

**FIRST NATIONAL  
CONTRIBUTION OF  
ROMANIA TO THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF THE  
EUROPEAN UNION  
STRATEGY FOR THE  
DANUBE REGION**

## **The EU Strategy for the Danube Region**

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## **1. European context**

### **1.1. Goals of the European Union Strategy for the Danube macro-region**

The European Commission (COM), through the Directorate General for Regional Policy (REGIO), will develop an EU Strategy for the Danube Region by the end of 2010. It will be made up of a Communication and an Action Plan to include the priority goals and the projects identified at national level by each individual Danube state, as well as bilateral and multilateral cross-border projects.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region will be a coherent cooperation framework, to contribute, on the one hand, to the implementation of the EU growth goals, and, on the other hand, to promote Community values and principles in the third countries of the region.

The new Strategy will support the implementation of new technologies regarding development, maintenance and protection of the River, so that Danube to become a modern and commercially attractive arterial river, environmentally friendly and compatible with the existent eco-systems.

The added value of the Strategy will be to strengthen the inter-regional, cross-border and transnational cooperation, as well as to promote, correlate and harmonize the numerous scattered initiatives and projects which have already been initiated or are under implementation in the Danube Region. The external dimension of the Strategy will supply the opportunity for specific cooperation under the form of joint projects with the third countries, which are candidates or potential candidate countries to European Union Member State status.

At the same time, the aim of the Strategy of the Danube Region will be circumscribed to the new concept which has been recently promoted at Community level, and which concerns the third dimension of the EU cohesion policy, namely territorial cohesion. This can be defined as an expression of the balanced, coherent and harmonious development of the territory, taking into account the business and social activities, the equipment, accessibility and environment quality, the existence of fair living and employment conditions for all citizens, irrespective of where they are, by capitalizing on the specific elements of each category of territory, thus contributing to the putting in place of a prosperous Europe, which can be sustainable from the economic, social and ecological points of view.

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region will be circumscribed to the priorities launched together with the dialogue of the European Commission with the Member States concerning the EU 2020 Strategy. Those priorities are aimed at economic growth based on research, innovation and science, an inclusive society, with a high rate of employment, a competitive and sustainable economy, based on cutting-edge technologies and ecological systems.

## **1.2. Funding programs**

Cooperation-wise, an important role goes to the contribution of the European territorial cooperation programs to funding specific joint programs between regions or states located in the Danube Basin, which are aimed at intervention fields, such as: accessibility, environment and emergency situations, economic and social development.

Other relevant projects with strategic impact at the level of the Danube Region can also be implemented throughout the sectoral/ regional operational programs carried out in Romania during 2007-2013, such as the Sectoral Operational Program: Increase of Economic Competitiveness, Sectoral Operational Program: Transport, Sectoral Operational Program: Environment and the Regional Operational Program.

## **1.3. Romania's specific context and its participation in cross-border and transnational programs**

The programs Romania participates in for the period 2007-2013 are as follows: the Cross-border Cooperation Program between Romania and Bulgaria, the Black Sea Joint Operational Program ENPI, the South-Eastern Europe Transnational Cooperation Program, the Romania – Serbia IPA Cross-border Cooperation Program, the ENPI Joint Operational Program Romania – Ukraine – the Republic of Moldova, the Hungary – Romania Joint Operational Cross-border Program, the ENPI Joint Operational Program Hungary – Slovakia – Romania – Ukraine, INTERREG IV C, URBACT II, ESPON 2013 and INTERACT II.

For the time being, in terms of data regarding the projects under implementation, information can be supplied only for the Cross-border Cooperation Operational Program for the South-East Europe 2007-2013 (SEE) and the Romania-Bulgaria Cross-border Cooperation Operational Program.

Thus, there is a total number of 15 projects under implementation (funded through the ERDF and IPA), and which are grouped into areas such as follows:

- *Social-economic integration, economic growth, education and culture*: 5 projects;
- *Connectivity – transportation and energy*: 4 projects. Out of those, three projects have Romanian project leaders as beneficiaries;
- *Environment – water quality, biodiversity, risk prevention and management*: 6 projects. Out of those, 1 project has a Romanian project leader as beneficiary.

From the point of view of the status of the organizations with a project leader or partner role in the framework of projects, the situation is as follows:

- Public authorities (ministries, county councils, town halls, local councils): 26
- Research institutions (institutes, universities): 20
- Other entities: central and territorial Chambers of Commerce, NGOs, regional development agencies: 18

The following goals will be attained through these projects:

- Putting in place of national and transnational management and planning networks, and, respectively, cross-border partnerships;
- Putting in place of permanent structures for environment protection matters, including the development of efficient solutions for the settlement of environment problems;
- Rehabilitation of drinking water distribution networks and infrastructure;
- Improvement of the local administration capacity to develop and implement efficient projects from the energy point of view.

## **2. The Danube Region**

Several criteria may be used to map out the Danube Region in the context of the European Strategy: the Danube States, the Danube Regions (NUTS 2/3), or the entire Danube Basin.

### **2.1. Overview – The Danube, a structural element at the European level**

The Danube – the biggest river flowing through the EU and the second biggest river of Europe, after Volga with a length of 2,857 km out of which 2,415 km being navigable, represents a connector of the Central Europe and the Black Sea with the Trans-Caucasus Area and Central Asia.

The Danube Region's economic growth potential has been insufficiently capitalized. As part of the EU Pan-European Transport Corridor 7, the Danube is an important waterway which connects Constanța Harbor to the industrial centers of Western Europe and the Rotterdam Port. The Danube Basin includes states and regions which in the future might benefit of direct access to the Black Sea, whereas the importance of connecting the EU with the Trans-Caucasus area and Central Asia has already been significantly enshrined by the European Commission through the new regional cooperation initiative called Black Sea Synergy.

The following is an overview of the Danube Region's current situation, from Romania's perspective, and the Appendix includes a list of national priorities (developed based on input from the Ministries which are part of the Inter-ministerial Working Group concerning the EU Strategy for the Danube).

### **2.2. Analysis of the current situation of the Danube region, from Romania's perspective**

On the territory of Romania, Danube has a length of more than 1075 km, and comprises 4 distinct sectors, with the following features:

1. Baziaș – Iron Gates II sector, 212 km in length, mountainous terrain, special tourist potential. From the hydrologic point of view, the Danube flowing regime is in retention because of the two hydro-energetic and navigation systems of Iron Gates I and II.
2. Iron Gates II – Calarasi Sector has 488 km in length being characterized by a flat terrain with water meadows. It has a special economic potential owing to the labor

- force in the region and the large area of farmland. From the hydrologic point of view, the Danube has a free flow throughout this sector.
3. Călărași – Braila sector, 200 km in length, is totally situated on the territory of Romania; It has economic and tourist potential. From the hydrologic point of view, the Danube has a free flow throughout this sector.
  4. Braila – the Black Sea, on the Sulina Channal, 175 km in length. From the hydrologic point of view, the Danube has a free flow throughout this sector. Sea ships up to 25,000 tdw can access this sector, partially downloaded, considering the fairway of minimum 7,32 meters at minimum sailing levels.

The connection between Danube River and the Black Sea has been accomplished by two navigable channels:

- The Danube – Black Sea Canal, situated between Constanța Sud Harbor and Agigea, at km 0 of the Canal, and Danube, in the area of km. no. 293, 64,410 km of the Canal Harbor with the Danube River;
- Poarta Alba – Midia – Navodari Canal, with a total length of 27,500 km, situated between Midia Harbor, Km. no 0 of the Canal and the confluence with Danube-Black Sea, to the km. no. 29+41, including the bifurcation of 5,5 km that is a part of Poarta Alba- Midia- Navodari Canal. Starting with the km. no. 3 of this Canal starts the connection with Luminita Port.

According with CCE-ONU classification, the Romanian sector of the Danube is a part of the VII rank of classification; Danube-Black Sea Canal is a part of the VI rank of classification; Poarta Alba-Midia-Navodari is a part of the V rank of classification.

### 2.2.1. Social and cultural aspects

From the cultural and social points of view, the Danube Region is a heterogeneous area, namely in the Western part of the Region, that is Germany and Austria, there is demographic increase (caused by immigration), whereas in the Eastern part (Romania, Bulgaria and Hungary) there is demographic decline and a migratory trend towards other regions of the same countries or emigration.

With respect to Romania, there is demographic decrease in this area especially in the rural areas and the small towns, mainly as a result of the migratory trends towards the bigger cities, especially Bucharest, as well as other countries. Besides Bucharest (with 8088 inhabitants/ square km), the **regional density** ranges from 179 inhabitants / square km in county Ilfov to 139 inhabitants / square km in county Galați, 39 inhabitants/ square km in county Caraș-Severin and 30 inhabitants / square km in county Tulcea.

The age group breakdown is a consequence of the population ageing, mainly as a result of the decrease in the birthrate, which causes the absolute and relative decrease of the young population (0-14 years-old) and the increase of the old population (60 years-old and over).

The Danube Region is also characterized by linguistic and cultural diversity, created through stratified historical influences and confluences, which took a more specific shape with the variety of movable and immovable cultural heritage monuments, as well as the appearance of creative models which pervaded the entire Danube Basin.

### 2.2.2. Economic aspects

With respect to economic development, the Danube Region is characterized by major disparities, both at the level of the states and at the level of the regions of the states. The less developed regions prevail in the new Member States, where the more visible regional disparities can also be found.

In Romania, the main disparity is between Bucharest and the other regions. Except for the Bucharest-Ilfov Region, the economic development of the other regions followed a decreasing trend, from the West to the East, the underdeveloped areas being located along the Danube. The underdevelopment of those regions goes hand in hand with unemployment, as well as with the prevailing of rural activities and the lack of capacity to attract foreign direct investments.

a) **Industrial restructuring** affected not only the small industrial cities but the bigger towns as well. However, as they had business activities with a more diversified structure, the bigger industrial towns used the labor force which had been laid off from the industry in the service sector. The Bucharest – Ilfov Region has a large growth potential, owing to its diversified economy and as a result of the central role played by Bucharest (with its higher-education establishments and service infrastructure etc). In 2004, Bucharest held 21% of the total number of enterprises registered in Romania and 20% of the large enterprises in the country. With respect to the Danube area, the share of enterprises registered in Bucharest was 48%. County Constanța ranks second after Bucharest as it holds 10.1% of the total number of enterprises registered for the Romanian Danube area. County Galați has 6.3% (and all the other counties in this region register values ranging from 2% to 4%).

b) **Agriculture** is a major source of income for the Danube population. Except for a few counties (i.e. Constanța, Ilfov), in the Romanian sector, agriculture is still one of the main activities. Currently it is a source of pollution also, both because of the use of fertilizers and pesticides, and because of the outdated animal farms.

#### c) **Research and development (R&D)**

Between 1999-2004, the entire staff employed in the R&D sector in the Romanian Danube area had the following evolution: increasing trend in the Bucharest-Ilfov region (from 2.4 to 2.71% of the total employment) and in the Western Region (from 0.38% to 0.42%), decreasing trend in the Southern Muntenia Region (from 0.64% to 0.29%), South-Western Oltenia (from 0.63% to 0.27%) and South-Eastern (from 0.37% to 0.17%); the higher values were recorded in the Northern counties of those regions, whereas the lowest were recorded in the Danube counties, except for counties Constanța, Galați and Brăila.

Important **National Research and Development Institutes**: Bucharest, Constanța, Tulcea, both in fields directly connected to scientific research in the area of environment and its related fields (medicine, biology, social-economic sciences, transports).

#### **d) Tourism**

By its geographic position, the region holds a large tourist potential, with very diverse natural and cultural resources, which make possible various types of tourism: mountains, seaside, spas, culture, ecotourism etc.

In the Western part of the Romanian Region, tourism is less developed than in other areas, because of the reduced demographic density, poor access to infrastructure and massive demographic migration. But this Western part has an extraordinary tourist potential because of the various forms of terrain and unique spots of attraction. The Eastern part is much more developed, but activities are concentrated on the Black Sea coast and the Danube Delta; the central Dobrogea region, though, is very little developed, even if it does have a large potential. An important role is also played here by cruise-ship tourism, which has seen an ascending trend in the recent years. To develop this activity, the tourist offers from the areas next to the river ports must be diversified.

Based on the analysis of the accommodation possibilities in Romania, results may be shown as follows: the biggest share of tourist structures is to be found on the Black Sea coast (42.6%); coming up next are Bucharest and the county capital cities (except for Tulcea), as well as the spas, mountain resorts and Danube Delta. There is a very small number of accommodation possibilities in the rural areas, as well as in the small cities (except for the Black Sea coast).

An increase in accommodation capacity is a must, especially for the rural areas, and it can be implemented by the creation of new accommodation establishments and, in the small cities, by the refurbishment of the already existing accommodation facilities and the erection of new ones.

### **2.2.3 Infrastructure**

#### **Transports and telecommunications**

Traditionally, the Danube and its secondary branches have been one of the transportation routes of Romania. Even if transport on the inland waterways is very much superseded by the other means of transportation, this avenue has a very high growth potential, which has not been fully used.

Transport on inland waterways is an efficient, cost-saving type of transportation; appropriate for long distances and large freight, and it is also an environment-friendly type of transportation.

Danube River and the Danube-Black Sea and Poarta Alba-Midia-Navodari Canals are part of the inland waterways systems, according to AGN agreement. River Prut, Siret-Baragan Canal with its Danube connections on Siret and Ialomita Rivers, Danube-Bucuresti Canal, by refurbishments of Arges and Dambovitza rivers, Olt River up to Slatina, Bega Canal and Mures (up to Alba Iulia) and Somes (up to Dej) will be also part of this network.

On the Romanian sector, according to the technical navigation parameters, from Braila (km. no. 175) and up to the Black Sea, on Sulina Canal, Danube allows access of the maritime vessels up to 25,000 tdw in Sulina, Tulcea, Galati and Braila Harbors. From Braila upstream, the technical navigation parameters allow access for the inland



navigation vessels in 29 harbors, out of which the most important are: Moldova Veche, Orsova, Drobeta Turnu Severin, Calafat, Bechet, Turnu Magurele, Zimnicea, Giurgiu, Oltenița, Călărași, Cernavodă.

The Romanian ports are connected to the national or European road and railways networks, and the existing harbor facilities and the ones to be developed allow to be turned in main logistical nodes for the multimodal transport. Thus, in the perimeter under evaluation, made up of the NUTS 3 Regions next to the Danube (the Caraș-Severin, Mehedinți, Dolj, Olt, Teleorman, Giurgiu, Călărași, Ialomița, Brăila, Galați, Tulcea and Constanța counties), to which the Bucharest-Ilfov Region is added together with 5 other counties in close functional connection to the Danube Region (Gorj, Vâlcea, Argeș, Dâmbovița, Prahova), there are: **road transportation corridors**, out of which 261 km of highway, around 6,650 km national roads, around 14,850 km of county roads, 6 TEN-T Corridors (totaling up to around 1,650 km) and **railway transport corridors**: TEN-T (totaling around 1,000 km), electric power railways (totaling up to around 1,225 km), and non-electric power railways (totaling up to around 3,700 km).

With respect to the Danube **crossing points** on the Romanian sector, they are: the Romanian-Bulgarian Giurgiu – Ruse border crossing point (road and rail), Calafat-Vidin Bridge (under construction, Rail and road), the Giurgeni-Vadu Oii road bridge) and the Porțile de Fier (Iron Gates) I Dam (road), which is also the Romanian-Serbian border crossing point. We also envisage to carry out two road bridges over the Danube River, between Romania and Bulgaria, to Bechet-Oreahovo and Calarasi-Silistra, and a road/rail bridge at Braila. Another form of crossing the Danube is by ferry; there are several ferry crossing points on the territory of Romania: Chiciu, Braila, Galati and Tulcea. We also envisage the carrying out of a crossing point between Romania and Ucraina, to Isaccea. **GSM network** coverage (both for phone lines and data transfer) must be extended; there are still areas and even some human settlements which do not have such services yet.

**Internet broadband access** is still insufficiently developed in the Romanian sector of the Region.

#### **2.2.4 Environment aspects**

The Danube Basin, which is home to over 2,000 flora and 5,000 fauna species, is a complex ecosystem, with varied subsystems (swift mountain rivers, plain rivers with meandered courses, sand dunes, swamps, abandoned meanders, islands, lakes and delta) which must be used in a sustainable manner and in an integrated protection system.

The **Danube Delta** is one of the widest natural wetlands and has a triple international protected status: it is a universal UNESCO natural and cultural heritage site, a wetland of international importance (the Ramsar Convention) and a Biosphere Reserve within the UNESCO Program “Man and the Biosphere.”

Other protected areas located in the Romanian sector of the Danube Region, which may be classified into several categories, are as follows: the **Nature 2000 Sites** (sites of community importance: 68 out of a total of 273 are located in Romania, Bird and Fauna protected areas – 60 out of a total of 108 are located in Romania), national parks, natural

parks, reserves etc., partially or completely located on the Danube Valley: the Porțile de Fier natural park, the Balta Mică a Brăilei natural park, the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve, as well as the ones located in areas neighboring the Danube Valley: the Semenic Cheile Carașului national park, the Cheile Nerei - Beușnița national park, the Domogled – Valea Cernei national park, the Mehedinți Mountains geopark, the Comana national park, the Măcin Mountains national park, the Lunca Joasă a Prutului national park, the Techirghiol lake, Vama Veche - 2 Mai etc.

In order to rehabilitate, protect and conserve the water environment of the Danube Basin and implement the goals of the *Water Framework Directive*, the environment infrastructure must be upgraded and enlarged, especially, the drinking water distribution infrastructure, the sewage infrastructure, the waste water cleaning and waste management networks, to decrease or eliminate the industrial waste water discharges and to promote new farming practices in observance of the European environment standards.

At the same time, appropriate steps must be taken to improve the lateral and longitudinal connectivity of the main course of the Danube river, with a view to repairing the damaged biodiversity and improving the hydro-morphological conditions for the water fauna and flora.

In terms of harm reduction, it is a known fact that the Danube Region is exposed to floods, drought and landslide risks. The development of this Strategy will put in place a new basis for the promotion of those measures aimed at decreasing such risks, including the one which have a cross-border dimension.

### **3. The structure of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region**

#### **3.1. The vision for the Danube Region**

Following implementation of the Danube Region Strategy, as well as the other actions by the Danube Member States, the implementation of the grants programs, the region will grow more dynamic, competitive and in its framework, the transnational, cross-border and interregional cooperation initiatives will result in a limitation of social and economic disparities, both in the West and the East, from the Danube “sources” to its flowing into the Black Sea and will promote, consequently, the balanced growth, by encouraging the local character. The Danube will be not only a transport axis, but also a cohesive element, to provide structure to the area and to foment strong cultural, educational and business interactions. The Danube will evolve, from a limitation – a natural barrier – into an element which is in favor of the sustainable development and cohesion.

It will also put in place the adequate conditions to rehabilitate, protect and conserve the environment, which will finally result in the sustainable use of the natural resources.

From Romania's perspective the strategy supplies a growth possibility for the counties in the Southern part of the country, because of the diversification of economic roles, the development of the human settlements network, the diversification of the tourist offer, the development of transportation networks, including through the creation of inter-modal nodes, the supply of the necessary infrastructure to protect the environment, in general, and the protection against natural risks and, more particularly, capitalization on the

natural and cultural heritage and increase in the social facilities. The Danube Region will especially become more competitive, attractive, the migration of the labor force will thus be limited, both to other areas of the country and to other countries. One important element in ensuring development is the strengthening of ties between the human settlements, by creating the functional urban-urban, urban-rural and rural-rural partnerships, such as the establishment of the Galați-Brăila growth pillar and other development pillars through cross-border cooperation.

The development of the Strategy for the Danube Region will provide an opportunity for the sharing of best practices among the countries involved and to facilitate exchanges between experts, decision-makers and inhabitants.

### **3.2. Methodology for the EU Strategy for the Danube Region**

The development of the strategy will take into consideration not only the Danube macro-region in its entirety, but also its component areas, which will be evaluated and treated based on their specific elements, the resemblance of the natural environment framework, the functional limits, and not only within their administrative limits.

The strategy will include information and provisions concerning:

1. The European framework, which, within the territorial cohesion policies, has identified the opportunity for the development of this strategy. Thus, it will list all the countries involved in the development of the strategy, and will provide a short overview of what it means and what is the Danube's role and potential for the European continent. The strategy must also specify the European-level objectives for the Danube Region and, not in the least, provide an overview of the already existing Danube cooperation initiatives, the European funding programs must be identified, as they can be accessed for the development of future projects.

2. A survey of the current situation, which will emphasize weaknesses and opportunities, first at sectoral level and will conclude by a diagnosis, which will be the integrated synthesis, a brief glance at the current Danube Region. The survey will be developed for the entire territory of the Danube Region and will be based on the various areas which display the same features, for instance – the Romanian territory will be structured into 5 distinct areas: Baziaș – Porțile de Fier II, Porțile de Fier II – Călărași, Călărași – Brăila, Brăila – Marea Neagră, pe canalul Sulina and Danube – Black Sea and Poarta Albă – Midia – Năvodari Canals.

3. The development of a vision, of an overall objective for the entire Danube Region and a set of strategic goals resulting into related courses of action. To fulfill these strategic goals, three priority axes have been established from Romania's perspective.

4. The action plan and the priority projects to be implemented with a view to fulfilling the strategic goals, that is to coherently tackle the Danube Region to decrease the current disparities, to facilitate the growth flows from the West to the East, taking into account all that the Danube represents for the European continent.

In order to prioritize investments, a matrix-type model will be used to take into account not only the intervention fields, but also the territory, to ensure an optimal correlation between the sectoral priorities and the territorial dimension.

From the formal point of view, the EU Strategy for the Danube Region should take the more concrete shape of a European Commission Communication, accompanied by an Action Plan, a similar procedure as in the case of the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region.

### **3.3. – General goals**

- To consolidate a Danube Region that is dynamic, competitive and prosperous.

#### **Strategic goals**

- The Danube – an ecological transport and connectivity axis at the European level;
- To decrease the economic and social, the inter-regional and intra-regional disparities;
- To support the development of the human settlements, as drivers of territorial development;
- To protect the environment and to adequately capitalize on the natural and cultural heritage elements, including by decreasing the natural and industrial risks;
- To improve the administrative capacity, to stimulate the educational, cultural cooperation, the exchange of best practices, as well as the “people to people” contacts.

#### ***Main courses of action:***

##### **Connectivity and accessibility**

- a) To put in place integrated transportation systems, including through the creation of inter-modal nodes;
- b) To strengthen and expand the trans-European and cross-border networks;
- c) To develop the inland transportation infrastructure and to promote inland transportation.

##### **Environment protection and risk prevention**

- d) To rehabilitate, protect and preserve natural resources;
- e) To develop the environment infrastructure;
- f) To diminish the natural risks by developing the forecast and intervention capacities and the specific infrastructure

##### **Social-economic growth**

- g) To diversify the business activities;
- h) To develop and diversify the tourist offer;
- i) To develop the polycentric network of human settlements, by promoting the urban-urban, urban-rural and rural-rural partnerships;
- j) To facilitate vertical and horizontal cooperation in the Danube Region;
- k) To strengthen cooperation in the areas of education and research.

### **3.4. – Priority Axes**

#### **3.4.1. – Connectivity and accessibility**

##### **Transports**

One of Romania's priorities is to provide modern transportation on the Danube, which is also a basis for the economic growth of the Danube areas. Their attractiveness must be increased through the growth of accessibility, the continuation in the expansion and upgrading of the port, airport, inland waterways, road and railways infrastructure, and the creation of system of inter-modal logistical centers.

The Danube must become a true modern river waterway to fulfill its role of major axis at the European level.

The gradual implementation of the projects within the European Corridor 7, which contributes to providing the optimal navigation conditions on the entire course of the Danube, with maximum safety, and to maintaining them, is a mandatory requirement for a successful strategy. Added to this is the upgrading of the network of harbors and navigation routs. The ports are basis for the creation of logistical centers, which will then be integrated within the inter-modal transport system. Additionally, the entire access road and railways infrastructure connected to these ports must be upgraded.

The priorities of this field are in connection with the following: the supply of a continuous minimal requirements for navigation, the upgrading of the current port infrastructure, and the setting up of new terminals, as well as the upgrading of the port services, by observing the environment safety and protection standards; to provide inter-modality by turning the ports into logistical centers for the inter-modal transport; to develop the river information services (RIS), to develop the connections between the terminals and the urban centers, and the national and international transport systems (including the ring roads building and construction) by developing the various means of transport to decrease the transportation time and increase the traffic safety, by preserving and protecting the environment factors.

The upgrading and ensuring access to rural areas to improve the life quality of the rural environment and to support the business and tourist activities, the upgrading of the county and local roads networks are other important supplementary aspects.

The increase in the mobility of the urban areas is required and it can be implemented through the upgrading of the urban public transport lines and the development of the multi-mode transport, with a view to increasing the comfort and safety of the passengers and decreasing the pollution, as a prerequisite for the social-economic growth.

The setting up of the infrastructure needed for non-polluting transportation is yet another opportunity which must be capitalized throughout the course of the Danube. Obviously, there is also the need to implement a plan of economic and financial measures to support this sector, which should include among its goals to provide facilities for the upgrading of the river fleet.

### **The information and telecommunication society**

The economic competitiveness must be supported and the interactions between the public sector and the enterprises/ citizens must be promoted by capitalizing on the potential of the information technologies and communications (ITC) and their applications, the development of the information and telecommunications infrastructure and by facilitating access to IT services, the development of the “broadband” infrastructure, the supply of modern computer systems, support for the innovating systems in the administrative process and not in the least, to provide a joint database to include a set of indicators for each state in the Danube Region.

It is necessary to stimulate the development of specific applications for the small and medium enterprises (SMEs), to support the public authorities/ SMEs to implement specific local projects, including the establishment of tele-centers.

The facilitation of the exchange of information, best practices among the urban settlements located in the Danube Region is a priority for the balanced development along the river course.

**The growth of the energy capacities in the Danube Basin**, irrespective of how the energy is produced (water, nuclear, fossil fuels, solar, other renewable energy sources) must be based on a close analysis of the way in which the optimal conditions for the environment protection have been fulfilled from all points of view.

The following can be listed among the priorities in connection with the growth of the energy capacities: the development and expansion of the energy infrastructure (transportation networks and power and thermal energy production capacities); the stimulation of investment in the area of the sustainable use of the non-renewable energy resources; the promotion of the energy production out of renewable sources (wind mills, photovoltaic cells, bio-fuels etc.); to continue the nuclear energy program and to improve safety standards; to increase the capacity for technological innovation and development; to support the implementation of thermal rehabilitation programs.

Romania also has a special interest to develop a regional energy market, as the biggest energy producer in the Balkans, with an important export potential and as the only country in the region which supplies an operator to administrate an internal wholesale market of electric energy. In this context, it seems possible to assess the inclusion of the South-Eastern Europe Energy Community within the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. It is forecast that an operational regional integrated energy market for gas and electricity, to be integrated with the European energy market, would have a special impact at the levels of the energy security, environment protection and development of renewable energies and at the economic and social levels.

### **3.4.2. Environment protection, risk prevention and management**

In the context of supplying the territorial cohesion of the European regions, the valorization and protection of the natural heritage through sustainable activities is an essential factor at the Danube axis level, taking into account the diversity of the natural elements in the Danube Region.

The putting in place of a management and control system for the environment factors (including the mitigation of the harm on the environment in cases of natural disasters, the general improvement of the environment factors through the protection of bio-diversity, the maintenance and expansion of the forested areas, parks and green lands in the urban areas) is a priority in the context of strengthening the ecological structures.

Other priorities refer to the rehabilitation and expansion of the environment infrastructure for all human settlements; industrial pollution prevention and control; industrial risk prevention; decrease in the surface and underground water pollution with nitrates from farming sources in all vulnerable areas; integrated waste management implementation; closure of landfills which are not in line with the current standards and the setting up of ecologic landfills to cater for all human settlements; reduction in the soil and coastal area erosion for the Southern part of the Romanian seaside; promotion of the EU environment policies with a view to protecting and capitalizing on the natural heritage; maintenance of the current protected areas and their promotion for scientific and tourist purposes.

It is also necessary to implement the measures provided in the Management Plans (developed in accordance with the Water Framework Directive requirements) to ensure the implementation of all environment objectives for all water resources. Special emphasis must be laid on the *climate change*, taking into account its impact on the waters, from the quantitative and qualitative points of view. In this respect, an *integrated approach to the climate change – the water management* must be implemented from the point of view of protecting the inland waterways, the sustainable use of the water for various purposes, as well as the protection against extreme phenomena.

The protection of the water resources and air quality are not only essential requirements to ensure the environment protection, but they are also very important elements to improve life quality and to increase the attractiveness of the rural areas. The improvement/ expansion of the water distribution/ sewage and waste-water cleaning networks, as well as of various other traditional activities may contribute to the joint efforts to ensure the sustainable growth of the Danube Region communities. The construction of an appropriate rural infrastructure essentially contributes to the development of business activities in the rural area, to the increase in the share of services, and, consequently, in the number of jobs.

Taking into account the interest for the Danube Delta (tourist, environment and natural areas protection, natural habitats observation, valorization of the cultural potential, traditions, health, security and safety of citizens – both natives, as well as Romanian or foreign tourist), the *risk prevention* component must be emphasized, as a component which has been less developed because of the natural conditions to reach various locations, exclusively using the inland waterways (including canals and brooks) or air transportation.

Measures must be taken into account to prevent the consequences of frequent exposures to natural risks (floods, droughts, earthquakes etc.) and technological and human risks (i.e. thatch fires set on large areas in the Danube Delta) that have a dramatic impact on the protection of the environment, natural habitats, protected natural areas. Consequently, projects must be developed to provide the improvement of the fire and emergency

situations prevention and response capacity by the professional services acting in the area of emergency situations in the Danube Delta perimeter and in other Danube counties.

Major emphasis must be placed on the industrial risk, especially in connection with the Seveso-type facilities, where hazardous substances are stored and processed, which, may accidentally have severe consequences for the human and natural environments. Therefore, measures to prevent industrial risks will be provided including in the land planning documentations.

### **3.4.3. – Social-economic development**

#### **Diversification of economic activities and support for the business environment**

It is essential to involve the business environment in the development of projects in connection with the EU Strategy for the Danube Region. There is potential support for the small and medium enterprises (SMEs) active in various fields related to the sustainable development of the Danube macro-region. One important aspect is the putting in place of the favorable conditions for the setting up of new investments and the strengthening of the currently existing ones by developing the utility system and the quality services for enterprises, through the simplification, transparency and speeding up of the administrative procedures to obtain the necessary permits and creating conditions to increase the productivity of businesses by using innovative products and processes.

There is the need for a flexible labor market, where the employment offer must be able to permanently cater for the requirements of the employers, by promoting the entrepreneurial culture, the information society and the new services, in the context of an accelerated dynamics related to the integration of business activities in the European and international area.

The SMEs must be supported to: increase their productivity and to decrease their energy consumption; invest in innovative technologies to protect the natural resources and in the recycling and reuse of waste; the creation, enlargement, upgrading the infrastructure of incubators and other business centers (production facilities for the SMEs, the relocation of the SMEs in these business structures); the development, promotion and internationalization of business activities; the creation of brand products and with a view to observing the international quality standards; purchase modern equipment and technologies for the production and services activities, including access to the Internet.

The support of public-private partnerships is a priority for the implementation of objectives focused on the economic growth and urban development.

The European Community legislation, increased standardization in the commercial and entrepreneurial education fields, the public-private partnerships are but a few essential elements which support the significant growth of economic development in the Danube Region.

#### **Education and research**

The education is an important factor for the sustainable growth of the region, as it has an essential contribution in the development of the human capital. In this respect, the promotion of initiatives in the area, with a potential contribution to strengthening the



regional cooperation and the development of integrated policies with a view to continuing the European construction, as well as developing the education system at the regional level, are long-term goals for this field.

Priorities in education are as follows: to improve the education infrastructure, to adjust the curriculum and to structure the education and vocational training system in line with the requirements of the labor market, to support the cooperation in the education area, through the existing programs and the mobility mechanisms for the educational purpose, with a focus on the promotion of direct cooperation among the higher education institutions.

Another priority of this field is the promotion of eco-education projects and other major initiatives in the area, in the framework of cross-border partnerships funded out of domestic and European sources.

The goals of the strategy in the area of research are as follows: 1. To increase knowledge, respectively, to gather top scientific and technological results; 2. To increase economic competitiveness through innovation with impact on the economic operators and to put the knowledge in practice; 3. To increase social quality through the development of solutions, technological solutions included, able to generate direct benefits for society.

## **Culture**

In time, the Danube has been an important catalyst for intercultural creativity and dialog, a source of inspiration and a bridge that strengthened communication among cultures and civilizations which developed under the influence of commercial, social and cultural relations set up in its proximity. Culture and national heritage protection is an important area for cooperation, which facilitates the exchanges between experts, the mobility of artists and the partnership initiatives.

An important factor is the creation of regional cultural identity by capitalizing on the cultural diversity of the Danube Region and the heritage potential as a factor for life quality growth. From this perspective, it is necessary to integrate the cultural dimension in the framework of other policies that contribute to the sustainable development of the Danube Region, as culture is a field of action which stimulates synergies and ensures the connection of the various fields of action.

The first coordinate, to strengthen cooperation in the area of heritage is aimed not only at implementing actions of research, conservation, protection, restoration and capitalization of the movable and immovable heritage, but also at implementing research programs and education activities to interconnect the main assets of the Danube Region (historical monuments, specific regional centers for vocational training, but also museum and eco-museum networks).

As for the contemporary creation, supported through the organization of innovative cultural events, but also through the revamping of established festivals and fairs, the dialogue possibilities include the visual arts, music, theater, dance, film and written culture. In this framework, one priority is the development and modernizing of the cultural infrastructure (entertainment institutions, libraries, museums, cinema halls).

Emphasis should be laid on the relevance of digitizing cultural contents, which would allow greater access to the cultural phenomenon. It is also important to promote cultural tourism as a factor of economic vitality, taking into account the valorization of tangible, and intangible heritage, but also the potential of cultural events in attracting tourists. More details about the development of tourism are shown in the following chapter.

The cultural diversity of the Sulina city (the last port before the Danube flows into the Black Sea) may generate a series of emblematic actions, which could reveal the common history of the Danube countries, enshrined in the historical act of the European Commission of the Danube established in 1856.

### **Development and diversification of the tourist offer**

One priority for the Romanian Danube Region is to develop tourism and capitalize on its natural, cultural and historical heritage by strengthening the specific infrastructure and implementing intensive promotion activities. The national strategy aims to increase the attractiveness of the region through economic growth and the creation of jobs in relation with the valorization of the cultural heritage and natural resources and the improvement of the accommodation and leisure infrastructure quality.

A few of the identified priorities are the rehabilitation and promotion of the tourist heritage elements that could lead to a growth of tourist interest for the Danube counties and their valorization; the development of tourist infrastructure at the Danube and the Danube counties in general; to attract new “tour operators” to organize cruises to the Danube Delta and to persuade the already operating ones to increase the number of stops on the Romanian course through the diversification of the tourist offer; the study of opportunities and possibilities to introduce regular passenger tours on the Danube, between the Danube ports, to allow the visiting of the most representatives and attractive Danube sectors; to develop new forms of theme tours – religious, fishing, hunting, rural, water sports, leisure and relaxation etc.

### **Rural development, agricultural policy and fishing**

The modernization of the agricultural sector and the diversification of business activities, other than agriculture, by capitalizing on the environment and natural resources (the fishing and forestry heritage, bio-diversity etc), as well as the intangible cultural heritage (the accumulated traditions and professional experiences), by developing the social capital and by creating new specializations, are an important priority.

Another priority is to support new forms of urban-rural or rural-rural partnerships to increase the attractiveness of the rural environment, as well as support for a sustainable development of the fishing areas and the improvement of life quality in these areas, the creation of opportunities of alternative income for the inhabitants of the fishing areas, the specific infrastructure development, the training of skilled staff, the supply of specific equipment for exploitation and processing activities, as well as the encouragement of partnerships are important actions included in the new strategy.

One of the key aspects for the rural development strategy refers to the facilitation of the transformation and upgrading of the dual structure of agriculture and forestry, as well as the related processing industries, in order to make them more competitive and to

contribute to the economic growth and convergence of incomes in the rural area (where this is possible), in parallel with the provisions of the adequate living conditions and the environment protection in those areas. Thus, special emphasis must be laid, mainly, on the manner selected to tackle and mitigate the structural disadvantages in the agricultural and forestry sectors, with a view to modernizing, strengthening and restructuring them, so as to be able to reach a high level of competitiveness and sustainable development from the environment protection perspective.

The specific situation of the disadvantaged areas has special importance, therefore these areas will receive financial compensations to preserve their continuous use of the farmland, as a factor stimulating the landscape and environment conservation. Support is extended for the use of those farming practices which promote biodiversity, water, soil and air protection. Measures are also considered to increase the environment value of farmland, through the forestation activities aimed to support the fight against climate change, to prevent the national disasters (floods, drought) and to improve the environment conditions, as well as through the Nature 2000 payments. The Nature 2000 scheme is aimed for the farmers from the areas of high natural value habitats.

The social dimension of the rural area, together with the business and environment aspects, must not be ignored, if one takes into account that the perspectives for the development of the rural environment are affected by the current infrastructure, the short-circuits in the service supply, the employment opportunities, which are insufficiently taken advantage of at the level of the non-farming activities, and the lack of vocational training facilities.

The LEADER approach must be added to the strategic directions mentioned above, as it is aimed to help the rural population to better acknowledge its own needs for development, natural resources and the potential it has, in order to adopt collective decisions for the long term development.

The implementation of integrated local development strategies, bringing together farmers, forestry specialists and other actors in the rural area, may reveal the local heritage through the promotion of local products and tourism. Also, one of the selection criteria for the GAL projects will take into account the mitigation of the environment impact. Involvement of local stakeholders in the development of areas which they represent, through the identification of the local needs and the setting of priorities will contribute to the improvement of local governance. By promoting the endogenous potential of the territories, LEADER will lead to the increase of quality and attractiveness of the rural area, the growth of common projects between the local and the national or European authorities and will improve the image and cohesion of the Romanian territories.

The sustainable exploitation of the water resources through reasonable fishing is a must to improve the life quality of the fishing communities, to preserve and restore the fish stock, to train and improve the labor force and to create alternative occupational alternatives.

The restoration of the reproduction and raising areas for the migratory fish species and other similar actions are a prerequisite condition for the sustainable fisheries management. Investments in joint infrastructures to rehabilitate the migration routes of the sturgeons on the Danube are most welcomed.

The sustainable aquaculture must be stimulated through the implementation of regional surveys and the adaptation and development of new technologies. Moreover, investments in aquaculture must be the object of environment impact evaluation surveys, taking into consideration the potential impact of this activity on the biologic diversity.

### **Public safety**

The priorities of this sub-field are to replace the current system of control on the Danube River, which is based on the checks to be conducted in the destination harbor, with a system based on specific border control at the clearly established ports of entry/ exit into/out of the future Schengen Area; to strengthen cooperation with the other law enforcement institutions, as well as with the local authorities in the Danube States; to supply fixed and mobile detection equipment, state of art communication equipment, as well as efficient sea mobility equipment; to protect the Danube eco-system by implementing an efficient concept to prevent fishing and hunting poaching activities, the forestry reserve deterioration, as well as the accidental or voluntary pollution; to ensure the safety of the freight transports, as well as that of the goods which are handled or stored in ports.

### **Network of human settlements**

From Romania's perspective, the priorities in this field are to shape up the Galați-Brăila urban system as a growth pillar, with a view to structuring the territory of the river course and putting in place of competitive human settlements, to limit the over-development of the capital at the national level, and to develop the local areas. Support for the cross-border partnerships between the cities in Southern Romania and the Bulgarian ones is another priority: Calafat-Vidin, Turnu-Măgurele-Nikopol, Zimnicea-Belene, Giurgiu-Ruse, Călărași-Siliștra, and through their corroboration, such partnerships could stimulate the polycentric approach to the system of human settlements of Romania and Bulgaria, which would lead to a balanced territorial development. Not in the least, the establishment of rural-rural partnerships in the deeply rural areas is a priority.

## **3.5. Mechanisms and implementation measures at national and community level**

### **3.5.1. General institutional mechanisms**

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region may be implemented with the support of the already existing national and Community institutions and legal framework and it is not necessary to develop new Community mechanisms.

To substantiate the final document, an Action Plan will come as a supplement, to include specific projects, submitted by the Danube States, throughout the consultation process with the Commission, as well as the medium and long term goals pursued through the implementation of the Strategy.

Thus, the **roles of the European Commission** will be to focus on the coordination, reporting, monitoring and on the establishment of the “follow-up” mechanism, observing the principles of additionality and subsidiarity. Also, the Commission could establish a permanent structure with special responsibilities to maintain the dialogue with the Danube States and to monitor the implementation of the Strategy at the regional level.

**The Council of the European Union**, in its various formats and the **European Council** will receive regular information on the progress in the implementation of the strategy and on the opportunities to enlarge its priority axes to other cooperation activities or programs.

**The Danube States** will be able to maintain dialog in an annual forum, organized based on various levels of competence, where the representatives of all involved authorities at the Community, regional, national and local levels will take part. Also, the business, the scientific and academic environments, as well as the civil society will be consulted in the framework of the forum.

**The national coordinators** from the Danube States will organize a network of permanent dialogue and exchange of information, thus ensuring the harmonization of national positions concerning the main elements of the Strategy, as well as the continuous active involvement of the Danube Member States;

The Summit of the 14 states which are party to the **Danube Cooperation Process** may maintain the relation with the third countries as part of the Danube Strategy.

### **3.5.2. Mechanisms and promotion measures at the national level**

Domestically, the contribution of Romania in the development of the strategy is the fruit of the cooperation among the following governmental institutions: the Foreign Ministry, the Ministry of Transports and Infrastructure, the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism, the Department for European Affairs, the Ministry of Environment and Forests, the Ministry of Economy, Trade and Business Environment, the Ministry of Public Finances, the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development, the Ministry of the Administration and Interior, the Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, the Ministry of Education, Research, Youth and Sports.

The Foreign Ministry ensures the inter-institutional coordination for the participation in the development of this strategy.

A series of events to promote the Strategy were organized, thus: on 2 December 2009, the 13<sup>th</sup> Conference on the travel navigation on the Danube took place in Bucharest, organized by the Travel Association *Die Donau* of Austria, in partnership with the Ministry of Tourism in Romania, an event which emphasized the importance of relaunching tourism in the Danube region, as part of the Strategy pillar concerning the social-economic development; on 15 January 2010, the Foreign Ministry organized a seminar where public administration and academic environment representatives participated and which launched the public national debate concerning the EU Strategy for the Danube Region; on 20 January 2010, the international Conference “*The European Union Strategy for the Danube Region – a new challenge in the context of territorial*

*cohesion in the South-Eastern European area,*” organized by the Ministry of Regional Development and Tourism in cooperation with the Foreign Ministry took place in the framework of the South East Europe Transnational Cooperation Program.

The Foreign Ministry plans to further organize a seminar on cultural and educational topics, as well as to take part in the Conference on economic and social development, the Danube Summit (Budapest, 25-26 February 2010), the Conference organized in Vienna and Bratislava on connectivity (20-21 April 2010), and to organize the Conference for the conclusion of the public consultation process, 10-12 June 2010, Tulcea and/ or Constanța).

The conclusion of the development of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region has been scheduled for December, this year, when the European Commission would release a Communication and an Action Plan to include objectives, priority actions and regional strategic projects.

### **3.5.3. Legal framework**

All the current legal instruments will be used for the implementation of strategy and the national priorities provided in the sustainable development policies currently in progress will be taken into consideration.

#### **a. The Community legal framework**

The *acquis communautaire* will be the basis for the programs and projects to be launched and implemented within the EU Strategy for the Danube.

The EU policies and instruments which are relevant for the strategy development are:

- The Cohesion Policy and the Green Paper on territorial cohesion
- The Lisbon Strategy for Growth and Employment
- The Strategy for Sustainable Development
- Mainstreaming sustainable development into EU policies - COM (2009)400 final of 24 July 2009
- The Environment Policy
- The 6<sup>th</sup> Community Environment Action Program, the Civil Protection Mechanism, the LIFE Instrument, the NATURA 2000 Program
- The Green Paper: Towards a European Strategy for the security of energy supply
- The White Paper: European Transport Policy for 2010: Time to decide
- TEN-Ts
- The Internal Market
- The Rural Development – Council Regulation 1698/2005
- Common Fisheries Policy (CFP)
- Framework program FP7
- The European Information Society Strategy

### **b. National legal framework**

At the national level, the provisions of the already developed land-planning documentations, which are endorsed through laws and strategic documents, must be taken into account when developing the Danube Strategy.

The land-planning documentation approved through national law is:

- The National Territory Construction Plan (PATN) with its 6 sections endorsed through law – transportation avenues, waters, protected areas, network of human settlements, natural risk areas and tourist areas.

The following national plans and programs are under implementation during the financial period 2007-2013 (strategic documents):

- The National Development Plan
- The National Reference Strategic Framework
- The Sectoral/ Regional Operational Programs on the 7 fields set at the national level
- The National Rural Development Plan
- The Operational Programs under the CTE Objective, to which Romania is a party.

### **3.5.4. Funding mechanisms**

The funding mechanisms for the strategy will be divided into three main sources:

- The European Union grants which are provided both to the Member States and to the third countries, the candidate countries or the potential candidate countries: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF); the European Fund for Rural Development; the European Social Fund (ESF); the Cohesion Fund; FEADR; the European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument, the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance; the EU Solidarity Fund; the FP7 Program; LIFE+ Financial Instrument for the Environment etc.;
- The funds earmarked in the national or local budgets, as well as the funds attracted through the public-private partnerships;
- Other financial instruments: EIB, EBRD.

## **Romania's Priorities in the framework of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region**

### **Pillar 1 – Connectivity and communications**

1. To provide appropriate conditions for the navigability on the entire course of the Danube, the European Corridor VII, during the low waters period;
2. To modernize the river ports and their related infrastructure; to turn the ports into logistical centers and to integrate them in an inter-modal transportation system, to provide the connections among the human settlements located on the course of the Danube;
3. To readdress the project of connecting Bucharest to the Danube through waterworks on the Argeş River;
4. To connect Bucharest and Constanta to the high speed railway network which links Paris – Strasbourg – Bratislava – Budapest;
5. To develop the information and communication infrastructure, especially broadband;
6. To implement the gas and oil transport and storage projects in the region (PEOP, Nabucco);
7. Trans-border interconnection of the power networks;
8. To set up a network for sharing of information and experience.

### **Pillar 2 – Environment protection and risk management**

1. Preservation and protection of the natural protected areas in the Danube region, and, first of all, the Danube Delta.

#### Project examples:

- *To implement an integrated communications and applications system with a view to maintaining the favorable status of conservation of habitats and species, as well as an efficient management of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve;*
- *To develop and implement Cross-border Strategies for the preservation of the natural heritage of the Danube River. The Protected Areas Network of the Danube River.*



2. Developing systems to monitor protection factors of the environment and bio-systems.

Project examples:

- *Computer system for integrated water management – WATMAN*
- *The use of GIS to establish the critical loads for the Danube Region eco-systems, as resulting from deposits of air pollutant emissions that have acidification and eutrophication effects, as well as tropospheric ozone formation effects.*

3. To ensure the Danube water quality by putting in place modern waste water cleaning and waste storage systems, as well as by implementing other measures to reach the environment goals related to water resources.

Project examples

- *To develop and enlarge the sewage systems and the waste waters cleaning stations in Bucharest, Călărași, Galați, Brăila, Giurgiu and others.*
- *To ensure water sources through waterworks on the inland waterways.*
- *To implement integrated waste management systems in all counties of Romania.*
- *To upgrade the water and geological monitoring system of the area connected to the Danube sectors between Călărași and Tulcea, Baziaș and Pristol.*

4. Romania and Bulgaria to jointly develop common rapid response procedures and plans in case of industrial pollution, to include the intervention-specific equipment and material supply: spill-sorb, floating dams, a fast response cutter to set up the floating dams

Project examples

- *To develop and modernize the water monitoring program to maintain the quality of the Danube waters;*
- *Integrated management of industrial pollution on the Romanian-Bulgarian sector*

5. To develop the capacity to prevent and manage fires and emergency situations within the perimeter of the Danube Delta Biosphere Reserve;

6. To set up and ensure the conditions for the operation of a training center, within the Danube Delta perimeter, for the staff and experts in various levels, from the European Union countries, whose cooperation through

theoretical and field activities is essential for the protection of this region or of any other similar, smaller regions in the risk prevention domain;

7. To set up the Danube Delta International Research Center, in the Danube Delta area, to focus on knowledge development, on modeling and simulation processes related to the Danube Delta phenomena, as well as the Danube Delta – Black Sea interface phenomena, including the potential risks for this area and their impact on the regional socio-economic activities. The Center's activities will be carried out by Romanian and foreign researchers and will be focused on the research priorities of the Danube countries, in the European context and on the research support granted to EU policies in these fields. It will also implement activities in the professional training area, especially doctoral and post-doctoral studies.

8. To develop the eco-tourism

Project examples:

- *To develop the eco-tourism by implementing a marking system for the bike routes in the Porțile de Fier (Iron Gates) area and to identify the potential accommodation areas which may be certified with an EU label*

9. To increase the forecast and intervention capacities in cases of floods, droughts or accidental spills and to implement an early warning system in cases of accidents with a transborder impact

Project examples:

- *An integrated system to monitor the accidental spills and to simulate the transport of pollutants on the Romanian Danube sector;*
- *A medium and long term water forecast system for the Danube.*

10. To develop and diversify the renewable sources of energy (water, wind, solar, biological) and a safe and secure nuclear energy system.

11. To protect the underground waters against pollution risks

Project example:

- *To protect the underground water resources at the Romanian-Bulgarian border region*

12. To integrate the floods risk within the land development planning

Project examples:

- *To conduct water works for the river courses and to protect the water works in the catchment areas of the Danube's tributaries*

- *To estimate the floods risks for the various users in the Danube water meadow*

13. To economically and ecologically modernize the Danube water meadow

Project example:

- *To ecologically and economically modernize the inferior Danube water meadow on the Romanian Danube sector (REELD)*

### **Pillar 3 – Social-economic development**

1. To create a regional cultural identity, by capitalizing on the cultural diversity of the Danube region and to emphasize the role of culture as a sustainable development factor.
2. To strengthen cooperation in the domain of heritage;
3. To promote and develop the traditional techniques and materials, which are crucial for the future of the heritage; to inform and raise the public awareness concerning heritage protection, starting at school age, and to engage the public in enhancing heritage visibility and promoting living museums;
4. To preserve, revitalize, and capitalize on the intangible heritage of national communities and minorities, e.g. by stimulating and revitalizing traditional crafts and specific occupations;

Specific project examples:

- *To develop cross-border synergies by coordinated marketing and research actions related to the historical sites, cultural heritage and cultural routes (to preserve the heritage by digitalization and to facilitate cultural tourism through access to virtual tours)*
  - *To develop a regional network for professional training in the area of mobile cultural heritage*
  - *To capitalize on the common cultural heritage (the Danube Roman border defense walls – the Limes)*
5. To strengthen cooperation in the area of contemporary creation (visual arts, music, theater, contemporary dance, film, written culture);

Specific project examples:

- *The Danube Theaters' Festival (cultural cooperation and cultural tourism)*

- *Romanian participation in the Donumenta Festival, organized in Regensburg (contemporary arts festival dedicated to the Danube countries)*
  - *“Vernacular architecture” exhibition (Romania – Croatia)*
6. To enlarge the “*Proetnicultura*” program, initiated by Romania and dedicated to the national communities and minorities, to other Danube region states.
  7. To diversify the travel offers, to promote the cultural tourism as an economic vitality factor;
  8. To identify and launch partnership with other Danube states to conduct cultural, sports and travel cross-border programs;
  9. To support SMEs to increase their productivity and decrease their energy consumption.
  10. To rehabilitate the large industrial parks, to regenerate the deteriorated urban areas;
  11. To support the public-private partnerships to implement integrated projects;
  12. To develop the rural economy by diversifying the non-agricultural activities, to support the creation and development of micro-enterprises, to encourage the agro-tourist activities;
  13. To improve the training infrastructure by upgrading and improving the equipment of all-level education institutions;
  14. To promote eco-education projects and other major initiatives in the area, within cross-border partnerships co-funded out of domestic and international sources;
  15. To increase the relevance and the compatibility of the educational offer and of the professional training on the Labour Market requirements.
  16. To promote the mobility with educational purposes and to support the direct cooperation between the tertiary education systems.

17. To improve the healthcare infrastructure and to develop healthcare units down to the level of the basic territorial-administrative unit;
18. To develop research centers networks and the know-how transfer to production companies.
19. To upgrade and develop the Danube water irrigation systems, while consolidating dams and water structures, as well as supplying equipment to the pumping stations to prevent the fish fry migration from the water catchment areas, and especially from the Danube Delta;
20. To improve life quality in the rural area by developing basic services for the population, renovating and developing the villages, preserving the rural heritage;
21. To develop farms and forest exploitations in a sustainable economic manner, by adequately using the farmland and forests;
22. To support the development of urban localities, as a means for the development of the territory, by establishing urban-urban, urban-rural, rural-rural partnerships.
23. The increasing of the special intervention activities of the related safety structures (e.g. police) for assuring a public safety environment for tourists and local communities in the Danube Basin.