

## Legal and practical aspects of the associations between the city of Bucharest and the large territorial collectivities – actuality and perspective

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**Abstract.** *In the current political and economic context, highly sensitive, determined and influenced by the financial crisis which spreads all part of globalization coordinates, the state administrations themselves are put in a position to find new and effective solutions, in order to satisfy a wide range of interests.*

*One of the possible ways reserved to administrative systems, with priority to those attached to the European continental area values, is the collaborative administration, based on strengthening cooperation and partnership between the public authorities which are animated by common interests both in national and foreign, and in internal and international collaboration.*

*From this point of view, the current scientific approach aims to reflect on the reality of institutional and partnership relations that the Municipality of Bucharest - capital of Romania - conducts in its relations with other European cities and large municipalities, such as the Municipality of Rome (Italy). The purpose of these relations regard multiple activities such as local services, high quality serving of the members of the local community, according to the principle and essential value of European Administrative Space - i.e. local autonomy.*

**Keywords:** territorial collectivities, collaborative administrations, local autonomy, Bucharest City, Rome City.

**JEL Classification:** H77.

**REL Classification:** 13G.

## Introduction

The circumstances of political, legal and socio-economic nature in the last 20 years, at the world, national and local level have inspired in the local collectivities **a new philosophy** with respect to fulfilling the duties derived from satisfying the general interest, by virtue of the essential principle and value of the European administrative space – namely, **local autonomy**.

**The local space** became a consolidated decisional center with a high degree of autonomy and with an important role of focused support for the local and national development strategies or programs of the governmental actors.

At present, the **local territorial collectivities claim to play an increasingly significant role in the European context**, being encouraged even by the states to which they belong, in the context of recognizing autonomy as an efficient management system of the public affairs.

As in many other states, in our country, the process of awarding administrative vocation to the local collectivities followed the *roller coaster evolution* of the process of implementing the Romanian public administration reform, the local collectivity standing out due to its double nature, of decentralized collectivity, but also of state territorial circumscription, with legal personality and with bodies empowered to act in its name (representative public administration) (Manda and Manda, 2008: pp. 24-25).

Thus, the decentralization process experienced, depending on the degree of administrative modernization, different stages: from the simplistic approach, by means of which decentralization is reduced to a sum of transfers of competences and functions to considering it as an intention to rebalance the political system, by redefining the state territorial levels.

In this new scheme of values, the **duties entrusted to the local public administration** multiply, but they also diversify, completing the *traditional, politico-administrative ones*, with *economic, social, cultural, scientific and many other duties* (Manda, 2012: p. 111), therefore, being **correlated to the intervention forms adopted by these authorities in society**.

Having to permanently adapt to the evolution of the local collectivities, in order to be able to satisfy its needs, the *local public administration was pushed forward*, being forced to anticipate the social transformations that *forecast the future* (Bourgon, 2007: p. 7) and to influence the elaboration of prognoses, programs, projects as results of the forecast, using these anticipations.

Thus, the local space was opened to the *direct compromise of the actors within civil society institutional, pluralism, participative development and decentralization* (Bossuyt, 1995) representing the pillars of a new paradigm of local public administration.

In the context of the new paradigm, the central axis of the behavior of local public closely follows a main objective: **local development**.

Local development experienced an increased degree of maturity and elasticity by synchronizing the specialists in the field of two large concepts, acknowledged at the beginning of the 1990's: **sustainable development<sup>(1)</sup> and decentralized cooperation**.

#### I. Decentralized cooperation

In the current politico-economic context, decisively influenced by the effects of the **economic-financial crisis** (reduction of resources for the sectors of major interest– health, education, investments, unemployment, decrease of domestic consumption etc.) which also manifest at the level of the local communities, the local authorities are in the situation where they must find new and efficient **solutions**, capable of answering to the **satisfaction of the general interest**.

One of the possible **action paths reserved to the administration systems**, which is aligned to the major attention for *development of the European Union, is constituted by the collaborative sub-state administrations*. It is grounded on strengthening the **cooperation and partnership relations** between these public authorities animated by mutual interests, both at the domestic, national level, as well as on the external level, of international collaboration.

The term of *decentralized cooperation* represents an innovative concept, which reflects a right and a liberty of the sub-state entities in the decentralized states and whose exercising is transformed in value added to the states' activity in international context.

It was promoted in 1970<sup>(2)</sup> by the World Federation of Twinned Towns (WFTT)<sup>(3)</sup> as alternative to the failure of traditional cooperation (central cooperation promoted by governments) offering the possibility of *direct participation of communes and populations to the international action<sup>(4)</sup>*, and a first legal recognition was granted by the UN in 1971 through Resolution 2861 (XXVI).

This notion was consolidated at the beginning of the 1990's, coming to complete the niches not covered by the excessively centralized mechanism of the OECD, *Official development assistance* (ODA)<sup>(5)</sup>.

The term, not fully outlined even today, has two meanings (Bekkouche and Gallepp, 2001: 389-390):

- *In broad sense (Anglo-Saxon approach)*: it reflects a new type of cooperation approach, new cooperation forms based on initiatives generated at the level of the local collectivities and characterized by an enlargement of the sphere of the participating actors. In this sphere are included, apart from the authorities exercising public power, also actors within civil society (for example, NGO's). This type of more participative and more horizontal cooperation is specific to the European Union.

The European Commission consecrated this concept for the first time within the cooperation agreements between the European Communities and the states in *Africa*, the Caribbean and Pacific areas (*CPA*)<sup>(6)</sup>, with the occasion of the fourth Convention of Lomé, in the part consecrated to objectives, principles and actors of cooperation.

The Convention of Lomé provided an *adequate field of action for a truly decentralized approach* (Bossuyt, 2001: p. 6), but the EU continued and continues to develop new cooperation modalities traced to this concept.

- *In narrow sense (French approach)*: it outlines only the area of the cooperation between sub-state administrations (decentralized public cooperation). The only actors recognized to exercise this right are the **authorities elected through universal vote or those which have the status of local public authority**. It is a meaning recognized by the French doctrine and especially by the practice of Latin states, such as Italy, France, Spain.

The European understanding on decentralized cooperation distinguishes different **objectives** out of which we mention the *encouragement of the local initiative, consolidation of the decentralization processes in different states, consolidation and widening of participative democracy functioning framework by means of the active involvement of citizens in the problematic of development, by conferring the local collectivities the right to establish their own development priorities* etc.

#### *Actors of the decentralized cooperation space*

In what concerns the European Union local collectivities there is a multitude of local entities characterized by distinct roles, attributions and competences which intervene within decentralized cooperation, out of which we mention<sup>(7)</sup>: *local and*

*regional public authorities, as well as other public entities enjoying relative autonomy, with definite competences and able to influence the social life of the collectivity; associations and local groups, such as cooperatives, base organizations (women, producers etc.) with specific „weight” in the community life; NGO’s, civil associations and other types of associations connected to the development process; the saving and credit institutions and the mutual funds; the academic and human rights protection structures; SME’s etc.*

The expression „local authority” refers to a wide range of actors located on different administrative levels (municipalities, communities, districts, counties, provinces, regions etc.). Europe enjoys more than 90,000 local authorities (municipalities) and more than 1,100 intermediary level administrative-territorial units (districts, counties), but in the current economic context a strong tendency to reconfigure the municipal map is seen, with the purpose to eliminate localities with low resources and small-range services. The resetting is achieved either by *reducing their number by merger or aggregation of different municipalities (measure specific to the northern countries), or by creating supra-municipal cooperation entities (measure specific to France)* (González, 2006: p. 115).

In this context, decentralized cooperation **provides a sustainable platform for cooperation between entities**, allowing, at the same time, the outlining of the responsibility matrix of each partner and must be understood not as a *substitute of governmental cooperation* (Seisdedos, 2008: p. 107), but as a set of actions complementary to the latter.

The acknowledgement, within the second Un Conference regarding Human Habitats (*Habitat II, Istanbul, Turkey, 3-14 June 1996*), of towns as vectors of decentralized cooperation, as important protagonists in the matter of *sustainable development, of the socio-economic and cultural infrastructure, of human rights, of innovation, infrastructures etc.*, generated an explosion of the dynamics of collaborative relations between the local entities (towns).

With this occasion, increased importance was given to local collectivities and authorities in the context of the world configuration of trade and international relations and local powers were recognized the right to cooperation for development, as international policy instrument, a matter until then considered as pertaining exclusively to national governments.

In what concerns decentralized cooperation, for some very active municipalities, it can constitute the objective of coordinated actions (the type of internationalization policies) or, in case of others, it can be a quantification of a wider participation at the international level, but not as a result of strategic programs.

Decentralized cooperation represents not only an important dimension of cooperation for development, but also an important instrument for consolidating decentralizations. Local authorities became the voice of their own collectivities, which they represent within the international organizations, on topics related to cooperation for development, a tendency to internationalize local collectivities being increasingly seen.

This particular type of cooperation constitutes a *new approach of the cooperation relations which attempt to stabilize direct relations with the local representation bodies and to stimulate their own abilities in designing and implementing the development initiatives with the support of the direct participation of interested citizens, taking into consideration their interests and their points of view on development* (Guía de orientaciones para la cooperación municipal al desarrollo, 2010: p. 19).

The competence and experience of local authorities in the area of the traditional sectors of local development, as well as the thorough knowledge of the local interests and needs lead to the consolidation of trust in these authorities, in the context of the development process.

*The principle of local autonomy*, fundamental principle governing the local public administration and the activity of its authorities, consecrated in the legal order of many European states and not only, allows the local collectivities to perform decentralized cooperation actions in the area of the competence fields that were transferred to them.

Thus, decentralized public cooperation subsumes international partnerships between different territorial collectivities or between different local public entities, with specific responsibilities and competences, with their own development exigencies, aiming at a common general interest, local development.

Decentralized public cooperation differentiates from the classical one by a few important characteristics (Enríquez and Ortega, 2007: pp. 13-14):

1. It assumes the participation of decentralized entities which act in programs, promote and manage actions, without necessarily including the concentrated participation and action of other actors (for example, the central government);
2. The action sphere belongs to the competences of the sub-national entities; it does not compete to that of the central administrations, but it completes the traditional bilateral cooperation in the area (local-territorial) in which, usually, it does not work; this area can be wider or narrower, depending on the decentralization degree of each state;
3. Cooperation comprises more than a simple transfer of financial resources, including experience exchanges in the field of providing public services, local

institutional consolidation, local infrastructure, local development, territory management etc.

4. The actors of decentralized cooperation are decentralized autonomous public territorial entities. They have their own budgets, programs.
5. The autonomy of these entities confers upon them more flexibility and fewer restrictions and procedures than in the case of classical cooperation.
6. The relations established between the actors of decentralized cooperation are more stable, both on average and on long term, and allow the adaptation of the cooperation pace or modalities.
7. It is grounded on the direct interest of each participant, generating horizontal symmetrical, reciprocal and mutual interest relations. This equality relationship is contested by the simultaneous existence between the participants of numerous asymmetrical relationships, from the institutional, socio-economic, administrative, financial and technical point of view;
8. It may involve the participation of a wide range of actors, thus generating sustainability on the long term and a consolidation friendship in international relations between peoples.

The legitimacy of decentralized cooperation derives both from the official texts of international and national bodies, and from running multilateral programs.

At the level of the EU member states, the legal framework of decentralized cooperation comprises several layers, defined by the *Council of Europe*<sup>(8)</sup>, the *European Union* and the *national* one.

A first instrument that ensures cooperation between the territorial collectivities is represented by the *Framework convention*<sup>(9)</sup> *on cross-border cooperation of collectivities or territorial authorities* and the two *additional acts*. In what concerns the European Union, the legal framework was initially defined in the fourth conference of the *Convention of Lomé*. Local authorities from the EU member states and the partner states received from the European Commission direct support for decentralization and decentralized cooperation by means of geographical programs, but also through thematic programs.

#### *Direct public decentralized cooperation. New challenges*

Depending on the degree of responsibility of the local public authorities in elaborating and planning public decentralized cooperation actions, the decentralized cooperation modalities are of two types: *direct* or *indirect*. In case of direct cooperation, the implementation of actions can be directly executed by the authorities or delegated to another actor, and in case of indirect cooperation, the responsibility belongs to actors outside the institutional environment of the local authorities. An example of indirect cooperation can also be the allocation of

cooperation resources by means of the open calls for local projects: *the financing of projects and actions presented by the NGO's representing a major part of the public decentralized cooperation flows.*

The essential characteristic of direct cooperation is thus constituted by the cooperation between „counterparts”, between local authorities in different states. It was consolidated by one of the coordinates of globalization, that of internationalizing exchanges, which enlarged the sphere of the international actions allowing the local actors (local authorities) to establish bilateral or network horizontal relations (initiatives of local public interest), with their counterparts in other states, relations increasingly ample, which are, today, at the basis of the world economy, through the issues they determine and the actors they involve.

The specialists in the matter distinguish between the simultaneous development of three phenomena: (Malé, et al., 2014: pp. 12-13). *an exponential increase of international activism of local governments; a new manner of standing out for local collectivities at the world level, not only as actors of the cooperation process (donors and beneficiaries), but as actors of any form of the world agenda; a change of the modalities and forms of relating to the international environment, increasingly more professional, oriented towards results, projects, through innovative networks and contexts, and internationalization through the supra-municipal actions.*

Direct cooperation exceeded today the stage of donor-acceptor relationship understood as support for development and the fight against poverty, transforming into a mechanism of the internationalization policy of local collectivities. This type of relationship relates to the solving of local interest problems (local public services, territorial management, health, sport, culture etc.), the authorities having flexibility in what concerns the scheduling and running of the cooperation process.

Today we are witnessing a change of approach of the relationship established through decentralized cooperation, the asymmetric relations of the donor-acceptor type being replaced by horizontal relations, by *equality and reciprocity* between partners, which allow experience exchanges and knowledge and mutual support.

The direct relations established between authorities allow, for the purpose of the coordinated implementation of public actions, the co-opting within a wide range of mechanisms (associations, clusters, forums, work networks etc.) of other categories of actors (universities, NGO's, public institutions etc.), legal responsibility belonging to the local authorities.

Thus, public decentralized cooperation, on the one hand, becomes a *vector of growth in matters of development and social and territorial structuring*, and, on



the other hand, *favours local autonomy* and, therefore, *democracy at the local level* and, at the same time, *decentralization* (Bekkouche and Gallet, 2001: p. 390).

Direct cooperation materializes, in its turn, in several forms, from the bilateral cooperation between pairs of territorial collectivities, to the network cooperation where we see more territorial collectivities associated for the purpose of reaching common goals.

*Bilateral cooperation: from twinning to mutual support partnerships*

By bilateral cooperation between two local collectivities is understood that relation established between the authorities of each party *around common local development goals and within which the executive authority becomes the central protagonist of the relationship*.

In practice, by *local collectivity* is understood as the population living on the territory of certain administrative territorial units of the state. They are named differently, depending on the administrative level: for an intermediary level, we find them in the form of regions, departments etc., and for the local level they are in the form of circumscriptions, municipalities, communes etc.

The partnership materialization is seen in the form of *twinning agreements, partnership conventions* etc., and implies a solemn commitment involving both the signing local authorities and the civil society. In many situations, partnerships are concluded as a result of signing, in an earlier stage, of a *statement of intent* (without legal commitment) with general character and subsequently developed in what concerns the goals targeted, the fields of action and the actions performed.

Regardless of the inequality existing from the economic, political and social viewpoint between the collectivities (from the perspective of the public institution resources), the parties are considered equal within the partnership, imposing a rigorous detailing of the objectives, problems and solutions, of the rights and obligations, of the benefits and results targeted, bilateral cooperation transforming into an *extension of the local development strategies in the territories of those collectivities*.

Since the associations between communities are not mandatory, the conclusion of a partnership between the local authorities must emit a common political will to put the contributions of the partner collectivities on equal positions.

Traditionally, two local collectivities associate through a twinning agreement, which reflects a special friendship and mutual support relationship which, in the last twenty years, experienced a radical transformation. The goal of twinning local collectivities is no longer the strict assistance or financial support, but of closeness of

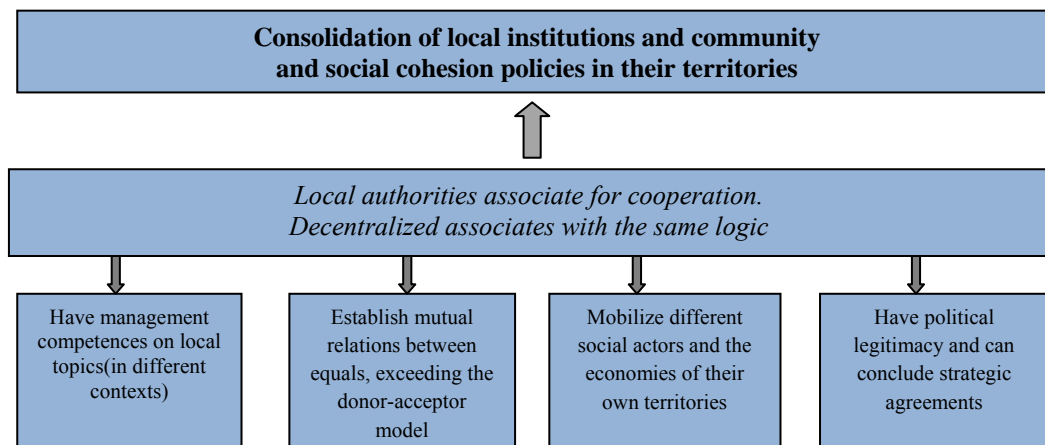
the two communities, for the purpose of ensuring cultural exchanges, knowledge, expertise, development of common projects etc., agreement which remains functional as long as there is political, but also social, will of both partners.

The twinning agreements between the signing parties have permanent character, in the past materializing through simple statements of intent and a series of official visits, which, in time, preponderantly as a result of changing the political configuration of the local decision-makers and of a decrease of political interest, lost their content (lack of motivation and activities), being difficult to identify new common objectives. Gradually, twinning was revitalized, becoming a strong instrument of cooperation and international solidarity by implementing common projects, both by the local authorities, and by the civil society.

The new models of association between communities are oriented towards ensuring the sustainability of public interventions and take into account the experience exchanges and institutional consolidation, giving up the old cooperation formulas based on isolated actions. Under the institutionalized umbrella of direct bilateral cooperation, local authorities will contribute to the consolidation of local governance, by linking the organizations within civil society in both collectivities.

These strategic partnerships subsume both the *added value* of local authorities, and that of the civil society organizations (Figure 1).

**Figure 1.** *Specificity and added value of decentralized cooperation*



**Source:** Proyecto Local, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

A major responsibility in boosting local development is due to the elected officials who can thus legitimate the initiative proposals of the citizens they represent and who elected them.

In what concerns the criteria used for concluding the partnerships, they target the *territorial similarities* (territorial size, geographical position, territorial profile a.s.o.), *topics of mutual interest*, *projects for the future* etc.

In order to appreciate if an association is performed in conditions of reciprocity, the specialty literature identified a *set of criteria* that can constitute a theoretical basis for building the evaluation indicators (Proyecto Local, 2010: pp. 48-50).

- *The strategic perspective of the cooperating institutions*: the institutions must adopt the same vision of equality and reciprocity within the established relationship of association. The guiding principle of these agreements is that of the common or mutual interest.
- *The common identification of problems and possible solutions*. The partner institutions must identify the problems affecting them, the solutions identified and the solving procedures which must be undertaken by all partner parties to maximize the benefits. The benefits obtained by each party must be rigorously identified and must be accepted and recognized by both parties.
- *Inclusion of the interdependency principle*. The relations established between institutions must include this principle, interdependency being built around the problem-solution equation.
- *Active participation of all actors involved*. The participation intensity depends on the reciprocity relation, all participating actors having to actively contribute to obtaining the forecasted results.
- *Mutual understanding and commitment*. The degree of reciprocity is measured depending on the degree of knowledge and commitment of the institutions of a signing party in the process of development of the partner party's institutions.
- *The parties' institutional consolidation*. A mutual relationship must take into account the long-term institutional consolidation of the cooperating parties, which presupposes mutual knowledge within the mutual exchange process.
- *The initiative right and capacity of each associated party*. A mutual relationship cannot be grounded on the exclusive initiative of just one party. There must be a shared leadership. Often in the start of partnerships, the power pole can be found with only one signing party, due to the lack of resources, experience etc.; however, in time, these asymmetries must diminish and progressively disappear, in order to be replaced with equality relations.
- *The closeness process*. It implies the setting of measurement indicators of the similarity of projects and mutual exchange in the imposed actions.
- *Mutual responsibility*. A reciprocity relationship presupposes a common responsibility. For this reason, in the partnership agreement there must be undoubtedly outlined the responsibilities of each party, the form of financing and the contribution with resources of each partner.

- *Transparent relations and responsibility.* The actions and results obtained within the must be subjected to transparency and to accountability rules.

The new association models consist of an approach that differs qualitatively from the traditional one (from the perspective of the *genesis, destiny and content*) from the local authorities, which allows them to modernize *their own politico-administrative culture*, which makes them more open to the exterior and more sensitive to the interior (González Parada, 1998: p. 9).

From the perspective of local development, the advantages which can be capitalized as a result of the closer bilateral cooperation are reflected by the local authorities characteristics: they are closer to the social necessities, they are leaders of collectivities that they represent, they promote citizen participation, fight against “sectorialization” and promote the integrity and the transversality of the cooperation actions, they have the necessary resources and the heritage, they manage their own culture and identity, they enjoy the social capital etc.).

These examples shape the role that the local authorities could have in bilateral cooperation and in decentralized cooperation in general, which in the context of the expansion of the actors and their actions’ sphere reveals a profoundly multidimensional character.

In spite of the pursued objectives, whichever the form of direct cooperation shape might be between local authorities, these present their own weakness, some of them deriving from the difficulty of fulfilling the obligations imposed by the partnership, as well as from an internal institutional opposition, and others being determined by the criticism resulting from the incapacity of the authorities to professionalize their actions within the partnership (González Parada, 1998: p. 9).

These weaknesses of decentralized cooperation have their origin in the space of local interests, politico-economic, social and ideological.

Out of the most often seen implementation barriers against direct decentralized cooperation we can mention: lack of effective decentralization, the absence of an open attitude of the actors involved, oriented more towards a donor-acceptor vision rather than towards equality, lack of institutional capacity and political will, ignorance of the principle of mutual interest, absence of a unitary vision on the future cooperation projects etc.

In the context of inequity, in what concerns the degree of decentralization between the partners, especially when one of them belongs to a state with several degrees of decentralization, a pressure factor occurs for the consolidation of decentralization in the adverse state.

The existence of a significant difference between the local collectivities (number of inhabitants, available sources etc.) may lead to a transformation of the reciprocity relationship into a dependency relationship of one collectivity on its partner.

## II. Municipal cooperation between Bucharest and other territorial collectivities

Just like at the governmental level, at the local level, *the diagnose of the Romanian administrative reality* reveals the necessity of operating a set of measures and actions in the administrative plan in order to develop the capacity of this system to absorb the given changes, in other words, to allow its modernization.

We further distinguish the existence of a high degree of territorial dependence upon the central authority, from the perspective of solving the local interest problems, mainly due to the distribution of the financial resource of the state between the administrative levels, as well as the separation of the functions and institutional competencies, which compels the administration to provide the citizen with some quality operational services, less expensive, valuable for the collectivity. Important to be underlined it is also the frame of decentralization of the transferred competencies from the central level to the territorial one.

With regard to the national judicial frame of the decentralized cooperation, we distinguish the constitutional and the legal frames. At a constitutional level the judicial capacity of the territorial collectivities to cooperate with other homologue collectivities is grounded on article 120 para. (1) and (2) which state that *the authorities of public administration, through which the local authority in communes and cities is made, are the chosen local committees and mayors, under the law, and these function as autonomous administrative authority*, and also on the article 121 para. (1) and (2) which disposes that *the public administration authority, services for the coordination of the activities of communal and urban councils in order to achieve public services of counties interest is the county council which is elected and works under the law's conditions*.

Similar to other states, the general competencies of the Romanian local authorities for satisfying the collectivities' needs and for furnishing some local interest public services are regulated by the law.

Regarding the legal frame related to the decentralized cooperation, the main premises of the matters is constituted by *Law no. 215/2001 a local public administration*, republished with the subsequent changes and completions. Therefore, the article 11, para (3) from the law which says that *the territorial-*

*administrative units have the right to, between the limits of their executive and deliberative authorities' competences, to cooperate and associate with foreign territorial-administrative as well, in law's order, through the decisions of the local or county councils, whatever the case.*

Thus, the Romanian State guarantees by law the local authorities' actions (deliberative and executive) started in the sphere of the decentralized cooperation type of international relations and executed in the name of the collectivities which they represent, but which have to respect *the limits of the competencies offered by the law and the international arrangements of Romania*. The material form of the cooperation has to respect certain rules of form and fond, legality control being assured by the prefect.

In the study proposed for analysis, we shall restrict the area of scientific research focusing on the synthetic analysis of the concrete effects caused by the conclusion of such direct cooperation partnership, between the City of Bucharest and other municipalities in Europe, as the case of the town Rome (Italy). Thus, we wish to reveal the *need to strengthen the collaborative type of administration*, as a *solution* to the problems faced today, the local public administrations, source and modality to overcome the obstacles appearing in the way to increasing the administrative efficiency, but also to improve public services.

In this sense, the applicative research focuses on identifying the main involvement directions of the partners in the agreements, for the purpose of bringing together the citizens of these local collectivities, of promoting the active European citizenship, of intensifying the mutual understanding between citizens etc.

From this perspective, the undertaken research wishes to answer the question: To what extent the cooperation on the public administration level of the municipality of Bucharest with other cities across Europe has contributed to the reciprocal sustainable development, to the consolidation of the common values and the feeling of European identity?

The methodology used is preponderantly qualitative and it is based on the analysis of the official documents, study case and interviews- structured alongside the representatives of the Municipality of Bucharest.

An urban diagnostic from 2011 (Document of strategic planning *Strategic Concept Bucharest 203*: p. 8) has revealed the fact that Bucharest is an East-European capital which already registers enough gaps comparing to the bigger and more developed European capital cities, but it still is, from the geographic, territorial size and economical points of view in a direct urban competition (European, macro-regional) with Belgrade, Budapest, Sofia or Istanbul, and also

with other important cities from the neighborhood: Salonic, Zagreb, Chisinau, Krakow, etc.

The Bucharest Municipality represents the first urban and national center of Romania, this level being achieved due to the status of capital of state, but also through the meeting of criteria related to the number of inhabitants (over 2 million), territory (approx. 365 square km), provided services, worldwide ranking place according to several urban development factors, etc.

This urban priority reflects into a series of indicators: decision making no. 1 center; high concentration of the public services infrastructure; it generates 20% of the national GDP; the best business oriented city of Romania; approximately 10% of Romania's inhabitants live in Bucharest, etc.

A study from 2011 shows that in 2010/2011, Bucharest occupied the first place in the ranking of the most attractive cities from Eastern Europe for investors, done by DI Magazine, called "Cities and European areas of the future – 2010/2011". According to the study, Romania's capital is followed by Warsaw, Budapest, Prague, Bratislava, Krakow, Kiev, Pilsen, Brno and Wroclaw. Bucharest leads according to cost efficiency for the investors, but it also dominates the smaller cities ranking according to cost efficiency (The Report of The General Mayor of Bucharest for year 2011: p. 4).

To have a proper image of what Romania's capital city represents at a worldwide level, alongside other big cities, megalopolis or just other capital cities of the world, we will present some of the statistic selections taken and processed from the online data base NUMBEO which provides information on cities and states of the world over life conditions, real estate, health, traffic or pollution.

Thus, internationally, Bucharest occupies from the *Quality of Life Index 2014s*<sup>(9)</sup> point of view, the 80th place and the 363th place from the *Cost of Living Index 2014*<sup>(10)</sup>.

Regarding the Municipality budget for 2014, this is approximately 1 bill. Euro, covering all the areas of interest for an European capital<sup>(11)</sup>, as it shows from the balance sheet of the budgetary execution of Bucharest for 2013: a decrease of the financing sources for expenses by 3% comparing to year 2012, inaccessible external credits in 2013 ( the law continuing to restrict the access to loans because of the high debts); a 98.35% rate of expenses absorption which denotes a high performance of the managing of public funds; the direct payment of the municipal public services – approx. 42, 49% of the total finance resources of the taxpayers, from which: 4.89%<sup>(12)</sup> etc.; a light decrease comparing to the precedent in regard

to the funds allocated to social assistance, which shows that alongside the unwanted recession period specifics it is obvious the humanist approach of the actual administration preoccupation; a payment of the debt service performed exactly and on time, one of the effects being keeping the rating of the municipality according to the in-country rating<sup>(13)</sup>.

For achieving the fundamental objective of „the development of the municipality of Bucharest as a dynamic city submitted to the European capital cities network, having a regional, continental and intercontinental role”, have been approved by *The General Council of the Municipality of Bucharest through the Decision no. 148 from 24.06.1999 five strategic objectives of economic and social development* as it follows (The Report of The General Mayor of Bucharest for year 2011: p. 15):

- *The emphasizing of Bucharest’s identity according to its aspiration to become a European metropolis.*
- *The support of the vitality and attractiveness of Bucharest suited to the role of Romania’s capital city.*
- *The development of the city as an urban agglomeration having an active and stimulative role on a regional and metropolitan level.*
- *Raising the citizens’ quality of life.*
- *The protection and the exploitation of the natural, architectural and urbanistic potential.*

As it is said in the General Mayor’s report from 2013, *the territorial planning and the formulation, implementation and monitoring of some politics and strategic documents represent essential instruments in the development process of the Municipality of Bucharest and its territory of support and influence* (Idem), which have attracted the preoccupation and interest of its management within the partnerships with other administrative- territorial units from the international sphere.

Bucharest Municipality has developed forms of cooperation with both international organizations, and through bilateral or multilateral agreements. A synthetic picture of the development of such partnership of the Bucharest Municipality with the developing collectivities, from countries with emerging economies with European countries such as Amman (Jordan), Damascus (Syria), Belgrade (Serbia), Ankara (Turkey), Hanoi (Vietnam), Chisinau (Republic of Moldova), Pretoria (South Africa), Beijing (China), Athens (Greece) is found in the appendix<sup>(14)</sup>. Under those agreements, shares objectives where to exchange experience and knowledge in various fields, the balance between the Bucharest Municipality and the other territorial collectives being still present.



Inside of the Protocol Corporation and Twinning between Bucharest Municipality and the Municipality of Amman, Jordan agreed to cooperate in fields as: *water supply, sewerage, sanitation of the city, local tax collection, public transport, cleaning, environmental protection and culture*. It also talks about mutual support in the following areas: *economic relations, trade and tourism*.

Friendship and Cooperation Protocol between Bucharest Municipality and Damascus provides support information exchange in areas such as: *urban systematization, cadastral and administrative development of the industrial areas, urban transport, and geographic information system application*.

The Cooperation Protocol signed between our institution and the city of Belgrade speaks of promoting the exchange of information and experiences in area such as: *social, economic, cultural and local administration*, focusing especially on the environment protection, urban development and rehabilitation of historical and cultural monuments.

Under the Twinging and Cooperation Protocol signed with the Ankara Municipality, at the second article is established that the 2 institutions will promote the exchange of information and experience in areas such as: *environmental protection, urban development, public transport and social services*. It also will encourage the collaboration between local government institutions and other non-governmental organizations and support friendly relations between citizens of the two capital cities.

Regarding the Cooperation and Twinning Protocol between the Bucharest Municipality and Izmir city, knowledge sharing was to be accomplished in the same areas as those covered by the Ankara Cooperation Protocol, but is even talking about the expansion of cooperation in the field of *culture, youth policy, professional training, sports, mass-media communication and the cultural heritage preservation*.

The Cooperation Agreement signed with Istanbul Metropolitan Municipality in the article 3 reads as follows: “The Parties will pay special attention to taking measures having the aim of cooperation in the *field of culture and arts of the two countries, promoting visual and performing arts, literature, music and film for their citizens*.” Also will encourage the cooperation between businessmen from the two cities and will initiate support measures to stimulate the development of companies and to promote investment in the two cities.

Bucharest Municipality has signed a Twinning and Cooperation Agreement with Hanoi city from Vietnam, in which has been established that the two institutions

will cooperate in the following fields: *urban planning and management, development, economic, professional trading, tourism and cultural activities.*

The Municipality of Bucharest signed on June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1997 a Protocol on development of cooperation relations between the Bucharest Municipality and Chisinau City Hall. The object of the Protocol is the exchange of specialist delegations in areas such as: *the organization and functions of the local public administration, organization of the cadaster services and urbanism and the territory planning, organization and functioning of the real estate investment sector and property filling, mutual information in sectors such as: water supply, street lighting, road maintenance, heating and sanitation, urban transport of passengers.*

On November 4<sup>th</sup>, 1999, Bucharest and Chisinau Municipality signed a Twinning Protocol having as object the exchange of experience and knowledge in areas that were covered by the Cooperation Protocol signed two years earlier by the two institutions, namely: *organization and functioning of local public administration, organization of the cadaster service and urbanism and territory planning, organization and functioning of investment in real estate property filling, mutual information in sectors such water supply, street lighting, road maintenance, heating system and sanitation, passengers urban transport.*

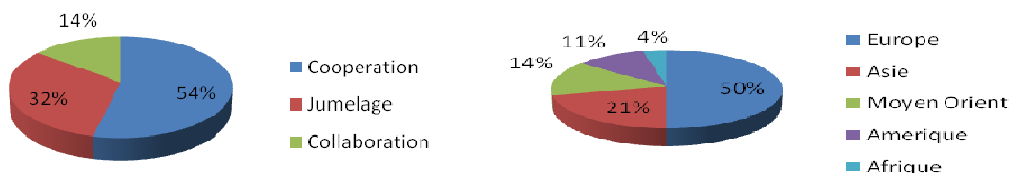
In the Twinning Agreement signed between PMB and the Pretoria Municipality, South Africa, is established that the two countries will uphold *justice and maintain peace and respect the cultural heritage of each, encouraging cultural development, educational and scientific Romanian and South-African nationalities.*

Also Bucharest Municipality signed a Twinning Agreement with Beijing Municipality, China. The agreement provides that the two institutions will perform a series of exchanges in the fields of *business, commerce, science, education, sport, health, personnel specialization.* Bucharest Municipality and Athens have signed both a Cooperation Agreement and a Twinning Protocol. Under the Twinning Protocol the parties agreed to promote the exchange of information in areas such as: *public administration area, especially in environmental protection, urban development and specific protection and cultural monuments.*

Also, from the European Union members, Bucharest signed in 1996 a Protocol Agreement with Paris, France, and in 2007 a Cooperation Protocol with Rome, Italy.

A study on the development of bilateral agreements concluded by the municipality (Mincă, 2013) shows that the largest number of the agreements was concluded in 1997-1999 (17 agreements), 54% representing Cooperation Agreements and 32% Twinning Agreements, and 50% of the agreements have been signed with European cities. From the total of the agreements by the municipality, 50% were concluded with counterparts from Europe 21% Asia, 14% in Middle Est, 11% America and 4% African, observing that Bucharest had a good active relation with Rome, Vienna, Seoul and Yerevan (Figures 2-3).

**Figures 2 and 3.** *Weight of the bilateral agreements types*



An illustrative example of Bucharest Municipality association formula with other territorial collectivities is the one embodied in the Cooperation Protocol signed by the Bucharest Municipality with Rome (Italy) and which establishes in Article 2 that the 2 municipalities will promote the exchange of information and knowledge in areas such as: *general public administration, urban transport, local economic policy, culture, education, sports, health, environmental protection etc.*

Implementation of the agreement has started with the opening of a representative of City Hall Bucharest (PMB) in Rome. Moreover, from 2007 to 2014, there were two visits to Bucharest and three visits to Rome, one of them at the level of General Mayor of Bucharest (2010 - Opening PMB Representation Office in Rome).

In 2014 there was a meeting of Bucharest Municipality delegation with the representatives of the Municipality of Rome, at the initiative of the Association "Citta del Bio", for the development and strengthening of partnerships between the two cities, by identifying common sustainable policies for food and agriculture, taking into account the role that cities can play in the favor of public health, environment, quality of life and sustainable economy.

The Bucharest Municipality delegation was interested to know the experience of Rome Municipality in order to strengthen the route of Bucharest Municipality towards becoming a Bio Town. In this aspect, the Italian side was addressed questions regarding specifically how Rome municipality promotes widespread

organically-produced food within the catering activity in schools, how traveling markets work, and the types of services developed on nutrition education issues.

The exchange of experiences planned for the near future aim at the strategic project “Roma Citta da coltivare”, developed for the dissemination of culture and agricultural practice in Rome and considered a first call for the allocation of land to young farmers in this municipality, the experience of *Teaching farms*, *Gardens school* and *School Catering Service* projects which provides more than 150,000 meals/day using more organic products, but also the opportunities that can benefit both municipalities to develop the cooperation in the field of agriculture and nutrition.

## Conclusions

The undertaken research highlights the rising trend of internationalization of territorial collectivities inside a new action sphere, that of decentralized cooperation, much more elastic and permeable than the traditional version of the centralized cooperation.

Decentralized cooperation has created the possibility of transforming the sub-state actors into direct interlocutors of international cooperation, present in a wide range of formulas that contribute in an accelerated rhythm to the consolidation of the local governance.

However, in order raise the impact of the decentralized cooperation local internationalization policy is necessary, in harmony with the national one and which to reflect inside different projects and territorial programs, the synergy of the actions of all the actors (central, local, institutional, civil society’s actors, private, etc.), in order to increase the impact on local collectivities.

The process of decentralized cooperation must unfold under the patronage of the principle of reciprocity, of the common development of the collectivities involved in the decentralized cooperation network, on the necessities and proposals that emanate from the local collectivities.

The representative authorities of these collectivities must enjoy adequate competences and resources that even though can use different forms and spheres of expression, allow reaching the common objectives inside a rigorously defined partnership as well

If we keep in mind the more restricted area of our research and analyze pragmatically the decentralized cooperation of the Municipality of Bucharest case,

we must take into account the answers of a set of questions regarding the international representation of the municipalities, the viable options and the extreme opportunities of the sustainable development of the collectivities and their authorities, the municipality image projected outside, etc.

As it is revealed from the undertaken research, in the context of profound socio-economic and political transformations of Romania's last decade, the municipality of Bucharest has generated and intensified different forms of bilateral or network cooperation, its local authorities becoming the main actors of these cooperations.

The municipality has promoted partnerships that don't strictly occur between different political entities, but in which their pacification, implementation and management are included civil society representatives for consolidating the legitimacy of the local public interventions

Even though the instruments and mechanisms used during these cooperations are more and more innovative, there are significant obstacles that must be overcome in order to achieve the expected objectives inside the concluded cooperations, and we keep in mind especially the existence of an administrative capacity, encased by the difficulty of allocating its own financial resources or accessing international funds, by the changes of the political configuration on CGMB level and by a socially vulnerable capital

All the persons interviewed from *The Protocol and External Affairs Direction* (PMB) have appreciated that from the different forms of cooperation concluded by the municipality, the twining remains the most efficient and effective on the long run, but less supple and flexible as the agreements/protocols of cooperation and collaboration. The direct cooperation between municipal cities is preferred instead of the traditional one (central) as it is more transparent, less bureaucratic and it involves a greater decisional autonomy, establishing a horizontal relation, reciprocal understanding between parts and recipients

In regards to the concretization of this cooperation, the initiative of elaborating some projects and actions are fairly divided between the agreement parts.

Local authorities from Bucharest must elaborate and implement a public policy of internationalization of the municipality which should complete the existing strategic planning, but rather with a sectorial impact than a general one. However, there are no standard models for such a policy, the authorities thus facing real challenges of international cooperation.

In order to avoid the situations in which the policy will stagnate the unfolding of the decentralized cooperation processes it is necessary to establish friendship

relations among the civil societies of the two collectivities, situation in which the representatives of the civil society are not only a turntable, but also partners in managing these cooperations alongside the local authorities

The cooperation of the Municipalities has one last projection, as a significant objective of the administration: the Citizen. In this case the cooperation serves better thanks to the continuous improvement of public services, and due to the essential principle and value of the European administrative space: *the local autonomy*.

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### Notes

- (1) The outlining of the sustainable development was performed within the Brundtland Report „Our common future” (1987) which defines this concept in the sense of satisfying the needs of today without sacrificing ability of the future generations to satisfy their own needs. The definition underlines the need for a new way of understanding the relationship between development, economic growth and the use of natural resources, at the same time with the need to preserve these resources. The concept was adopted at the international level within the UN Conference on Environment and Development in Rio de Janeiro, in June 1992.
- (2) The first actions of decentralized cooperation materialized in the twinning agreements between different owns, after World War II. The priority cooperation axes targeted friendship, peace, cultural exchanges etc.
- (3) Which is transformed in year 1988 in the *World Federation of United Towns and Cities*. Manifest of the seventh WFTT Congress.
- (4) *Official Development Assistance* (ODA) is a term coined by the *Development Assistance Committee* (DAC) of the *Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development* (OECD) to measure aid.
- (5) At the moment of signing, the European Communities were composed of 12 European states, and CPA had 69states.

- (6) European Commission, *Note to the services of Development General Directorate and to the delegations in the CPA-ALA-MED and PECO countries*, Development General Directorate, A4(00) D/1424, 23 December Brussels, pp. 2-3 in Abraham, L.D, *La cooperación oficial descentralizada. Cambios y resistencia en las relaciones internacionales contemporáneas*, Los libros de la Catarata, 2008, Madrid, p. 207.
- (7) At present, by means of the Congress of Local and Regional Powers.
- (8) Adopted by the Council of Europe in Madrid on the date of May 21<sup>st</sup>, 1980 (STCE n° 106). The convention defines the legal framework of the cross-border cooperation between the signing states. It was ratified by Romania through GO no.120/1998.
- (9) *The Quality of Life Index* is an estimation of the quality of life made by utilizing an empirical formula, based on experiments. At this point it is considered the most important factor: pollution, then safety etc.
- (10) The indices that compose *The Cost of Living Index* are taken into consideration and have as level of reference New York City (NYC). The *Consumer Price Index* is an indicator that takes into consideration the price of consuming goods, including groceries, transportation and utilities. The Housing Rent Index is an estimation of the cost of the apartments for rent and bars in New York City. *The Local Purchasing Power* shows the relative power of buying the goods and services with a medium wage in that city.
- (11) Approx. 30% being allocated to investments. The evolution of expenses of the Municipality of Bucharest comparing to 2009 shows that, despite the economic conjuncture which got worse constantly under the actual General Mayor, the politic of fostering investments has further succeeded.
- (12) The urban development potential represented by the education sector is insufficient and/or underutilized, generally because of the patrimonial base or decreased motivation of the teaching staff.
- (13) Thus, the nominal effort of approx. 6.68% annually from the total of the budget expenses doesn't cover the rate to paid, but only interest and fees.
- (14) Data supplied by the *Direction of Foreign Affairs and Protocol* within the Bucharest City Hall.

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- Law no. 215/2001 *of local public administration*, republished, modified and completed
- Report of the General Mayor of the City of Bucharest for year 2011*
- Report of the General Mayor of the City of Bucharest for year 2013*



## Appendix

**Source:** Data supplied by the *Direction of Foreign Affairs and Protocol* within Bucharest City Hall

### Twinning/cooperation/collaboration protocols

#### Twinning

No.	Document type	Date of signing
1	Agreement protocol Bucharest – Athens	20.05.1993
2	Twinning protocol Bucharest – Atlanta	19.09.1994
	Memorandum of understanding regarding cultural and economic cooperation Bucharest – Atlanta	06.1994
3	Declaration of mutual agreement regarding the conclusion of the Twinning Agreement Bucharest –Pretoria, South Africa	20.10.1997
4	Twinning and cooperation protocol, Bucharest – Ankara	20.06.1998
5	Twinning and cooperation protocol, Bucharest – Amman, Jordan	19.06.1999
6	Twinning protocol Bucharest –Chisinau	4.11.1999
7	Twinning protocol Bucharest – Nicosia	12.03.2004
8	Agreement regarding the establishment of twinning Bucharest – Beijing	21.06.2005

#### Cooperations

No.	Document type	Date of signing
1	Cooperation Protocol Bucharest – Paris	20.07.1996
2	Cooperation and friendship agreement Bucharest – Athens	17.01.1997
3	Cooperation Protocol Bucharest – Izmir	23.07.1998
4	Memorandum regarding cooperation and friendly exchanges Bucharest – Beijing	23.11.1998
5	Memorandum of cooperation Bucharest –Zhenjiang Province, China	28.11.1998
6	Understanding draft for cooperation Bucharest – Damascus, Syria	17.12.1998
7	Understanding and mutual cooperation agreement, Bucharest – Ottawa, Canada	22.02.1999
8	Friendship and cooperation protocol Bucharest - Damascus, Syria	19.06.1999
9	Draft of cooperation protocol Bucharest – Belgrade	7.07.1999
10	Friendship and cooperation protocol Bucharest – Hanoi	30.08.1999
11	Cooperation Protocol Bucharest – Belgrade	22.09.1999
12	Cooperation agreement Bucharest – Montreal	29.06.2001
13	Cooperation agreement Bucharest – Istanbul	28.04.2006
14	Cooperation Protocol Bucharest – Roma	26.06.2007
15	Cooperation Protocol Bucharest – Vienna	14.12.2010

#### Collaborations

No.	Document type	Date of signing
1	Protocol regarding the development of collaboration relations Bucharest – Chisinau	3.06.1997
2	Collaboration agreement Bucharest – Moscow	22.06.1997
3	Understanding protocol Bucharest – Beijing	28.08.1997

**Declarations/Letters of intent**

No.	Document type	Date of signing
1	Letter of intent Bucharest – Budapest	2.04.1997
2	Declaration of Ankara, First General Assembly of the Association of Capitals in the Black Sea Area	06.09.2000
3	Declaration of Vienna, Role of Capital Cities in the EU expansion process	02.07.2001
4	Memorandum regarding the results of the visit to Moscow of GM of the City of Bucharest	8.11.2005
5	Letter of intent, Bucharest – Ilfov development region – Lazio region	18.05.2006
6	Memorandum regarding the results of the working visit in Bucharest of China International Industry & Commerce (CIIC)	18.01.2007
7	Letter of intent for the participation in the program „Youth in Europe” – a drug-prevention program	19.09.2007
8	Declaration European cities against drugs	19.09.2007
9	Resolution of DONAUHANSE Project	2007
10	Letter of intent Bucharest – Tbilisi	19 .09. 2009
11	Project of intent regarding the Protocol on the collaboration program between Bucharest and Moscow	2010 -2011
12	Memorandum of understanding for friendship and cooperation Bucharest – Seoul	05.2012
13	Letter of intent regarding the cooperation between Bucharest – Yerevan	10.04.2013

At the beginning of the 1990's, Bucharest joined the majority of international organizations: *METROPOLIS*, *AIMF*, *l'Union des villes capitales en Europe central et du sud-est*, *BALCINET*, *Energie Cites*, *l'Union des Capitales de l'Union Européenne*, etc. Out of the last actions, we can give as examples WeGO (L'organisation pour gouvernance électronique) in 2012, *Citta del Bio* and *Major Cities of Europe* (2014) etc.