

## **Types of international cooperation at the local level Bucharest city hall case study**

**Mirela MINCĂ**  
Bucharest City Hall, Romania  
mirela.minca@pmb.ro

**Abstract.** *International cooperation at the local level is not an area widely covered by the literature. Nevertheless, international cooperation is the backbone of international relations at this level.*

*The present article describes different types of cooperation such as bilateral cooperation with or without a formal framework and multilateral cooperation within international organizations, international projects and multilateral agreements.*

*A comprehensive analysis regarding the types of international cooperation in which Bucharest City Hall is involved is carried out.*

**Keywords:** cooperation, agreement, bilateral, multilateralism, Bucharest City Hall.

**JEL Classification:** H79.

## Introduction

*The rapports which are established within an international society are, in general, named international relations.* The notion of international relations applies to a number of categories of social rapports which have in common the fact that these *rapports exceed the borders of one state.*

Hence, the following categories appear:

- 1) Rapports between states and between states and other entities from the international society, such as *international organizations.*
- 2) *Rapports between individuals and legal persons from different states* (Beșteliu, 1998: p. 2).

*International relations is a relatively young discipline*, less than a century old, many of its most important questions and concepts have deep roots in intellectual history. From Classical Greece to the British Empire, Ming China to modern America, leaders, advisers, academics and students have wrestled with *problems of war, trade, culture and diplomacy* (Cox, 2012: pp.16).

Within *the field of international relations*, the field of international cooperation can be also found. The two fields are closely intertwined.

The history of these fields can be traced to *ancient times*, all the way to the first treaty in the history of mankind, the peace treaty between Hittites and Egyptians called the *Treaty of Kadesh* (1259 BC). The treaty established amongst others a cooperation policy in case of aggression by other forces.

Cooperation starts with a situation where *"each actor's policies (pursued without regard for the interest of others) are regarded by others as hindering the attainment of their goals"*. Cooperation takes place *"[...] when actors adjust their behaviour to the actual or anticipated preferences of others, through a process of policy coordination."* (Keohane, 1984).

Moreover, *"(international) cooperation describes interactions to achieve common objectives when actors' preferences are neither identical (harmony) nor irreconcilable (conflict)"* (Paolo, 2015: p. 3). At present, the local territorial collectivities claim to play *an increasingly significant role in 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* (Manda and Nicolescu, 2014: pp. 98).

Local authorities recognize that international cooperation has a special role and, *cooperation is the best tool to tackling common interest issues from global issues* such as climate change to *regional issues* such as the EU Strategy, in the Danube Region.

There are several types of cooperation: *bilateral cooperation and multilateral cooperation.*

In Romania, bilateral and multilateral cooperation is regulated by *Law no. 215/2001 regarding local public administration.* According to the provisions of Law no. 215, both types of cooperation are possible, only with the approval of the Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and with the approval of the Romanian Ministry of Regional Development and Public Administration. Also, in the cases of bilateral cooperation through agreements or of multilateral cooperation through accession to an international organization, it is necessary that the Local Council (in the case of Bucharest – the General Council of Bucharest) adopts a decision in this respect.

### Bilateral cooperation

*Bilateral cooperation refers to the relations involving two groups or countries.*

At the local level, *bilateral cooperation emphasizes the ties between two cities, usually, in two different countries, but, not necessarily. According to the Romanian legislation, two cities from Romania can sign a cooperation agreement as well.*

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. 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 (Manda and Nicolescu, 2014: pp. 104-105).*

The reasoning behind, entering such agreements is tackling common interest issues through *exchanges of knowledge and experience, exchanges of information, technical consultation, exchanges of experts, organization of workshops, meetings, etc.* (Friendship and cooperation Agreement between the City of Amsterdam and the City of Paris, Amsterdam, 2013).

*Bilateral cooperation is the most common used type of cooperation by Bucharest City Hall. Bilateral cooperation can take place within a formal framework: cooperation/collaboration or twinning agreement. A list of agreements signed by Bucharest can be found in Appendix 1.*

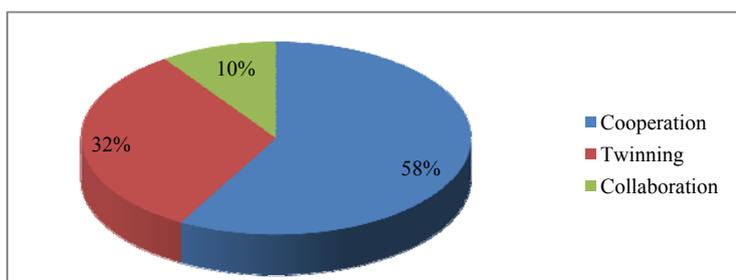
*Bilateral cooperation can also take place without the existence of a formal framework. After the fall of the communist regime, Bucharest signed its first Twinning Agreement with Athens, in 1993, by the Decision of the General Council of Bucharest no. 46/1993.*

Thus, between 1993 and 2015, Bucharest signed 31 agreements:

- 18 cooperation agreements;
- 10 twinning agreements;
- 3 collaboration agreements.

The distribution between twinning, cooperation and collaboration agreements can be found in Figure 1:

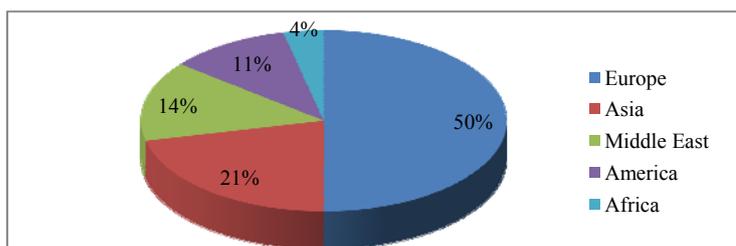
**Figure 1.** *Types of agreements signed by Bucharest*



As one can see in Figure 1, the cooperation agreement is the most used type of agreement. Regardless of the type, all agreements employ cooperation methods such as experience and delegations' exchanges. Moreover, there is not a type of agreement that is more powerful or effective than the other. *All types of agreements have equal value.*

From a geographical point of view the situation is the following:

**Figure 2.** Geographical dispersal of cooperation agreements signed by Bucharest



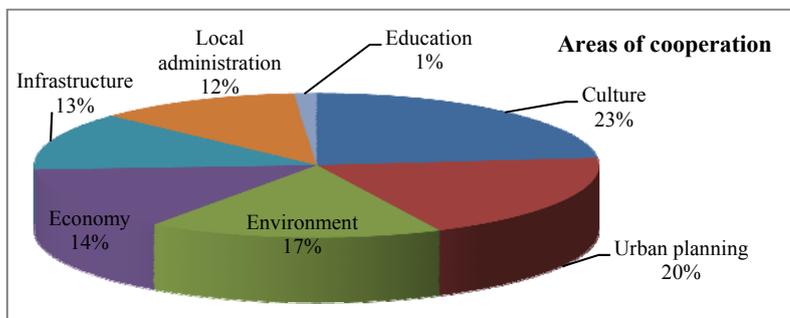
Since Bucharest located in Europe, it is only natural for our city to expand its relationships with *European cities*.

The most common areas of cooperation can be found in the table below:

**Areas of cooperation bilateral agreements signed by Bucharest**

No.	Area of cooperation	City – number of agreements
1.	<i>Culture</i>	Athens, Amman, Atlanta, Beijing, Belgrade, Bern, Chisinau, Damascus, Hanoi, Istanbul, Izmir, Ottawa, Nicosia, Moscow, Paris, Pretoria, Rome, Vienna - <b>18 agreements</b>
2.	<i>Urban planning</i>	Athens, Ankara, Belgrade, Bern, Chisinau, Damascus, Hanoi, Istanbul, Izmir, Montreal, Ottawa, Paris, Pretoria, Rome, Vienna - <b>16 agreements</b>
3.	<i>Environment</i>	Athens, Ankara, Belgrade, Bern, Chisinau, Damascus, Izmir, Montreal, Ottawa, Nicosia, Moscow, Paris, Rome, Vienna - <b>14 agreements</b>
4.	<i>Economy</i>	Amman, Atlanta, Beijing, Belgrade, Hanoi, Istanbul, Nicosia, Moscow, Paris, Rome - <b>10 agreements</b>
5.	<i>Infrastructure</i>	Athens, Amman, Bern, Chisinau, Istanbul, Izmir, Montreal, Ottawa, Rome, Vienna - <b>10 agreements</b>
6.	<i>Local Administration</i>	Athens, Ankara, Istanbul, Izmir, Ottawa, Nicosia, Paris, Rome - <b>8 agreements</b>
7.	<i>Education</i>	Beijing - <b>1 agreement</b>

**Figure 3.** Areas of cooperation - Bucharest

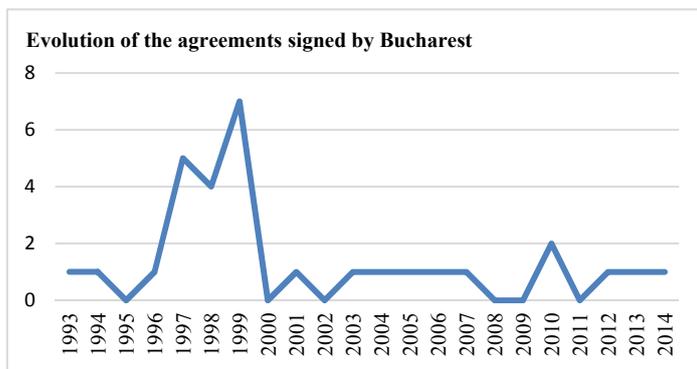


*Culture is the most common area of cooperation* that can be found in more than half of the agreements signed by Bucharest between 1993 and 2015. Culture is the most frequent area of cooperation because culture exceeds any barriers such as linguistic barriers, educational barriers or religious barriers.

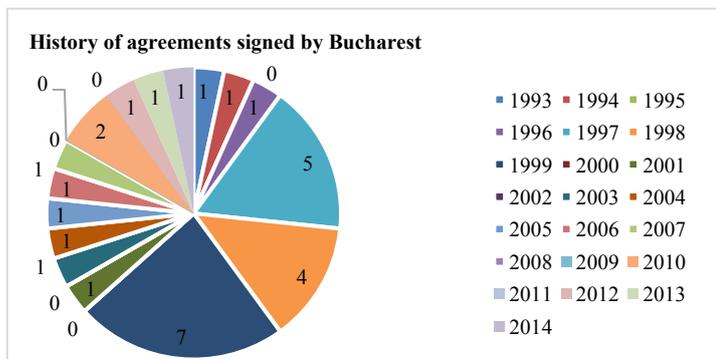
Culture is followed by *urban planning, environment and infrastructure* because these are the most common issues major cities face.

The evolution of the bilateral agreements can be found in the figures below:

**Figure 4.** Evolution of bilateral agreements signed by Bucharest



**Figure 5.** History of Agreements signed by Bucharest



In the beginning, one agreement/year was signed. The most prolific period, in the history of international cooperation for Bucharest City Hall was between *1997 and 1999*. In 3 years, Bucharest entered *16 agreements*. Afterwards, the number of agreements signed decreased and now it stabilized at *one agreement/year*. Usually, the years when no agreements were signed were the years before and when elections were being held.

Unfortunately, despite such a large number of agreements, some of these agreements are not very active anymore. The reasons behind this are diverse:

- *Changes of the geopolitical context* for instance in the cases of the Friendship and Cooperation Agreement between Bucharest and *Damascus* or the Twinning Agreement between Bucharest and *Pretoria*.

- *Changes of political regimes and priorities* (for example: the Cooperation Agreement between Bucharest and *Paris* (signed in 1996) was less active during the previous mayor's mandate. The former mayor of Paris preferred collaborating within the International Association of the French Speaking Mayors (AIMF), an organization presided by Paris. At present, Bucharest and Paris are seeking to re-establish the cooperation ties).
- *The impact of the economic crisis* which affected the bilateral relations with cities that are located far away from Bucharest (for instance the Cooperation Agreements between Bucharest and *Ottawa, Hanoi* or *Montreal*), etc.

At this time, the most *active agreements* signed by Bucharest are: the Cooperation Agreement with *Vienna*, the Cooperation Agreement with *Rome*, the Twinning Agreement with *Beijing*, the Twinning and Cooperation Agreement with *Ankara*, the Cooperation Agreement with *Istanbul* and the Memorandum with *Seoul*. Also, Bucharest and *Paris* have plans to reactivate the Cooperation Agreement that was signed in 1996.

As it was mentioned above, bilateral cooperation can exist outside the scope of a formal framework.

The reasons behind this *informal cooperation* are the same as the reason behind *formal cooperation*. In this respect, Bucharest has a very active relationship with *Sofia*. The two capital cities support each other in areas such as: EU Strategy regarding the Danube Region, cultural exchanges and other common interest issues. Other examples include *Budapest, Ingolstadt*, etc.

### Multilateral cooperation

*Multilateralism* can be defined as “*the practice of coordinating national policies in groups of three or more states*” (Keohane, 1990: p. 731).

Hence, by extrapolating Keohane's definition at the local level, *multilateral cooperation means implicating more than three cities*.

Moreover, “*multilateralism refers to a system in which it is expected that states will act as a group, through negotiation and IOs*” (Birkin, 2006: p.10).

The main form of multilateral cooperation is represented by active membership of a city within an international organization.

“*International organisations are entities established by formal political agreements between their members that have the status of international treaties; their existence is recognised by law in their member countries*” (OECD, 2005).

Bucharest is a member of a series of **international organizations**: *global organizations, regional organizations and/or organizations specialized* on a specific area of cooperation such as energy, e-government and so on.

Bucharest is a member of the following *international organisations*:

- *The International Association of the French Speaking Mayors (AIMF)* – since 1990;
- *The World Association of Major Metropolises (METROPOLIS)* – since 1991;

- *The Union of Central, South and Eastern European Capitals* (UCSEEC) – since 1995;
- *Energy Cities* – since 2008;
- The Union of Capitals of the European Union (UCEU) – since 2009;
- *The World e-Governments Organization of Cities and Local Governments* (WeGO) – since 2012;
- *Città de Bio* – since 2014;
- *Major Cities of Europe* – the ITC Users Group – since 2014.

*AIMF* is a large association with more than 200 member cities and since Bucharest is a member of *AIMF* for 25 years, of course, the city has had a very active presence within this organisation, culminating with Bucharest being the host of the XXVI General Assembly of *AIMF*, in 2006.

Also, throughout the years Bucharest had an active presence within *METROPOLIS*.

Unfortunately, the European organisations such as *UCSEEC* and *UCEU* are in the brink of disbanding due to a lack of interest or participation from some of the members.

Bucharest ceased to be a member in two international organizations due to excessive fees and lack of benefits: *Eurocities* (Decision of the General Council of Bucharest no. 165/2012) and *Polis* (Decision of the General Council of Bucharest no. 263/2013).

*Multilateral cooperation* can take place within *European projects* as well. Bucharest was/is a partner city in the following *EU projects*:

- *CAPRICE* (Decision of the General Council of Bucharest no. 177/2009) on mobility from 2009-2012 - partner cities: *Berlin* (lead partner), *Paris*, *Vilnius* and *Warsaw*;
- *I-SPEED* (Decision of the General Council of Bucharest no. 19/2010) on sustainable tourism from 2010-2012 – the partnership was coordinated by the City of *Venice* (Italy) and composed of 9 partners from 9 European countries: the City of *Warsaw* (Poland), the *National Association of Municipalities* in the Republic of Bulgaria - *NAMRB* (Bulgaria), the *Region of Crete* (Greece), the *Region of Hedmark* (Norway), the *Region of Galicia* (Spain), the *County of Powys* (Great Britain), *Province of Rome* (Italy) and the *Nantes Urban Community* (France);
- *DELI* (Decision of the General Council of Bucharest no. 31/2014) on migration from 2014-2015 – partners: *Council of Europe* (lead partner), *Cartagena*, *Dublin*, *Getxo*, *Lisbon*, *London – Lewisham*, *Munich*, *Reggio Emilia*, *Rotterdam* and *Vienna*.

The aim for these projects was to solve issues such as mobility, migration, etc. by exchanging information and experience between the partners mentioned above.

Multilateral agreements represent another form of multilateral cooperation. A multilateral agreement is *an international agreement involving three or more parties*. For example, the *GATT* (*General Agreement of Tariffs and Trade*) has been, since its establishments in 1947, seeking to *promote trade liberalization through multilateral negotiations*.

In the case of Bucharest, examples of multilateral agreements include:

- *The Covenant of Mayors* (Decision of the General Council of Bucharest no. 99/2011) which represents “the mainstream European movement involving local and regional authorities, voluntarily committing to *increasing energy efficiency and use of*

*renewable energy sources on their territories. By their commitment, Covenant signatories aim to meet and exceed the European Union 20% CO<sub>2</sub> reduction objective by 2020.* The Covenant was signed by 5744 authorities by 2015;

- *The Paris Declaration 2015, entitled “In response to the challenge of global climate change, a European commitment and local solutions” and which is supported by cities such as Amsterdam, Athens, Bordeaux, Bucharest, Budapest, Dublin, Helsinki, Lisbon, London, Madrid, Milan, Rome, Sofia, Vienna, Vilnius, Warsaw and so on;*
- *The Vienna Declaration 2015, named “A strong voice in Europe” and which focuses on urban agenda and the systematic involvement of the 28<sup>th</sup> capital cities in EU policies*

The main difficulty with multilateral agreements is getting all the interested parties to agree with the text, changes proposed by others and so on. In the cases of the Paris and Vienna Declarations from 2015, *3-4 months* were necessary for drawing up the final version of the Declaration. Another weakness of this type of cooperation could be *the lack of accountability*. The Covenant is signed on a voluntary basis and there are more than 5.000 signatories which makes it very hard to keep track of each city’s commitment and even *harder to enforce penalties in case of a breach*.

*“Nevertheless, 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”* (Manda and Nicolescu, 2014: p. 117).

## Conclusions

Regardless of the type of *international cooperation*, the *cities* around the world are facing *similar challenges and issues*. By gathering together to tackle common interest issues, by exchanging information and knowledge, by supporting each other, half the battle is already won and the cities can work on ensuring their citizens a high quality life.

The biggest challenge in the case of international cooperation is *maintaining the level of commitment* by all the parties involved. As it was explained above, priorities change for each city, making obsolete an agreement or an international organization.

The management of each city has to take into account the history shared with a partner (city, cities or international organization) and act accordingly. Each agreement or each statute contains *provisions in case one party is interested in dissolving the cooperation framework*. Bucharest used this mechanism and it no longer a member of two international organizations.

*Cities need to intensify their cooperation* relations in order to become *stronger*. By being united, cities gain *more power* in order to influence and have a real say on global issues, policy issues, European issues, etc.

Cities have a *tremendous potential* and should use it to solve *common interest issues*.

What *Franklin D. Roosevelt* said more than 50 years ago still applies today *“Competition has been shown to be useful up to a certain point and no further, but cooperation, which is the thing we must strive for today, begins where competition leaves off.”*

Truer words were never spoken. Yes, indeed, cities are competing for resources such as funding, investments and touristic attractiveness, but, only, by *engaging in collective collaborative processes, the cities can overcome the challenges ahead.*

### Acknowledgements

The paper was elaborated with the support of Prof. Dr. Sorin Mircea Oprescu, General Mayor of Bucharest, with the encouragement of Mrs. Cristina Elena Nicolescu, General Councilor, General Council of Bucharest and the management of the Foreign Affairs and Protocol Department, Bucharest City Hall.

### References

- Barkin, S.J., 2006. *International Organization: Theories and Institutions*. Palgrave MacMillan. p. 10.
- Cox, M., 2012. *Introduction to international relations*. LSE.
- Keohane, O.R., 1984. *After Hegemony: Cooperation and Discord in the World Political Economy*. Princeton University Press.
- Keohane, O.R., 1990. Multilateralism: An Agenda for Research. *International Journal*. 45. Autumn. p. 731.
- Manda, C.C. and Nicolescu, E.C., 2014. Legal and Practical Aspects of the Associations between the City of Bucharest and the Large Collectivities Territorial –Actuality and Perspective. *Theoretical and Applied Economics*. Vol. XXI. No. 12(601). pp. 97-122.
- Miga-Besteliu, R., 1998. *International Law – Introduction into Public International Law*. All Beck. p. 2.
- Paulo, S., 2014. International Cooperation and Development. A Conceptual Overview. No. 13. *Discussion Paper*. p. 3.
- Decision of the General Council of Bucharest No. 165/2012.
- Decision of the General Council of Bucharest No. 177/2009.
- Decision of the General Council of Bucharest No. 19/2010.
- Decision of the General Council of Bucharest No. 263/2013.
- Decision of the General Council of Bucharest No. 31/2014.
- Decision of the General Council of Bucharest No. 46/1993.
- Decision of the General Council of Bucharest No. 99/2011.
- Friendship and cooperation Agreement between the City of Amsterdam and the City of Paris. Amsterdam. February 7<sup>th</sup>. 2013.
- Law no. 215/2001 regarding the local public administration, republished, modified and completed.
- Paris Declaration “In response to the challenge of global climate change, a European commitment and local solutions”.
- <http://www.ancient.eu/article/78/> - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
- <http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bilateral> - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
- <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=1434> – last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
- <http://www.aimf.asso.fr/default.asp?id=40> - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
- [http://www.pmb.ro/adrese\\_utile/transport\\_urban/autorizatii\\_taxi/caprice.php](http://www.pmb.ro/adrese_utile/transport_urban/autorizatii_taxi/caprice.php) - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015
- <http://www.ispeed.eu/partners.htm> - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
- <http://pjp-eu.coe.int/en/web/deli> - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
- <http://www.globalnegotiator.com/international-trade/dictionary/multilateral-agreement/> - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
- [http://www.covenantofmayors.eu/about/covenant-of-mayors\\_en.html](http://www.covenantofmayors.eu/about/covenant-of-mayors_en.html) - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
- [http://www.covenantofmayors.eu/covenant\\_signatories.pdf](http://www.covenantofmayors.eu/covenant_signatories.pdf) - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
- <http://www.theguardian.com/environment/2015/mar/26/full-text-of-climate-change-statement-signed-by-26-european-mayors> - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.
- <https://www.wien.gv.at/english/politics/international/vienna-declaration.html> - last accessed May 11<sup>th</sup>, 2015.
- <http://www.roosevelt.edu/Business/AboutUs.aspx> - last accessed on May 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2015.

## **Appendix 1**

### **Twinnig, cooperation and collaboration agreements signed by Bucharest**

#### **Twinning agreements**

1. Protocol Bucharest - Athens, 20.05.1993
2. Twinning Protocol Bucharest - Atlanta, 19.09.1994
3. Joint Statement regarding the Twinning Agreement Bucharest - Pretoria, 20.10.1997
4. Twinning and Cooperation Bucharest - Ankara, 20.06.1998
5. Twinning and Cooperation Bucharest - Amman, 19.06.1999
6. Twinning Protocol Bucharest - Chisinau, 4.11.1999
7. Twinning Protocol Bucharest – Montevideo, 2003
8. Twinning Protocol Bucharest – Nicosia, 12.03.2004
9. Twinning Protocol Bucharest – Beijing 21.06.2005
10. Twinning Protocol Bucharest – Bangkok, 2010

#### **Cooperation agreement**

1. Cooperation Protocol Bucharest – Paris, 20.07.1996
2. Friendship and Cooperation Agreement Bucharest – Athens, 17.01.1997
3. Cooperation Protocol de Bucharest – Izmir, 23.07.1998
4. Memorandum regarding Cooperation and Friendly Exchanges Bucharest – Beijing, 23.11.1998
5. Memorandum of Cooperation Bucharest – Zhenjiang Province, 28.11.1998
6. Project of a cooperation agreement Bucharest– Damascus, 17.12.1998
7. Cooperation Agreement Bucharest – Ottawa, 22.02.1999
8. Friendship and Cooperation Bucharest - Damascus, 19.06.1999
9. Project 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 – Rome, 26.06.2007
15. Cooperation Protocol Bucharest – Vienna, 14.12.2010
16. Memorandum of understanding regarding the friendship and cooperation between Bucharest and Seoul, 2012
17. Cooperation Agreement Bucharest – Baghdad, 2013
18. Cooperation Agreement Bucharest – Bern, 09.10.2014

#### **Collaborations**

1. Protocol regarding the development of collaboration relations Bucharest – Chisinau, 03.06.1997
2. Collaboration Agreement Bucharest– Moscow, 22.06.1997
3. Agreement Bucharest - Beijing, 28.08.1997