

Workshops for international employees and employers focused on communication, workers' rights, onboarding, and employee retention;

A mentor system for newcomers to provide support during their first months in Varaždin;

A "Guide for Life and Work in Varaždin" available in Croatian, English, Nepali, and Hindi.

These tools aim to help workers integrate more confidently while supporting employers in managing diverse teams.

Through this partnership, Academia is helping DAN Ltd.

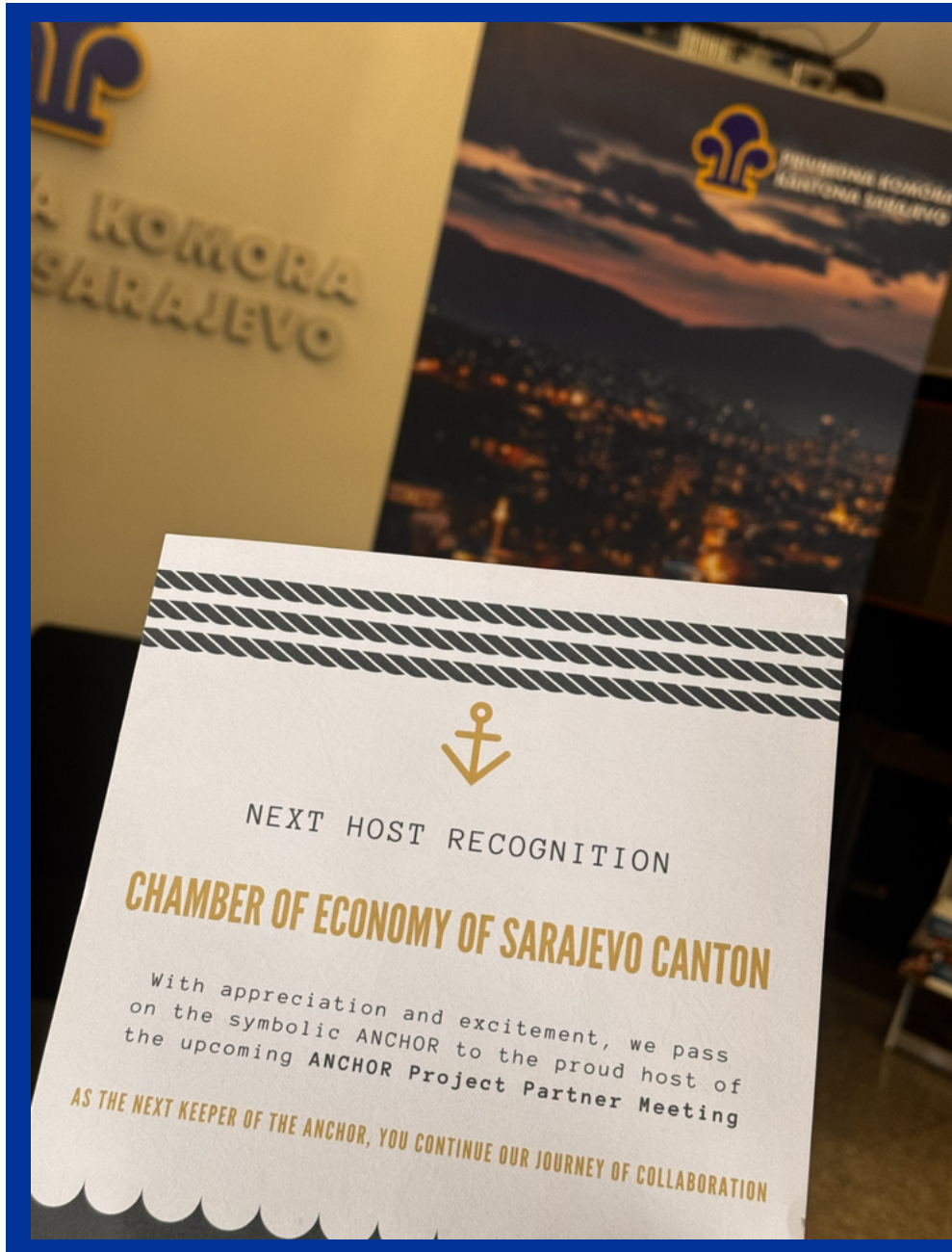
in creating a welcoming, well-prepared environment where both workers and employers can thrive together. Academia's expertise and DAN's local leadership are driving meaningful progress toward a more inclusive and competitive labour market in Varaždin.



PARTNERS' NEWS

INTRODUCTION OF THE ANCHOR PARTNERSHIP

CHAMBER OF ECONOMY OF SARAJEVO CANTON (BIH)



Within the ANCHOR project, the Chamber of Economy of Sarajevo Canton is currently preparing the next steps related to the design and implementation of local pilot actions focused on improved labour market governance and the inclusion of vulnerable groups.

As part of this process, the selection of a local external expert for the preparation and design of pilot actions is currently underway. The expert will support the development of a structured and realistic pilot model that connects labour market needs, adult education, employer involvement and support for unemployed persons from vulnerable groups.

The planned pilot will be based on cooperation between the Chamber's Education Centre, the Employment Agency and interested companies. The Education Centre will organize short, targeted adult training programmes, while companies will contribute through consultations on labour market needs, practical training opportunities, mentoring and possible employment-related follow-up.

The action builds on the Education Centre's previous experience in organizing labour-market-oriented adult training for deficit occupations, combining theoretical training

with practical learning in cooperation with employers. The process of defining the exact training field and occupation is currently underway in consultation with the Employment Agency and companies, based on real labour market demand and employment potential.

Additional external expertise will also be engaged, as needed, including trainers and lecturers, communication professionals for the local pilot campaign, practical training mentors and participant support/retention mentors. The objective of the pilot is to test whether a coordinated model involving the Employment Agency, a certified adult education provider and employers can improve the employability of vulnerable unemployed persons and create a more direct pathway towards employment.

Looking ahead, the Chamber is also entering an intensive preparation phase for the upcoming ANCHOR project partner meeting, scheduled to take place in Sarajevo this November. The meeting will bring together project partners and stakeholders to review progress, exchange experiences and define the next steps in the implementation of project activities.



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DEVELOPMENT AGENCY NORTH - DAN LTD. (CRO)



Over the past six months, Development Agency North - DAN has continued to strengthen local and transnational cooperation within the ANCHOR project, with a particular focus on transforming identified labour market challenges into concrete local actions.

An important step in this process was the second Local Labour Market Forum, held in Varaždin on 24 March 2026. The meeting brought together 25 representatives of the City of Varaždin, Croatian Employment Service, universities, schools, civil society organisations and other local institutions. Building on the results of the first Forum, participants discussed the current labour market situation, reviewed existing strategic measures and focused on the preparation of the Local Action Plan and possible pilot activities.

The discussion highlighted several challenges that are particularly relevant for Varaždin. Foreign workers were identified as one of the groups facing significant barriers to labour market and social integration, including language barriers, cultural differences and limited familiarity with local systems and work practices. At the same time, participants stressed the importance of strengthening links between young people and employers, encouraging earlier interaction with students, improving the visibility of career opportunities and better aligning education with labour market needs. These findings provided an important basis for defining future pilot activities and the Local Action Plan.

The local work was complemented by an important transnational milestone in May, when Development Agency North hosted the third ANCHOR Partner and Steering Committee Meeting in Varaždin on 12-13 May 2026. Partners from across the Danube Region gathered for two days of joint work, exchange and planning. The meeting focused on reviewing project progress, further developing Local Action Plans, preparing pilot actions and communication activities, as well as discussing the ANCHOR Transnational Strategy and the next implementation steps.

The Varaždin meeting also hosted the project's First Year Review and marked an important step in connecting local experience with the wider Danube Region through the first meeting of the Transnational Labour Market Forum. This provided an opportunity to bring together project partners and external stakeholders and to exchange perspectives on labour market governance, demographic change and the needs of vulnerable groups.

With the local dialogue now translated into clearer priorities, DAN is moving towards the next phase of the ANCHOR project: finalising the Local Action Plan and preparing pilot activities that respond to the specific needs identified in Varaždin. The focus remains on practical, locally grounded solutions, while experiences and lessons from Varaždin will continue to contribute to the wider transnational cooperation within ANCHOR.



PARTNERS' NEWS

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MUNICIPALITY OF NYÍREGYHÁZA CITY WITH COUNTY RIGHTS (HUN)



Nyíregyháza Municipality held a professional partnership meeting at the City Hall in June, focusing on further developing the city's labour market cooperation, as well as on the current tasks and objectives of the international projects currently being implemented.

Like many other European cities, Nyíregyháza continuously faces the challenge of training talented young people who leave the city to pursue their studies elsewhere and, after completing their education, do not return but instead seek employment in other locations.

Together with the partner cities involved in the ANCHOR project, we are seeking solutions that can be applied by small and medium-sized cities to retain talented young people and skilled workers, or to attract them back. After all, the greatest asset of a city is its people.

Nyíregyháza has more than a decade of experience in fostering purposeful cooperation among labour market stakeholders. The model established within the Nyíregyháza Employment Pact has created a stable foundation for joint work between the municipality, employment, business, education and civil society actors. This cooperation enables the city to respond more effectively to labour market challenges and ensures active links between local stakeholders. Building on this foundation, two complementary international projects are currently being implemented.

At the local level, our work focuses on strengthening cooperation between organisations responsible for effective labour market integration, with particular emphasis on retaining young people by making the city a more liveable place and ensuring access to suitable employment opportunities.

During the event, the ANCHOR project was presented, among other topics, and participants worked together on solutions for retaining young people locally, improving the quality of the labour market, and supporting the labour market integration of people with reduced work capacity.



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CITY OF VALJEVO (SRB)

The City of Valjevo is entering a new phase of the ANCHOR project, moving from joint analysis and planning towards testing practical local solutions. Building on the dialogue within the Local Labour Market Forum and the development of the Local Action Plan, the City is preparing two complementary pilot actions that address two sides of the same challenge: making local employment opportunities more visible and strengthening jobseekers' readiness to access them.

"Valjevo Works - Open Workplace Days" will bring young people, students and jobseekers into direct contact with local employers through structured workplace visits. Instead of learning about jobs only through vacancy notices, participants will be able to see working environments first-hand, speak with employers and employees, and gain a clearer understanding of the skills, expectations and career opportunities available in Valjevo. At the same time, employers will have an opportunity to present their workplaces and listen to the perspectives of potential future employees. The action will explore whether closer and more transparent contact can improve the attractiveness of local jobs and support better-informed career choices.



"Step Towards Work - Practical Support for Jobseekers" will focus on people facing greater barriers to labour market participation. Through accessible, hands-on workshops and guidance, participants will strengthen essential job-search skills, build confidence and become better prepared to communicate with employers and take concrete steps towards employment. Drawing on cooperation with employment, social protection and civil society actors, the action will test a flexible support model that can respond to the needs of different groups and connect existing local services more effectively.

Although they respond to different needs, the two pilot actions are designed as one local pathway: building readiness while opening doors to real workplaces. A dedicated communication campaign will support this approach by mobilising target groups, engaging employers and local institutions, and explaining the practical value of participation through stakeholder networks, local media and digital channels. Feedback gathered during implementation will help Valjevo refine the model and identify the elements with the strongest potential for wider use.

The preparations were further advanced through the third ANCHOR partner meeting in Varaždin, Croatia, where partners reviewed progress and exchanged ideas on pilot design, local action planning and communication. Valjevo also strengthened its connection with the newly established Transnational Labour Market Forum, linking local experience with knowledge from across the Danube region. The insights from the pilot actions will feed into the Local Action Plan and the future work of the Local Labour Market Forum. As ANCHOR moves from planning to implementation, Valjevo will use the pilots not as isolated activities, but as an opportunity to test a more coordinated, inclusive and responsive model of local labour market cooperation.



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NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANIZATION "YOUTH SPACE" (UKR)

Since the publication of the previous eNewsletter, NGO "Youth Space" has taken important steps to translate the strategic approaches of the ANCHOR project into practical solutions for Uzhhorod's local labour market. The main focus has been on strengthening cooperation among key labour market stakeholders, preparing the Local Action Plan, and developing two pilot activities for young people, veterans, and internally displaced persons. The Local Labour Market Forum brought together representatives of local authorities, the employment service, employers, educational institutions, civil society organisations, young people, and representatives of vulnerable groups, providing a platform for jointly identifying challenges and developing practical solutions.

The results of research, stakeholder consultations, and Forum meetings are being used to prepare the Local Action Plan. The document will define measures to improve access to employment information, develop relevant skills, strengthen cooperation among young people, employers, educational institutions, and the employment service, and support people who face additional barriers when seeking employment.

The first pilot, "Co-branding and Information Support for the Youth Employment Centre in Uzhhorod" aims to strengthen interaction between young people and the Uzhhorod Branch of the Zakarpattia Regional Employment Centre. The planned activities include an open workshop, two information sessions, the production of a promotional video, and an information campaign on job vacancies, vocational training, grant programmes, and other opportunities available to young people.

The second pilot, "Soft Skills Development and Employment Support for Veterans and IDPs," will include practical sessions on communication, self-presentation, interview preparation, job searching, and adaptation to a new professional environment. Ten individual consultations will also be organised on employment, professional development, and available support programmes. At least 30 people will participate in the activities, including veterans and at least 10 internally displaced persons. The implementation of the pilots will make it possible to test practical solutions, collect feedback from participants, and use the results to further improve the Local Action Plan.





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ZRS BISTRA PTUJ (SLO)

"You can find a good job at home, too!"

ZRS Bistra Ptuj (PP03) puts one promise at the heart of both pilot actions

Every region losing its young people to bigger cities knows the problem: it is not that there are no good jobs at home — it is that nobody can see them. Since the last eNewsletter, ZRS Bistra Ptuj has built both ANCHOR pilots around one shared answer, borrowed from the Karierni Ptuj initiative and now adopted as the motto of our pilot work: "You can find a good job at home, too!" One slogan, two pilots — one that makes good jobs at home visible, and one that makes them accessible. And one message with a wider ambition: to bring together employers, institutions and the community under a single banner, and to be strongly embraced across our local environment.

Making good jobs visible — Pilot A2.1, the Karierni Ptuj 365 and co-branding toolbox. Together with local stakeholders and leading regional employers, we are developing a shared, transferable co-branding toolbox, with Karierni Ptuj 365 — the digital hub of the toolbox, built on the existing Karierni Ptuj website — at its centre. The purpose is simple: to raise the visibility and recognisability of regional employers, and to give young people one place where they can see what local companies do, what they offer and which opportunities await them — regional employer branding in one place. Participating employers will adopt the shared identity and tell their stories through the authentic voices of their own employees in form of short videos. The invitation to join is open. From autumn 2026 onwards, the pilot will be amplified by a promotional campaign reaching young professionals with Podravje roots at home and abroad, building up to the January 2027 fair and continuing on for LinkedIn promo campaigns for

Making good jobs accessible — Pilot A2.2, employer workshops for inclusive hiring. A good job at home must be findable for everyone — including those the labour market too often overlooks. We will organize a two-workshop programme for the employer cohort: inclusive recruitment methodology (CV review, interview redesign), focused on workers aged 50+ and the long-term unemployed.

Both pilots converge where the slogan will be spoken out loud: at the 6th Karierni Ptuj career fair on 20-21 January 2027, the central labour-market event of the region —hosted in Ptuj, Slovenia's oldest town, watched over by its mediaeval castle above the Drava. We look forward to showing our ANCHOR partners that the promise is being kept.





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TU WIEN (AUT)

Since our last update, the team at TU Wien has translated the dashboard's "skeleton" into a fully functional, feature-rich reality. Driven by our commitment to agile development, we have integrated robust data capabilities and gathered critical partner feedback during our recent project meeting in Varaždin to shape the next generation of this tool.

Key Features of the Current Dashboard:

- **Live Data Integration:** Users can seamlessly select and upload official datasets directly from Eurostat.
- **Dynamic Visualizations:** The interface automatically generates tailored charts, graphs, and maps based on the user's focus.
- **Granular Filtering:** Deep-dive analysis is made simple with comprehensive filters for age groups, time ranges, and specific thematic areas (such as employment rates or demographic shifts).

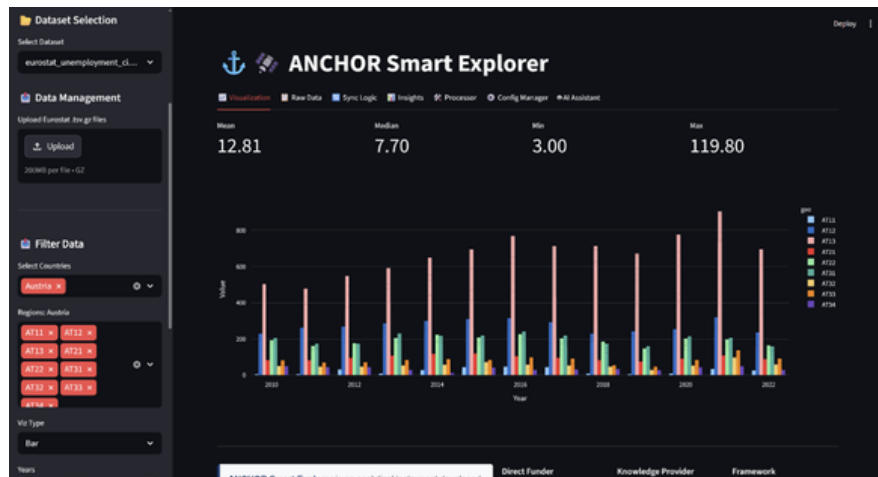
A tool is only as good as the value it brings to its users. At our recent project meeting in Varaždin, we conducted a targeted survey to gauge partner perceptions, user experience, and future needs.

The survey confirmed strong enthusiasm for the platform's current analytical depth, while providing us with invaluable local perspectives to refine the user interface. By aligning our technical roadmap with this hands-on feedback, we ensure the dashboard remains highly practical for everyday policy-making.

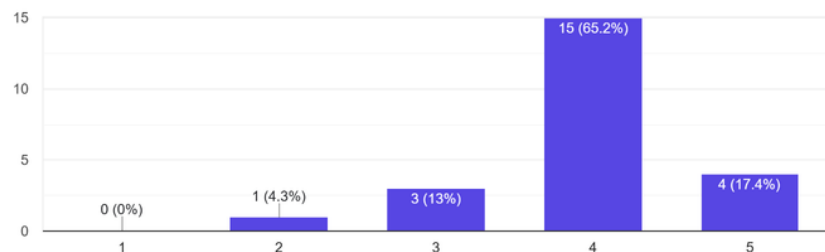
One of the most exciting takeaways from the Varaždin meeting was the overwhelming interest in integrating an intelligent Chatbot Area within the dashboard.

We understand that navigating complex databases and selecting the right combination of filters can sometimes be daunting for busy decision-makers. To bridge this gap, we explored the concept of a conversational AI assistant designed to simplify data exploration:

- **Prompt-to-Analysis:** Instead of manually toggling menus, users can simply type a natural question (e.g., "Show me youth unemployment trends in NUTS 2 regions between 2020 and 2025").
- **Automated Filtering:** The chatbot interprets the prompt, automatically applies the correct thematic, age, and time filters, and instantly displays the requested visualization.
- **Democratizing Data:** This integration lowers the technical barrier to entry, ensuring that any local stakeholder—regardless of data expertise—can extract actionable governance strategies in seconds.



The AI-based application is closely aligned with my specific task requirements.
23 responses





PARTNERS' NEWS

INTRODUCTION OF THE ANCHOR PARTNERSHIP

MUNICIPALITY OF CENTAR SARAJEVO (BIH)

During the recent project period, the Municipality of Centar Sarajevo continued to strengthen cooperation with key local labour market stakeholders through the ANCHOR project.

A key milestone was the Local Labour Market Forum held on 30 March 2026, bringing together around 15 representatives of relevant institutions and organisations, including the Employment Service of Sarajevo Canton, the Chamber of Economy of Sarajevo Canton and the Adult Education Institution "Nova zanimanja". The Forum provided an opportunity to present the ANCHOR project, discuss the role of local stakeholders and jointly work on the preparation of the Local Action Plan (LAP).

The Municipality has since continued working with stakeholders on the draft LAP, focusing on key priorities such as attractiveness and retention of the workforce, inclusion, skills development, and stronger cooperation and coordination among labour market actors.

In parallel, Centar is preparing its pilot activity aimed at supporting start-up business holders through targeted training, with the objective of strengthening entrepreneurial skills and improving their position in the labour market. These activities are helping to establish a stronger local partnership and create a more coordinated approach to addressing labour market challenges in the Municipality of Centar.





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