

## ForMin Aurescu, at EUSDR Forum, proposes capitalising on links with other EU initiatives in region

**Minister of Foreign Affairs Bogdan Aurescu participated, on Thursday, in videoconference format, in the ministerial meeting of the Annual Forum of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), organized by the rotating Presidency of Croatia.**

The central theme of the forum - "Harmonious and sustainable development of the Danube Region" - provided an assessment 10 years after the launch of the Strategy, at the initiative of Romania and Austria, and the presentation of the efforts of EUSDR states to prevent and combat the multiple effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and to identify common approaches and projects for socio-economic recovery in the Danube region.

According to a Foreign Ministry (MAE) release sent to AGERPRES, the head of Romanian Diplomacy welcomed the completion of the review process of this Strategy and the adoption of the new Action Plan of EUSDR, underlining the efforts of the Romanian Presidency of EUSDR in 2019 in promoting this goal.

In this context, he mentioned the role of Romania as co-initiator of the EU Strategy in 2008 and the provision by our country and Austria of the offices of the Technical Secretariat of the Strategy. At the same time, he expressed Romania's openness to continue hosting this structure even after 2021.

Minister Bogdan Aurescu pointed out that the challenges generated by the pandemic crisis represent a test of the resilience of states and societies in the region, and the crisis can be overcome only by manifesting regional solidarity, as an expression of common responsibility, by defending democratic values and order based on rules and international law, as well as by adapting to the current context.

The Romanian minister also mentioned the EU's efforts to overcome the current crisis and to recover the economies of the member states, in the form of adjustments to the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027 and the adoption of the most ambitious investment plan in the history of the Union ("Next Generation EU") and also the substantial EU financial support for the countries of the Western Balkans and the Eastern Neighborhood.

On this occasion, the head of the Romanian diplomacy evoked Romania's contribution at regional and EU level to the efforts to prevent and combat the pandemic, mainly helping the citizens of the Republic of Moldova by sending medical teams, allocating funds and donating basic sanitation products, respectively the hosting by Romania of the strategic reserve of medical equipment (RescEU) which also benefited countries from the Western Balkans.

Aurescu also stressed the beneficial role of regional cooperation within the EUSDR in bringing EU standards, values and practices closer to EU countries participating in the EUSDR, and proposed building on the EUSDR's links with other EU initiatives in the region, such as the Black Sea Synergy, Common Maritime Agenda for the Black Sea, with the aim of supporting joint actions and projects in the fields of environment, research and development, energy, transport and economic recovery.

Bogdan Aurescu welcomed the Croatian EUSDR presidency's efforts during this difficult period, marked by the COVID-19 pandemic, and wished success to the future Slovak rotating presidency in this format of regional cooperation. At the end of the meeting, the participating ministers adopted a political statement reaffirming the crucial significance of strengthening cooperation between the states of the Danube region in overcoming the current crisis.

The EUSDR is a political initiative of Romania and Austria, promoted in June 2008 by a joint letter on a Prime Minister level addressed to the President of the European Commission. EUSDR is a community instrument for macro-regional cooperation of riparian states, aimed at the economic and social development of the Danube macro-region, by strengthening the implementation of EU policies and legislation in the region.

14 states are participating in the Danube Strategy: nine EU member states (Austria, Romania, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Croatia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Germany - Bavaria and Baden-Wurttemberg, Hungary) and five non-EU countries (Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Moldova and Ukraine).