

Priorities and Economic Development Projects in the Danube Region from Romania within the Context of Implementing the European Union Strategy

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The main objective of this study is to briefly present the challenges and realities of economic and social potential existing in the region crossed by the Danube in Romania, to introduce the priorities taking into account their specific area and point out the major projects that have had a great impact upon the development of the Danube region and its adjacent area(1). The present paper can be used as basis for strategic decisions related to the Danube region, both at the sectorial level and at the integrated one. Moreover, due to its 1200 km of Romania's external border included in the Danube region, the structure of the territorial cooperation programmes can be easily defined(4). In the context of the **EU Strategy for the Danube Region (SUERD)**, the present paper establishes the objectives and priorities of the Danube region as well as of the potential development opportunities in the Danube region(8).

Keywords: Danube region, economic potential for development, EU Strategy for the Danube Region (SUERD), development priorities, development projects

JEL Code : O2

1. Introduction

The criteria that were taken into consideration when demarcating the territory corresponding to the Danube region in Romania are the following:

- The influence of the river extended to(9):

- structure and typology of economic activities
- setting infrastructure and means of transport
- structure of population
- land typology

- Territorial boundaries of the Romanian counties in order to have access to statistical data(5).

Due to the lack of space in the present paper that focuses on economic and territorial development, the Danube region is defined as the area strongly influenced by the river, made up of the 12 counties bordering the Danube, i.e. Caraș-Severin, Mehedinți, Dolj, Olt, Teleorman, Giurgiu, Călărași, Constanța, Ialomița, Brăila, Galați, Tulcea, to which Bucharest and Ilfov county are added (see figure no. 1).

In order to avoid any ambiguities related to the territory included in the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (SUERD), the area thus demarcated will now be referred in the present study as the *Danube region*(3).

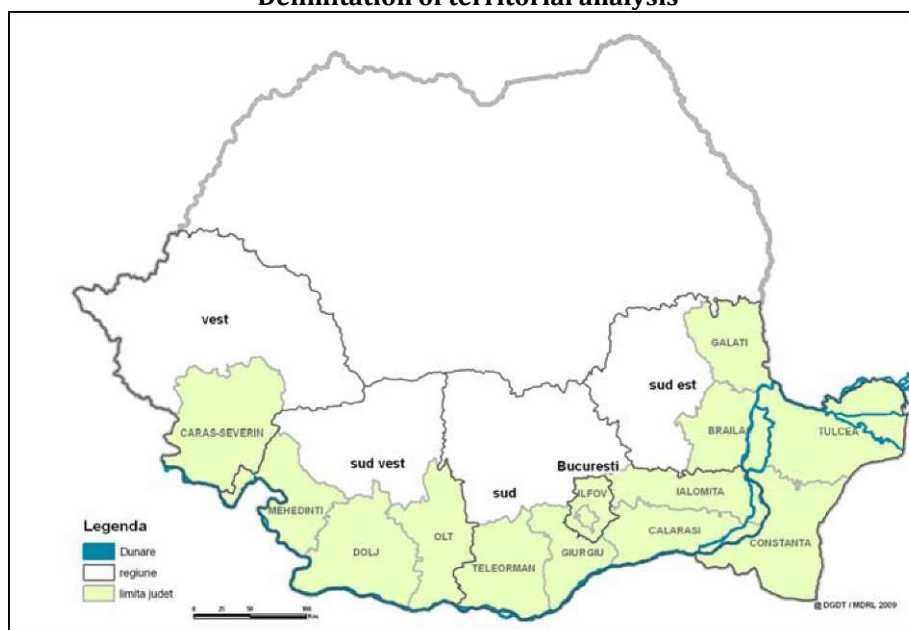
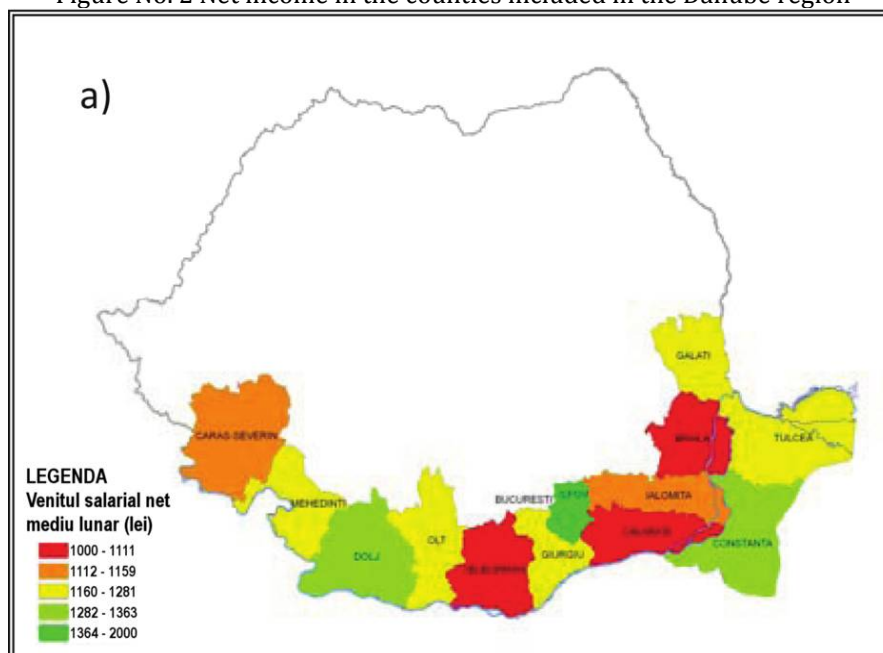
Delimitation of territorial analysis

Figure no. 1 – Areas included in the study (source: MDRT, 2010)

2. Analysis of the macroeconomic indicators of the counties included in the Danube region – Romania shows major discrepancies between the levels of development of these regions (Ilfov county was included due to its proximity to the Danube)(2). The *monthly average net income per person* indicator was analysed and major discrepancies were observed in the counties included in the present study. Thus in Dolj, Ilfov and Constanta counties, this indicator reaches 2000 lei, whereas in Teleorman, Ialomita and Braila it does not exceed 1111 lei, i.e. almost half of the value of the first three counties analyzed. Therefore the implementation of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (SUERD) is highly required in order to lead to a levelling out of these indicators that assess the development level in the analysed region(7).

Figure No. 2 Net income in the counties included in the Danube region



Source : MDRAP 2014

3. Priorities and Major Development Projects in the Danube Region

In order to identify the projects and development priorities in the Danube region in Romania, we divided the river into six specific areas, namely: **A - the mountain area, B - Oltenia, C - Muntenia, D - Braila-Galati, E - Dobrogea and F – the Danube Delta**. We identified the possible pillars of sustainable development within the above-mentioned areas(7).

We continued our analysis for each sector and we presented several priorities and development projects that must be considered when implementing the local and regional development strategies.

A. The mountain area

Pillars of sustainable development	Priorities	Major Projects
Mountain tourism Protection of natural heritage Accessibility	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Making the best of the natural potential by developing tourism in the following areas: development and diversification of accommodation and services structure, development of rural tourism, creating paths for non-motorized transport, - Trans-border cooperation with Serbia on projects in environmental protection and tourism; - Development of road and rail transport infrastructure which would ensure links both to Craiova and Timișoara - 2 important growth poles of Romania, and would increase traffic fluidity in the area; - Establishing links between villages and railway transport nodes. 	Regeneration of historic buildings and public spaces - Băile Herculane Improving infrastructure with winter sports equipment

B. Oltenia

Pillars of sustainable development	Priorities	Major Projects
Trans border cooperation (twin towns) Risk Prevention Agriculture Industry Transport Infrastructure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Increasing the capacity of urban places to structure the territory and to ensure services accessibility; - Development of the polycentric localities network through: a) transversal cooperation between localities of different ranks; - b) trans-border cooperation between the urban centres that play a regional role Craiova - Plevna (urban-urban); c) trans-border cooperation between twin towns situated on both banks of the Danube: Calafat - Vidin, Bechet - Rahova (urban-urban) d) horizontal cooperation between the Danube port towns (urban-urban); e) increasing cooperation in the urban-rural relationship. - Development of transport infrastructure – shifting from a peripheral area to an area linked to the development flows - Development of water transport by restoring the Danube ports, supplying equipment for transport development on the Danube, development of infrastructure required to cross the Danube, i.e. bridges, ferries, intermodal transport nodes; - Development of road infrastructure: building the highway between Bucharest - Craiova, which together with the A2 highway - Bucharest - Constanța would ensure a development axis along the Danube, improving the quality of roads in the area in order to ensure an efficient transport as well as the connection of localities to the economic corridor development; 	Common strategies for twin towns Increasing the metropolitan area of Craiova Bridge over the Danube at Bechet-Rahova Highway Bucharest-Craiova-Calafat (and Craiova- Drobeta Tr. Severin) Increase in speed rail Constanța- Bucharest-Craiova-Drobeta Tr. Severin Irrigation system Ring road for Craiova on the south Cycling route along the Danube Port rehabilitation

Pillars of sustainable development	Priorities	Major Projects
	<p>Development of railway infrastructure: achieving the high-speed rail between Drobeta Turnu Severin - Craiova - Bucharest - Constanța, which would ensure the connectivity between the south part of Romania to the its western part as well as to the coastline, improving the quality and efficiency of railway transport within the sector and ensuring the connectivity between the Danube ports.</p> <p>Unlocking the potential of agriculture: development of the irrigation infrastructure, supplying the equipment required for processing agricultural products in the rural areas;</p> <p>Unlocking the potential of tourism: development of agri-tourism – promoting historical buildings, development of tourist circuits, complementary development town – port.</p> <p>- Reducing natural and industrial risks.</p>	

C. Muntenia

Pillars of sustainable development	Priorities	Major Projects
Trans-border Cooperation (twin towns) Territorial Cooperation (metropolitan area) Agriculture Pisciculture Tourism Transport infrastructure development transport - Inter- modality	<p>- Increasing the capacity of urban places to structure the territory and to ensure services accessibility</p> <p>- Development of the polycentric network of localities through: a) transversal cooperation between localities of different ranks;</p> <p>b) trans-border cooperation between twin towns situated on both banks of the Danube: Turnu Măgurele - Nicopole, Zimnicea - Svishtov, Giurgiu - Ruse, Oltenița - Turtucaia and Călărași - Silistra (urban-urban)</p> <p>d) horizontal cooperation between the Danube port towns (urban-urban);</p> <p>- e) increasing cooperation in the urban-rural relationship.</p> <p>- Development of transport infrastructure – shifting from a peripheral area to an area linked to the development flows.</p> <p>- Development of water transport by restoring the Danube ports, supplying equipment for transport development on the Danube, development of infrastructure required to cross the Danube, i.e. bridges, ferries, intermodal transport nodes;</p> <p>- Development of road infrastructure: building the highway between Bucharest - Craiova, which together with the A2 highway - Bucharest - Constanța would ensure a development axis along the Danube, improving the quality of roads in the area in order to ensure an efficient transport as well as the connection of localities to the economic corridor development;</p> <p>- Development of railway infrastructure: achieving the high-speed rail between Drobeta Turnu Severin - Craiova - Bucharest - Constanța, which would ensure the connectivity between the south part of Romania to the its western part as well as to the coastline, improving the quality and efficiency of railway transport within the sector and ensuring the connectivity between the Danube ports.</p> <p>- Increasing cooperation between Călărași and Slobozia – creating a distribution network to two major consumers - Bucharest and Constanța with the</p>	<p>Finishing the Danube-Bucharest canal;</p> <p>Building a cargo airport in the south of Bucharest;</p> <p>Finishing the ring road of Bucharest;</p> <p>Completing the metropolitan area of Bucharest;</p> <p>Doubling the Giurgiu-Ruse road bridge;</p> <p>Building the bridge between Călărași and Silistra;</p> <p>Irrigation infrastructure;</p> <p>Cycling route along the Danube;</p> <p>Ports Rehabilitation;</p> <p>Developing a touristic route in Oltenița (where luxury cruise lines dock on the Danube) - Bucharest</p> <p>- developing ports for touristic ships in Giurgiu</p>

Pillars of sustainable development	Priorities	Major Projects
	seaside resorts; - Unlocking the potential of agriculture: development of the irrigation infrastructure, supplying the equipment required for processing agricultural products in the rural areas; - developing agri-tourism: developing fishing-tourism especially in Călărași, developing tourism circuits - complementary development town-port; - development of cycling routes.	

D. Brăila- Galați

Pillars of sustainable development	Priorities	Major Projects
Urban System Agri-pol Land banking Industry Transport Infrastructure Inter-modality	<p>- Increasing the capacity of urban localities to structure the territory and to ensure the service access: developing network localities through: a) improving the urban system Brăila - Galați, which would lead to a population of over 700,000 inhabitants and would ensure: - on the macro-level of the Danube region: structuring the river by developing an important urban centre near the place where the Danube meets the Black Sea; - on the national level: limiting urban hypertrophy brought about by Bucharest (Romania ranking second in EU), ensuring a balanced territorial development by creating a growth pole between Iași and Constanța; - on the regional level: a higher area of serving the territory, increasing the number and quality of services, overcoming the dividing factors – cooperation on many territorial levels; c) enhancing the cooperation in the urban- rural relationship.</p> <p>Development of the agricultural potential by supplying the required infrastructure – irrigation systems, storage, processing and distribution of agricultural products together with a sustainable agricultural land management;</p> <p>Development of transport infrastructure: - Development of road infrastructure: a) development of an axis of transport from north to south Galați-Brăila-Slobozia-Călărași, which would be a ring road of the Black Sea and would ensure the links to Ukraine and Bulgaria, b) building the bridge in Brăila over the Danube which would ensure the links between the Danube Delta and Moldova; ensuring the gate conditions of the Danube Delta; - Development of rail infrastructure to efficiently connect localities to the development axes and points;</p> <p>- Unlocking the touristic potential: unlocking the potential provided by the Braila Lake (Balta Mică a Brăilei), development of fishing and hunting tourism, unlocking the natural potential provided by the Danube.</p>	Developing the urban system Brăila-Galați Connexions through means of transport between Brăila and Galați Road and rail bridge over the Danube - Braila- Galați Irrigation infrastructure Urban rehabilitation of the promenade Danube cliffs in the two municipalities; Port rehabilitation

E. Dobrogea

Pillars of sustainable development	Priorities	Major Projects
Summer tourism Inter- modality Urban Development Aeolian Energy Accessibility	<p>- Increasing the capacities of urban localities for a balanced territorial development through developing the polycentric network of the locality: a) transversal cooperation between localities of different ranks to ensure a balanced territorial development, b)</p>	Urban regeneration of touristic resorts from the Black Sea coast; Development of the intermodal platform from

	<p>horizontal cross border cooperation between urban centres that play a regional role: Constanța - Varna (urban- urban), c) developing research and innovation activities to strengthen the capacity of development of Constanța as well as its capacity to polarize the territory, d) sustainable development of the resorts on the Black Sea coast through cooperation, e) strengthening urban- rural cooperation;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Development of transport infrastructure: - Development of water transport; - ensuring an efficient and safe transport between Cernavodă and Constanța; - Development of road infrastructure - a) completion of the Bucharest - Constanța highway, which would form a perpendicular axis of development along the Black Sea coast; b) improving the quality of roads in the area to ensure an efficient transport and to connect localities to the development corridor; c) ensuring alternative routes to the seaside area - Constanța - Hârșova and Constanța - Călărăși; - Development of rail infrastructure - a) achieving a high speed rail between Bucharest - Constanța, which would ensure the links between the rest of the territory and the seaside, b) improving the quality and efficiency of rail transport within the sector. - Achieving an intermodal node in Constanța - Unlocking the potential of agriculture: a) unlocking the potential on vineyards; b) supplying the necessary structures for the primary processing of agricultural products in the rural area; c) supplying food products in the south part of the county, for Constanța and for the summer tourists. - unlocking the touristic potential: a) development of cross-border partnerships with the resorts from the Bulgarian coast line – in order to organize touristic circuits both to visit Bulgaria and the Danube Delta; b) development of partnerships between the Romanian seaside resorts; c) expanding the touristic offer – development of activities to attract tourists in all seasons, d) improving the quality of touristic services, e) sustainable unlocking of the natural potential. - Unlocking the human potential of Constanța, one of the biggest countries of the country: increasing the number of workplaces, ensuring facilities required for professional conversion – specializing in touristic and travel-related services, ensuring social inclusion. - Reducing the natural and industrial risks. Protection of the environment by supplying the facilities for storage and processing of waste in compliance with the requirements of the EU norms. 	<p>the Constanța port area; Planning integrated territorial investments in the coast area (Capul Midia-Vama Veche</p>
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F. Danube Delta

Pillars of sustainable development	Priorities	Major Projects
Protection of cultural and natural heritage Touristic Activities Better living standards for the population Pisciculture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Unlocking the touristic potential by protecting the environment: using environmentally-friendly building materials that are specific to the area, compliance with the specific architectural design of the area, improving services and the quality of public spaces for the development of Tulcea, as a central place and as a place for distribution for the Danube Delta; 	Completion of PATZ and Danube Delta Strategy and planning an integrated territorial investment/development action, the local community being in charge with it and dedicated to the Danube Delta; Diversification of touristic activities; Development of a harbour for tourist boats and yachts at Sulina;

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organizing touristic circuits and promoting them. - Access to education, medical infrastructure and services for the population; - Exploiting and processing the fish stock. 	Investing in Murighiol to become the second gate to the Danube Delta.
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4. Conclusions

The level of social and economic development in the counties in the Danube region varies significantly. Therefore the implementation of certain development strategies and projects is highly required in order to lead to an increase in the living standards of the population in this region. Several priorities and development projects have been identified, specific to six areas included in the Danube region from Romania. These can be implemented by their integration into the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (SUERD), which can ensure sustainable funding.

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