

## EUROPEAN COOPERATION FOR THE DANUBE REGION

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### *Abstract*

*The paper aims to show the importance of Danube Region for the European countries. The European Union Strategy for the Danube River provides a framework for cooperation for the problems of the region: floods, transport, environment, energy, sustainable development. The reunions organized in EU countries try to highlight the importance of the EU Strategy for the Danube River. The paper highlights the Strategy work as key to Cohesion Policy as engine of growth. The Strategy for the Danube Region is a new way to overcome 20th century division and conflicts in the Region, and as an important impulse for overall socio-economic development.*

*Key words:* cooperation, Danube, strategy, development, macro-regional approach

### INTRODUCTION

Danube, the second largest river in Europe, covers about 2850 km, linking the Black Forest to the Black Sea, across ten countries and has tributaries from other four countries. [1]

An ideal location for placement of hydroelectric power plants, a pan-European transport corridor and a refuge for the rarest species in Europe - the pressures on the river are often in conflict with each other and political changes in the region also influenced the way the difficulties are dealt. Following the example of the EU Strategy for Baltic Sea, which was the first macro-regional approach, the EU strategy for the Danube was based on stakeholder efforts in the region, allowing them to create a region where all 115 million people to enjoy security, prosperity and equal opportunities. [2]

EU Strategy for the Danube is a model of regional cooperation at European level. [3]

A strategy to boost the development of the Danube Region was proposed by the European Commission on 8 December 2010. Member States endorsed the EU Strategy for the Danube Region at the General Affairs Council on 13 April 2011. [4].

With its 100 million inhabitants, a fifth of EU Danube Region is a key factor for the overall

welfare of the European Union. Many of the problems of the region are in nature: floods, transportation lines and energy, environment and security all require a unified approach. [5] European Union Strategy for the Danube Region refers mainly to 14 countries, of which eight are EU Member States (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania), and six are non-EU countries (Croatia, Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Ukraine and Moldova).

The people living in the Danube Region will benefit from: faster transport by road and rail, cleaner transport by improving the navigability of rivers, cheaper and more secure energy thanks to better connections and alternative sources, a better environment with cleaner water, protected biodiversity, and cross-border flood prevention, a prosperous region, through working together on the economy, education, social inclusion, and research and innovation, attractive tourist and cultural destinations, developed and marketed jointly, a safer, well-governed region, thanks to better cooperation and coordination of government and non-governmental organizations [6].

## MATERIALS AND METHODS

The strategy is based on a new method which is based on "macro-regional" approach, following the steps of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea. The originality of the method lies in the way it combines different countries to cooperate in setting goals to align funds and to join efforts to achieve the objectives and the European Commission will play a major role in coordination.

Representing a united response to the problems affecting a fifth of the EU and more than 100 million inhabitants, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region is the example of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea and it leverages best practices.

With no new EU funds, no new laws enacted in the EU and non-EU new structure instead, the focus is to create synergies ties between authorities at all levels to maximize the impact of actions and funding. Areas of innovation and cutting-edge research are among the region's strengths: strategy facilitates mutual communication of knowledge and networking to support growth. There are needed infrastructure and modern communication methods to make an opening in the region, both to itself and to its outside world.

The strategy provides a framework for sustainable cooperation actions aimed at all these problems and others. For the strategy to succeed, however, the people in the region need to take actions in order to build a sustainable future for themselves and their children. Preparation of large projects in the Danube area has accelerated in recent years as witnessed by so many conferences organized lately.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

At Regensburg (Germany), was held the first Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (27-28 November 2012), an event attended by representatives of local governments in the Danube region.

The European Union Strategy for the Danube Region has proposed to interconnect the Danube region, to protect the environment,

provide increased prosperity and strengthen the institutions of the region. Under the patronage of the European Commission and the Regional Government of Bavaria (Germany), the Forum Annual European Union Strategy for the Danube Region was held under the slogan "How can the Danube Region help build a more competitive Europe?"

The discussions at the forum were focused on topics such as building the future Danube Region, improved environmental adaptability, perspectives energy region of modern Danube, a river basin sustainable tourism and environmental assets, innovative action Danube successful businesses, promoting delegation, skills and overall growth and modern governance in Danube area.

The Forum at Regensburg was a good opportunity to celebrate the results of the first year of implementation of this strategy, which aims to find common solutions to the challenges facing all 14 participating countries in various fields, such as transport, employment labor, environmental, security and economic growth.

Another example is the Danube Financial Dialogue - Second edition (23-24 January 2013) held in Belgrade, Serbia. At the event were presented the financial perspectives of the EU project enough to cover the entire macro-region lying within the 14 states. In this dialogue was discussed and agreed with the delegates of the Danube countries and representatives of the European Commission and the European Union to organize a forum dedicated to Bucharest Danube macro-region strategy.

Financial Dialogue Danube - Second Edition already open financial perspective pragmatic and robust enough for the great transformative EU project covering the entire macro-region lying within the 14 states.

Recently, an agreement was signed between Bulgaria and Romania to sustained development of river transport on the Danube section which forms the border between the two countries. According to the Convention on the Danube transport, the development responsibility is an interdepartmental committee composed of representatives of

Bulgaria and Romania. Benefits of cooperation between Bulgaria and Romania will be the development of joint projects with real impact in the Danube Region, developing links between South-East and the rest of Europe by Pan-European Transport Corridor IV with bridge building number 2 over the Danube between Vidin and Calafat. Other benefits will be the development of river navigation in the Danube between Bulgaria and Romania, multiple links between the two countries and the rehabilitation and expansion of Ruse and Giurgiu Bridge. Is expected to improve port infrastructure development and construction of new terminals in Vidin and Russe modular and collaborative construction of an icebreaker.

## CONCLUSIONS

As 2013 is the International Year of Water Cooperation in the field, its purpose is to raise awareness, both in terms of the potential for increased cooperation, and on the challenges facing water management given the increasing demand for water allocation and services.

For Romania, the consolidation of the Danube's cooperation is a priority taking account of the potential for sustainable development of the region and we want to contribute at making the Danube a backbone of the European area as part of the Rhine-Main-Danube corridor.

The problems we face are numerous and the dimensions of regional cooperation are multiple: transport, energy, tourism, agriculture and environment.

The economic and social development of the Danube region must be a sustainable development, which respects the European legislation regarding the environmental protection.

Romania supports this approach given that manages most of the climate change's reserves and the need to protect villages against natural disasters and national parks in the Danube region are extremely important aspects and need to be considered in the current strategy.

The Strategy's projects can be financially supported by developing strong synergies

between different EU policies: cohesion, transport, tourism, agriculture, fishing, social and economic development, energy, environment, neighbourhood and development policies.

The EU has called on civil society in the Danube Basin to start a process of higher self-organisation and to build up a platform for trans-national, trans-regional and interdisciplinary cooperation, consultation and networking. The Danube Civil Society Forum is the forum for civil society cooperation within the Danube Strategy.

This year, in October Romania will host the forum dedicated to the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region. The Forum is dedicated to discussion activities, consultation on revised actions and develop new approaches. In this country will take part in EU institutions and stakeholders (including intergovernmental organizations, the private sector and civil society).

We hope that this event will find us ready, able to find solutions to the problems facing the 14 riverain countries, but especially able to absorb projects able run in the Danube macro-regional strategy. Contribution to the public consultation process representatives of civil society, NGOs and the business environment is encouraged, as the final beneficiaries of the strategy are all Romanian citizens.

Romania is, along with Austria, the author of EU Strategy for the Danube Region. Romania has contributed to the development of the EU Strategy, together with all other riverain states on the basis of national positions defined in the ministerial working group specifically created for this purpose. Danube Strategy is a priority for the Government of Romania in conditions where sustainable development potential of the region is considerable. The plan wants to impose a transformation Danube backbone of European space as part of the Rhine - Main - Danube. Ministry of Foreign Affairs provides national coordination of project realization.

Civil society organizations and private companies are also involved in the implementation of actions and projects and in achieving goals.

The strategy should focus on results. Closer cooperation will allow more efficient exploitation of existing policies and funding. Extensive work is needed, involving appropriate combinations of institutions, sectors and countries.

Strategy - a tool for integration and better use of EU funds - is also a political innovation and a new stage in EU regional policy.

Cooperation is a year of good cooperation is needed between state institutions and civil society members. Success in the Danube region will contribute to the prosperity of Europe as a whole.

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