

# Building Resilience Through Cross-Border Cooperation Romania, Moldova, and Ukraine. A Comparative Analysis Between Euroregions “Upper Pruth” and “Lower Danube”



Anatolie Cărbune

**Abstract** An assessment of economic and social potential of Euroregions “Upper Pruth” and “Lower Danube” reveals a wide spectrum of opportunities for cooperation, which would boost regional development and build resilience. However, there still exist several obstacles, which should be tackled in order to reach the desired goals. The aim of this article is to identify the opportunities and the obstacles that reduce the efficiency of cross border cooperation initiatives between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. The passivity of Moldavian side could be explain by several factors, such as the inefficiency of administrative - territorial structures in creating and promoting own projects, lack of strategies and plans for regional integration which would exploit the benefits of CBC, insufficient allocation of money on a local level, as well as corruption. Within this paper, the concept of resilience will be used to assess and to identify the risks and vulnerabilities of both Euroregions and their impact on cross border cooperation. The research method is non-participatory observation. In addition, we use quantitative variables to assess and to compare the economic potential of both Euroregions. The conclusions of our study is that institutions and administrative management play a major role in cross border cooperation, and their lack of efficiency will lead to rather weak outcomes and less resilience. In addition, there is a tendency towards ignoring cross-border cooperation when discussing about building resilience within EU’s neighbourhood, therefore our study aims at filling this gap.

**Keywords** Cross-border cooperation · Resilience · Regional development · Institutions · Opportunities

**JEL Classification** O1 · R1 · F5

---

A. Cărbune (✉)

Center for Europeans Studies, Corp I—Universitatea Alexandra Loan Cuza, Bulevardul Carol I 19, 700517 Iasi, Romania

e-mail: [anatoliecărbune@yahoo.com](mailto:anatoliecărbune@yahoo.com)

© The Editor(s) (if applicable) and The Author(s), under exclusive license to Springer Nature Switzerland AG 2021

A. Horobet et al. (eds.), *Global, Regional and Local Perspectives on the Economies of Southeastern Europe*, Springer Proceedings in Business and Economics, [https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-57953-1\\_2](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-57953-1_2)

# 1 Introduction

In such a dynamic and complex international system as we have nowadays, cross-border cooperation has become a tool for overcoming historical barriers. Cross-border cooperation is a concept initiated by the EU in order to encourage and increase the cooperation between the states with common borders. In the case of the European Neighbourhood Policy, cross-border cooperation represents a key priority for the EU, since it seeks to secure its external borders. A special focus is given to cross-border cooperation between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. Despite the geographical proximity between the three countries, there are still many issues from the economic, social and political point of view for regions near common borders. Therefore, cross-border cooperation is seen as an important tool for regional development and for promoting common interests within common initiatives. Taking into account that the common border between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine represents also the dividing line between EU space and non-EU space, approaching relations in this case through cross-border cooperation is even more important. Furthermore, as Moldova and Ukraine are often prone to external pressure from Russia, a wide range of risks and vulnerabilities affect their security and their economic development (Barbulescu et al. 2016). Within this context, cross-border cooperation should be approached through the lens of resilience, as Eastern part of Europe is insecure due to the current geopolitical implications and internal instability. Furthermore, it is important to understand how barrier effect creates obstacles to cross-border cooperation and how good governance could be achieved by creating network on a democratic governance basis (Anderson et al. 2002). When discussing about cross-border cooperation, Euroregions represent the structures that link local entities, in order to build territorial synergy and promote their mutual interests. Participating as a member within Euroregions has positive implications on political cross-border cooperation, which throughout time could create spillover effect in terms of policy cooperation initiatives (Svensson 2015). Within our paper, the Euregions Upper Pruth and Lower Danube will be analysed, since they represent an interesting case for studying cross-border cooperation between Romania, Ukraine and Moldova.

Our paper strives to examine, on the one hand, the opportunities of cross-border cooperation in both Euregions (Upper Pruth and Lower Danube) and on the other hand, the obstacles that reduce the effectiveness of projects and joint initiatives between the actors involved. The trilateral framework of cooperation requires a greater attention on differentiations between the regions from social, economic and political point of view (Barbulescu et al 2016). Therefore, the policies should be approached according to distinct priorities on a local level. The cooperation between the EU and its partners is highly important, in order to highlight their advantages, through an effective coordination of resources, in particular to support cross-border cooperation (European Parliament and the Council of European Union 2014).

Work of many scholars provides relevant findings regarding issues and challenges related to cross-border cooperation. Economic, social and geopolitical are the most common arguments used by the authors. According to Lepik (2009), the

most common obstacles when discussing about cross-border cooperation are the following: level of trust coming from national institutions, limited financial resources and lack of qualified staff. Bufon and Markejl (2010) identified several weaknesses of cross-border development: ineffective institutional management, passivity of partners, pursuing individual interests rather than looking to the needs of the broader population, competition between local administration, rather than sustainable cooperation. The obstacles should be approached by considering the barrier effect, which has created obstacles for cooperation at institutional, cultural and economic level (Medeiros 2014).

Despite a rich body of academic literature comprised of articles, studies and reports related to cross-border cooperation between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine, there are still many issues and aspects that should be brought into discussion. The role of Romania is not only limited to a partner within CBC initiatives as an EU member, Romania has the responsibility to support the implementation of policies under European Neighbourhood Policy. The conceptual basis of Neighbourhood Policy is the resilience concept, which brought a conceptual vitality within academic literature. However, in the current context, there is a tendency towards ignoring cross-border cooperation when discussing about building resilience within EU's neighbourhood. Therefore, our study aims at filling this gap. Furthermore, in the light of the events which took place in Eastern Europe throughout the last decade (such as the war in Georgia in 2008) and in recent times (the Ukrainian crisis), cross-border cooperation has important geopolitical implications which used to be ignored in the past by scholars.

Taking into account the aforementioned arguments, the Euroregions "Upper Pruth" and "Lower Danube" will be analyzed in order to highlight the obstacles and opportunities of cross-border cooperation, considering the influence of geopolitical realities. Within this analysis, the resilience concept will be used to assess the nature of opportunities and obstacles in order to identify the vulnerabilities and risks of both Euroregions. Therefore, we want to highlight the idea that it is not necessary only to be prosperous, open and efficient, but also to be resilient.

The paper has three parts. The first section of the article gives an overview on the specificities and the differences existing between the Euroregions Upper Pruth and Lower Danube. The second part reveals the most common obstacles in cross-border cooperation between Romania, Ukraine and Moldova. Finally, the third part assesses the opportunities and potential of both Euroregions within several fields of cooperation.

## **2 An Overview on Specificities and Differences of Euroregions "Upper Pruth" and "Lower Danube"**

European Union has actively supported cross-border cooperation, which has throughout time became an important mechanism for deepening and developing

relations with non-EU members within neighbourhood, through the establishment of Euroregions (Scott 2015). As Euroregions operate under an institutional framework and benefit from their own financial resources, a variety of issues can be approached, such as environment protection, trade, security issues, research and development, transport infrastructure (Lepik 2009). Romania, Moldova and Ukraine share a rich and complicated history and have similar institutional structures (Nastase et al. 2017). They are also actors that share important borders within the Eastern neighbourhood. Fruitful cooperation near common borders is needed more than ever, due to the present international context, which is characterized by volatility, when discussing from a geopolitical perspective. The Euroregions Upper Pruth and Lower Danube are important instruments, taking into consideration that three countries are involved. The general aim of establishing these Euroregions is represented by, but not limited to facilitating cross-border cooperation of local administration, institutions, ONGs, supporting business initiatives, increasing mobility in science, culture, sport.

An important factor that determined the formation of both Euroregions is the unitary ethnic structure. Because of historical context, the ethnic homogeneity at EU's Eastern neighbourhood is essential for keeping cohesion within Euroregions. Traditions, culture, mentality, language or historical legacy are factors that determine the homogeneity of the population and communities (CESCI 2016). Along the river Pruth, which is the basis axis of both Euro-regions, 178 settlements can be found on both sides: 99 on the right side and 79 settlements on the left side (CESCI 2016). To be more precise, the majority of the territory is comprised of Romanian population. The hydrographical axis determined the appearance of coupled settlements, like Medeleni-Medeleni or Grozesti-Grozesti (Sageata 2014).

Throughout time, certain large urban centers evolved as spatial structures, with a significant impact on cross-border cooperation: Galati, Husi and Iasi are from Romania and Cahul, Leova and Ungheni are from Moldova (CESCI 2016) (Table 1).

As is shown within the Table 2, there are more border points within Upper Pruth—9, while in the Lower Danube there are only 4. Geographical factors have determined a more accentuated density of crossing points in the Upper Pruth Euroregion, despite the fact that Lower Danube region has a larger territory and a larger population. The dynamic of interactions between cross-border regions in the case of Upper Pruth is the result of regional network interactivity and geographical connectivity determined by proximity. In addition, Lower Danube involves the maritime factor, which limits the territorial interactivity to a certain extent. A more accentuated accessibility through crossing points has several implications: on one hand, it might allow the propagation of external shocks, while also it might be practical in achieving a faster recovery (Osth 2018) (Table 2).

In this case, river Pruth is not only a natural border, but also it is also a dividing line with important geopolitical implications. Therefore, as mentioned above, the border between Romania on one side and Moldova and Ukraine one another side represent EU's external border. In this context, Romania has an important responsibility of securing the border by managing efficiently people mobility and commercials fluxes coming from non-EU space.

**Table 1** Basic information about Upper Pruth and Lower Danube Euroregions (Adapted after Roscovan et al. 2010)

	Upper Pruth	Lower Danube
Historical background	The creation of the Euroregion: 22 September, 2000	The creation of the Euroregions—14 August, 1998
General characteristics	The members of the Euroregion are: Moldova—Balti, Briceni, Edinet, Rascani, Glodeni, Falesti, Sangerei, Donduseni, Ocnita; Romania—Botosani and Suceava; Ukraine—Cernauti region	Moldova—Cahul, Cantemir Romania—Braila, Gala;i, Tulcea Ukraine—Odessa
Organizational Structure	The Euroregions have the following organizational structure: The Council of the Euroregion, the President of the Council, the Secretary of the Council, Work Commissions of Euroregion	The Euroregions have the following organizational structure: the Council of the Euroregion, the President of the Euroregion, the Vicepresidents of the Euroregion, commissions on specific fields, Centre for Coordination
Main goal and common fields for cooperation	<i>The main goal:</i> extending the existing sub regional links in order to support the cooperation of administrative territorial units <i>Common fields for cooperation:</i> economic relations, development of cross-border infrastructure, ecological security and environmental protection, cooperation within educational, scientific and cultural fields, protection of population's health, development of tourism	<i>The main goal:</i> the promotion of CBC in the lower basin of Danube <i>The main objectives:</i> organization and coordination of actions in order to stimulate economic, cultural, ecologic and educational cooperation <i>Common fields for cooperation:</i> economic cooperation, ecology, infrastructure projects, demography, education, mitigation of natural hazard, fight against organized crime

Taking into consideration the events that have occurred in Eastern European (the political crisis in Ukraine, the war in the Eastern part of the country, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, the frozen conflict in Transnistria or the unstable political situation in Chisinau), it becomes necessary to reconsider the framework of cross-border cooperation within the context of European Neighborhood Policy guidelines and provisions.

**Table 2** Border-crossing points at Romania's Eastern frontier (Adapted after Sageata 2011)

Custom point	Connection to	Passage to	Transport regime	Traffic regime	County	Euro-region
Galati	International waters		Port free zone	International	Galati	Lower Danube
	Girgiule sti	Moldova	Road railway			
Izvoarele Sucevei	Sept(Sipot)	Ukraine	Road	Small border traffic	Suceava	Upper Pruth
Oancea	Cahul	Moldova	Road	International	Galati	Lower Danube
Racovat	Diakivtzi	Ukraine	Road	Small border traffic	Botosani	Upper Pruth
Radauti-Prut	Lipcani	Moldova	Road	International	Botosani	Upper Pruth
Sirct	Porubne	Ukraine	Road	International	Suceava	Upper Pruth
Stanca	Costesti	Moldova	Road	International	Botosani	Upper Pruth
Suceava	International airport		Air flights	International	Suceava	Upper Pruth
Sulina	International waters		Port free zone	International	Tulcea	Lower Danube
Tulcea	International airport		Air flights	International	Tulcea	Lower
	Ismail	Ukraine	Port	International	Tulcea	Danube
Ulma	Rusca	Ukraine	Road	Small border traffic	Suceava	Upper Pruth
Vicovu de Sus	Krasnoilsk	Ukraine	Road	Small border traffic	Suceava	Upper Pruth
Viscani	Vadu Siret	Ukraine	Railway	International	Suceava	Upper Pruth

### 3 Obstacles and Risks in Cross-Border Cooperation Within Upper Pruth and Lower Danube Euroregions

Despite a rich amount of studies conducted on cross-border cooperation between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine, there was a tendency to ignore the nature of threats and risks from a multidimensional perspective and their potential negative impact (Vasylova 2012). Therefore, a broader picture of current situation by highlighting the obstacles, risks and vulnerabilities is needed. In this section, we aim to highlight the idea that, due to numerous negative factors that slow the cooperation between the three countries, regions near the common borders need to be resilient. The resilience has become an important concept for policy-makers, considering that it might be an effective measure to the uncertain and insecure environment that characterizes human societies nowadays (Giacometti et al 2018).

In the recent times there has been a growing interest of researchers on resilience, focused on communities and regional development (Bristow and Healy 2014; Keck

and Sakdapolrak 2013; Bene et al. 2014; Huggins and Thompson 2015). Numerous studies have highlighted the need for deepening the research on resilience from a multidimensional perspective. As resilience was included as one of the top priorities of EU Global Strategy (2016) and of the Review of the European Neighbourhood Policy from 2015, there is a need to see its practical impact. Cross-border cooperation comprises a wide source of opportunities for partners; however, the realities show that the results did not fulfill the expectations. Regions near common border are affected by a wide variety of factors belonging to different categories. In addition, risks and shocks might originate from both external and internal generators. Before the 2008 financial crisis, studies were focused more on the internal sources of risks. The present international context requires a closer look to external disturbing factors, such as economic crisis or events with profound geopolitical implications. In particular, this is a relevant argument for cross-border cooperation in the case of Romania, Moldova and Ukraine.

When discussing about strengthening cross-border cooperation between the three countries, political stability is one of the most important factors (Barbulescu et al. 2016). Any political instability at central level has an influence on decisional processes at regional level. Corruption, internal political battles and tensions are endemic characteristics of the political environment in Moldova and Ukraine. In particular, political unrest affects regional stability, which has a negative impact on cross-border cooperation. Romania, Moldova and Ukraine present different political landscapes, which in turn provide different views on cross-border cooperation in this case. Therefore, at the moment of the establishment of the Euroregions, the three states expressed divergent visions concerning cross-border cooperation. As an EU member, Romania is supporting the accession within Euro-Atlantic institutions; therefore, its role is to promote the principles of cross-border cooperation as part of European integration framework (Roscovan 2003).

The volatile political environment and frequent counterproductive changes have a negative influence on bilateral and multilateral cooperation, as there is a visible lack of synchronicity and divergent objectives between central and regional authorities. In particular, political instability is determining a different level of involvement of partners within projects. Internal battles between parties, divergent political ideologies and different attitudes towards external partners have shaped a rather negative image of Moldova in the realm of foreign involvement. Thus, as external priorities of partners involved are different, it is difficult to reach a common agreement towards several projects. For example, the agreement between EU and Moldova, which was signed in June 2014, implies the reform progress. The implementation process of political and economic reforms has been undermined by political instabilities and structural vulnerabilities of institutions.

Issues within the realm of politics have significant tangents with administrative management. Since there is a lack of support from central government, local and regional authorities have a higher pressure in order to meet the expectations as part of CBC initiatives. Another issue is the lack of communication, which leads to inefficient collaboration and a lower administrative transparency, since the staff within the administrative structures lacks specific communication and negotiation skills. In

addition, both Euroregions lack specific strategic framework in order to lead convergent efforts, overcome divergences and to support an efficient policy making process (Roscovan et al. 2010). Disputes between institutions represent an endemic characteristic of the political environment in Moldova. For instance, there are frequent tensions and disagreements between the State Chancellery and other ministries regarding the management of external funds (Barbulescu et al. 2016). Moreover, due to the frequent political changes in Moldova, the staff within authorities responsible for projects management is often changed as well; thus, the effectiveness of the implementation process is highly affected. It should be mentioned that at the beginning of cross-border cooperation, Moldova has shown a high interest, since many economic advantages and opportunities appeared; nonetheless, the enthusiasm of central authorities has not in practice remained at the same level. The passivity of the Moldovan authorities is the result of several factors, which have their roots in the political, economic and geopolitical realms. The administrative structures from Moldova, which are involved within cross-border cooperation projects, lack the capacity of self-organization and efficient promotion of their initiatives.

Another important issue is the low level of promotional activities related to cross-border cooperation. Within the administrative structure within the both Euroregions there is no specific system for sharing and informing local administrative-territorial units about all the opportunities related to cross-border cooperation. As it can be seen in the Table 3, overall, the element related promotional activities is important, since it might lead to an intensification of the regional development in the context cross-border cooperation and it will enrich and enlarge the existing social-networks between partners, associations, administrative units or economic agents.

A diversity of risks and obstacles implies the geopolitical dimension. Due to the ongoing conflict in Ukraine and because of Russia's hybrid wars on post-soviet countries, EU's Eastern Neighbourhood became increasingly insecure. The geopolitical realities have important implications on cross-border cooperation, as Moldova and Ukraine are within the common neighbourhood between EU and Russia, being under the so-called "Russia's sphere of influence". Despite this fact, the priorities for cross-border cooperation within the Euroregions Upper Pruth and Lower Danube were not adapted according to the current context. In addition, it is important to highlight that geopolitical events have shown a differentiate influence on specific countries or regions. An important element is the proximity. Therefore, the Southern dimension of cross-border cooperation seems to be more exposed to geopolitical risks than the Northern one. A relevant example to support this argument is represented by the conflict between Ukraine and Russia within Black Sea in November, 2018. As Russia captured its ships, Ukraine decided to introduce the Martial Law, which included the regions from Eastern part of the country, and Odessa—as a member within Lower Danube Euroregion—was one of them. The pressure of the events amplified the people's fears, authorities' concerns, and poses serious challenges to cross-border cooperation mechanism. These events have also a negative impact on the processes related to projects implementation. Therefore, Ukrainian authorities are more focused on security issues, rather than on cross-border cooperation initiatives (Barbulescu et al. 2016).



**Table 3** Risks and obstacles associated to cross-border cooperation between Romania, Ukraine and Moldova (Author's own representation)

Typologies	Risks/obstacles	Examples	Solutions/resilience drivers
Economic	Economic crisis, lack of investments, limited funds	Low competitiveness of goods and services, over dependence of agricultural sector	Promoting and Supporting business initiatives
Social	Poverty, income disparity, unemployment, marginalized population, lack of knowledge		Investments in tourism, agriculture, organisation of cultural events, festivals, etc.
Environmental	Floods occurrence, loss of aquatic biodiversity, pollution	Floods from July–August 2008	
Political Administrative	Political instability, lack of communication, weak governance and weak institutions, low level of promotional activities, corruption, mistrust among regional actors, disruptive policies, organized crime: Administrative: lack of consistent national regulations towards CBC(in die case of Moldova and Ukraine); weak fiscal bases of counties, unstable relations between national and local governments; The period of submitting and contracting projects is to lone	Centralized behavior (Cemauti and Odessa) of local authorities in Ukraine determines delays in decision making processes (Barbulescu et al. 2016)	Harmonization of die legislation, implementing EU reforms, intensification of promotional activities related to CBC opportunities, consolidation of cooperation framework between legions, involvement and support civil society
Geopolitics 1	Hybrid war, propaganda, differences between countries (divergent political views)	Russian pressure on countries from Eastern Europe, Ukrainian conflict	

## 4 Opportunities

In this section, our aim is to highlight the opportunities of cross-border cooperation, by assessing the unexploited socio-economic potential within the Euroregions Upper Pruth and Lower Danube.

Both Euroregions possess an enormous potential for socio-economic development. Despite an obvious large amount of opportunities, in two decades of cross-border cooperation between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine, the situation has not improved significantly. As we already identified, there are several categories of obstacles, which reduce the effectiveness of policies. However, the process of identifying opportunities with transparency and efficiency is also very important when it comes to policymaking initiatives.

Despite the fact that both Euroregions-Upper Pruth and Lower Danube were established by the same actors, their situation is quite different, considering the cooperation framework and the interests of partners (Roscovan 2003). Within Lower Danube Euroregion, Galati county has dominated local activity, which gave more opportunities for the Romanian side. However, within the Upper Pruth Euroregion, Ukrainian side has shown high interests, as it has important implications for its development to the West. Weak governance, small incentives, passivity of partners and lack of funds are only few negative factors that affected the process of identifying the opportunities, which would allow a more efficient exploitation of them. Between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine, there are a wide range of opportunities in tourism, economy, agriculture or culture, which would boost cooperation between regions, cities, local communities, businesses and universities.

Within both Euroregions there is significant potential for developing the agricultural sector. It should be noted that, in order to achieve tangible results, there is a need for investment in infrastructure and human resources. In this context, the promotional activities such the organization of fairs, business forums, exhibitions or seminars are important in order to inform the population about the available opportunities. The development of agricultural sector will boost regional economy and will offer new opportunities for local producers. The Euroregions possess important land resources, pastures, hayfield and forestry resources (Voicilas 2017). Increasing the connectivity and the dynamics of regional economy will result in a denser network and stronger partnerships.

A great potential for development exists within the tourism field, which is one of the top priorities of cross-border cooperation between Romania, Moldova and Ukraine. Tourism activities generate investments in infrastructure, develop business within the tourism field, and create new jobs (Batyk and Semenova 2013). As the labor cost is cheap and it is flexible, the integration of local population would bring benefits for their life. In particular, there are great similarities between the Euroregions Upper Pruth and Lower Danube in terms of natural diversity, historical heritage and climate conditions. Therefore, tourism opportunities might be approached in as similar way. However, Lower Danube has a greater potential for tourism development, as it is closer to the Black Sea. An assessment of local tourist resources within cross-border

**Table 4** Projects submitted by type of institution from Moldova (Adapted Roscovan et al. 2010)

Joint Operational Prooranyiie Romania-Ukraine-Republic of Moldova 2007–2013		
Priority	Type of institution	Projects (number)
Priority 1: Towards a more competitive border economy	NGO	5
	Public administration	10
	Public institution	5
	Research institutions and education	4
Priority 2: Environmental challenges and emergency preparedness	NGO	3
	Public administration	11
	Public institution	4
	Research institutions and education	1
Priority 3: People to people co-operation	NGO	36
	Public administration	23
	Public institution	10
	Research institutions and education	4
Total		106

area shows that there are several opportunities for developing historical or cultural tourism. For an efficient exploitation of these resources, innovative marketing and management actions are required in order to stimulate local entrepreneurship and attract tourists.

The famous wine industry, unique natural sites, local products and a promising network set by roads and railways indicate a real potential for tourism (Roscovan et al. 2010). Furthermore, the rich diversity of local resources such as traditions, cultural habits, clean and rich environment or even fishing and hunting are opportunities for developing the rural tourism. Near cross-border areas, there is a lack of specific infrastructure for tourism; and as can be seen in the Table 4, little cooperation is made between central and local authorities in order to support tourism initiatives, while NGOs are the most active actors.

Within the above tables we can observe that most of the projects proposals were submitted within the *Priority 3—People to People Cooperation*. Undoubtedly, this is positive aspect, which has important implications on building social connectivity and spreading information about cross-border opportunities. However, despite this, within the *Priority 1 towards a more competitive border economy*, there were implemented much less projects, which translates into less opportunities exploited, which in turn has insignificant impact on regional development and cross-border cooperation.

Within this context, we assume that creating new opportunities would increase regional resilience. Spatial accessibility, geographic proximity and the dynamic of interactions between people and a more intense economic activity represent just few factors that play an important role in regional resilience. Therefore, as spatial accessibility is limited despite of the existing geographic proximity, future initiative

**Table 5** Project proposals submitted by beneficiaries from Moldova (Adapted after Roscovan et al. 2010)

Priority	Total projects	Projects proposal from Moldova	Leader partners from Moldova	Partners Moldova
<i>First call for projects proposals</i>				
Priority 1: Towards a more competitive border economy	171	55	3	7
Priority 3: People to people cooperation	156	25	9	52
<i>Second call for projects proposals</i>				
Priority 1: Towards a more competitive border economy	372(CN) 22 (CA)	98(CN) 22(CA)	3	17
Priority 3: People to people cooperation	475(CN) 35(CA)	100(CN) 26(CA)	7	21

shall be shaped according to the needs, to increase the accessibility and people interaction in order to build resilience for long term.

## 5 Conclusions

Euroregions Upper Pruth and Lower Danube are important tools under which cross-border cooperation between Romania, Ukraine and Moldova is achieved. However, several obstacles are identified that limit the effectiveness of cooperation.

The present article has aimed at analysing cross-border cooperation between Romania, Ukraine and Moldova, by underlying on one hand the main obstacles and risks and on the other hand the opportunities within the current context. In order to achieve this, we conducted a comparative analysis between the Euroregions Upper Pruth and Lower Danube, in order to highlight if there are some differences on regional level. Our study highlighted that weak administrative capacity and internal political issues represent the main obstacles, which have negatively impact on cross-border cooperation. At the same time, we assume that geopolitical risks should also be taken into account when discussing about cross-border cooperation. Therefore, our assumption is that geographical proximity of Lower Danube Euroregion to Eastern Ukraine represents a generator of a variety of risks and vulnerabilities, taking into account the conflict between Russia and Ukraine. Due to the insecure environment, Ukrainian authorities were more focused on security issues rather than on cross-border cooperation activities.

An assessment of both Euroregions revealed that there are countless examples of opportunities within different fields. Gross value added by regional economy,

tourism and mobility would result in an increase of convergence between regions and it would reduce impact of barrier effect.

The study presents several limits regarding the relevance of resilience concept regarding cross-border cooperation. Therefore, further research is expected in order to fill this gap. In conclusion, our analysis calls for more research in order to identify the nature of risks and vulnerabilities and to provide solutions, for a better understanding of cross-border cooperation from a multidimensional perspective.

## References

- Anderson, J., et al. (2002). Why study borders now? *Regional and Federal Studies*, 12, 1–12.
- Barbulescu, I. G., et al. (2016). Cooperarea transfrontaliera între Romania si Ucraina, respectiv între Romania si Republica Moldova. Oportunitati si provocari in perioada 2014–2020. Studii de Strategie si Politici, Institutul European din Romania.
- Batyk, I., & Semenova, L. (2013). Cross-border cooperation in tourism between the Warmian Masurian Voivodeship and the Kalingrad Region. *Baltic Region*, 3(17), 77–85.
- Bene, C., Newsham, A., Davies, M., Ulrichs, M., & Godfrey Wood, R. (2014). Resilience, poverty and development. *Journal of International Development*, 26(5), 598–623.
- Bristow, G., & Healy, A. (2014). Regional resilience: An agency perspective. *Regional Studies*, 48(5), 923–935.
- Bufon, M., & Markelj, V. (2010). Regional policies and cross-border cooperation: New challenges and new development models in Central Europe. *Revista Romana de Geografie Politica*, 12(1), 18–28.
- Bulat, V. (2018). Studiu de evaluare a impactului programelor de cooperare transfrontaliera ale UE privind dezvoltarea social-economica a Republicii Moldova. The Minister of Agriculture, Regional Development and Environment of Republic of Moldova, Chisinau.
- European Parliament and of the Council of the European Union. (2014). Regulation (EU) No 232/2014 of the European parliament and of the Council of 11 March 2014 establishing a European Neighbourhood Instrument. *Official Journal of the European Union*, 77, 27–42.
- Giacometti, A., et al. (2018). regional economic and social resilience: Conceptual debate and implications for nordic regions. Discussion paper prepared for Nordic thematic group for innovative and resilient regions, Stockholm.
- Huggins, R., & Thompson, P. (2015). Local entrepreneurial resilience and culture: The role of social values in fostering economic recovery. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 8(2), 313–330.
- Institute of Geography, Romanian Academy. (2016). *Crossing the borders. Studies on cross-border cooperation within the Danube Region*. Budapest: Central European Service for Cross-border Initiatives.
- Keck, M. & Saklapolrak, P. (2013). What is social resilience? Lessons learned and ways for ward, *Erdekunde*, 67(1), pp. 5–19.
- Lepik, K. L. (2009). Euroregions as mechanisms for strengthening cross-border cooperation in the Baltic Sea region, *TRAMES: A Journal of the Humanities & Social Sciences*, 13(3), 265–284.
- Medeiros, E. (2014). Barrier effect and cross-border cooperation the Sweden-Norway Interreg-A territorial effects. *Finisterra-Revista Portuguesa de Geografia*, 97, 89–102.
- Nastase, C., et al. (2017). Cultural similarities in service of the cross-border cooperation between Ukraine and Romania. In *International Scientific and Practical Conference Cross-Border Regional Development in the System of Cross-Order Cooperation*, Chernivtsy, Ukraine (pp. 130–135).

- Osth, J. (2018). Social capital, resilience and accessibility in urban systems: A study on Sweden. *Networks and Spatial Economics*, 18(2), 313–336.
- Roscovan, M. et al. (2010). *Ghidde cooperare transfrontaliera. Ediia a II-a, revazuta si completata*. Editura EPIGRAF, Chisinau.
- Roscovan, M. (2003). Cooperarea transfrontaliera a Republicii Moldova cu Romania si Ucraina. [www.ipp.md/public/files/Publicatii/2003/iulie/PrRoscovan.doc](http://www.ipp.md/public/files/Publicatii/2003/iulie/PrRoscovan.doc). Accessed on February 2, 2019.
- Sageata, R. (2011). Cross-border co-operation Euro-Regions at the European Union eastern frontier within the context of Romania's accession to the Schengen Area. *Geographica Pannonica*, 15(4), 127–135.
- Sageata, R. (2014). Ethnic homogeneity in Cross-border cooperation Euroregions in the Lower Danube Basin, Editura Academiei Romine (pp. 56–58).
- Scott, J. W. (2015). Bordering, border politics and cross-border cooperation in Europe. In: F. Celata & Colletti, R. (Eds.), *Neighbourhood policy and the construction of European external borders* (27–44). Springer.
- Setnikar, S., Cankar, J. S., & Petkovsek, V. (2014). Factors that influence cross-border cooperation between business in the Alps-Adriatic region. *Economic Research/Ekonomska Istrazivanja*, 27(1), 304–319.
- Svensson, S. (2015). The bordered world of cross-border cooperation: The determinants of local government contact networks within Euroregions. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 25(3), 77–295.
- Vasylova, V. (2012). Euroregions in Ukraine-Romania-Republic Of Moldova Area: Expectations, experience and prospects, *CES Working Papers*, 4(4), 878–886.
- Voicilas, D. M. (2017). Opportunities and threats in North Eastern Romania—SWOT Analysis in Suceava and Botosani counties. *Agricultural Economics and Rural Development, New Series*, 14(2), 175–184.