

Dear Colleagues!

Dear Participants!

I am happy to have the opportunity to represent today the point of view of the Committee of the Regions regarding the **migration of skilled labour**, respectively the **phenomenon of brain drain**.

As we all know, at the heart of the European Union there are **four key principles**.

The right of the freedom constitutes **many opportunities** for Member States and their citizens, but they also mean **a wide range of challenges too**.

If domestic policies fail to deal with these challenges, we will face with the **the brain drain phenomenon**, which constitutes a real problem mostly in **Eastern European countries**.

Facing with the phenomenon of brain drain in Romania

Since Romania joined the European Union 12 years ago, over two million Romanians have emigrated in search of better work opportunities and lives.

According to the World Bank's data, between 1990 – 2017, **Romania registered the highest rise in the migration stock among all EU states – 287 per cent (two-hundred eighty-seven per cent)**.

The loss of human capital represented by the highly skilled Romanians already **has an impact on the key sectors of the Romanian economy**.

During the past years, several initiatives were implemented at national level in order to attract back Romanian citizens living abroad (for example: the Romanian government launched a scheme offering \$50,000 (fifty-thousand) grants, along with business guidance, to each person who wants to repatriate and start their own business).

The impact of these types of initiatives was more or less successful.

In this regard I would like to emphasize that these initiatives works **only if they are integrated in a clear national strategy, which aim is to reduce the migration of skilled labour.**

The role of local and regional authorities

When it comes to the migration of skilled labour, it is very important to implement the well-known phrase, respectively: **“Think globally, act locally!”**

Local and regional authorities have a key role in reducing the migration of young people.

Local initiatives have a positive great impact, therefore LRA’s must ensure **equal opportunities, promote social integration** and they must improve the **youth’s competitiveness on the labour market:**

For example, LRAs have competencies:

- To ensure equal opportunities for young people **in small or isolated communities;**
- To promote **professional training initiatives** related to regional characteristics and specific skills;
- **To collaborate with private stakeholders** , who are aware of the needs of their target group of young people and turn them into opportunities for future employability;
- **To collaborate with local education institutions** (eg. Regional universitites, high school), who own data about their students after graduation;

LRAs also have attributions in finding local solutions that help make the given **region more competitive.**

Development of education

One of the key sectors that mostly affect the migration of young people is **EDUCATION**.

Although many positive measures have been taken in the field of education development, **it still faces serious shortcomings in the effective use of available resources**.

The **employment rate of higher education and vocational graduates** in the EU has not fully recovered after the 2008 financial crisis.

The EU needs to identify, develop and support areas, which represent the key element of development.

At the same time we need to take into consideration that **every country and region has its own specific features**.

Huge differences can be observed not only among Member States, but also **among regions**.

In this regard, the EU policies should put more emphasis on regional differences - **in particular on less developed regions or rural areas** - when it comes to the development of educational strategies.

Furthermore, as the rapporteur of the COR on the opinion “**DEVELOPMENT OF STEAM EDUCATION**”, I would like to emphasize that the development of this area, as well as **digital education** has been proved as an effective tool in reducing migration.

Unemployment rates are lowest in these sectors in almost all Member States.

In the medium to long term the **number of jobs** in sectors related to STEM **will rise significantly**.

For example, in Skandinavia STEM education has been proved to be an **efficient tool for combating the phenomenon of brain drain**.

Local and regional authorities have an important role in this process as they play a decisive role **in mobilizing EU funds**.

A quality education system must foster **acquisition of key competences** - regardless of student's social and economic status.

I also want to stress out the important role of education in maintaining **cultural diversity** and promoting **interculturalism**.

In this regard every effort should be made **to prevent limitations to on access education**, be they economic, ethnic, linguistic or any other type of restrictions.

We are all aware of the fact that **there are still measures that restrict the access of minority students to mother tongue education at all levels**.

Therefore, such initiative, as for example the **Minority Safepack** are fundamental in maintaining national identity

Supporting resettlement

Regarding the migration of young people, it is very important to promote the possibility of returning to their region of origin.

Young people should be encouraged to use the knowledge gained **through mobility programs at home**, because a competitive region presupposes competitive professionals.

In this regard, local and regional authorities have a key **role in motivating skilled people to return to their home country with specific measures**.

Let me highlight some possible initiatives:

- **create a fund** to stimulate the resettlement of people working abroad.

Therefore, we should check whether for example the **Erasmus programme** would allow the setting up of such a fund.

- **create a PLATFORM** for the young, where they can find all the necessary **INFORMATION** and **POSSIBILITIES** in one place, for example:

- COURSES, TRAINING for all ages at the appropriate level
- ALTERNATIVE career paths, so that young people do not have to leave and work abroad
- MOTIVATION TO STAY or RETURN – presenting good examples and practices
- Guarantee a BASIC PACKAGE for young people, which focuses on:
 - access to high speed internet
 - It should foster basic digital skills
 - it should foster learning a second foreign language
 - it should offer career guidance and continuous mentoring, involvement in volunteering and
 - it should provide accessible forms of funding in order to carry out studies that offer career prospects.