

## **Euroregion Lower Danube**

The Euroregion Lower Danube comprises border areas on the Black Sea coast in the Ukraine, Moldova and Romania. Due to the historical background, the political and ethnic situation and, not least, lengthy visa procedures, cross-border co-operation in this area is particularly difficult. The Ukrainian part of the Euroregion, i.e. the area around the cosmopolitan city of Odessa with its important seaport, co-operates with the rather rural areas on the Moldavian and Romanian part of the border, which are characterised by a number of small and medium-sized towns.

The Euroregion formed several commissions whose task is to deal with the various aspects of cross-border co-operation. This allows co-operation in all areas of everyday life, including, but not limited to economic co-operation, an area where, without doubt, the most urgent problems need to be solved. In addition to this, the Euroregion addresses ecological, social and cultural issues. It tackles everyday border problems, as well as the important matter of cross-border crime.

The "AEBR Cross Border Award", a travelling trophy to be awarded for the very first time in 2002, will go to this region in recognition of the intensive socio-cultural co-operation that has been established despite the extremely difficult situation at the borders between the Ukraine, Moldova and Romania.

In the years 2001/2002 the Euroregion organised the following activities (list not exhaustive):

- inter-ethnic forum,
- international festival for amateur artists,
- performances of the Odessa Theatre and Ballet in the neighbouring regions,
- children's festival,
- scientific colloquium on archaeology in the Euroregion.

The universities have signed a co-operation agreement. In addition to co-operation between schools, the media have also started co-operation so that the citizens become more familiar with the Euroregion and its activities.

This increasing socio-cultural integration was, for instance, the starting point for environmental co-operation for the benefit of the Danube delta and for the new ferry link between Tulcea and Galati, which facilitates contact between the citizens.

In addition to a regional development strategy that covers ecological, social and cultural issues, a very ambitious TACIS project is about to be put into practice, i.e. an economic development strategy for the Odessa region, which includes a specific section on cross-border co-operation.

The Ems-Dollart Region (EDR) decided to endow this year's award with an additional €1,000 in order to make a small financial contribution to the further promotion of cross-border co-operation in the Euroregion Lower Danube.