

PERSPECTIVES OF CROSS BORDER COOPERATION OF THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA WITHIN THE FRAMEWORKS OF THE ENPI (2007-2013)

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Abstract:

This article emphasizes the opportunities of the Republic of Moldova in the domain of cross border cooperation for the timeline that follows the implementation of the Neighborhood Program Romania – Republic of Moldova 2004-2006. The main accessible instruments for the following timeline which will support projects with cross border impact are ENPI Cross Border Cooperation Romania-Ukraine-Moldova and the ENPI Cross Border Cooperation in Black Sea Basin for 2007-2013. Acquired experience in project implementation within Neighborhood Program constitutes an important factor for the refinement of the ENPI opportunities, all of them integrally offering the possibility of accomplishment of documents regulations with neighborhood countries, on a bilateral and trilateral level within the frameworks of the Euro-regions, as well as a frame of support of the process of European integration of the Republic of Moldova.

Key words: Cross border cooperation, European integration, European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI)

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In order to advance the relationships with the European Union, the Republic of Moldova obviously has to achieve substantial progress in relationships with neighboring countries, to expand the areas of cooperation and to subscribe to common agendas for reaching European standards. This aspect is considered both by documents which constitute the contractual basis of our relationships with the EU (especially, that one of the two neighboring countries is a member of the EU) and through objectives established within bilateral and trilateral Agreements signed by the Republic of Moldova with Romania and Ukraine as neighboring countries.

Strengthening cross-border cooperation has become an important realm of action of bi- and trilateral documents with neighboring countries, especially with signing in Ismail, on 4th of July 1997, of the Protocol for trilateral collaboration between governments of Romania, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine. The establishment of the three Euro-regions

(Euro-region “Dunărea de Jos”¹ and Euro-region “Prutul de Sus”² where Romania, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine partake in; and Euro-region “Siret-Prut-Nistru”³ where

¹ The Euro-region “Dunărea de Jos” was established by signing the Agreement for Establishment of the Euro-region “Dunărea de Jos” on 14th of August 1998 in Galați by those three countries. Members of this Euro-region are: Cahul and Cantemir Districts from the Republic of Moldova; Galați, Brăila and Tulcea Counties from Romania; Odessa Region from Ukraine.

² The Euro-region „Prutul de Sus” was established on 22nd of September 2000 in Botoșani municipality (Romania). Members of this Euro-region are: Fălești, Edineț, Glodeni, Ocnîța, Rîșcani and Briceni Districts from the Republic of Moldova; Botoșani and Suceava Counties from Romania; Cernăuți and Ivano-Frankivsk Regions from Ukraine.

³ In September 18th 2002, it is signed the Protocol for Cross-border Cooperation of the Euro-region Siret-Prut-Nistru in Iași. In December 4th 2002, it is adopted the Statute of the Euro-region Siret-Prut-Nistru within the first Forum of the Euro-region Presidents in Ungheni. In 2005, the Euro-region Siret-Prut-Nistru Association was established, an association as a legal entity with the headquarters in Iași (Romania). Members of this Euro-region are: Calarasi, Orhei, Cimișlia, Telenesti, Soroca, Straseni, Leova, Ungheni, Criuleni, Ialoveni, Soldanesti, Hincesti, Floresti, Basarabasca, Dubasari, Anenii Noi, Rezina and Nisporeni Districts from the Republic of

only Romania and the Republic of Moldova take part in) marked an important stage not only in the approval of the commitments in this domain, but also the creation of a framework of cooperation between local communities according to the provisions of the European documents ratified by all three countries (Romania, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine). Although there are more mechanisms for cooperation, we consider that, until present, the opportunities for cross-border cooperation were not fully put to good use. In the introductory part of the Europe Union / Republic of Moldova Action Plan is specified that “Moldova is invited to enter into intensified political, security, economic and cultural relations with the EU, enhanced cross border cooperation and shared responsibility in conflict prevention and conflict resolution”. From among the objectives and provisions of this document some of them refer expressly to cross-border cooperation, in particular:

- Gradual elimination of restrictions in order to allow a regular allocation of reciprocal services performance between the Republic of Moldova and Europe Union in definite areas, in accordance with the commitments of the World Trade Organization and those of title IV, chapter III of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (Cross border services performance);
- Further participation in “Söderköping Process” ;
- Develop regional cooperation between relevant legal authorities (police, border guards, migration and asylum services, custom);
- Reinforce structures and necessary procedures for evaluating environmental impact, including in a cross-border context; improvement of respective legislation;
- Active participation in the Danube-Black Sea Working Group regarding the implementation of cross-border concept of water management; ensure active participation at the compartment of Eastern Europe, Caucasia and Central Asia within EU Water Initiative;

Moldova; Iasi and Vaslui Counties from Romania. For more details look at: <http://euroregiunea-siret-prut-nistru.org/>

- Identify possibilities to increase regional cooperation concerning cross-border problems, especially with neighboring countries;
- Intensify contacts and regional cross-border capacity by undertaking the opportunities and challenges which arise from the EU enlargement;
- Encourage local and regional initiatives relating to the establishment and development of the cross-border cooperation;
- Guarantee support for human resources development and for other capacities of local and regional administration to ensure an efficient implementation of cross-border cooperation actions.⁴

National Development Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2008-2011 is quite reserved as regards the mechanisms and actions for developing cross-border cooperation, although Point 1.4.2 of this document is titled similarly in the EU-Moldova Action Plan – *Intensify cross-border cooperation between the Republic of Moldova, EU member states and neighboring countries* by: a) organizing common Moldovan-Ukrainian state border management; b) developing regional cooperation between relevant legal authorities (police, border guards, customs)⁵.

The development of collaboration relationships and of bi- or trilateral partnerships, besides ambitious principles and objectives, requires significant resources in order to materialize them in real projects with cross-border impacts. Due to the fact that the objective of strengthening the cross-border cooperation is not only a concernment of the Republic of Moldova and of its neighbors, but also a strategic objective of the Europe Union, after the RSSR collapse until present time, the EU has set up more instruments and programmes of technical and financial assistance in this domain for the former soviet states, with the aim of ensuring, through enlargement, stability, prosperity and security

⁴ The Decision of the Government of the Republic of Moldova to enact European Union-Republic of Moldova Action Plan, no.356 of April 22nd 2005, “Monitorul Oficial” (Official Gazette) of the Republic of Moldova no.65-66/412 of April 29th, 2005.

⁵ The Law on adopting the National Development Strategy for 2008-2011, no.295 of December 21st 2007, “Monitorul Oficial” (Official Gazette) no.18-20 of January 29th, 2008.

of its external borders. From PHARE and TACIS⁶ to Neighborhood Programmes (2004-2006), the Europe Union put forward in 2007 the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument for 2007-2013, which corresponds with the new financial cycle of the Union. The legal basis for the New Instrument, which essentially replaces the precedent ones, lies in the ENPI Regulation enacted by the EU in October 2007⁷. Between 2000 and 2006 Moldova benefitted from 23 million Euros for cross-border cooperation only⁸, but nowadays it benefits in this sense from the Neighborhood Programme with Romania, as well as by participating in CADSES (Central Adriatic Danubian and South-Eastern European Development Space).

One of the ENPI objectives set out in Article 2 of the Regulation of 2006 provides: „supporting cross-border cooperation through common local initiatives to promote economic, social and environmental durable development in border regions and integrated territorial development around external borders of the Community”. Practically, since January 1st 2007, with Romanian and Bulgarian accession to the EU, the Republic of Moldova has become a direct neighbor of the Community being

⁶ For the Republic of Moldova, the first stage of TACIS Programme “Implementation of the EU-Moldova Partnership and Cooperation Agreement” started off in September 23rd, 1997 and lasted for one year, the second stage started off in February 1999 and lasted for 10 months, the third stage started off in April 2000 and lasted for 2 years and a half. This Programme, as Viorel Cibotaru himself put it, “contrived to contributing to the reinforcement of institutional capacities and the improvement of communication and decision-making system between institutions involved in consistently unfolding the objectives materialization process of the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement (PCA). In addition, under its auspices a series of instruments were elaborated to facilitate the Moldovan legislation adjustment to the norms and standards of the Europe Union legislation”. Cibotaru, Viorel. *Republica Moldova și Comunitatea Internațională (Curs Univiersitar)*, (The Republic of Moldova and International Community), – Chișinău: 2001, p.51.

⁷ Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 October 2006 laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, Official Journal of the European Union L 310/1, 9.11.2006, accessible at: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/oj_l310_en.pdf

⁸ The data is taken from the Annex 6 of the ENPI Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2007-2013.

situated on the external borderlines of the EU. Accordingly, it is assumed that the EU will offer assistance within the frameworks of the ENPI for the Republic of Moldova, as well for other states which have terrestrial or maritime borders with the EU, through transnational programmes for cross-border cooperation, in addition to national programmes.

In accordance with Article 29 of the Regulation, the total funding available for the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument for 2007-2013 amounts to 11.181 million Euro with regard to all types of programmes. However, with reference to cross-border cooperation prospects of the Republic of Moldova for 2007-2013, it will benefit particularly from two instruments:

- **The Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova⁹**, which is one of those 15 programmes centered upon cross-border cooperation foreseen by the ENPI Cross-Border Cooperation for 2007-2013¹⁰ and
- **Black Sea Synergy – a new Regional Cooperation Initiative¹¹**.

1) **The Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova (2007-2013)¹²**

This trilateral programme will be grounded on cooperation experience and structures established within the frameworks of the Neighborhood Programmes from the first stage (2004-2006). The Strategy Paper for 2007-2013 provides that the programme’s partners elaborate and adopt joint operational programmes proposed by the Commission, which afterwards will adjust them to the

⁹ The Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova website available since December 12th 2007: www.ro-ua-md.net

¹⁰ ENPI Cross-Border Cooperation, Strategy Paper (2007-2013) and Indicative Programme (2007-2010), available at: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/country/enpi_cross-border_cooperation_strategy_paper_en.pdf

¹¹ Communication from the Commission to the Council of the European Parliament, *Black Sea Synergy – a new Regional Cooperation Initiative*, COM(2007) 160 final, Brussels, 11.04.2007, available at: http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf

¹² The Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013, available at: <http://www.ro-ua-md.net/user/file/POC%2520Ro-Ua-Md%252029%2520feb%2520romana.pdf>

provisions of the ENPI Regulation (Title III of the Regulation refers to cross-border cooperation) and to implementation rules of the cross-border cooperation programmes within the ENPI¹³ elaborated and adopted by the Commission by means of the Regulation 951/2007 in line with provisions in Article 11 of the Regulation 1638/2006, after which the Commission will adopt and remit copies of these documents to the European Parliament and Member states.

The EU financial assistance for 2007-2013 according to this programme, similarly to other programmes, is ensured from two sources:

- a) From financial allocations proper to ENPI in accordance with Article 29 of the ENPI Regulation of October 26th 2006;
- b) From European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) in accordance with the Regulation of July 11th 2006¹⁴.

In June-November 2006, with the aim of elaborating strategic documents of the programme, as well as of the objectives and priorities of these documents, on a national and regional level diverse consultations were held in those three countries (two interactive workshops in the Republic of Moldova, eight workshops in Romania). In September 2006-February 2007, there were held technical meetings with national, regional and local structures involved in programme elaboration, management and implementation. Since September 2006, when the Joint Group for Programme Activities Coordination was officially established, there have been held five meetings in Brussels, Bucharest, Chisinau and Odessa. In February-March 2007, the programme project was subject to public consultation, especially with regard to the settlement of Environmental Report for the Programme. After its adoption by the three states involved in, the Joint Operational

Programme were officially transmitted on March 10th 2008 to be adopted by the European Commission. By means of the Decision of the European Commission no.3806 of July 29th 2008, the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova ENPI CBC for 2007-2013 was adopted. It is the first cross-border cooperation programme on the EU external borders financed and implemented in accordance with the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument 2007-2013, adopted by the European Commission.

The joint programming document establishes the following structures assigned with programme management and implementation:

a) **Joint Managing Authority** (the Romanian Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing through the Department of International Territorial Cooperation is the Joint Managing Authority for the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova. It is responsible for implementing correctly and efficiently the programme in the limits of the entire eligible area, including the partner states). The responsibilities of the Joint Managing Authority are set out in a detailed manner in Article 15 of the Commission Regulation no.951/2007 which establishes the implementation rules for the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument.

b) **Joint Technical Secretariat (JTS)** (Secretarial functions are carried out by the Regional Office for Cross-Border Cooperation Suceava and the Regional Office for Cross-Border Cooperation Iasi, from Romania);

c) **Branch Offices of JTS** (*In Ukraine* – Department of Monitoring International Technical Assistance, General Department of Economic Development and European Integration of Odessa Region State Administration, Department of cross-border cooperation, economic foreign activity and international relations of Cernauti Region State Administration; *In the Republic of Moldova* – structure within the frameworks of the Ministry of Economy and Commerce);

d) **Partner institutions on central level** (The programme has partners such as Ukrainian central institutions – Ministry of

¹³ Commission Regulation (EC) No 951/2007 of 9 August 2007 laying down implementing rules for cross-border cooperation programmes financed under Regulation (EC) No 1638/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council laying down general provisions establishing a European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 210, 10.8.2007.

¹⁴ Council Regulation (EC) No 1083/2006 of 11 July 2006 laying down general provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund and the Cohesion Fund, *Official Journal of the European Union*, L 210, 31.7.2006, p. 25.

Economy, and from the Republic of Moldova – Ministry of Economy and Commerce).

e) **Joint Monitoring Committee**

(This structure is composed of an equal number with partner states representatives of the programme, from national, regional and local levels, being chaired by the Joint Managing Authority. Within the frameworks of this structure the European Commission plays a consultative role). In accordance with the basic documents of the EU, the Joint Monitoring Committee fulfills the following tasks:

- it appoints the project-selection committees for the project;
- it decides on the selection criteria for the projects and takes the final decision on the selection;
- it approves the work programme of the Joint Managing Authority;
- it decides on the volume and allocation of the programme's resources for technical assistance and human resources;
- it reviews all management decisions taken by the Joint Managing Authority;
- it evaluates and monitors the progress towards the specific objectives of the programme;
- it reviews all reports (including the audit report) submitted by the Joint Managing Authority and, if necessary, takes appropriate measures;
- it examines any contentious cases of recovery brought to its attention by the Joint Managing Authority;
- it decides on the execution of the programme evaluations, appointing independent evaluators.

Policy and External Assistance Coordination Division within the Government Office of the Republic of Moldova as a partner in the implementation of the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007-2013 announced a competition for selecting a representative of the non-governmental sector from Moldova as observer in the Joint Monitoring Committee of this Programme.

Operations of certification and payments are performed by the Financial Unit within the Ministry of Development, Public Works and Housing of Romania, whereas the audit is performed by an operational independent institution by the Romanian Court

of Accounts. In line with Article 13 of the Regulation of the European Commission no.951/2007, the Joint Managing Authority (JMA) is annually subject to external ex-post evaluation, which is accomplished by an institution independent of the JMA.

According to the Strategy Paper for 2007-2013 and to the Indicative Programme for 2007-2010 of the cross-border cooperation programmes, the EU funding provided for the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova (2007-2013) amounts to 126.718 million Euro, out of which 66.086 million Euro are allocated for 2007-2010 and 60.632 million Euro for 2010-2013¹⁵. The national co-financing by the three partner states totals 111.404 million Euro.

Each of the three states involved in the programme, from a geographic point of view as well as eligible areas, will participate differently:

- a) **Romania** – Botosani, Suceava, Iasi, Vaslui, Galati, Tulcea Counties (adjoining Braila County);
- b) **Republic of Moldova** – entire territory;
- c) **Ukraine** – Cernauti and Odessa Regions (adjoining Ivano-Frankovsk Region, 10 districts of Khmel'nitska Region and 12 districts of Ternopil'ska Region, and Vinnitska).

The total area covered by the programme comprises 112.554 sq. km, while the inclusion of the adjoining regions adds up another 64.053 sq. km to the total terrestrial surface, a population of 15 million inhabitants, out of which approximately 10 million reside in the core area of the programme and 5 million reside in adjoining regions¹⁶. The eastern limits of the programme on the Ukrainian territory are close as much as necessary to the EU borders in order to create, by means of prospective projects, a cross-border impact for the regions of the three states. While for the EU eligible areas of these programmes, the administrative-territorial unities usually correspond to NUTS III level, for partner states there are administrative-territorial unities involved likely to correspond to the equivalent structures of the EU eligible areas. The length of the common

¹⁵ ENPI Cross-Border Cooperation, Strategy Paper (2007-2013) and Indicative Programme (2007-2010), p.29.

¹⁶ Joint Operational Programme, p.11-12.

border of the Republic of Moldova with Romania and Ukraine is 1099.4 km¹⁷.

The Joint Operational Programme, from which will benefit Romania, the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine for 2007-2013, assumes that in the context of secure frontiers to stimulate the developmental potential of the border area through favoring the contacts between partners from both sides of the border, so as to improve the social-economic and environmental situation.

In order to achieve this aim, the projects submitted within the programme will have to undertake one of the following four objectives:

- Social and economic development, with a view to frontiers monitoring;
- Cooperation for tackling common problems, such as environmental protection, public health, prevention and fighting organized crime;
- Efficient management and frontier security;
- Promotion of "People-to-people" actions on local level.

Similarly to the Neighborhood Programmes for 2004-2006, but with some modifications, this programme has set out priorities and measures which trilateral projects shall be focused on, with the purpose of achieving the programme's aim and objectives:

Priority 1. Towards a more competitive border economy

Measure 1.1 – Improving the productivity and competitiveness of the region's urban and rural areas situated along the border. (For this measure will be accepted projects with budgets of 100.000 Euro to 1.000.000 Euro).

Measure 1.2 – Cross-border initiatives in transport and energy networks. (For this measure will be accepted projects with budgets of 100.000 Euro to 2.000.000 Euro).

Priority 2. Environmental challenges and emergency preparedness

Measure 2.1 – Addressing strategic cross-border environmental challenges, including emergency preparedness. (For this measure will be accepted projects with budgets of 100.000 Euro to 500.000 Euro).

Measure 2.2 – Water supply, sewerage and waste management. (For this measure will be accepted projects with budgets of 100.000 Euro to 2.000.000 Euro).

Priority 3. "People to people" cooperation

Measure 3.1 – Local and regional governance, support to civil society and local communities.

Measure 3.2 – Educational, social and cultural exchanges.

Priority 4. Technical assistance

This horizontal priority will ensure the efficiency and efficacy of resource usage, in accordance with the programme's objectives and priorities.

During the programme timeline, each priority is stipulated to be allotted estimative sums (Priority 1 - 57 million Euro; Priority 2 – 45 million Euro; Priority 3 – 12 million Euro; Priority 4 – 12 million Euro). The project size will usually vary between 30.000 Euro - 2.000.000 Euro. However, it is encouraged to submit projects of a larger value¹⁸, the assurance of co-financing being important, which has to be 10 % from the EU contribution to the project¹⁹.

The payment requests within the programme mandatorily have to be implemented in partnerships with institutions/organizations from the countries involved in the programme. At least one partner has to come from Romania and a partner from Ukraine and/or the Republic of Moldova. The programming document stipulates clearly that projects between partners from Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova only will not be accepted. The partners will appoint a *Leader partner* who will sign a financing agreement with the Managing Authority, will have partnership agreements concluded with other partners of the project, and will be responsible for project implementation, in line with the terms determined in the agreement. Article 41 of the Regulation of the Commission no.951/2007 provides three types of projects for implementation within the frameworks of this programme:

- a) **Integrated Projects** – where partners from each side of the border contribute with different elements to carrying out the same project;
- b) **Symmetrical Projects** – where activities on a side of the border are accompanied by

¹⁷ Ibidem.

¹⁸ Joint Operational Programme, point 8.3.7, p.107.

¹⁹ Ibidem, point 8.3.6.

similar activities on the other side of the border;

- c) **Simple Projects** – are carried out mainly or entirely on one side of the border, but for the benefit of both partners.

Potential beneficiaries of the programme who will be able to implement these types of projects are: Local and regional authorities, NGOs, representative associations and organizations, Universities, research institutes, educational/training organizations. The ENPI Strategy for cross-border cooperation for 2007-2013 provides that no auction shall be launched and no agreement shall be signed after December 31st 2013, except for audit and agreements evaluation. Although there will be elaborated projects in diverse domains covered by the specific measures of the programme, it is well known that one of the problems which, at least from the beginning, the programme will be facing with, likewise others, will be the lack of qualitative projects due to the reduced absorbing capacity of the European funds from this domain. A problem will also reside in co-financing identification capacity necessary for project implementation by the applicants and partners, as well as other criteria necessary in the process of evaluation of payment requests. General and specific criteria for project selection are approved by the Joint Monitoring Committee, at the recommendation of Joint Managing Authority. Among the minimal requirements solicited in the selection process it can be specified: the existence of a partner from the other side of the border; administrative, technical and financial capacity of project management; required co-financing.

Owing to the experience gained by the three states within the frameworks of the Neighborhood Programmes for 2004-2006 (Romania-the Republic of Moldova and Romania-Ukraine), during the implementation of the Joint Operational Programme, there will be found interconnections and opportunities for development of some trilateral projects, in particular within the Euro-regions. The cooperation between the three states is for the interest of all, especially that the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine aspire to adhere to the EU. The Moldovan-Romanian relationships do not currently reach the best level of collaboration, yet their evolution has known periods both more fruitful and more

contradictory. In 2005-2006 the cooperation of the Republic of Moldova with Romania, in contrast with previous and subsequent years, has known “an evolution worthy of envy”²⁰. The university professor, Victor Saca, specifies, with reference to the importance of the improvement and perpetuation of the trilateral cooperation between the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine, that:

- First of all, these are limitrophe countries, therefore it is natural to be in need of relationships of good vicinity, to acknowledge each other, to render respect and reciprocal support;
- Second, each country in order to achieve the objectives of the transition needs internal stability which depends on the external situation, especially on the country's contribution to maintain and reinforce the stability of the neighboring countries²¹.

An important role in this format of cooperation certainly is played by the political relationships and interests, which “are based not only on necessities but also on the factor of advantage, of preferences, which sometimes do not coincide with the objective necessities of the three states”²². The achievement of the Programme objectives will be monitored by means of certain indicators which prove to us on what type of outcomes the projects should be focused. The programming document has elaborated, in line with the three priorities, the following indicators of evaluation and monitoring through – *numbers of projects*: which encourage initiative locally based activities; which stimulate cross-border cooperation between universities, research

²⁰ Cebotari, S., Saca, V., Coropcean, I. *Politica Externă a Republicii Moldova în contextul proceselor integraționaliste*. (Foreign Policy of the Republic of Moldova in the context of integrationist processes) – Chisinau: Institutul Militar al Forțelor Armate, 2008, p.139.

²¹ Saca, Victor. *Interesele și Relațiile Politice în spațiul post-comunist (Republic Moldova, România, Ucraina)*. În *Moldova, România, Ucraina: Integrarea în structurile europene*. (The Interests and Political Relationships in the post-communist space (Republic of Moldova, Romania, Ukraine). In *Moldova, Romania, Ukraine: the Integration in the European structures (Materials of the International Symposium, Chisinau 15-16 October 1999)*). Responsible for edition – Valeriu Mosneaga. – Chisinau: 2000, pp.141-142.

²² Ibidem.

institutes and business/local authorities; which develop cross-border training services for employment in relation to market needs; with recognized support for modernization of agriculture and joint production; which support the development of permanent joint products in the field of tourism; which clearly influence the field of transport, border crossing infrastructure and energy networks; which undertake water supply and waste management; through which is supported fighting soil erosion, including forestry management; which involve institutions/professional associations which activate in emergency systems; which support common planning initiatives, experience exchange, cooperation networks; which establish permanent social and cultural exchanges; which fight organized crime and of human trafficking²³.

A serious obstacle for elaborating payment requests, we believe, will lie in the linguistic factor, owing to the fact that the process of elaboration implies arduous work; moreover, the request for payment as a rule has to be concluded in the English language. Point 8.4 of the Joint Operational Programme provides that "Taking into account the fact that the Programme is by definition multinational, and in order to facilitate management and to shorten the completion periods, according to Article 8 of the *Implementing rules*, the official language used in the Programme is English. The call for proposal will be launched in the national language of each country"²⁴.

We consider that through the implementation manner of this programme, which essentially seeks to contribute to the growth of "people-to-people" contacts and to rally diverse community actors in the process of social-economic development and environmental protection in the border regions, not only the existence of a political will for cooperation between countries and local communities will be demonstrated, but also partners' capacities to mobilize resources and to promote strategic projects in the region will be distinguished.

2) Black Sea Synergy – a new Regional Cooperation Initiative

This is the second programme, in a multilateral format with cross-border constituent, for which the Republic of Moldova is eligible. The Republic of Moldova is one of the 10 countries covered by this programme, along with Greece (Kentriki Makedonia, Anatoliki Makedonia Thraki), Bulgaria (Severoiztochen, Yugoiztochen), Romania (South-Eastern Region), Ukraine (Regions: Odessa, Mykolaiv, Kherson, Zaporoshye and Doneţk, Republic of Crimea and Sevastopol), Russia (Rostov Oblast, Krasnodar Krai, Adygea), Georgia (entire territory), Armenia (entire territory), Azerbaijan (entire territory) and Turkey (Istanbul, Tekirdağ, Kocaeli, Zonguldak, Kastamonu, Samsun, and Trabzon). The EU policy towards the Black Sea region, which has a specific history in the European history²⁵, has been determined by the implications of its enlargement, with Romanian and Bulgarian accession in January 1st 2007, bordering countries with the Black Sea. Romania has been an unquestionable advocate of this policy and initiative through multiple interventions since 2005. Meanwhile, in January 2007, at the assembly of the General Affairs and Foreign Relations Council (GAFRC), the first one which Romania partook in as a Member state of the EU, the former Romanian minister of foreign affairs Mihai Razvan Ungureanu emphasized the necessity to define a more prominent eastern dimension of the ENP, which would confirm the EU commitment to the Black Sea area and its geopolitical importance²⁶; moreover, he proposed to start off the so-called "Bucharest Process" with the aim of upholding the initiatives of the countries of this region.

At the Bucharest Summit of June 5th 2006, the presidents and the ministers from nine countries of the Black Sea region, by Romanian initiative, launched – *the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership*²⁷ which will

²⁵ See: *Marea Neagră: Istorie și Geopolitică*, Culegere de studii, Volumul 1. - Bucureşti: 2007. (Black Sea: History and Geopolitics, a collection of studies)

²⁶ See: Cojocaru, Doru. *Géopolitique de la Mer Noire: Eléments d'approche*, Harmattan, 2007, 290 p. 11

²⁷ Within the frameworks of the Forum was created a Black Sea Fund, "*The Black Sea Fund for Regional Cooperation*", financed by the German Marshall Fund of

²³ Joint Operational Programme, pp.73-74.

²⁴ Ibidem, p.110.

facilitate the identification of overlapping points between the investment projects, scientific researches, regional initiatives²⁸ and political processes, by means of a series of regulated or ad-hoc set activities, in a different format. The communication from the Commission of December 2006 foresaw the launching of the eastern dimension of the ENP, which served as replies to interventions of Romania and of countries of the region, so as to be afterwards emphasized by the Poland-Sweden initiative in May 2008. In April 2007 the EU launched the new regional cooperation initiative within the European Neighborhood Policy titled “Black Sea Synergy”, which aims at developing cooperation in the covered regions, as well as between the region and the EU. In order to better understand the meaning of this initiative for the EU, we are going to exemplify the statement of the Commissar for External Relations and European Neighborhood Policy, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, who, with regard to launching of this initiative, said: *“With the accession of Bulgarian and Romanian, the EU has become part of the Black Sea region. Today, we have delivered on a promise made last December (2006) to develop a regional dimension to the ENP. The time is ripe to focus political attention at the regional level and invigorate ongoing cooperation processes, opening an additional space for cooperation with Russia, Turkey and our eastern ENP partners. I am also hopeful that Black Sea Synergy will contribute to creating a better climate for the solution of the “frozen conflicts” in the region.”*

the United States. The Fund was launched in fall 2006, with a starting budget of 20 million Dollars.

²⁸ The establishment of the Forum will increase and strengthen the mechanisms of cooperation including cross-border relationships in agreement with other regional initiatives such as: Stability Pact for South-Eastern Europe which becomes in 2008 the Regional Cooperation Council aiming at accelerating the European integration of the countries of the region through improving the economic development and collaboration; Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization (BSEC), regional cooperation initiative launched in 1992 by 11 riparian states or situated in the proximity of the Black Sea basin, with the aim of promoting the gradual integration of the region in the European and world economy. Since 1999, the Black Sea Commerce and Development Bank have been functioning, whereas since 2004, the Project Development Fund – as specific instrument to support cooperation projects in prominent domains for the member states.

The title itself of this initiative – *synergy* refers to the insertion of certain mechanisms and instruments of assistance and cooperation, which as a matter of fact fulfills the function of contributing to assurance of stability, prosperity and security of respective region. For the implementation of projects within the frameworks of this initiative, the European Commission created the Black Sea basin CBC Programme 2007-2013 which includes also the eligible area of the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Republic of Moldova-Ukraine. The Communication from the Commission of April 11th 2007 regarding the Black Sea initiative mentions that the history and geographical proximity bestow on those 10 countries involved the quality of regional natural actors.

The Black Sea Basin Cooperation Programme is focused on the civil society support and cooperation on local level of the countries of the region. Facilitating the development of contacts between communities, cities, universities, cultural institutions, civil society organizations is set out as major objective of this programme, while the improvement of the opportunities created by other cross-border cooperation programmes between Bulgaria and Romania (financed from the European Regional Development Fund) and between Bulgaria and Turkey (financed from the Instrument for Pre-Accession) will contribute significantly to the achievement of important regional projects²⁹. The programme identifies such priorities as supporting economic development, resolving jointly environmental problems and promoting *people to people* activities. Out of the 15 cross-border cooperation programmes of the EU, foreseen in the Strategy for 2007-2013, there are 3 maritime programmes (for the Black Sea, the Mediterranean Sea, the Baltic Sea Region). In contrast with the three programmes, the Black Sea Basin Cooperation Programme is allocated scantily 17.3 million Euro for 2007-2013 (around 9.02 million Euro for 2007-2013 and 8.28 million Euro for 2010-2013), whereas the Mediterranean Sea Basin programme is allocated approximately 173.6 million Euro and around 22.6 million Euro for the Baltic Sea

²⁹ COM(2007) 160 final, p.8.

region cooperation programme for 2007-2013³⁰.

Taking into account the specific nature of the cross-border cooperation programmes in maritime basins, we may consider by means of the projects the following aspects³¹:

- Establishment and development of thematic platforms and networks which would serve as instruments for the exchange of practices and solutions to mutual problems, in the economic, social, environmental, cultural domain as well as in the government sphere;
- Supporting such fields as: transport, energy, communication, environment, maritime security, fighting against illegal migration, including pilot projects;
- Supporting the creation of multilateral relationships between NGOs and civil society groups in the EU and partner states in domains as governance, human rights, democratization, mass-media and equal opportunities, etc.

It ought to be remarked that the issue of the contacts promotion between the ten countries, with the aim of improving accessible funds for this programme through partnership projects, in line with the objectives specified above, is already addressed by the work agenda of the regional organizations and institutions. From the experience of the previous European programmes, where more countries were involved, it has been drawn out that an impediment for this multilateral cooperation process is the legal frame or the lack of the possibility to establish legal entities which would facilitate the work and interaction process between the legal frames of different countries. In this sense, we consider that an important role in achieving the objectives of the Black Sea Basin Joint Operational Programme 2007-2013 could be taken by the establishment of an institution (*European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)*) to accomplish the cooperation agreements (especially inter-regional) between the authorities of the riparian countries. In fact, the possibility of establishing such a legal entity is foreseen in Regulation no. 1082, adopted on July 5th 2006 by the European

Parliament. According to this Regulation, the EGTC³² has the mission “to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and/or inter-regional cooperation, called from now onwards “territorial cooperation”, between its members, with the exclusive aim of strengthening the economic and social cohesion on the territory of the European Union” (Article 1, § 2). By means of this instrument, although the EGTC exclusively refers to cooperation on a community level, especially the EU member states will be able to actively involve, through local and regional authorities, public legal authorities and their forms of association, which in actual fact are capable of establishing such a legal entity, in the implementation of projects co-financed by the Europe Union from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and/or through the Cohesion Fund, as well as in other specific activities of territorial cooperation (Article 7, § 3).

The Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine are eligible for these two programmes, a trilateral one and a multilateral one, and therefore can submit projects in both programmes, which can offer opportunities for the initiatives and synergy complementarity. It is being planned a tight collaboration between the Joint Managing Authorities of the two programmes, with the purpose of preventing double financing of projects or activities, although the limited budget of the Black Sea Basin Cooperation Programme, on top of its objective on a more general regional level, minimizes this risk³³. Approaching ecological problems, including drinkable water supply, prevention of natural calamities, as well as preservation of the Black Sea basin patrimony, are aspects which will require imperative projects from the countries of the region, whereas the Republic of Moldova also has to be actively engaged in these processes. Moreover,

³² A more detailed information about the activities of the Regional Committee for EGTC is available at: www.cor.europa.eu/egtc.htm

³³ The Joint Operation Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova, p.38 and 48. In this sense, the programme also provides that a representative of the JMA for the Black Sea Basin JOP can be invited as observer at the sessions of the Joint Monitoring Committee of the JOP Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova in order to ensure financing coordination.

³⁰ ENPI Cross-Border Cooperation, Strategy Paper (2007-2013) and Indicative Programme (2007-2010), p.29.

³¹ COM(2007) 160 final, p.23.

the Republic of Moldova is already involved in some initiatives regarding the resolution of cross-border environmental problems, common water usage and protection, in particular the Danube River and the Black Sea³⁴.

The Black Sea Basin Cooperation Programme, by the eligible area, comprises 834 719 sq. km with a population of 74.2 million inhabitants and administrative-territorial unities equal to the unities according to the European common classification of NUTS II, or the entire territory of the country, as in the case of the Republic of Moldova and of other three countries of the region³⁵. Likewise the trilateral Programme, with regard to the elaboration of the joint strategic programming document, namely the Joint Operational Plan of the programme, there have been held technical meetings of the Joint Task Force and of the Joint Working Group (August 2006 in Bucharest, September 2006 in Odessa, November 2006 in Salonika, December 2006 in Bucharest, January 2007 in Brussels and in March 13th in Varna), including that public consultations regarding the project of the operational programme have been started, until the end of March 2007. The European initiative *Black Sea Synergy* was subject to the approbation of the member states during the EU German presidency, which ended on 1st of July 2007. As it has been mentioned above, this regional initiative is merged with other forms of

³⁴ In Annex 3 of the ENPI Strategy of the Republic of Moldova for 2007-2013 is underlined important data with regard to the participation of the Republic of Moldova in regional initiatives in the environmental sphere: Republic of Moldova is a member of the *Danube-Black Sea (DABLAS) Task Force*, which promotes a cooperation platform between the IFIs, donors and beneficiaries with the aim of water protection and of relevant measures concerning the Danube River and the Black Sea. The Republic of Moldova is also a member of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR), which identifies necessary measures for implementation within the EU Water Framework Directive aiming at preserving water ecological state and its good chemical component parts for the entire Danube basin. The Republic of Moldova participates also within the "Environment for Europe" process, a multilateral project launched in 1989, with the purpose of supervising the process of the permanent and altering growth of environmental issues in the countries of the Central and Eastern Europe, outrunning the old methods and orienting towards the EU mechanisms.

³⁵ *Black Sea Basin ENPI CBC programme*, Joint Operational Programme 2007-2013, pp.9-11.

cross-border and international cooperation³⁶, but its subtitle – *A new regional cooperation initiative* – and the claim that this Programme represents "a new and original form of cooperation" corresponds to what other authors stated "to a certain extent deceptive, for, in reality, *Black Sea Synergy* is not established from an EU independent strategy for the Black Sea region, because the EU policy in the region is already included in three well-outlined and refined dimensions³⁷".

An important aspect of the programme, even a goal of itself, lies on strengthening the trust between partner states, a major emphasis being put on the cross-border and territorial cooperation, for, it is the very territorial cooperation that will counteract the negative impact of the national frontiers on territorial development³⁸. So as to achieve the goal and the three key objectives of the programme, there have been set out 7 measures in line with three priorities considered strategic for the region:

Priority 1: Cross-border assistance offered to partnerships for economic development based on common resources.

Priority 2: Inter-connection of resources and competencies with the aim of environmental improvement and protection.

Priority 3: Cultural and educational initiatives for the establishment of a common cultural environment in the Black Sea basin.

The financial resources allocated for the programme will be allotted by means of grants and partnership projects, where a co-financing of 10% will be required. Potential beneficiaries of the projects will be, the same as in the trilateral Programme between Romania, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine – local and regional authorities, NGOs, associations and representative organizations, universities, research institutes, cultural institutes, public agencies. Also, the programming document determines the authorities and the structures

³⁶ Ibidem, p.36.

³⁷ Pop, Adrian (coordinator)., Manoleli, Dan. *Spre o strategie europeana in Bazinul Marii Negre. Cooperarea teritoriala*, Studiul nr.4, (Towards an European strategy in the Black Sea Basin, the territorial cooperation, Study no.4), Institutul European din Romania, Proiect SPOS 2007 – Studii de strategie si politici.- Bucuresti: Decembrie 2007, p.26.

³⁸ Ibidem, p.38.

which will implement this programme (the Joint Monitoring Committee, the Joint Managing Authority, the Joint Technical Secretariat, National Info Points, National Authorities, Financing and Agreement Central Unity) each one having clearly set out responsibilities and tasks in order to ensure the functionality of this instrument³⁹.

Through a complete commitment to the *Black Sea Synergy*, the Europe Union will have to increase the cooperation with the countries involved in the programme, in order to ensure the implementation of common projects between the EU and the riparian countries with truly strategic outcomes and prospective benefits for all implicated countries. Moreover, this objective was laid out by Benita Ferrero-Waldner at the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries of the Black Sea region which was held in Kiev on 14th of February 2008⁴⁰. By the end of this event, the Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries involved in the programme has been adopted, through which they confirmed their commitments to strengthening the cooperation in different domains within this initiative in the Black Sea basin⁴¹. The initiative of the Council of Europe regarding the creation of the “Black Sea” Euro-region⁴² was launched as a result of: the Final Declaration of the International Conference on Inter-regional Cooperation in the Black Sea Basin held in Constanta on 30th March 2006, the Recommendation 199(2006) of the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the Council of Europe “Inter-regional cooperation in the Black Sea Basin” adopted on 1st June 2006, the Final Declaration of the Conference on “Black Sea Euro-region” held in

Samsun (Turkey) on 3rd November 2006 and the Final Declaration of the Conference on “Inter-regional cooperation in the Black Sea basin” held in Odessa (Ukraine) on 25-26 June 2007. The establishment of this Euro-region as a not-for-profit association with juridical personality and with the headquarters in Romania (Article 5 the Statute) was materialized by signing the Constituent Act and the Statute of this Euro-region on 26th September 2008 in Varna, Bulgaria. The “Black Sea” Euro-region is meant to offer an impetus and a form for strengthening cross-border and regional cooperation between the countries and regional and local authorities of the region. In March 30th 2006 within the frameworks of the International Conference for Inter-regional cooperation in the Black Sea Basin (Constanta, Romania), Terry Davis – the Secretary General of the Council of Europe, with regard to the establishment of an Euro-region as a form of cooperation between countries, said: “The Euro-region initiative is an example of what the Council of Europe does best – bringing countries and peoples together by building on what we have in common – be it a river, a sea or a set of shared values and ideals. Being successful in bringing its ambitious objectives to life, the Euro-regions will logically and inevitably contribute to the dismantling of the existing dividing lines in Europe”⁴³. How will the Republic of Moldova put to good use the opportunities offered by its membership at the fourth Euro-region? (In fact, Moldova participates within this structure only through a territorial-administrative unity of the second level from the south – Cahul District, which according to the Decision of the Cahul District Council of October 16th 2008 adhered to the “Black Sea” Euro-region).

The active participation of the Republic of Moldova in this programme, as well as in other forms of cooperation created, especially through developing bilateral relationships, in addition to taking on and honouring certain commitments and regional initiatives in the context of holding the presidency of regional organizations, can offer many opportunities and advantages in the process of European integration. The role and the importance of

³⁹ *Black Sea Basin ENPI CBC programme*, Joint Operational Programme 2007-2013, p.63.

⁴⁰ Speech/08/77, Benita Ferrero-Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and European Neighbourhood Policy, *Black Sea Synergy: the EU's approach to the Black Sea region*, Black Sea Synergy Ministerial Meeting, Kiev, 14 February 2008.

⁴¹ Joint Statement of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the countries of the European Union and of the wider Black Sea area, Kyiv, 14 February 2008.

⁴² Local or regional authorities which signed the Constituent Act and the Statute of the “Black Sea” Euro-region were given in advance the decisions and empowerment by the deliberative authorities of the territorial-administrative unities from respective countries.

⁴³ The official website of the “Black Sea” Euro-region: <http://www.bser.eu>

Bulgaria and Romania in this region, as EU Member states, are not only indisputable, but also they are the corridor which the EU will involve through, will influence and promote measures and positions in the region. Romania states, by its National Security Strategy, that “it has a fundamental strategic interest that the extended Black Sea region be a stable, democratic and prosperous one, tightly connected to European and Euro-Atlantic structures, as to stimulate a more intense and prolific European and Euro-Atlantic involvement in this region”⁴⁴. These objectives become more important for the European Community once this region is characterized by an “important democratic deficit and incapacity of plenary exertion of the responsibilities attributed to sovereign countries, is the wealthiest part of Europe and – probably – one of the densest on the globe in separatist conflicts, disputes and constant tension”⁴⁵.

Although the programme refers to strengthening territorial cooperation between countries of the region for social-economic development, the security dimension in the region is a strategic objective both for these countries and for the EU and its relationships with Russia. Oleg Serebrian rightly said that not only a concrete involvement of Europe in this strategic region is needed but also “it is now the united Europe’s turn to become the geopolitical hegemon in the Black Sea region and not merely offering to this area trivial projects of stabilization and discouraging neighborhood projects”⁴⁶. In this context, the European Parliament, in the debates on Report of July 10 2008 regarding the EU enlargement policy, asserted that concrete measures are being imposed for excelling the actual project of the Black Sea Synergy and a Black Sea Union shall be created similar to the French Mediterranean Union project launched by 43 European leaders

⁴⁴ *Strategia de Securitate Națională a României. România Europeană, România Euro-Atlantică: pentru o viață mai bună, într-o țară mai sigură, democratică și prosperă.* (Romanian’s National Security Strategy. European Romania. Euro-Atlantic Romania: for a better life, in a more securer, democratic and prosperous country) - București: 2006, p.32., available in Romanian at: <http://www.presidency.ro/static/ordine/SSNR/SSNR.pdf>.

⁴⁵ Ibidem, p.33.

⁴⁶ Serebrian, Oleg. *Geopolitica spatiului pontic*, (Geopolitics of the Black Sea region) Editia a II-a revazuta si actualizata. –Chisinau: Editura Cartier, 2006, p.202.

in Paris on 13th July 2008. This idea was resumed by the European Parliament in Resolution adopted on 3rd September 2008 regarding the situation from Georgia.

For the Republic of Moldova, Romania can serve as a support and factor to facilitate the advancement of the EU-Moldova relationships by means of this initiative. In Romanian’s National Security Strategy is mentioned that:

“On the basis of the special relationships between Romania and the Republic of Moldova and in consensus with natural responsibilities which derive from shared history, language and culture, with the principle “a single nation – two countries” and with the spirit of the European neighborhood policy, we will devote a close attention to the cooperation with the Republic of Moldova. Romania has the political and moral duty to uphold this country in undergoing the process of modernization, democratization and European integration, to undertake as much as possible in order to support – from a political, economic and diplomatic point of view – the principle of sovereignty and its territorial integrity, as well as to increase our contribution to enlarging the security and prosperity space. In order to achieve this goal, Romania will carefully monitor the evolution of the separatist conflict from the eastern districts of the Republic of Moldova, will actively contribute to the identification of viable solutions – based on country democratization and region demilitarization, on the withdrawal of the troops and of the illegally placed armament – and will support a decisive involvement in the peace process of the European Union and the United States”⁴⁷.

On the website of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs are published the external priorities of this state for 2008, where, with a view to the Republic of Moldova, is specified: **“The relationship with the Republic of Moldova stays a priority.** In 2008 Romania will continue to support the Republic of Moldova, with sagacity and openness, in the reform and Europeanization exertion for which it has opted. Romania will act in order that the citizens of the Republic of Moldova enjoy the opportunities offered by the EU, through defining and implementing the **EU-Republic of**

⁴⁷ Romanian’s National Security Strategy, op.cit., p.36.

Moldova mobility partnership and, by means of it, to become vigorous actors of democratic changes. In 2008, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will improve and diversify consular services, in addition to the mobility facilities offered by Romania to the citizens of the Republic of Moldova. Romania has realized the importance of a solution to the Transnistrian conflict, which shall respect the sovereignty and integrity of the Republic of Moldova and contribute to regional security. Owing to its membership of the North-Atlantic Alliance, Romania alleged the support for a better relationship between the Republic of Moldova and NATO and will contribute to supporting real projects which will serve this objective. In 2008, the Republic of Moldova will be one of the main beneficiaries of the Official Development Assistance projects administered by the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, in accordance with the assumed responsibilities as an EU Member state⁴⁸.

As we can realize, the commitments to support the Republic of Moldova by Romania in the accession process to the EU are resumed in some strategic documents of this country, while this support can be manifested more active, especially within the regional initiatives. In the context of the regional countries' participation in the achievement of the objectives of the operational programme, through establishing and improving the "people to people" contacts, increasing the relationships of collaboration in the sphere of education by means of diverse cross-border agreements, is important to realize the role which, in the decision-making process and in the multilateral relationships for planning the improvement of cross-border cooperation, is assumed by the four different categories according to Knight Jane: the people, the programmes, the providers and the projects/services⁴⁹. The inter-regional programmes contribute both to a better cooperation between countries and to a gradual integration of the regions, in particular through

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<http://www.mae.ro/index.php?unde=doc&id=35181&idlnk=1&cat=3>

⁴⁹ Knight, Jane. *Cross-border education: an analytical framework for program and provider mobility*. In: *Higher Education: Handbook of Theory and Research*, J.C. Smart (ed.), Vol. XXI, 2006 Springer, Printed in the Netherlands, pp.345–395.

bordering territories, in a social-economic space profoundly marked by the global economic competition, which evidently brings about the growth of dependency between countries of the world's regions⁵⁰.

In conclusion, the perspectives of the improvement of the Republic of Moldova cross-border cooperation as an important factor in the European accession process, for 2007-2013, are determined to the largest extent by the following factors/indicators:

- The objectives of the Republic of Moldova foreign policy in relation to the neighboring countries (Romania and Ukraine), including the compliance level to the European normative framework in the domain of cross-border cooperation, to common commitments through Treaties and Agreements of bilateral and multilateral collaboration;
- The state institutions' capacity to support local authorities in promoting projects with cross-border impact through improving the national legislative framework to put into practice the principles of local autonomy and subsidiary;
- The level and quality of the EU-Republic of Moldova relationships, including the marks given to our country for implementing reforms in the context of the ENP;
- The quality of the political dialogue and of the cooperation between local authorities within the three Euro-regions which the Republic of Moldova partake in, the efficiency of institutions and of structures of this cross-border cooperation form;
- The capacity of the institutions/organizations from Moldova potentially beneficiaries within both programmes of the ENPI, in line with cross-border cooperation objectives, to involve as much as possible in joint actions with partners from Romania and Ukraine and to identify financial resources complementary to European funds as co-financing for cross-border projects;
- The Moldovan economic agents' capacity, especially from the bordering area with

⁵⁰ Territorial Agenda of the European Union, *Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions*, Agreed on the occasion of the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion in Leipzig on 24-25 May 2007, p.2.

Romania, to take advantage of the commercial opportunities provided by the EU for the Republic of Moldova and to put into practice the humans' freedom of movement, through local border traffic with Romania;

- The information and the access to information level of institutions/organizations of the frontier regions of the three countries, through diverse means and participation of the academic and social-cultural institutions in long-lasting partnerships.

Although within the ENPI the two programmes (the Joint Operational Programme Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova and the Black Sea Basin Cooperation Programme for 2007-2013) only gives to the Republic of Moldova the statute of an eligible country where European funds can be easily available for the cross-border dimension, there are also possibilities of cross-border projects implementation with resources proper to local authorities members of the Euro-regions, which would be able to plan in the budgets of the territorial-administrative unities for resources intended for actions of cross-border cooperation, despite the fact that in almost all districts there are subdivisions with budgets and responsibilities expressly set out in the domain of European integration and cross-border cooperation. Thus, the financial resources planned in line with these aspirations could provide for with co-financing for the projects submitted to the European Commission for financing. The Action Plan for cross-border cooperation within the Euro-regions adopted by Government in 2004 ought to be updated; moreover, there has to be allocated resources from the state budget for the accomplishment of strategic activities in support of our approaching to the EU. The Republic of Moldova will be able also to put to good use funds which could be allocated for definite initiatives in which it partakes within the regional structures in South-Eastern Europe, as well as a member of the Council of Europe.

It is important that the Republic of Moldova through its local authorities, academic and civil society institutions identify project ideas with clear outcomes and massive impact on domains with social-economic and environmental problems from our country.

Besides, such projects will have to generate processes of political and economic cooperation in cross-border regions in a more autonomous manner between parties involved by reason of common ideas and interests, guided by the objective of European integration⁵¹. After the evaluation of previous programmes on cross-border cooperation, of their implementation processes, for the European countries, as well as for the Republic of Moldova, in particular the TACIS⁵² programme, the EU identified also types of risks⁵³ associated with the implementation of the new programmes and cross-border cooperation projects for 2007-2013, which were deliberately defined in the Indicative Programme for 2007-2010 of cross-border cooperation programmes. Although we emphasized these risks in another paragraph, to which other risk factors can be added, we consider that it must be put in considerable efforts in order to reduce these risk factors and to ensure a successful implementation of the programmes and projects for which we are eligible. This will signify not only an increase of value in the implementation process of national reforms as requirements for a qualitative advancement of our relationships with the EU, but also passing an important test on capacity building and immediate improvement of European funds absorption.

⁵¹ László, Dankó. *Cross-border co-operation in the expansion of European integration*. In: *European Integration Studies*, Miskolc, Vol.1, Nr.2, 2002, pp.3-23.

⁵² The evaluation of the TACIS programme from 2006 performed by the Commission, underlines particularly the importance of a focus of this programme within the ENP on strengthening the partnerships between civil society institutions and authorities through different projects, the results of which shall be institutionalized and the durability and continuity assured. *Evaluation of Council Regulation 99/200 (Takis) and Its Implementation*, January 2006, European Commission/Evaluation Unit/ EuropeAid, DG for Development and External Relations DG.

⁵³ The risks identified by the Commission are: the partners' capacity and preparedness to enter into a programme partnership (political commitment); the partners' willingness and capacity to manage the programme, and notably to establish a system of joint management responsibility; the partners' knowledge and capacity to develop and implement project proposals; the national level's support to the establishment and management of the programme by local partners.

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