



ON ROMANIA CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION EUROREGIONS

Senior Lecturer Vasile BOGDAN, PhD

DANUBIUS University, Galați

Viorel-Cătălin MIHALCEA, PhD Candidate

"Carol I" National Defence University, Bucharest

Populations of different ethnicities have to live in different states, separated by borders that mutilate the national feeling and the perspective of the populations. In the relatively recent period, the European Union has proceeded to overcome the sequelae of the past, switching to creating bridges between neighbouring states, which have populations living on both sides of the border. The approach serves the need for balance, peace and detente in areas that have been difficult for conflict in the past. The initiative came from the West, mainly due to German concerns, the space being severely tested during the last world conflagrations. In the established cross-border collaborations, the most important is the economic-financial support for raising the standard of living and expectation in the poor communities. In this context, regarding the cross-border collaboration in the area bordering the national territory, Romania presents itself as extremely constructive, being part of 12 Euroregions, across all the borders of the country.

Keywords: territorial cooperation, macro-regions, standard of living, regional development, stability pillars.



INTRODUCTION

It is in the logic of history that the great powers at a particular time conduct destabilising actions resulting in stopping the unitary development of the nations in terms of affirmation and habitation. Obviously, it is the case of the Romanian people, severely tested, throughout history, as far as the collective being is concerned, because of territorial losses. Thus, the descendants of the Romanians were forced to live in areas in the composition of different states either neighbouring Romania or even remote ones.

In such conditions, the discontinuity, spatial and political, produced in the survival of the Romanian people in the same body, should constitute the strategic impetus in the efforts to overcome the temporary borders that separate isolated spaces, of the utmost importance being the desire for collaboration and support of the ethnic nuclei from outside the country. As it is known, territories of Romania started to be annexed by other countries in 1940, from all four cardinal directions, Romania drastically reducing its surface, resources and population.

GENERAL CONTEXT

The European Union consists of 27 states that are closely linked, thus ensuring the flow of labour force, capital, goods and services. As a protection measure against the wave of globalisation, different ways of counteracting it can be activated. Structures of the same ethnicity, separated in the historical past, can now exist in the composition of different states, thus separated by national borders. It is the merit of the European Union to have created the legal framework necessary for multiple cooperation and support, achieved between the ethnic groups divided by the current borders. Maintaining subordination to the national responsible bodies, the structures in the territories are provided with the opportunity to identify solutions for local administration through their own efforts, to achieve the standard

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Euroregions appeared beginning 1990 in Western Europe, after the fall of the Iron Curtain, following the line of former separation, near the borders of Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland. Likewise, (following the German example) Euroregions appeared at the point of contact between Western and Central Europe (Germany, Poland, Czechia) and Eastern Europe (Russia, Latvia, Poland).

of living with the perspective of future progress, in relation to the possibilities available to them in the territory.

The fundamental legal documents related to cross-border cooperation are represented by the *Treaty of Maastricht* (signed on 7 February 1992 and entered into force on 1 November 1993), the *Treaty of Rome* (signed on 25 March 1957, taking effects after 1 January 1958), the *Treaty of Lisbon* (signed on 13 December 2007, entered into force on 1 December 2009), as well as the *decisions* and *accession treaties*¹. Regional as well as local development is desirable to provide regional and local communities with funds and facilities, to materialise some initiatives at the local level, to provide solutions to some social needs and to foster the welfare of the communities in the territory². In this regard, after 2004, a *law on regional development* was adopted in Romania³.

Territorial cooperation is intended to agree on, to launch and conduct unitary actions, subsumed under the policies of unitary development of territories that are, administratively, under separate jurisdictions⁴. In the regional development paradigm, we will consider *Euroregions* as “... *areas or regions of economic and not only interference between two or more states that, in common, capitalise on the material and human resources by initiating activities and programmes in agriculture, industry, transportation, telecommunications, tourism, commerce*”⁵. Euroregions appeared beginning 1990 in Western Europe, after the fall of the *Iron Curtain*, following the line of former separation, near the borders of Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Switzerland. Likewise, (following the German example) Euroregions appeared at the point of contact between Western and Central Europe (Germany, Poland, Czechia) and Eastern Europe (Russia, Latvia, Poland).

¹ Romanian Academy, Institute of Geography, Radu Săgeată (coord.), *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării (Cross-border Cooperation Euro-Regions in the Lower Danube Basin)*. Geographical Study, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2014. Table 10. System of Euroregions on the eastern border of Romania, pp. 29-32.

² Tiberiu Brăilean, *Dezvoltare regională și cooperare transfrontalieră*, Editura Junimea, Iași, 2007, p. 21.

³ *Law no. 315 on 28 June 2004 (updated) on Regional Development in Romania*, published in the *Official Gazette* no. 577 on 29 June 2004.

⁴ Adrian Pop (coord.), Dan Manoleli, *Spre o strategie europeană în bazinul Mării Negre. Cooperarea teritorială*, Institutul European din România, București, 2008, p. 53.

⁵ *Stadiul actual al reglementărilor naționale și comunitare în domeniul cooperării transfrontaliere*, Editura Primus, Oradea, 2009, p. 43.

After 2007, Euroregions were created in Eastern Europe (Carpathian area⁶, the Lower Danube, the Danube-Mureş-Tisa or the Upper Prut)⁷.

Cross-border cooperation is robust in the Baltic region, as a consequence of the involvement of the states having a consolidated democracy and a high economic and social development level; therefore, we can state that there is an opportunity for the inhabitants to acquire a proper standard of living. Between international actors there have been signed bilateral or multilateral agreements to support partnership initiatives⁸. The successive stages of cross-border relations can be as follows: exceeding border limits and manifesting relations between entities and populations, exchanging information, especially between local authorities, unanimous acceptance, cooperation, optimisation and integration of regional development programmes⁹. The latter two stages have not been achieved yet, representing only hypotheses related to future cooperation possibilities¹⁰.

THE SYSTEM OF EUROREGIONS IN THE PROXIMITY OF ROMANIA

In the proximity of Romania, history has been generous in terms of creating certain areas having ethnic continuity and being under the jurisdiction of many states. It is important to know that cross-border cooperation regions have preserved the defining features of the ethnic element and the good relations between neighbours as well as the mutual cooperation with the motherland. It should also be mentioned that the arbitrary borders have hampered the natural transfer of influences, nevertheless, without interruptions in the flows of collaboration.

The storms of history have placed Romanian populations in all cardinal directions, in relation to Romania. The cross-border cooperation produced with the intention of beneficially meeting the desires of mutual knowledge, of joint effort, more sustained development, with the attainment of better levels of common welfare, all of them found



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⁶ Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine and Romania.

⁷ Vasile Bogdan, *Euroregiuni de cooperare transfrontalieră ale României*, Editura CTEA, Bucureşti, 2019, pp. 31-33.

⁸ European Union, *Practical Guide to Cross-Border Cooperation. Euro Dobrogea*, Constanţa, 2005, pp. 25-26.

⁹ ***, Council of Europe, *Cross-Border Cooperation Manual*, Bucureşti, 2000, p. 56.

¹⁰ Vasile Bogdan, *op. cit.*, pp. 45-48.



the right understanding, with the acceptance of the limits of the local implications. It is noteworthy that Romania is part of the establishment of the Euroregions towards all the cardinal directions:

- on the eastern border, there are the *Lower Danube*, the *Siret-Prut-Dniester* and the *Upper Prut* Euroregions;
- on the western border, we highlight the *Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar*, the *Danube-Criş-Mureş-Tisa*, as well as the *Middle Danube-Iron Gates* Euroregions;
- on the northern border, there is the *Carpathian Euroregion*, comprising the territory belonging to five states (Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Ukraine and Romania);
- on the southern border, there are the “*Danube 21*” *Cross-Border Cooperation Association* and the *Southern Danube*, *Giurgiu-Ruse*, *Danubius* and the *Danube- Dobruja* Euroregions¹¹.

The Euroregions on the state borders of Romania should be also analysed as part of the Danube micro-region, being situated on the Rhin-Main-Danube axis or in the Pontus Euxinus area. The analysis of the Danube macro-region should be conducted in a manner that is similar to the Adriatic and Ionian, Alps or Baltic Sea macro-regions (figure no. 1)¹².



Figure no. 1: the Danube macro-region¹³

¹¹ *Ibidem*, pp. 103-175.

¹² According to <http://www.interreg-danube.eu/>, retrieved on 13.12.2019.

¹³ Source: <http://www.danube-region.eu/>, retrieved on 13.12.2019.

The stability pillars will be ensured by: strengthening the potential of the Danube macro-region, connecting the region to similar identities, in the context of water transport, the existence of the possibilities of terrestrial, air and railway systems, the protection of the environment (with diminishing the natural and anthropic risks, increasing the quality of water, soil, air and biodiversity), building welfare and prosperity (through competitiveness, population involvement, specialisation and multidisciplinary training), all these aspects being subsumed under the requirements of the knowledge society¹⁴.

THE EUROREGIONS ON THE EASTERN BORDER

In a progressive manner, on the eastern border of Romania, following 1997, three Euroregions have been defined: *the Lower Danube, the Upper Prut and the Siret-Prut-Dniester*. Indisputably, the Euroregions are placed in the framework of outer European Union and NATO borders, generating particular aspects regarding their geopolitical integration¹⁵ (table no. 1).

Euroregion generic data	Countries involved
The Lower Danube Established in 1997-1998 Area 53,496 km ²	Romania
	Ukraine
	Republic of Moldova
The Upper Prut Established in 2000 Area 42,809 km ²	Romania
	Ukraine
	Republic of Moldova
The Siret-Prut-Dniester Established in 2002 Area 31,434 km ²	Romania
	Republic of Moldova

Table no. 1: Euroregions situated on the eastern border of Romania¹⁶

The priorities of the Euroregions on the Romanian eastern border are related to the following major objectives: to develop a more competitive economy in the cross-border area, to ease the pressure on the environment and to prepare for the expansion of the “*people to people*” type of manifestation (extended cooperation between

¹⁴ *Ibidem*.

¹⁵ Vasile Bogdan, Emanuel-Ştefan Marinescu, *Cooperarea transfrontalieră și studii de arie. Curs*, Editura CTEA, Bucureşti, 2019, pp. 35-36.

¹⁶ Romanian Academy, Institute of Geography, *op. cit.*, p. 61.



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the communities within the cross-border area)¹⁷. In the Prut adjacent space, the two metropolitan areas are revealed, Iași and Brăila-Galați.

The *Lower Danube* was established following Romania's attempts to form the Euroregion, made at the Ismail Summit, on 3-4 July 1997. The "Declaration on Cross-Border Cooperation" was signed by the Presidents of Romania, Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova¹⁸. On 14 August 1998, in Galați, it was signed the "Agreement on Establishing the Lower Danube Euroregion". After the events in 2014-2015, between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, the territorial delineation in the Crimean Peninsula changed radically (*figure no. 2*).



Figure no. 2: the Lower Danube Euroregion¹⁹

¹⁷ Cosmin Sabău, *Efectele benefice ale cooperării transfrontaliere în euroregiuni: Euroregiunea Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar*, Editura Mirton, Timișoara, 2012, pp. 148-149.

¹⁸ Romanian Centre for European Policies, *Contribution to the Partnership for Development between Romania and the Republic of Moldova*, 29 May 2013, Chișinău, p. 14.

¹⁹ Radu Săgeată (coord.), *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontaliere din bazinul inferior al Dunării. Studiu geografic*, Editura Academiei Române, București, 2014, figure no. 29, p. 66.

The *Siret-Prut-Dniester Euroregion* was established by signing the “*Protocol on the Cross-Border Cooperation in the Siret-Prut-Dniester Euroregion*”, on 18 September 2002, in Iași, following the initiatives of the Local Councils in Romania and the Republic of Moldova²⁰. On 4 December 2002, in Ungheni (the Republic of Moldova), it was signed the *Statute on the Functioning of the Siret-Prut-Dniester Euroregion*, at the Forum of Presidents²¹ (figure no. 3).

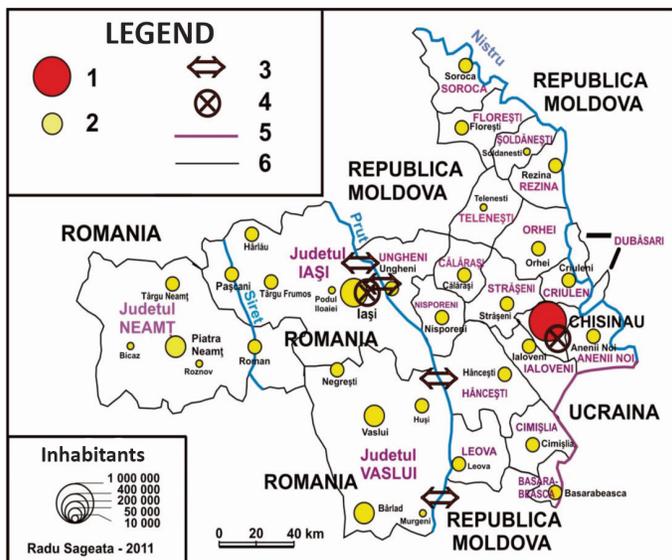


Figure no. 3: the Siret-Prut-Dniester Euroregion²²

The organisational aspects were set at the *Forum of Presidents*, a meeting that took place in Ialoveni (the Republic of Moldova), on 6 April 2004. On that occasion, it was approved the “*Regulation on the Organisation and Functioning of the Siret-Prut-Dniester Euroregion*”, the document having some significant modifications. The three Romanian counties are territorial entities having a different economic potential, the value of Iași County being indisputable, considering the city was the capital of former province Moldova.

²⁰ Ion Talabă, *România și tematica euroregiunilor*, in *Euroregiunile. Prezent și viitor*, Editura Performantica, Iași, 2005, p. 198.

²¹ Felicia Dediu, *Participarea României la realizarea unor inițiative în domeniul cooperării tranfrontaliere regionale*, in “*Carol I*” NDU Bulletin, no. 4/2007, pp. 221-222.

²² See *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării. Studiu geografic* (Radu Săgeată coord.), *loc. cit.*, figure no. 22, p. 78 (1.- Capital. 2. – Polarisation nucleus. 3. – Cross-border connections. 4 - Airports. 5 - Borders. 6 – Administrative limits).



The *Upper Prut Euroregion* was established following the Romanian initiative, the beginning being marked by the “*Treaty on Good Neighbourhood and Collaboration Relations between Romania and Ukraine*” signed on 2 July 1997²³. It should be also mentioned the “*Agreement on the Establishment of the Upper Prut Euroregion*”, a document signed on 22 September 2000, in Botoșani (figure no. 4).

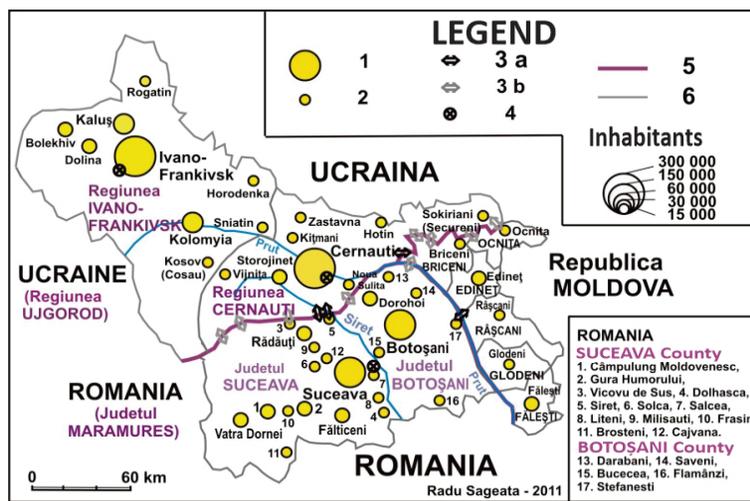


Figure no. 4: the Upper Prut Euroregion²⁴

The Upper Prut Euroregion was established following the Romanian initiative, the beginning being marked by the “*Treaty on Good Neighbourhood and Collaboration Relations between Romania and Ukraine*” signed on 2 July 1997.

The leadership is ensured by a Council, and the functions are exercised through the Presidency and the Secretariat of the Euroregion Council as well as through the Coordination Centres (in Bălți, Suceava and Cernăuți) and four working commissions²⁵. The four working commissions have complementary priorities: commission 1 (economy, infrastructure and tourism), commission 2 (ecological security, environment protection and bioeconomy), commission 3 (collaboration in the field of science, education, culture, healthcare, sports and youth) and commission 4 (enhancement and harmonisation of inter-regional, inter-ethnic relations and local leadership)²⁶.

²³ Vasile Bogdan, Emanuel-Ștefan Marinescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-118.

²⁴ According to *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării. Studiu geografic*, loc. cit., figure no. 28, p. 87 (1.- Regional polarisation nuclei. 2.- Local polarisation nuclei. 3. – Cross-border connections: 3 a. International traffic. b. Small border traffic. 4 - Airports. 5 - Borders. 6 – Administrative limits).

²⁵ Andrei Balînschi, *Problemele și perspectivele dezvoltării Eurorehiunii “Prutul de Sus” în condițiile proceselor integrării europene, în Euroregiunile. Prezent și viitor*, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

²⁶ Felicia Dediu, *op. cit.*, p. 220.

It should be noted the intention of local communities to create a space of collaboration, mutual aid and progress of the mentioned cross-border areas, taking into account the Russian Federation geostrategic implications. In this regard, it is necessary to be aware of the control and influence measures that come from the outside, present eastward of the Romanian border, which limit the collaboration efforts and affect the population resilience. The major deficit in financial resources makes necessary a massive financial support. It is certain a slow economic development, population aging, pauperisation and decrease in number, as well as the modest level of road communications, the poor promotion of tourism, the industrial and transport (road and rail), park reduced and outdated, the mediocre level of education, the massive migration of local work force to the East and the West. In this regard, measures are needed to protect the environment, in order to stop the degradation of the standard of living in the rural sector, which is at the level of extreme poverty, as well as energetic measures for accessing European funds²⁷.

THE EUROREGIONS ON THE NORTHERN BORDER

The northern border of Romania, situated in the context of the European Union and NATO external border, is on the Baltic-Pontic axis, well known for the political pressures at the regional level.

The *Carpathian Euroregion* comprises five states: Hungary (5 counties), Poland (4 voivodeships), Slovakia (9 counties), Ukraine (4 regions) and Romania (7 counties)²⁸. The included counties in Romania are Satu Mare, Maramureş, Sălaj, Bihor, Suceava, Botoşani and Harghita (starting in 2000). The Euroregion was established on 14 February 1993, in Debrecen (Hungary), on the occasion of the meeting of the foreign ministers of the interested countries, in which the local administration representatives were present²⁹ (*figure no. 5*).

The constitutive documents are the *“Agreement on the Establishment of an Inter-Regional Association the <Carpathian Euroregion>”* and the *“Statute of the Inter-Regional Association the <Carpathian Euroregion>”*. Its management is ensured by the Carpathian Euroregion Council, the decision-making body in terms of the Euroregion strategy

²⁷ Vasile Bogdan, *op. cit.*, pp. 93-94.

²⁸ Ion Talabă, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

²⁹ Vasile Bogdan, Emanuel-Ştefan Marinescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 134-143.



and the problems of major interest. The international Secretariat was initially based in Uzgorod (Ukraine), being then moved in Debrecen (Hungary). The working commissions are under the responsibility of a state as follows: Regional Development (Hungary), Prevention of Natural Disasters (Slovakia), Tourism and Environment (Poland), Trade Development (Romania) and Social Infrastructure (Ukraine)³⁰.

The Carpathian Euroregion is a unique cross-border structure as there are bi- and trilateral contacts. In the existence of the Euroregion, it is important the message transmitted to the peoples of Europe, namely that such cooperation could be feasible. Moreover, it is an impetus for other Euroregions in Europe to work and develop, in terms of cooperation, dialogue and mutual aid.

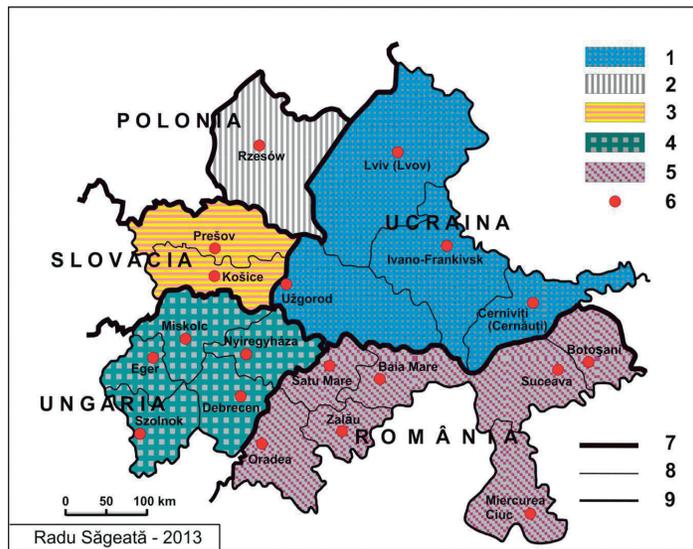


Figure no. 5: the Carpathian Euroregion³¹

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³⁰ Cristina Dogot, *Romanian Local Administrations and Their Activities in Carpathian Euroregion*, in *Cross-Border Cooperation. Models of Good Practice in the Carpathian Region* (Adrian-Claudiu Popoviciu, editor), Editura CH Beck, Oradea, 2014, pp. 174-175.

³¹ According to *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării. Studii geografice*, loc. cit., figure no. 52, p. 128 (1-5 sectors: 1. Ukrainian, 2. Polish, 3. Slovak, 4. Hungarian, 5. Romanian, 6. Polarisation centres, 7. State borders, 8. Administrative limits, 9. Carpathian Euroregion limits).

the interest in trade, economy, culture and administration, sharing Western specific values in compliance with the EU policies related to cross-border matters. The quality and seriousness of the human factor, the maturity and coherence of the achievements are in line with the set objectives. The educational infrastructure follows an optimistic trend, considering the high level of labour force qualification.

THE EUROREGIONS ON THE WESTERN BORDER

In what follows, we will analyse the situation on the western border of Romania, on two distinct lines: the segment of the border between Romania and Hungary, with the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion, therefore consisting of two parties (Romania and Hungary), and the sector of the border between Romania and Serbia, with the Middle Danube-Iron Gates Euroregion, consisting of two parties (Romania and Serbia). As an exception, it will be highlighted the Danube-Criş-Mureş-Tisa Euroregion, a structure consisting of three parties (Romania, Hungary and Serbia)³². *Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar* was established in the late 2002, following the simultaneous initiatives of the County Council Bihor

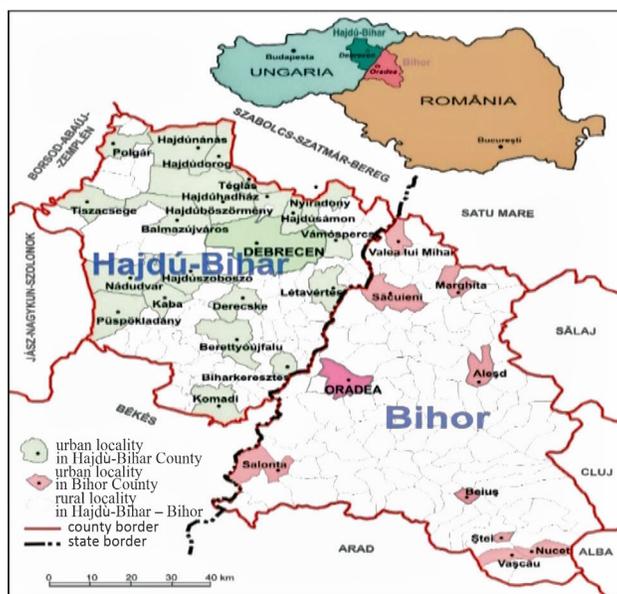


Figure no. 6: the Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion³³

³² Romanian Academy, Institute of Geography, *op. cit.*, pp. 140-141.

³³ According to Hungary Population Census, apud *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării. Studiu geografic, loc. cit.*, figure no. 60, p. 152.



and the Local Self-Government of Hajdú-Bihar (Hungary). The practical aspects were set by the “*Concept and Programme of the Romanian-Hungarian Cross-Border Region Development*”³⁴.

The *Bihor-Hajdú-Bihar* Euroregion is an extremely dynamic and prosperous cross-border structure. The numerous and successful initiatives of the cooperating parties support, through common efforts, the high-level of the border population welfare.

The *Danube-Criş-Mureş-Tisa (DKMT)* was established through the “*Bilateral Cooperation Agreement between Timiş (Romania) and Csongrad (Hungary)*” and the “*Danube-Mureş-Tisa Regional Cooperation Protocol*”, signed in 1997 (figure no. 7).

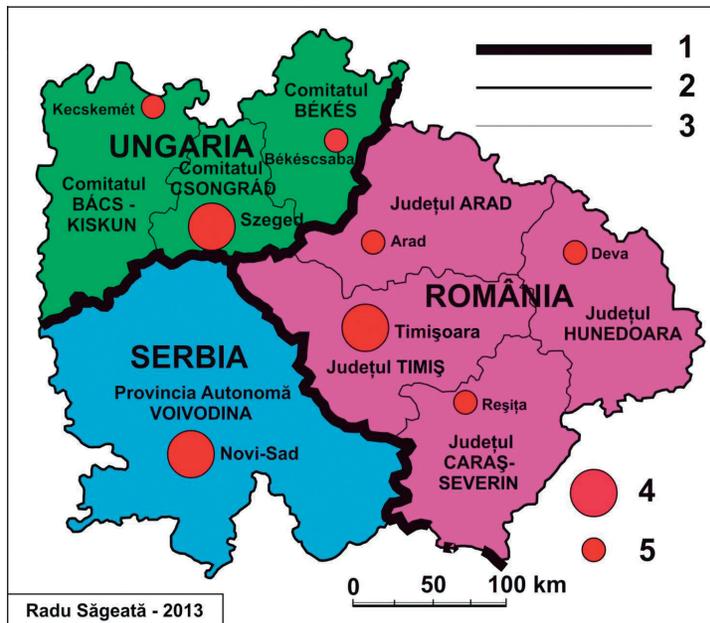


Figure no. 7: the Danube-Criş-Mureş-Tisa Euroregion³⁵

The aims are related to the region improved democratisation and the European Union integration acceleration, the social-economic development, the achievement of contacts and special relations in the field of cross-border cooperation. The major objectives are related not only to enhanced mutual relations in the fields of economy,

³⁴ Vasile Bogdan, Emanuel-Ştefan Marinescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 151-155.

³⁵ According to *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării*, loc. cit., figure no. 70, p. 181.

education and culture, healthcare, science and sports, but also to the collaboration in the field of European integration³⁶.

The *Middle Danube-Iron Gates* was established on 6 October 2005. In Vidin the constitutive documents were signed, namely the *Association Agreement* and the *Statute of the Middle Danube-Iron Gates Euroregion*. There are involved the Romanian counties Caraş-Severin and Mehedinţi, and the Serbian districts Bor and Branicevski³⁷ (Figure no. 8).



Figure no. 8: the Middle Danube-Iron Gates Euroregion³⁸

Among the efforts of the Euroregion, it is noted the major involvement of the Romanian and Serbian parties in supporting the National Park “*Iron Gates*” (Romania) and, in the mirror, the National Park “*Djerdap*” (Serbia).

The high efficiency of local government policies and the collaboration between authorities, local communities and the business environment

³⁶ Felicia Dediu, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

³⁷ Vasile Bogdan, *op. cit.*, pp. 154-157.

³⁸ According to *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării*, *loc. cit.*, figure no. 87, p. 215.



in the spirit of open cooperation, prosperity and progress are illustrative. The developed entrepreneurial spirit, the manifestation of commercial, cultural and administrative exchanges, the operation of successful commercial practices are noted. The awareness of belonging to the levels of civilisation and culture, specific to the West, is certain. Moreover, the accumulated positive experience is used as a bridge to remarkable cross-border results.

The human resource preparation and quality, the mature and responsible approaches are compliant with the tangible set objectives. A feasible and broad education system is developed for the labour force. There are natural and environmental resources that are optimally capitalised on by tourism³⁹.

THE EUROREGIONS ON THE SOUTHERN BORDER

The system of Euroregions on the southern border comprises the cross-border cooperation structures: *the Southern Danube, the Lower Danube, the “Danube 21” Cross-Border Association, the Giurgiu- Ruse, the Danubius and the Danube-Dobrogea.*

The “*Danube 21” Cross-Border Association*⁴⁰ was established on 18 January 2002 in Vidin, through the documents signed by the mayors of Calafat, Vidin and Zaječar⁴¹. The Association is situated at the crossroads of three states (Romania, Bulgaria and Serbia). It has an area of 1,144 km²⁴² having localities belonging to three states: *Romania* (the city of Calafat and the communes Desa, Poiana Mare, Ciupercenii Noi and Cetate), *Bulgaria* (the city of Vidin and the communes Macriș, Rujnuti, Lom, Belogradcic, Kula, Novo Selo and Dimovo) and *Serbia* (the city of Zaicear and the communes Kladovo, Sokobania, Bolivat, Bor, Kniajevat and Mandanpec)⁴³ (Figure no. 9).

It is extremely important the signing, on 1 August 2006, of the “*Agreement between Romania and Bulgaria on the Construction of the Calafat-Vidin Bridge*”, the estimate costs being about 236 million Euros (total costs being 226 million Euros), covered by the European

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³⁹ *Ibidem*, pp. 156-159.

⁴⁰ The Association has available all the component and functional particularities that are specific to the Euroregion. The term is in concordance with the smaller area of the presented cross-border structure (A.N.).

⁴¹ Adrian Pop (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁴² Vasile Bogdan, Emanuel-Ștefan Marinescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-169.

⁴³ Felicia Dediu, *op. cit.*, p. 214.

Union and the European Investment Bank⁴⁴. The 1,971-metre-long bridge was completed on 14 June 2013. The “Danube 21” Association is a structure comprising three parties, having an atypical format, the Romanian share being reduced as compared to the Serbian and Bulgarian involvement.



Figure no. 9: the “Danube 21” Cross-Border Association ⁴⁵

The Southern Danube was established in March 2001, comprising cross-border cooperation structures from Romania (the Local Councils of Alexandria, Turnu Măgurele, Zimnicea and Roşiorii de Vede) and Bulgaria (three urban municipalities: Nikopol, Belene and Veliko-Tărnovo).

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The Euroregion activity is less dynamic. The infrastructure development (with the permanent possibility to cross the Danube in the area) could revitalise the economic aspects that are necessary for the highly pauper area.

⁴⁴ *Ibidem*, pp. 214- 215.

⁴⁵ According to *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării*, loc. cit., figure no. 94, p. 237 (1. Romanian sector. 2. Serbian sector. 3. Bulgarian sector. 4. Polarisation centre).

⁴⁶ Adrian Pop (coord.), *op. cit.*, p. 71.

⁴⁷ Vasile Bogdan, Emanuel-Ştefan Marinescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 169-172.

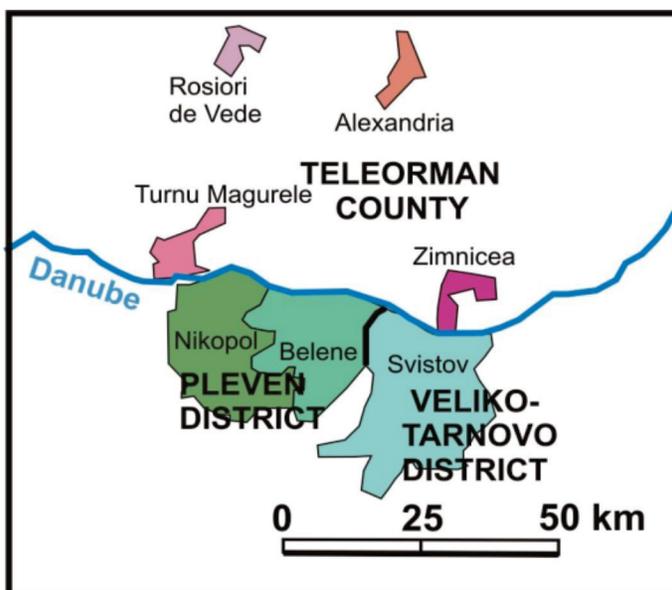


Figure no. 10: the Lower Danube Euroregion⁴⁸

The Danubius was established in 2002 following the joint interests of the County Council Giurgiu (Romania) and the Prefecture in Ruse (Bulgaria). It comprises the Romanian party, with the territory in the Giurgiu County, and the Bulgarian party, with the Ruse province.

The *Giurgiu-Ruse* was established based on the *Establishment Convention*, signed by the mayors of the municipalities of Giurgiu and Ruse on 23 April 2001, in Giurgiu⁴⁹.

The Euroregion comprises the City Hall of Giurgiu, the City Hall of Ruse and the Municipal Energy Agency in Ruse (ONG). The Euroregion is situated on the route of strategic trade in former COMECON, Moscow-Kiev-Bucharest, with possible access to Sofia and Burgas, a reason why the Giurgiu-Ruse Bridge was built, between 1952 and 1954.

During the quarterly meetings there are discussed problems related to the environment, healthcare and livestock, requirements or projects being provided rapid solutions in a bilateral format (*Figure no. 11*). The Euroregion has a small area and reduced possibilities for economic effort and cooperation. However, it maintains the impetus for mutual exchanges and for the effective work of the local administrations in the Danube riverside areas⁵⁰.

The *Danubius* was established in 2002 following the joint interests of the County Council Giurgiu (Romania) and the Prefecture in Ruse

⁴⁸ According to *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării*, loc. cit., figure no. 99, p. 246 (1. Romanian sector. 2. Bulgarian sector. 3. State border).

⁴⁹ Ion Talabă, *op. cit.*, p. 195.

⁵⁰ Vasile Bogdan, Emanuel-Ștefan Marinescu, *op. cit.*, pp. 172-175.

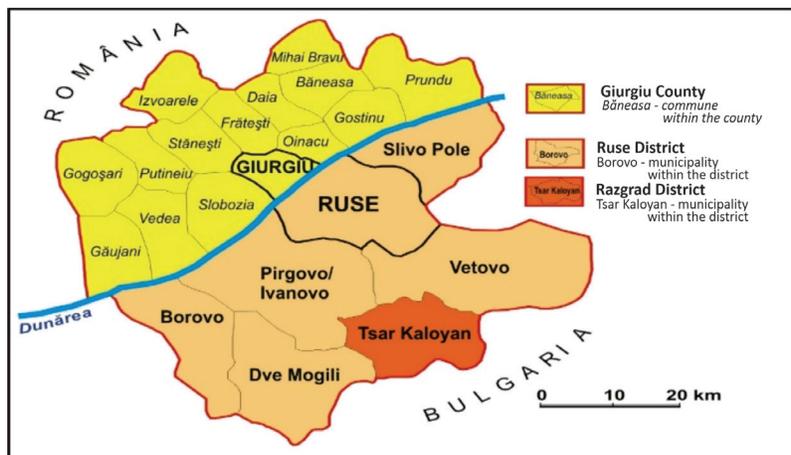


Figure no. 11: the Giurgiu-Ruse Euroregion, administrative structure⁵¹

(Bulgaria). It comprises the *Romanian party*, with the territory in the Giurgiu County, and the *Bulgarian party*, with the Ruse province⁵² (Figure no. 12).

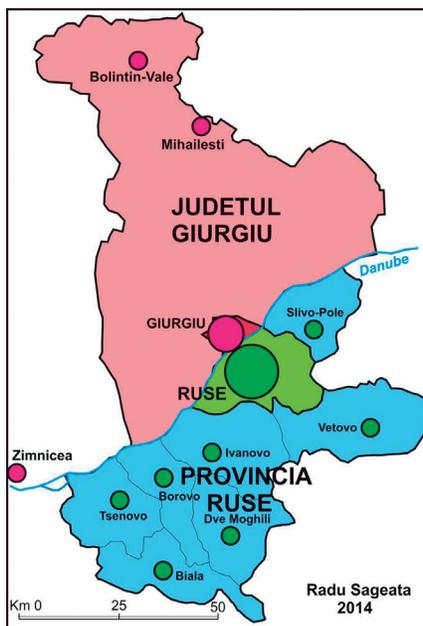


Figure no. 12: the Danubius Euroregion⁵³

⁵¹ According to *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării*, loc. cit., figure 102, p. 258.

⁵² Ion Talabă, *op. cit.*, p. 196.

⁵³ According to *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării*, loc. cit., figure no. 1072, p. 267.



The *Danubius Euroregion* continues and amplifies the objectives and opportunities previously analysed for the Giurgiu-Ruse Euroregion, but the geographical and economic environment, as well as the demographic structure are extrapolated at the level of the Giurgiu County⁵⁴.

The *Danube-Dobrogea* was established in 2002, having territorial structures from Romania (Ialomița, Călărași and Constanța counties) and Bulgaria (Silistra and Dobrich provinces – *figure no. 13*).

Within the Euroregions in the south, it is noted the significant involvement of the local communities for cohesion in terms of shaping the space for collaboration, prosperity and progress specific to the Euroregions situated on the southern border of Romania, in compliance with the European Union policies.

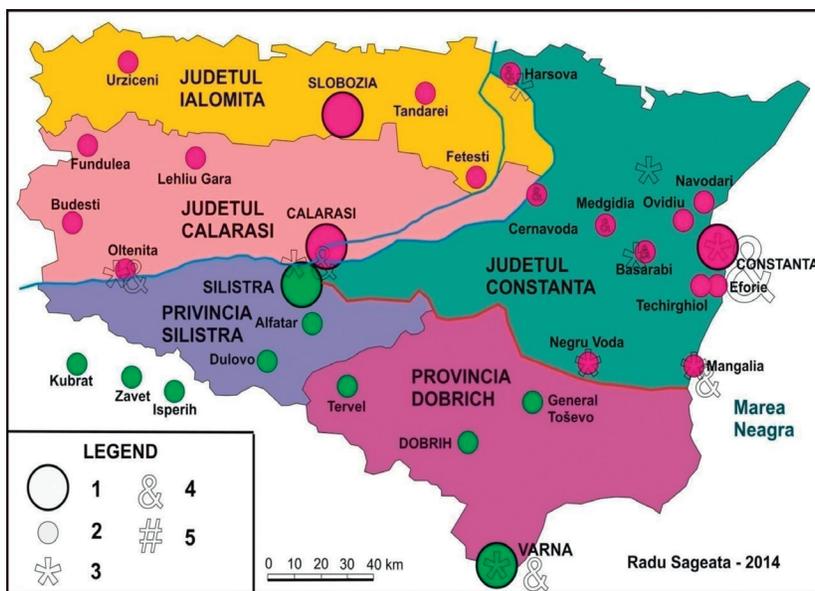


Figure no. 13: the Danube-Dobrogea Euroregion⁵⁵

The Euroregion is a powerful cross-border structure. The Romanian party comprises Constanța County, a hub of cross-border polarisation of major regional importance, as a port on the Black Sea. The value of the communications node and of the economic force will increase in the future, in relation to the enlargements of the Rhine-Main-Danube axis, as well as the extension of the hydrocarbon route from the Caspian Sea area.

Within the Euroregions in the south, it is noted the significant involvement of the local communities for cohesion in terms of shaping

⁵⁴ Vasile Bogdan, *op. cit.*, pp. 173-175.

⁵⁵ According to *Euroregiunile de cooperare transfrontalieră din bazinul inferior al Dunării*, *loc. cit.*, figure no. 118, p. 286. (1. – Regional and local polarisation nuclei. 2. - Ports. 3. - Waterways. 4 – Administrative limits. 5 – State frontiers).

the space for collaboration, prosperity and progress specific to the Euroregions situated on the southern border of Romania, in compliance with the European Union policies.

The entrepreneurial spirit is significant, outlining and manifesting certain forms of commercial, cultural and administrative collaboration, acceptance of EU values and policies in the cross-border field. We note the extension of the positive experience, as an impetus for increased cross-border results.



CONCLUSIONS

The establishment of cross-border structures is a relatively recent reality at the European Union level. The establishment of Euroregions intervenes in areas marked by historical convulsions that have greatly affected the communities located near the borders. Through the mechanisms of cross-border cooperation, the hatred of the past is overcome, being promoted a common construction, as a useful solution, which favors the building of a Europe of peace, detente and progress.

The desired success in the implementation and the future of the Euroregions is dependent on a number of factors, such as the political will of establishing “bridges” with former historical enemies, stimulating the entrepreneurial experience and capacity, ensuring multiple support (legislative, political, financial, technological etc.) for the communities involved, supporting the poor areas and accessing European funds, subsidies, donations or tax exemptions, carried out over large periods of time.

For the future, we consider that it is necessary to optimise the European legislative framework, to connect the provisions of the national law to the respective requirements, to direct the planned funds to the areas with poor populations and multiple problems to solve, to establish simplified mechanisms for accessing European funds, to streamline the local decision, to coordinate the practical effort, and to broaden the geopolitical context of affirming cross-border cooperation. Due to the maturity of the long-term effort, the Euroregions can become factors for progress in the future.

From the perspective of national security, the involvement of the Euroregions may have different effects and aspects. Among the positive effects, we can mention the support for increasing the standard



of living, the technological upgrades, the preservation of traditions, the achievement of absolutely necessary critical facilities, the induction of progress and prosperity in less favoured areas. The negative effects refer to the desire to eliminate the borders of the Romanian space, the erasure of national identity, the disappearance of the feeling of belonging to the common past and the elimination of the traditional forms from the cross-border spaces.

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