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The RO-BG 2 project continues: Investigating the opportunities to reduce the use of the ten-t network in the cross-border region Romania - Bulgaria by optimizing the transport of goods and passengers as well as the development of a common mechanism to support the intermodal connection 2014 - 2020, 2021 - 2025

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**THE RO-BG 2 PROJECT CONTINUES:
INVESTIGATING THE OPPORTUNITIES TO REDUCE THE USE OF THE
TEN-T NETWORK IN THE CROSS-BORDER REGION ROMANIA -
BULGARIA BY OPTIMIZING THE TRANSPORT OF GOODS AND
PASSENGERS AS WELL AS THE DEVELOPMENT OF A COMMON
MECHANISM TO SUPPORT THE INTERMODAL CONNECTION 2014 -
2020 / 2021 – 2025**

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Abstract: *The Romania - Bulgaria project, Interreg V-A 2014-2020 Program was started on February 12, 2015 (RO - BG 1) and financed by the EU from the European Regional Development Fund with the aim of developing the border area between the two countries by financing of joint projects, and in the period 2021-2025 we proposed to continue the research through a new Project Romania - Bulgaria, Interreg V-A Program. The strategic framework of the program brings an extraordinary perspective for regional development that is based on concrete and measurable results with the ability that in the next 25 years, the two countries, Romania and Bulgaria, offer the most modern infrastructure and perspectives to settle the active population from the 18-55 age segment, benefiting from numerous living and working conditions and at the same time the growth of competitive and sustainable communities through the efficient use of resources and the capitalization of growth opportunities related to belonging to the Danube and Black Sea regions. Our project is a very well-articulated guide that will continue the documentation that will also help to start the work necessary to build an economic interconnection platform to ensure the consistency of the 12 states located between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black Seas with what is meant by the Danube Corridor. The main economic fields in which the I3M member countries are interested are defined by three major pillars: Energy, Transport, Digitization. We are strongly engaged, both I, in the position of coordinator, Prof. Dr. Eng. Cristiana Sirbu, president of the GIEDD Foundation, as well as our partners from the Association of Danube Municipalities "Dunărea" in Bulgaria, to correlate the data processed through the Romania - Bulgaria Project 1, Interreg Program V-A 2014-2020 with a new Project Romania - Bulgaria 2 2021 - 2025 which we propose to connect the main Danube corridors, as well as the Black Sea to the I3M Mega Project.*

Keywords: *energy, transport, digitization, infrastructure, Danube corridors;*

JEL classification: R0, R4

INTRODUCTION

The Romania - Bulgaria project, Interreg V-A 2014-2020 Program was started on February 12, 2015 (RO - BG 1) and financed by the EU from the European Regional Development Fund with the aim of developing the border area between the two countries by financing common projects. The programming document developed jointly by the two countries, thanks to the long partnership with the interested parties at national, regional and local level, was approved by the European Commission on February 10, 2015. The strategic framework of the program brings an extraordinary perspective for regional development that is based on concrete and measurable results with the ability that in the next 25 years, the two countries, Romania and Bulgaria, offer the most modern infrastructure and perspectives to settle the active population in the 18-55 age segment, benefiting from numerous living conditions, work and at the same time the growth of competitive and sustainable communities through

the efficient use of resources and the capitalization of growth possibilities related to belonging to the Danube and Black Sea regions. [5]

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The "Ecological initiative and sustainable development group" foundation, whose president is Prof. Dr. Eng. Cristiana Sirbu, and the Association of Danube Municipalities "Dunărea" from Bulgaria undertook an extensive research that was based on the total budget of the Interreg V-A Romania - Bulgaria Program with a value of 1 428 765,73 euros, of which 1 214 450,87 euros from the European Regional Development Fund, 185 739,54 euros co-financing by the national budgets of Romania and Bulgaria and 28 575.32 euros represents the beneficiaries own contribution. [2]

The program activated five priority axes and technical assistance, as follows:

1. A well-connected region
2. A green region
3. A safe region
4. A qualified and favorable region for inclusion
5. An efficient region
6. Technical assistance

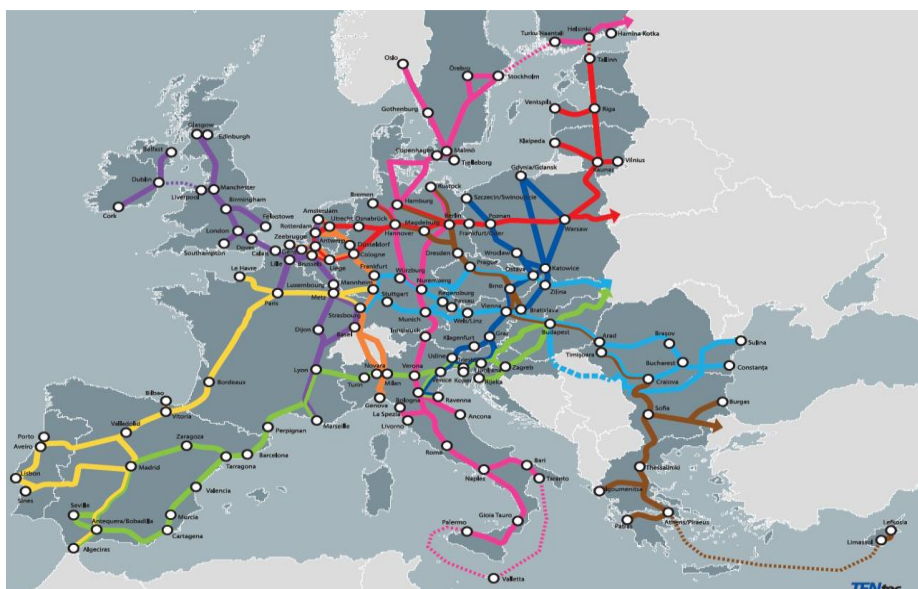
Investigating the opportunities to reduce the use of the TEN-T network in the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border region by optimizing the transport of goods and passengers, as well as the development of a common mechanism to support the intermodal connection is a desired goal that we want, in the period 2021-2025, by continuing its project we manage to significantly improve the process of planning, development and coordination of transport systems for a better connection to the TEN-T network in the cross-border region, using the capacity of intermodal nodes.

To significantly improve the planning, development and coordination of the cross-border area through utilizing the intermodal nodes' capacity. Institutions and organizations involved in the planning, formulation and implementation of transport policies and the transport sector management in both countries; representatives of the business and the non-governmental sector; transport experts; local and regional authorities in the cross-border region; potential investors.

The aim of TEN-T is to build a transport network that would facilitate the flow of goods and people between EU countries. The aim is to ensure that, progressively, and by 2050, the large majority of Europe's citizens and businesses will be located no more than 30 minutes' travel time from this extensive network.

The core Trans-European transport network functions through 9 transport corridors:

- Baltic-Adriatic Corridor;
- North Sea-Baltic Corridor;
- Mediterranean Corridor;
- Orient/East-Med Corridor;
- Scandinavian-Mediterranean Corridor;
- Rhine-Alpine Corridor;
- Atlantic Corridor;
- North Sea-Mediterranean Corridor;
- Rhine-Danube Corridor.



Main transport corridors

Two of the nine transport corridors pass through the territory of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area, namely:

- The Orient/East-Med Corridor, which connects the North, Baltic, Black and Mediterranean Seas, thus optimizing the use of the relevant ports and Motorways of the Sea;
- The Rhine-Danube Corridor, with the Main and Danube waterway as its backbone, which connects the central regions around Strasbourg and Frankfurt to Vienna, Bratislava, Budapest and finally the Black Sea, with an important branch passing through South Germany.

The core network will connect: [4]

- 94 main European ports with rail and road connections;
- 38 key airports with rail connections into major cities;
- 15,000 km of railway line upgraded to high speed;
- 35 cross border projects to reduce bottlenecks.

RESULTS AND DISSCUSION

Air transport is a sector of strategic importance with significant contribution to the EU employment and economy. The aviation employs, directly and indirectly, 5,1 million people and its contribution to the European GDP is EUR 365 billion, or 2,4%. The road transport remains the main means of transport of passengers and freight in Europe and its has increased steadily in the past decades. The same applies to Romania-Bulgaria cross-border area, although the density of the public road network (22.95 km/100 sq. km.) is considerably lower than the European average (110 km/100 sq. km.). [3] The lack of connectivity between the Danube region and the interior of the country is the main impediment to the development of logistic centers and harbours, and therefore for the economic development of the cross-border region. The railway transport is the cross-border area lags behind the European trends in the sector. The density of the active railway network is approximately 46.1 km per 1000 sq. km. in Romania and 38.9 km per 1000 sq. km. in Bulgaria. The Danube River is a central factor for the regional economic development and cross-border cooperation in the region. Through the development of combined river and sea transport (Danube River and the Black Sea) the

harbor cities in the cross-border area have the potential of turning into significant logistic centres and contributing to the socio-economic growth of the region.

It was clearly proven that the first project contributed significantly to the extensive study of the I3M Mega Project - the Three Seas Initiative which aims to be a flexible platform that brings together 12 EU member states geographically positioned between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black Seas, the countries that have engaged in this project being Romania, Bulgaria, Austria, Hungary, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Czech Republic, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland. The initiative of the Big Three thus becomes the third project of the European Union which is perfectly linked to the Strategy of the European Union for the Danube Region.

The objectives that the project sets will significantly contribute to a well-planned and sustainable development of the transport infrastructure and the organization of the networks for the four modes of passenger and freight transportation (road, water, air and rail). The overall result of the project will be an enhanced transport connectivity of the Romania-Bulgaria cross-border cooperation of the relevant actors in the formulation of transport policies and investment decision-making.

The documents developed in the framework of the project will be distributed to all stakeholders and will be available to the broad public. It is expected that the project results will influence the transport policy formulation, the development and investment planning in the intermodal nodes in the cross-border area. The project will contribute to the overall economic and social development of the cross-border region. Smarter, faster, safer and “greener” transport infrastructure and communications are key preconditions for economic growth and higher employment.

CONCLUSIONS

Our project is a very well-articulated guide that will continue the documentation that will also help to start the work necessary to build an economic interconnection platform to ensure the consistency of the 12 states located between the Adriatic, Baltic and Black Seas with what is meant by the Danube Corridor. [1] The main economic fields in which the I3M member countries are interested are defined by three major pillars: Energy, Transport, Digitization.

We are strongly engaged, both I, in the position of coordinator, Prof. Dr. Eng. Cristiana Sirbu, president of the GIEDD Foundation, as well as our partners from the Association of Danube Municipalities "Dunărea" in Bulgaria, to correlate the data processed through the Romania - Bulgaria Project 1, Interreg Program V-A 2014-2020 with a new Project Romania – Bulgaria 2 2021-2025 which we propose to connect the main Danube corridors, as well as the Black Sea to the I3M Mega Project.

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