

**Possible initiatives/contributions of the Bulgarian/Austrian and Romanian EU Presidencies to the current economic, migration and security challenges faced by the EU. How should Bulgarian-Romanian cooperation work in a broader regional cooperation context?**

There are many episodes of history, politics in the past, culture and economy that are in touch between the three countries Austria, Romania and Bulgaria. We will not have the whole day to list them, but what unites the three countries is that they are members of our common European Union home. In this sense, besides the common present, we have a common future. I hope it will bring us not only common problems, but also common solutions, more challenges, but also more opportunities. Within the framework of the common Europe there is something specific that connects the three countries, this is the great, eternal, quiet and blue river Danube and the opportunities ahead of the Danube region.

The Danube Region comprises over 1/4th of the European Union population, 8 Member States and 6 countries not belonging to EU, about 150.5 million people population of the countries 29.6% of the European Union, and together with the other countries of the Danube region that are not members of the EU the population already reached 208 million people.

The EU Strategy worked out for the Danube Region provides the basis and a number of guidelines for sustainable development in order to develop the region of which our three countries are a component part.

## **T R A S P O R T**

From this point of view, we can see the Danube River as a historically established but also a modern transport corridor. Intensive navigation, cargo transportation, trade and tourism can be conducted along the river.

Unfortunately, this potential is not fully utilized. The average annual volume of freight transported along the Danube is only about 15% compared to those transported along the Rhine. The connection of the Danube-Rhine Connecting Channel is not fully utilized through Main, which provides the 2300-km-long river transport link between the North Sea, the Atlantic and the Black Sea. This is Pan-European Transport Corridor No 7, which gives tremendous development potential to our three countries. It is also an international transport corridor, and there are 14 countries of the Danube region, which have the opportunity to use combined transport along the Danube.

The Danube region is also the second macro-region (after the Baltic), which has a well-established EU strategy.

Additional possibility: Within the corridor 8, the Black Sea highway, connecting the two Bulgarian ports of Burgas and Varna (103 km) should be built. An enormous economic potential contains in the possible extension of the 'Black Sea Highway' project, as it continued to Constanta in the north and to Istanbul in the south. This will connect the largest port of the Black Sea Constanta and its satellites Midia and Mangalia as well as the Bulgarian ports of Varna and Burgas with the huge international transport hub, such as Istanbul. Another argument is that at the Black Sea coast in Arnavutköy north of Istanbul, a new airport with a capacity of 140 million passengers per year is being built, with the ambition to turn the airport not only into the largest air hub in Europe, and after some time also in the world, outsourcing Atlanta, Beijing and London.

This way the Black Sea highway will connect several Pan-European Transport Corridors (4,7,9,10) and will be able to count on a generating market of over 80 million people. In comparison, the current distance of 605 km along the traditional road Constanta-Varna-Istanbul, which could be overcome for about 7.5-8 hours. Upon construction of a highway the distance will be shortened by about 100 km and the Constanta - Istanbul route will be passed for about 4 - 4.5 hours.

Currently, the existing highway segments that can be used are in Bulgaria and in Turkey. According to preliminary estimates, about 355 km should be built to complete the Black Sea highway from Constanta to Istanbul.

According to EISA's analysis, this could be the fastest possible implementation and successful infrastructure project, for which besides EU funding, private investors can also be attracted by the highway and bringing into use toll fares.

## **ECONOMY, PLANNING, ECOLOGY**

The further development and implementation of the Danube Strategy and the combination of Pan-European Corridors development would allow the lower Danube and Black Sea areas to become a logistical centre for cargoes coming from Asia and the Far East. This will significantly increase the loading of Danube ports and the movement of goods along the Danube to Central and Western Europe, and hence to the North Sea and the Atlantic ports.

Additional possibilities exist in the development of river engineering, foreseeing and control of the floods on the Danube and its tributaries and planned ecological management of the Danube River. Special consideration should be given to joint efforts to preserve the unique fish richness of the river, especially sturgeon fish and planned care and measures for the cleanliness of Danube waters.

## **TOURISM AND CULTURE**

The Danube provides special and unique opportunities for cruise ship tourism. According to the data for the Bulgarian tourism, nearly 4% of the realized nights spending in Bulgaria are in the Danube towns as a result of cruise tourism and attractions.

At the Danube River over 15 cruise companies work daily. The registered Danube cruise companies possess 104 ships with an average capacity of about 170 passengers. Cruise

tourism programs allow visits to the Danubian towns, mutual acquaintance with cultures, history, traditions, cuisine, wine of the region. The predominant profile of the cruise tourist on the Danube is family and friendly groups aged 51-65 39% and over 65 years old people - 45% or more than 85% of the total number of travellers on the Danube. As an additional effect of the increase of cruise tourism on the Danube for Bulgaria is that for the last 10 years near the river were built 16 vineyards and wineries, 12 of which develop wine tourism in addition.

The above mentioned facts show the great potential and opportunities for tourism development along the Danube, as unquestionably the great experience and expertise of the Austrian side as a leader should be used. The Austrian influence is also visible in the architecture of the Danube towns, mostly Russe and Vidin, which are also attractive urban tourist sites on the Bulgarian side. The presence of the two bridges at Rousse-Giurgiu and Vidin-Calafat, enable the good trade exchanges and the creation of joint tourism products among the countries in the region, also the many common episodes in history, proximity to culture and traditions would contribute to this. It is enough to mention St. Dimitar Basarbovski, the patron of Bucharest, who was born and lived in the 17th century in the Bulgarian lands near Russe, Romania participated with his troops in the Ottoman Empire's liberation in Bulgaria in the 19th century, as well as the Austrian Troops released, albeit for a brief period, a number of parts in the then north-western Bulgarian lands around the town of Chiprovtsi and Montana in 1688.

The Danube also gave birth to the saviour of Europe, the man who, in 451, stopped the Huns of Attila in the Battle of the Catalonian Fields, Flavius Aetius, the great Roman commander named by his contemporaries and historians 'the last real Roman person', who was born in Durostorum, now Silistra.

Now that Europe and the European values are again subjected to religious fanaticism and terrorist attacks, the memory and glory of Flavius Aetius, the saviour of Europe, can become a subject of a cultural and historical project for the Danube. Also his statue could welcome and send off the ships and tourists that come to get acquainted and enjoy the Danube and Europe.

## **MIGRATION, SECURITY**

It is undisputed that military action in the Middle East - Syria, Iraq, military clashes and terror after the changes in North Africa and the situation in Afghanistan - are the root cause of the migratory wave that flooded Europe from the second half of 2013. The continuing military action in these mentioned areas, the chaos of the power and the uncertain future continue to generate migration to Europe. This is undoubtedly the number 1 challenge for Europe, which will have its effects for many years on.

Austria and Bulgaria, and Romania, in a smaller part, are among the countries affected by the mass migration. Austria is among the 5 most affected EU countries in which nearly 90% of all illegal migrants in the EU are detained. In Austria itself, there are serious moods for abandonment from the settlement agreement for migrants, in this regard Austria has organized a special forum with the participation of Balkan countries. Unfortunately, according to Eurostat, Bulgaria is among the EU countries with the greatest number of illegal residence migrants. The authorities in Bulgaria are taking considerable precautions, and only in 2016 the prosecutor's office in Bulgaria has brought more than 30 cases against organized crime

groups for illegal immigration in the country and transportation of immigrants. We have a number of police officers who let migrants pass against payment, were arrested and brought before the court. Bulgaria is taking measures to stop mass access by building a fence along the border with Turkey and enhancing police presence in the area.

However, from the perspective of EISA, the EU needs to take comprehensive measures and urgently review its migration policy, the role of FRONTEX and the whole European protection of its external borders.

In this connection, it is necessary:

- Urgently to be reviewed and re-adopted the EUROPEAN AGENDA OF SECURITY and EUROPEAN AGENDA OF MIGRATION;
- Adoption of a pan-European strategy for the protection of the Union's external borders;
- Maximum coordination between the migration services and the security services, and why not the establishment of pan-European security forces as well, for which De Gaulle advocated more than half a century ago, and soon the Bulgarian Prime Minister called for in Brussels;
- Optimization and management of Schengen Information System and introduction of additional requirements and real-time data transfer from national information systems;
- Optimizing the cooperation and partnership with non-EU countries, primarily Turkey, which could be a real buffer for migrants. Similar arrangements and arrangements should also be made with the Kingdom of Morocco, Egypt, Libya, Tunisia and Algeria, and the EU should provide for appropriate economic and commercial incentives to retain potential migrants in their countries of origin;
- To increase the information exchange and cooperation in the field of anti-terrorism, trans-border and organized crime with the Russian Federation and Ukraine.

## **CONCLUSION**

In its millennial, mostly Christian history and culture, Europe has often been faced with external dangers. It is our duty to do everything we need, even anything more, as to preserve Europe's values, culture, traditions, the future of our children and all Europeans, but also to build up adequate mechanisms against the abuse of European tolerance and openness. The same way a respectable architect constructs a building which will stay up much after his creator, the EU must be a worthy architect for its continent.