

**THE ROMANO/ROMANIAN EURO-REGIONAL  
TRANS-FRONTIER COOPERATION  
AT THE EU EXTERNAL FRONTIER (2008).  
THE EURO REGION “SIRET-PRUT-NISTRU”  
– ELEMENTS OF POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY**

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**Abstract:** The dynamic of the European political area, complicated and sometimes contradictory, determines the necessity of the trans-frontier cooperation, on a background of the tendency that some limitrophe regions associates in structures meant to facilitate the efficient capitalization of the area with all the aspects generatrix of functional territorial systems and sub-systems and with a high level of systemically interface. Regarding the year 2008, in the European area, the Prut River remained a political barrier between two Romanian states, Romania and Moldavian Republic. The trans-frontier cooperation of Euro-regional type represents a modality of vanishing the differences of structural-territorial and economical kind, that derives from the superposition of the eastern external frontier route of the EU (from 2007) and NATO (from 2004) with Prut River. The Siret-Prut-Nistru Euro-region, created at the initiative of Romania in 2002, “covers” from the territorial and demographic point of view an important part in the Romanian ex-EU area, making in this way an optimal frame of interconnecting the two territorial state systems, toggled in different macro-territorial structures. The “Siret-Prut-Nistru” Euro-region can be considerate one with a remarkable functional potential, determined by the common peculiarity that has the human communities from those two associated political areas and of course, the European aspiration of both states.

**Keywords:** Euro-region, the Euro-region Siret-Prut-Nistru, trans-frontier cooperation, territorial systems, Romania, Moldavian Republic.

The existence of two Romanian states separated by a frontier of which restrictive role, as an external EU frontier and NATO, represents a supplementary argument for developing the trans-frontier cooperation on this area. With this terms, especially for the present period, it is imposed the identification of a system that allows the breakthrough of those two communities from left, respective the right of Prut River with a cultural, social and economic point of view.

The trans-frontier cooperation of Euro-regional type represents a modality of accomplishing this step, starting from the registered successes at the trans-frontier relations level in the areas where euro-region territorial systems with Central Europe and Western Europe exist.

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Fig. 1 The geographical position of the “Siret-Prut-Nistru” Euro-region

**The constitution frame.** Establishing the Euro-regions “Superior Prut” and “Lower Danube” in 2000 “solved” partially this problem by including in these trans-frontier cooperation systems the Romanian counties from Moldova and those from the northern and southern of the Moldavian Republic and, of course, with the participation of some administrative-territorial structures contiguous from Ukraine.

With these conditions, in 2002, the “Romanian-Moldavian” trans-frontier cooperation system became a more complete one following the initiatives of some County Councils from Romania and Moldavian Republic of constituting the “Siret-Prut-Nistru” Euro-region. Hereby, in October 2002, in Iași, was made the first official nucleus of the Euro-region by signing a trans-frontier cooperation Protocol „Romanian-Moldavian” with the name of “Siret-Prut-Nistru” Euro-region.

At the end of 2002, respectively in 4 December, in Moldavian Republic, at Ungheni was signed *The Operation Statute of the Euro-Region*, date that took place also the first reunion of the presidents forum, corporate by the deputies of all the participant Counties Council.

The “Siret-Prut-Nistru” Euro-region was made by territorial-administrative high-level structures, respective counties, with an upper level of being compatible at all the adjudication level and the ability to develop trans-frontier relation of cooperating in a decentralized political system sustained by the Public Administration Law from the associated states.

Unfortunately, Moldavian Republic came back from the administrative-territorial organization point of view to the soviet district system that may be a disadvantage for the institutional collaboration, between the administrative-territorial structures situated on one way and the other of the frontier.

According to *the constitution state* of this structure of trans-frontier cooperation, the main objectives aim at the development of the collaboration relations in the local administrations with priority in the economical, cultural and educational domains etc. Comparative to the other Euro-regions, Romania's participation to this new Euro-regional system has some advantages that increase the functionality of the system. It is about a common history of the fact that it is talked a single language, the Romanian one, being the main element of the communication with direct implications in understanding all the functional mechanisms of the trans-frontier cooperation system and nevertheless the advantage of the compatibility organizational systems of organizational administrative-territorial of the two existent states, essential attributes that stood at the base of the constitution, development and functionality of this structure of trans-frontier cooperation of Euro-regional type.

**The administrative and geographic frame.** The geological synthesis of old, the physical-geographic frame of the Euro-region's area is one dominated by plateau, with altitudes of no more 600m, stark by valleys with canyon aspect and orientated in north-south direction, like the flowing direction of those 3 main hydrographic arteries that names also the Euro-region, respectively, in sequence from west to east: The Siret River, The Prut River and The Nistru River.

In the actual shape the Euro-region "Siret-Prut-Nistru" was built in 2002 but in two stages (Figure no 1, Table no 1):

a.) *the first stage*, respectively the months September and November, were made the initiative cores, formed by the counties Iași, Neamț and Vaslui from the Romanian part and the counties Chișinău, Ungheni and Lăpușna from the Moldavian part.

b.) *the second stage*, respectively the month December, when the Euro-region area expanded by integrating another two counties from Moldavian Republic: Orhei and Soroca situated on the north-eastern part of the state.

This trans-frontier structure is the only one with Romanian participation that includes in his area, without being a member, also a state capital, the Chișinău town, the Moldavian Republic capital.

**The structural peculiarities.** Regarding the territorial extension, this Euro-region subscribes in the category of the average value and regarding the shape it is close to one territorial structure with high level of functionality. It is a bilateral cooperation structure inner-stately that was based on administrative territorial structure similar with high level of compatibility. Also, like we mentioned before, includes in its area a human community with common past and cultural-ethno-linguistic identical peculiarities.

Analysing the data presented in Table no 1, we observe also the existent symmetry between those two territorial structures associated from the point of view of territorial extension and demographic potential, as follows:

- the proportions are relatively equal, regarding the integrated area, 53,8 % for the Romanian part and 46,2 % for the Moldavian part;

- the situation is identical also, from the demographic potential point of view, with a slight superiority for the Romanian side of 64,0 %. Of course, regarding the fact that in this area is included also the capital of the Moldavian Republic the proportions are relatively equilibrated in this case.

The proportions regarding the surface and population are alike regarding its weight at the level of each national territorial ensemble (Table no. 1). Both as

surface and as population, the Moldavian Republic part represents about a half form the surface and respectively the country's population while the Romanian part represent under 10,0 % on each situation.

The Euro-region "Siret-Prut-Nistru". Administrative-demographics peculiarities in 2002  
(Source: www.insee.ro; www.citypopulation.de/Moldawien.html)

Table 1

County	Surface (km <sup>2</sup> )	%	Population (2002)	%	Density (loc/km <sup>2</sup> )	No towns	Nr commune / villages	Capital	No. Inhab.
Iași	5.476	17,1	819.044	19,9	149,6	4	85 / 421	Iași	321.580
Neamț	5.896	18,5	557.084	13,5	94,5	4	70 / 347	Piatra Neamț	105.499
Vaslui	5.318	16,6	455.550	11,1	85,7	4	71 / 456	Vaslui	70.267
<b>Total</b>	<b>16.690</b>	<b>53,8</b>	<b>1.831.678</b>	<b>63,6</b>		<b>12</b>	<b>226 / 1.224</b>		
<i>by România</i>	<i>7,00 %</i>		<i>8,44 %</i>						
Chișinău	2.780	8,7	382.400	9,3	137,5	5	86 / 164	Chișinău	662.400
Lăpușna	3.436	10,8	276.300	6,7	80,4	5	58 / 137	Hâncești	19.000
Orhei	2.850	8,9	300.400	7,3	105,4	4	69 / 173	Orhei	37.000
Soroca	3.162	9,9	274.600	6,7	86,8	5	57 / 167	Soroca	38.900
Ungheni	2.516	7,9	260.300	6,3	103,4	4	52 / 94	Ungheni	40.000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14.744</b>	<b>46,2</b>	<b>1.494.322</b>	<b>36,4</b>		<b>23</b>	<b>322 / 735</b>		
<i>by Republica Moldova<sup>1</sup></i>	<i>45,01 %</i>		<i>53,97 %</i>						
<b>Euroregion</b>	<b>31.434</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>3.326.000</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>128,5</b>	<b>35</b>	<b>559 / 1.983</b>		
Chișinău City	490	1,5	779.400	19,0	1.590,6	6	11 / 24	Chișinău	662.400

But there are differences regarding the size of the resident cities as main regional polarization centres with superior values for the Romanian ones, excepting the city Chișinău from the Moldavian side where the average value is 30.000 citizens given by 150.000 from the Romania side. Hereby, there are two important centres for each area: the city Chișinău for the Moldavian part and the city Iași for the Romanian part. If from the point of view of the city sizes the situation is favorable to the Romanian part regarding its number the situation is favorable to the Moldavian part with a double number of urban centres, that means an equilibrated and dense repartition in the territory of the local polarization centres.

Starting from the existent public administrative law, in each of the two states that regulates the associations at trans-frontier cooperation level, may accomplish at county and local councils, at city halls, in the Euro-region area, are 238 of such institutions (12 cities and 226 communes) that administrates 1236 localities, and the Moldavian part 29 cities and 333 communes that manages 788 localities.

In conclusion, associating in the Euro-region can be realized in 14 cities and 559 communes, respective trans-frontier associations between the cities and communes from the previous mentioned Romanian and Moldavian part. Without the cities Chișinău and Iași, that together have over one million inhabitants, results an average of 4100 inhabitants on administrative potential asociative structure on the Moldavian part and aproximately 6300 inhabitants on the same type of unity on the Romania part, hereby existing theoreticly, the premise that the asociation of two local councils may form a structure with an average of 10000 inhabitants.

The territorial distribution of the population shown by the density value of 128,5 loc/km<sup>2</sup> existent in the Euro-region is considered over the european

<sup>1</sup> Territorial Administrative Organization of the Republic of Moldavia under Law no. 191-XIV from 12 of November 1998 (Official Monitor of the Republic of Moldavia no.116-118, 30 of December 1998) completed by the Law no776-XIV from 2-nd of February 2000; Law no. 1140-XIV from 14 of July 2000 (source: [www.ccrm.rol.md](http://www.ccrm.rol.md))

average and, of course, over the Romanian and Moldavian Republic average. At the superior part are situated the counties Iași, Chișinău and Orhei and with lower values, Vaslui and Lăpușna (Table no. 1).

The Euro-region “Siret-Prut-Nistru” is superposed from the ethnic point of view of an area predominant Romanian, at which is added in a smaller part, the gipsies in the Romanian part, respective Ukrainians and Russians from the Moldavian part.

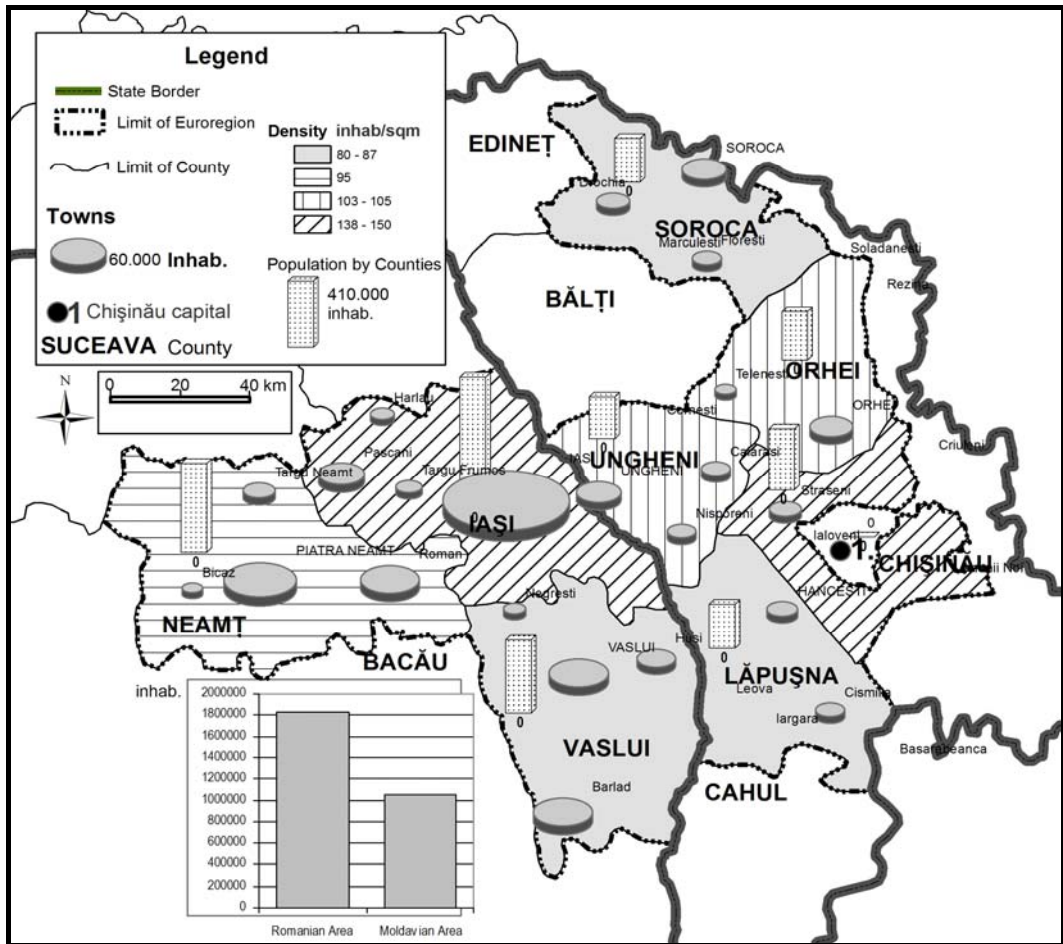


Fig. 2 The Euro-region “Siret-Prut-Nistru”. The demographic potential and the localities network with decisional functions (cities and villages)

**The Romanian-Moldavian and its permeability.** Stabled on the present route in 1948 by annexation of the Bessarabia and Northern Bucovina by the URSS, this acquired step by step a powerful role of separation specific to the communist period. The relaxation of the political situation from the central and eastern area by abolishing the communist system that determined, in 1991, the disintegration of URSS and the born of 15 new independent state, the Moldavian Republic also, in a much smaller territorial structure of what inner-war Bessarabia was.

Romania was the first European state that officially admitted the Moldavian Republic, creating a series of facilities for the citizens of this state and

interacting with the “mother country”. Of course, an important role in this way came from the frontiers permeability.

A period of approximately 10 years, respective 1991-2000 the person flow between the two states was accomplished with the ID card and a large number of citizens of the Moldavian Republic received Romanian citizenship.

The promotion of the Romanian’s negotiation with EU in the idea of integrating this new European structure imposed step by step a new series of “restrictions” regarding the “filtration” of the trans-frontier human flow, by the safety of this frontier that in 2007 became external frontier of the EU. Although, from 2004 is also frontier with “NATO”.

The support of the frontier between the two states is one of hydrographical type plotter along the Prut River and of the accumulation lake at Stânca-Costești arranged in the same hydrographical basin artery. From those 681, 3 km that represents the total length of the frontier between the two states 70, 0 % is included in the Euro region area “Siret-Prut-Nistru”.

The dynamics of the emergence frontier crossing points remained almost identical during 1990-2007. Hereby, from a railway point and a route one, specific to the socialist period, in present in the Euro-region area has open a single route point based on crossing with the ferryboat. Opening new crossing points in the present period under the conditions that the two states are into different faze regarding the European integration process will impose a high professional of those and based on European security standards.

The Euro-region role in this context is a considerable one, having as main purpose the attenuation of the economical and cultural discrepancy from the two areas, of identifying and applying solutions that the political frontier not to became a separation one, specific to the communist period and to create a favourable frame of preparing the Moldavian area to approach and even the perspective of integration in the EU area.

Hereby, at the stately frontier level integrated in the Euro-region “Siret-Prut-Nistru” (Figure no. 2) are the following crossing points with international regime (source The Stately Police, 2007):

1. Sculeni-Sculeni, by route, without bridge, through interchance with the ferryboat;
2. Iași-Socola-Ungheni, by railway with bridge;
3. Albița-Leușeni, by route with bridge;
4. Iași - aeroport;
5. Chișinău –aeroport.

This frontier sector, on the Romanian side is under surveillance and control of the General Stately Police Iași, having in subordinate The County Inspectorates of Iași and Vaslui.

**The functionality of the Euro-regional area.** The territorial configuration of the euro region “Siret-Prut-Nistru” is situated in the category of those with favourable shape to the functionality and which, at his turn is determined by the system of ways and means of communication.

The route network of superior rank (European, national and county), concordant to Figure no. 3, that marks out the two relatively asymmetric systems: one Moldavian with a dense network of this category of roads and a Romanian sector with a reduce density and with a main axis northern-southern along the Siret Valley to which converge the other categories of roads of inferior rank.

We can appreciate that at the level of the Romanian part is a rectangular system compared with the Moldavian sector where the system convergences radial with the main core at the Chișinău capital. There are some connexions possibilities at all the main trans-frontier ways on eastern-western relation with an determination that the number of the bridges are insufficient. In fact, if we count the connexion through bridges, we observe the looming of a route means of communication of system of type “hourglass” by “concentrating” the route flow on Albița-Leușeni.

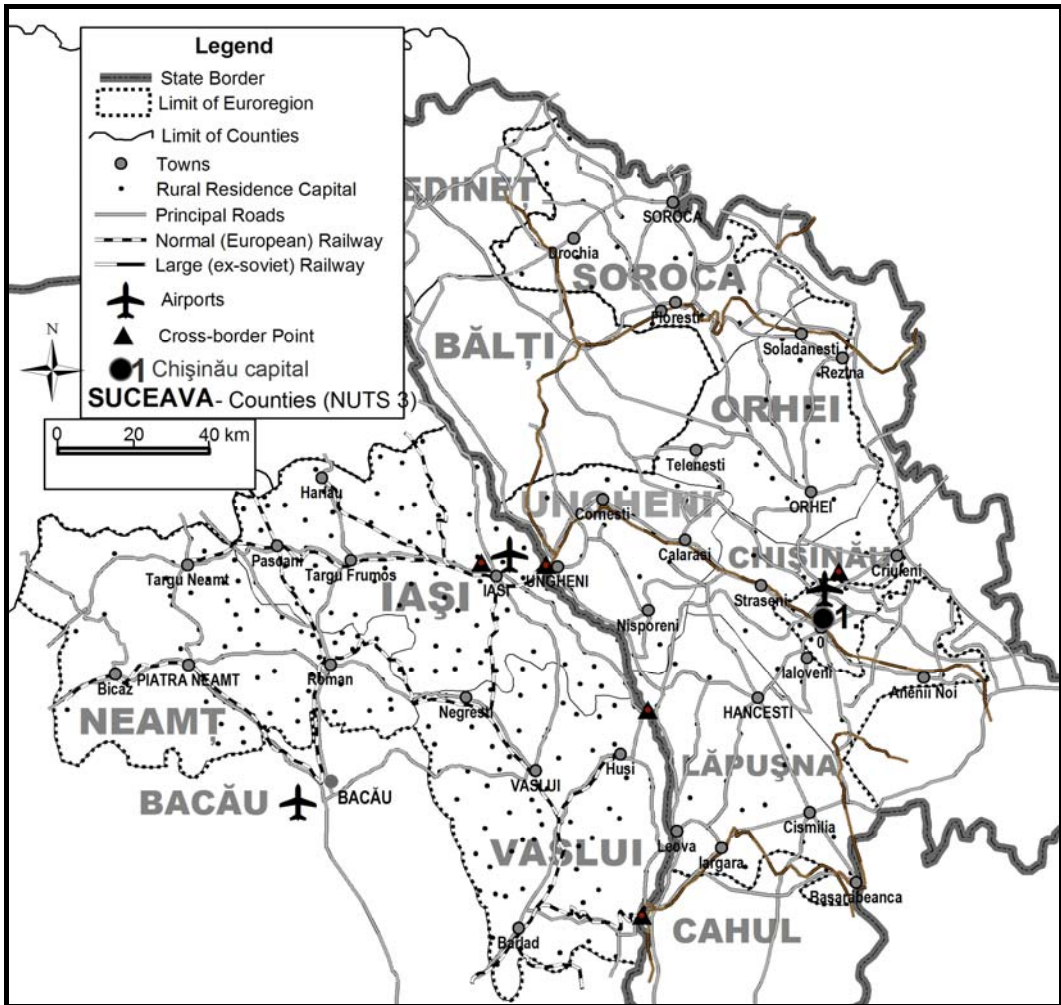


Fig. 3 The Euro-region “Siret-Prut-Nistru”. The demographic potential and the localities network with decisional functions (cities and communes).

Also, an important role in developing the trans-frontier relational system can be played by the doublet localities “face to face” situated on the right and left of River Prut, in many ways with identical names related through a system of frontier of parallel routes but with only two trans-frontier connexions: by ferryboat to Sculeni and by bridge to Albița (Figure no. 3).

The railway network follows closely the networks route, this time with a dense network on the Romanian territory. The inconveniences are determined by:

- the biggest part of the network from the Romanian territory is not electrified, excepting the tronsone of the Siret Valey.

- the incapacities between the railway system of the Romanian area (normal gauge) and the Moldavian one (large gauge) that involves a lasting process for interchanging in the connection points existent along the border. Besides, the "hourglass" system is so obvious to railways by concentrating the entire trans-frontier flow on Socola-Ungheni connection.

In the Euro-region area are two airports with international connexions. The most important is the one from Chisinau, and with smaller sizes that from Iasi, between the two airports existing regulate charts. Another international airport situated in the vicinity of the Euro-region is that from Bacău.

**In conclusion**, the Euro-region "Siret-Prut-Nistru" is framed in the category of those with high functional potential and at which level it is imposed the identification of some solution for interfacing the two systems with common traditions but differentiated by the stately statute associated through the position prism regarding the integration in the European Union. Even if the Moldavian Republic makes part of the independent Stately Community the partnership with EU, the financed programs by this, with priority for the frontier areas, including the Moldavian Republic in the eligible area for applying the INTEREG III CADSES Programme, are only few arguments on behalf of prominence the united European families wishes to include in his area also the second Romanian state.

This trans-frontier cooperation structure can be a solution to elaborating some balanced developing strategies of the two "frontier slopes" different from the point of view of the economical development and especially regarding the freedom of displacing the people, under the conditions in which the Romanian and Moldavian communities are find dispersed on the entire Euro-regional area.

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