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### SOME CONSIDERATIONS ON ROMANIA'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE NEW EUROPEAN NEIGHBOURHOOD POLICY

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#### Abstract

*Initiative supported by Romania even from its pre-accession years, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is now even more in the attention of the policy-makers. Being at the Eastern frontier of the European Union, Romania is confronted with higher responsibilities and also potential risks related to the challenges this region is confronted with. Romania intends to play a pro-active role in the ENP, being also a promoter of regional cooperation initiatives in the area. Supporting the projects aimed at creating and consolidating a stability and security area in the Eastern neighbourhood, pleading permanently for an increased attention not to overlap the different cooperation initiatives (either the ENP overall framework or the Black Sea Synergy, the Eastern Partnership and so on) Romania is also focusing on increasing the role of the civil society in the area. Romania should find ways to turn to good account the opportunities deriving from its potential of stability and security factor in the area, its aspiration to be a catalyst of regional cooperation in the area, by largely using the instruments offered by the European Neighbourhood Policy, also concentrating on its contribution to the constant adaptation of these instruments and to finding new solutions to deal with the challenges of this part of the EU neighbourhood.*

#### Keywords:

*European Neighbourhood Policy, Romania, Moldova, Black Sea Synergy, regional cooperation*

#### Introduction

Once extended to the Central and Eastern part of Europe, the European Union registered a change of priorities in its external policy. The new economic and social opportunities, accompanied also by new challenges and risks at the

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Eastern frontier of the European Union have led to the necessity to adapt EU's relations with its new neighbouring states and even identify new policies, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), for tackling these relations.

Romania's accession to EU, on January 1<sup>st</sup> 2007, has also imposed an adjustment of its relations with the neighbours, taking into account the new position as EU Member State, with increased responsibilities as country at the Eastern border of the Union.

Romania has undertaken a pro-active role in the Black Sea region, at the same time supporting constantly a common and unitary position of the European Union towards this area. The traditional relations with the Mediterranean countries have continued, Romania supporting the new initiative for the Mediterranean, proposed by President Sarkozy.

The military events in Georgia in the summer of 2008 have led to unfortunate consequences in South Osetia, with human losses, economic damage and trust breaking. Romania has promoted the dialogue in the area, constantly affirming the support for observing the international conventions and the territorial integrity principles.

Some elements of Romania's position/contribution towards these components of the new neighbourhood policy will be mentioned in this article. It is necessary to point out that several topics, such as Romania's relations with the South-Mediterranean states and a possible contribution to the development of the Southern dimension of the ENP will not be tackled this article. The intention is to focus on the Eastern dimension of the ENP - on Moldova, Ukraine and also on Black Sea projects.

### **Elements of Romania's position/contribution in/to the New European Neighbourhood Policy**

Even from the emergence of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2004, Romania has supported its objectives and principles, at first from the position of candidate state. Being a supporter of the inclusion of the Southern Caucasus countries in the ENP, Romania considered that the increased political cooperation, the financial support foreseen and the wide array of cooperation fields envisaged would only be some of the elements that would make the initiative of this policy attractive both to EU and to all the potential ENP partner states.

Starting with 2007, Romania has undertaken a pro-active role in the New European Neighbourhood Policy, as a full Member State, aware both of its responsibilities at the Eastern border of the Union and of the opportunities that might emerge from this strategic position.

Romania was among the states that requested the **reform**<sup>25</sup> of the ENP, in order to better answer to the needs of the partner states, as well as to the constantly growing challenges in the area. In this sense, even before November 2006, Romania transmitted to all the Member States a *non-paper* affirming its position towards ENP: supporting the intensification of the cooperation with the Eastern neighbours, while observing the fundamental principle of differentiation, of regional ownership; a stricter monitoring process of the progress achieved and an increased cooperation in energy security, democracy, rule of law etc.

At present, **Romania supports the consolidation of the ENP** as priority of EU's external relations, especially by increasing the positive conditionality and by rendering efficient the Action Plans, as main instruments of the policy. Romanian officials believe that the new Action Plans for Moldova and Ukraine should include more ambitious and detailed objectives and a much more precise calendar for their implementation.

Romania strongly supports the objective of building *an area of stability and security in its Eastern neighbourhood*. Therefore it salutes the initiatives that entail the consolidation of regional cooperation.

Romania is looking forward to the Commission's Communication, planned for the next spring, on the **Eastern Partnership**, the new initiative (May 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2008) of Poland and Sweden. Although at first regarded with a certain reserve by Romania and Bulgaria, countries that prefer to concentrate their efforts and to give more credit to the Black Sea Synergy project, the Eastern Partnership initiative will probably benefit of Romania's support, *if* this new framework is to be *complementary* to the ones already in place and will observe all the ENP principles, identifying additional financial sources. This initiative will concentrate upon deeper cooperation and integration with the Eastern partners, entailing visa facilitation, the creation of a free trade area for services and agriculture goods, increased cooperation in transport, environment and border control. This initiative is considered to be a good occasion to reform the ENP in the favour of the Eastern neighbouring partners, reducing the gap towards projects as the Nordic Dimension or the Black Sea Synergy<sup>26</sup>.

This new initiative was supposed to counterbalance Sarkozy's project, of a "Barcelona Process: **Union for the Mediterranean**", launched at the Summit in Paris, on July 13<sup>th</sup> 2008. This Union is regarded as a multilateral partnership meant to increase the opportunities for the regional cohesion and integration. The

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<sup>25</sup> Interview with a representative of the Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008

<sup>26</sup> Cianciara K., Agnieszka, „*Eastern partnership – opening a new chapter of Polish Eastern policy and the European Neighbourhood Policy?*”, Analyses and Opinions, No. 4, June 2008, The Institute of Public Affairs, Warsaw, Poland, p. 13

focus is placed on a more balanced governing<sup>27</sup> (the introduction of a co-presidency: one EU member state and one partner state from the Mediterranean area), on concrete projects in transport, environment and energy. Having its own institutions, the new framework is supposed to attract additional funds for encouraging and promoting further regional programmes (from private sources, contributions of the Mediterranean partners, of the financial institutions, regional banks or from the Neighbourhood Investment Facility)<sup>28</sup>. Romania has supported this initiative from the beginning, considering three main areas of cooperation<sup>29</sup> as mainly important: energy, water resources and maritime/land highways. Romania considers this initiative as an opportunity for the Romanian firms to move again towards these markets where they had traditional business relations and important commercial flows.

Romania is in favour of a more concrete and active involvement of the European Union in the issue of *solving the frozen conflicts*, in all the negotiating formats regarding these conflicts. The recent events in Caucasus are merely a proof that there is still a need for an increased attention at international and European level to the cooperation and conflict solving for this particular region.

As for the *financial assistance*, Romania contributes with over 800 thousand euro in 2008 for its Eastern neighbourhood from the development aid funds, Republic of Moldova and Georgia being priorities on the agenda. Romania will also contribute with one million euro in 2008-2010 to the Neighbourhood Investment Facility, mainly for the support of transport, energy projects, social sector, small and medium enterprises.

Romania was and continues to be a **promoter of an EU strategy for the Black Sea**. The new EU cooperation initiative, the *Black Sea Synergy*<sup>30</sup> (April 2007), has been endorsed and constantly promoted by Romania. Aiming at supporting the democratic principles, the rule of law and good governance, a better border management, improving the security climate through concrete measure to combat illegal migration or organised crime, also seeking to assure energy and infrastructure security, regional development and consolidated cross-

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<sup>27</sup> Keller-Noellet, Jacques and Andoura, Sami, „*Quel avenir pour la Politique europeenne de voisinage?*”, European Affairs Program, Working Paper, 2008/03, EGMONT - Royal Institute for International Relations, Brussels

<sup>28</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council *Barcelona Process: Union for the Mediterranean*, COM(2008) 319 (Final), Brussels, 20 May 2008, p. 8-9.

[http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/euromed/docs/com08\\_319\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/euromed/docs/com08_319_en.pdf)

<sup>29</sup> Press statement of Romanian President Traian Băsescu, at the conclusion of the Paris Summit for the Mediterranean, July 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008 [http://www.presidency.ro/pdf/date/10061\\_ro.pdf](http://www.presidency.ro/pdf/date/10061_ro.pdf)

<sup>30</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament *Black Sea Synergy – A New Regional Cooperation Initiative*, COM(2007) 160 final, Brussels, 11 April 2007

[http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07\\_160\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com07_160_en.pdf)

border cooperation, the initiative was meant to be a regional, unitary approach of the European Union towards the region. In June this year, the Commission issued a Communication on the *Report of the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy*<sup>31</sup>, stating once again that the Synergy is and should remain complementary to the ENP, based also on the co-financing principle. The joint operational programme for the Black Sea region that is about to be launched benefits of a total budget of 17.5 million euro (Romania contributing with 4 million euro) and aims at economic and social development, addressing common challenges, secure borders, financing “people-to-people” projects, the eligible area comprising regions from Romania, Bulgaria, Ukraine, Russia, Turkey and Greece and the territory of the Republic of Moldova, Georgia, Azerbaijan and Armenia. The importance of cross-border programmes has increased, also given the possibility of incorporation of a series of financial instruments (the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument under the ENP, the European Regional Development Fund, the funds allocated by the European Investment Bank or by the Trade and Development Black Sea Bank etc).

The European Parliament has approved on January 17<sup>th</sup> 2008 a Report on a Black Sea regional policy approach, initiated by the Romanian MEP Roberta Anastase, report that supported and approved the *Romanian proposals*: a regional approach for the policy in the Black Sea, an active involvement of Russia and Turkey - as equal partners - in upholding the project, doubling the financial allocations through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument for the cross-border cooperation projects<sup>32</sup>.

A Romanian initiative, the *Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership* envisages a platform for cooperation and commitment to develop a regional strategy and a common vision in the region, identifying concrete cooperation opportunities and creating viable partnership networks. At the first Summit (June 5<sup>th</sup> 2006), Romania expressed its option for accelerating cooperation in the Black Sea area, pleading for a regional umbrella that would offer a higher interaction among the partners. In the months that followed, Romania has proposed to its partners a series of projects of the Forum on the environment protection, involving the civil society in the region, know-how exchange between Nordic

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<sup>31</sup> European Commission, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, *Report of the first year of implementation of the Black Sea Synergy*, Brussels, COM(2008) 391 final, 19 June 2008 [http://ec.europa.eu/external\\_relations/blacksea/doc/com\\_08\\_391\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/external_relations/blacksea/doc/com_08_391_en.pdf)

<sup>32</sup> European Parliament, *REPORT on a Black Sea Regional Policy Approach* (2007/2101(INI)), Committee of Foreign Affairs, Rapporteur: Roberta Alma Anastase <http://ps.blacksea-commission.org/Documents/PublicDocuments/docs/News/EU%20Parliament%20Report%20on%20Black%20Sea%20Regional%20Policy%20Approach%20A6-0510-2007.pdf>

cooperation and the Black Sea cooperation initiatives.<sup>33</sup> A number of international conferences and seminars have been envisaged since then, aiming at developing the capacity of the civil society to play an active role in the region, to connect to the European agenda and also to efficiently resort to European funds on specific projects.

An important element of Romania's strategy in the Black Sea area is the creation of a *Black Sea Euro region* (initiated in March 2006) that is due to be launched in September this year, with its Secretariat in Constanta and having as main goal to attract the local communities in the development of cooperation projects in the region.

With the support of the US German Marshall Fund, a *Black Sea Trust Fund for Regional Cooperation* is now based in Romania with the aim of supporting democracy consolidation, regional cooperation for civil society development, promoting good governance in the Black Sea region.

In this context, the main instruments for promoting Romania's interests in the Black Sea region remain the promotion of the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership, the consolidation and reform of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation Organization, the promotion and consolidation of the Euro region, the support of the Black Sea Trust programmes and the promotion of the regional policy approach for the Black Sea within the ENP.

As regards the implication of Romania in strengthening the cooperation **relations with the Republic of Moldova**, under the European Neighbourhood Policy, the focus has been upon supporting the European vocation and perspective of Moldova, paying particular attention to the challenges of the frozen conflict in the area. Romania acknowledged the launch of the reflection process upon the new agreement EU-Republic of Moldova, since the Action Plan of 2005 expires this year, and is in favour of speeding up this reflection process. Romania was the initiator of the launch of a mobility partnership EU-Moldova, at the same time supporting a free trade agreement between EU and Moldova, depending on the economic capacity of the latter.

As a matter of fact, after Romania's accession to EU, some changes intervened in the relationship Romania-Republic of Moldova: the restrictions upon the free movement of persons increased, the access to free trade flows visibly diminished, Romania having to renounce to several facilities of a traditional and privileged relationship with Moldova, all this generating negative effects on the partner country.

At present, Romania supports the European perspective of the Republic of Moldova, pleading for introducing Moldova as soon as possible under the EU

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<sup>33</sup> Interview with a representative of the Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, August 5<sup>th</sup>, 2008

policy for the Western Balkans<sup>34</sup>, idea that, although not supported with geographic arguments, aims at keeping a possible membership perspective for Moldova separate from Ukraine's, given the major differences, as dimension, potential and even support from the present EU member states. Also Romania favoured and encouraged Moldova's membership to relevant regional organizations, such as CEFTA, Central European Initiative, South-East cooperation process, constantly affirming its support for observing the integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Moldova.

A more pro-active policy towards Moldova could still be put in place, through increased assistance for the implementation of the Action Plan EU-Moldova and for the future agreement that is about to be concluded, support for reducing the energy dependency of the Republic, more opportunities for the labour force in Moldova, promotion of an active attitude and involvement of EU in tackling the conflict in Transnistria and also attracting interested partner states for endorsing Romania's initiatives concerning Moldova, under the ENP.

In March 2007, negotiations began for a *New Enhanced Agreement* EU-Ukraine, as well as for a deeper free trade agreement. Within the ENP, **Romania supports the consolidation of EU-Ukraine relations**<sup>35</sup>, based on the European values, on observing the regional and international commitments, under the aegis of the Action Plan and the future Enhanced Agreement. Romania supports the reforms undertaken by Ukraine in the fields of rule of law, justice and investment climate improvement, expecting that the constitutional reform remains a priority. At the same time, apart from the European Neighbourhood Policy projects that involve Ukraine (and the incessant development of the cross-border cooperation), Romania is dealing with the present action at law regarding the continental shore of the Black Sea, at the International Court of Justice in the Hague, following an endless series of bilateral negotiations (almost 34 rounds only between 1998 and 2004). In addition, it remains to be seen the evolution of the disagreement on Ukraine's construction of Bastroe Channel (in the Danube Delta).

As for the tragic events in **Georgia** this summer, Romania has had a rather cautious position towards this conflict. The diplomatic tour of the Romanian President in five countries in the Black Sea region (19-22 August, in Ukraine, Rep. Moldova, Rep. Azerbaijan, Georgia and Turkey) was meant to express a full support for Georgia, observing the territorial integrity and sovereignty principles, reaffirming the strong necessity to enhance cooperation in this area, through tangible projects. Romania has declared it would not recognize the independence of Abkhazia and South Osetia, consistent with the position towards Kosovo.

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<sup>34</sup> Press statement, Press conference of President Traian Băsescu, Brussels, at the end of the Extraordinary European Council, September 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008 [http://www.presidency.ro/pdf/date/10163\\_ro.pdf](http://www.presidency.ro/pdf/date/10163_ro.pdf)

<sup>35</sup> Interview with a representative of the Romanian Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Bucharest, August 1<sup>st</sup>, 2008

During the *Extraordinary European Council on Georgia*, on September 1<sup>st</sup> 2008, in Brussels, Romania has presented an analysis of the situation in the region, future perspectives, together with several solutions proposed for the stability and security in this region. Promoting the solidarity principle at EU level in dealing with Caucasus topics, Romania advocates for replacing the peace-keeping mechanisms in the frozen-conflicted regions, for increasing NATO's role in the Black Sea area, for speeding up the European energy projects, avoiding the isolation of Georgia and Azerbaijan<sup>36</sup>. The Conclusions of this European Council state the concern of the EU member states towards the disproportionate reaction of Russia and condemns the unilateral decision of Russia to acknowledge the independence of South Osetia and Abkhazia. An important conclusion of this Summit was also the acknowledgment of the urgent necessity to *enhance regional cooperation with the Eastern partners*, either through the Black Sea Synergy, or through the Eastern Partnership and other initiatives at EU level.

A partnership between EU and Azerbaijan is also strongly supported by Romania.

The future increased importance of the European Neighbourhood Policy also ensues from the *European Parliament resolution*<sup>37</sup> (September 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008), requesting a further development of the ENP, adapting it to the necessities of the Eastern partners, affirming the necessity to enhance cooperation with the Black Sea countries, even by creating a special institutional and multilateral mechanism, such as a *Union for the Black Sea*. It is also expected that the European Union engages itself politically, budgetary in the project Nabucco, given the alternative projects that have already appeared in the area (i.e. South Stream project). It is necessary to guide the future ENP towards the South and East having in mind the necessity of assuring a diversity of suppliers and safe transit routes. Therefore it would be useful to link in the future the ENP to an EU energy policy<sup>38</sup>.

## Conclusions

Priority of its foreign policy, the EU's Neighbourhood Policy was supported by Romania even from the pre-accession period. Later on, Romania has embarked on the way to consolidate the ENP, many of the initiatives leading to the reform of the ENP being strongly supported and endorsed by Romania.

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<sup>36</sup> Press statement of President Basescu, at the International Airport Henri Coandă, before leaving for the Extraordinary European Council in Brussels, September 1<sup>st</sup> 2008

[http://www.presidency.ro/pdf/date/10161\\_ro.pdf](http://www.presidency.ro/pdf/date/10161_ro.pdf)

<sup>37</sup> [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/briefing\\_page/35768-245-09-36-20080901BRI35767-01-09-2008-2008/default\\_p001c002\\_ro.htm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/expert/briefing_page/35768-245-09-36-20080901BRI35767-01-09-2008-2008/default_p001c002_ro.htm)

<sup>38</sup> Longhurst, Kerry, „*Injecting more differentiation in European Neighbourhood Policy: what consequences for Ukraine?*”, *Russie.Nei.Visions* no. 32, Russia/NIS Center, Paris, July 2008, p. 20



Aware of the potential risks at the Eastern frontier and of its greater responsibilities at the frontier of the Union, Romania has attempted to draw the attention of the European and international community both upon the economic opportunities and also on the risks, challenges and potential threats that this region is confronted with.

Romania strongly supports the projects aimed at creating and consolidating a stability and security area in the Eastern neighbourhood, pleading permanently for an increased attention not to overlap the different cooperation initiatives (either the ENP overall framework, the Black Sea Synergy, the Eastern Partnership and so on) and also for observing the principles of differentiation (upon own merits), co-financing and increasing the role of the civil society in the area.

The cross-border projects have acquired a greater significance within the ENP.

During the negotiations and also in the implementation phase of the Action plans, Romania can support countries like Moldova, Ukraine, Georgia, sharing its experience accumulated during the pre-accession period.

At the same time a supporter of the European perspective for Moldova, encouraging the European aspirations and reforms in Ukraine, Romania is focusing upon the development of a common, unitary and efficient EU strategy in the Black Sea area. Its initiatives and constant promotion of the Black Sea Synergy, together with consolidating the Black Sea Forum for Dialogue and Partnership and the Black Sea Trust projects are on the agenda of priorities as regards its external policy in this region.

Romania has given a clear signal of full support towards Georgia, reaffirming its commitment to the principles of territorial integrity, sovereignty and frontier inviolability.

The active participation in the European Neighbourhood Policy implies not only specific contributions to the development of EU's relations with the partner states or the bilateral relations between Romania and ENP partner states, but also facing challenges regarding the relatively unstable climate of the region (given the frozen conflicts, the illegal migration, the difficulties of securing the borders), also paying attention to avoiding the creation of new barriers at the borders of the Union.

Romania should find ways to turn to good account the opportunities deriving from its potential of stability and security factor in the area, catalyst of the regional cooperation initiatives in the area, by largely using the instruments offered by the European neighbourhood policy, also concentrating on its contribution to the constant adaptation of these instruments and the attainment of new solutions to deal with the challenges of this part of the EU neighbourhood.

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