



Białystok, 28 September 2011

Go East, Erasmus!

Meeting of Ministers responsible for higher education from EU member states and Eastern Partnership countries

CHAIR'S SUMMARY OF THE DISCUSSION

The Ministers responsible for higher education in member states of the European Union and in the countries of the Eastern Partnership, or their representatives, assembled in Białystok on the eve of the second Eastern Partnership Summit (Warsaw, 29-30 September) discussed ways to increase the scale, ease and quality of participation of Eastern Partnership countries in EU programmes for the mobility of students, scholars and staff of higher education institutions.

1. The participants of the discussion:

- 1) welcomed the joint communication of the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and of the European Commission 'A New Response to A Changing Neighbourhood: a Review of European Neighbourhood Policy' (25 May 2011), which proposes to expand the participation of Eastern Partnership countries in programmes such as Erasmus Mundus, Tempus and Youth in Action and open future new EU programmes such as Lifelong Learning to Eastern Partnership countries;
- 2) welcomed the Commission's communication 'Supporting growth and jobs - an agenda for the modernization of Europe's higher education systems' (20 September 2011), which states that 'attracting the best students, academics and researchers from outside the EU and developing new forms of cross-border cooperation are key drivers of quality' and envisages a single programme for education, training and youth named Education Europe, which 'will contribute to the Bologna 20 % mobility target'.

2. The participants of the discussion underlined the importance of education as a unique vehicle for the realization of the goals of the Eastern Partnership, as well as emphasized its role as one of the crucial tools for strengthening democracy, economy and civil society in wider Europe.

3. The participants of the discussion appreciated the contribution of the European Union's programmes such as Erasmus Mundus, Tempus, Youth in Action and Marie Curie to mobility and excellence of higher education and research in Eastern Partnership countries.

4. With the goal of increasing the scale, ease and quality of academic mobility between European Union and Eastern Partnership countries in mind, the participants of the discussion further agreed that:

- 1) There is a need to increase the number of mobility opportunities for nationals of Eastern Partnership under Action 2 of the Erasmus Mundus Programme in the current EU multiannual financial framework.
- 2) There is a need to consider the option that the future programme for education, training and youth being developed for the 2014-2020 financial framework should create the perspective of appropriate participation of the Eastern Partnership countries in the programme and in particular their full participation in the programme's component that will succeed the current Erasmus programme for student mobility and will share its essential traits of ease and large scale of participation.

5. The participants of the discussion expressed their hope that the Heads of State or Government of the European Union countries and Eastern Partnership countries and the representatives of the European Union assembled in Warsaw for the second Eastern Partnership Summit on 29-30 September 2011 will endorse the goal of increasing the scale, ease and quality of academic mobility between European Union and Eastern Partnership countries.

6. The participants of the discussion agreed that they will commit themselves to promote mobility and cooperation between EU and EaP countries to the best of their abilities within their sphere competence as ministers responsible for higher education. They will discuss with their colleagues from different ministries the possibility of abolishing obstacles to mobility that lie outside of their remit.