

EUROPEAN ASSOCIATION OF CAREER GUIDANCE
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EACG PARTICIPATION IN A STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIP FOR PUPILS' CAREER GUIDANCE

The European Association of Career Guidance will participate as a partner in an innovative, European project under the title "Information and Communication Technology for Romanian Career Counselling" - ICT4RoCC. The project, which will focus on the pupils' career guidance, it will be financed by the Erasmus+ programme, Key Action 2 - Cooperation for innovation and the exchange of good practices. Besides EACG, the Strategic Partnership comprises members from Romania and Latvia as well as the Cypriot software provider company Com2go Ltd., while it will be coordinated by the Centrul Judetean de Resurse si. Asistentă Educatională Vrancea from Romania.

Already from 2013, the European Commission has stated that "High quality, up-to-date guidance made available at an early stage is essential for providing young people with the information they need to make informed education and career choices. Helping young people understand their own strengths, talents, different study options, and employment prospects is essential. Guidance could be provided through interactive methods (mentoring, coaching, one-to-one guidance, work placements) and through online services."



As a result, the focus of this project is **making pupils help themselves, making information from verified sources available to them in a digital form that is more relevant for the "digitally born" generation and giving them online instruments to make self-assessments, to facilitate self-knowledge and career decisions.** The project's main objectives will be, among others, the following:

- **development and usage of ICT tools and OER** in career guidance for an open and flexible counselling and facilitating the access at educational resources;
- **development of an efficient system of career guidance and counselling**, including a component dedicated to improving the attainment of young people, **particularly those at risk of early school leaving.**

- **improving the capacities of organizations active in the field of education** in the areas of quality of learning provisions, internationalization, equity and inclusion, strategic development.

- **promoting cross-border cooperation** and enhancing the commitment of regional public authorities in the qualitative development of education.

- **facilitating equity and inclusion in education by making the resources available to all pupils** in our region, independent of the geographic area and availability of an career counsellor in some schools.

EACG's main responsibility in the project is to **edit a guide for efficient career counselling activities in digital version, as an OER that can be used for understanding the career counselling principles, objectives, activities, with examples of good practices from all over Europe.**

The project's duration will be **24 months (until August 2016)**, while a kick-off meeting will take place in mid- December, in Romania **where EACG will be represented by its President, Dr Gregory Makrides.**



CJRAE Vrancea,
Coordinator of the Project



JOBS AND GROWTH ARE KEY PRIORITIES FOR THE NEW COMMISSION



After the European Union has come through one of the most testing periods in its history, one of the biggest challenges will be to convince citizens that things will change. The new Commission, which officially assumed office on 1st of November 2014, will focus on tackling the big political challenges Europe is facing, such as getting people back to work in decent jobs, triggering more investment, making sure banks lend to the real economy again, creating a connected digital market, a credible foreign policy and ensuring Europe stands on its own feet when it comes to energy security. All these reflect the Political Guidelines on the basis of which Jean-Claude Juncker was elected by the European Parliament.

These Priorities which have already been presented since June 2014,

are the following:

- **A New Boost for Jobs, Growth and Investment**
- **A Connected Digital Single Market**
- **A Resilient Energy Union with a Forward-Looking Climate Change Policy**
- **A Deeper and Fairer Internal Market with a Strengthened Industrial Base**
- **A Deeper and Fairer Economic and Monetary Union**
- **A Reasonable and Balanced Free Trade Agreement with the U.S.**
- **An Area of Justice and Fundamental Rights Based on Mutual Trust**
- **A New Policy on Migration**
- **A Stronger Global Actor**
- **A Union of Democratic Change**



*Mr Jean-Claude Juncker,
New President of the
European Commission*



*Mr Jyrki Katainen,
Commissioner for Jobs,
Growth, Investment and
Competitiveness*

The Juncker Commission's top priority is **to get Europe growing again and increase the number of jobs without creating new debt**. The Commission's Jobs, Growth and Investment package will focus on cutting regulation, making smarter use of existing financial resources and making flexible use of public funds – to provide up to 300 billion EUR in additional private and public investment over the next three years.

The **new Commissioner for Jobs, Growth, Investment and Competitiveness is Mr Jyrki Katainen** from Finland, who will be responsible among others, for the coordination of the mid-term review of the Europe 2020 strategy - Europe's economic growth strategy, for pursuing structural reforms in EU countries and ensuring, together with the Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, that the EU's economic policy coordination is successful and takes account of the social impacts of reforms, as well as for the improvement of the business environment in order to make Europe a more attractive place in which to work and invest.

In addition, the new Commissioner for Employment, Social Affairs, Skills and Labour Mobility, is Ms Marianne Thyssen from Belgium, whose main responsibilities are, among others, the following:

- **Ensuring that employment and social policy are at the centre of the European Semester for economic policy coordination** by working in full partnership with EU countries and social partners to create good jobs, and modernise labour markets and social protection systems;
- **Promoting the free movement of workers** so that people can take up vacant jobs in other EU countries and employers can adequately fill vacancies, while supporting national authorities to resolve abuses or fraudulent claims;
- Contributing to the growth and investment package and funding initiatives that support access to the labour market, in particular by **promoting vocational training and lifelong learning to strengthen skills and by implementing the Youth Guarantee Scheme**;
- Stepping up the **struggle against inequality and poverty** and ensuring **decent and safe working conditions and equal opportunities** for all on the labour market



*Ms Marianne Thyssen,
Commissioner for
Employment, Social
Affairs, Skills, and
Labour Mobility*

More information: http://ec.europa.eu/about/juncker-commission/docs/pg_en.pdf, http://ec.europa.eu/commission/2014-2019_en

HOW TO DEAL WITH UNDECLARED WORK?



A group of EU member countries will help tackle the problem of the undeclared work, according to a new opinion by the European Economic and Social Committee (EESC). It is estimated that in Europe, 2.1 trillion EUR of income is lost to undeclared work annually .

There is no initiative at the European level on coping with undeclared work. The working group is meant to bring member countries together to coordinate strategies at the European level, in order to prevent further increase of undeclared work. Undeclared work generates immediate earnings, but there are negative consequences over the long-term. Short term labourers tend to have poorer working conditions when doing undeclared work, and suffer from poor health and inadequate pension coverage. The state is similarly deprived of taxable revenues to finance public services.

The EESC has proposed a number of instruments to decrease undeclared work. These are tax incentives, fines, inspections, better regulation, and a better coordination at the European level through a mandatory platform. The proposal to establish a European taskforce, obligatory for all member countries, comes from the Commission and was endorsed by the EESC on 10 September 2014.

More information: <http://tinyurl.com/m7e6vmk>

INVESTMENTS TO CREATE MORE AND BETTER JOBS

EU leaders and social partners agreed on the 23rd of October 2014 on the urgent need to stimulate investment and create more jobs in order to meet the objectives of the Europe 2020 Strategy, the EU's long-term growth and jobs plan. The event was in the framework of The Tripartite Social Summit, which meets twice a year, and is an opportunity for an exchange of views between European employer and employee representatives (the social partners), the Commission, EU Heads of State and Government, and Employment Ministers from the countries holding the current and future Council Presidencies.

Both workers' and employers' organisations (the social partners) joined the President of the European Commission, José Manuel Barroso and the President of the European Council, Herman Van Rompuy, in agreeing on the need to pursue reforms to support a long-term recovery. They also discussed the EU's economic governance in general. The talks also focused on promoting a job-rich recovery, namely on ways to foster youth employment, and the social partners' key role in this, as well as their importance in designing and implementing reforms at European and national level.



More information: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2150&furtherNews=yes>

REPORT ON "YOUR FIRST EURES JOB"



The European Commission has published on 24 September 2014, a report evaluating Your first EURES job, a mobility scheme to help young Europeans between 18 and 30 to find a job, traineeship or apprenticeship in other EU countries The aim of the evaluation was to take stock of the results achieved over the first two years of the scheme and of the main challenges to be addressed in the future.

The study has put "Your first EURES job" into perspective on the basis of the various evaluation criteria, like for instance, relevance, complementarity, added value, organization and governance, effectiveness and efficiency. The evaluation report based on evidence-based findings and experience of other EU mobility schemes, calls the Commission, among others to:

- continue managing Your first EURES job at EU level;
- ensure a balance of project types and geographical coverage;
- extend the duration of projects and strengthen public-private partnership networks;
- continue providing implementation guidelines and monitoring the progress made.

More information: <http://tinyurl.com/lnmjixu>

ERASMUS BOOSTS EMPLOYABILITY AND JOB MOBILITY

EMPLOYMENT AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

ERASMUS STUDENTS



Young people who study or train abroad not only gain knowledge in specific disciplines, but also strengthen key transversal skills, according to a new study on the impact of the European Union's Erasmus student exchange programme. The Erasmus Impact Study is the largest of its kind and received feedback from nearly 80.000 respondents including students and businesses.

The Erasmus Impact Study shows that graduates with international experience fare much better on the job market and are half as likely to experience long-term unemployment. Employers are looking for personality traits boosted by the programme, and tests reveal that Erasmus students show higher values for these personality traits. Students benefitting from Erasmus funding can choose to study or take up a traineeship abroad. The report reveals that more than one in three Erasmus trainees is offered a position at the enterprise where they do their traineeship. Erasmus trainees are also more entrepreneurial than their stay-at-home counterparts: 1 in 10 has started their own company. They can also expect faster career advancement; staff with international experience are given greater professional responsibility.

Erasmus also offers students broader horizons and social links. 40% have changed their country of residence or work at least once since graduation, while 93% of students with international experience can imagine living abroad in the future. The new Erasmus+ programme will provide opportunities to go abroad for 4 million people, in the next seven years (2014-2020). Erasmus+ will be even more accessible thanks to increased linguistic support, more flexible rules and additional support for people with special needs, from disadvantaged backgrounds or from remote areas.

More information: http://europa.eu/rapid/press-release_IP-14-1025_en.htm?locale=en

NEW PUBLIC EMPLOYMENT SERVICES NETWORK



In September, it was launched officially the Public Employment Services Network, a new cooperation structure helping Member States further coordinate their policies and actions against unemployment and reinforcing the European economic governance framework. Upgrading the support provided by Member States' public employment services to young people is particularly important for the practical implementation of the Youth Guarantee, the ambitious EU-wide reform aiming to help all jobless people under 25 to find employment.

This new Network is based on a Council and European Parliament Decision to maximise the efficiency of public employment services through closer cooperation. The new structure will provide greater opportunities for comparing public employment services performance against relevant benchmarks, for identifying good practices and for improving co-operation, through among others, mutual learning and peer to peer assistance programmes. National policy makers will use the Network's expertise in the design, development and assessment of employment policies.

More information: <http://tinyurl.com/lqkeyv>

MILAN EMPLOYMENT SUMMIT

"Our unemployed youngsters cannot wait any longer: Member States should accelerate the implementation of structural reforms to support youth employment, making full use of the financial resources allocated under the Youth Employment Initiative and the European Social Fund" stated Christa Schweng, President of Labour Market Observatory (LMO) at the European Economic and Social Committee, on the occasion of the special summit on employment organised on 8th October 2014 in Milan.

The reforms should notably focus on aligning education systems with labour market needs and on transforming public employment services into real placement agencies. The implementation of the Youth Guarantee is also an opportunity to rethink the role of some

labour market rules which may prevent the young workforce to enter the job market. These are some of the conclusions of a study conducted by the EESC Labour Market Observatory on the implementation of EU policies for youth employment. The study stresses that the varied situations faced by unemployed young people justify a tailor-made approach, adapted to national circumstances. Its success lies with the full involvement of social partners and civil society, which contributes to greater acceptance of reforms by the population.



More information: <http://www.eesc.europa.eu/?i=portal.en.lmo-observatory-impact-study-youth>

REPORT ABOUT BOTTLENECK VACANCIES

The European Commission has published on 19 September 2014 a study on bottleneck occupations, i.e. jobs where employers have had problems in the past to find and hire staff to fill vacancies, and expect the same in the future.

The study, which has been carried out in all EU Member States plus Iceland, Norway and Liechtenstein, found that bottleneck vacancies do not only occur in high skilled occupations, such as health, IT, etc, but are also found in skilled and low skilled manual occupations, in manufacturing, construction or tourism. This is due both to mismatch in educational choices at high skill level, and to poor wage or



working conditions which lead to difficulties to replace ageing workers at lower skill levels.

Most of the bottlenecks identified are structural, persisting over long periods, showing that education and training systems need to better and more swiftly aligned to labour market needs. At EU level, the study recommends better targeted EU mobility aimed at specific specializations and occupations in need, as well as better matching of skills in EU recruitment. EU action should upscale and focus more narrowly targeted mobility tools for young people such as Your First EURES Job and should improve skills-based matching on the EURES Job Mobility Portal.

More information: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?langId=en&catId=89&newsId=2131&furtherNews=yes>

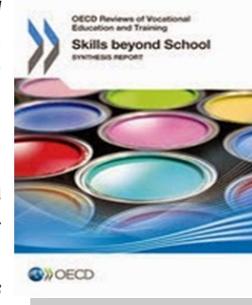
BETTER PROFESSIONAL TRAINING WOULD BOOST SKILLS AND JOB CREATION

Countries should step up their efforts to improve the quality of post-secondary vocational training in order to meet the changing needs of today's job market, according to a new OECD report, published on 13 November 2014. The Report named "Skills Beyond School: Synthesis Report" highlights the fact that most basic vocational courses cannot teach the higher level skills needed in an increasing number of jobs in fast-growing sectors, such as healthcare technicians and junior managers.

Some conclusions of the report are the following:

- All professional education and training programmes should **include some work-based learning as a condition of receiving government funding**. This work-based learning should be systematic, quality-assured and credit-bearing;
- Ensure that **the workforce in professional training institutions benefit from a strong blend of pedagogical skills, industry experience and academic knowledge**.
- Assess students' basic skills at the start of programmes and **integrate basic skills development into professional programmes**.
- **Engage industry stakeholders** and develop and sustain vocational systems in close partnership with those stakeholders. This is key as work-based learning is too often weak and unsystematic, and employers and trade unions are sometimes too remote from the development of qualifications, so that they end up having limited value in the labour market.

More information: <http://tinyurl.com/mxv3lcd>



INVESTMENT IN ADULT LEARNING PAYS OFF



A research study, conducted by the German Institute for Adult Education (DIE) and the Institute for Education and Socio-Economic Research and Consulting (FiBS) shows that the returns to adult learning are substantial and accrues to the economy, individuals, and society. The analysis suggests that adult learning is even more important for innovation performance than higher education. This is explained with the fact that for example learning in the workplace through task complexity is the most important driver for innovation performance.

Focusing on economic benefits, a positive relationship was identified between adult learning and economic growth: countries **with higher growth rates show higher adult learning participation rates during the last five years**. As a result, it can come to income benefits and reduced unemployment rates.

Participation rates are higher in countries, where individuals pay less in relation to their income. Frequently persons with lower formal qualifications and income levels indicate costs as an obstacle. **Therefore, the study suggests keeping the costs for the individual low, through state funding and funding from employers.**

Countries that spend at least 1% of GDP on adult learning, reach participation rates of almost 60%, with employers being the biggest financiers of adult learning (50% of overall spending). Sadly, the effectiveness of these spending figures can very often put into question, as some countries show comparatively high spending figures in relation to their participation rate. Unfortunately, this research also confirms that in the countries only very little is spent on non-vocational adult learning, which is at the utmost 10 to 15% of the overall budget for adult learning.

More information: <http://tinyurl.com/jvnhe6o>

INTEGRATION OF DIGITAL SKILLS IN SCHOOLS

Low digital skills and competences among school pupils and the need to integrate effective use of information and communication technologies into teacher training are among the most pressing challenges faced by European school education today, according to a report published on 2 October 2014 by the European Commission and the New Media Consortium.

The first-ever Horizon Report Europe: 2014 Schools edition, highlights the trends and technological developments that are likely to have an impact on education over the next five years. It grades the challenges faced by European schools in three categories: 'Solvable', 'Difficult' and 'Wicked'. The report echoes the objectives of the Commission's Opening up Education initiative and is based on input from more than 50 experts from 22 European countries, the Commission's Joint Research Centre, the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the United Nations' Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO).

It says action is urgently needed to promote innovation in the classroom to take advantage of increased use of social media, open educational resources and the rise of data-driven learning and assessment. **Integrating ICT in teacher education and addressing students' low digital competence are solvable challenges.** Creating 'authentic' learning opportunities, based on real-life experience, and blending formal and non-formal education, will be more difficult to implement in the short-term. The toughest, 'wicked' challenges include the need to improve the teaching of complex thinking and ensuring students are 'co-designers' of learning.

More information: <http://tinyurl.com/nkdukqm>



RECOGNISING SKILLS GAINED OUTSIDE OF SCHOOL OR UNIVERSITY



Member States still have a long way to go to ensure that knowledge, skills and competences that people have acquired outside school or university are recognized, valued and accepted despite some good progress since 2010, according to a report which was released on 20 November 2014.

The 2014 European Inventory on Validation of Non-formal and Informal Learning, which covered 33 European countries (EU Member States, Iceland, Liechtenstein, Norway, Switzerland and Turkey), showed that a better design and implementation of effective tools to recognise those skills is needed so they can better contribute to tackling current bottlenecks within the EU labour market. **The sharp increase of structural unemployment in the EU has showed the existence of a massive skills mismatch within the EU labour market.** Some of the major challenges identified by the report include:

- The low level of awareness regarding the possibilities and potential value of validation, especially amongst the general public;
- The social and labour market acceptance of validation, whilst growing, remains in many countries lower than the acceptance of formal education;
- The level of bureaucracy and costs involved in validation are still a significant barrier to its implementation in most countries

More information: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?>

HIGHLY SKILLED THAN HIGHLY EDUCATED LABOUR FORCE

A report compiled by the Centre for Research on Education (JRC) supports that highly skilled may be more important than highly educated in modern economies for social well-being. The report comes to that conclusion by analysing the links between formal education, skills among the working age population, as well as different aspects of social well-being, including interpersonal trust, volunteering and health

According to the report, policy interventions should be geared **towards the enhancement of skills both in schools and throughout adulthood** while the educational systems should focus more on the provision of adequate skills fostering effective and fruitful participation in the labour market and social life. These findings are in line with current studies suggesting that returns to education in terms of economic growth are also determined by the skill level of students and adult learners.

More information: <http://tinyurl.com/kaxf7k2>



GREEN ACTION PLAN FOR SMES

The Europe 2020 Strategy outlines the EU's priority to become a sustainable economy and set ambitious objectives for climate action and energy efficiency. The Small Business Act (SBA) highlighted that the EU and Member States should enable SMEs to turn environmental challenges into opportunities. The Green Action Plan (GAP) gives a clear direction and framework for how the EU, in partnership with Member States and regions, intends to help SMEs exploit the business opportunities that the transition to a green economy offers.

This initiative concretely presents a series of new or revised SME-oriented actions proposed at European level. The GAP aims to (1) improve resource efficiency of European SMEs, (2) support green entrepreneurship, (3) exploit the opportunities of greener value chains, and (4) facilitate market access for green SMEs.



More information: <http://tinyurl.com/k3hvf3h>

ACCESS TO FINANCE IS A KEY CHALLENGE FOR COMPANIES' GROWTH



EU's small businesses are increasingly optimistic about their growth prospects but many are still concerned about the lack of access to finance, according to a survey published on 12th of November 2014 by the European Commission. Between April and September 2014, SMEs demands for financing were not always fulfilled - especially for smaller and younger companies.

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More information: <http://tinyurl.com/qhkqgbz>

SMART TAX REFORMS

A new study which was published on 12 August 2014, estimates that EU Member States could make their business sectors more competitive by changing the way taxes are collected from companies. The study suggests that by reducing the business tax burden linked to labour and shifting the expected tax revenue to the energy consumption facet instead, Member States could lower companies' overall production costs. According to the study, if the tax reforms were in this direction, they would make the business sector more profitable whilst at the same time fostering job creation and reducing CO2 emissions.

The study indicates that in order to encourage growth and job creation, tax reforms should not be based merely on profit taxation, as the overall production costs for companies contain a much larger set of taxes, including labour, environmental, property and or local/regional taxes. The results of the study suggest that increasing energy taxes and lowering labour taxes could entail a significant reduction in the total production costs and thus yield substantial efficiency gains for firms.

More information: <https://ec.europa.eu/jrc/en/news/potential-triple-win-smart-tax-reforms?search>



QUARTERLY REVIEW ON EMPLOYMENT AND SOCIAL SITUATION



The economic recovery which started in the spring of 2013 remains fragile and future employment developments remain uncertain, according to the European Commission's latest *Employment and Social Situation Quarterly Review*, which was published on 6th of October 2014.

The Review also takes a look at differences in income inequality among Member States, and underlines the relevance of investing in skills through life to increase the employability of workers. Employment has continued to grow in most sectors since mid-2013. However, many of the new jobs created are part-time or temporary. Unemployment still remains close to historically high levels: almost 13 million people having been unemployed for more than one year. Moreover, one in three unemployed people have spent more than two years without a job.

For young people, the situation has improved, with significant reductions in unemployment rates in most Member States. Nevertheless, youth unemployment remains very high in countries such as Greece and Spain. Among those who have a job, almost half are on temporary jobs and nearly a quarter works part-time.

Member States need to continue their efforts to turn the Youth Guarantee into a reality to ensure that every young person gets help to find either a decent job or the opportunity to find training, experience or learning relevant to getting a job in the future.

More information: <http://ec.europa.eu/social/main.jsp?catId=737>

SOCIAL AGENDA—SEPTEMBER 2014 ISSUE

The new issue of the *Social Agenda* (No 38) which was published on September 2014, focuses on *Health and Safety at work 2014 – 2020*. The European Commission adopted during the previous summer, a *Communication on an EU strategic framework on health and safety at work for the years 2014-2020*.

The issue includes a special feature which presents the novelties of this strategic framework, such as a new emphasis on work-related diseases, tackling new risks, reaching out to micro and small companies, addressing demographic change, contributing to economic recovery, improving data, reinforcing the global dimension, etc. The new issue contains also an interview of the outgoing Employment and Social Affairs European Commissioner Mr László Andor, who highlights the success of the “Youth Guarantee” initiative, as well as a presentation of the Fund for European Aid to the most deprived.



More information: <http://tinyurl.com/oe3k4bq>

NEW REPORT ON STRATEGIES OF UNEMPLOYED PEOPLE IN EUROPE



The Directorate General of Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion, has published on 27 November 2014, a new report under the title “Facing the crisis - The coping strategies of unemployed people in Europe”. The report explores how those households that are particularly exposed to poverty and long-term unemployment manage to deal with the blows dealt by the economic crisis.

Some of the report's interesting outcomes are:

- the unemployment compensation system is not identical in those countries in which the interviews were carried out. Access to housing assistance, extended social security or health care coverage also varies from one country to another;
- expenses that are unnecessary or unjustifiable given their employment situation and its economic effects are first to be curtailed;
- the unemployed in different countries are not all in the same boat. Deprivation cuts far deeper in the southern European countries and Romania than in France and Germany
- there is divergence between the general attitude of German and French unemployed individuals, who expressed embarrassment in asking for assistance, and the unemployed in the southern European countries for whom it is legitimate to turn first to family members in a time of need, even if this dependence may also be viewed as an imposition.

More information: <http://tinyurl.com/py7jkyt>

UPCOMING EVENTS

- **The Reindustrialisation of Europe: Innovation, jobs, growth**
24 February 2015, Brussels, Belgium.
http://www.eu-ems.com/summary.asp?event_id=247&page_id=2171
- **17th International Exhibition on “EDUCATION & CAREER”**
7-8 March 2015 Athens, Greece
http://www.ekpaidefsi.gr/default.aspx?Languages_id=2
- **EUROPEAN CAREER GUIDANCE CONFERENCE 2015**
13-17 May, Porto, Portugal.
<http://www.career-eu.info/index.php?id=1657>
- **ERASMUS Congress and Exhibition - ERACON 2015**
13-17 May 2015, Porto, Portugal
<http://www.eracon.info/?id=234>

HOW TO BECOME A MEMBER

The Association is open to any individual or organisation interested or dealing with Career or Employment issues, as well as any organisation willing to become a One-Stop-Service-Shop for Career Guidance.

The application procedure to become a member of the Association is very easy. The following link provides direct access to the subscription webpage and all the necessary information that the applicant needs to know:

<http://www.career-eu.info/index.php?id=137>

The Association offers **two kind of subscription schemes**:

- For Institutional/Organization membership €150
- For Individual membership €100

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