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**The Economic Development of Cross-Border Cooperation Euroregions of
Romania as a Determinant of European Security**

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Abstract: Populations of different ethnicities are forced to live within artificial borders, being separated by fences that mutilate their national feeling as well as their future prospects. In recent years, the European Union has tried to overcome the difficulties of the past, creating real bridges between neighbouring states, which divide regions on both sides of the border. The approach serves the need for balance, peace and relaxation in areas that have been in difficulty as a result of past conflicts. The initiative of the countries in Western Europe initially started in Germany, the area being hardly tried in the last world conflagration. In establishing cross-border collaborations, economic-financial support is essential for raising the standard of living and expectations of cross-border communities. In the contemporary context of cross-border cooperation, Romania presents itself as extremely open to cooperation, in its 12 Euroregions. The economic factor is the most important for the future success of the Euroregions, as a decisive parameter of real integration.

Keywords: cross-border cooperation; territorial cooperation; Euroregions; transborder relations; mutual collaboration; good neighbours

1. The General Context

Throughout the entire history, harsh, forceful and destructive actions took place, which blocked off the development of ethnic groups and nations in their initial areas of self-actualization. In the case of the Romanian people, we can argue that these lands' inhabitants experienced debacles and continual interruptions in their permanence within their very space of constitution and living, their own territory being cannily paired down. Under these conditions, the forerunners of the Romanian people were forced to continue their existence in areas set within neighboring states of Romania, sometimes even located at a distance.

In the well-known conditions of the fragmentation of the Romanian nation, the discontinuity in their spatial, political and ethnic survival of our nation within a unitary national body must be the reason for the efforts to maintain contact with Romanian homes, with overcoming borders that separate isolated spaces, via legal measures established at the level of the European Union. However, the desire for collaboration and support of ethnic groups outside the country through synchronized efforts of the central and administrative factors at the local level are of the utmost importance.

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The European Union is made up of 27 states that maintain close relations, achieving the broad framework for the development of labour force flows, capital, goods and services. In the conditions stated regarding the freedom of individual movement and self actualization, it is known that structures belonging to the same ethnic group lead their very existence at this time as belonging to different states, therefore as being separated by national borders in the historical past. It is the special merit of the European Union regarding the shaping of the multiple-sort legal framework of cooperation and support achieved between common ethnic groups, separated by the current borders.

The basic legal acts of cross-border cooperation are the *Maastricht Treaty* (signed on the 7th of February 1992 and entered into force on the 1st of November 1993), the *Treaty of Rome* (signed on the 25th March 1957 and with effect from the 1st of January 1958), the *Treaty of Lisbon* (signed on the 13th of December 2007 and with effect from the 1st of December 2009), as well as the decisions and *treaties of accession* (Săgeată, 2014, pp. 29-32). The regional and local development points out at complex ways used to provide funds, logistical support and other facilities for regional and local communities, to carry out inland initiatives, to solve particular issues within communities or support welfare of social structures in the territory (Brăilean, 2007, p. 21). In 2004, a law on regional development was adopted in Romania.¹

Territorial cooperation involves the agreement, initiation and construction of unitary actions, subject to the unitary development policies of the territories that are included in the ad hoc-constituted administrative jurisdictions (Pop & Manoleli, 2008, p. 53). In the paradigm of regional development, we will consider the Euroregions as “areas or regions of economic interference and not only, in which two or more states jointly capitalize on material and human resources, by initiating and carrying out activities and programmes in such fields as agricultural, industrial, transport and telecommunications, tourism and trade”². The concept of (similar or equivalent) Euroregions is present only in Europe. The genesis of the Euroregions took place in Western Europe after 1990, following the fall of the Iron Curtain. The building site is located on the former route of the dividing line produced by the Iron Curtain, near the borders of Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium and Switzerland. Euroregions were also established (following the German example), at the contact of Western Europe with Central Europe (Germany, Czech Republic, Poland) or with Eastern Europe (Lithuania, Poland). After 1997, Euroregions were established in Eastern Europe (Carpathian, Lower Danube, Danube-Mureş-Tisza or Upper Prut) (Bogdan, 2019, pp. 31-33). In the Baltic region, cross-border cooperation is strong, due to the involvement of states with consolidated democracies, which have a high economic and social level. For this case, there is a possibility to ensure an adequate standard of living for the inhabitants of the cross-border area. Bilateral or extended agreements have been signed between international actors involved in cross-border cooperation, with effectively supporting partner initiatives.³ In these circumstances, it is unanimously stated that the factor of economic development of the Euroregions is decisive for the desired European integration.

Specific to cross-border Euroregions, the successive stages of the effort can be: lack of manifestations, exchanges of information, mutual acceptance, extended cooperation, optimization of the framework and integration of Euroregions (Europe, 2000, p. 56). The last two stages could not be carried out in the practice of building the Euroregions until the present moment, being only hypothetical sequences of the cooperation possibilities that must be optimized and achieved in the future (Bogdan, 2019, pp. 45-48). Once again, the low level of economic development in multiple Euroregions or their national segments

¹ *Legea nr.315 din 28 iunie 2004 (reactualizată) privind dezvoltarea regională în România*, Monitorul Oficial nr.577 din 29 iunie 2004.

² *Stadiul actual al reglementărilor naționale și comunitare în domeniul cooperării transfrontaliere*, Editura Primus, Oradea, 2009, p.43.

³ *Uniunea Europeană, Ghidul cooperării transfrontaliere. Euro Dobrogea*, Constanța, 2005, pp.25-26.

makes – for the time being – something incongruous out of the European integration of cross-border cooperation Euroregions, there being needed a sustained effort aimed at the economic development of all cooperating areas.

2. The System of Euroregions of Which Romania is a Part

History was *generous* with regard to creating, in the vicinity of Romania, some areas that have Romanian ethnic continuity in their living zones, territories found under the jurisdiction of several other states. Therefore, Romanian territories are on both sides of the borders with other states. Between their isolated homes and the fatherland, natural relations of collaboration, support and cultural exchanges continue over time along with other similar ones expressed in multiple areas. Under these conditions, areas located across the border and pointing out at the same population masses – i.e. cross-border areas – have preserved the defining features of the original ethnic element, have maintained good neighbourly and mutual collaboration relations with the fatherland (across national borders) in different ways of manifestation and amplitude. The borders drawn arbitrarily throughout history have hindered the natural transfer of mutual influences, without witnessing interruptions in the flows of collaboration between the territories of the same race.

Given the conditions of the historical past, Romanian populations are found in all the cardinal points as relative to their geographic position to Romania, being located towards all four cardinal directions. Cross-border cooperation must support the need to address the mutual knowledge of the current stage of each ethnic community and the foremost requirements, the priority of the future joint effort, the need to increase support, the help to achieve higher standards of common welfare and preserve traditions and ethnicity. The cross-border effort must be carried out with the proper agreement between the central managements of both parties found in a dialogue, with accepting the urgent needs regarding the implications of local administrative bodies.

The triggering approach will always belong to the central political bodies, through official meetings at the top of the political scene. Where appropriate, these may include meetings of State Presidents, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, State Secretaries, Ambassadors or other high-level officials, who will agree on the conditions of future collaborations, on territorial entities in joint effort relations and will sign, adopt and promote formal agreements for accession to the status of Euroregion. Maintaining strict subordination in relation to competent national segments, the cooperation structures have the possibility to find solutions for identifying future possibilities of collaboration in multiple areas, for increasing the living standard of population – with estimating the elements of progress, in relation to the actual possibilities of the territories taking joint efforts.

In the situation of the stated cross-border cooperation, we wish to emphasize that Romania is a party to the establishment of cross-border cooperation Euroregions towards all cardinal directions:

- to the east, the Euroregions of the *Lower Danube, Siret-Prut-Dniester* and the *Upper Prut* are found;
- to the west, we mention the Euroregions of *Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar, Danube-Criş-Mureş-Tisa* and the *Middle Danube-Iron Gates*;
- to the north, there is the Carpathian Euroregion, comprising the territory of five states: Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine and Romania;
- to the south, there operate the “*Danube 21*” cross-border cooperation association, as well as the *South Danube, Giurgiu-Ruse, Danubius* and *Danube-Dobrogea* Euroregions (Bogdan, 2019, pp. 103-175).



Figure 1. Danube Macroregion according to <http://www.danube-region.eu/>

The Euroregions located at the state borders of Romania will be considered as constituents of the Danube macro-region, and will be subject to evaluation in the same terms. This aspect is essentially required as Romania's cross-border cooperation Euroregions are located on the Rhine-Main-Danube river axis, some being also included in the Black Sea Area. For the general survey on the conditions and possibilities of the Danube macro-region, the analytical elements similar to the Alpine, Baltic, Adriatic and Ionian macro-regions, etc. will be maintained.¹

In the case of the Danube macro-region, the stability pillars will be constituted by the requirement for strengthening the geopolitical formation capacity, by the measures to connect the region to the effort of similar territorial identities, by the particular situation of water transport's existence, the capabilities of interconnected travel systems (land, air, river and rail), the protection of natural environment (with reducing natural and anthropogenic damage, increasing the quality of water, soil, air and biodiversity), the increase of well-being and prosperity (through the involvement and effective effort of local communities, the preservation of traditional forms, the multidisciplinary specialization) – all these being subsumed to the priorities of the knowledge society.²

3. Euroregions Existing on the Eastern Border

As a well-known fact, Romania is located on the external border of the European Union and NATO, being positioned on the Baltic-Pontic isthmus – the geopolitical space of expression for clashes of influence and opposing interests between West and East. As a result, the activity of the Euroregions located at the eastern border of Romania, is burdened by the intervention of multiple manifestations of political-economic and social opposition.

After 1997, three Euroregions were established at the eastern border of Romania: the Lower Danube, the Upper Prut and the Siret-Prut-Dniester. Undoubtedly, as the Euroregions are located at the far eastern borders of the European Union and NATO, the issue will induce specific connotations on integration into the membership area (Bogdan & Marinescu, 2019, pp. 35-36).

Details are presented in Table 1.

¹ According to <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/>, accesat la data de 13.12.2019.

² According to <http://www.danube-region.eu/>, accesat la data de 13.12.2019.

The System of Euroregions Located at the Eastern Border of Romania (Săgeată, 2014, p. 10)

Table 1. Euroregions at the Eastern Border

Generic Data	States Involved
Lower Danube Established in 1997-1998 Surface: 53,496 km ²	Romania
	Republic of Moldova
	Ukraine
Prutul Superior Established in în 2000 Surface: 42,809 km ²	Ukraine
	Romania
	Republic of Moldova
Siret-Prut-Nistru Established in 2002 Surface: 31,434 km ²	Romania
	Republic of Moldova
	Republic of Moldova
	Ukraine
	Ukraine
	Romania
	Republic of Moldova
Romania	

The priorities of the Euroregions located on Romania's eastern border subscribe to the achievement of major objectives: solid support for building a more competitive economy across borders, reducing pressure on environmental resources, mutual support, major cultural exchanges, preparation for solving emergency situations, maintaining traditional forms and cultural particularities, as well as the expanding "people to people" events (broadening the spirit of cooperation between cross-border communities) (Sabău, 2012, pp. 148-149).

The Lower Danube was created through Romania's efforts at the *Ismail Summit* on the 3th-4th of July, 1997. The signing and approval of the "Declaration on Cross-Border Cooperation" was materialized by the Presidents of Romania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.¹ In the Municipality of Galați, on the 14th of August, 1998, the "Agreement on the Establishment of the Lower Danube Euroregion" was signed. We mention that, after the events of 2014-2015 between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, territorial delimitations underwent changes in the area of the Crimean Peninsula. Details are presented in fig.2.

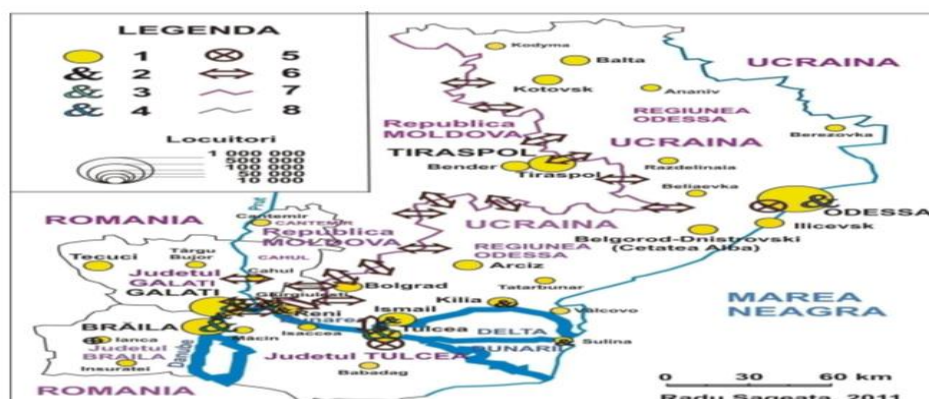


Figure 2. The Lower Danube Euroregion (Săgeată, 2014, p. 66)

¹ Centrul Român de Politici Europene, *Contribuții la Parteneriatul pentru dezvoltare dintre România și Republica Moldova*, 29 mai 2013, Chișinău, p.14.

Siret-Prut-Dniester was founded on the initiative of local councils in Romania and the Republic of Moldova. The Euroregion was established by signing the “*Protocol on cross-border cooperation of the Siret-Prut-Dniester Euroregion*”, an event held on the 18th of September 2002 in Iasi (Talabă, 2005, p. 198). It was then in Ungheni (Republic of Moldova) – on the 4th of December 2002 that the *Statute of Functioning of the Siret-Prut-Dniester Euroregion* was signed, on the occasion of the Meeting of the Presidents’ Forum (Dediu, 2007, pp. 221-222). Details are presented in fig.3.

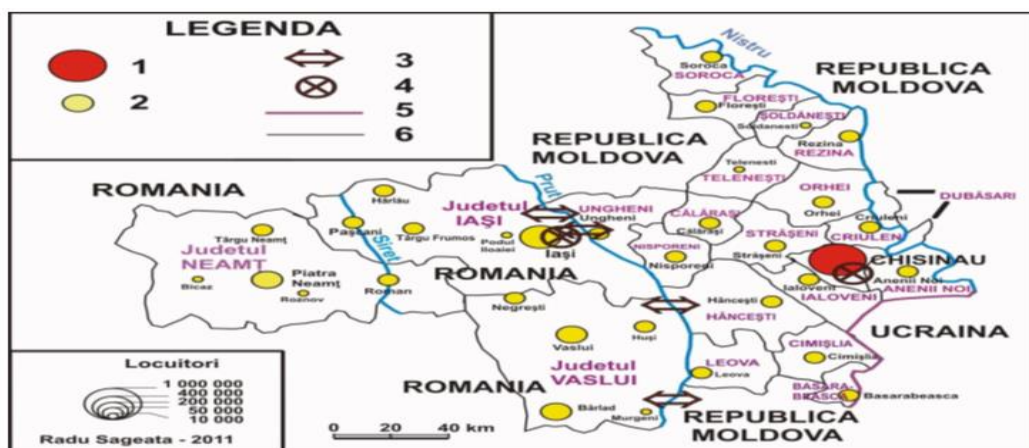


Figure 3. Siret-Prut-Dniester Euroregion Euroregion (Săgeată, 2014, p. 78)

(Key: 1. Capital city. 2. Polarization core. 3. Cross-border connections. 4. Airports. 5. Borders. 6. Administrative boundaries)

Organizational and operational details of the cross-border cooperation area were established at the *Presidents’ Forum* - a meeting held in Ialoveni (Republic of Moldova) on the 6th of April 2004, there being submitted for approval the “*Regulation on the Organization and Functioning of the Siret-Prut-Dniester Euroregion*” – a document containing many significant changes. The three Romanian counties included in the Euroregion are territorial entities with a different economic potential. We mention the high economic capacities of Iași County – the capital of the former historical province of Moldavia.

The **Upper Prut** owes its appearance to the initiative taken by the Romanian side - in the “*Treaty on Good Neighborly Relations and Cooperation between Romania and Ukraine*,” signed on the 2nd of July 1997 (Bogdan & Marinescu, 2019, pp. 116-118). We do also wish to draw attention to the “*Agreement for the Establishment of the Prutul de Sus Euroregion*” – a document agreed upon and signed in Botoșani on the 22nd of September 2000. Details are presented in fig.4.

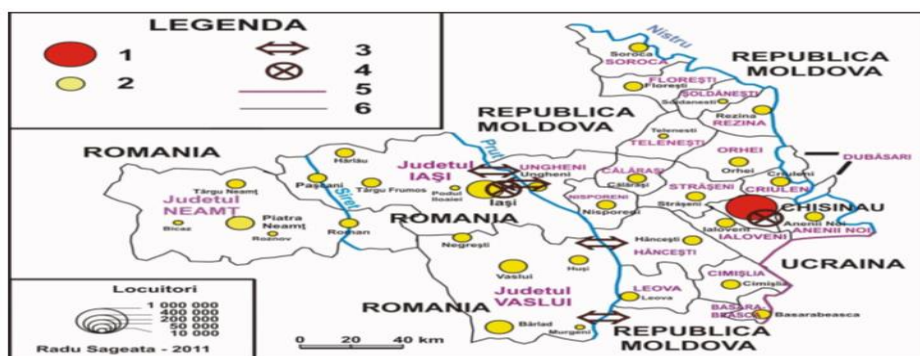


Figure 4. The Upper Prut Euroregion (Săgeată, 2014, p. 87)

(Key: 1.Regional polarization cores. 2. Local polarization cores. 3. Cross-border connections: a. International traffic. b. Small border traffic. 4 Airports. 5. Borders. 6. Administrative boundaries)

The leadership of the Euroregion belongs to a Council, the Presidency of the Euroregion Council and the Secretariat, the Coordination Centres (in Bălți, Suceava and Cernăuți), as well as the Working Commissions (Balınschi, 2005, p. 201). In addition, the Working Commissions have the following responsibilities: Commission 1 – economic affairs, infrastructure and tourism, Commission 2 - ecological security, protection of the natural environment and the bioeconomy, Commission 3 - cooperation in the fields of science, education, culture, health, sports and youth, and Commission 4 - increasing and harmonizing relations on the interregional cooperation, the interethnic collaboration and the local self-government (Dediu, 2007, p. 220).

The desire of local communities is to build a space for collaboration, mutual aid and progress within cross-border areas, despite tall extant obstacles, major financial difficulties requiring intervention with high funds. Areas subject to cross-border cooperation have low economic opportunities and a low standard of living – with frequent expressions in the cultural field and the traditional segment. There are extremely frustrating such elements as: the poor economic development of the areas, the impoverishment, the aging, the population decline, the existence of a low communication level of any kinds, the modest measures for promoting and carrying out tourism activities, the presence of a low level and much outdated industrial and transport park (road and rail), the existence of a mediocre level of education, the massive migration of domestic labor force to the East and West, the lack of ecological and medical protection measures. Efforts are needed to protect and preserve the environment, to stop the degradation of living standards in rural areas that are found in extreme poverty. In the area of the Euroregions on the eastern border of Romania, energetic measures are also needed to access European funds (Bogdan, 2019, pp. 93-94).

4. Euroregion Located on the Northern Border

Being located on the external border of the European Union and NATO, Romania has its northern border integrated into the Baltic-Pontic axis, known as a space for the clash of opposing interests between East and West.

The **Carpathian Euroregion** is composed of territories belonging to five states: Hungary (with 5 counties), Poland (with 4 voivodeships), Slovakia (with 9 counties), Ukraine (including 4 regions) and Romania (with the participation of 7 counties) (Talabă, 2005, p. 193). Romania includes the counties of Maramureș, Satu Mare, Sălaj, Bihor, Botoșani, Suceava and Harghita (since 2000). The Euroregion was set up on the 14th of February 1993 in Debrecen (Hungary) on the occasion of the meeting between the foreign ministers of the interested states, there being also present the representatives of local administrations (Bogdan & Marinescu, 2019, pp. 134-143). Details are presented in fig.5.



Figure 5. The Carpathian Euroregion (Săgeată, 2014, p. 128)

(Key: 1-5 sectors – 1. Ukrainian. 2. Polish. 3. Slovak. 4. Hungarian. 5. Romanian; 6. Polarization centres. 7. State borders. 8. Administrative boundaries. 9. Border of the Carpathian Euroregion)

The founding documents consist of the “Agreement on the Establishment of the *Carpathian Euroregion* – an Interregional Association”, as well as the “Statute of the *Carpathian Euroregion* Interregional Association”. The managerial effort belongs to the Carpathian Euroregion Council, which has decision-making powers regarding the Euroregion’s strategy, the issues of major interest and the actual approach. Initially, the International Secretariat functioned in Użgorod (Ukraine), later being transferred to Debrecen (Hungary). The working commissions are under the competence of each state, as follows: Regional Development - Hungary, Natural Disaster Prevention - Slovakia, Tourism and Environment - Poland, Trade Development - Romania and Social Infrastructure - Ukraine (Dogot, 2014, pp. 174-175).

The Carpathian Euroregion has a unique structure in the field, there being necessary the activation of bi-lateral and tri-lateral contacts. The establishment and efforts of the Euroregion contain an important message to be conveyed to the peoples of Europe, demonstrating the feasibility of this kind of cooperation within five participating states. This is the fortunate case of a fivefold interstate effort and the development for other Euroregions in Europe as well in the matter of opportunities for work, dialogue and mutual support. The fivefold participation practically shapes the space of collaboration and progress in a much-tried area in historical terms, in which the same ethnic group has nuclei of presence on the territory of all the neighboring countries involved in the cross-border effort.

The structures of the Euroregion are distinguished by entrepreneurship, by the presence of diversified practices and the different commercial preoccupations, by the specific economic framework along with the cultural and the administrative context, by promoting the spirit of belonging to Western specific values – all with the implementation of EU policies on cross-border cooperation. The quality, preparation, determination and seriousness of the human factor together with the maturity, support and coherence of the steps taken are incorporated into the objectives to be achieved. The educational infrastructure is of a good standard, with a high level of workforce qualification and with significant Western influences.

5. Euroregions Existing on the Western Border

The situation of the Euroregions established at the western border of Romania can be analysed on distinct sections: the Romanian-Hungarian border, with the Bihor – Hajdú – Bihar Euroregion, therefore having a bipartite expression (Romania and Hungary) and the Romanian-Serbian border, with the Middle Danube – Iron Gates Euroregion, also knowing a two-part formula (Romania and Serbia). As an exception, the tripartite structure will be emphasized, i.e. the Danube – Cris-Mures – Tisza Euroregion (Serbia, Romania and Hungary) (Săgeată, 2014, pp. 140-141).

Bihor–Hajdú–Bihar was established at the end of 2002, as a result of the simultaneous steps initiated at the level of the Bihor County Council and the Hajdú-Bihar Local Self-Government (Hungary). The aspects to be followed were provided in the “Concept and Development Program of the Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Region” (Bogdan & Marinescu, 2019, pp. 151-155).



Figure 6. Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion (Săgeată, 2014, p. 152)

The objectives are the development of broad economic and cultural relations, support in the field of education and specialization, the development of the land and air communications network, the scientific and technological progress, the improvements in such fields as sports, tourism, communication, along with making the most of the European integration effort. The Euroregion has a dynamic, top-class, highly prosperous structure. The multiple, complex and fruitful initiatives belonging to the parties found in cooperation ensure the support of border populations in achieving a high standard of well-being, materialized through taking joint efforts.

Danube-Cris-Mures-Tisza (DKMT) was established by the “Bilateral Cooperation Agreement between Timiș (Romania) and Csongrad (Hungary)”, as well as by the “Danube-Mures-Tisza Regional Cooperation Protocol”, agreed in 1997. Details are presented in fig.7.

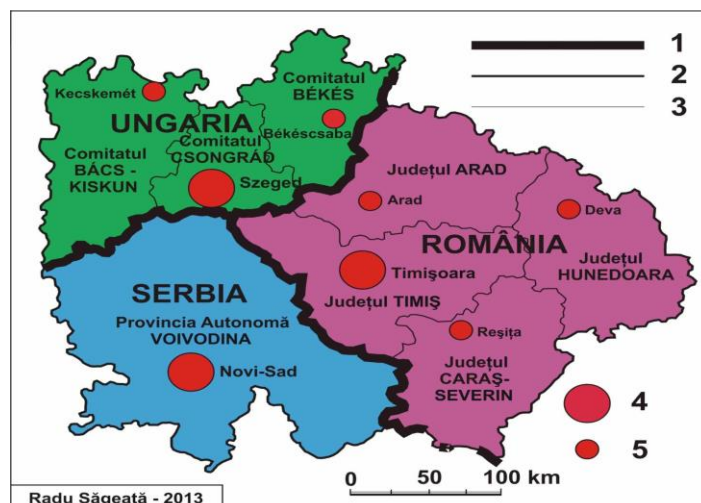


Figure 7. Dunăre-Criș-Mureș- Tisa Euroregion (Săgeată, 2014, p. 181)

The aims are to accelerate the democratization of the region, to support European integration, to raise the socio-economic framework, to establish tripartite contacts, to establish specific relations in the cross-border field. Among the objectives, there must be mentioned: the amplification of mutual economic relations, the mutual transfer of education and culture, the assistance in healthcare science, technology, sports, tourism, communications, as well as the collaboration to achieve European integration (Dediu, 2007, p. 212).

The **Middle Danube – Iron Gates** was established in Vidin on the 6th of October 2005, the founding documents signed actually referring to “*The Association Agreement*” and “*The Statute of the Middle Danube - Iron Gates Euroregion*”. The Romanian counties of Caraș-Severin and Mehedinți are involved in this cooperation with the Serbian districts of Bor and Branicevski. Details are presented in fig.8.

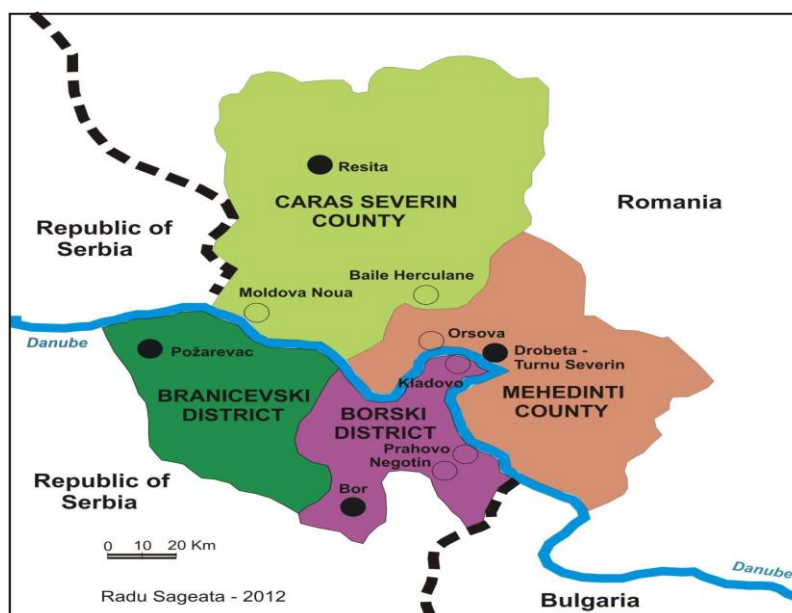


Figure 8. The Middle Danube - Iron Gates Euroregion (Săgeată, 2014, p. 215)

The joint effort highlights the broad involvement of the Romanian and Serbian parties in the “*Iron Gates*” National Park (Romania), and, symmetrically, in the “*Djerdap*” National Park (Serbia).

The high efficiency of the measures generated by the local government and of the real collaboration efforts between the authorities, the local communities and the business environment – achieved in the spirit of real cooperation, openness and progress is extremely relevant in this context. There are worth mentioning the present entrepreneurial spirit, the amplification of long commercial exchanges, the achievement of cultural and administrative transfers and the operation of successful commercial practices for the benefit of communities. Awareness of belonging to the Western civilization, culture and norms is valid and developed. The positive experience is amplified, as a bridge to significant future cross-border results and raising the standard of the cross-border cooperation space.

The training, specialization and quality of the human resource together with the discipline of action, the maturity in thinking and responsibility for the efforts made to the very benefit of communities – are as many elements in full support of the tangible goals expressed. A solid education system, an extensive school network and a high level of workforce qualification do also find their actual expression. There are presented natural and environmental resources that are truly exploited through tourism. (Dediu, 2007, pp. 156-159)

6. Euroregions Formed at the Southern Border

The system of (similar) Euroregions existing at the southern border contains cross-border cooperation structures, as follows: Southern Danube, Lower Danube, “Danube 21” Association, Giurgiu-Ruse, Danubius and Danube-Dobrogea.

“Danube 21” Cross-Border Cooperation Association¹ was established in Vidin, on the 18th of January, 2002, following the documents’ being signed by the mayors of Calafat, Vidin and Zaječar (Pop & Manoleli, 2008, p. 71). The association is found in the space of interference of three states - Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia. The area of 1,144 km² covered by it (Bogdan & Marinescu, 2019, pp. 165-169) is comprising human settlements located in the three states: *Romania* (with the city of Calafat and the communes of Poiana Mare, Desa, Cetate and Ciupercenii Noi), *Bulgaria* (with Vidin and the communes of Makresh, Ruzhintsi, Lom, Belogradchik, Kula, Novo Selo and Dimovo), as well as *Serbia* (with the town of Zaječar, the communes of Kladovo, Sokobanja, Boljevac, Bor, Knjazevac, Majdanpek and Negotin). (Dediu, 2007, p. 214) Details are presented in fig.9.



Figure 9. “Danube 21” Cross-Border Cooperation Association (Săgeată, 2014, p. 237)

¹ The association has all the component and functional features of the Euroregion. The term “association” refers to the smaller spatial extent of the present transboundary structure [A/N].

It is worth mentioning the signing of the “*Agreement between Romania and Bulgaria on the Construction of the Calafat-Vidin Bridge*” on the 1st of August 2006, the costs of building the critical infrastructure being estimated at about 236 million euros (the total real costs were of 226 million euros) and being provided by the European Union and the European Investment Bank (Dediu, 2007, pp. 214- 215). The bridge, with a length of 1,971 meters, was completed on the 14th of June 2013. We restate that the “*Danube 21*” Association is an atypical tripartite structure, with a low share of the Romanian side, as compared to the Serbian and Bulgarian involvements.

The Southern Danube was built in March 2001, consisting of cross-border territorial structures in Romania (the local councils in the municipalities of Alexandria, Turnu Magurele, Zimnicea and Roşiori de Vede (Pop & Manoleli, 2008, p. 71)), and three urban municipalities in Bulgaria: Nikopol, Belene and Veliko-Tarnovo (Bogdan & Marinescu, 2019, pp. 169-172). Details on Southern Danube are presented in fig.10.

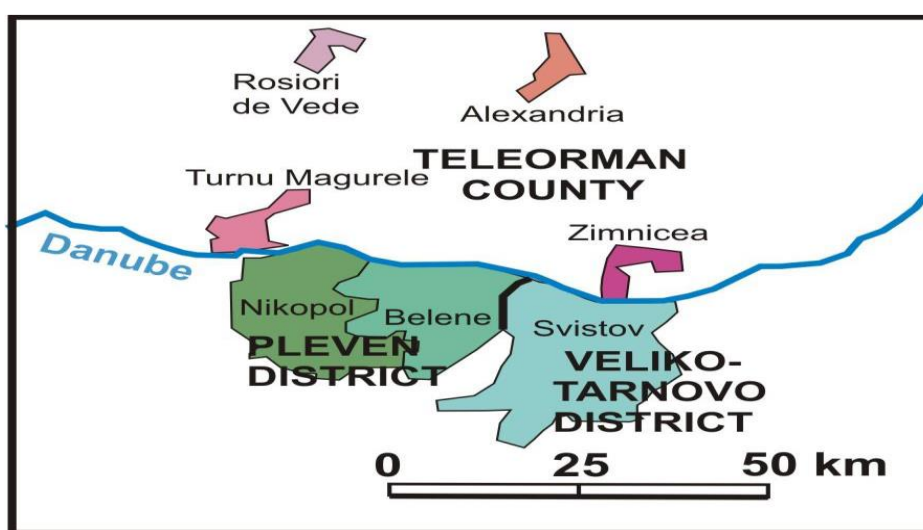


Figure 10. The Southern Danube Euroregion (Săgeată, 2014, p. 246)

(1. Romanian sector. 2. Bulgarian sector. 3. State border)

The activity of the Euroregion is quite modest in dynamic terms. The development of the infrastructure between the two states in the future (with a possible permanent crossing over the Danube built in the zone) could revive the economic dimension of the visibly poor area.

Giurgiu-Ruse includes the Giurgiu City Hall, the Ruse City Hall as well as the Ruse Municipal Energy Agency (NGO). The Euroregion is located on the strategic direction of interstate trade belonging to the former CAER - Moscow, Kiev, Bucharest, with subsequent access to Sofia and Burgas. It is the reason behind the construction of the Giurgiu-Ruse bridge in the 1952-1954 period. The initial document of the Euroregion is the “*Constituting Convention*”, signed by the mayors of Giurgiu and Ruse on the 23rd of April 2001 in the city of Giurgiu. (Talabă, 2005, p. 195).

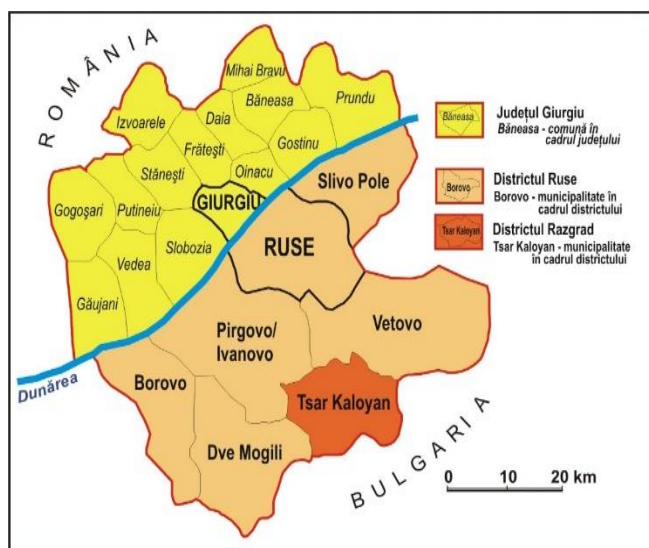


Figure 11. Giurgiu – Ruse Euroregion

The Euroregion has a small size and modest opportunities for assuming great economic efforts and multiple cooperations. There are maintained the impetus for mutual exchanges and the effective work of local administrations within the Danube riparian areas (Bogdan & Marinescu, 2019, pp. 172-175). Details are presented in fig.11. The quarterly meetings focus on environmental, public health and livestock issues, with a view to effectively addressing requirements and projects in bilateral terms.

Danubius was built in 2002 by the common concerns of the Giurgiu County Council (Romania) and the Russian Prefecture (Bulgaria). It includes the *Romanian segment* with the coverage of the territory of Giurgiu county and the *Bulgarian segment* with the involvement of the Ruse province. Details are presented in fig.12.

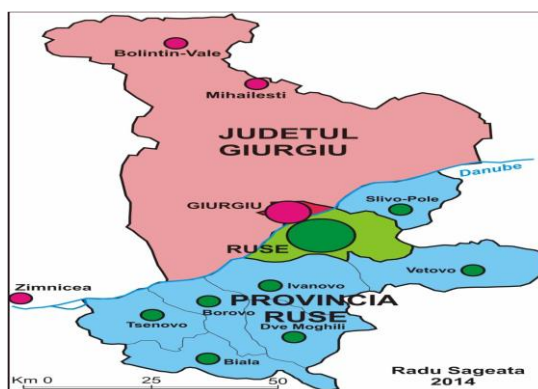


Figure 12. Danubius Euroregion (Săgeată, 2014, p. 267)

Danubius Euroregion continues, amplifies and puts into practice the objectives and possibilities previously analysed for the Giurgiu-Ruse Euroregion – regarding the situation of Danubius Euroregion in which the geographical area, the economic framework and the demographic structure are dimensioned at the level of Giurgiu County (Bogdan, 2019, pp. 173-175).

Danube-Dobrogea was established in 2002, comprising territorial structures of Romania (Ialomița, Călărași and Constanța counties) and Bulgaria (Silistra and Dobrici provinces). Details are presented in fig.13.



Figure 13. Danube-Dobruja Euroregion

(1. Regional and local polarization centers 2. Ports 3. Waterways 4. Administrative boundaries 5. State borders)

The Euroregion is a rather strong cross-border structure. The representations of the Romanian side include the multiple potential of Constanța County – a node of high transboundary polarization having major regional (European) importance (being the largest port on the Black Sea). The value of the communications node (in terms of the naval, road, rail and air communication) and of the economic node will increase in the future, in direct connection with the extensions of the Rhine-Main-Danube axis and with the developments regarding the hydrocarbon fuel routes from the Caspian Sea to Europe.

For the Euroregions existing on the southern border, we note the significant cohesion implications at the level of local communities in optimizing the spirit of collaboration, prosperity and specific progress, in line with European Union policies.

Entrepreneurship is highly significant, with building and expressing different forms that are favourable to the economic, commercial and cultural collaborations – in traditional and administrative domains, with accepting the EU values, requirements and policies in the cross-border field. One thing that is certain is the very expansion of the positive experience, which is so necessary in developing the future cross-border efforts.

Conclusions

The construction of cross-border structures of the Euroregion-type is a relatively recent fact in the European Union. The Euroregions' establishment has been taking place within areas marked by historical upheavals that have severely hampered communities near the borders, affecting their future and moral structure. Through leverages and mechanisms of cross-border cooperation, the territorial formations of former opponents do simply give up their own past hatred, moving towards joint effort and construction - as a useful solution to support building a Europe of peace, harmony and progress.

The estimated success in implementing and ensuring the future of Euroregions depends on multiple factors, such as the political will to build “link bridges” between former historical enemies, stimulating relevant experience and successful entrepreneurial capacity, ensuring multiple (i.e. legislative, political, technological, financial, etc.) support for communities, aiding poor areas, accessing European funds in the field, providing subsidies, donations or tax exemptions – all being produced for long periods of time.

For the future, it is necessary to optimize the European legislative framework, to connect the provisions of the internal law of European states to the requirements of the European Union framework, to direct the planned funds towards disadvantaged areas that have multiple problems to solve, to establish simplified mechanisms for accessing European funds, to streamline local decisions, to coordinate the achievement of practical efforts and extend the geographical context of cross-border cooperation's materialization. Through the maturity and robustness of the long-term effort, Euroregions can become real factors of progress in the future, ensuring the prosperity of the currently poor territories. From the viewpoint of European security, the construction and activity of the Euroregions can have multiple and far-reaching effects and consequences that range from the extremely negative to the very positive. Among the negative aspects, which must be avoided and prevented regardless of the circumstances, there can be mentioned the risk of erasing the relevance of state borders, of obliterating national identity and the feeling of belonging to a common past, with rejecting traditional forms and the ethnic spirit within cross-border areas. The aspects regarding the support in increasing the living standard of population, the assimilation of modern technological flows, the support in preserving traditions, the achievement of stringent critical facilities, the boosting of progress, the prosperity in inhospitable areas, the major cultural support are extremely positive, and must undeniably benefit by the entire support and attention of our society.

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