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## REFLECTIONS ON THE EURO-REGIONS CONTRIBUTION TO THE REALIZATION OF THE ASSOCIATION AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

### ABSTRACT

The functionality of the new economic system, based on market relations and open to the world, often marked by dynamism, uncertainty and risk, sometimes even hostility, depends to an increasing extent on the prowess to conjugate own efforts with neighbours, on cross-border cooperation, including within the Euro-region.

In the socio-economic development of Moldova's administrative-territorial units, as members of Euro-region, important changes have undoubtedly occurred, not only in shape, but also in concept. This situation requires intensified concerns, including studies related to the socio-economic developments in the administrative-territorial units.

In this article the authors take into consideration the objectives and achievements associated to the Euro-region administrative-territorial units, coming with proposals that might contribute to their further development.

**Key words:** Euroregion, efficiency, objective, development, expectation.

**JEL Classification:** F2; O1; R1.

### 1. INTRODUCTION

After the Independence Declaration approval (August 27 1991), the Republic of Moldova has made considerable efforts to consolidate the economic and social cooperation with the neighbouring countries.

The stable cooperation relations between the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine are based on such common values as: democracy, human rights, the rule of law, market economy, etc.

Both the national public authorities and those of the administrative-territorial units of the Euro-regions' Member States are concerned with the cross-border cooperation. The Euro-regions' problems are debated within the Cross-Border Cooperation and European Integration Forum.

Throughout the years, the economic, social and cultural development of the Euro-regions and of the cross-border areas was the subject of various studies. The results of the respective studies were presented at scientific sessions, starting with the first edition which took place in the year 2005.

## **2. STATE OF KNOWLEDGE**

The activity of Euro-regions in general and of the regions from our country in particular has been the theme of various national and international research studies. However, even though this issue was approached at different scientific sessions, in various national and international publications, it continues to be of actuality for our country, due to the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Community of Atomic Energy and its member states, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part. The investigations provide the possibility to outline certain recommendations on the efficiency of the Euro-regions activity, to which the Republic of Moldova is part.

## **3. MATERIAL AND METHOD**

The following materials were used in the research study: the regulatory acts of the European Union and the Republic of Moldova, manuals, monographs and other publications specific to the theme, which enabled us to identify the factors influencing the impact of Euro-regions from our country on the realization of the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Community of Atomic Energy and its member states, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part.

The quantitative analysis is based on the data selected and processed by the authors from the Statistical Yearbooks of the Republic of Moldova and on other official information from the institutions from our country and from the European Union. The study of the empirical information and the link analysis provided us with meaningful explanations concerning the phenomena or processes of the human potential impact upon agriculture in the Republic of Moldova.

## **4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS**

### **4.1. THE EVOLUTION OF THE RELATIONS BETWEEN THE EUROPEAN UNION AND THE REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

After the independence proclaimed on August 27, 1991, the political and economic relations between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova were established on the basis of the Trade and Cooperation Agreement, which regulated the relations between the European Community and the former USSR,

which, on January 1, 1992 was replaced by practically identical separate Partnership and Cooperation Agreements, with all the ex-Soviet states, which had joined the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), with our country included. The relations between the Republic of Moldova and the European Union were initially established on the basis of the “Partnership and Cooperation Agreement”, which was signed on November 28, 1994 in Brussels. The Partnership and Cooperation Agreement /PCA/ came into force on July 1, 1998 after ratification, replacing the Agreement between the European Communities and former USSR on trade and commercial-economic cooperation of December 18, 1989 (Art. 105 of PCA).

*PCA general objective* is to establish a partnership and a collaboration that could strengthen and expand the relations between the EU and Moldova on the basis of the common values they share. The European Community and the Republic of Moldova, according to PCA, would grant each other favoured clauses in all fields /Art.10/ would engage themselves to ensure the free transit of goods /Art.11/ and others. Paragraph 1 from Article 51 of PCA establishes the economic cooperation meant to contribute to the reform process, to the economic recovery and to the sustainable development of the Republic of Moldova. One of PCA objectives (Art.I) is to promote investments.

On December 13, 1996 the President of the Republic of Moldova, in an official message addressed to Mr. Jacques Santer, the President of the European Commission, for the first time expressed our country’s desire to become an associate member of the Union by the year 2000. Not receiving any answer, one year later, the President of the Republic of Moldova sent another message with a similar content, both to the President of the European Commission and to all the heads of the EU Member States. This time, also, from officially unknown reasons, he did not get any answer.

In the year 1998, the new Parliament from Chisinau voted a decision by which the orientation towards European integration is declared “a major strategic objective of the country”. A year later, Sturza Government refused to follow the counterproductive principle to obtain gains from two parts at the same time and set the European integration as the main objective of its foreign policy.

In early 2002, a few Nordic countries, and mainly Great Britain and Sweden, asked the European Commission to make proposals concerning the fate of Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus. As a result, in August 2002, the Commission and the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Policy and Common Security addressed a letter to the Council expressing initiatives for an enlarged Europe. The General Affairs and External Relations Council (GAERC) concluded at its meeting in November 2002 that the “the enlargement represents an important opportunity for the development of the relations with the new neighbours of the EU, which should be based on shared political and economic values”. GAERC also mentioned that “The New Neighbourhood” initiative should be seen in conjunction with the strong EU engagement to deepen its cooperation.

On March 11, 2003, the European Commission presented its communication, “Wider Europe – Neighbourhood: A new framework for relations with our Eastern

and Southern Neighbours” to the European Council and Parliament. The foundation of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) started from the premise that “by helping our neighbours we can help ourselves”. The European Council from Brussels, in October 2003, welcomed the Communication on the New Neighbourhood Instrument and asked the Council and the Commission to develop this initiative. The neighbourhood policy was launched in March 2004.

The enlargement of May 2004, through the accession of the new 10 Member States, has changed the division lines between the European Union and its neighbours, leading to the increase of the political and economic role of the European Union. As a consequence, ENP has become a savior of the “enlargement fatigue”. Within the ENP mechanism, renamed: The European Neighborhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), the Commission proposed two phases.

In the initial phase, for 2004–2006, EU concluded Individual Action Plans with the neighbouring countries within ENP. The Action Plans are complex, establishing a set of cooperation priorities in the economic, political and security fields. The Action Plans do not substitute the Association Agreements (AA) or the Partnership and Cooperation Agreements (PCA) signed with the neighbouring countries, but they are complementary to these and constructed on their basis. With the goal to individualize the European Neighbourhood Policy in relation to our country, the *Individual Action Plan Republic of Moldova – European Union for 2005–2007* was designed, which was signed by our country on January 22, 2005 and came into force in February, 2005.

In the year 2005, the Parliament from Chisinau unanimously adopted the Declaration on the political partnership for reaching the European integration goal, in which it is emphasized that “the further development of the Republic of Moldova can be ensured only by consistently and irreversibly promoting the strategic course towards the European integration”.

In the second phase, for the period after 2006, the Commission proposed again a Neighbourhood Instrument, which identified the “common challenges” from the communication *Wider Europe*. In this stage, it was proposed to improve the coordination between different financial instruments within the existing legal and financial framework.

In the year 2006, the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova (RM) voted the law providing that all legislative and normative acts, until their adoption, must be expertized for establishing their compatibility with the EU legislation. In the same year, the RM Parliament unilaterally cancelled, starting with 1 January, 2007, the visa regime for the citizens of EU Member States as well as for the citizens from the US, Canada, the Swiss Confederation and Japan.

With Romania’s accession to the European Union, on January 1, 2007, the Republic of Moldova became a new direct “neighbour” of the EU. This determined the EU States to focus more on the processes of political, economic and social nature that were taking place in our country.

On December 5, 2007, the European Commission gave to the public the communication “A Vigorous Neighborhood European Policy”. The Document reiterated that the European Neighbourhood Policy starts from the premise that EU is interested to see a more advanced, stable economic development and a more efficient governing in its vicinity. The Communication emphasized the differentiation principle on which ENP is based. The vicinity policy provides for privileged relations on the condition of the attachment of the neighbouring countries to such values as democracy, human rights, rule of law, market economy etc. In the economic field, ENP is oriented towards the consolidation of the preferential trade relations, the increase of the technical and financial assistance, the gradual participation in a series of Community programs.

“The Eastern Partnership” was launched within the European Neighbourhood Policy, in which the Republic of Moldova is included. Having in view the common values and the strong connections established under the Partnership and Cooperation Agreement and developed within the European Neighbourhood Policy and the Eastern Partnership, acknowledging that the Republic of Moldova as a European Country shares a common history and common values with the EU Member States, our country is committed to implement and promote these values, and also to respect all the principles and provisions of the United Nations Charter, of the UN Universal Declaration on the human rights of 1948, of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe.

On June 27, 2014 at Brussels, the Association Agreement was signed between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and its member states, of one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part. The respective Agreement, which establishes a new legal framework for the advancement of the relations between the Republic of Moldova and European Union, was ratified on July 2, 2014 by our country’s Parliament and on November 13, 2014 by the European Parliament.

By this Agreement, an Association was established between the European Union and its Member States of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part, with the following objectives, specified in paragraph 2 of the first article:

a. to promote political association and economic integration between the Parties based on common values and close links, including by increasing the Republic of Moldova’s participation in EU policies, programs and agencies;

b. to strengthen the framework for enhanced political dialogue in all areas of mutual interest, providing for the development of close political relations between the Parties;

c. to contribute to the strengthening of democracy and to political, economic and institutional stability in the Republic of Moldova;

d. to promote, preserve and strengthen peace and stability in the region, including through joining efforts to eliminate sources of tension, enhancing border security, promoting cross-border cooperation and good neighbourly relations;

e. to support and enhance cooperation in the area of freedom, security and justice with the aim of reinforcing the rule of law and respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, as well as in the area of mobility and people-to-people contacts;

f. to support the efforts of the Republic of Moldova to develop its economic potential via international cooperation, as well as through the harmonization of its legislation to that of the European Union;

g. to establish conditions for enhanced economic and trade relations leading towards the Republic of Moldova's gradual integration in the EU internal market, as stipulated in this Agreement, including by setting up a Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area, which will provide for far-reaching regulatory framework harmonization and market access liberalization, in conformity with the rights and obligations arising out of WTO membership and the transparent application of those rights and obligations; and

h. to establish conditions for increasingly close cooperation in other areas of mutual interest.

An obvious question emerges: What is the position of the Euro-regions in which our country is a part in the relations between the European Union and the Republic of Moldova?

#### 4.2. THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND THE EURO-REGIONS

To *cooperate* means to collaborate, to take part in an action, to work together with someone. In other words, cooperation means the co-working of persons, economic units, states in order to increase the efficiency on the basis of mutual benefit. Cooperation, in Jordan G. Bărbulescu's opinion, is the availability of national states to "work together" "over" national borders in order to reach certain common objectives, yet preserving their sovereignty. The cross-border cooperation takes place in the following areas: economic development; tourism and leisure; transport and traffic; agriculture development; innovations and technology transfer; environment protection; social cooperation; education and research; culture and sport; emergency services and public health; disaster prevention; energy; communications; waste recovery; security, etc.

Cross-border cooperation is generally based on rationalities of cultural, ethnical, linguistic, confessional or economic nature. One of well-known cross-border cooperation forms is the Euro-region. The European Council and the Permanent Conference of the Local and Regional Authorities of Europe (established in 1975 to become the *Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe* in 1994) have promoted and supported the policy of cross-border cooperation by establishing the *Euro-regions*.

The Euro-regions, in Silviu Neagu's opinion, can be defined as "areas or regions of economic interference and not only, in which two or more states put into

value in common the material and human resources through the initiation and development of agricultural, industrial, transport and communications, tourism, commercial programs and activities.”

Generalizing the opinions published in the literature, we consider that “the *Euro-region represents the territory of the local units, on one side and the other side of a border, which undertake to cooperate with the goal to ensure a fair balance of interests and to increase the population's living standard in the area*”.

In the German legislation, there are 6 distinct characteristics of Euro-regions:

1. The Euro-regions represent the most efficient cooperation forms in the border areas;
2. The Euro-regions contribute to balancing the different development levels of the border areas;
3. The Euro-regions strengthen the inhabitants' trust and cooperation spirit;
4. The Euro-regions are the area for the practice of good neighbourhood and integration;
5. The Euro-regions help to overcome the difficulties of the negative heritage of the past;
6. The Euro-regions are important elements in narrowing the discrepancies between the EU developed states and the new member states.

The Euro-region concept, as cooperation form in the international system, imposed itself in the European space having at its basis the common economic and political interests. According to this view, the Euro-regions are sub-regional cooperation forms, which contribute to the economic and social cohesion of the geographic cross-border areas, which include administrative-territorial units from the neighbouring countries. The geographic area of the Euro-regions is mainly determined by the socio-economic integration degree of a relatively concentrated geographic area.

It is without doubt that the Euro-regions have the historical and cultural, linguistic and religious connections, the traditions and habits as starting point, which are shaping the identity and the differentiation of the perception and interpretation of the phenomena that are produced in the society.

Most authors consider that the first Euro-region was *Benelux*, initially created as a Customs Union of Belgium, Netherlands and Luxembourg components. The Treaty establishing the *Benelux* Customs Union was signed at London, in 1944, by the governments of the three countries, which at the moment were in exile in Great Britain. The treaty was set into operation in 1947 and ceased to exist in 1960, when it was replaced by the entity named *The Benelux Economic Union*. There are other authors, who claim that the first Euro-region was *Regio Basiliensis*, founded in 1963, based on the Basel City area.

The establishment and development of the Euro-regions intensified after the “European Framework Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation between Territorial Communities or Authorities” was launched.

The cross-border cooperation of our country acquired an official framework with the signing in Ismail on July 3–4, 1997, of the Protocol on Trilateral Cooperation between the Governments of Ukraine, Republic of Moldova and Romania.

Within the respective Protocol, on August 14, 1998, the “*The Lower Danube*” Euro-region Agreement was signed. This first Euro-region in which our country participates was established as a partnership between the administrative-territorial units from Romania (Tulcea County Council, Galați County Council, Brăila County Council), the Republic of Moldova (Cahul District Council and Cantemir District Council) and Ukraine (through the State District Administration Odessa, Odessa Regional Council, Reni District Council). The Coordination Center coordinated all the activities developed within the Euro-region, which consisted of three members for each part, representatives of the regional public authorities. The Council was led by a President assisted by a Vice President. The working bodies of the Euro-region consisted of nine working commissions for different domains.

Eleven years later, on March 20, 2009, the partners decided on the establishment of the Cross-Border Cooperation Association the “Lower Danube Euroregion” with the area of 53.3 thousand km<sup>2</sup> and a population totalling 4090 thousand inhabitants.

On September 22, 2000, in the municipality Botoșani from Romania, the Republic of Moldova, Romania and Ukraine signed the Agreement on the “Upper Prut” Euro-region, with an area of 42402 km<sup>2</sup> and 4097.5 thousand inhabitants.

As a result of the common initiative of the County Councils Iași, Vaslui and Neamț from Romania and of the District Councils Anenii Noi, Basarabesca, Călărași, Cimișlia, Criuleni, Dubăsari, Florești, Hâncești, Ialoveni, Leova, Nisporeni, Orhei, Rezina, Soroca, Strășeni, Șoldănești, Telenești and Ungheni from the Republic of Moldova, the Protocol on the cross-border cooperation within the Euro-region “Siret-Prut-Nistre” was signed at Iasi on September 18, 2002.

On December 4, 2002, in Ungheni, the Reunion of the Presidents’ Forum took place; on this occasion, they signed the Operation Statute of the Siret-Prut-Nistre Euro-region. According to the statute, the general goal of the Euro-region resides in “expanding and improving the relations between the local communities and authorities in the economic, educational, cultural, sports areas and sustainable development of the region in the context of getting in line with the EU standards in this area”.

Subsequently, the Municipalities Bălți and the districts Sîngerei, Fălești, Căușeni, Drochia, Ștefan Vodă, Rîșcani, Glodeni, Taraclia were also accepted as full members of the Euro-region Siret-Prut-Nistre Association, as well as the county Prahova from Romania. Starting with January 1, 2015, the Administrative Territorial Unit Gagauz-Yeri also became a member of the Euro-region Siret-Prut-Nistre, with voting right. The decisions in this case were approved *unanimously, through open vote, by the older members of this reunion*.

At present, the Euro-region Siret-Prut-Nistre totals 25560 km<sup>2</sup>, out of which 1798751 ha agricultural land, 426533 ha forests, 101557 ha water surface. The



human potential amounts to 2627139 people, out of which 827778 in the urban area and 1799361 persons in the rural area.

Practically, the space of the Republic of Moldova, except for the segment on the left side of the Nistru river, is part of the following Euro-regions: Upper Prut, Siret-Prut-Nistru and the Lower Danube.

The cross-border cooperation, this process of intensifying and deepening the interdependencies between the economies of different states, takes place in the context of mutual interests. Within the Euro-regions listed above, as an effect of the cross-border cooperation, a number of projects were achieved, with European funds; these are already finalized or under implementation, as follows:

1. Public administration: experience exchanges between the representatives of the local public administration;

2. Entrepreneurship: programs of expertise and increase of competitiveness, business incubators, partnerships for the border area development;

3. Culture: cooperation promotion through books (under digital form inclusively), films, on-line publicity and television, maintaining and putting into value the mobile cultural heritage;

4. Environment: common management for the Prut River course, air quality protection, diminution of the impact of waste upon the environment;

5. Civil society: exchange of volunteers between NGOs

6. Transport: development of an alternative transport network between Romania and Ukraine and the rehabilitation of the old transport corridors;

7. Tourism: educational programs, tourist information campaigns and valorization of natural tourism resources, putting into value the traditional crafts, promoting the traditional folk songs and dances. (<https://ro.wikipedia.org/>)

The achievements are visible in the implementation of other cooperation projects regarding the activation of trade and economic cooperation. However, we should be aware that the cross-border relations in the Euro-regions in which the Republic of Moldova participates are influenced by exogenous factors. Thus, for example, the cross-border relations in the Euro-regions: Upper Prut, Siret-Prut-Nistru and Lower Danube are negatively influenced by the military units of the Russian Federation, which are dislocated on the territory of our country, and by the existence of the uncontrolled zone Chişinău – Transnistria, where favourable conditions were created for trafficking in weapons, cars and drugs and trafficking in human beings.

In addition, there is a gap between the regions and the capital cities of the Republic of Moldova, Romania or Ukraine. As a rule, the representatives of central authorities pay increased attention to bilateral relations, while the regional elites cannot succeed in transferring, at national level, the information on cross-border projects and initiatives.

There are national particularities that significantly influence the development of Euro-regions. Thus, the existing disputes between Romania and Ukraine on the

Ukrainian and Romanian minorities in the two countries have contributed to cooling the bilateral relations and have affected the cross-border cooperation in the Euro-regions Upper Prut and Lower Danube.

We also mention that in certain districts from the countries that are component parts of Euro-regions, the Christian holidays are held according to the Gregorian calendar, while in other districts according to the Julian calendar.

The EU membership has turned the Romanian border into the EU's Eastern border, which diminished the intensity of personal contacts. It is worth mentioning that part of the inhabitants of the border regions from the Republic of Moldova and Ukraine have reacted to the policy of restraining the right of access, by adopting the Romanian citizenship.

For the citizens of our country, the Visa Facilitation Agreement became extremely important, which was signed by the Republic of Moldova with the European Union. As a result, the EU Regulation no. 259/2014 of the European Parliament and Council of April 3, 2014 modified Regulation no. 539/2001 establishing the list of the third countries whose nationals do not need visa for crossing the external borders of the EU.

Thus, starting with April 28, 2014, the citizens of the Republic of Moldova, holders of biometric passports, can travel without visas to 26 countries from the Schengen Space (Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Greece, Germany, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, the Netherlands, Poland, Portugal, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden and Hungary), to Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus and Romania (countries in which the Schengen policy is applied), as well as to Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein, as well as to Monaco, San Marino and Vatican, countries that do not have border controls. The travels within the liberalized visa system do not provide the right to work, study, for family re-integration or other purposes implying long-term stay (over 90 days). In this respect, it is necessary to continue to ask for national visas in the EU states, on the basis of which permits of stay will be subsequently applied for.

The cross-border cooperation depends on the natural potential homogeneity, which practically is identical, on the respective economies structure, which is quite similar, on the patterns and procedures by which the economies were reformed, which are considerably different.

According to the "Conception of Agrarian Reform and Social-Economic Development of the Village", adopted by the Parliament of the Republic of Moldova on February 15, 1991, the main orientation of the land reform is the "de-monopolization of the state ownership upon land and, as a result, the recognition of land as a merchandise, the assertion in practice of different types of property in agriculture". In Romania, similar legislation was adopted, regarding the de-monopolization of the state ownership upon land. However, if, for instance, land privatization in Romania took place by land restitution to former owners, in the Republic of Moldova the agricultural land privatization took place by the transmission of equal share (although the Conception of Agrarian Reform specified

the transmission of equivalent share) to the members of agricultural households and to other categories of village inhabitants, which partially generated the differentiation of the land owners' attitude toward land.

In addition, the reforms in our country took place in the space of the mentality inherited from the old system, with at least doubtful methods and instruments. Many participants in the reforms are from the generation who found themselves in an independent country, coming from the USSR where they had a patriarchal childhood in the fifties, enrolled in the school system in which, in the 1960s, even the laws of physics followed the Communist Party's indications, studying in the 1970s at the university about how happy they will live in communism, being assigned a job in the 1980s in the "enlightened" period of stagnation, where corruption got roots, while in the 1990s they were given the task of national economy reforming.

As a result, the peasants, by obtaining the ownership right, expected to get rich, without any effort. This romantic period was very short and the same peasants became deeply desperate when they were confronted with the realities, mainly with those realities generated by the market relations, including those generated by the mechanisms oriented to the sustainable development of the economy of the Euro-region components.

The regulatory-legal basis of the three states largely differs, in certain cases, in the field of regional policy, of local self-administration and inter-regional cooperation, resulting in the lack of the possibility at local administration level to allocate budgetary resources on independent basis for common activities within the Euro-region.

Moreover, Kiev, for example, considered that the trilateral unification results were unsatisfactory, because, in its view, Romania made use of its influence at Brussels, grabbing for its own projects the greatest part of the financial sources granted by the European Union.

The absence of financial resources, the modest capacities of initiation, elaboration, promotion and implementation of cross-border cooperation projects represent the cause of the inertial character of Moldova's participation in the Euro-regions activity. Thus, the classical question arises: What is to be done?

#### 4.3. WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

An answer to this question can be found first in the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Atomic Energy Community and their Member States, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part, which mainly presents "The regional development, the cross-border and regional cooperation".

Paragraph 1 from Article 107 of the Agreement shows that "the parts will promote mutual understanding and bilateral cooperation in the field of regional policy, including the methods of formulation and implementation of regional

policies, the governance and partnership at several levels, focusing on the development of disadvantaged areas and territorial cooperation, with the goal of creating the communication channels and strengthening the information and experience exchange between the national, regional and local authorities, the socio-economic actors and the civil society.”

According to paragraph 2 of the same Article, “the parts will cooperate in particular for the correlation of the practice of Republic of Moldova with the following principles:

a. decentralization of the decision process, from central level to the level of regional communities;

b. partnership consolidation between all parts involved in the regional development;

c. co-financing, through the financial contribution of Parts involved in the implementation of the regional development projects and programs.”

Paragraph 1 of Article 108 reads: “the Parts will support and consolidate the involvement of local and regional authorities in cross-border and regional cooperation and the related management structures, they will strengthen cooperation by the creation of a favourable legal framework, will support and develop the capacity building measures, and will promote the consolidation of the economic and commercial cross-border and regional economic networks.”

Paragraph 2 of this article stipulates: “the Parts will cooperate to strengthen the institutional and operational capacities of the national and regional institutions in the fields of regional development and land planning, *inter alia*, by:

a. improvement of the vertical and horizontal interaction mechanism of the central public and local administration in the process of elaboration and implementation of regional policies;

b. development of the local public authorities’ capacity in order to promote cross-border cooperation in conformity with the EU rules and practice;

c. exchange of knowledge, information and best practices regarding the regional development policies in order to promote the economic welfare of local communities and the uniform development of regions”.

Paragraph 1 of Article 109 specifies that: “the Parts will strengthen and encourage, among other things, the development of the cross-border elements of the transport, energy, communications, culture, education, tourism, health networks and of other domains stipulated in the present Agreement, which have impact upon the cross-border and regional cooperation”.

Paragraph 2 of the same Article provides for: “The Parts will intensify cooperation among their regions under the form of transnational and cross-border programs, encouraging the participation of the regions of Republic of Moldova in the European regional structures and organizations and promoting their economic and institutional development through the implementation of projects of common interest. These activities will take place in the context of:

- a. continuing the territorial cooperation with the European regions (through transnational and cross-border programs);
- b. cooperation, within the Eastern Partnership with the EU institutions, including the Committee of the Regions and the participation in different European regional projects and initiatives;
- c. cooperation, *inter alia*, with the European Economic and Social Committee, the European Association of Development Agencies and the European Spatial Planning Observatory Network.

Paragraph 1 of Article 110 stipulates that “the Parts will intensify and ensure the better coordination and cooperation among regions within the EU strategy for the Danube Region, focusing, *inter alia*, on the improvement of the transport and energy connections, on the environment, on economic and social development and security, which will contribute to the faster transportation by road and railway, cheaper and safer energy, a better environment with cleaner water, protected biodiversity and more efficient prevention of cross-border floods”.

In paragraph 2 of the Article, it is mentioned that “the Parts will increase cross-border cooperation in order to restore navigation on the Prut River, which will lead to the prevention of floods in the river basin, improving water quality, irrigation in agriculture, intensifying the economic activities, promoting tourism and cultural activities, as well as contributing to capacity building”.

According to Article 111, “the Parts will facilitate the circulation of nationals from the European Union and Republic of Moldova, who have to cross the border on frequent basis and on short distances”.

Among the common problems of the Euro-regions in the three countries, the solving of which we consider opportune for the future, we list the following:

- Simplification of the border crossing procedures and of the Customs control for citizens and economic operators, opening of new border crossing points and modernization of the existing ones;
- Construction of the motorway Bucharest – Chişinău and extending the motorway from Iasi to Ungheni with two branches: to Chişinău and Bălţi;
- Connection of Euro-regions to a common energy system;
- Regularization of the rivers Suceava, Siret, Prut and Nistre and accessing funds for warning and fight with possible natural disasters;
- Creation of a natural cross-border Park to include the natural reserves Pădurea Domnească, Codru and Suta de Movile from the Republic of Moldova, as well as Lake Stâncă – Costeşti from Romania.
- Organization of the common tourist routes for the Euro-regions Siret-Prut-Nistre, Upper Prut and Lower Danube.
- Intensification of the organization of ethnic folklore festivals and contests, of scientific sessions and joint scientific research groups.

## 5. CONCLUSIONS

Undoubtedly, new elements have emerged and will continue to emerge in the economic, social and cultural activity of the Euro-regions. At present, the activity of the Euro-regions to which our country is a part, is influenced by the Association Agreement between the European Union and the European Community of Atomic Energy and its member states, of the one part, and the Republic of Moldova, of the other part.

As a result, it is required to get an insight into the Euro-regions' contribution to the realization of the respective Agreement and to outline certain measures regarding the increase in efficiency of the association activities, which triggered off the present research study.

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