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Dear reader,

We are happy to invite you to **participate in the Annual Regional Conference online!**

The Regional Challenge Fund's flagship hybrid event, the fifth **Annual Regional Conference is titled "From Skills Shortage to Talent Pipeline: Strengthening VET-Business Partnerships in the Western Balkans"**. This year, the physical venue of the event will be Sarajevo, Bosnia and Herzegovina, with online participation.

Enterprises, VET providers, donors, regional experts, chambers of commerce, and others will put one of the region's most pressing challenges at the centre of the conversation: **how to turn skills shortages into sustainable talent pipelines.**

Expect discussions on stronger VET-business partnerships, the technical, digital and green skills needed for EU value chains, the impact of AI and digitalisation on the world of work, effective work-based learning, and RCF-

supported partnerships that are already helping close skills gaps across the region.

Join the conversation online on 17 November 2026 from 9:00 to 13:00.

Register for online participation

While we look ahead to November, the past three months have been full of activity across the RCF community. From training teachers and in-company mentors and delivering industry-standard equipment to opening modern learning environments and strengthening practical training, RCF-supported partnerships have continued turning investment into better opportunities for learners and businesses across the Western Balkans. In this edition, we bring you some of the highlights from July, August and September.

The Net4VET Challenge Returns in 2026

Great skills are not built by schools or companies alone. They are built through partnership.

This idea is at the heart of the **Partners in Skills – Net4VET Challenge 2026**, which invites RCF-awarded consortia to showcase what can be achieved when vocational education providers and enterprises work side by side.

The annual challenge encourages consortia to showcase, through their Net4VET profiles, the achievements, results, and lessons emerging from their RCF-supported partnerships.

To take part, consortia are invited to share the latest information via their Net4VET profile, particularly the **"We are great at…"** section, demonstrate how their project has recently strengthened cooperation between VET providers and businesses, and submit the online application form by 2 October 2026, when the evaluation starts.

RCF in Action

Albania: Strengthening Teachers and In-Company Mentors

An important milestone for dual VET in Albania was reached with the certification of **16 VET teachers and 30 in-company mentors**, supported by the RCF Accompanying Measure. Out of 225 trained mentors, around 140 are expected to be certified, helping establish a quality-assured model for mentor training that can be replicated across VET providers in Albania.

Read more

Serbia: Building Stronger Mentorship and Teaching in Subotica

Teachers from the **School of Chemistry and Technology Subotica** and representatives of its partner companies completed a two-day training programme supporting cooperative training for Confectioners and Bakers. By strengthening teaching, assessment, workplace learning and mentoring skills, the programme helps create better practical learning experiences for students.

Read more

Bosnia and Herzegovina: Modernising Veterinary Education in Sarajevo

With RCF support, the **Veterinary Faculty of the University of Sarajevo** acquired state-of-the-art educational models and simulators through an investment worth **EUR 250,000**. The equipment allows students to practise diagnostic and clinical procedures in a controlled environment, strengthening practical skills while supporting animal welfare in line with the internationally recognised 3R principles.

Read more

Albania: Industry-Standard Training for Beauty Professionals

VTI New Generation in Tirana received advanced aesthetic, beauty and dermatological treatment equipment worth **more than EUR 240,000** as the first phase of its RCF-supported investment. Together with further equipment and cooperation with six partner companies, the investment will help bring practical training closer to current industry practice.

Read more

Serbia: A New Metal Processing Workshop in Užice

The **Technical School Užice** completed its modern metal processing workshop, equipped with CNC machines, a robotic arm, 3D printers and modern toolsets. Developed in cooperation with eight partner companies, the new learning environment will give students hands-on experience with technologies used in today's manufacturing sector.

Read more

Serbia: New IT Classrooms Ready for Students in Niš

The **Electrotechnical School "Mija Stanimirović"** and **IT General High School "Bora Stanković" in Niš** completed the modernisation of their IT classrooms through an RCF-funded project. New computers and smart boards will support practical teaching and help students build digital skills for careers in a rapidly evolving technology sector.

Read more

Bosnia and Herzegovina: New Equipment, New Knowledge in Bijeljina

Teachers at the **Agricultural and Medical School in Bijeljina** completed a five-day professional training programme on new laboratory equipment provided with RCF support. Over 40 hours of theoretical and hands-on

training, teachers strengthened their skills in using laboratory systems for protein and fibre analysis, preparing the equipment for regular practical teaching.

Read more

Serbia: RCF Joins "Germany and Serbia. Together" in Subotica

RCF joined the **"Germany and Serbia. Together" festival**, celebrating 25 years of German-Serbian development cooperation. Students from the School of Chemistry and Technology Subotica showcased their vocational skills using equipment procured with RCF support, bringing practical VET closer to visitors and the wider community.

Read more

Serbia: Responsible Development of New Learning Environments

During the summer, the RCF Environmental and Social Management Plan team monitored **four RCF-supported construction sites in Čačak, Niš and Subotica**. The visits helped ensure that environmental, health, safety and social requirements are followed as new and improved learning environments take shape.

Read more

RCF Introduces Electronic Bid Submission from 1 October 2026

Starting from **1 October 2026, the Regional Challenge Fund moves to electronic submission of bids for SUPPLY and WORKS tenders through the E-Submission Platform**.

From this date onwards, bids for newly published tenders will be submitted exclusively through the platform, providing a single digital channel for accessing tender documentation and submitting offers.

The E-Submission Platform is available in **German and English**, with the English version accessible through the language option in the lower right corner of the platform interface. Companies can create an account under

their company name to access relevant documents and submit their offers electronically.

Where a **Bid Security** is required, the original Bid Security must still be submitted in hard copy to the FMU before the submission deadline, regardless of the method used to submit the bid.

Access the E-Submission Platform

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