

15th Meeting of the Eastern Partnership Platform 4

“Contacts Between People”

Tackling skills mismatch of graduates from higher education and vocational education and training

I represent the Committee of the Regions, the European institution with a mission to best represent the interests of regional and local institutions and communities.

And at the regional level, I am the president of the Harghita County Council, a rural region in Romania.

In 2014, I was nominated rapporteur of the Committee of the Regions on aspects of **European higher education in the world and Youth Report**. This opinion summarized the possibilities for making regional higher education institutions more competitive in the global market.

CORLEAP (The Conference of Regional and Local Authorities for the Eastern Partnership)

A first thematic report in the framework of CORLEAP is being prepared on the subject of **“Development of active citizenship as a way to strengthen local democracy in the Eastern Partnership countries”**.

We would welcome an opportunity to present the findings also at the **Platform 4 meeting**.

In the opinion adopted by the Committee, we clearly stressed the importance of **knowledge transfer** from higher education and research institutions to regional public and private authorities.

States should develop programs and support mechanisms to assist higher educational institutions at local and regional level in implementing their internationalization strategies.

Dissemination of **best practices** and **systemic solutions** in the European higher educational system to neighbouring and pre-accession countries is needed, not least because this will more effectively facilitate student mobility from those countries to Europe, and give Europe a stronger position in the competition for talent.

In the field of education, the opinion suggests a "minimum qualifications and skills guarantee" for all young people in Europe, as well as a basic package including access to high speed internet, language learning, career guidance and mentoring, funding opportunities for studies and promoting the right to a first job.

It also highlights the importance of matching skills with employers' needs and promoting professional training initiatives, tailored to regional specificities and specific skills.

One of the biggest issues is the problem of brain drain affecting most of the Center and Eastern European countries. We consider that special financing mechanisms should be developed by Member States to stop this type of migration

This last idea is exactly what the discussion is about.