

ON A MISSION TO INNOVATE



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Ondrej Lunter (*1987) - Vice-Governor of Banská Bystrica Self-Governing Region. Ondrej has a Master's Degree in Political Science and a Bachelor's Degree in Business Economics from Masaryk's University in Brno, Czech Republic. He co-founded the NGO project Demagog. SK and Demagog.CZ, a platform for transparency and accountability of the public sector. In 2017 he was elected as

a Member of Banská Bystrica Regional Parliament for the district of Banská Bystrica town. As of 2019 he has been holding the position of the Vice-Governor for Transportation and Regional Development. The key areas of his politics are issues of the regional differences and development gaps, employment policies, focus on innovations and the development of local tourism.

Our mission is to make the Banská Bystrica region a place where people can live, work, and raise their children. A thriving community in a healthy competitive environment that supports continuous creation and development of innovations. A place where people do not leave from, but instead new ones come in. We consider the long-term support of science, research and education in schools and the support of new unconventional solutions in various areas of life to be a key means of fulfilling this mission.

Innovations are the driving force behind productivity, business and revenue growth in the region. We are working hard to become a leader among Slovak regions in providing services to companies in connecting research and educational institutions with local governments and the business sector. Innovation is also a key principle in other strategic areas of our interest through which we improve the living conditions of our citizens such as tourism or care for the elderly.

One of the areas we are focusing on is a reform of education in our region, which includes the promotion of dual education and the networking of companies with secondary vocational schools. We are aware of the need to stimulate young people in a dynamically changing environment to

develop entrepreneurship and creativity in them. At the same time, we enable them to acquire practical skills, which are a real part of modern and innovative industry in the region.



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We have set up 13 Career Centers, whose task is to manage the change in the thinking of school management to a pro-client approach - oriented to employers in individual regions. Vocational education must understand the needs, both current and future, of employers and adapt its teaching accordingly.

The Banská Bystrica region is also profiled as the innovation leader in the field of social economy. I consider more than 7%

long-term unemployment to be an opportunity and a potential in a situation where there is a shortage of skilled labor in the market. We are the founder of two registered social enterprises, which today serve as role models for the whole country. We employ people with disabilities, low level of education, or the long-term unemployed. People at risk of social exclusion can start practicing with us and later work with us as our social enterprises create a safe working environment and a space for acquiring work habits and skills. After a year or two, our employees know how to find a full-fledged job in companies where they are able to work reliably and competently. We support local governments in our region to set up such social enterprises and provide them with professional assistance as well as public contracts.

In the long run, we pay great attention to business innovations in our region. The Banská Bystrica region is a typical example of the regional innovation paradox - we lack the tradition of cooperation between companies and innovators, but also mutual trust between the actors of the innovation ecosystem. We are working on a change as we need more private investment in the innovative sector of the economy. This requires better coordination of industrial, technological, and regional policies. The region came up with the initiative of a regional innovation policy platform,

which will enable the development of innovation in traditional sectors of the economy by removing barriers, but especially by supporting industry links with R&D workplaces and finding common approaches and solutions in using funds to support innovation activities.

We create a functional innovation ecosystem, provide companies with information services, practical advice, and quality support services - whether in the field of recruiting qualified workforce, adapting the teaching process in our schools, training projects in cooperation with companies for high school and university students, or in such areas as public transport tailored to strategic investors. We are interested in building an environment suitable for the establishment of start-ups

and spinoffs, lending a helping hand in connecting companies to science and research. We also intend to create stable conditions for the shared service center sector directly in our region with a competitive labor cost.

Since we took office, one of our main goals has been to promote innovative solutions to the diverse problems the region was facing at the time. Today, we are pleased to say that we have managed to find the right people with innovative thinking and proactive approach who are coming up with progressive ideas. Our future plans are ambitious, we have launched projects with potential, but we must persevere and continue. We are determined to persevere and make our region a sought-after place, be it for investors or for people to create the life they wish.