

## EURO-REGIONAL DANUBIAN COOPERATION

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### Abstract

The Danube is the second longest river in Europe, with a total length of 2850 km, along the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, its longest stretch being on the Romanian territory (around 1100 km). Transi and trade on the Danube has increased since the eighteenth century, when the river acquired an international character with the Treaty of Paris of 1856, which established a regime of internationalization of the river, based on freedom of navigation for all States, including the non riparian ones. In this context, the Lower Danube euro-region stands at the confluence of three countries, Romania, Moldova and Ukraine with one the longest European river and seems to confirm, one more, the importance of the Danube, not only as a commercial and trade route, but also as a major cooperation catalyst between independent and friendly States.

**Keywords:** cross-border cooperation, development, creativity, innovation

### Short introduction to the Danubian cooperation

There are several points of interest to be extracted and briefly presented here, as the Danube represented, along the past, besides an important communication and commercial route, a stability and progress factor in a region that stood, many times, in the East-West confrontation.

The Danube gained its international importance with the timid appearance of a new concept, at that time, known as international river law<sup>2</sup>, developed in the nineteenth

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<sup>2</sup> See *Questions of International Law*: Vol 2, ISBN 902860830, published by Sijthoff and Noordhoff, 1981

century in Europe. The 1815 Vienna Convention provides the first definition of an international river, as the waterway that separates the naturally or passing across the territory of two or more States. Considered a major European river, the Danube was seen as an important mean of communication and trade and received a legal status based on the principle of freedom of navigation, being managed by an international commission, which can be considered to have been the first structures international looming international technical organizations today.

After losing wars, signing peace treaties, the Ottoman Empire was forced to give permission to sail first to the Lower Danube to Austria, then, in turn, France, England and Russia. With the onset of conflict for supremacy in the Danube Delta, began practically efforts to find a solution for resolving the conflict between the great powers. The economic interests of each of these states, riparian or not, the Lower Danube were promoters of any strategy that sketch<sup>3</sup>.

Since that time, although they have tried a number of elaboration of a body of rules of international river issues of international rivers and their legal regime were no longer treated as a whole, there are currently international law rules governing international rivers, giving them a special status based on agreements between the riparian States, as was the case of the Danube, whose first classification in the category of international rivers dates back to 1865, with the Treaty of Paris<sup>4</sup>, which confirmed the end of the Crimean War.

The first Euro-region appeared in the aftermath of the European Single Act, just before the Maastricht Treaty, in 1991, as a joint initiative between France and Spain, knows as the Midi Pyrénées, Languedoc-Roussillon and Catalunya region, offering an important input towards developing the international bonds between the three State. Based on that example, the Lower-Danube Euro-region was created 15 years ago, in 1998, through an „European Framework Convention regarding the cross-border cooperation between local authorities and/or collectivities”, joining together three Romanian districts (Galați, Braila and Tulcea), two districts from the Republic Moldova (Cahul and Cantemir) and two from Ukraine (Odessa and Reni).

### Academic achievements in the Lower-Danube Region

Going back to our current point of interest, the cooperation in the Lower-Danube Region, one should stress out the main objectives that were envisaged in 1998 when this initiative came to life and what has been achieved so far.

<sup>3</sup> Edward Krehbiel, *The European Commission of the Danube: An Experiment in International Administration. Political Science Quarterly*, 1918, 33(1), p.38-55. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2141879>; Vernon J.Puryear, *International Economics and Diplomacy in the Near East*, 1920, p. 90

<sup>4</sup> <http://mjp.univ-perp.fr/traites/1856paris.htm> (15.09.2016)

From a legal and political science point of view, the international status of the Lower Danube Region comes from the fact that, as the Danube crosses the territories of three sovereign States (Romania, Republic of Moldova and Ukraine) and is subject to different legal regimes. From an economical point of view, this status allows both realization of income and also acts as communication path between those three different sovereign States.

The originary objectives of this initiative were to support the durable development of the three national regions, throughout extended cooperation between them, aiming at developing integrated cross-border economical development, human resources development, cross-border academic cooperation<sup>5</sup>, training and conferences, thus allowing both the combat of social exclusion and fight against illicit migration, criminality and smuggling.

One major achievement, from an international relations theory point of view, is the fact that, throughout this initiative, increased the cooperation between an EU country and non-EU countries, which would represent a good base for the future cooperation between the European Union and its neighboring States, throughout the EU strategy for the Danube Region<sup>6</sup>.

One mean through which we think that this region would contribute to the challenges of the EU Strategy 2020 would be by means of education and research, joining together the three major national regions in the area.

As such, some steps have already been made, through bi and trilateral academic cooperation, between the State Universities located in Galati (Romania), Cahul (Republic of Moldova) and Odessa (Ukraine). There are already functioning study programs, accredited in accordance to the European Standards and Guidelines, as they were approved by the Ministers of Education at the ministerial meeting in Bergen, 2005, at bachelor and master level, offered by the Romanian State University of Galati in the Republic of Moldova, aiming at supporting and strenghtening both student and teachers mobility, improving the insertion of academic institutions in the regional environments and the most important aspect, increasing the knowledge production of the universities, that can be measured both in terms of strict academic research and in terms of concrete results, connected to economical, social and cultural life in the three countries, confirming thus the fact that this Euro-region achieved its primary goal *i.e* to increase the inter-human

<sup>5</sup> Iosif R.Urs, Sorin Ivan, *The University – An Institution of Creativity and Innovation for the Europe of Knowledge, The International Conference Education and Creativity for a Knowledge based Society*, Titu Maiorescu University of Bucharest, 2012, p.7

<sup>6</sup> Stefan Gänzle, Kristine Kern, Antony Polonsky, *A Macro-regional Europe in the Making: Theoretical Approaches and Empirical Evidence*, Palgrave, Macmillan, 2016, p.163; <http://www.danube-region.eu>

contacts, aiming at social, educational and cultural inclusion of its inhabitants, by allowing both the growth of their education level and the conservation of their cultural inheritance.

### Instead of a conclusion

Considering that today the conceptual fight in the globalized context should be based on the „*BONO BONUM NASCITUR*” principle, there should be three directions in which the academic cooperation should aim, cooperation, varied financing sources and prestige, that could only be achieved in common. This Euro-region, with all the outputs already achieved until now, could represent a strong starting point for the development of the new EU strategy for the Danube region, as some of the major stakeholders involved in developing this strategy could benefit from the cooperation already in place, as this paper intended to present, both in the economical cooperation area, with different projects already implemented, as well as in the academic, research and higher education area, as different study programs at university level are being offered with emphasis on the real international and cross-border cooperation concepts.

### References

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