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**REGION**  
*and*  
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## **CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION BETWEEN ROMANIA AND BULGARIA BEFORE EU ENLARGEMENT (2007)**

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

Contemporary cross-border co-operation implies the existence of a framework for the development of economic, social, cultural activities, etc. Within this framework, it is important to know the particularities of the territorial structures specific to contiguous countries and their degree of harmonization. The dynamics of the cross-border relationships highlights cross-border structures that vary in form, dimension, content and organization. Thus, the aim of this study is to reflect the modalities, instruments and typology of these types of co-operation structures from the point of view of functionality and efficiency, between Romania and Bulgaria during the EU pre-adherence phase.

Romania and Bulgaria position in the same group of states for which the data of integration coincides with 2007, led to the intensification of the cross-border co-operation between the two states. This co-operation process has, among other major objectives, the transformation of the Danubian axis from a natural border, strongly controlled and with an obvious function of delimitation/separation, into an axis of economic co-operation. As effect a gradual change of a natural fluviate border between the two states into an axis of economic polarization by eliminating the barriers and restrictions imposed by the political border and which led, in time, to the separation of the communities from the contiguous cross-border areas. At the same time, this cross-border co-operation structure represents an essential support for the *Vlahii*

(Romanians) in Bulgaria and Serbia to have a contact with Romanian language and culture, situation similar for the Bulgarians and Serbians with a minority statute from the contiguous Romanian integrated areas.

The territorial-administrative units specific to each particular state have an important role in this approach because they create a territorial, demographic and judicial context which provides for the functionality of these demarches. The European Union made the first step by creating the statistical unit system (NUTS) for creating a uniform system of essential indicators in the functional mechanism of cross-border relationships of all types.

## **2. ROMANIAN AND BULGARIAN CROSS-BORDER STRUCTURES**

If during the communist system the borders and cross-border areas had a divergent and isolating character, after 1990 the new political orientation in European context favoured the change of their role into the areas of convergence and lines of political territory demarcation. By creating facilities at administrative level, the cross-border administrative-territorial units can be considered *'the epidermis'* of a Ratzelian-type organism which first enters in contact with the outside inputs. Thus the county roads and local roads are the first to enter in contact and react to external influences and constrictive or favourable measures to the co-operation process.

The cross-border co-operation is also based on the existence of some correspondences at the level of cross-border administrative-territorial units belonging to the contiguous states. The European system NUTS represents a support in that sense, created especially to accomplish a certain uniformity of the system of statistical data collection. This system, as for 2006 is not applicable in all Romania's neighbouring states; this correlation is possible only in case of Romania and Bulgaria.

In the context of this study the counties, municipalities, towns and communes (on Romanian side) are the main administrative-territorial unities which offer a framework of analyses and report according to the laws

The administrative-territorial organization of Bulgaria comprises regions (NUTS II), subregions (equivalent of counties), towns and communes (with component villages). The compatibilization of Romanian and Bulgarian cross-border systems is possible, especially at the level of regions and provinces, as units similar to the county, as well as at the level of localities (Tab. 1 and Fig. 1). Correspondent to the territorial-administrative system the Bulgarian part identifies cross-border structures of the type: localities, municipalities, provinces and regions.

Table 1. Romania level and neighbouring countries

No	Level 0/ Country	NUTS 1/ Level 1	NUTS 2/ Level 2		NUTS 3/ Level 3		NUTS 5/ LAU 2/ Level 5		
		name	name	no	name	no	name	no	
1	Romania	Country	Regions of development	8	Counties + Bucureşti	42	Cities and Communes	2951	Villages
2	Bulgaria	Country	Regions of planning	6	Provinces/ Oblasts	28	Municipali- ties	5338	

Source: Eurostat, Bruxelles (2003).

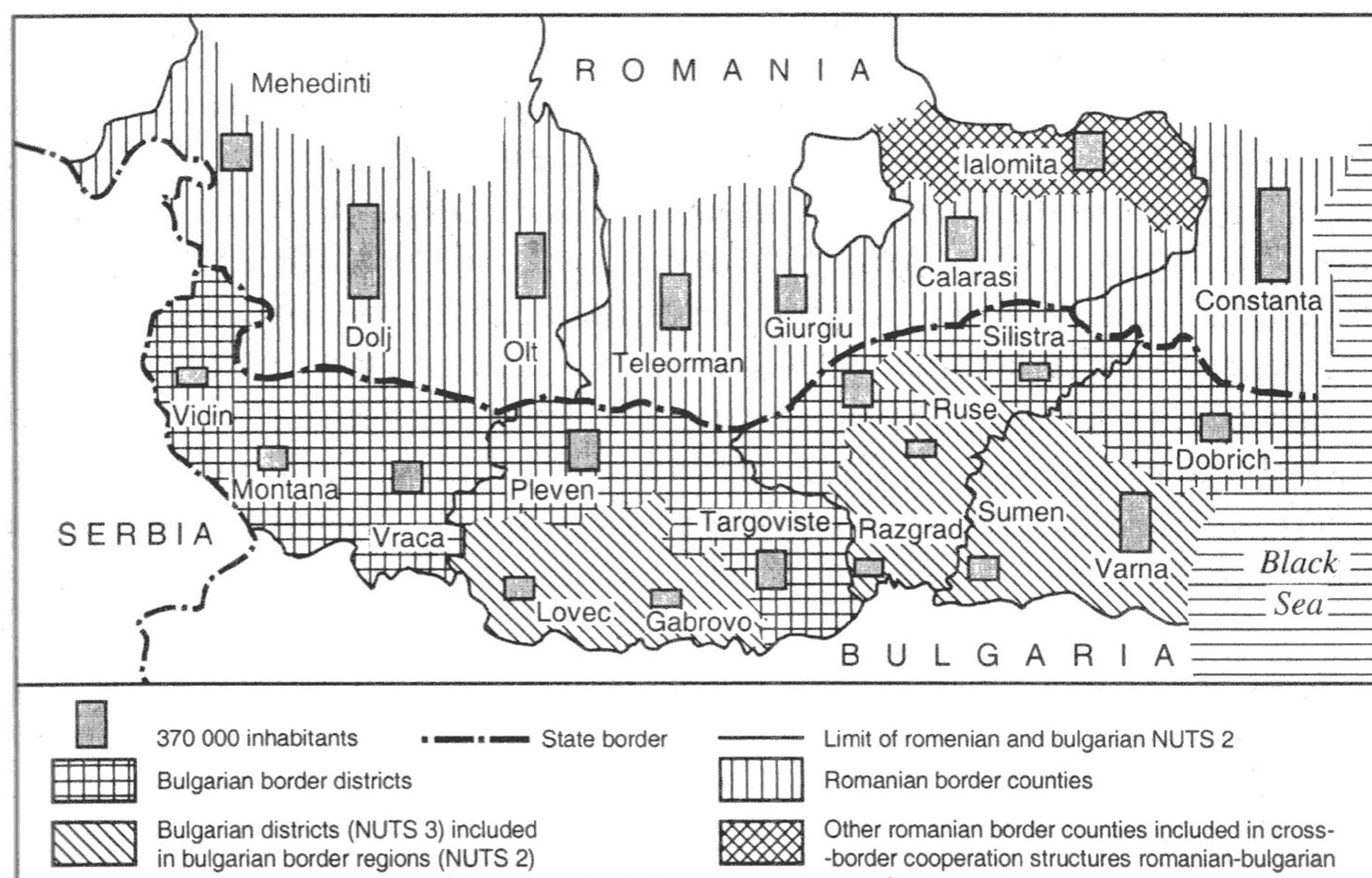


Fig. 1. Counties and regions of cross-border development (NUTS 3) in Romania and statistical regions and cross-border districts in Bulgaria integrated in structures of Romanian-Bulgarian cross-border co-operation and their demographic potential as for 2002

The maintenance of good relationships with neighbouring countries represents a strong point of each democracy. In Romania's case this is a very important issue whose complexity derives from the mutations that took place in the architecture of the European political space after the fall of the communist system. After a period of uncertainty as to new political and economic orientation, the future of the two states was determined at the Nisa Summit in 2002 by the decision of their integration into the European Union in 2007.

Faced with this perspective the two states had to reconsider strategies of economic and political development as well as the relationships with the neighbouring countries. Moreover, by joining the NATO Romania and Bulgaria assumed a series of obligations towards the alliance and the partner states, and became important elements of security in South-Eastern Europe. Thus in 2001 the Romanian-Bulgarian relationships entered a new phase. Mutual contacts, consultations, experience exchange and co-operation had to intensify.

The judicial framework which ensures a good co-operation between the two states is the treaty entitled '*Friendship, co-operation and good neighbourhood between Romania and Bulgaria*' signed on 27 January 1992. This treaty regulates bilateral collaboration, facilitates conclusion of various agreements and conventions in different fields of activity.

The reflection of the diplomatic relationships is the *economic and commercial relationships system* developed between the two countries. In 2002 the volume of Romanian-Bulgarian commercial exchange was 324.59 million USD, out of which Romania's export was 176.25 million USD (54.3% of the total) and Bulgaria's export to Romania 148.29 million USD (45.7%). It appears that the commercial balance was rather equitable, with a 27.96 million sold in favour of Romania (Fig. 2). The minimum value of the commercial exchanges was in 2001, around 351.0 million USD, and the most significant sold in favour of Romania was in 2000, around 179.09 million USD (MAE, 2003).

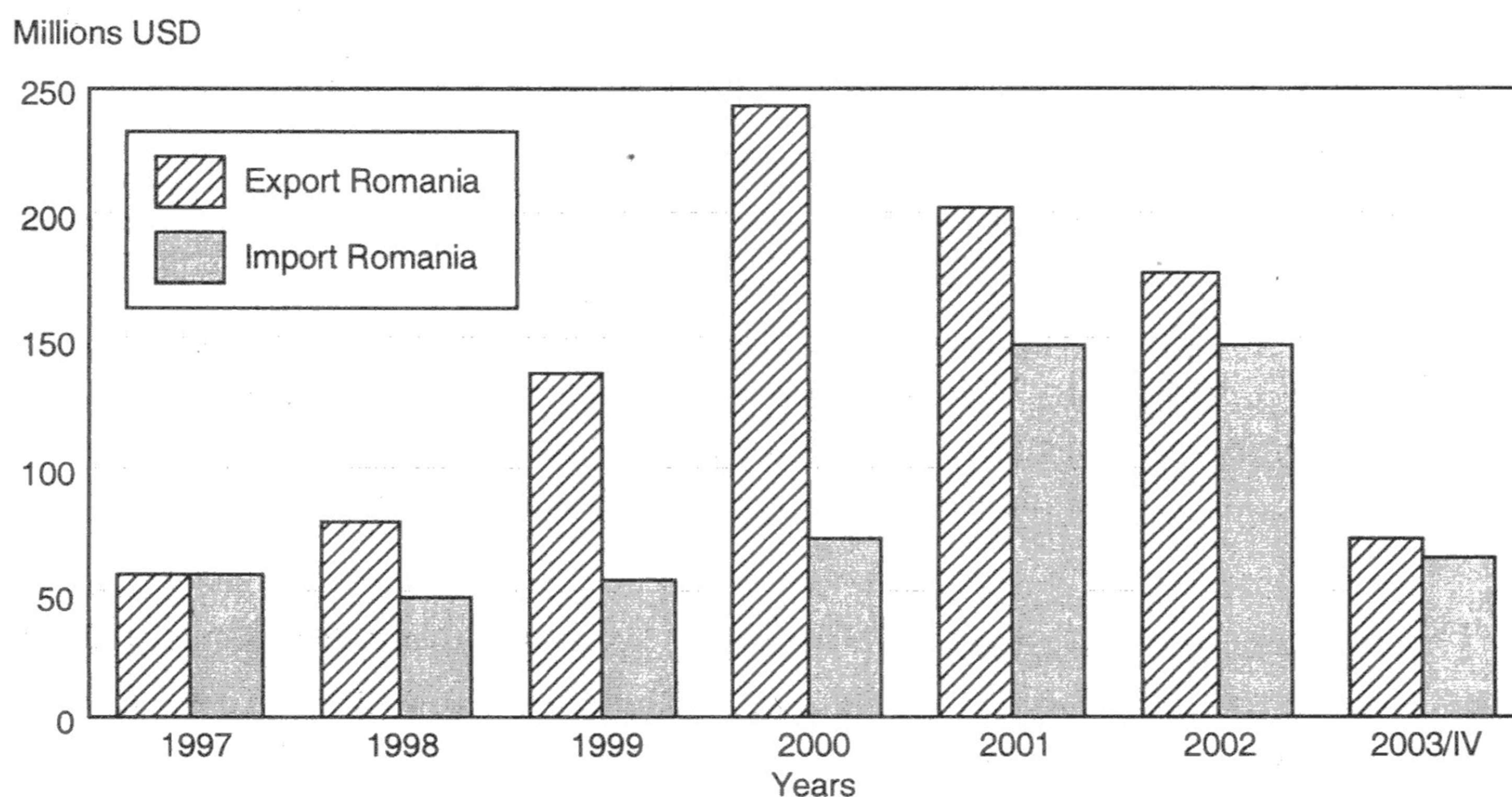


Fig. 2. The evolution of commercial exchanges between Romania and Bulgaria between 1997-2003 (first semester)  
Source: MAE (2003).

In 2003 with 462 Romanian-Bulgarian mixed societies and a capital of 10.6 million USD, Bulgaria comes on position 41 in the investors top regarding the value of the invested capital (Ministry of External Affairs, Romania, 2003).

The rapidly developing relationships between Romania and Bulgaria are materialized in the development of a significant number of projects with PHARE financial assistance in the field of infrastructure, transport, environmental protection, health, cross-border co-operation within five Euroregions. Both states participate in regional co-operation structures like the Organization of Economic Co-operation at Black Sea, the Central-European Co-operation Initiative, the Co-operation Process in South-Eastern Europe, SECI, and trilateral agreements with Turkey and Greece.

**The bordering/cross-border infrastructure** necessary for the development of cross-border co-operation in the Romanian-Bulgarian borderland includes naval ways, roads and railways. After 1990 the number of border crossings increased gradually, although to slow to meet the needs. This increased after 2000 when Romania and Bulgaria were invited to adhere the European Union in 2007. Along the 631.3 km long borderline there are 9 roads, 6 harbours, 2 railways and a ferry-boat system on the Danube. These can be separated into two large categories:

1) Active:

- international: Calafat-Vidin; Bechet-Dreahovo; Corabia, Turnu-Magurele; Zimnicea; Giurgiu-Ruse; Oltenita; Ostrov-Silistra; Negru Voda-Kardam; Vama Veche-Durankulak;

- border crossings for local border traffic.

2) Inactive:

a) having necessary facilities but for various reasons do not operate at the moment, but can be re-opened in short time: Oltenita-Turtucaia (boat); Chiciu-Calarași-Silistra (boat);

b) deprived of necessary facilities cross-border traffic but connected with roads to the nearest localities: the road Carvan-Kainardjia; Dobromiru din Deal-Severneak; Porucik-Kardjievo; Cetatea-Roșita; Dumbraveni-Roșita.

Totally 17 border crossings in 11 localities are active of which: 8 roads, 3 railways, 6 harbours.

The average distance between road border crossings is 79.0 km, between ferry border crossings is 105 km, and between railway border crossings is 210.0 km. Considering only the active border crossing points, the average distance is 57 km. Compared to other borders in Central Europe the cross-border circulation along the Romanian-Bulgarian border is relatively intense.

### 3. 'EUROREGIONAL' TYPE OF ROMANIAN CROSS-BORDER CO-OPERATION

As provided by Romanian and international law, Romanian territorial structures (administrative-territorial units of different ranks) are integrated at the level of 11 Euroregions, 4 of them with Romanian-Bulgarian participation.

**Giurgiu-Ruse Euroregion** (Fig. 3) is the first Romanian-Bulgarian cross-border co-operation structure established on April 23<sup>rd</sup> 2001. This cross-border association relies on the proximity of the two doublet cities and has the advantage of being situated on the unique circulation axis on the Danube with road and railway, which increase the possibilities of economic and social development of this area and the attraction of new territorial-administrative unities on both shores of the Danube. The cross-border traffic is served by 5 border crossings: one naval, three roads (a bridge and two ferries) and one railway.

In 2002 at the initiative of Giurgiu County Council and Ruse District another, larger Euroregion was established under the name **Danubius** (Fig. 3).

**Danubius Euroregion**, very similar by size to the *South Danube Euroregion*, is a part of an extensive contiguous euroregional complex, in the central sector of Romanian-Bulgarian Danube section.

This Euroregion is crossed by important European circulation axes and is situated in the proximity of Bucharest which has an enormous demographic and economic potential. Here, the Bucharest-Ruse axis runs which reunites two important European highways E70 and E85 which canalizes presently the most important flux of passengers and goods in the Romanian-Bulgarian cross-border area.

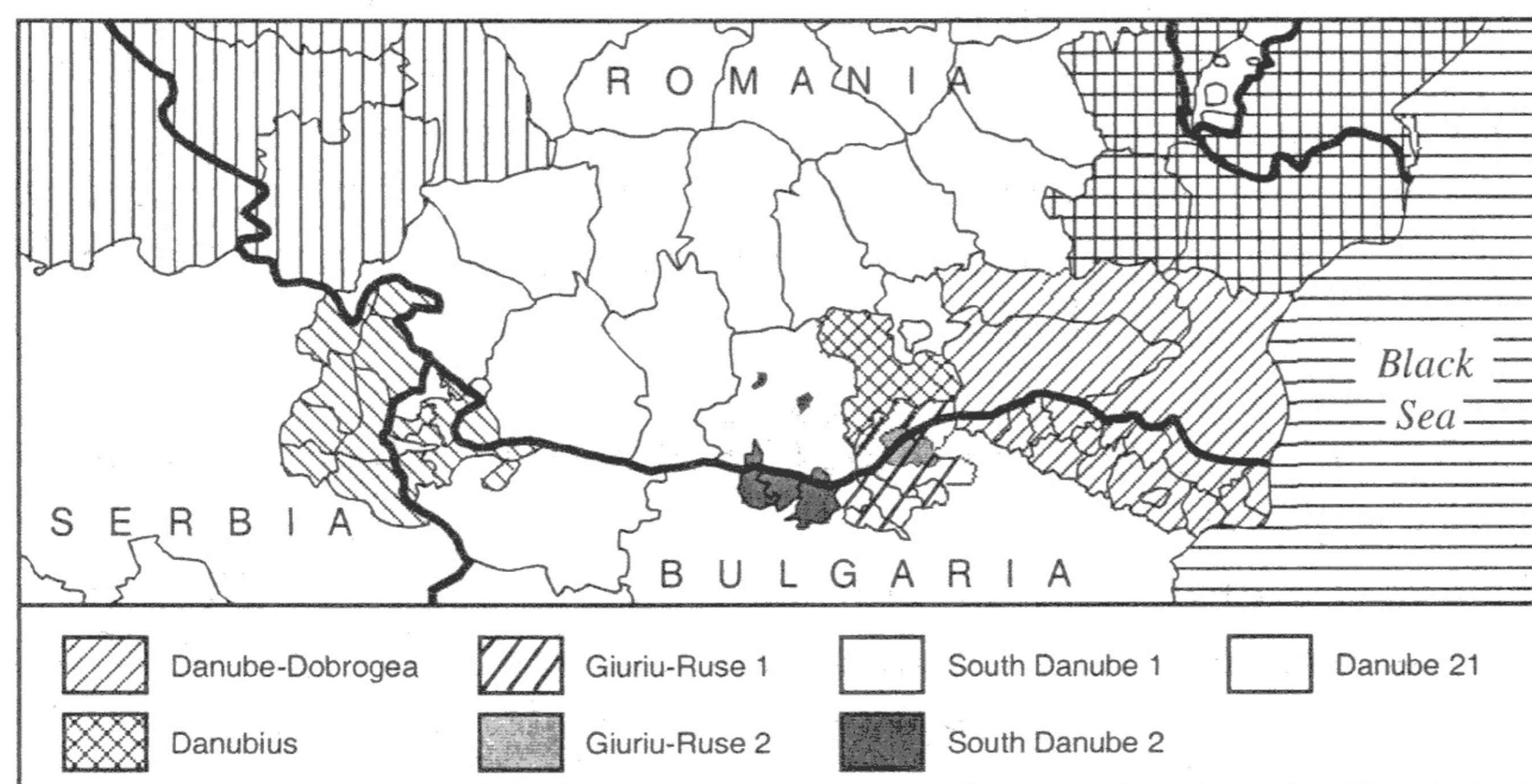


Fig. 3. Euroregions with Romanian participation at the level of 2003  
Source: Ministry of External Affairs (2003)

This fact is a continuation of a situation specific to the communist period when the commercial fluxes between the Balkan countries and the rest of the continent were directed almost entirely on Giurgiu-Ruse axis (Sageata, 2003). Thus, the cross-border flux is concentrated entirely in the sector of the Giurgiu-Ruse localities on a river axis.

Table 2. The Euroregions of cross-border co-operation with Romanian participation existent in 2003

No	Name of Euroregion	Year of foundation	Surface (km <sup>2</sup> )	Population	Countries	Administrative division
1	Giurgiu-Ruse	2001	2.784	266.157	2 - Bulgaria and Romania	21 out of which: One city +13 communes in Romania and 7 Bulgarian municipalities;
2	'Danube 21' Cross-border Co-operation Association	2002	9.500	448.349	3 - Romania, Serbia and Bulgaria	21 out of which: One city and 4 Romanian communes ; 8 Bulgarian municipalities; 8 Serbian municipalities
3	'Danubius'	2002	6.310	564.179	2 - Bulgaria and Romania	Giurgiu County and 8 Bulgarian municipalities in Ruse District
4	'South Danube'	2002	1.646	201.869	2 - Bulgaria and Romania	4 towns Teleorman County and 3 Bulgarian municipalities
5	'Danube-Dobrogea'	2002	24.177	1.693.522	2 - Bulgaria and Romania	5 out of which: 3 Romanian counties and two Bulgarian district and 15 municipalities

Source: Ministry of External Affairs (2003).

One can say that the Giurgiu-Ruse Euroregion, represents a territorial system of clepsydra type determined by the orientation of the fluxes on the only linking axis through the Friendship Bridge built during the socialist period. Thus, the two territorial-political systems, Bulgarian and Romanian, namely Ruse District and Giurgiu County, whose border is traced along the Danube river by associating in the Euroregional cross-border co-operation structure can contribute to the extension of the number of connections by achieving common projects with the priority given to the trans-Danubian infrastructure. The first step in this direction should be construction of local border crossings served by ferries, especially in doublet localities. This issue will acquire a new dimension at the moment of Romania's and Bulgaria's integration into European Union, when the political border between the two states will become an 'internal EU border'. We mention here Vede-

-Pargovo, Gaujani-Mecka, Pietrosani/Pietrisu-Batin, Gostinu-Sandrovo, Prundu-Rjahovo a.s.o. The same refers to the railways system.

**'South Danube' Euroregion** has as main objectives the implementation of social and economic development programs between cross-bordering communities and joint solutions of cross-border issues.

*South Danube Euroregion* is a small cross-border structure, which facilitates compatibilization of the legislation and economic issues of the contiguous administrative-territorial structures.

This Euroregion features the following particularities:

- the Romanian side is predominantly urban with a high density of population and reduced territorial extension, whereas on the Bulgarian side are and mixed urban/rural territories;

- lack of territorial cohesion: the four Romanian unities are dispersed on the Teleorman County, of which only two are on the Danube while the Bulgarian side is situated on the Danube area. The prospective inclusion of other administrative-territorial unities, especially rural on Romanian side would provide territorial and, therefore functional cohesion

- the four Romanian towns and the three Bulgarian are evenly distributed on the Euroregion territory which implies favourable consequences for elaboration of a development strategy;

- the Danube represents for the moment, in the absence of linking bridges, a '*natural barrier*' which hinders the connection between the two communication systems on the Northern and Southern bank of the Danube, namely the circulation between the communities in cross-border areas. For the moment, the nearest linking bridge is in Giurgiu-Ruse sector which canalizes the better part of the passenger and freight traffic in the Euroregion area.

The building of a new bridge at Turnu Magurele-Nikopol represents the most important task which must be achieved to provide a correspondent functionality of the two contiguous border areas and of the Euroregion as a whole. The lack of a bridge leads to the concentration of the naval transport actions and the development of the adjacent harbour infrastructure to ensure the cross-border traffic.

The main 'problem' of this Euroregion is the lack of a direct road and railway connection between the two communication systems situated on both Danube shores. For the moment, until the construction of the bridge on the Turnu-Magurele-Nikopole sector, the two systems of communication use the unique bridge between Giurgiu and Ruse, while the Danubian localities facing each other are served by ferry-boats.

**'Danube 21' Cross-border Co-operation Association.** The main motivations behind the establishment of this Euroregion was the disadvantageous geographical position of these areas in relation to urban centres of superior



rank, underdeveloped infrastructure; the predominance of the primary sector, high unemployment rate. Thus, on the 18<sup>th</sup> January 2002 at Vidin (Bulgaria) the nucleus of one of the newest Euroregion was created in the form of collaboration between the City Halls and the local Councils in Calafat-Romania, Vidin-Bulgaria and Zajecar-Serbia (Fig. 3). The Association includes 3 sectors of Romanian-Serbian and Romanian-Bulgarian border.

This cross-border co-operation structure is rather small which promises functional efficiency. This is constituted as a nucleus to which, in time, adjacent administrative units can be gradually associated. Also, this form of association, as well as those in the Romanian border area, must benefit from legal and strategic support from the Romanian state and the contiguous states involved, especially because of the fact that in this area is inhabited by large Vlach population, who currently undergo a cultural and ethnic rebirth.

Due to insufficient communication system (lack of bridges) the Euroregion's functionality is limited but with good chances for improvement.

**Danube-Dobrogea Euroregion** is situated in the Eastern extremity of the cross-border Romanian-Bulgarian area (Fig. 3). It includes the Eastern sector of the Romanian-Bulgarian border on the Danube and a land section separating Dobrogea and Cadrilater. It is a structure of cross-border co-operation based on co-operation agreements between local administration, business organisms and non-governmental organizations of the following administrative-territorial units (source , 2003): Silistra and Dobrich districts in the historical province Cadrilater on the Bulgarian side; Calarasi, Constanta and Ialomița on the Romanian side.

Covering the area of 24,177 km<sup>2</sup> it is the largest Romanian-Bulgarian Euroregion, comprising three distinct border sectors; land, fluvial and maritime. The maritime border offers possibilities of development of a shared harbour and complimentary infrastructure.

The Euroregion's population is 693,522 people, 79% of whom live in the Romanian sector and only 21% on the Bulgarian side. The population density is above 80 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> on the Romanian side as compared to below 50 inhabitants/km<sup>2</sup> in the Bulgarian section. The demographic potential of the Danube-Dobrogea Euroregion should be considered optimal.

The Euroregion features some favourable characteristics:

- evenly developed transport network;
- transport network includes all means of transportation: roads, railways, ferries, harbours and airports. Its central part will be the prospective highway linking Constanta Harbour and the capital city of Bucharest;
- presence of a highway sections in the Central Romanian side and in the Southern on the Bulgarian side;
- even distribution of the border crossings along the border;

- connection of the Romanian and Bulgarian transportation systems not hampered by any natural obstacles;
- important international roads and highways crossing the Euroregion;
- presence of the Dunare-Marea Neagra Channel in the central section which provides a rapid link between the Danubian localities and those on the Black Sea shore

The disadvantages include:

- insufficient number of linking bridges between the two sectors situated on left and right side of the Danube, which determines the concentration of traffic, with negative consequences for the territory organization and the quality of environment;
- lack of balance regarding the population distribution with about 70% concentrated in the Danube Eastern sector and Dobrogea;
- varied population density and uneven distribution of main towns and development centres.

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