

The Story of an ERIC

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Abstract: The idea of transforming the Danube Delta into a “living lab” for the international scientific community goes back to the last decade of the 20th Century. The post-communist period was very complicated, and almost a decade passed before a series of steps were taken by the Romanian authorities for research towards the transformation from idea into reality. A major workshop was co-organized by GeoEcoMar and the US Army Corps of Engineers in 2006, which brought together worldwide delta experts in Romania. The conclusion was that a successful management of a delta can only be reached if the entire river basin and the sea under its influence are looked upon as a continuum. The Romanian government took the initiative and funded the efforts to build an international centre, dedicated initially to interdisciplinary science for the Danube- Delta – Black Sea System (hence its name, DANUBIUS-RI). Already by 2011, the idea started to grow pan-European, and already by 2014, the international scientific community, together with supporting governments, recognized the maturity of the idea, and a proposal was submitted for DANUBIUS-RI to be included in the ESFRI 2016 Roadmap. After being accepted as an ESFRI initiative for a pan-European research infrastructure dedicated to interdisciplinary studies in river-sea systems, the next step was the creation of the international organization that would manage this distributed facility. With support from the European Commission (through H2020 DANUBIUS-PP and Horizon DANUBIUS-IP projects), all the steps were taken to prepare in detail all the requested ingredients for an ERIC (European Research Infrastructure Consortium). Finally, at the end of June 2025, DANUBIUS ERIC (the first ERIC hosted by Romania) was born. Austria, the Czech Republic, Italy, Moldova, the Netherlands, and the United Kingdom are the governments that have already adhered to this international organization; other countries are on course to become members.

Keywords: DANUBIUS-RI; River–Sea Systems; Research Infrastructure; Danube Delta Living Lab; ERIC Formation 2025

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