

*"A shelter business environment – the shortest way to cross-border development"*

## PROJECT CONTEXT

Montana – Vidin - Dolj cross border region is a relatively low developed region, with few sustainable business partnerships and business environment less developed compared to EU25. Investments are low, despite good geographical position and infrastructure opportunities - TEN-T, Danube river, airports and transport facilities.

The cross border region is confronted with the following **problems**:

- ▶ Underperforming overall economy characterized by low GDP per capita, low incomes, low new investment, poor transport infrastructure;
- ▶ Overall peripheral character characterized by small SME numbers, *lack of export-oriented businesses*, relatively low use of IT and modern technologies and business management skills;
- ▶ *Competitiveness and technological gaps* compared to national economies and to EU;
- ▶ Limited cross-border economic cooperation experience with few initiatives owing to a *lack of information, coordination and support facilities*;
- ▶ *Limited investment*, due to the remote location of the cross-border area from the centre and bigger cities, that up to now has made it relatively unattractive for foreign direct investors.
- ▶ *Perceptions of the area as a low value-added economy* that will remain a barrier to investment.

The proposed project aims to overcome these problems, by **strengthening cooperation between important competitiveness actors**- *RDABC 2000 –Montana*, as pole for business support for Montana region; *ARIES-Oltenia* Subsidiary, as pole of technology transfer and business support services for Oltenia Region; *PLIMM; Agency for Regional Development and Business Center - Vidin* and *Vidin Chamber of Commerce*, as main organizations in Vidin area to provide business services and information will directly contribute, through their experience in business cooperation in cross-border area and strategy development to the success of the project.

Activities carried out are oriented to **limiting cross border problems in business area**, through *increased information, coordination and support facilities* - business missions. Also, the project **creates the instruments for increasing the capacity of SMEs**, by *establishing of business support centers network*.

Business representatives in cross border area will be **directly connected each other** through **networking facilities of the portal**, as well as through the **video connection**. They will be able to present their products and services, identifying market niches and therefore, *increasing their exports*. Continuous information and networking with other interested investors and business partners from cross border area or European Union will determine local businesses *to increase their competitiveness, by technological research and innovations*.

The **study** on local economical sectors will give opportunity of companies to develop sustainable partnership, creating of trade contacts and will contribute to the cross- border development. The portal for cross border promotion will be designed in an attractive manner for all type of investors (dynamic map of the area with opportunities for local and specific information) and it will provide all necessary and structured information for SMEs and investors.

**On medium and long term, the project will create a dynamic relation between Bulgarian and Romanian cross border businesses, characterized by high competitiveness and technological innovations.**