

THE DANUBE STRATEGY AND ITS IMPACT ON THE PROCESS OF UKRAINE-EU RAPPROCHEMEENT

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Abstract: *The research paper analyzes the impact of the Danube strategy on the process of Ukraine-EU rapprochement. The strategy itself is primarily a political document, which provides guidance to States in the region and the EU institutions to ensure the development of the Danube region. This document is unique in a number of parameters. First, its implementation will affect not only the eight Danube States - members of the EU, but also the neighboring countries of the EU. Secondly, it is a comprehensive document that covers not only the transport sector, but environmental issues, development of culture and tourism, education and many others. For Ukraine, the value of the Strategy is primarily due to the fact that in the context of the course of European integration this document provides additional opportunities for entry into the common European space. In addition, the Danube strategy can be considered as a tool for regional development. Strategy parameters cover four regions of Ukraine, located in the Danube River Basin - Odessa, Chernivtsi, Transcarpathian and Ivano-Frankivsk region.*

Keywords: European Union Strategy for Danube Region; Ukraine; Odessa; Chernivtsi; Transcarpathian; Ivano-Frankivsk

INTRODUCTION

In June 2009 the European Commission began to prepare the document which would include proposals of the Danube region countries towards directions of an integrated and comprehensive development of the Danube region. The European Commission has invited 14 countries for the development of the Danube Strategy that make up the Danube region, namely: eight EU Member States - Austria, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Germany, Hungary, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia; 1 candidate country for membership - Croatia; 3 potential candidates for accession - Serbia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina; 2 Partner countries - Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova.

In December 2010 the European Commission represented Danube Strategy - a long-term EU policy towards solving the problems of the Danube macro-region. It was developed on the experience of the Baltic strategy. 14 countries of the

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Danube River Basin by 2020 are to implement 200 projects related to four main areas of Association of the Danube Region (transport, energy, culture, tourism);

- protection of the environment in the Danube Region (restoring water quality, control of environmental risks, conservation of landscape and biodiversity);

- promoting prosperity (development of the "knowledge society" through research education and information technology support for enterprise competitiveness through the development of clusters and complexes, investment in the development of knowledge and skills of employees;

- strengthening the position of the Danube Region (including political stability in the region to work together to provide security, the fight against crime).

Ukraine is a country that has been invited for developing and further implementation of the Danube Strategy. Ukrainian part of Danube region covered by the Danube strategy includes four regions: Odessa, Chernivtsi, Ivano-Frankivsk and Transcarpathian. As for today, Ukraine is the only country in the Danube region, which was not determined with its desire to coordinate one of the eleven priorities of the Danube strategy, but only demonstrated its interest towards "Improving transport and communication infrastructure , including the development of internal shipping" (Дъяков, 2012).

However, Ukraine's participation at the national level in the development of the Strategy from the outset was formal and declarative. As a result, country was not included in the list of States which are responsible for specific priority areas (Филипенко, 2013).

1. CURRENT FEATURES OF UKRAINE'S PARTICIPATION IN DANUBE STRATEGY

Ukraine's participation in the development and further implementation of "The European Union Strategy for Danube Region" enable country to demonstrate on practice that Ukraine and EU have common interests and have potential for working together for solving mutual problems and for sustainable development in the Danube region. However, Ukraine's participation in the development of the SDR at the national level initially had formal and declarative character. Official Kyiv did not use any opportunity to participate in a series of international conferences that were organized by the European Commission during the first half of 2010 for discussing common issues.

Consequently, the quality of "Ukrainian vision of the future EU strategy for the Danube Region" ("Position Paper" of Ukraine) cannot be considered satisfactory for the following reasons:

- Ukrainian "Position Paper" is not based on an awareness of the whole complex of problems that are common to all or most countries in the Danube region and the need for concerted action to resolve them. It contains a number of project ideas which are essentially local or national and are not deemed to be included in the Action Plan in accordance with the criteria put forward. Document does not take into account the key approaches to the development of SDR and

Action Plan, which had been formulated by the European Commission - namely, they must relate to the Danube basin as a macro-region , and not be focused on purely local or national projects;

- "Position Paper" is geographically limited, because almost all of the proposed idea, except for one (project V.3.2. - Flood prevention, protection from the harmful effects of water pollution and accidents in the basins of the rivers Prut and Siret) refer exclusively Ukrainian Danube, while geographically Ukrainian part of the Danube region is much wider and includes, in addition to Ukrainian Danube (Odessa region) areas located in the basins of the rivers Tisza, Prut and Siret (Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi region). It should be noted that the Transcarpathian and Chernivtsi region also borders with Romania and the Romanian minority living there;

- joint activities among region countries, which has been carried out and had some results was not considered sufficiently and only mentioned in Ukrainian "Position Paper". Thus, the project idea V.2.3. - Creating a single geographic information system of the Danube River Basin – has been proposed without the presence of a GIS database for Basin "Danube GIS", which had been developed under the auspices of the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR / ICPDR).

Such a formal approach, lack of interest of relevant ministries in the development of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, the rejection of the involvement of non-governmental experts has meant that some of the projects may have a significant impact on the subsequent redistribution of the hydrological balance in the Danube Delta and eventually the state of navigation in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta.

Comparative analysis of position papers of Ukraine ("Ukraine's vision of the future EU strategy for the Danube Region") and Romania ("First National contribution of Romania to develop the EU Strategy for the Danube Region") indicate that they recognize a number of common problems of paramount importance (primarily related to environmental issues and improving communication between countries).

At the same time, the focus on the national interest should be noted. For example, both documents contain priorities for the development of river ports, but each assumes it to its national territory. Both define the priority of navigation on the Danube, but each according to their own interests. In particular, Romania is interested in further development of existing shipping channels and Ukraine insists on creating of alternative one on its territory.

A formal approach, lack of relevant ministries interests in the development of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, the rejection of the involvement of non-governmental experts have led to the loss of Ukraine advantages in the Danube Delta and had negative impact on the state of navigation in the Ukrainian part of the Danube Delta (Makyx, 2013, p. 11).

2. DANUBE STRATEGY AND DANUBE SYNERGY

On October 31, 2013 an International Forum "Danube synergy" took place in Odessa, in which the head of the Romanian counties of Tulcea and Galati have put forward ideas on possible ways of international cooperation in the framework of the Euroregion "Lower Danube".

According to the Chairman of the Tulcea county Horia Teodorescu, in the frame of the new fiscal period of EU on 2014-2020 the special attention will be paid to the creation of new opportunities and synergies for all verticals of power within the European region "Lower Danube". The main goal should be increasing of funding and volumes of foreign investments. H.Teodoresku stressed that for obtaining concrete results in the Danube region it is necessary to undertake a comprehensive examination of the opportunities existing in the region and to upgrade infrastructure in spheres of energy, transport, culture and eco-tourism, to organize joint control over emergencies. "Danube Synergy" provides a framework for developing a comprehensive strategy for cross-border cooperation in the framework of the Euroregion "Lower Danube" for joint action and sustainable development, based on the competence of the central, local government and the private sector.

Globalization, EU enlargement and the creation of new international organizations on the geographical basis or on common interests - all this testifies to the need to develop cooperation between the authorities of the Euroregion "Lower Danube". The responsibility of neighboring countries should be development of more effective collaboration through the mediator services of Association Euroregion "Lower Danube" commissions for the development of the economic potential, attracting of foreign investments and the use of European funds. Joint efforts can bring potential Euroregion "Lower Danube" to the maximum and under the new budget period 2014-2020 it can be convert common challenges to our opportunities.

According to H.Teodoresku, International Forum provides considerable potential for the Odessa region, as recently Odessa region actively entering into European structures and the European life. County Chairman said that in Odessa soon will be opened the local office of an international organization "Conference of Europe coastal regions" where he is the Vice President now. According to him, it will be additional political opportunity to integrate the Odessa region into European life. H.Teodoresku said that within the region "Lower Danube" Romania and Ukraine are partners, not rivals. And in the context of the integration of the various areas and regions the instruments of Euroregion "Lower Danube" should be used to the maximum for the development of cooperation and partnership. County Chairman said that recently Forum "Danube synergy" held in Bucharest as well. It was attended by top officials of the Romanian government (Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs) and there was determined how to build a partnership between the neighboring countries of the Danube. H.Teodoresku said that the leadership of the region of Tulcea ready to share experience with neighboring countries that are not yet members of the EU but belong to the Danube. He expressed the hope that the



opportunities opened up on the basis of the budget period 2014 - 2020 would be maximally utilized for further development of European regions (Teodoresku, 2013).

According to the Chairman of the Galati county Nicolae Bakalbasha since the creation of the Euroregion "Lower Danube" partner regions practically have not implemented any measures. Despite the favorable geopolitical position, from the economic point of view Euroregion has certain drawbacks. The Chairman suggested that most of the economic problems of the European region are artificial. N.Bakalbasha stressed that navigation problems in the Danube caused the Crimean War and, from the other side, became the basis for creating the first pan-European organization - "The European Commission of navigation on the Danube." He expressed regret that despite the fact that Danube is officially the seventh corridor of EU, it practically does not carry out transportation, because 7% of the navigation potential - is really nothing. However, in his opinion, the River Danube - a potential tool for development of all Danube countries, first of all for those that belong to the Euroregion "Lower Danube". According to N.Bakalbasha, European community began to take certain actions and is willing to invest essential funds for the development of navigation on the Danube.

The Chairman of county stressed that it is difficult in winter to transport any goods on the Danube, as the river sometimes freezes and there is shortage of icebreakers. Also, it became difficult in recent years to carry on goods on the Danube in the summer because of flooding that led to the accumulation of large amounts of silt and that constantly compel to engage in expensive procedure of flushing channels. He also drew attention to the presence of two dam construction projects for electricity production and for improving navigation conditions in the Middle Danube, which are not realized because of high prices and uncertain policy in addressing this issue. The Chairman of the county said that on the European level the Danube issues began to be considered together with the issues of the western Black Sea region. He said that in the future will try to raise the question of improvement of navigation conditions on the Danube on the European level. N.Bakalbasha considered unacceptable that so far Romania, Moldova and Odessa region could not influence the situation with navigation on the Danube, but owing to Danube synergy the significant results would be achieved (Bakalbasha, 2013).

3. DEVELOPMENT OBJECTIVES UP TO 2020

The issue of development of navigation on the Danube is of particular importance in the context of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region realization. The strategy particularly declares the following objectives in the development of such sectors of economy as transport, energy, culture and tourism:

- to increase the volume of cargo transportation by 20% by the year compared to 2010;
- to remove existing navigation "narrowings" on the river in order to enable the shipping of VIb type vessels throughout the year;
- to improve travel time of passenger transportation between major cities;

- to develop efficient multimodal terminals at Danube ports to connect internal waterways with rail and road transport up to 2020;
- to create a four rail corridors for freight that cross the Danube Region (as planned, on 3 or 5 years);
- to achieve national targets on the basis of the objectives on climate change and energy "Europe-2020".

However, the realization of abovementioned targets requires seeking of huge financial resources and in technical perspective - of effective design solutions (Makux, 2013, p. 11).

CONCLUSIONS

Of great importance for Ukraine is the possible co-operation capacity of the Danube shipping with the industrial potential of Southern Ukraine, which can increase on 8-10% the intensity of traffic on the Danube. The good prospects have the cooperation in the energy sector, including renewable energy. The great importance in the context of implementation of the Danube Strategy takes common realization of city-building projects for the cross-border regions. The core of this process in attaining mutual agreement on territorial development of state border areas that poorly developed as peripheral. Joint planning will allow to avoid unbalanced using of border areas and thereby enhance the effectiveness of these areas and ensure proper connectivity between border areas.

Significant potential for constructive cooperation within the Danube strategy exists in the field of environmental protection, particularly in monitoring of compliance with environmental standards in the Danube River Basin, flood and other emergencies.

Poor infrastructure (waterways, ports and communications systems) and the uneven development of its elements are the main causes of the weakness of Danube shipping market and inability of new, primarily high-speed transportation technology introduction on Danube that by the time and cost of goods delivery can compete with railways and highways.

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