

EDITORS' NOTE ON THE SPECIAL ISSUE DEDICATED TO THE DANUBE AND BLACK SEA AREA

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Starting in 2014, EUSDR - the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region - will replace the former South-East Europe territorial cooperation program, providing a framework for funding projects focused on territorial cooperation of the countries and regions situated within this area. In fact, more than a program, the EUSDR is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Commission in December 2010 and focused on three objectives: convergence (solidarity among regions), regional competitiveness and employment, and European territorial cooperation. The strategy is focused on four pillars (connecting the region, protecting the environment, building prosperity and strengthening the region) divided among 11 priority areas: (1) waterways, (2) rail-road-air, (3) energy, culture and tourism, (4) water quality, (5) environmental risks, (6) biodiversity, landscapes, quality of air and soils, (7) knowledge society, (8) competitiveness, (10) people and skills, and (11) security.

While the name can suggest that the strategy covers only the region adjacent for the Danube, participating countries, including member states (Germany, Austria, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovak Republic, Slovenia, Bulgaria, Romania and Croatia), accession countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and Montenegro), and neighborhood countries (Moldova and Ukraine) are fully included in the area of application.

Even though the entire Romanian territory and administrative units within it are able to benefit upon EUSDR, numerous events preparing the launch of the Strategy, taking place in Romania in 2012 (such as the 2nd Annual Forum of the EU Strategy for the Danube Region, 3rd Danube Financing Dialogue, Danube Innovation Partnership, Danube Day 2013, Black Sea - Danube Social-Economic Innovation Forum or the Danube Environment Forum) have set a particular focus on the Danube, the

Danube Delta, and coastal area of the Black Sea.

Given the experience of the National Institute for Research and Development in Constructions, Urbanism and Sustainable Spatial Development URBAN-INCERC in research and planning focused on this area (including the SEE projects DONAUREGIONEN, DOMAUREGIONEN+, DATOURWAY, spatial plans for the Danube Delta and Black Sea coast, urban plans for many administrative units situated within the area, and other studies focused on the same region, some of which are summed up in the articles included here), we decided to dedicate a special issue of "Urbanism. Arhitectură. Construcții" to research covering the Black Sea coast, Danube area, and the Danube Delta, with a special focus on spatial planning. Even though we have called for papers during the two editions of the international conference organized in April and October by our institute, the number of submissions received was very low, yet sufficient to populate the current issue.

The region situated at the core of this issue has a crucial importance, which can be emphasized from several points of view drawing the attention of specialists from different fields, some stressed out by the articles included here. Firstly, they are home to an extraordinary biological and ecological diversity, represented by many unique or rare species and habitats, which resulted into the inclusion of many sites in the world heritage or

international network of protected sites. Secondly, they are characterized by an equally important ethnic diversity; people with different ethnic, cultural or religious backgrounds lived here in harmony, and also in harmony with nature, developing a set of practices that could lie the grounds for sustainable development, if embedded in the strategies of development. Thirdly, they are subject to the same pressures affecting Romania after 1990, induced by the socio-economic changes in conjunction with a development that lacks planning, or continuity in planning: excessive urbanization joined by the replacement of traditional living by the new ways of life, determining a separation from traditions, but also serious environmental, social, cultural and economic impacts. Last but not least, even though there were attempts to develop regulatory practices, they lacked the means of enforcement and a systemic correlation, and consequently produced limited effects, aggravated by the apparent lack of interest from those in charge with the management of the area.

We are simply hoping that the articles gathered here will stress out the crucial importance of research carried out to substantiate future territorial cooperation projects carried out under the framework of EUDSR, but will also reveal the important natural and cultural heritage of the area, which in addition to its fragility and vulnerability calls for developing projects aimed at its sustainable development.