

15th MEETING OF THE EASTERN PARTNERSHIP

Platform 4: 'Contacts between people'

7 June 2016

IMPLEMENTATION REPORT of WORK PROGRAMME 2014-17

5th Progress report – December 2015 - June 2016

CONTENT

1. Introduction
2. Education
3. Youth
4. Research and Innovation (including Information Society)
5. Culture
6. Timetable of events

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2015 Riga Declaration and the review of the European Neighbourhood Policy stressed the importance of people-to-people contacts and mobility as part of a comprehensive collaboration between the EU and the partners in its Neighbourhood. Young people's education and employability as well as job creation were mentioned as priorities in the Communication.¹

Platform 4 contributes to the goals of the Eastern Partnership, notably in the area of people-to-people contacts and serves to promote European values, political stability, economic growth and social justice. Platform 4 expands and deepens collaboration in education, youth, research and innovation, information society, culture and creativity, and audio-visual sectors.

The objective of this report is to inform Platform 4 participants on the activities implemented since the last Platform 4 meeting in December 2015, organised on the basis of a two-track approach: policy dialogue on the one hand, and support to capacity building and cooperation projects through participation in EU international cooperation programmes.

A list of events planned in 2016 and beyond is attached.

2. EDUCATION

Education is an important aspect of the dialogue for cooperation and modernisation reforms. Investment in education and training for skills development is essential not only to boost growth, but to also create critical and engaged citizens and to share common values, which is the essential basis for a strong, balanced and long-lasting relationship between EU and its Eastern Partnership neighbours.

¹ http://ec.europa.eu/enlargement/neighbourhood/pdf/key-documents/151118_joint-communication_review-of-the-enp_en.pdf

A coherent package of 4 actions is offered in the area of **higher education**:

Credit mobility / international opening of Erasmus: this action supports credit mobility i.e. student mobility between 3 and 12 months (in both directions) to obtain credits in a host institution, which are then recognised by the home institution. It also funds staff mobility in both directions. Scholarships are awarded on the basis of inter-institutional agreements between EU and non-EU universities. It is the international opening of the well-known and established Erasmus programme.

The 2015 call for credit mobility had a total budget for the Eastern Partnership region (EaP) of €18.9 million. Both rounds of the call used 89% of the budget and resulted in 439 bilateral projects between higher education institutions (HEIs) in Europe and EaP.

The selected projects plan that 57% of the mobility will be for students and 43% for staff. Nearly 3,550 participants from Eastern Partnership countries will come to study or teach in a Programme Country in Europe (81% of mobilities proposed) while 850 students and staff will go to one of the Eastern Partnership countries. It means that the 2015 projects will fund nearly 4,400 individual mobilities to and from EaP, compared to the total of 5,800 mobilities funded for the region in the previous programming period 2007-2013 (Erasmus Mundus actions).

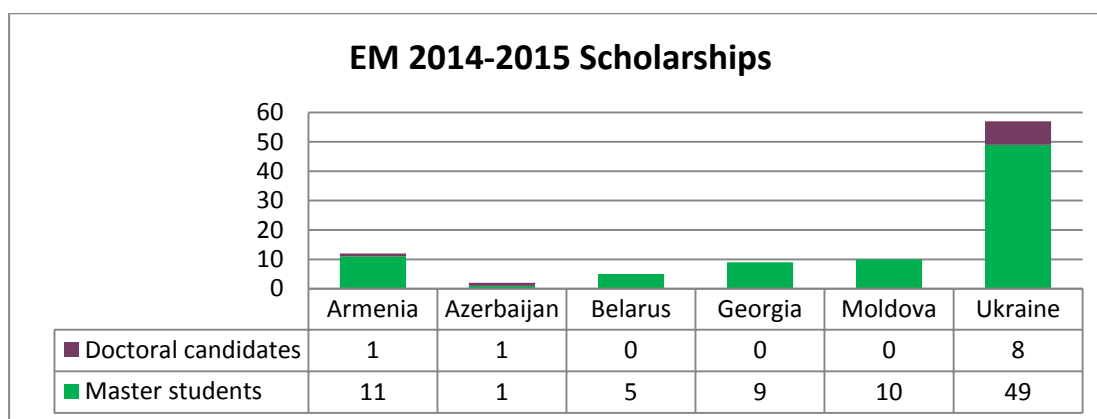
Partner Country	ICM Projects	Participants
Armenia	48	367
Azerbaijan	44	335
Belarus	48	327
Georgia	103	888
Moldova (Republic of)	35	298
Ukraine	161	2,160
Total:	439	4,375

Under the 2016 call, 886 applications were submitted for projects with EaP requesting a total of 17,200 individual mobilities, a 22.5% increase since last year. Projects are currently being selected.

Degree mobility / Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees: Erasmus+ continues to support excellent students through Joint Master Degrees which are offered by consortia of EU and non-EU universities. This action allows students from EaP countries to receive a Joint Master Degree and study in at least two different European countries.

Scholarships and fellowships are awarded on the basis of academic merit and excellence.

In the 2014-2015 intake for Erasmus Mundus Joint Master Degrees (EMJMDs), 85 EaP students received a full scholarship, covering full tuition, living and travel costs and insurance, including those selected within a special ENI East geographical window. In addition, in the Erasmus Mundus Joint Doctorates that is still running, 10 doctoral candidates have been selected from EaP countries.



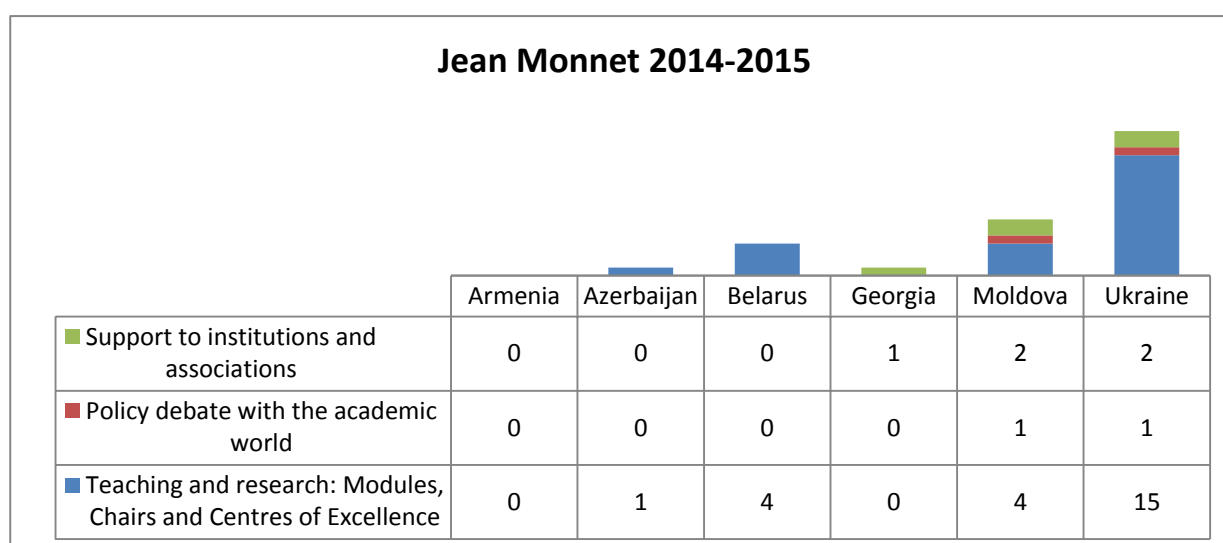
Initial results of the 2016 intake of Erasmus Mundus include 66 scholarships at Master level and 6 fellowships at doctoral level awarded to EaP nationals. The figure includes 24 Master degree scholarships awarded within a dedicated ENI East geographical window.

Capacity building supports joint projects based on multilateral partnerships to fund curriculum development and modernisation, joint or double degrees, new diploma, modern teaching and learning practices, upgrading of facilities and equipment, improving university governance and creating better links between higher education and the world of work. This action also finances projects aiming to make an impact on national systems, through the involvement of national authorities, alongside universities.

23 projects were selected in 2015, involving nearly 90 HEIs from EaP. Under the 2016 call, for which projects are currently being selected, 148 intra-region applications were submitted. EaP countries are also involved in 90 cross-regional applications. The results of the evaluation should be available in July 2016.

Jean Monnet supports teaching or research in European integration issues through dedicated Modules, Chairs or Centres of Excellence. Projects are awarded on the basis of academic merit and relevance; no budget is earmarked for any region.

31 Jean Monnet projects were selected in the Eastern Partnership region in 2014-2015. 168 new applications have been submitted in 2016 call (19% increase compared to 2015).



In the field of **school education**, eTwinning Plus involves a number of selected schools from EaP countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine), and started in 2013. So far, 660 schools and more than 1,500 teachers from EaP countries are registered on the platform and are taking part in 1015 ongoing projects.

The initiative is gaining popularity among the eTwinning community, there are now close to 50,000 eTwinning teachers open to partnerships with eTwinning Plus countries. Since October 2014, the teachers from eTwinning Plus countries can initiate the projects themselves, and 186 are ongoing; they become eligible for national and European Quality Labels, thus we reasonably expect a rise in the number of projects and teachers involved.

3. YOUTH

Cooperation in the field of youth has continued in 2016 through EU programmes:

- **Erasmus+**

Within the context of the Erasmus+ Programme, young people, youth workers and youth policy makers from EaP countries are eligible to take part mainly in two types of activities, together with their counterparts from Erasmus+ Programme Countries:

Learning Mobility of Individuals (Key Action 1) are 'mobility projects for young people and youth workers', which consists of:

- 'Youth Exchanges', in which groups of young people from different countries work together on relevant topics while discovering new cultures, habits and lifestyles;
- The 'European Voluntary Service', which allows young people either individually or in groups to express their personal commitment through unpaid and full-time voluntary service in another country in fields such as culture, social care, civil protection or environment;
- 'Mobility of youth workers', which enhances the professional development of youth workers through seminars, trainings, job shadowing and other mobility opportunities.

Erasmus+ National Agencies are still entitled to use up to 25% of the budget allocated under Key Action 1 for projects involving Partner Countries Neighbouring the EU, including EaP.

Support for policy reform (Key Action 3) supports 'meetings between young people and decision makers in the field of youth', fostering active participation in democratic life and focusing on the priorities set by the Structured Dialogue between young people and decision makers.

In 2015, close to 22,000 young people and youth workers from Eastern Partnership countries and Erasmus+ Programme Countries participated in joint non-formal learning projects within the context of Erasmus+. About 56% of the participants were young people, 44% were youth workers. The percentage of youth workers participating in this cooperation contributes to ensuring the sustainability of the projects' impact. About one third of the total number of participants was from Eastern Partnership countries. For 2016, the same kind of activities is being continued.²

For 2016, the European Parliament has proposed a **preparatory action** for children and **youth exchange** programme between the EU and Ukraine for EUR 300,000. As the envisaged activities were very similar to the Youth Exchanges funded within the framework of Erasmus+ Key Action 1 – Youth Exchanges, these additional funds have been allocated to the Erasmus+ National Agencies.

² The final figures of participants for 2016 will be available in spring 2017.

- **Eastern Partnership EU4Youth**

Building on the results and recommendations of the evaluation of the Eastern Partnership (EaP) Youth Window 2012-2013³, launched by the European Commission in 2014, as well as on key recommendations for the European Union resulting from the 2nd Eastern Partnership Youth Forum (9–11 February 2015, Riga/Latvia), the European Commission is currently designing a new tool for youth in the Eastern Partnership. The new instrument is called EU4Youth. Main aim of such action is to keep engaging youth and civil society from the Eastern Neighbourhood, with a focus on skills development, participation, employability and increased political leadership of youth.

4. RESEARCH AND INNOVATION, INFORMATION SOCIETY

At bilateral level, significant developments occurred regarding **association to Horizon 2020**.. In April 2016, the Horizon 2020 Association Agreement with Georgia was signed, and in May the agreement with Armenia. Horizon 2020 information days for stakeholders and workshops for policy makers were held in Tbilisi at the end of May and in Yerevan at the beginning of June 2016.

Moldova (that became the first EaP country to be associated to the programme on 1 January 2014) and Ukraine already requested support from the H2020 **Policy Support Facility**, for a peer-review of their national research and innovation systems. The Moldovan review reported in May 2016 and the Ukrainian review was launched in May 2016. In the framework of the IncoNet EaP project under the 7th Framework Programme, 'Policy mix peer reviews' have been conducted in Georgia and Armenia.

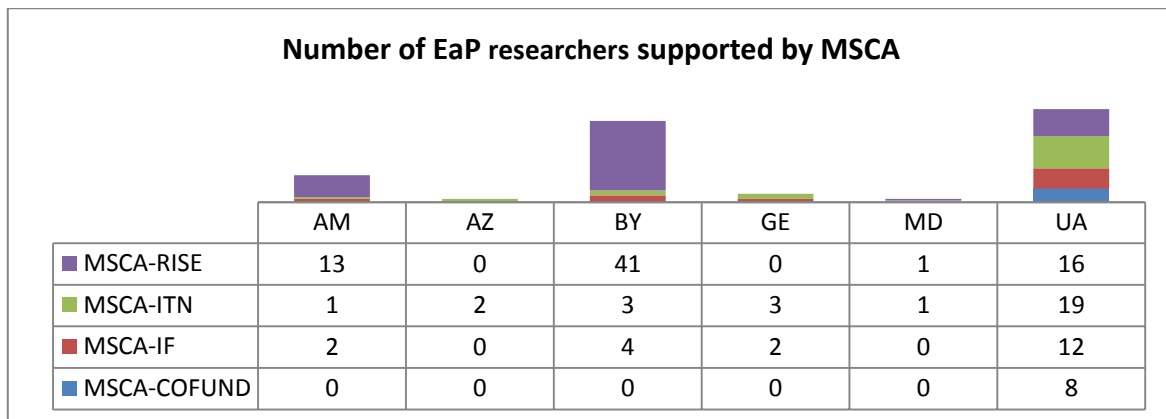
The establishment of Horizon 2020 **National Contact Points** (NCP) in the different EaP countries was also addressed by the Panel in order to identify possible issues regarding networking with EU counterparts for training activities. A regional panel event focused on NCP training took place in Kyiv in early 2016.

Platform 4 supported the networking of EaP countries with National Contact Points (NCPs) from the Member States and the countries associated. Thanks to this support, the legal and financial contacts for Horizon 2020 as well as the H2020 **Marie Skłodowska-Curie** (MSCA) contacts in the EaP countries may attend networking meetings. For MSCA, the 4th meeting was organised on 19-20 May 2016.

The MSCA programme continues to offer excellent research cooperation and mobility opportunities at the individual and organisation levels. Partnerships developing doctoral training programmes (industrial and joint doctorates included) are supported via Innovative Training Networks (ITN). Common research/innovation projects implemented through the exchange of staff members can be developed via the Research and Innovation Staff Exchange (RISE) funding scheme. Individual researchers may apply to the Individual Fellowship (IF) scheme or to co-funded fellowships (COFUND).

So far, 128 researchers from EaP countries received MSCA fellowships. 43 research institutions have participated in the MSCA projects, receiving the EU contribution of € 4.87 million.

³ The Eastern Partnership Youth Window has been implemented in 2012-2013. The Window involved more than 37,000 young people and youth workers - more than 15,000 of them from Eastern Partnership countries - exceeding the set targets by far. Young people, youth workers and youth organisations from all Eastern Partnership countries and all Youth in Action Programme countries participated in about 1,600 projects funded under the Window.



In the area of ICT-based infrastructure for research and education ("**e-infrastructure**") work focused on the **E@P.Connect**, an ambitious project that plans to connect electronically all Eastern Partnership countries' researchers and students to their western counterpart through the pan-European research and education network GÉANT.

This project was developed by DG NEAR and DG CONNECT with the region's research and education networks, governments as well Member States' research and education institutions and in conjunction with EAP Platform 4, the EAP Panel on Research and Innovation and the EEAS . The project started on 1 July 2015 and will last 5 years and half. The first year is being dedicated to market survey, design and procurement while the remaining part of the project will focus on operation/upgrade and deployment of additional services in mobility and content access.

In practical terms, the project will:

- Design, procure and operate a concrete regional optical infrastructure connecting at multi gigabits/s speed the six countries to GÉANT
- Stimulate the adoption of the technology for unifying the access to existing wifi infrastructures and allowing smooth IT access in situation of mobility ("eduroam")
- Make digital content available to researchers through a harmonised identification access technique across the region (federation of identities and "eduGAIN")

A key critical success factor is the raise of the National Research and Education Networks' profile of the six beneficiary's countries - both financially and operationally – as a result of being part of GÉANT.

The project is expected to:

- Enable effective virtual collaboration with western counterparts to almost 2 million researchers and high education students for solving regional/global scientific challenges
- Removing technical barriers for regional virtual collaboration including long communications delays, difficulties on IT registration, and difficulties in accessing content.

The first milestone achieved in Q1 2016 was to connect Armenia and Georgia to the pan-European GÉANT network, thus enabling local researchers and students to participate in collaborative work with their peers in Europe and other parts of the world.

The first Eastern Partnership E-Infrastructure Conference (EPEC 2016) will take place in Tbilisi, Georgia, on 6-7 October 2016. The conference organisation is led by DFN, the German National Research and Education Network, and will feature contributions from all projects and supporting partners in e-infrastructure active in the region.

5. CULTURE

Cooperation in the field of culture has continued through dedicated programmes and the policy dialogue developed in the context of Platform 4.

The **Eastern Partnership Culture Programme II** builds upon the experience of the phase I. It is implemented since 1 January 2015, and has five main objectives:

1. developing and further strengthening cultural and creative industries;
2. creating synergies between public and private actors;
3. enhancing the contribution of civil society to cultural policy development and reform in the region;
4. strengthening the capabilities of EaP countries to facilitate their participation in international culture cooperation initiatives, including the EU Creative Europe programme;
5. enhancing cultural heritage protection at local level.

The total budget of EaP Culture Programme II is €4.9 million for a three-year-implementation timeframe and consists of two components. The first four objectives are targeted by the technical assistance project Cultural Capacity Development Unit (CCDU) with similar competencies to the Regional Monitoring Capacity Building Unit (RMCBU) of phase I, while the fifth objective is pursued by the project **Community-led Urban Strategies in Historic Towns (COMUS)**, implemented by the Council of Europe. As a continuation of the Kyiv Initiative, this project aims to develop local development strategies for the historic centres of nine towns in the Eastern Partnership countries (2 towns in Armenia; 1 in Belarus; 2 in Georgia; 1 in Moldova; 3 in Ukraine)⁴. Azerbaijan has recently withdrawn from the COMUS project.

The **Creative Europe** Programme offers opportunities for transnational cooperation among cultural and audio-visual operators. It is open to the participation of the ENP countries, subject to certain conditions, on an equal footing with the Member States. In the MEDIA sub-programme, audio-visual professionals/organisations from EaP countries can participate in trainings, festivals, audience development and market access activities. The Culture sub-programme provides funding opportunities for activities in the field of culture, notably cross-border cooperation projects, networks and platforms as well as literary translations. Opportunities under Creative Europe were presented by the Commission at the launch conference of the Eastern Partnership Culture programme. Georgia and Moldova were the first EaP countries to join Creative Europe. On 1 January 2016 Ukraine became the third EaP country to join the programme.

The Platform 4 also supports **policy dialogue** and policy sharing. As part of the on-going EaP Culture Programme II, preparations started for the organisation of the Creative Georgia Forum in Georgia in December 2016, which will be attended also by other EaP countries. Preliminary contacts were also held with the Moldovan Ministry of Culture, further to their proposal to host a workshop on creative cities in the second half of 2016.

⁴ Further details on the projects and presentations are available here: <http://www.culturepartnership.eu/en/article/regional-conference-launch-of-the-community-led-urban-strategies-in-historic-towns-comus-and--eu-eastern-partnership-culture-and-creativity-programme>

6. TIMETABLE OF EVENTS

Eastern Partnership Platform 4 Provisional list of meetings and events 2016-2017

Platform 4 meetings		
Title	Date	Location
15 th EaP Platform 4	7 June 2016	Brussels
16 th EaP Platform 4	Autumn 2016	Brussels
17 th EaP Platform 4	Summer 2017	Brussels
18 th EaP Platform 4	Autumn 2017	Brussels

Panel on Research and Innovation		
Title	Date	Location
4 th Panel on Research and Innovation	Second semester 2016	Brussels
Research and Innovation: one regional event per year and complementing the work of the Panel on Research and Innovation and the activities carried out in the framework of the INCONET EaP on topics such as: - issues related to cooperation in the innovation domain - specific S&T capacity issues faced by Eastern Partnership countries	2017 – annual regional event to be hosted by Belarus	Minsk, Belarus
5 th Panel on Research and Innovation	2017	Brussels

Provisional list of events		
Title	Date	Location
<i>Seminars/workshops</i> Validation workshop of the Study on Film industries	July 2016	Odessa
Conference: "Youth for Rights"	23 September 2016	Bratislava
<i>Seminars/workshops:</i> eInfrastructures	6-7 October 2016	Tbilisi
Workshop on creative industries, possible focus on creative cities/decentralized cultural policies	2016	Moldova
5 th Meeting of Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions National Contact Points: provision of support to facilitate the participation of EaP representatives	November 2016	Brussels
<i>Seminars/workshops</i>	2016	tbd

ICT in Horizon 2020		
Seminar on integrity in higher education	Autumn 2016	Brussels
EaP Forum on “Culture and Creative Industries”	Nov/December 2016	Tbilisi
Seminars/workshops: Regional Torino Process 2016	December 2016	Tbilisi
Eastern Partnership Youth Forum	2017	Poland (tbc)
<i>Seminars/workshops</i> ICT in Horizon 2020	2017	tbd
<i>Seminars/workshops:</i> eInfrastructures	2017	tbd
6 th Meeting of Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions National Contact Points: provision of support to facilitate the participation of EaP representatives	2017	Brussels
Seminars/workshops eTwinning Plus dissemination and Valorisation event	2016/2017	tbd
Seminars/workshops Regional events on good practice in Erasmus+, Tempus and Erasmus Mundus projects.	2016/2017	tbd
Event on the role of young people in decision-making processes	2016/2017	Ukraine
EaP Regional event to raise awareness and share best practice related to the Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions under Horizon 2020	2017	tbd
Seminars/workshops The international conference “Democratization of youth participation in the civic and social life of Eastern Partnership countries”	2016/2017	Ukraine
Seminar on internationalisation of higher education, focus tbc	2016/2017	Belarus
Event on achieving the Bologna targets in a post-Soviet context	2016/2017	Armenia
Seminar(s) on Creative Europe programme in the Eastern Partnership: good project examples, application writing training, partner search etc.	2016/2017	tbd
Seminar/workshop devoted to the evaluation of the Eastern Partnership Culture Programme	2016/2017	Proposed by Poland (on previous version WP)

Past events

Platform 4 meetings		
Title	Date	Location
11 th Eap Platform 4	22 May 2014	Brussels
12 th Eap Platform 4	3 December 2014	Brussels
13 rd EaP Platform 4	15 June 2015	Brussels
14 th EaP Platform 4	14 December 2015	Brussels

Panel on Research and Innovation		
Title	Date	Location
<i>Seminars/workshops</i> From Framework Programme 7 to Horizon 2020: generalities, rules of participation, financial aspects	17 March 2014	Chisinau/Moldova
2 nd Panel on Research and Innovation	21 May 2014	Brussels
3 rd Panel on Research and Innovation	26 March 2015	Brussels
Horizon 2020 EaP NCPs training	2-3 March 2016	Kyiv, Ukraine

Finalised events		
Title	Date	Location
1 st Meeting of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions National Contact Points: provision of support to facilitate the participation of EaP representatives	10 March 2014	Athens
<i>Seminars/workshops</i> eInfrastructures event: Workshop on Identity Technology for researchers and students	19-20 June 2014	Sofia
<i>Seminars/workshops</i> eInfrastructures event : GÉANT technologies and services training	8-11 September 2014	Chisinau/Moldova
Creative Europe Desks meeting Participation of EaP representatives (Georgia / Moldova / Ukraine)	20-21 October 2014	Brussels
<i>International Conference</i> Cultural Policy in Europe Today: finance, management, audience development	23-24 October 2014	Kyiv/Ukraine

2 nd Meeting of Marie Skłodowska-Curie Actions National Contact Points: provision of support to facilitate the participation of EaP representatives	10-11 November 2014	Brussels
<i>Seminars/workshops</i> ICT in Horizon 2020 events	12-13 November 2014	Baku/Azerbaijan
<i>Seminars/workshops</i> Regional Torino Process meeting to assess progress in VET reforms 2012-	3- 4 December 2014	Tbilisi/Georgia
The 2nd Eastern Partnership Youth Forum focused on youth employability and cross-sectorial cooperation in the field of youth as main topics. The conclusions of participants in the Forum will be communicated to the Eastern Partnership Summit.	9-12 February 2015	Riga/Latvia
3rd Meeting of Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions National Contact Points and training on Horizon 2020: provision of support to facilitate the participation of EaP representatives:	25-26 March 2015	Brussels
a Prize award ceremony for the eTwinning Plus "best practice" in the framework of the Platform 4	6-9 May 2015	Brussels
<i>Seminars/workshops</i> Seminar on the potential of cultural and creative industries.	25-26 June 2015	Chisinau/Moldova
<i>Seminars/workshops</i> Combined info-day ICT in H2020 + eInfrastructures	10-11 September 2015	Tbilisi/Georgia
<i>Seminars/workshops</i> Conference on the implementation of National Qualification Frameworks in EaP countries	6-8 October 2015	Batumi/Georgia
4 th Meeting of Marie Skłodowska-Curie actions National Contact Points: provision of support to facilitate the participation of EaP representatives	19-20 May 2016	Brussels
Studies		
Study on Film industries	28/07/2015	http://capacity4dev.ec.europa.eu/hiqstep/document/situation-cinema-and-audiovisual-industries-eastern-partnership-countries