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DBS Gateway Region

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# Platform Cooperation Strategy

Final document

WP 6 – Activity 6.1

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## Document Control Sheet

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## Table of Contents

1	Executive summary.....	7
2	Introduction.....	12
2.1	Project objectives and priorities.....	12
2.2	The meaning of the Cooperation Strategy and links to the Cooperation Platform .....	13
2.3	Cooperation Platform workflow.....	14
2.4	Principles of the Cooperation Platform.....	15
3	Methodology .....	16
3.1	Objective and scope .....	16
3.2	Methodological tools.....	16
3.2.1	Desk analysis.....	16
3.2.2	Benchmark.....	16
3.2.3	Online questionnaires.....	17
3.2.4	In-depth interviews .....	17
3.2.5	Partner workshops .....	18
3.3	Involved target groups.....	18
3.3.1	Lead Partner of the DBS Gateway Region project.....	19
3.3.2	Project partners.....	19
3.3.3	Associated partners.....	19
3.4	Research integrity measures applied .....	19
4	Research findings on other platforms or similar initiatives in the Danube Region.....	21
4.1	Communication via external communication interface .....	26
4.2	Close cooperation with a transparent organisational structure .....	26
4.3	Cooperation agreement .....	33
5	Research findings of the questionnaire survey and qualitative interviews conducted among partners	35
5.1	Online questionnaire .....	35
5.2	In-depth interviews .....	48
5.2.1	Interview with the Lead Partner (LP).....	48
5.2.2	Interview with the Bulgarian partners.....	49
5.2.3	Interview with the Romanian partner .....	50
5.2.4	Interview with the Hungarian partner (the leader of WP6).....	51
5.3	Interactive workshop with partners in Vienna.....	52

6	Gap analysis.....	58
6.1	Summary of the Joint Vision 2040.....	58
6.2	Barriers and challenges – finding the gap .....	59
6.3	Contribution of the Platform to the Joint Vision .....	63
7	Strategy.....	64
7.1	The necessary scope and criteria of the Platform .....	64
7.1.1	Target groups and cooperation methods.....	64
7.1.2	Platform services .....	65
7.1.3	Political, operational and financial background .....	67
7.2	Creating the Platform – the process.....	69
8	A basic overview of the institutionalisation and proposed legal solutions, advantages and disadvantages	
	71	
8.1	Goals for the region (Joint Vision 2040) .....	71
8.2	Objectives for the Cooperation Platform .....	72
8.3	Advantages and disadvantages of the potential legal forms .....	72
8.3.1	EGTC.....	73
8.3.2	EEIG.....	75
8.3.3	Loose cooperation agreement .....	77
8.4	Comparison of the organisational forms.....	78
9	Forward looking conclusions and recommendations for the post-project period on the functioning of the Platform.....	81
9.1	Technical background of the operation .....	81
9.2	Personal background and planned resources to operate the Platform .....	81
9.3	Basic marketing and communication concept on how to promote the Platform, including the identification of the internet-based channels to be used .....	81
9.4	Business model for the Platform operation .....	82
9.5	Future steps for the development of the Platform .....	84
9.6	Recommendation on the functioning of the platform .....	85
10	Annexes .....	89
10.1	Questionnaire .....	89
10.2	List of the RAP measures .....	95
10.3	Agenda for the interviews .....	101
11	References and data sources.....	102



## List of Figures

1 Cooperation Platform workflow.....	14
2 The integrity of the methodological measures .....	20
3 Route of Rhine-Danube CNC .....	22
4 The cooperation area of EUSDR and its logo.....	23
5 The cooperation area of ARGE Donauländer and its logo .....	24
6 The logo of CODCR.....	25
6 The involved ports of the Western Black Sea.....	25
5 Area of Rhine-Alpine Corridor .....	29
6 Partners involved in the survey .....	35
7 Members of the Platform .....	36
8 Access to the Platform.....	37
9 Service: Presenting the DBS Gateway Region project results and outputs.....	37
10 Service: New funding opportunities.....	38
11 Service: The implementation of the Roadmap measures .....	38
12 Service: Cargo consolidation service .....	39
13 Service: Lobbying.....	39
14 Service: Searchable, visualised output and project documents.....	40
15 Service: Monitoring the RAP measures .....	40
16 Service: Partner meetings.....	41
17 Service: Creating working groups/discussion boards.....	41
18 Service: Well-structured common database .....	42
19 Service: Sharing best practices .....	42
20 Service: Know-how sharing via trainings.....	43
21 Service: Know-how sharing via online discussions.....	43
22 Service: Online help interface .....	44
23 Service: Marketing activities.....	44
24 Service: Communication with other institutions.....	45
25 Service: Encouraging eco-friendly behaviour .....	45
26 Service: Sharing port introduction videos .....	46
27 The organisational background of the new Platform.....	47
28 The most preferred organisational form.....	47
29 Expectations and concerns about the Platform .....	52
30 Key topics related to the organisational issues of the Platform .....	54
31 Evaluation and scoring of the possible future services and functions of the Platform.....	56
32 Joint Vision 2040 – Mission Statement .....	58
33 Structure of Joint Vision 2040 .....	59
34 Connections between the Potential Analysis and the Joint Vision 2040 .....	61
35 Gap analysis – summary .....	62
36 Connections between the Platform and the Joint Vision 2040.....	63
37 Potential members and users of the Platform .....	65
38 Platform services related to the most relevant Fields of intervention from Joint Vision 2040 .....	67
39 The Platform’s membership system.....	68



40 The process of establishing the Cooperation Platform .....	70
41 Gap analysis – summary .....	71
42 Connections between the Platform and the Joint Vision 2040 .....	72
43 Comparison of the possible organisational forms .....	79
44 Business Canvas Modell.....	83
48 Future steps for the Platform .....	84
49 Potential members and target groups .....	86
50 List of potential services .....	87

## 1 Executive summary

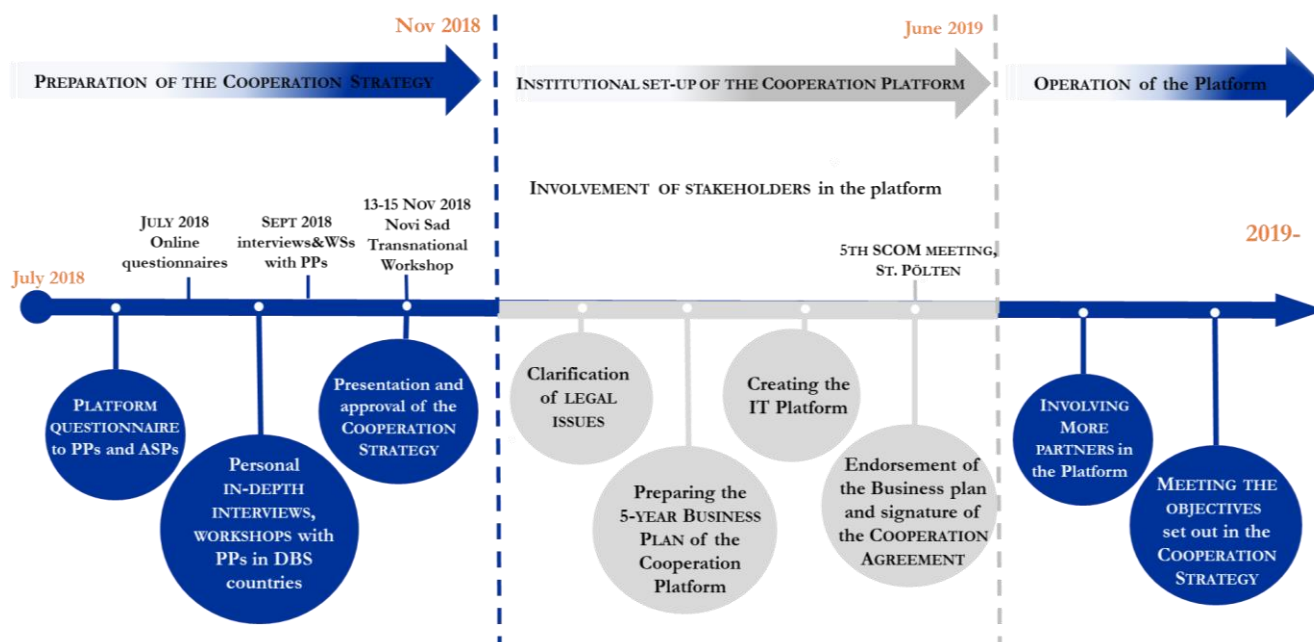
The purpose of the Cooperation Platform is to ensure long-term commitment, continuous electronic and non-electronic promotion and active engagement for the incorporation of the project’s recommendations after the DBS Gateway Region project completion. The Platform will offer transferability of the know-how acquired within the project through know-how sharing and monitor the implementation of the projects. It will facilitate funding for necessary activities within the Roadmap, ensure the durability and sustainability of the project results and enhance further development steps toward the realization of the Joint Vision 2040.

To reach this overall goal, the member partners should form a Platform which will also have an electronic webpage and agree on the framework in which the cooperation can be operated. The framework of the cooperation concerns matters such as:

- Legal form of the Platform
- Members and target groups
- Activities of the members in the framework of the cooperation
- Financial model

The Strategy of the Cooperation Platform endeavours to assess and present the possible solutions to each of the key questions for the framework of the Cooperation Platform. Accordingly, the Strategy does not provide with one best solution for the set-up of the Platform but lays out the directions and issues that will serve as the basis for the detailed Business Plan of the operation.

The set-up of the Cooperation Platform starting from the strategy development process to the operational work is planned according to the below flow chart:





## Methodology

The development process of the Strategy included the following methodological tools:

- **Desk analysis** – available project documents and outputs, relevant legislations, information on good practices
- **Benchmark** – assessment of similar or relevant cooperation platforms (different legal forms)
- **Online questionnaire** – distributed among project partners and associated partners
  - All the 10 project partners and 13 out of the 20 associated partners – responded to the questionnaire providing valuable information for the later analysis.
- **In-depth interviews** with project partners
  - Regional Government of Lower Austria
  - Municipality of Galati
  - Municipality of Varna and the Port of Varna (associated partner)
  - Freeport of Budapest Logistics
- **Interactive partner workshop** with the participation of the Regional Government of Lower Austria, the Urban Innovation Vienna GmbH, Port Authority Vukovar, Public Ports, jsc and the University of Novi Sad

As a conclusion of the above personal interviews, questionnaires and partner workshops, the main expectations of the project partners toward the e-Platform are:

- Enhance communication, information sharing and networking among the DBS Gateway Region stakeholders by using an online interface;
- Provide services which the partners do not have resources for (financial, human, technical);
- Provide political backing to the partners to be more effective in reaching the main objectives of the DBS Gateway Region;
- Be eligible to obtain and effectively use external funding resources;
- Market the DBS Gateway Region in the field of sustainable transportation; and
- Provide financial and operational sustainability.

## Platform services and activities

Based on the partners' responses for the online questionnaire and based on the inputs from personal meetings, the below Platform services are to be further elaborated in the Business Plan:

- Lobbying
- Communication with other stakeholders
- Monitoring the implementation of the Regional Action Plan measures
- Presenting of the DBS Gateway Region project results, outputs - searchable, visualized documents on the online platform
- Common marketing activities





## Legal form of the Platform

Project and associated partners involved in the assessment, preferred the following four types of cooperation form to establish:

1. Common organization with permanent staff (legally established, e.g. in a form of a company or association or EGTC)
2. Common external communication interface
3. Common internal communication interface
4. Cooperation agreement between the platform members

The Strategy offers a structured comparison between three potential organizational forms to ease the decision-making of the partners related to the final legal form of the Cooperation Platform. The three main organizational forms are:

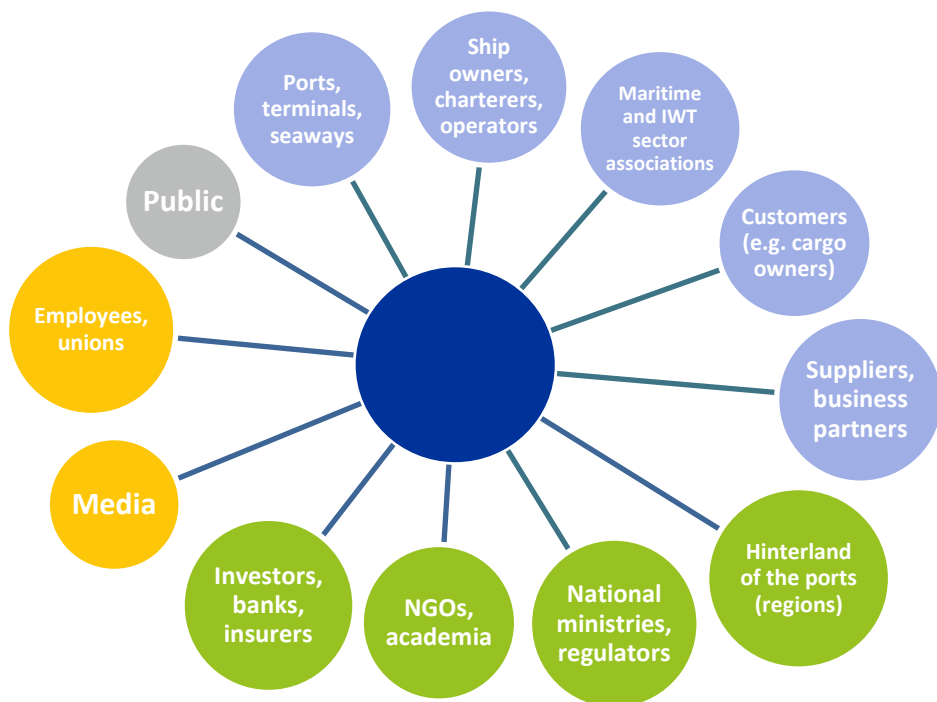
- EGTC
- EEIG and
- Loose cooperation agreement

The above three organisational forms are assessed in Chapter 8 of the Strategy along the following comparison aspects:

- Members;
- Commitment of members;
- Level of political influence;
- Diversity of financial sources, income, debt;
- Operational aspects;
- Financial sustainability;
- Marketing effect.

## Target groups

The objectives of the Joint Vision 2040 can only be achieved by the Platform if its membership is open – or at least accessible – not only for the project partners and associated strategic partners, but for any regions and municipalities (with ports) along the Danube river (the public sector). Accessibility, however, is important regardless of membership, because it guarantees the widespread availability of information and services provided by the e-Platform – the lack of both was identified as an obstacle in the Potential Analysis and the Joint Vision 2040, too. The targeted stakeholders are seen on the below figure:



**Gap analysis and strategic areas**

The below chart represents how the Cooperation Platform contributes to the implementation of the Joint Vision 2040, thus, which areas can be directly or indirectly influenced and improved by the Cooperation Platform.

**BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT**

The Platform's services should include good practices and know-how sharing (e.g. through online trainings) – these will **indirectly contribute to the economic development of the region and make the sector more attractive for investment.**

**LEGAL FRAMEWORK**

In order to eliminate the regulatory differences, the Platform can contribute **indirectly in the form of lobbying.** The impact of the Platform in this field is largely dependent on the extent to which the **decision-makers** can be **involved**, thereby eliminating their current lack of awareness.

**MARKETING**

Using a joint voice for lobbying implies the existence of a **joint brand** which can only be successful if it is **complemented by joint marketing activities** (events, publications, etc.) – the Platform directly contributes to this Field of intervention.

**SERVICES**

The Platform itself will provide **new services** to the shipping-related stakeholders in the region, which can be considered as a **direct intervention**, but the most influential change is the **continuous communication and information exchange** between the members, derived from their joint services.

**INNOVATION/TECHNOLOGY**

The Platform – especially in its initial form – cannot be considered an online planning tool but can **(indirectly) launch and support joint developments that serve innovation.**

**ORGANISATION/COOPERATION**

**Enabling the efficient share of information** (in terms of capacities, for example) between all ports to optimise their operation and processes **and using a joint voice as a strong lobby must be the ultimate goals of the Platform.** This close cooperation will make developing joint services easier.

**INFRASTRUCTURE**

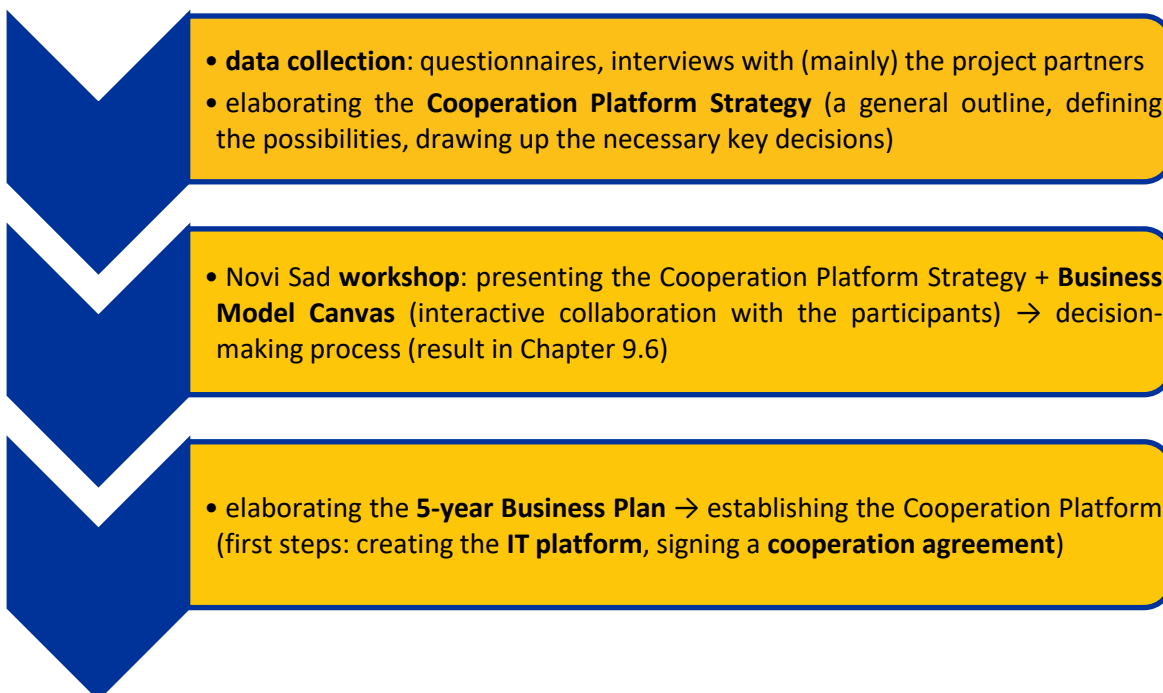
The problems of infrastructure maintenance and modernization are largely due to the lack of resources. The Platform can provide **assistance in fund acquisition**, presenting – e.g. in the form of an online help desk – and securing (by lobbying) the relevant funding instruments.

## Towards implementation

The strategy outlines the most important criteria the Platform needs to meet – after carefully studying the document, it is up to the partners to make the **key decisions** regarding the Platform's operation. The most important decisions concern:

- The list of current/potential members and the target group;
- The legal form of the organisation (based on the previous decision);
- The basics of the organizational and operational rules;
- The e-Platform's main profile, its services, their timing and prioritization (including the main field(s) of intervention the Platform aims to focus on first, e.g. navigability);
- And its resource needs (including the financial and human resources).

The interactive workshops of the meeting in Novi Sad in November 2018 supported the decision-making process: the results of the **Business Model Canvas** are thoroughly studied by the partners and taken into account during the development of the Platform's **5-year Business Plan**. Following the acceptance of the Business Plan, the e-Platform's operational foundations will be elaborated, the most important parts of which are **creating the IT platform** and **signing the cooperation agreement** of the members.



## 2 Introduction

### 2.1 Project objectives and priorities

With the expansion of the EU, the borders were opened to reunite the historical Danube region. The emergence of new markets resulted in raised road transport flows, which not only restrain further economic development but have other detrimental effects on the region, too.

The **DTP1-1-050-3.1 DBS Gateway Region – Regional and Transport Development in the Danube-Black Sea Region towards a Transnational Multiport Gateway Region** project's main objective is to support the Danube-Black Sea Region to become an attractive gateway region for eco-friendly, preferably maritime and inland waterway transport between Central Europe and the Black Sea, the Caspian region and the Far East, by facilitating cooperation between the regions, ports and other key actors. Their joint efforts will improve the accessibility of both the ports and the regions and strengthen interoperability between maritime and inland waterways as well as with their hinterlands. Together with raising the awareness about the possibilities of intermodal transport, this will lead to shifting existing and attracting new cargo flows to environmentally friendly transport systems.

Currently, the aging infrastructure and inefficient intermodal services limit the potential of the water transport system. The multitude of private companies in a fragmented market cannot be expected to be promoters of an intermodal network system that leads to higher efficiency at macro-level rather than the level of the firm. The project partners believe that the cooperation of public authorities, ports and their related associations is a key factor to raise the quality, reliability and efficiency of the waterway transport system.

However, cooperation in itself will not lead to the envisaged results. It needs to be elevated to a well-informed, well-prepared, well-focused and well-supported level. The specific objectives of the project accommodate this fact:

1. The project aims at creating a basis for cooperation between the relevant stakeholders in order to be able to work together toward the development of the DBS Gateway Region.
2. Through the increased attractiveness of the waterway transport system, it aims at providing the preconditions for the region to take over the envisaged role as the DBS Gateway Region.
3. In order to be able to further develop and actively promote the DBS Gateway Region beyond the lifetime of the project, the project aims at facilitating long-term cooperation between all key actors within an institutionalised Cooperation Platform and the importance of which would be ensured by an electronic interface.

Based on these goals and objectives, several strategies and plans are developed:

- **Potential analysis**  
The potential analysis is the basis for the Joint Vision 2040 and gives an overview of the existing and future market potentials. Relevant information from existing studies is gathered, harmonized in terms of indicators, actuality and data quality. The analysis builds on the outputs of projects like DaHar, GIFT, INWAPO, ADB, EMPIRIC and others.
- **Joint Vision 2040**

The Joint Vision 2040 is based on the Potential analysis and describes the economic, regional and logistics development targeted for the DBS Gateway Region. It is an aspirational description of what the region would like to achieve or accomplish in the mid-term or long-term future. It serves as a guide for choosing current and future courses of action.

- **Roadmap**

The Road map consists of measures suitable to reach the Joint Vision 2040 and aims at turning the DBS Gateway Region into an attractive gateway region for maritime and inland waterway transport. It is a basis for future cooperation and increase the attractiveness of the water transport system.

- **Regional action plans**

Each participating region work on concrete actions feasible to tackle the relevant challenges and provide the standards set in the Road map. Timelines, responsibilities and the necessary steps to be taken are defined for each action.

- **Cooperation Platform**

The Cooperation Platform will ensure long-term commitment, continuous promotion and active engagement for the incorporation of the project's recommendations after project completion. The platform will offer transferability of the know-how acquired within the project through trainings and monitor the implementation of the projects. It will facilitate funding for necessary activities within the Roadmap, ensure the durability and sustainability of the project results with the help of an online interface and enhance further development steps toward the realization of the Joint Vision 2040.

## 2.2 The meaning of the Cooperation Strategy and links to the Cooperation Platform

The Cooperation Strategy is a jointly developed document laying down the codes of cooperation within the Cooperation Platform. It includes concepts, fields and ways of cooperation, including the administrative framework. It is specifically developed for the DBS Gateway Region. However, cooperation is a universal quality and the Strategy can be used as a best practice on how cooperation can work.

The Cooperation Strategy lays down the competences and fields of action of the Cooperation Platform after the project is finalised. Legitimised by this jointly agreed Strategy, the e-Platform will ensure the sustainability and continuation of the taken actions and thus contribute to the long-term cooperation of all key actors in the DBS Gateway Region.

The Cooperation Strategy is the framework, which determines the main principles according to which the Cooperation Platform will operate. Its main objective is to achieve a very broad acceptance that will allow new members to join the Cooperation Platform in later stages. Since the Cooperation Strategy is a legitimized basis for the future action of the e-Platform, it will give it broad acceptance by all founding and potential new members in order to guarantee durability.

The Cooperation Strategy forms the basis for the consideration of the institutional set-up of the e-Platform, indicating which kind of political, operational and financial framework will best serve the quality of contribution towards the Cooperation Strategy.

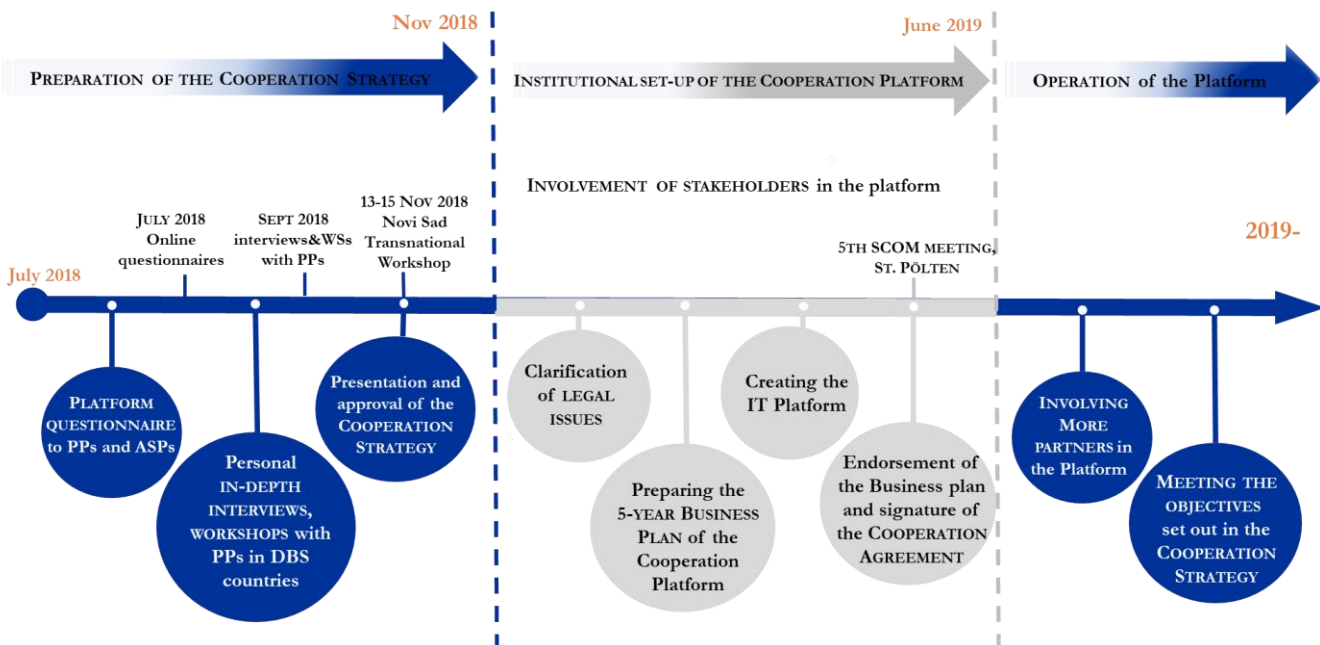
The transnational workshop on know-how transfer in Novi Sad on 14 November 2018 inaugurated the Cooperation Platform with the approval of the Strategy by the DBS project partners and thus gives the basis for a detailed Business Plan to be elaborated at the last stage of the DBS Gateway Region project.

The definition of the institutional framework will start with the development of the 5-year Business Plan which will analyse the financial and institutional durability of the e-Platform in-depth. The Business Plan will find answers to questions such as the membership rules, the financial sustainability and the legal form of the Platform.

In order to be able to fulfil the strategic and ambitious tasks foreseen in the Cooperation Strategy, the set-up of the Cooperation Platform will build upon two pillars – the political and the operational backing. The political backing is necessary to lobby for the recommendations (direct use of the “Roadmap”) of the project. The operational backing is necessary to keep up with the administration (defined in the Cooperation Strategy) that is provided by the partnership during the project’s lifetime and needs to be held up after the project’s completion. The operational work will be taken over by an institution with no commercial or operative interest in the freight transport in the Danube Region and thus keeps objectivity and provides support to all members and it will also have an online interface to communicate with other stakeholders and market the cooperation.

### 2.3 Cooperation Platform workflow

To better understand the logical set-up of the Cooperation Platform starting from the strategy development to the operational work, the chart below details the whole process:



1 Cooperation Platform workflow

## 2.4 Principles of the Cooperation Platform

When the concept of the Cooperation Platform was laid down and explained in the Application Form of the DBS Gateway Region project, no specific technical details were defined in terms of the operational structure, services, legal status or membership issues. It is the main goal of the Strategy to identify these main principles based on which the Business Plan can be elaborated.

The fundamental principles shall be defined by the partners who are to be the main actors of the Platform (besides several additional stakeholders joining later). During the strategy development phase of the Cooperation Platform, all DBS partners were intensively involved to express their expectations, fears and concerns about the future cooperation. As a conclusion of several personal interviews, questionnaires and partner workshops, the main expectations of the project partners toward the Platform are as follows.

Regardless of the specific details of the future cooperation, the Platform shall meet the following criteria:

- Enhance communication, information sharing and networking among the DBS Gateway Region stakeholders;
- Provide services which the partners do not have resources for (financial, human, technical);
- Provide political backing to the partners to be more effective in reaching the main objectives of the DBS Gateway Region;
- Be eligible to obtain and effectively use external funding resources;
- Market the DBS Gateway Region in the field of sustainable transportation; and
- Provide financial and operational sustainability.

## 3 Methodology

### 3.1 Objective and scope

The main objective of the strategy development was to identify the directions and focal points of the cooperation, which a meaningful and sustainable Platform can be built upon. Since none of the specific aspects of the Platform was defined beforehand, the Strategy had to cover a very complex case with many open questions. However, the partner organisations involved in the strategy development have diverse opinions and – most importantly – different levels of commitment.

The main challenges of the Cooperation Platform strategy development:

- No element of the organisational aspects has been pre-identified (e.g. legal form, membership, services, financial framework);
- No opportunity to bring all partners together to have a joint discussion and joint decisions on specific questions;
- Diverse organisations with different expectations; and
- Different levels of commitment.

Since the Strategy had to be developed in such a complex and undefined environment, the scope of the document does not cover the action plan for the implementation of the Platform. Only followed by the joint approval of the Strategy can the Business Plan of the next five years of the operation be elaborated.

### 3.2 Methodological tools

#### 3.2.1 Desk analysis

Desk analysis is among the most frequently used evaluation tools. Its scope covers the analysis of information available in written form. All the collected documents and online information and data available were evaluated via this method. The main sources of the desk analysis:

- DBS Gateway Region Application Form
- DBS Gateway Region project outputs, in particular:
  - Regional Action Plan and RAP measures
  - Funding Guideline
  - Potential Analysis
  - Joint Vision 2040
- Commission regulations for specific organisational forms (EGTC, EEIG)
- Available information online on best practice cases for similar cooperation platforms

#### 3.2.2 Benchmark

The case study-based benchmark method involves an in-depth study of a phenomenon on a multitude of perspectives. These multiple perspectives may come from multiple data collection methods (both qualitative and quantitative). During ex-ante evaluation, case studies bring in the experiences of past and current programmes providing for a critical analysis on the quality of the new programme.



Short case study descriptions were made on similar cooperation platforms or initiatives. Good practices were collected on different perspectives, such as:

- Similar field (sustainable transport) where the cooperation is realised
- Similar legal environment – EU level cooperation, EU legal basis
- Similar set-up of the cooperation – regional bodies, authorities and national level companies in a specific sector
- Similar goals – services, lobbying and political influence, networking, information sharing, IT interface

### 3.2.3 Online questionnaires

Questionnaires can be classified as both a quantitative and qualitative method depending on the nature of the questions. Specifically, answers obtained through close-ended questions with multiple-choice answer options are analysed using quantitative methods (illustrated with various charts). Answers obtained to open-ended questionnaire questions are analysed using qualitative methods and they involve discussions and critical analyses without the use of numbers and calculations.

The main advantages of questionnaires in general:

- Time-efficient data collection
- Higher level of comparability and objectivity (compared to many alternative methods of primary data collection)

**Online questionnaire:** respondents were asked to answer the questionnaire sent by e-mail. The advantages of the online questionnaires include their inexpensive price, time-efficiency, and the respondents do not feel pressured, therefore can answer when they have time, giving more accurate answers. However, the main shortcoming of the mail questionnaires is that sometimes respondents do not bother answering them and they can just ignore the questionnaire.

**DBS questionnaire:** in the DBS Gateway Region project, every project partner and associated partner was invited via e-mail to fill in the online questionnaire, designed in a Google Form. Altogether, 23 partners – all 10 project partners and 13 out of the 20 associated partners – responded to the questionnaire providing valuable information for the later analysis.

Given the organisational nature of the analysis, the questionnaire included more qualitative than quantitative questions. Applying more close-ended questions assessing the attitude and priorities of the partners made the analysis more comparable while bar-charts could easily be made, too. Nevertheless, some open-ended questions let the respondents share their opinion and concerns related to the idea of the future cooperation.

The detailed results of the online questionnaire are presented in a later chapter, whereas the questionnaire form can be found in the Annexes.

### 3.2.4 In-depth interviews

Usually, individual interviews consist of an in-depth conversation with an individual, conducted by trained staff. The purpose is to collect specific information related to the opinion of the interviewee. In-depth interviews with the project partners were an essential part of the methodology, since the main expectations and concerns about such a complex case can be revealed easier in a deeper and more personal conversation.

Not all project partners, only the following organisations were interviewed in-depth by the experts of the strategy development:

- Regional Government of Lower Austria
- Municipality of Galati
- Municipality of Varna and the Port of Varna (associated partner)
- Freeport of Budapest Logistics

### 3.2.5 Partner workshops

Workshops are a format of working group that are held with the specific aim of evaluation and typically convene more times. The method is recommended in the case of complex evaluation tasks, especially when quantitative tools are not applicable (e.g. non-quantifiable impacts), also when participants have different opinions and independent decision-making is necessary. The identification of the project partners' opinion about a Cooperation Platform, of which the structure, activities, legal entity and main attributes are not specified yet is quite a complex task to come to a common ground with diverse partners.

A 2-hour-long interactive workshop was organised in Vienna with project partners from four countries to jointly identify these main focuses the Platform strategy should build upon:

- Regional Government of Lower Austria
- Urban Innovation Vienna GmbH
- Port Authority Vukovar
- Public Ports, jsc
- University of Novi Sad

During the workshop, the participants worked together to draw up the main recommendations for the Cooperation Platform. The workshop was divided into three main steps:

1. Individual identification and then sharing the main expectations and concerns
2. Defining the 6 most crucial organisational issues of the Platform to be decided, common recommendations for them
3. Prioritisation of the potential Platform activities and services along a pre-designed scoring methodology

The summary and visual documentation of the workshop is detailed in a later chapter and the Annexes.

## 3.3 Involved target groups

In the strategy development phase of the Cooperation Platform, only those partners have been involved in the process, who are directly responsible for the establishment of the new organisation. These target groups are:

- the Lead Partner;
- the project partners; and
- the associated partners.

Though the creation of the e-Platform is a designed task of the project partners, the final target group of the Cooperation shall be much wider, involving all the relevant stakeholder organisations of the DBS Gateway Region in the field of multimodal transportation. The first milestone to address and commit this target group is the Novi Sad transnational event in November 2018.

### 3.3.1 Lead Partner of the DBS Gateway Region project

Since the Lead Partner of the DBS Gateway Region project, the Regional Government of Lower Austria has been having a decisive role since the very first concept of the Cooperation Platform, the strategy development originated from the first interview with the representatives of the Lead Partner.

Besides the first interview, the Regional Government played an important role during the interactive partner workshop in Vienna as well.

Like all project- and associated partners, the Lead Partner also contributed to the online questionnaire.

### 3.3.2 Project partners

Being the main actors of the Platform, the project partners were involved in each step of the strategy development:

- The online questionnaires;
- The in-depth interviews; and
- The partner workshop.

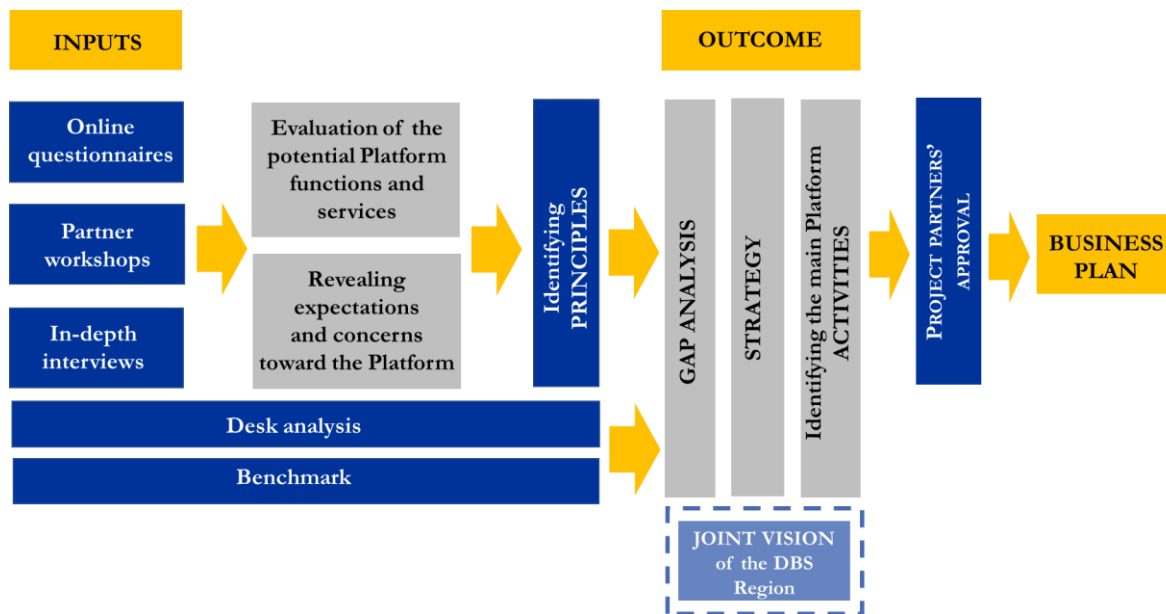
### 3.3.3 Associated partners

Since the group of associated partners is rather diverse and their commitment toward the establishment of the e-Platform is less evident, they were only involved in the online questionnaire during the strategy development.

Their responses to the questionnaire helped to understand the attitude, main expectations and reservations regarding the presented Platform concept. The responses of this target group were exceptionally valuable since they might represent the opinion of the stakeholders to be involved in the e-Platform in a later stage.

## 3.4 Research integrity measures applied

The integrity of the methodological measures applied during the strategy development phase is illustrated by the chart below:



## 2 The integrity of the methodological measures

The primary inputs for the identification of the cooperation principles were gained from the main actors, the project partners and the associated partners, via the online questionnaire, personal in-depth interviews, partner workshops and meetings.

Based on the information obtained from the project and associated partners, and the findings of the document analysis and benchmarking, the main outcomes of the Strategy could be developed:

- Gap analysis to identify those areas where the Cooperation Platform could have an added value
- Strategy of the Cooperation Platform, which the Business Plan will build upon
- Identification of the main activities for the future operation of the Platform

The gap analysis, the Strategy and the Platform activities shall be approved by all project partners, the key actors of the Cooperation. The approval of the Strategy will take place at the Novi Sad SCOM meeting in November 2018. After approving the main principles and objectives of the Platform Strategy, the detailed Business Plan can be developed, too.

## 4 Research findings on other platforms or similar initiatives in the Danube Region

This part of the Strategy provides insight into the topic of similar cooperation platforms and their current status through a best practice research.

Short-term cooperation projects often produce general level strategies, but their implementation may sometimes remain incomplete. Therefore, ensuring the continuity of cooperation is crucial when pursuing tangible goals (Knippschild 2011). In addition, the DBS Gateway Region intends to facilitate long-term cooperation of all key actors within an institutionalized Cooperation Platform with the help of an electronic interface.

Transnational cooperation can exist on many levels, ranging from the most superficial information sharing to the most profound combined constitution. The possible organizational forms were listed in the online questionnaire, too, depending on the level of cooperation between the partners:

- Non-formalized cooperation between the platform members (very loose form of cooperation without any legally binding document, online solution etc.)
- Common internal communication interface (e.g. sharing data, documents and messaging between the platform members)
- Cooperation agreement between the platform members
- Common organization (legally established like in a form of a company or association or EGTC, etc.) without permanent staff
- Common organization (legally established like in a form of a company or association or EGTC, etc.) with permanent staff
- Common external communication interface (e.g. common webpage, online cloud)

According to the online questionnaire, the three most preferred form of the DBS Gateway Region cooperation could be:

1. **Common external communication interface** (e.g. common webpage, online cloud)
2. **Common organization** (legally established like in a form of a company or association or EGTC, etc.) with permanent staff (with 9-9 responses)
3. **Cooperation agreement** between the platform members (with 8 responses)

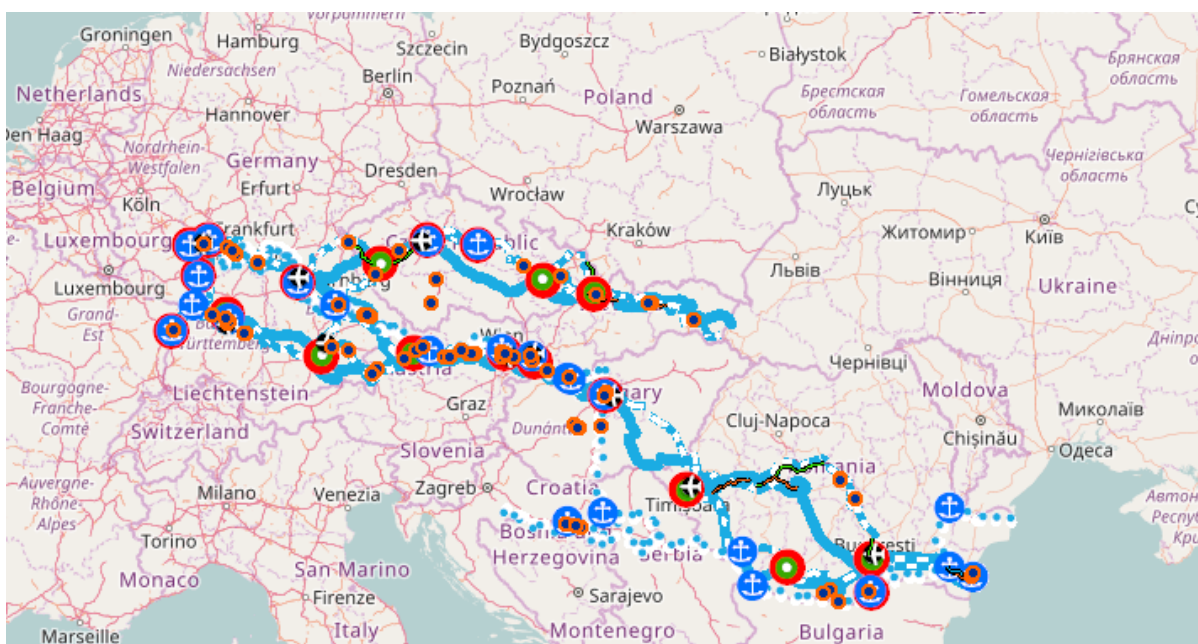
The same classification method is also used in this document, when different types of existing transnational cooperations and collaborations are listed. It will ease the decision-making by setting up our own criteria system (which will be our basis for the analysis in Chapter 8) based on these good practices.

However, before starting to list good practices, it is important to mention two collaborations that are territorially overlapping with the DBS Gateway Region, therefore, improving the situation of the Danube and the surrounding area is also a top priority for them. In order to avoid competing for resources or even members, it is crucial to examine the functioning and goals of these organizations and to cooperate with them to enforce synergistic effects.

1. The **Rhine-Danube Core Network Corridor (CNC)**<sup>1</sup> covers all modes of transport and connects nine Member States, with six benefiting from the Cohesion Funds' support. The EU has endeavoured to

<sup>1</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/rhine-danube\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/themes/infrastructure/rhine-danube_en)

support the Corridors' development through the implementation of targeted investments by providing co-funding through the Connecting Europe Facility (CEF) instrument. Their goal is to achieve an ambitious transport network in the Rhine-Danube region in parallel with other TEN-T Corridors. They think it is also a requirement to have a close cooperation with environmental experts from the beginning of all infrastructural projects aiming at improving navigability conditions on the rivers.



3 Route of Rhine-Danube CNC

2. **EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)<sup>2</sup>** covers the area from the Black Forest (Germany) to the Black Sea (Romania-Ukraine-Moldova), so it brings together 14 countries along the Danube river. EUSDR is a macro-regional strategy adopted by the European Commission in December 2010 and endorsed by the European Council in 2011. The Strategy was jointly developed by the Commission, together with the Danube Region countries and stakeholders, in order to address common challenges together. The Strategy seeks to create synergies and coordination between existing policies and initiatives taking place across the Danube Region.

The Strategy focuses on four pillars, and within each pillar, concrete cooperation actions specify priority areas:

- Connecting the region
  - i. Improve mobility and transport connections
  - ii. Encourage more sustainable energy
  - iii. Promote culture and tourism
- Protecting the environment
  - i. Restore and maintain water quality
  - ii. Manage environmental risks
  - iii. Preserve biodiversity, landscapes and the air and soil quality
- Building prosperity

<sup>2</sup> <http://www.danube-region.eu/>



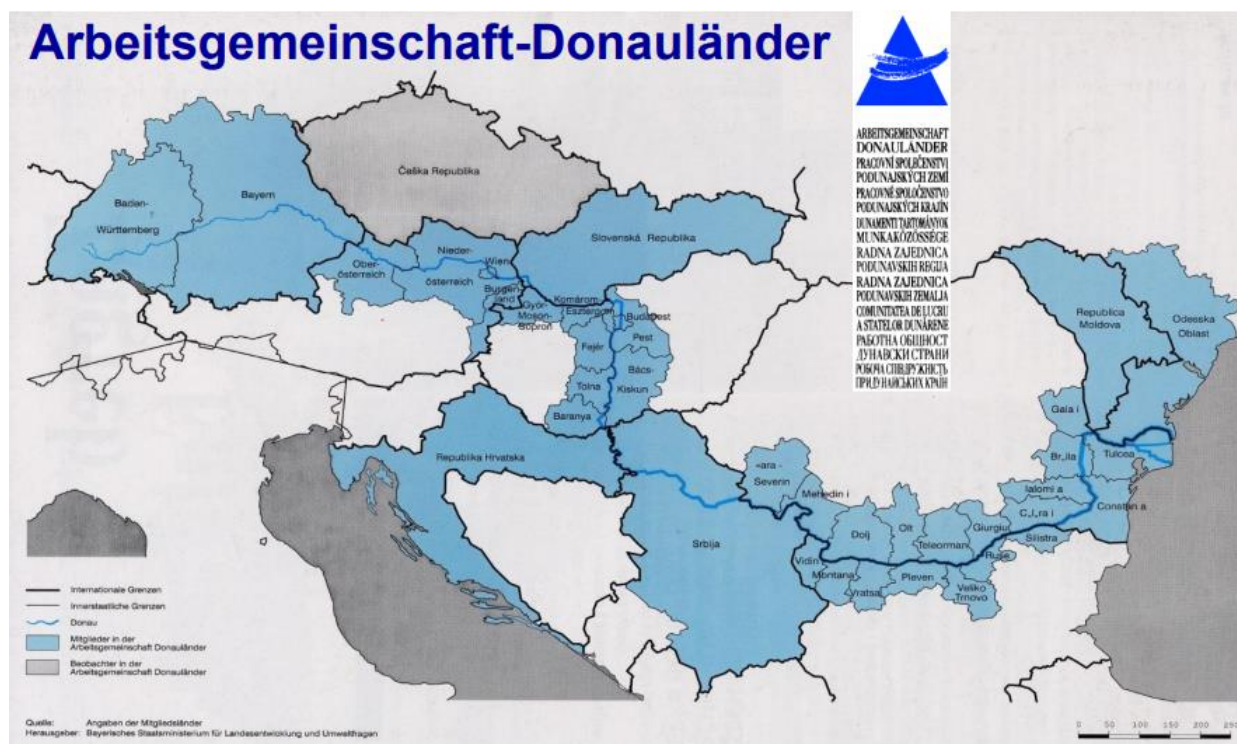
- i. Develop the Knowledge Society
  - ii. Support the competitiveness of enterprises
  - iii. Invest in people and skills
- Strengthening the region
  - i. Step up institutional capacity and cooperation
  - ii. Work together to promote security and tackle organised and serious crime



4 The cooperation area of EUSDR and its logo

3. **Arbeitsgemeinschaft (ARGE) Donauländer**<sup>3</sup> was created in 1990. The aim of the organisation is to promote co-operation among its members for the development of the Danube area to serve the interests of its inhabitants and to foster peaceful cooperation in Europe. Location of the Secretariat in St Pölten, Land Lower Austria. Each member bears the cost engendered by the activities, interpreters are paid by the host region. So, there is no membership fee. The work groups of the organisation are follows:
- Culture and Science; Chair: Lower Austria
  - Transport and Shipping; Chair: Vienna
  - Zoning and Environmental Protection; Chair: County Bacs-Kiskun
  - Economy and Tourism; Chair: County Győr-Moson-Sopron
  - Youth and Sports; Chair: County Pest

<sup>3</sup> [http://www.noel.gv.at/noe/Internationales-Europa/Arbeitsgemeinschaft\\_Donaulaender.html](http://www.noel.gv.at/noe/Internationales-Europa/Arbeitsgemeinschaft_Donaulaender.html)



5 The cooperation area of ARGE Donauländer and its logo

4. **Council of the Danube Cities and Regions (CODCR)** is a bridge that links European, regional and local institutions to the academic, business, financing networks and other representatives of the civil society. The members of the Council act for partnership and mutual assistance at interregional level. The key principles which will be mainstreamed are the respect for democracy and human rights, the rule of law, good governance, the principles of market economy, social and environmentally sustainable development, the principles of ethnic and gender equality as well as the principle of regional balance. The Council acts as the political voice of the Danube Cities and Regions with, in particular, the following objectives: <sup>4</sup>

- To organize and develop dialogue, consultation and cooperation between all Danube Cities and Regions;
- To promote regionalization in the Danube Region and encourage the application of the principles of subsidiarity and complementarity;
- To promote the institutional participation of Regions in the decision-making processes;
- To support and promote the key above-mentioned principles of respect;
- To cooperate with and support activities within Interregional Association or Organizations;
- To run its own programmes or participate in programmes organized by third parties;
- To sign agreements with organizations sharing common interests with the Council.

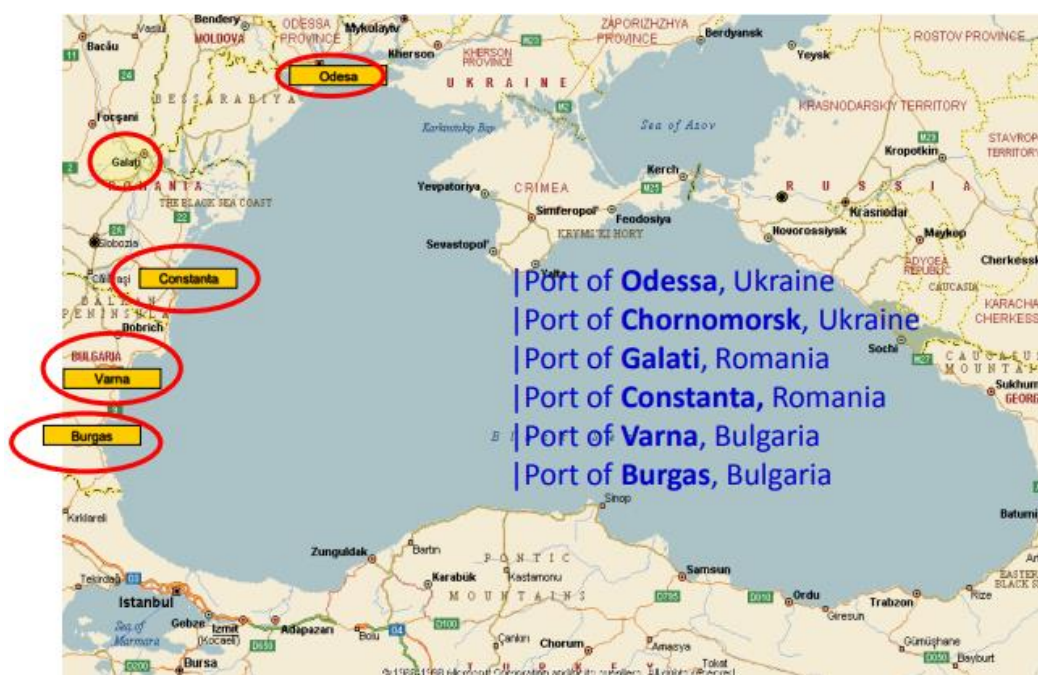
<sup>4</sup> <http://www.codcr.com/>





6 The logo of CODCR

- Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between ARGE Donauländer and the Regions of the Western Black Sea and its ports** aims to better connect with the major economies in Europe and the Danube River basin, to better integrate themselves into international networks and to strengthen regional cooperation. This interregional Platform should serve all partners involved in the accelerated development of their economies and thus their living standards.<sup>5</sup>



7 The involved ports of the Western Black Sea

The idea of the DBS Gateway Region project was created related to these initiatives, in particular MoU. The above-mentioned initiatives involved only a part of the Danube-Black Sea Region, whereas the DBS Gateway Region involves the whole Danube-Black Sea Region and intends to include all relevant stakeholders.

Taking into consideration the operational objectives of these partnerships and the desired organizational form of the e-Platform based on the partners' opinion, the following three major types of organizations have been selected, under which various good practices are presented.

<sup>5</sup>[http://www.noe.gov.at/noe/Internationales-Europa/23\\_SdLB\\_Beilage\\_5.7\\_Praesentation\\_Multiport\\_Gateway\\_Region\\_.pdf](http://www.noe.gov.at/noe/Internationales-Europa/23_SdLB_Beilage_5.7_Praesentation_Multiport_Gateway_Region_.pdf)

## 4.1 Communication via external communication interface

The literature on cooperation via communication interface can be divided into two broad parts, with one part focusing on cooperation within organizations (internal cooperation) and another addressing cooperation between organizations (external cooperation). First, examples are given in relation to this latter cooperation format.

### **Smart Energy<sup>6</sup>**

Smart Energy is a collaboration platform in the Alps-Adriatic Region, funded by INTERREG's Austria-Italy programme. It aims to create collaboration between partners (universities, research centres, etc.), facilitate innovation, advance the development of low-carbon and efficient energy networks, and raise the profile of the area internationally. The cooperation platform includes a website that lists news and events, and a competency map, where project partners can be searched based on location and expertise.

### **Cooperation Platform for Northern Latin America (COPLAN)<sup>7</sup>**

COPLAN is a cooperation platform for Central American and German companies. Its emphasis is on environmental and climate technology and training, as well as foreign trade and investment. Common interests are found in workshops and networking events of the COPLAN network. Projects that are carried out by two or more partners of the platform or promote regional linkage and learning are especially encouraged.

### **European Cluster Collaboration Platform (ECCP)<sup>8</sup>**

The European Cluster Collaboration Platform is a large network between cluster organizations. The objective is to help organisations find potential partners and develop collaborations, and to support new value chains through cross-sectoral cooperation. The platform also shares information on the latest cluster developments.

The platform includes:

- a database of 800 profiled cluster organisations worldwide, plus regional, national, international and sectoral cluster networks;
- an information hub for clusters offering the latest news;
- a partner search facility for cluster organisations and matchmaking events supporting cooperation between clusters (for example: EU-Korea Cluster Matchmaking Event, Apply to the circular economy mission to Japan and Indonesia); and
- a database of cluster-related projects developed under various European programmes.

## 4.2 Close cooperation with a transparent organisational structure

A close cooperation with a transparent organisational structure can be structured in many ways as well. Usually, transnational cooperation platforms take the form of a non-profit organization, like the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), an association or a foundation. A more business-oriented option is the European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG), although it does not directly generate profit either.

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<sup>6</sup> <http://smartenergyproject.eu/>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.giz.de/en/worldwide/25349.htm>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.clustercollaboration.eu/vibrant-platform-service-cluster-organisations>

- The European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) has the status of a legal person and a rather heavy organizational structure. The objective of an EGTC is to promote transnational and interregional cooperation. Members of the EGTC may be Member States, regional or local authorities, communities, or other public bodies. However, members may not be private companies – this would be a challenge for the inclusion of privately-owned port and transportation organizations. An up-to-date list of all EGTCs can be found on the webpage of the LIBERTAS - European Institute.<sup>9</sup>
- A European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) can be formed by companies and other legal entities, including individuals, carrying on an industrial, commercial, or other activity. The purpose of an EEIG is to promote cross-border cooperation and develop the economic activities of its members. Even though the ultimate goal is to streamline and promote these economic activities, the EEIG does not directly generate profit. No starting capital is needed to establish it, and no donations from the public are allowed. The maximum number of employees is 500. The EEIG is fiscally transparent: its results are only taxable as profits or benefits derived by its members. An up-to-date list of all EEIGs can be found on the webpage of the LIBERTAS - European Institute.<sup>10</sup>
- An association can be established to connect key actors and to promote their common goals. An example of this is the East-West Transport Corridor Association, which was founded after the completion of an INTERREG project, or Pro Danube International.
- A foundation could be organized either as a non-profit corporation or as a charitable trust.
- Other non-profit organizations are also possible. For example, the Transatlantic Platform and LEDS Europe and Eurasia Platform have also transparent organizational structures, but they do not comply with these previously mentioned forms.

### **East-West Transport Corridor II (EWTC II)<sup>11</sup>**

The EU INTERREG project East-West Transport Corridor II ran from 2007 to 2013. It aimed to strengthen the transport corridor between Esbjerg (Denmark), Sassnitz (Germany) and Vilnius (Lithuania). Activities included the development of an overall strategy for the corridor, infrastructure improvements, new solutions for business and logistics and strengthened transport research, and cooperation between researchers.

During the project, a permanent organization for cooperation came into existence: the Vilnius-based East-West Transport Corridor Association (EWTCA), which works to develop cooperation between transport and logistics companies, authorities and institutions and tighten the commercial connection between EWTC hubs. In the Association's vision, the corridor expands further east, connecting the Baltic Sea Region with Russia, Kazakhstan and China to the east and Belarus, Ukraine and Turkey to the southeast.

The Association aims at:

- Developing a network for information and document management;
- Proposing harmonized solutions for transport documents;
- Establishing an instrument for sharing the best practices between the EU and partner countries;
- Removing the transportation- and market-related barriers and administrative bottlenecks; and

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.libertas-institut.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/egtc-list.pdf>

<sup>10</sup> <http://www.libertas-institut.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/08/ewiv-l%C3%A4nderliste.pdf>

<sup>11</sup> <http://www.ewtcassociation.net/>

- Establishing an international research centre on green transport corridor development.

EWTCAs consists of 6 business associations, 14 companies, 4 public administrative institutions and 2 universities from 11 countries. For the first two years of its operation, ETWCA received financial assistance from the EU Baltic Sea Foundation. The association arranges meetings and events. Their last seminar took place in October.

### **Pro Danube International<sup>12</sup>**

Pro Danube International is a non-profit association under Austrian Law. Pro Danube is “the Platform for cooperation and the development of projects”. It has a simple structure, which allows for an efficient implementation of its work programmes:

- General Assembly consists of corporate and associated members. It is the governing body, and as such, it appoints the Board, approves the budget and decides on overall strategies.
- The Board consists of a chairperson, up to two deputies, a secretary general and representatives of the member countries. It approves the annual budget and the work programme.
- General Secretary manages the day-to-day-business. It consists of highly skilled professionals and executes the defined activities and projects on behalf of the association.

Pro Danube International acts as a network of private businesses to promote better infrastructure and services, which results in a more intensive use of the environmentally friendly inland waterways. They adequately represent the “Danube-minded business” in the political debate on transport policy, transport technology and regional development.

Pro Danube has three core objectives:

- to create a more favourable policy framework;
- to improve waterway infrastructure; and
- to promote investments into ports, fleets as well as nautical and logistics personnel.

### **Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC<sup>13</sup>**

To have more accurate information about this organisational form (this platform type was very popular among the partners based on the results of the survey), a personal interview was conducted with the director of the **Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC<sup>14</sup>** and the representatives of the Lead Partner.

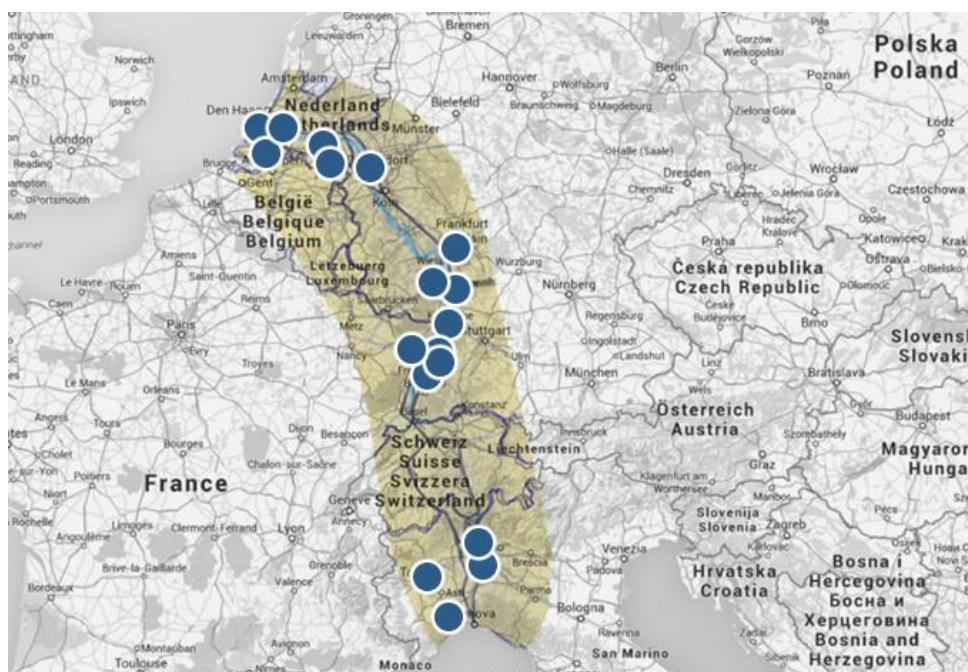
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<sup>12</sup> <https://www.prodanube.eu/>

<sup>13</sup> <https://egtc-rhine-alpine.eu/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.corridor-rhine-alpine.eu/>





8 Area of Rhine-Alpine Corridor

Similar to the DBS Gateway Region project, partners along the Rhine Corridor worked together in the strategic project “CODE24 – Corridor Development Rotterdam-Genoa (2010-2015)” funded by Interreg IVB NEW. The project aimed at a joint integrated approach towards the future development of the TEN-T core network corridor Rhine-Alpine and intended the interconnection of economic development, spatial, transport and ecological planning and thus, addressing urgent conflicts of capacity, sustainability and quality of life along the corridor. After five years, the CODE24 project partners presented a common strategy for the future development of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor, the main transport corridor of Europe.

#### *Set-up of the organisation*

In order to facilitate transnational cooperation between the partners along the axis and to manage the complex challenges of this corridor development, the “Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC” was established in 2015 for securing a long-term partnership and cooperation beyond the limited project period.

The set-up process was initiated through the EU funded project working on the basis of cooperation. Hereafter, the following steps were taken:

1. Decision to choose EGTC as legal form
2. Signing of a declaration for EGTC by the partners of the EU project
3. Elaboration of mandatory convention and statutes (discussion of single articles)
4. Discussion and decision of crucial issues (seat, function owners, fee)
5. Approval procedure (for all members) within each country
6. Publication of foundation
7. Still ongoing joining of new members

Like the Joint Vision 2040, the common strategy for the development of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor as presented by the CODE24 partners provides the outlook for the future tasks of the EGTC.

The main objective of the EGTC is to jointly strengthen and coordinate the integrated and territorial development along the multimodal Rhine-Alpine Corridor from the regional and local perspective. It connects the North Sea ports of Belgium and the Netherlands with the Mediterranean port of Genoa. It is one of the most important freight routes in Europe: more than 70 million people live, work and consume in the catchment area of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor, and it overlaps partly with „Blue Banana”, the economic backbone of Europe. The Corridor is already well developed, but challenges arise from the increased traffic flows and some bottlenecks with insufficient capacity. Recent developments include the opening of the Gotthard Base Tunnel, which cuts through the Alps.

The seat of the EGTC was taken over by the LP of the CODE24 project and is now hosted by Verband Region Rhein-Neckar, who also provides the office facilities (conference room, printer, lawyer, etc.) as in-kind contribution.

Members of the EGTC:

- Public ports (state owned)
- Regions
- Cities

At the beginning, the EGTC had ten members from two countries. After three years of operation, there are 25 members from six countries, one of which is Switzerland.

Within the initial budget, 1 ½ person-years were calculated for the basic operation of the EGTC. However, the EGTC never hired anyone. The director is an in-kind contribution of the Verband Region Rhein-Neckar and all the other activities (based on several modules) were contracted for 2+2 years to an external expert following a Europe-wide tendering process.

The annual membership fee is equal for each member following the principle 1 member/1 vote/1 fee. The annual budget covers the operational costs of the EGTC only. In case the EGTC participates in a European funded project, any co-financing is covered by those EGTC-members that are involved in the project.

The European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) form has been chosen as the appropriate form to join forces in the area, as the Rhine-Alpine Corridor forms a spatially coherent axis with many common interests. According to the Interregional Alliance for the Rhine-Alpine Corridor strategy, an EGTC provides a useful platform to shape a cooperation related to competitiveness, financing, development potential and collaborative planning. The Corridor Info System (CIS) is used as an interactive web GIS-based instrument for information exchange. Overviews of many planning-relevant themes are easily available in the form of spatial data.

### *Activities*

The main activities of the Rhine-Alpine Corridor EGTC:

- Capitalising on the results of the CODE24 project
- Combining and focusing the joint interests of its members
- Improving the visibility and promotion of the Corridor
- Jointly promoting and lobbying the regions in the Corridor

- Implementation and evolution of the joint development strategy
- Directing funds to Corridor-related activities and projects
- Providing a central platform for mutual information and exchange

The current measures and themes listed in the Corridor's strategy are:

- Network optimisation – reducing administrative burdens, e.g. different fees for different modes of transport, improving data exchange through innovative technologies;
- Raising capacity – multimodality, energy efficiency, demand-oriented superstructure and the enhancement of crucial railway nodes;
- Integration of noise mitigation, alternative fuels and land-use questions;
- Communication to ensure acceptance (towards the logistics sector and the wider public); and
- Concrete projects – European Rail Freight Line System (ERFLS) to connect smaller rail road terminals to the Corridor, Rhine-Alpine Integrated and Seamless Travel Chain (RAISE-IT) to develop seamless travel chains, etc.

The EGTC organises meetings on a regular basis. There are meetings of the general assembly – consisting of all current member organisations, a Chair and two Vice Chairs –, steering committee meetings and meetings of the expert groups as well as extraordinary meetings depending on urgent topics and needs for action.

#### **EEIG Corridor Rhine-Alpine<sup>15</sup>**

The European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) Corridor Rhine-Alpine is a European entity and was founded by rail infrastructure managers in 2008, supported by the European Union. The big difference between EGTC and EEIG is the economic interest of the members of an EEIG.

Its organisational structure includes the following:

- The Executive Board of the Ministries, which represents the interests of the Transport Ministers in dealings with the European Coordinator for ERTMS, the European Coordinator of CNC Rhine-Alpine and the European Commission.
- The Management Board consists of representatives from companies who are responsible for the national implementation functions of the Corridor. The Management Board has set up a Programme Management Office as a permanent working organization, under which eight Working Groups manage the delivery of tangible results. In addition, there are two advisory groups to the Management Board: the Railway Undertakings Advisory Group and the Terminal Advisory Group. They serve as information platforms to involve railway undertakings, terminals and stakeholders of the intermodal transport chain.

It creates added value for their customers in international rail freight and supports modal shift. Thanks to an intensive cooperation between the involved infrastructure managers, it can offer an improved service concept to railway undertakings (RUs), which supports them in optimising their productivity and business models for the benefit of competitive rail transport services. Along the lines of "all from a single source", the interfaces are minimised to give customers the greatest possible convenience and maximum transparency for using the Corridor. For this purpose, the Corridor One-Stop-Shop (C-OSS) has been set up. The EEIG

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<sup>15</sup> <https://www.corridor-rhine-alpine.eu/home.html>

Corridor Rhine-Alpine EWIV is coordinating a programme of measures to bring about the greatest possible simplification in cross-border rail transport for the customer. On a political level, the organisation's task is to harmonise the interests of the various European countries and the infrastructure managers to facilitate freight transport to move from road to rail.

In the coming part, such close cooperation will be listed that also have a well-defined organisational structure but do not fit into the previously mentioned groups.

#### **LEDS Europe and Eurasia Platform (LEDS-EEP) <sup>16</sup>**

The Low Emission Development Strategies Global Partnership, founded in 2011, is coordinated by a joint secretariat and guided by a steering committee that provides strategic direction. Regional LEDS platforms organize and deliver cross-country learning, communities of practice and technical collaboration. They link policymakers, practitioners and funders through meetings and working groups related to low-emission development strategies.

LEDS EEP is the regional platform for Europe and Eurasia, focusing on Eastern Europe. The platform's structure includes a steering committee (donors, ministries, research, industry associations), which guides a secretariat. An annual forum is held for all members of the platform.

#### **Trans-Atlantic Platform (T-AP) <sup>17</sup>**

The Trans-Atlantic Platform establishes a mechanism for structured multi-lateral engagement of research funding agencies in Europe and the Americas and enhances transnational collaboration between funders, research organizations and researchers. The activities of the platform include offering joint calls for research in areas of strong potential for international collaboration and facilitating international collaboration in the social sciences and humanities.

Governance structure:

- The Coordination Team is responsible for the overall scientific coordination and technical organisation of the Platform, and for monitoring progress and the day-to-day management.
- The Coordination Office is responsible for preparing all necessary tools for the management of the Platform.
- The Steering Committee is responsible for the strategic direction of the Platform, and its major projects. The Steering Committee is the decision-making body on strategy, contractual and financial issues, the analysis and management of potential risks. It promotes the Platform's activities and programmes and promotes the Platform in the context of other networks and organisations.
- The Management Team is the forum for the implementation, management and monitoring of the work plan. The responsibilities and tasks of the Management Team include planning, organising and guiding the execution of the Platform activities, reporting to the Steering Committee, and

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<sup>16</sup> [http://www.ledsgp.org/?loclang=en\\_gb](http://www.ledsgp.org/?loclang=en_gb)

<sup>17</sup> <https://www.transatlanticplatform.com/>



disseminating and informing the Platform activities. The Management Team consists of a staff member from each partner and functions as a forum to meet and discuss the Platform activities.

### **VASAB – Vision and strategies around the Baltic Sea**<sup>18</sup>

VASAB is an intergovernmental multilateral cooperation of 11 countries of the Baltic Sea Region, funded by members. VASAB prepares policy options for the territorial development of the region and provides a forum for exchange of know-how on spatial planning and development between the Baltic Sea countries:

- Recommend transnational policy measures;
- Promote methodology development;
- Promote cooperation projects;
- Cooperate with other cross-BSR initiatives; and
- Promote a dialogue with sector institutions.

One of the main themes of this cooperation is accessibility, e.g. supporting fast road and rail connections.

The VASAB Long Term Perspective for the Baltic Sea Region (LTP) is the following: „In 2030, the Region should account for fast, reliable and environmentally efficient technologies of transport, information and communication that link the territories along and across the Baltic Sea, making the community of the Region well-connected and highly accessible in the contacts both internally and with the outside world.”

The VASAB budget is financed by annual contributions from the VASAB Member States according to annual budgets approved by the Committee on Spatial Planning and Development of the Baltic Sea Region (CSPD/BSR).

### **HELCOM – Baltic Marine Environment Protection Commission**<sup>19</sup>

HELCOM is an intergovernmental organization and the governing body of the Convention on the Protection of the Marine Environment of the Baltic Sea Area. The contracting parties are Denmark, Estonia, the European Union, Finland, Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Russia and Sweden. HELCOM is, inter alia, a supervisory and coordinating body, a focal point for information, and the developer of recommendations for marine policy. Its action areas include agriculture, fisheries, marine litter, marine protected areas, shipping, etc. The chairmanship rotates between the contracted parties.

## **4.3 Cooperation agreement**

The third level of cooperation is the cooperation agreement, which states the rights and responsibilities of the individual companies entering into a very loose form of a relationship. Some of the project partners have chosen this type of organisational form because they believe that they can also reach the goals by a looser engagement.

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<sup>18</sup> <https://vasab.org/>

<sup>19</sup> <http://www.helcom.fi/>

### **Baltic Sea Pharma platform<sup>20</sup>**

This EU INTERREG Baltic Sea Region flagship project's purpose is to reduce pharmaceutical emissions in the Baltic Sea area. The platform is also an attempt to shift the cooperation from single short-term projects to more holistic long-term processes.

The platform aims beyond the most common networking activities, as it is also striving towards regional environmental policy development – the cooperation with HELCOM (Helsinki Commission) endorses this. However, activities focus mostly on non-regulatory technological and management options.

The platform includes:

- Transnational projects on e.g. advanced waste water treatment provide the knowledge base and output of the results. Currently, four projects are clustered on the platform.
- Supporting activities like regional state of plays and task-oriented workshops promote project implementation and policy development in the region.
- Policy development such as regional guidelines and best practices aim to influence regional and European policy on the issue of pharmaceuticals in the environment. This work will be done in cooperation with HELCOM's Correspondence Group on Pharmaceuticals.

### **Biotope and China<sup>21</sup>**

The Platform can also be an agreement between two parties for a common goal – after reaching it they will decide on further cooperation. An example for this is a recently signed water cooperation agreement between Biotope and China. It was signed by a French organisation and five Chinese entities at the French Embassy in Beijing in May 2018. The agreement covers all types of engineering activities in the fields of integrated river developments, the preservation and restoration of aquatic ecology, water pollution, the preservation of aquatic environments, the design of 'sponge cities', wetland management and environmental assessments.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.balticsea-region-strategy.eu/news-room/highlights-blog/item/40-baltic-pharma-platform>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.biotope.fr/en/news/water-cooperation-agreement-between-biotope-and-china/>

## 5 Research findings of the questionnaire survey and qualitative interviews conducted among partners

An online questionnaire, interviews and a partner workshop were conducted among the partners to see their opinion in connection with the establishment of the Cooperation Platform. The main topics were related to membership issues, the organisational and financial form of the new agreement. The results of these methodological tools will be presented in the coming sections.

### 5.1 Online questionnaire

A new online questionnaire was created and distributed among the project partners and associated strategic partners in July. 23 out of 30 partners contributed to the assessment by filling out the survey to share their expectations and concerns related to the new cooperation.

Below is the list of the partners who filled in the questionnaire:

Name of organisation	Project partner code	Country
Provincial Government of Lower Austria	LP	AUSTRIA
Urban Innovation Vienna GmbH	ERDF PP1	AUSTRIA
Public Ports, jsc.	ERDF PP2	SLOVAKIA
Freeport of Budapest Logistics Ltd.	ERDF PP3	HUNGARY
Port Authority Vukovar	ERDF PP4	CROATIA
Bulgarian Ports Infrastructure Company	ERDF PP5	BULGARIA
Municipality of Burgas	ERDF PP6	BULGARIA
Municipality of Varna	ERDF PP7	BULGARIA
Municipality of Galati	ERDF PP8	ROMANIA
University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences	IPA PP1	SERBIA
Ecoplus. The Business Agency of Lower Austria	ASP1	AUSTRIA
Port of Vienna	ASP2	AUSTRIA
Vienna City Administration	ASP3	AUSTRIA
Bratislava Self-Governing Region	ASP5	SLOVAKIA
Hungarian Federation of Danube Ports	ASP6	HUNGARY
Ministry of Development Hungary	ASP8	HUNGARY
Port of Novi Sad	ASP10	SERBIA
Bayernhafen GmbH & Co. KG	ASP11	GERMANY
Ministry of the Sea Transport and Infrastructure	ASP14	CROATIA
Luka-Vukovar d.o.o	ASP15	CROATIA
Provincial secretary for economy and tourism	ASP17	SERBIA
River Administration of the Lower Danube	ASP18	ROMANIA
Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology	ASP12	AUSTRIA

9 Partners involved in the survey

It turned out from the answers of the respondents that some of the project ASPs did not see themselves as relevant organisations for the partnership and consequently did not provide complete input for the online questionnaire either (e.g. the Federal Ministry of Transport, Innovation and Technology in Austria).

#### *The level of cooperation in the Platform*



The first question was related to the platform type. The most preferred formats of the cooperation are as follows:

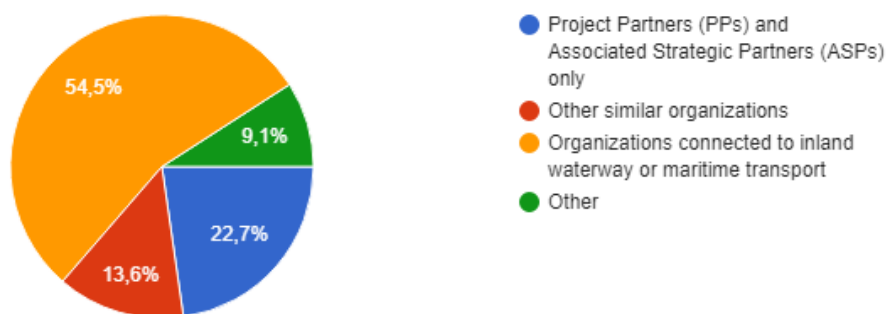
1. **Common external communication interface** (e.g. common webpage, online cloud) (9 responses)
2. **Common organization** (legally established like in a form of a company or association or EGTC, etc.) **with permanent staff** (9 responses)
3. **Cooperation agreement** between the platform members (8 responses)
4. **Common internal communication interface** (e.g. sharing data, documents and messaging between the platform members) (8 responses)
5. Non-formalized cooperation between the platform members (very loose form of cooperation without any legally binding document, online solution, etc.) (4 responses)
6. Common organization (legally established like in a form of a company or association or EGTC, etc.) without permanent staff (3 responses)

It stands out that between a loose agreement and a strong cooperation there is not a big difference in the preferences. That’s why it requires further analysis to reveal the engagement level of the members of the Platform. But, considering together the external communication interface and common organisation options, which can be also elaborated together, then we will get the majority. However, we will analyse it more deeply in later Chapters.

The figure below shows the responses in connection with the membership issues. 54.5% of the partners who filled out the questionnaire think that other organizations in the field of inland waterway or maritime transport should be involved. Only 22.7% think that only PPs and ASPs should be future partners.

### What is your opinion on who should be the members of the platform?

22 válasz



#### 10 Members of the Platform

The respondents suggested to start the new Platform only with the PPs and ASPs and later open it for new members. At the best case, all members of the working community of the Danube Region and cities complemented with strategic partners like ports or development companies can be part of the cooperation.

63.6% of the respondents voted to involve further waterborne transport organisations and only 9.1% think that only PPs and ASPs should have the right to access the Platform and its services. It is a key mission of the Platform to open the partnership for networking purposes and share knowledge among the members.

## What is your opinion on who should have the right to access the platform and its services?

22 válasz



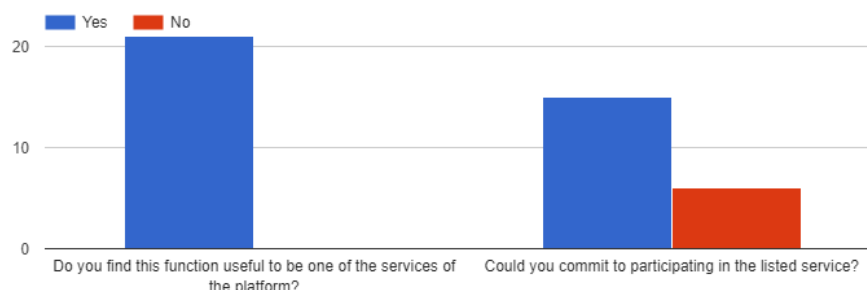
### 11 Access to the Platform

#### Platform services

In the next part of the questionnaire, the possible functions of the Platform were listed. The respondents had to evaluate each of the listed services and – based on the responses – bar charts were created, as seen below. The usefulness of the possible services appears in the left part of the figures. The commitment of the partners related to the given service is seen on the right side. Blue bars show the number of affirmative answers while red ones refer to the negative responses.

The first optional function is about presenting the DBS Gateway Region project results and outputs, for example, the mid-term and long-term goals of the Joint Vision 2040. 21 respondents found this function useful and – out of them – 16 could commit to actively participate as well.

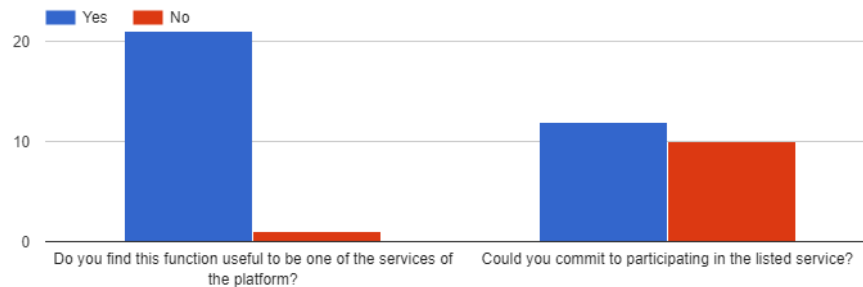
Presenting of the DBS Gateway project results, outputs (e.g. mid-term and long-term goals based on Joint Vision 2040)



### 12 Service: Presenting the DBS Gateway Region project results and outputs

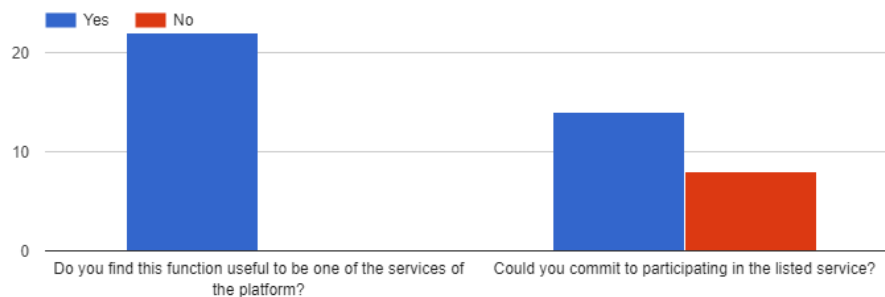
The following service on the list is the continuous monitoring of new funding opportunities based on the Funding Guidelines. Except for one respondent, all partners claimed that it could be a useful service. But as for their commitment, the situation is more divisive.

Continuous monitoring of new funding opportunities (building on the Funding Guideline)



13 Service: New funding opportunities

Provide assistance by the implementation of Roadmap measures for other platform members with the help of the relevant PP

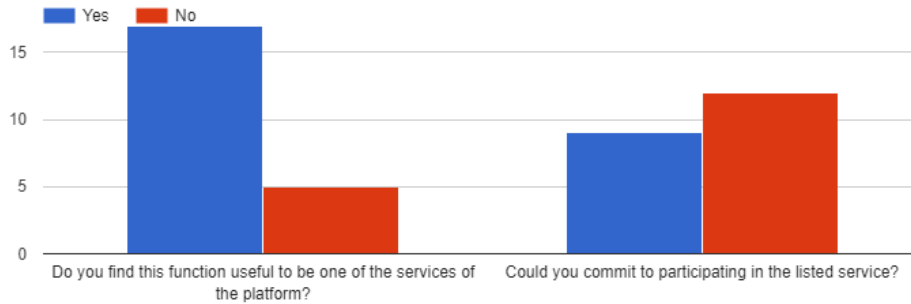


14 Service: The implementation of the Roadmap measures

Partners were asked about their willingness to provide assistance during the implementation of the Roadmap measures. Every respondent found this a good idea and most of them are open to actively participate in the implementation as well.

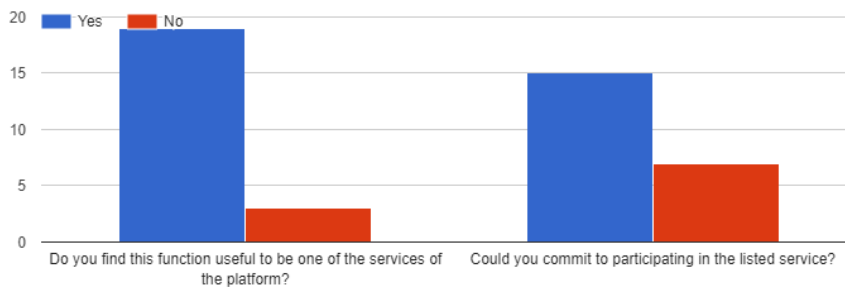
The partners' commitment did not prove to be strong related to the cargo consolidation service – most respondents expressed that they could not commit to participating in such a service.

### Cargo consolidation



15 Service: Cargo consolidation service

### Lobbying



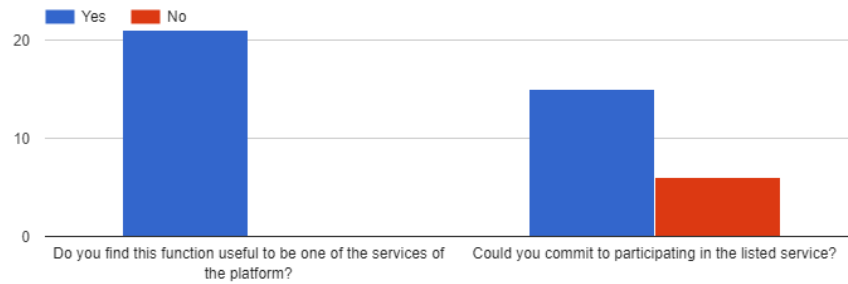
16 Service: Lobbying

The partners' answers are of the most positive about the utility of lobbying – two-third of them would commit to participating in it, too.

The usefulness of the searchable, visualised output and project documents on the online platform (e.g. measures and funding guidelines in a displayable way) was found very positive and most of the partners would also participate in implementing it.

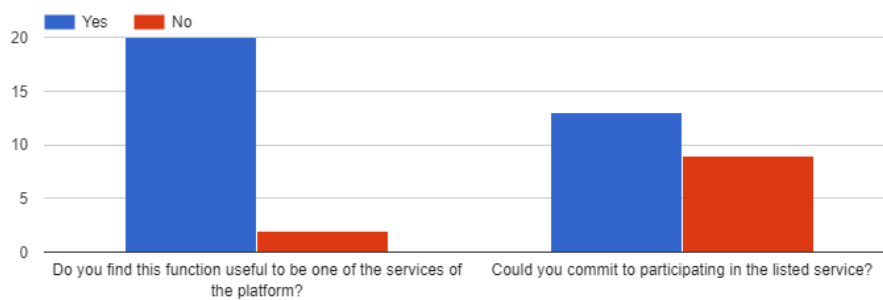


Searchable, visualized output and project documents (e.g. measures and funding guidelines in a displayable way) on the online platform



17 Service: Searchable, visualised output and project documents

Monitoring the implementation of the Regional Action Plan measures



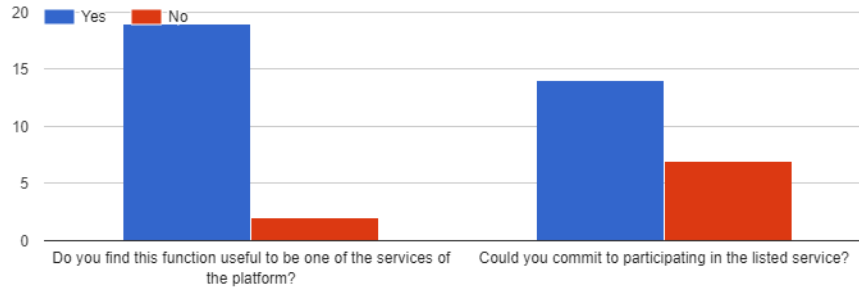
18 Service: Monitoring the RAP measures

Monitoring the implementation of the RAP measures could also be a useful function and more than half of the partners could commit to participating in it.

The respondents were asked if partner meetings organised every year or half-a-year are necessary or not in their opinion. The majority of the partners agreed though their commitment did not prove to be confirming.

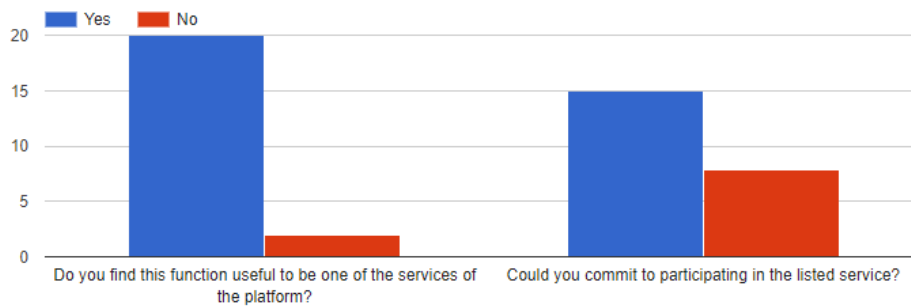


Organising partner meetings every year/half a year, etc.



19 Service: Partner meetings

Creating working groups/discussion boards in specific topics (to discuss the progress of measures/know-how transfer, etc.)



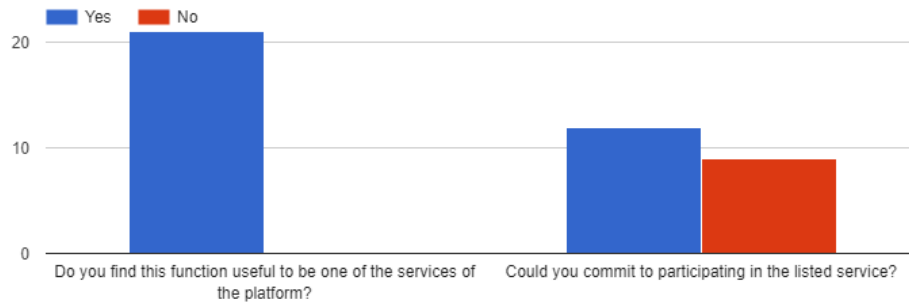
20 Service: Creating working groups/discussion boards

The bar chart above shows the answers related to the usefulness of creating working groups/discussion boards in specific topics, for example, to discuss the progress of measures, know-how transfer, etc. It was almost entirely found to be a helpful function, but the responding partners did not seem to be active in the implementation of it.

Another divisive question in terms of the partners' engagement is the well-structured common database of the Platform members (containing data about port infrastructure, facilities, freight volumes). The usefulness of this function is unequivocal, but it would require a lot of effort to create such a database – this might be a reason why the partners did not express strong commitment.

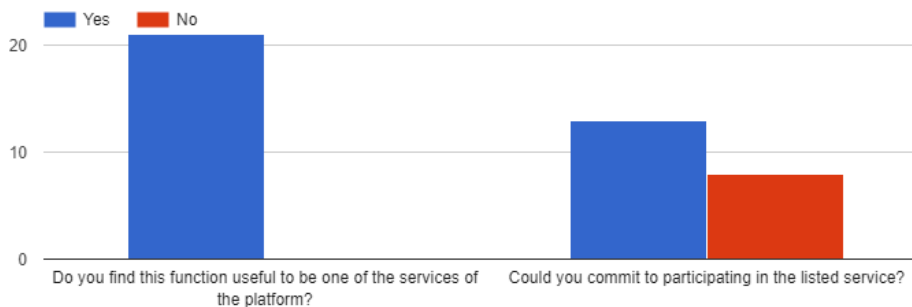


Well-structured common database of the platform members (e.g. description of port infrastructure, facilities, freight volumes, stakeholders)



21 Service: Well-structured common database

Sharing good practices (e.g. in using state aid instruments, related to the implementation of measures)



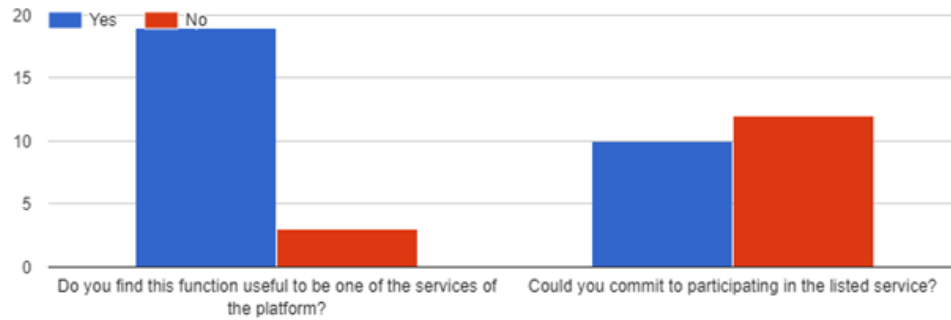
22 Service: Sharing best practices

Sharing best practices in various topics (e.g. using state aid instruments, the implementation of RAP measures) can be another useful function on the new online platform, but to introduce it, the partners should have a higher engagement to participating in the workflow.

The partners were also asked about know-how sharing via two different questions. The bar charts below show the results:

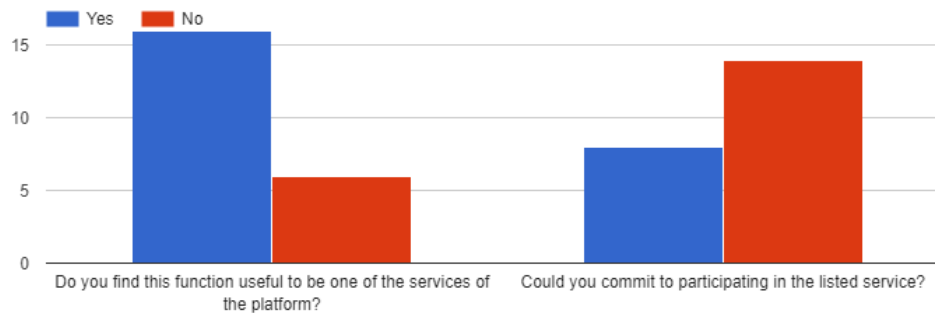


Know-how sharing on port logistics through online trainings (training material provided by the platform members, obtaining certificates)



23 Service: Know-how sharing via trainings

Know-how sharing on port logistics on regional online discussions



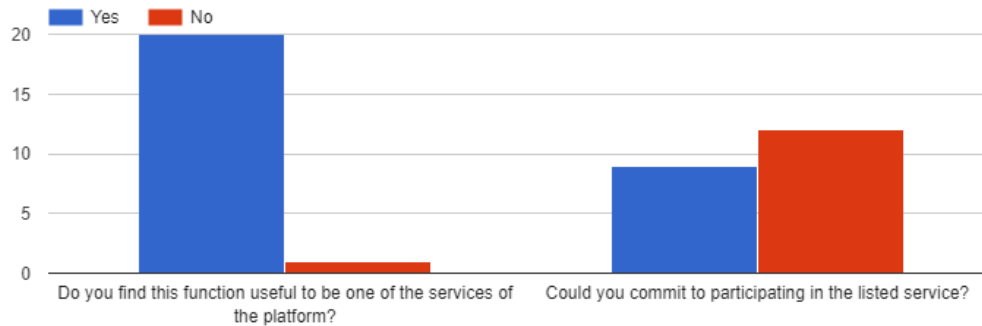
24 Service: Know-how sharing via online discussions

Their answers were less confirming related to the usefulness of online trainings and online discussion platforms.

Establishing an online help interface where others could ask questions in connection with the DBS Gateway Region did not prove to be one of the most desired services either. The majority of the partners would not commit to participating in the maintenance of this function if it becomes a part of the Platform services.

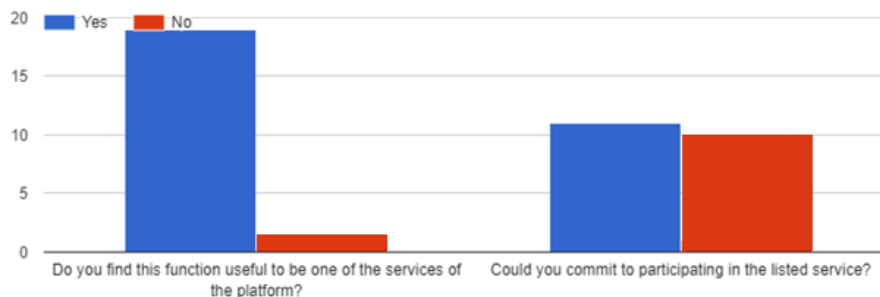


Online help interface (e.g. asking questions related to the DBS Region)



25 Service: Online help interface

Coordination of common marketing activities of the DBS region: common marketing materials, common media appearance on events, common sales activities



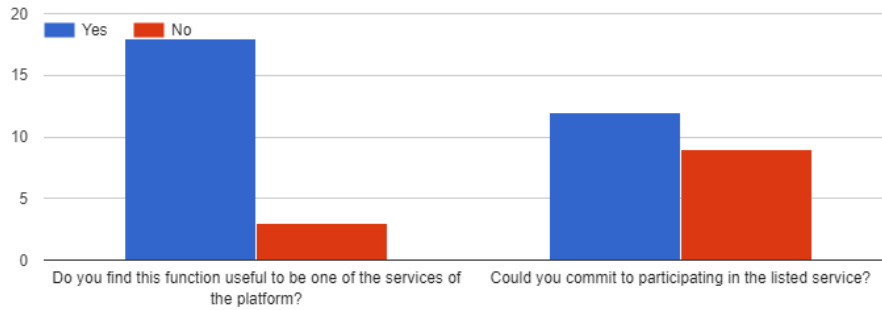
26 Service: Marketing activities

The coordination of common marketing activities of the DBS Gateway Region (e.g. common marketing materials, common media appearance on events or common sales activities) can be a useful function but the engagement of the partners is rather divisive.

Communication with other institutions and stakeholders seems to be a desired activity, however, due to the lack of a linkage network, many of the respondents prefer not to participate.

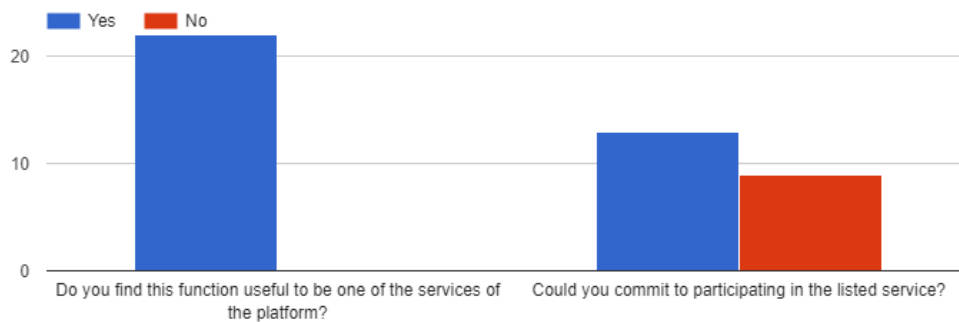


Communication with other institutions and stakeholders



27 Service: Communication with other institutions

Encouraging eco-friendly behaviour (e.g. ecological footprint counter)

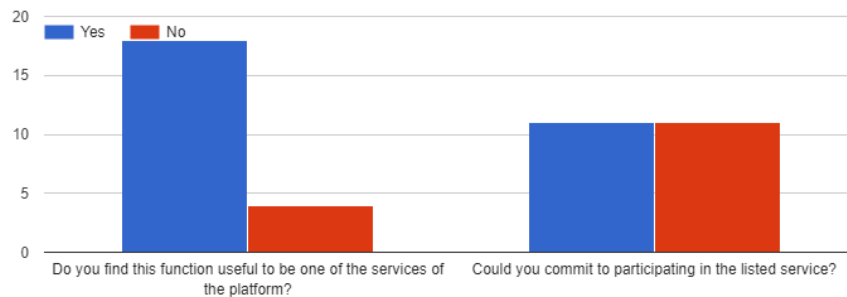


28 Service: Encouraging eco-friendly behaviour

Encouraging eco-friendly behaviour among the partners and other institutions is very important and is a current objective of the DBS Gateway Region, in parallel with the responses shown on the left side of the bar chart above. This service could be for example an ecological footprint counter to reinforce environmental consciousness, though the right side of the figure reflects a less confirming commitment.

The last indicated service of the list was sharing introduction videos of partner ports. According to the figure of the partners' engagement, the respondents consider this a less useful function.

### Sharing introduction videos of the partner ports



#### 29 Service: Sharing port introduction videos

To sum up, each function was found almost entirely useful to be one of the Platform’s services, but the willingness to be part of the implementation is rather divisive, in particular in:

- Cargo consolidation
- Sharing introduction videos of the partner ports
- Know-how sharing on port logistics through online trainings or on regional online discussions
- Online help interface (e.g. asking questions related to the DBS Gateway Region)
- Coordination of common marketing activities of the DBS Gateway Region

In terms of usefulness and commitment, the most preferred functions are:

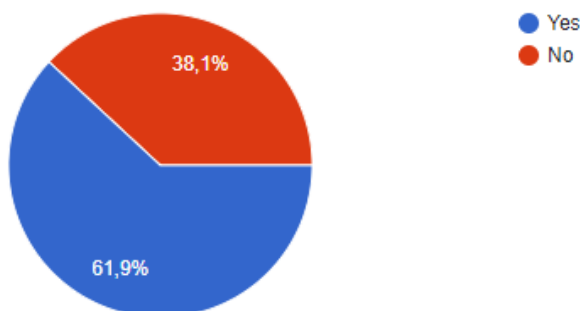
- Monitoring the implementation of the Regional Action Plan measures
- Lobbying
- Searchable, visualized output and project documents (e.g. measures and funding guidelines in a displayable way) on the online platform
- Presenting of the DBS Gateway Region project results, outputs (e.g. mid-term and long-term goals based on the Joint Vision 2040)

Based on the partners’ responses for the online questionnaire, the above-mentioned Platform services are worth to be considered for further elaboration in the Business Plan.

The next section in the survey was related to the organisational and financial background of the new Platform. The first question was related to the setting up of a new organisation to operate the Platform versus joining to an already existing one. 61.9% of the respondents preferred to create a new organization.

Beside a new online platform, do you find useful to set up a new organisation to operate the Cooperation Platform or include an existing one?

21 válasz

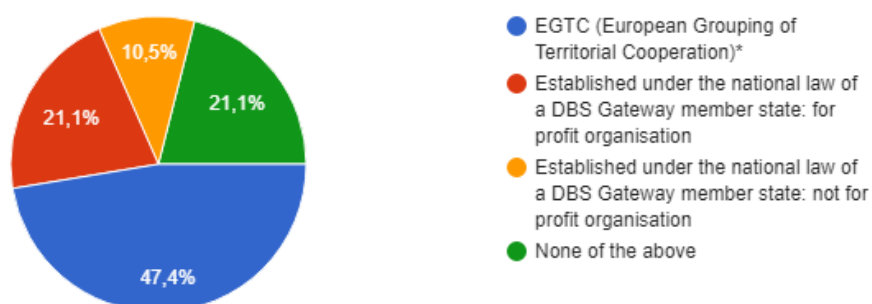


30 The organisational background of the new Platform

The partners were asked to indicate the most preferred organisational form based on their opinion. The division of responses is shown in the figure below. 47.4% of the partners preferred an EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation) as the future organisational form of the Platform. The second most preferred forms are for-profit organisations established under the national law of a DBS member state and the “none of the above” category. The responses for the latter might reflect that the respondents favour an agreement level of cooperation or joining an already existing organisation.

Please mark the appropriate line/lines if you have a vision of the organizational form.

19 válasz



31 The most preferred organisational form

The partners had to indicate their preference: if the Cooperation Platform should act only on a working level or should it also have a decision level, like a political board. The distribution of responses was the following:

- working level: 11 responses – 58%
- decision level: 2 responses – 10%
- both: 6 responses – 32%



The partners were invited to recommend further relevant stakeholders who could be involved in the future:

- Members of government, decision making organisations;
- Ministries of Transport and Construction;
- National and Provincial Ministries;
- Ministries of Transport and Information Technology Communication (MTITC);
- Danube Commission;
- Regional and local authorities;
- Members of the European Parliament from the countries which participate in the project;
- ViaDonau (bmvit);
- City representatives who are responsible for logistics, transport and waterway management;
- Ministries of Economy/Environment/Transport; and
- Ministries of Innovation and Technology.

The partners also recommended various methods for the involvement of the stakeholders:

- Regular international exchange formats and updates on new developments, offering concrete concepts that highlight the benefits of transnational cooperation;
- Sharing various databases with them, trainings, networking possibilities;
- Participating in meetings with vital discussions; and
- Personal invitations, face to face meetings.

The last question of the survey was related to the future financial model of the Platform. The responses are as follows in the order of the priorities:

1. Own revenues from services provided by the Platform (12 responses)
2. In-kind contribution of the members (7 responses)
3. Annual membership fee (7 responses)
4. Financed by a host organisation (5 responses)
5. Operation from tender sources (4 responses)

Based on these answers, the own revenues from services provided by the Platform is the most preferred financial contribution.

## 5.2 In-depth interviews

To get a wider and more exact picture on the opinion of the project partners, several in-depth interviews were conducted during August and September with ten project partners. Their main findings (e.g. expectations, concerns, recommendations) are presented below on a case by case basis.

### 5.2.1 Interview with the Lead Partner (LP)

The first in-depth interview was conducted with the representative of the Lead Partner of the DBS Gateway Region project, the Regional Government of Lower Austria. The aim of the first interview was to determine the first steps and directions of the strategy to be set up, since the Lead Partner has been having a decisive role since the very first concept of the Cooperation Platform.

The most important expectations of the LP towards the new Platform include the following:

- The Platform should have a political and operational pillar as well – the political backing is a must.
- An organisational entity is necessary with legal force to be entitled to make contracts, initiate tenders, etc.
- The Platform should have a yearly budget, business plan and permanent staff, webpage.
- An EGTC could be an ideal organisational form and involving the entire DBS Gateway Region is a fundamental goal of the Platform.

The LP highlighted that the EGTC could be a more potent organisational form in the next EU financing period and could also have a permanent staff. The Austria based Working Community of the Danube Regions could also have a leading role, but it is important to be open to new members and continuously involve new stakeholders.

Another recommendation from the LP's side was to group strategic measures of the Regional Action Plans (RAP) into clusters and operate them as working groups.

### 5.2.2 Interview with the Bulgarian partners

At the meeting with the Municipality of Varna (PP7), the deputy mayor and the project coordinator represented the project partner and Port Varna EAD (ASP9) was also present.

#### **Main expectations towards the successful operation of the Platform and the main concerns of the interviewed partners**

Both the Port and the Municipality see value in maintaining contacts with the project partners after the project's termination, as well as in the general promotion of the Gateway region or in sharing knowledge. Their major expectation is that this future European group (the Platform) should have genuine influence on the national governments and the European Commission and could represent the partners' interests besides.

The Platform activities could trigger funds for the implementation of the priority measures (RAP measures) which they proposed e.g. large-scale (transport) infrastructure development projects:

- The modernisation of the Railway Ferry Complex facilitating change of bogies between the European standard railway gauge and the former Soviet wide gauge
- The modernisation of the Varna-Ruse railway line
- The development of the Black Sea Highway (Constanta-Varna-Burgas-Istanbul)

They believe that these projects are crucial to speed up the cargo transport between the Danube and the Black Sea, better position the Gateway Region, benefit all important ports at the Western part of the Black Sea and attract additional cargo projects.

They have also some concerns in connection with the Platform:

- Many of the potential partners – especially the ports – compete with each other, so it is very important to clearly define the information/knowledge to be shared.
- The organisational and financial sustainability of the Platform after the project – especially in the starting period – will be hard to determine and maintain.

## Main recommendations for the set-up of the Platform

The Bulgarian partners would prefer an online solution as the marketing and communication interface of the Platform, but the members should also meet once a year to discuss the main results and the plans for further cooperation.

In terms of the organizational form, they find many solutions appropriate: EGTC, a non-profit or a for profit organisation established under the national law of a DBS Gateway Region country, for example.

There is not much financial resource for such purposes but if a very clear framework and benefits are presented, some financial contribution is not impossible, but only the financial contribution of partners will not be sufficient to sustain the operation of the Platform. In-kind contributions from members could also be an important basis for the operation.

Reflecting on the potential services, they said that most of them are useful, but they have to be more specified and selected based on the financial form/budget. However, the most important ones could be:

- Lobbying for funds to implement large infrastructure projects
- Monitoring of the implementation of the regional action plans
- Sharing good practices with using a standard structure (if everyone contributes)
- Know-how sharing (already happening in an informal way, based on personal connections between port operation organizations)
- Communication with other institutions
- Sharing introduction videos (however, these are expensive)

Although not listed, but should be considered:

- Providing information on the Gateway Region to potential investors (private and public)
- Quality control of the information provided by the Platform members would also be necessary

### 5.2.3 Interview with the Romanian partner

The project manager of the PP8 represented the Municipality of Galati at the interview.

#### Main expectations towards the successful operation of the Platform and their main concerns

The Platform should be a useful (e-)tool which will ensure sustainability and support long-lasting cooperation and further action (in the region targeted by the project). But it would be very hard to harmonise the opinions of the partners regarding to the optimal level, type and financial framework. The added value of the Platform could be to:

- keep in contact with the project partners and other relevant organisations;
- promote the DBS Gateway Region both at a professional and public level;
- represent the interests of the members; and
- share information and best practices with each other.

The Romanian partner expects that the Platform will give the opportunity to:

- build connections with organisations acting directly or indirectly in river and maritime transport;

- share concrete measures, best practices, and experiences among the members; and
- have current information about transport issues, relevant meetings and conferences in the Danube Region, etc. (e.g. Danube River Show, newsletters).

One concern is in connection with the organisational and financial sustainability of the Platform and also ensuring the transparency and equal access, which is a key issue for a public authority.

### **Main recommendations for the set-up of the Platform**

With regards to the organisational form, a cooperation agreement is necessary between the Platform members and operating a common external communication interface (e.g. common webpage, online cloud), a new online platform. But at the same time, it would be equally important to identify the ideal operational framework with clear responsibilities and duties of the partners and to appoint a lead organization with influence at the EU-level.

As a public authority, the Municipality of Galati has limited resources to undertake financial obligations, therefore, the annual membership fee is a great concern.

Regarding the mentioned services in the questionnaire, they find most of them useful, but pointed out that the partners must prioritise them first. A very useful service could be the “Port Community System”. The Municipality of Galati has been preparing an application in the frame of Connecting Europe Facility with the Romanian port administrator and Bulgarian partners. It is a single-window concept, a one-stop-shop platform to communicate with port owners, port operators, administrators, service providers, freight forwarders, etc. All the actions within the ports (the logistics chain) will be organised on one single platform (approaching/leaving the port, switching transport modes, paying fees and taxes, etc.). It could be disseminated as a best practice also by and within the Cooperation Platform.

Passenger transport could also be developed and promoted within the Cooperation Platform (Austria and Hungary have good practices that can be adapted in the DBS Gateway Region), which has been a quite popular development plan recently.

#### **5.2.4 Interview with the Hungarian partner (the leader of WP6)**

A personal interview was also conducted with the CEO of the Freeport of Budapest Logistics Ltd. (PP3).

### **Main expectations towards the successful operation of the Platform and the main concerns**

Regardless of the organisational form, the Platform must have added value for each member. This can be a new organisation as well, though the CEO of the Freeport has had bad experiences with the collection of membership fees in other similar organisations. Nevertheless, it would be beneficial to have own revenues from the provision of own services. Main fears:

- Insufficient financial resources for the operation
- Too many services in the focus might result in no real achievement

### **Main recommendations for the set-up of the Platform**

The new organisation should have well-defined, but also focused objectives (e.g. focusing on the implementation of maximum one or two RAP measures). Improving the navigability on the Danube or

reviewing the legal regulation of waterborne navigation (e.g. sanctioning non-paying shipping companies) could be measures in the strategic focus.

The leader of the new organization should rotate regularly to make all partners and countries committed to the common goals.

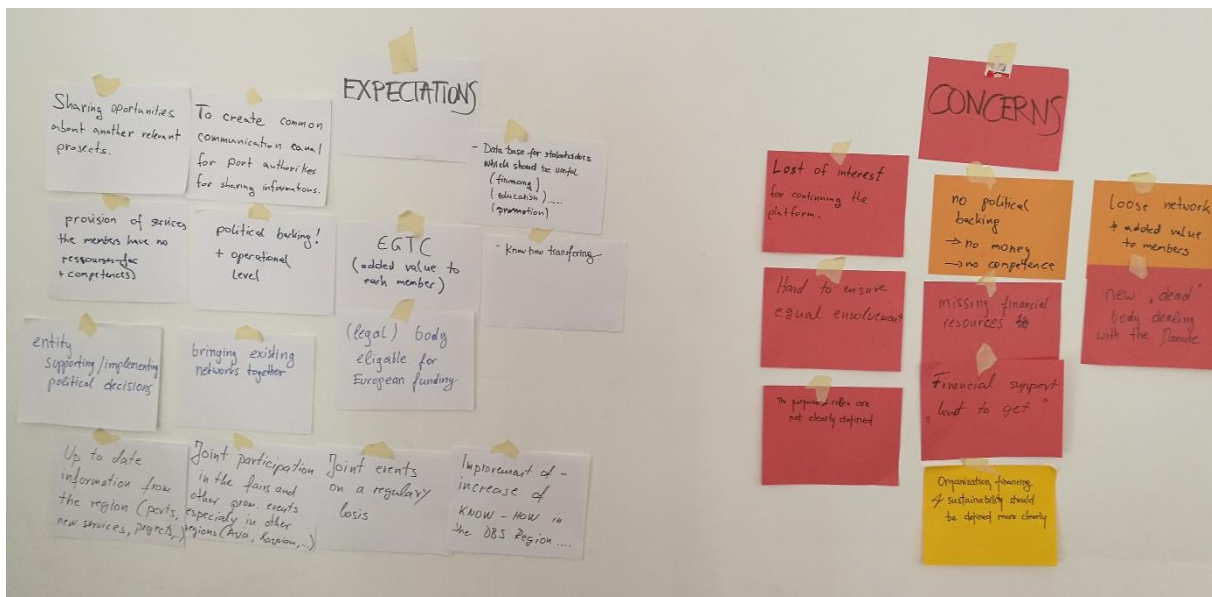
The most useful potential services in their opinion are:

- Lobbying
- Monitoring the implementation of the Regional Action Plans
- Creating working groups in specific topics

### 5.3 Interactive workshop with partners in Vienna

The joint interactive workshop in the strategy development phase was organised in Vienna with the participation of the Regional Government of Lower Austria (LP), UIV Urban Innovation Vienna GmbH (PP1), Public Ports, jsc. (PP2), Port Authority Vukovar (PP4) and University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Technical Sciences (IPA PP1). The discussed topics were similar to the in-depth interviews, but the discussion was organised in a more structured way.

#### Main expectations towards the successful operation of the Platform and their main concerns



32 Expectations and concerns about the Platform

The participants of the workshop were invited to put on the wall their own expectations and concerns related to the Cooperation – the results can be seen on the picture above.

The main expectations of the participating partners:

- Sharing opportunities about other relevant projects
- The Platform should be an entity to support political decisions, since the members have no resources and competitiveness on their own.

- Creating a common communication channel for port authorities to share information with each other and to bring existing networks together
- To have political backing and operational level, a legal body which will be eligible for European funding
- Joint participation in fairs and other promotional events, especially in other regions, e.g. Asia
- To set up an EGTC, which could have added value for each member
- Having a common database for stakeholders which would be useful e.g. for financing, education, promotion
- Improve and increase the know-how in the DBS Gateway Region
- Up-to-date information about the Region (e.g. ports, new services, projects) via newsletters, webpage etc.

The main concerns mentioned:

- Loosing of interest in maintaining the Platform
- No political backing and, as a result, no money and no competence
- Loose network and low level of added value to the members
- New “dead” body dealing with the Danube
- Hard to ensure equal involvement of the members
- Missing financial resources, hard to get financial support
- The purpose, the roles, the organisation, the financing and sustainability should be defined more clearly

Participants agreed on to have a legal entity to be able to absorb external funding and have a political influence as well. The biggest fears are related to the involvement and engagement of the partners and the loss of interest for maintaining the e-Platform.

### **Main recommendations for the set-up of the new Platform**

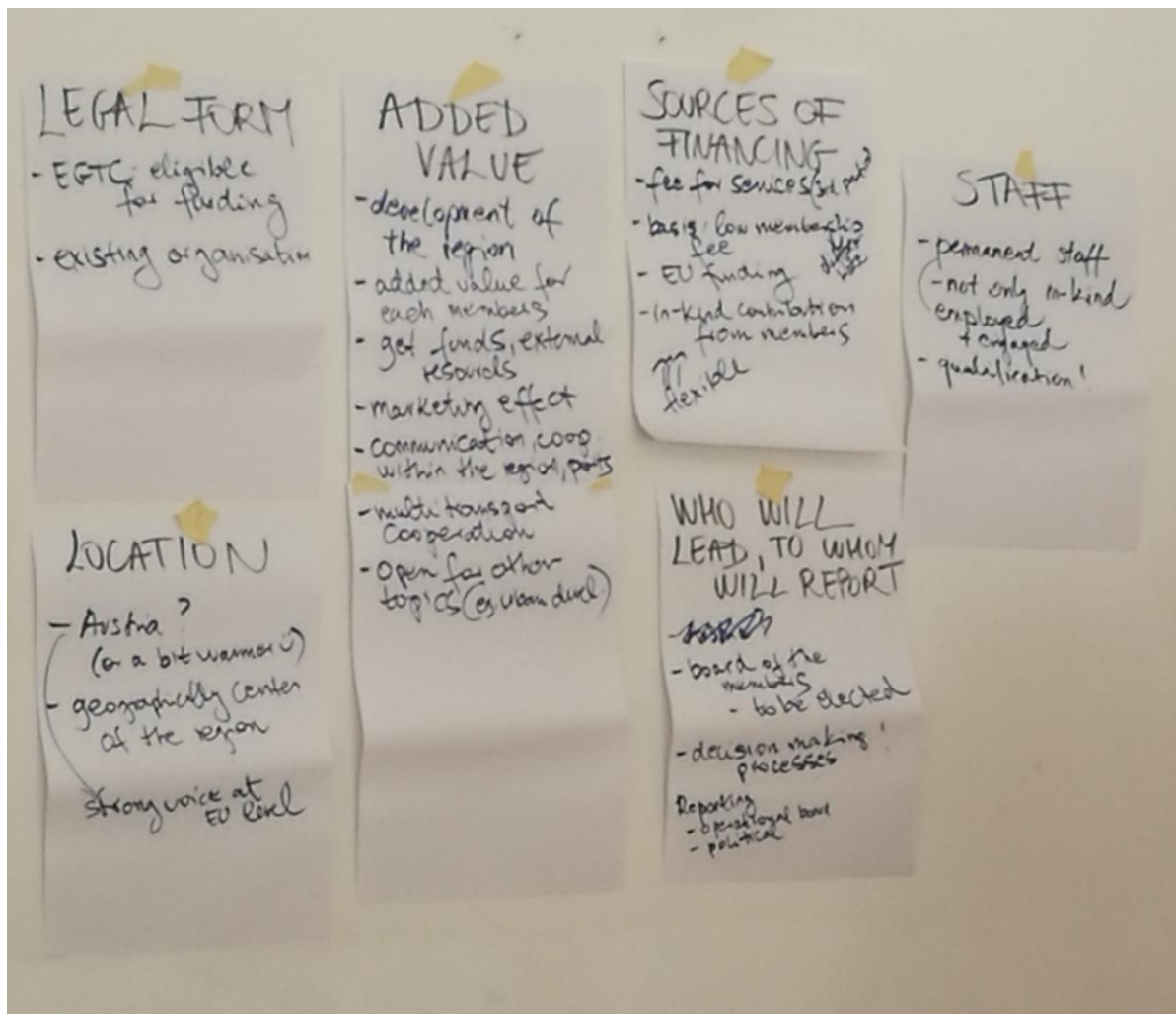
The participants recommended key topics, related to the organisational issues, that must be decided in the first step. Six subjects were selected to be further discussed, as seen in the picture below (Figure 30).

#### **Legal form**

- EGTC: legal body, non-member states could join, eligible for funding
  - alternatively joining to an already existing one

#### **Sources of financing**

- Low membership fees (the amount depends on the form of the organisation)
- Fees for provided services for non-members (they will calculate if they want to be members with more rights or just get some services for less money)
- EU funding – to apply for project implementation, writing feasibility studies, etc.
- In-kind contributions from the members



33 Key topics related to the organisational issues of the Platform

### Who will lead and be responsible?

- Austria – influence on the EU level
- Joint board of the members and a leader to be elected or rotated
- Decision-making processes must be defined
- Reporting (operational and political board, too)

### Location

- Austria as an option – strong voice at EU level, though geographically situated at the border of the Region
- No one country should dominate the leadership, management and operational tasks must be shared, too
- Different national laws must be considered while setting up a new organisation

### Staff

- Permanent staff – employed, not only in-kind contribution



- Key to have somebody who is an expert and engaged in the Platform
- Those who have certificates, earlier similar experiences

#### **Added value**

- Serving the development of the Region
- Get funds/external resources
- Marketing effect (e.g. marketing as a port region to others, for example to China)
- Better communication outside the Region and also between the partners
- Bring associations together e.g. have a multimodal transport cooperation, urban, tourism, environment as main topics to deal with

#### **Evaluation and scoring of the possible future services and functions of the Platform**

The participants were asked to prioritise the potential Platform services along a structured scoring method. This can be seen on Figure 31. The first column (red dots) presents the priority of the listed Platform services based on the participants' opinion. The second two columns (green dots) indicate the engagement of the partners to the given services.

SERVICES		GO ✓	NO GO ✗
1) VISUALIZED DBS PROJECT RESULTS	5 dots	5 dots	
2) MONITORING FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES	4 dots	4 dots	
3) SUPPORTING THE IMPL. OF RAP MEASURES	5 dots	4 dots	
4) CARGO CONSOLIDATION			4 dots
5) LOBBY	5 dots	3 dots	
6) REGULAR PARTNER MEETINGS	4 dots	3 dots	1 dot
7) THEMATIC WORKING GROUPS	2 dots	4 dots	
8) SEARCHABLE DATABASE OF MEMBERS	4 dots	2 dots	2 dots
9) ONLINE TRAININGS		3 dots	3 dots
10) KNOW-HOW SHARING, GOOD PRACTICES - ONLINE	2 dots	4 dots	
11) ONLINE HELP INTERFACE			3 dots
12) COMMON MARKETING ACTIVITIES, INTRO VIDEOS	5 dots	4 dots	
13) PROMOTING ECO-FRIENDLY BEHAVIOUR	1 dot	3 dots	
14) COMMUNICATION WITH OTHER STAKEHOLDERS	5 dots	4 dots	
	PRIORITY		

34 Evaluation and scoring of the possible future services and functions of the Platform

The most preferred Platform functions based on the indicated priorities are:

- Common marketing activities and intro videos (7)
- Communication with other stakeholders (6)
- Lobby (6)
- Supporting the implementation of the RAP measures (6)
- Visualised DBS Gateway Region project results (5)
- Searchable database for members (5)
- Monitoring funding opportunities (4)
- Regular partner meetings (4)

Based on the number of green dots indicating the partners' commitment, the following Platform activities proved to be the most preferred:

- Visualised DBS Gateway Region results (5)
- Monitoring funding opportunities (5)
- Thematic working groups (5)
- Know-how sharing and good practices online (5)
- Common marketing activities and intro videos (5)
- Promoting eco-friendly behaviour (5)
- Communication with other stakeholders (5)
- Supporting the implementation of the RAP measures (4)

Services with high level of engagement but not found to be useful are:

- Thematic working groups
- Know-how sharing and good practices online
- Promoting eco-friendly behaviour

***Based on both of the two prioritising methods, the most preferred services are:***

- Visualised DBS Gateway Region results
- Monitoring funding opportunities
- Supporting the implementation of the RAP measures
- Common marketing activities and intro videos
- Communication with other stakeholders

Considering the results of the online survey as well, two Platform activities must be highlighted as the most preferred ones:

1. Monitoring the implementation of the Regional Action Plan measures
2. Searchable, visualized output and project documents (e.g. measures and funding guidelines in a displayable way) on the online platform

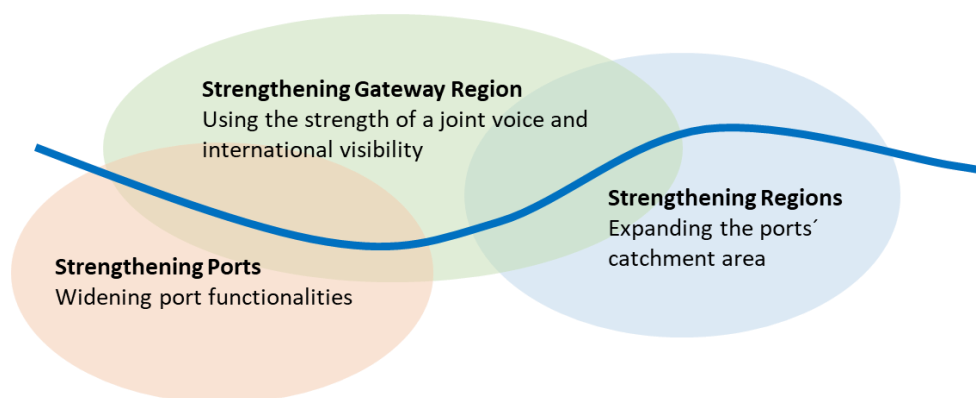
These two should be definitely part of the services to be created based on the responses to the survey, the workshop and the interviews.

## 6 Gap analysis

In order to outline the strategy of the Cooperation Platform, it is necessary to clearly see **what state the partners aim to reach and what kind of obstacles they must overcome**. To reveal the areas – literal and figurative – of the DBS Gateway Region that should be improved, this document contains a gap analysis, often used in management as a **comparison of the actual performance** of an organisation **with its potential or desired performance**.

### 6.1 Summary of the Joint Vision 2040

The partnership has already agreed upon a set of goals they will strive for, and these goals have been presented in the Joint Vision 2040 – the document describing the economic and logistics development foreseen for the region in the mid- to long-term future. It defines a **Mission Statement** that all partners want to focus on. This Mission Statement builds upon three main pillars:



35 Joint Vision 2040 – Mission Statement

The **Strategic Objectives** specify the content of the above-mentioned pillars and assign seven **Fields of intervention** to the original statements, which are further elaborated into **Operational objectives**.

Pillar	Strategic Objectives	Fields of intervention
Strengthening Gateway Region	<b>Sustainable development</b> through a long-lasting <b>cooperation</b> of the stakeholders	Organisation/ Cooperation
	An <b>internationally recognized brand</b> for the DBS Gateway Region	Marketing
	An innovative Gateway Region with <b>modern infrastructure, operation and services</b>	Technology/ Innovation
	A strong <b>joint voice to lobby</b> for the implementation of <b>legal preconditions</b> for competitive shipping	Legal Framework
Strengthening Regions	Ports and their hinterlands are one entity working together towards the same goal – their <b>multimodal connections enable efficient and reliable door-to-door services</b> for cargo flows of small, medium and big enterprises	Infrastructure

Pillar	Strategic Objectives	Fields of intervention
	<b>Business settling around ports</b> in cooperation with business agencies, the region and the ports	Business Development
Strengthening Ports	Seaports cooperate with each other on common needs to attract cargo flows and support the economic development of the DBS Gateway Region (“ <b>coopetition</b> ”) – each port uses its <b>unique selling points, adding up to a comprehensive service</b>	Infrastructure
	<b>Danube port logistics centres</b> , offering a large variety of functional and value-adding services	Services

36 Structure of Joint Vision 2040

**The overall vision is an economically prosperous DBS Gateway Region, competing successfully at the international freight transport market as an attractive choice for maritime and inland waterway transport (IWT).**

## 6.2 Barriers and challenges – finding the gap

The current reality of the region has been examined in the Potential Analysis during the project, based on the results of the regional seminars in Austria, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria. The document identifies numerous challenges the partners – and the DBS Gateway Region as a whole – face and have to solve to achieve their joint vision.

- The main obstacle is the **limited navigability** of the Danube. Companies have to deal with existing bottlenecks, waterway blocks (low water, ice, etc.), which make inland waterway transport **unpredictable** and **slow** in comparison to using trains or trucks – a major problem, especially in the case of time-sensitive goods. Since not all countries in the region are members of the European Union, **customs handling** (in Serbia and the Ukraine) **causes** even more **delays and additional costs**. The **lack of a highly trained and competitive staff** with good work ethics also affects the quality of the services.
- **Pricing** is another important factor – the current price level of IWT is higher than rail or road transport for several reasons: the extra logistics services (planning and coordination) needed, last mile and transshipment costs (industries are usually located far from the Danube), **discriminative legislation**, high fixed costs per barge stop, etc. In order to be cost efficient, **large quantities of goods must be transported** – the lack of an integrated planning process makes it hard to cooperate by grouping transports or organize more LCL (Less Than Container Load) shipments.
- The discrimination against IWT also shows itself by the lack of **funding** opportunities. While public support of rail transport is a regular occurrence, investment funds for the construction of new port infrastructure or the renewal of shipping fleets are scarce – the funds are sufficient **only for regular maintenance**, not for investing in modernization and capacity expansion.
- The lack of digital ICT-tools available for **integrated network management** results in **missing links between the different transport modes**. As a result, vessels are often not working at full capacity on either direction; this situation is further exacerbated by a lack of widely available information.

- In general, there is a lack of **awareness and know-how** of inland waterway transport, especially in the minds of the policy- and decision makers. Therefore, cooperation and joint plans for entering new markets and attracting new cargo flows to the Danube is rare.

These complex challenges (and their individual components) can be organized into **7 types of barriers** – representing the different aspects of any kind of transport – that the stakeholders must address:

1. Goods
2. Logistics
3. Infrastructure
4. Politics
5. Environment
6. Economy
7. Technology

For every barrier identified in the Potential Analysis, there are corresponding Operational objectives in the Joint Vision 2040 (see Figure below). It is not a coincidence, that the barriers are complementary to the Fields of intervention from the Joint Vision 2040, too: Organisation/Cooperation, Marketing, Technology/Innovation, Legal Framework, Infrastructure, Business Development and Services.

Barrier	Operational objective(s)
Goods	Providing <b>sufficient storage facilities</b> at the ports Grouping transports and/or organizing more <b>LCL shipments</b>
Logistics	Transforming ports into <b>logistics centres/intermodal hubs</b> Implementing <b>Port Community Systems</b> Widening the ports' functionalities by adding <b>new/special logistics services</b> to their portfolio Enabling the <b>efficient share of information</b> between all ports Encouraging the offer of <b>joint services</b>
Infrastructure	Establishing a wide-reaching network of <b>last mile infrastructure</b> Ensuring all year-round <b>reliable fairway conditions</b> on the Danube Improving the <b>rail and road infrastructure</b> within the port areas
Politics	Encouraging <b>joint planning processes and solutions</b> to address transnational challenges Creating a strong <b>joint voice (lobbying)</b> Supporting <b>awareness raising campaigns</b> to gain trust Ensuring the transnational <b>harmonisation of standards</b> Setting standards for port labour <b>training</b> and qualifications Promoting the <b>harmonisation of customs and administrative rules</b>
Environment	Offering backup systems/ <b>alternative routes</b> in case of environmental damage (e.g. ice, high water) Providing incentives for <b>eco-friendly behaviour</b>

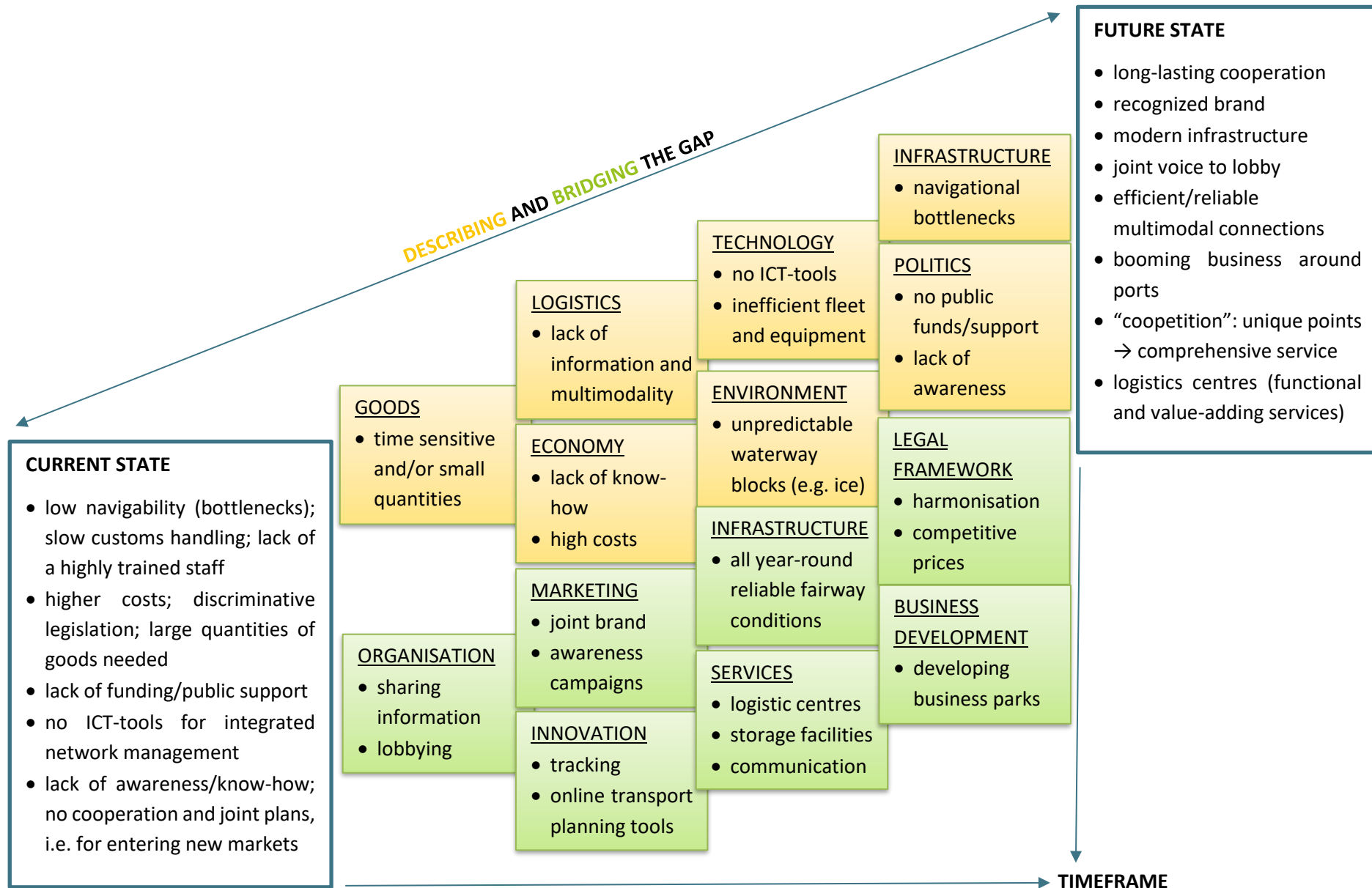


Barrier	Operational objective(s)
Economy	Developing <b>business parks</b> at the ports or in their vicinities Including the relevant companies in the <b>regional economic policies</b> Supporting <b>business development</b> Creating clear international <b>visibility</b> and a <b>joint brand</b> Determining <b>competitive prices</b> for shipping
Technology	Ensuring <b>transparency</b> through ICT tracking Implementing <b>online transport planning tools</b> Including the <b>last mile</b> of the logistics chain into the cities' plans Opening new fields of <b>research</b> Ensuring the uptake of <b>innovation</b>

**37 Connections between the Potential Analysis and the Joint Vision 2040**

When comparing the current and the (hopefully) future state of maritime and inland waterway transport – using the above-mentioned categories –, the most pressing problems/challenges and their possible solutions can be easily identified and defined (see Figure below). However, **not all gaps may be bridged immediately, and certainly not with the same tools and methods.** The DBS Gateway Region project strives to **solve as many issues as possible** but **gradually**, through increasingly influential steps toward its final mission.





### 6.3 Contribution of the Platform to the Joint Vision

As previously established, one of the most important elements of a gap analysis is the recognition that the problems discovered cannot be solved simultaneously. Accordingly, it is vital to determine which areas can be directly or indirectly influenced and improved by the Cooperation Platform (see Figure below). A more detailed list of the potential Platform services can be found in Chapter 7.

#### BUSINESS DEVELOPMENT

The Platform's services should include good practices and know-how sharing (e.g. through online trainings) – these will **indirectly contribute to the economic development of the region** and **make the sector more attractive for investment**.

#### MARKETING

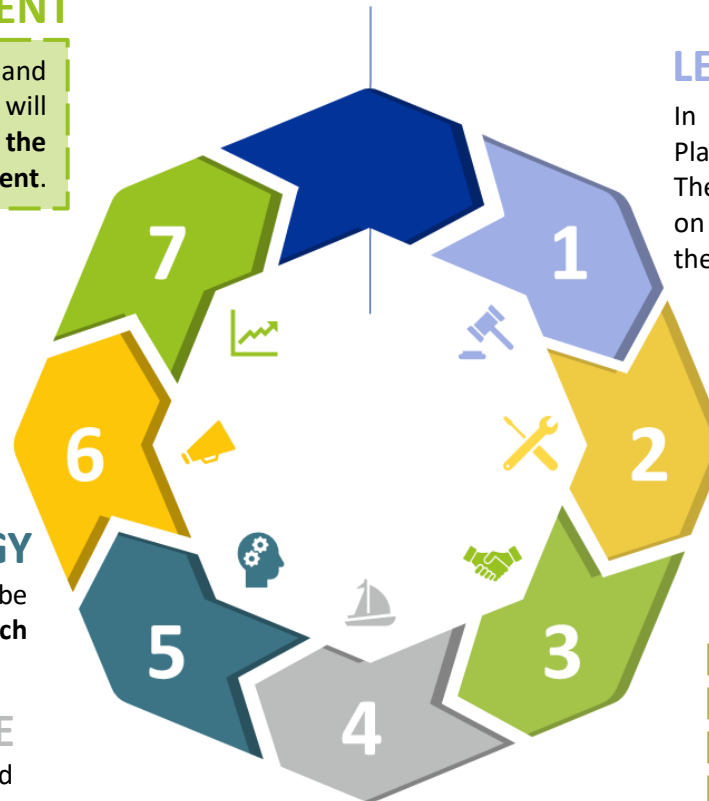
Using a joint voice for lobbying implies the existence of a **joint brand** which can only be successful if it is **complemented by joint marketing activities** (events, publications, etc.) – the Platform directly contributes to this Field of intervention.

#### INNOVATION/TECHNOLOGY

The Platform – especially in its initial form – cannot be considered an online planning tool but can **(indirectly) launch and support joint developments that serve innovation**.

#### INFRASTRUCTURE

The problems of infrastructure maintenance and modernization are largely due to the lack of resources. The Platform can provide **assistance in fund acquisition**, presenting – e.g. in the form of an online help desk – and securing (by lobbying) the relevant funding instruments.



#### LEGAL FRAMEWORK

In order to eliminate the regulatory differences, the Platform can contribute **indirectly in the form of lobbying**. The impact of the Platform in this field is largely dependent on the extent to which the **decision-makers** can be **involved**, thereby eliminating their current lack of awareness.

#### SERVICES

The Platform itself will provide **new services** to the shipping-related stakeholders in the region, which can be considered as a **direct intervention**, but the most influential change is the **continuous communication and information exchange** between the members, derived from their joint services.

#### ORGANISATION/COOPERATION

**Enabling the efficient share of information** (in terms of capacities, for example) between all ports to optimise their operation and processes **and using a joint voice as a strong lobby must be the ultimate goals of the Platform**. This close cooperation will make developing joint services easier.

39 Connections between the Platform and the Joint Vision 2040

## 7 Strategy

### 7.1 The necessary scope and criteria of the Platform

#### 7.1.1 Target groups and cooperation methods

The objectives of the Joint Vision 2040 can only be achieved by the Platform if its **membership** is open – or at least **accessible** – not only for the project partners and associated strategic partners, but **for any regions and municipalities (with ports) along the Danube river (the public sector)**. Membership on a wider scale has both its benefits and drawbacks: if the membership is broad, it is easier to delegate the necessary operational tasks, and revenue from the possible membership fees will increase – but a larger organisation is also more difficult to manage. Accessibility, however, is important regardless of membership, because **it guarantees the widespread availability of information and services provided by the Platform** – the lack of both was identified as an obstacle in the Potential Analysis and the Joint Vision 2040, too.

The **stakeholders** (from both a membership and an accessibility standpoint) can be seen on Figure 37 (sorted by relevance). Blue circles show **the most important actors** of the shipping industry **who have a direct connection to maritime and/or inland waterway transport**. Green marks the stakeholders that **have a direct way of influencing the sector**, either by offering **education**, establishing **regulations** or providing **funds**. Yellow represents stakeholders that are less essential – at least **from a day-to-day operational and promotional standpoint** – but still **involved**. The general public is shown by a grey circle – informing them about some developments is needed and beneficial on a case-by-case basis but their involvement in the Platform as members – or even users – is unlikely (and unnecessary).

To ensure real cooperation, which is one of the Strategic Objectives of the Joint Vision 2040, at least a **cooperation agreement** is needed between the first members (the project partners, for example), but a **legally established organisation could be a better approach**. The only basic criterion of the organizational (legal) form – a few suggestions are detailed in Chapter 8 – is that it should be able to handle the acquisition of new members from any country in the region.

An **internal and external communication interface** is a must – the former will enable the members to share data and message each other, while the latter can be a website which is accessible to a wider audience. Using a cloud-based collaboration software for internal communication and joint work can be beneficial and makes every member's equal participation possible. Beside the possibility of annual or semi-annual meetings, the partners can keep in touch by e-mails, phones and video chat (e.g. Skype) – **the key is to communicate regularly**.



40 Potential members and users of the Platform

### 7.1.2 Platform services

Regarding the possible services of the Platform, they can be structured into the following areas:

#### 1. Services related to the DBS Gateway Region project

Since the Platform is an important output of the project, it is reasonable – and necessary (according to the rules of the call) – to use it for the promotion and dissemination of the other deliverables. The most important feature that can be included in the Cooperation Platform in this area is **presenting searchable, visualized project documents** (Potential Analysis, Funding Guideline, etc.), and therefore, the DBS Gateway Region project’s results (e.g. mid-term and long-term goals based on the Joint Vision 2040) on the online platform. The e-Platform can also be used for **updating and monitoring these documents and the related implementation activities**, offering services like:

- The continuous monitoring of new funding opportunities (building on the Funding Guideline);
- Assistance in the implementation of the Roadmap measures; and
- Monitoring the implementation of the Regional Action Plan measures.

#### 2. Services related to information exchange

In order to overcome the distances and coordinate their individual services/processes, the members need to ensure an **open information flow** which **should be the most important objective of the Platform** – from the basics, i.e. a well-structured **common database** of the Platform members (description of the port infrastructures, facilities, freight volumes, stakeholders, etc.) to **regular communication with other institutions and stakeholders**.

#### 3. Services related to operating the Platform

Organizing **partner meetings** annually/semi-annually and creating **working groups/discussion boards** in specific topics (to discuss the progress of the measures identified during the project, for example) should guarantee a smooth operation.

#### 4. Services related to transnational knowledge exchange

One of the key elements of EU projects is **capitalization** – instead of an endless repetition of similar projects, applicants are encouraged to build on existing achievements and realized ideas by adding something new. This is an advice worth listening to in the case of any development project but implementing it is only possible if there is a platform where these **good practices** (e.g. of using state aid instruments, related to the implementation of measures) can be easily accessed. Of course, **sharing any knowledge about the sector** and **organizing trainings** can be useful, too (i.e. know-how on port logistics in the form of certified trainings and/or regional online discussions). For assistance in specific cases, an **online help interface** – where the users can ask questions related to the DBS Gateway Region – should be incorporated into the Platform.

#### 5. Services related to marketing and promotion

The Platform can be a useful interface not only for the **marketing activities of individual members** (for example, by sharing an introductory video of a port or a region), but also for **coordinating joint promotional activities**. Such services directly contribute to one of the Joint Vision 2040's Fields of intervention (see Figure 38). Examples: joint promotional materials (e.g. leaflets), joint media appearances, joint participation in events, joint sales activities, etc.

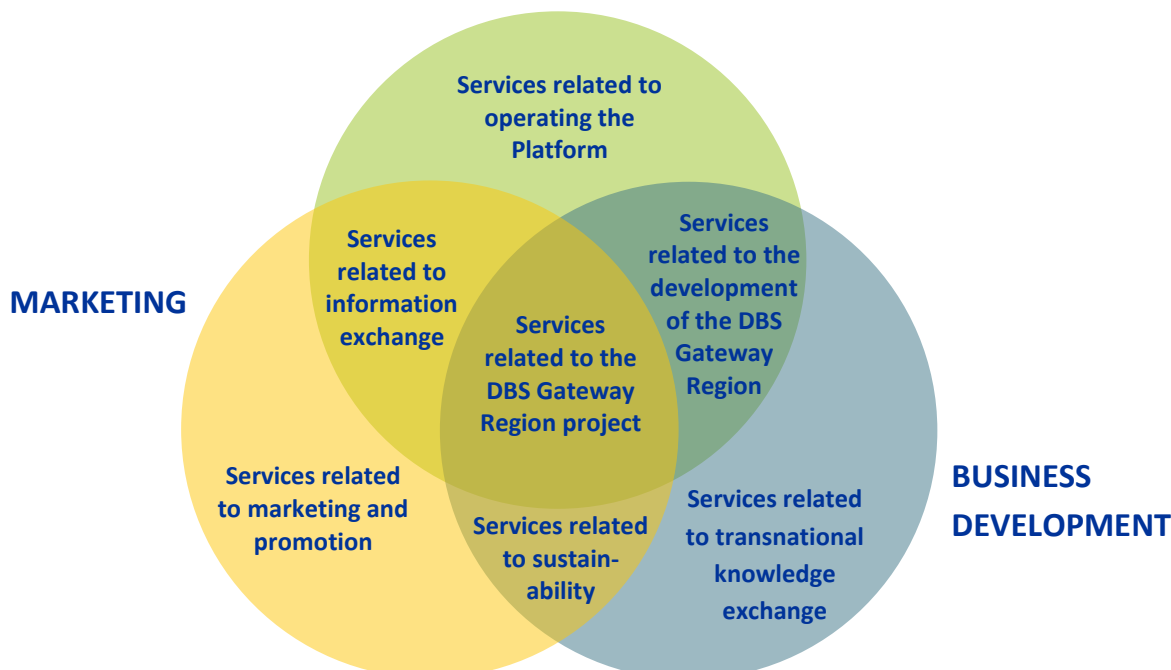
#### 6. Services related to the development of the DBS Gateway Region

Among the ideas put forward by the partners, **lobbying** shall be the most useful in the future, since it can contribute directly to the development of maritime and inland waterway transport in several focus areas, as well as **cargo consolidation**, which – in addition to LCL shipments – may be another relevant **response to the lack or small volume of goods**.

#### 7. Services related to sustainability

It is worth to consider **encouraging eco-friendly behaviour** (e.g. through an ecological footprint counter).

## ORGANISATION/COOPERATION



### 41 Platform services related to the most relevant Fields of intervention from Joint Vision 2040

Naturally, when launching the Platform – and during the initial phase of its operation –, **fragmenting its service portfolio would not be smart**. The reasonable course is to **gather the information** that the Platform wants to share with its stakeholders (about the navigability of the Danube near different ports, for example) and **focus on the ongoing implementation and sustainability of the DBS Gateway Region project** as a first step – the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> service areas identified before. If these services can be realistically managed, the members can organize **joint activities** (trainings, awareness campaigns), in time bringing their ongoing collaboration to the point where they can effectively **lobby** for significant changes in the sector.<sup>22</sup>

#### 7.1.3 Political, operational and financial background

It is clear that representing the interests of the DBS Gateway Region is more effective if there exists some **political support** behind it. To achieve this, the members of the Platform should **include relevant government actors** (decision-making organisations, the ministries of transport and construction, other relevant national and provincial ministries, regional and local authorities, the Danube Commission, etc.). First, the partnership should concentrate on **laying the professional and operational background of the Platform**, and then – if there is a demand and capacity later on – the enlargement of the members' list may be beneficial.

When building the **membership** system, devising several layers **depending on the respective organisation's level of participation in the Platform** would be a useful quality: a distinction needs to be made between

<sup>22</sup> A similar logic should apply to the members: at first, a smaller consortium can get started on establishing and maintaining a close working relationship, which would be followed by the expansion of the Platform without any loss of quality.

founding members and those who only use certain services (e.g. online trainings). These three categories (see Figure 39) can serve as an efficient starting point for further elaboration:

- **Members who run the Platform**

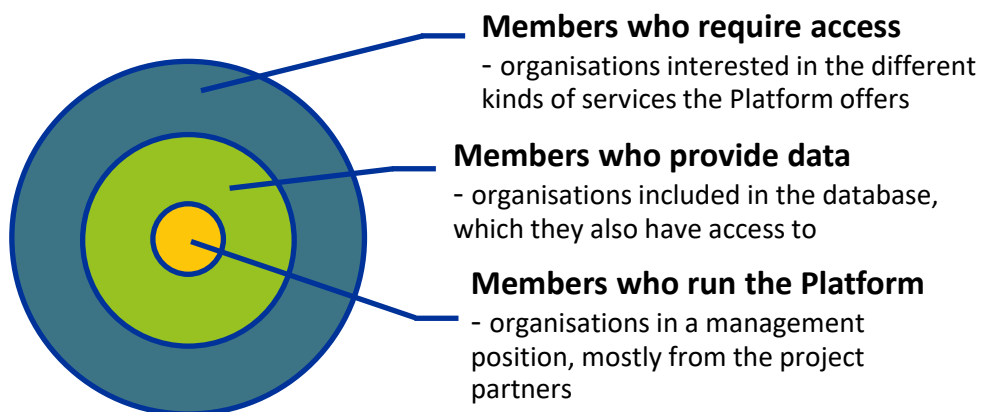
These organisations will be in a **management position** in the consortium (most of them from the beginning of the Platform) – mainly the partners who are already involved in the DBS Gateway Region project. They can organize partner meetings and provide the Platform's human resources.

- **Members who provide data**

These organisations are **willing to share their own data**/information (introductory videos, the description of their facilities for the database, etc.), **but they do not undertake management tasks**.

- **Members who require access**

This is a **looser** connection to the Platform: those who choose this option can **use its individual services**, but they will not be included in the database, for example. In this category, the Platform can also **differentiate between the members based on the types of services they are interested in** (cooperative services – e.g. joint marketing events, or solitary services – e.g. online trainings, etc.).



42 The Platform's membership system

**In order to ensure stability and diversity**, it is best to finance the operation of the Platform **using funding from multiple financial sources**. Based on the suggestions and opinions of the partners, the most important funding source could be the **revenue from the services provided by the Platform**. However, services may only be realistically charged for if:

- They address existing, real needs of the potential users;
- They are of high quality and add value; and
- They are competitively priced.

Relying on the membership system, **annual membership fees** can also be charged – a regular financial contribution according to the level of involvement of the relevant organisation. In order to ensure the commitment and cooperation of every managing partner, it would be helpful to maintain a **rotating leadership position** (changing annually or in every two years): the leader organisation would carry out the



most important coordinating tasks during the given period, making **in-kind contributions** (voluntary work, equipment, etc.) to the Platform. Obtaining **grant support** should also be considered if and when relevant calls are available.

When making plans about the promotion of the Platform, members must continuously keep in mind that their goal is to **create value by attracting and connecting diverse groups of stakeholders**. The final user experience will depend on the strength and quality of the Platform's 'ecosystem' and its participants. While traditional organisations usually push messages to increase sales (push marketing), the Platform should rely on the opposite: **seeking answers to its potential customers' problems and creating a demand for the offered services** (pull marketing).

## 7.2 Creating the Platform – the process

This strategy outlines the most important criteria the Platform needs to meet – after carefully studying the document, it is up to the partners to make the **key decisions** regarding the Platform's operation (as shown in Chapter 5, the results of the questionnaire survey and the interviews reflect major differences of opinion regarding various important issues).

The most important decisions concern:

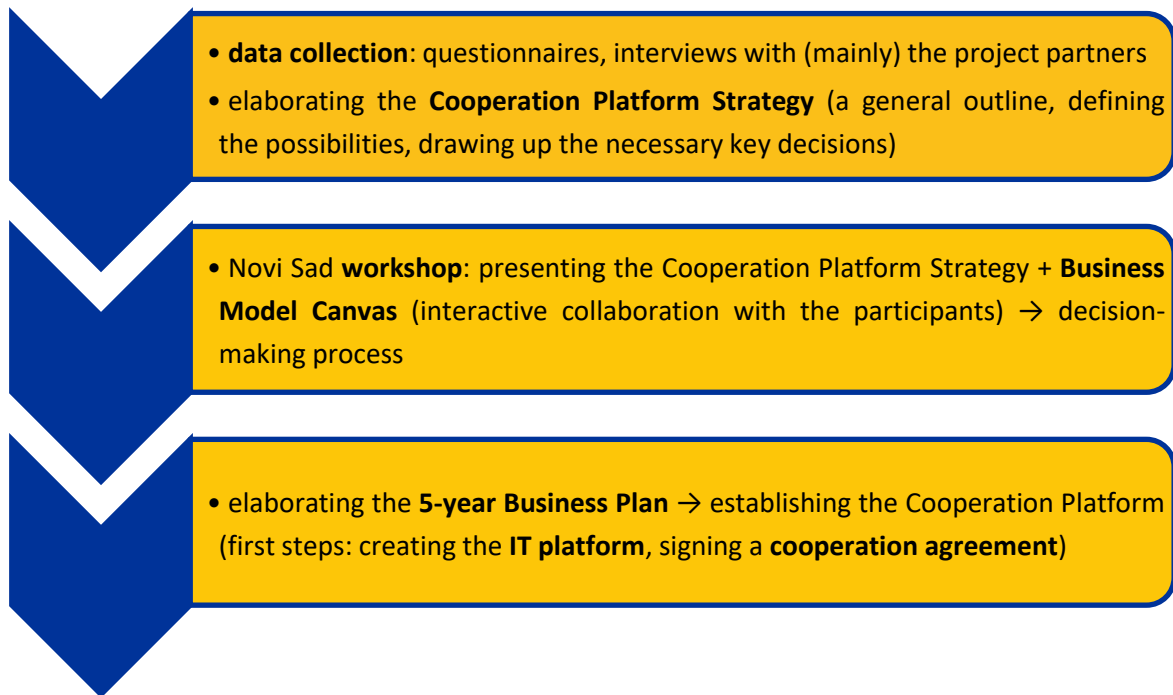
- The list of current/potential members and the target group;
- The legal form of the organisation (based on the previous decision);
- The basics of the organizational and operational rules;
- The Platform's main profile, its services, their timing and prioritization (including the main field(s) of intervention the Platform aims to focus on first, e.g. navigability);
- And its resource needs (including the financial and human resources).

One of the interactive workshops of the meeting in Novi Sad – on 14 November 2018 – supported this decision-making process: the results of the **Business Model Canvas**<sup>23</sup> is thoroughly studied by the partners and taken into account during the development of the e-Platform's **5-year Business Plan**. Following the acceptance of the Business Plan, the Platform's operational foundations will be elaborated, the most important parts of which are **creating the IT platform** and **signing the cooperation agreement** of the members (see Figure 40).

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<sup>23</sup> Business Model Canvas: a strategic management template for developing new business models – a visual chart with elements describing a firm's or product's:

- key partners, activities and resources;
- cost structure and revenue streams;
- customer segments and relationships;
- channels;
- and value propositions.



**43 The process of establishing the Cooperation Platform**

## 8 A basic overview of the institutionalisation and proposed legal solutions, advantages and disadvantages

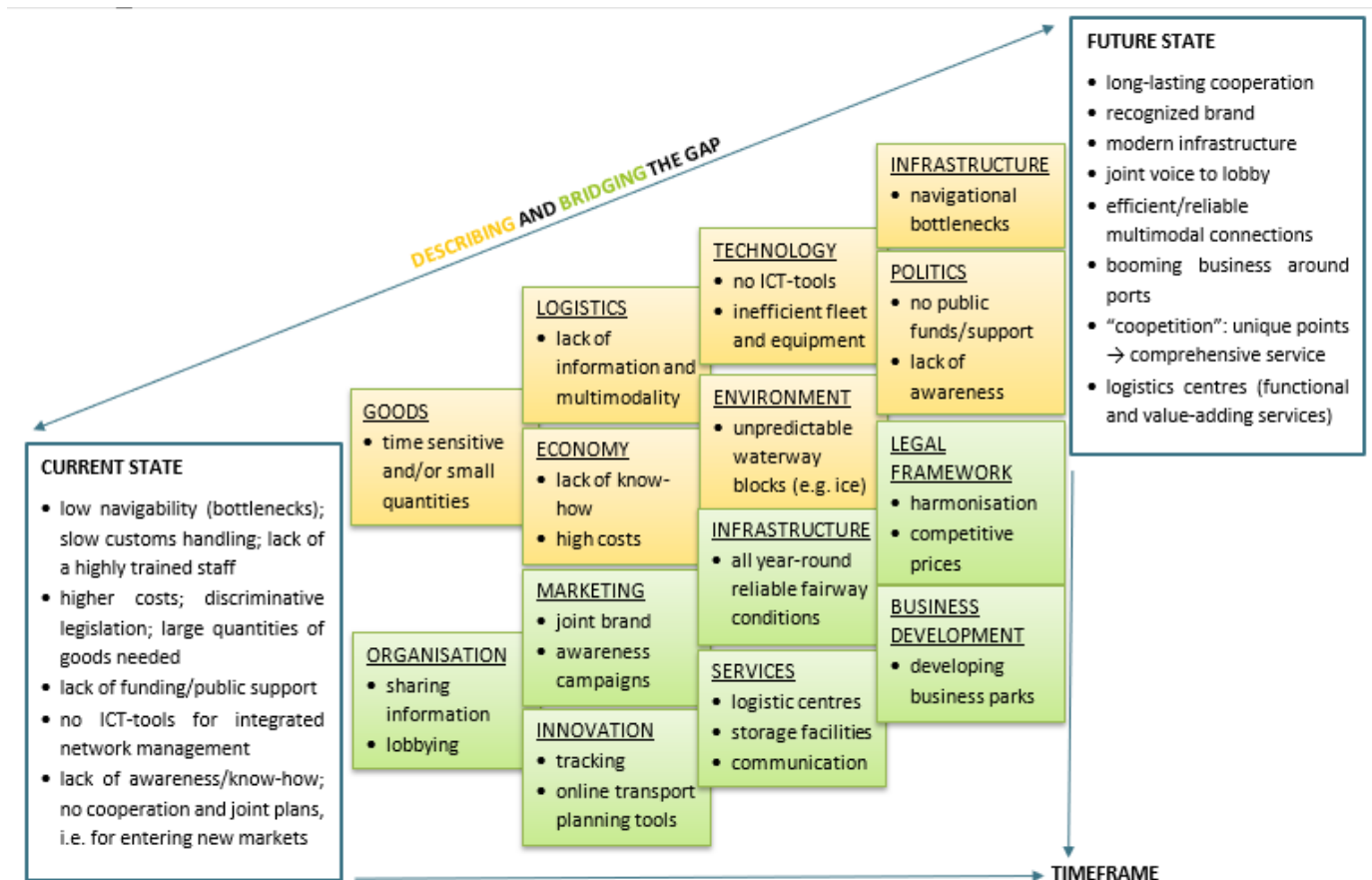
This chapter presents a brief overview of the DBS Gateway Region’s goals based on the Joint Vision 2040, with regard to the results of the previous survey and the main objectives for the Cooperation Platform to see where the Platform’s focus should be and what the partners would like to achieve.

The overview of these inputs can serve as an input for project partners when assessing the possible legal forms of the Platform. The end of the Chapter offers a set of criteria along which the potential legal forms can be compared more objectively.

### 8.1 Goals for the region (Joint Vision 2040)

The partnership has already agreed upon a set of goals they will strive for, and these goals have been presented in the Joint Vision 2040 – the document describing the economic and logistics development foreseen for the region in the mid- to long-term future. It defines a Mission Statement that all partners want to focus on.

When comparing the current and the (hopefully) future state of maritime and inland waterway transport, the most relevant problems/challenges and their possible solutions can be easily identified and defined (see Figure below). However, not all gaps may be bridged immediately, and certainly not with the same tools and methods. The DBS Gateway Region project strives to solve as many issues as possible but gradually, through increasingly influential steps toward its final mission.



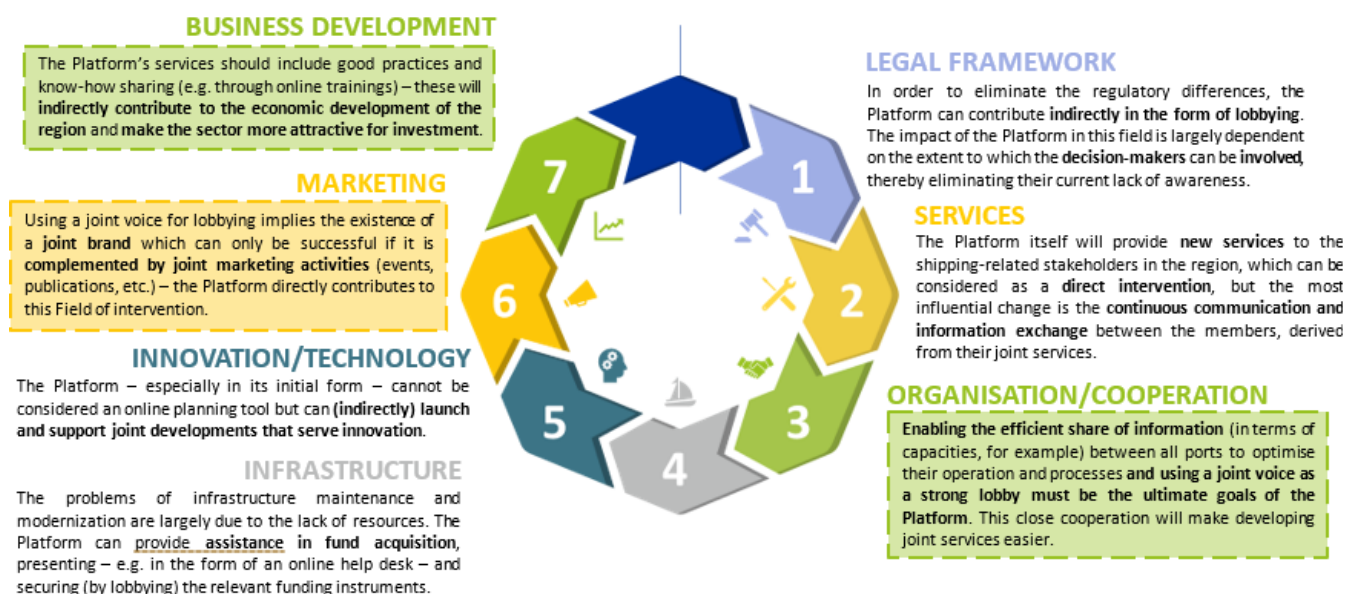
44 Gap analysis – summary

The main future goals are follows:

- Long-lasting cooperation
- Recognized brand
- Modern infrastructure
- Joint voice to lobby
- Efficient/reliable multimodal connections
- Booming business around ports
- Comprehensive, functional and value-added services

## 8.2 Objectives for the Cooperation Platform

Accordingly, to the above-mentioned goals, it is vital to determine which areas can be directly or indirectly influenced and improved by the Cooperation Platform. The below diagram visually presents these areas.



### 45 Connections between the Platform and the Joint Vision 2040

Therefore, the partners must take these into account by deciding which organizational form can best support these objectives.

## 8.3 Advantages and disadvantages of the potential legal forms

The below chapter aims to make a comparison between the three potential organizational forms to ease the decision-making of the partners related to the final legal form of the Cooperation Platform.

The three analysed organizational forms are:

- EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation),
- EEIG (European Economic Interest Grouping) and
- Loose cooperation agreement.

The three cooperation forms were selected based on the inputs from the questionnaire (presented in Chapter 5) and the expressed expectations and other aspects of the involved partners such as their need for political backing or their commitment to the cooperation.

Various advantages, disadvantages and recommendations are presented related to these organisational forms, which can be considered for the future operation of the Platform after the DBS Gateway Region project.

### 8.3.1 EGTC

EGTC, as a legal form, is an outstanding opportunity for municipalities, regions and states to establish cross-border, transnational or interregional cooperation with similar players of another member state and to fulfil their common objectives. Within the framework of this organisation, local players get the same opportunities within the borders and across the borders.

EGTC is the first legal instrument of the European Union that provides legal personality and frame to the cooperation of European municipalities and regions and the efficient use of Union grants.

The grouping brings the players of at least two Member States (municipalities, regional authorities or the state) into a joint organisation. The legal conditions of the grouping are governed by the law of the state where the centre is located. EGTC has legal personality and full legal capacity, may act as an independent legal subject. The grouping has its own budget, organisation and contracting capacity, may acquire mobile or immobile properties, act before a court. The members elect the chief executive and set up the public assembly consisting of the representatives of the members jointly.<sup>24</sup>

#### Advantages

Despite the limitations of using the EGTC instrument for certain forms of cooperation, this instrument has been created to realise the following advantages that may not be realised anywhere in the EU by other legal instruments:

- Creating a strategic approach for integrating several actions under the framework of mutual policy;
- Stabilising cooperation structures and continuity of actions;
- Legally binding decisions and long-term engagement of the partners;
- Participation of the partners in decision-making processes and creating ownership;
- Transparency and visibility of the structure;
- Improving the efficiency when using public funds;
- Better democratic legitimation due to the general assembly;
- Easier access to tendering and acquisition procedures;
- Improved possibility to participate in EU programmes as single beneficiary;
- Joint marketing (common brand);
- Possibility to employ staff directly.

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<sup>24</sup> <http://egtc.kormany.hu/egtc-general-information>

Some EGTCs can achieve more democratic legitimacy or public responsiveness through an enhanced participative approach. In these cases, mechanisms for improving the relation to the civil society are foreseen by establishing a civil parliament or a mayors' conference

Certain aspects of the Regulation favour a possible harmonization effect, above all the direct applicability of the Regulation in the Member States. Furthermore, the Regulation states that an EGTC has legal personality (with the authority to manage its own budget) and it determines an assembly and a director as minimum requirements in terms of trans-frontier organs. These provisions create a European-wide legal basis with certain common obligations for trans-frontier cooperation applicable in all states, which has never existed so far.

Cooperation in border areas has specific needs, depending on regional, geographic, economic, social, cultural and other conditions related to cross-border linkages. Correspondingly, EGTCs may be used for quite different tasks and objectives and their design for facilitating territorial cooperation in border areas and beyond may differ accordingly. An EGTC may be established to conduct thematic tasks (e.g. environmental protection, transport association, managing education or health infrastructure) or cross-sectoral tasks (e.g. supporting regional development). When establishing an EGTC it is crucial to identify the need for deepening and/or steadying the cooperation in a way that previous structures are not sufficient for achieving the pursued 'level' of cooperation. Furthermore, the stakeholders holding the competence for the tasks that shall be transferred to the EGTC need to become members of the EGTC.

The EGTC is a network of experts based on the expertise of its members. Thus, the balance of the members is key factor.

### Potential disadvantages

EGTC is a legal entity and as such, enables regional and local authorities and other public bodies from different member states, to set up cooperation groupings with a legal personality. Consequently, private companies cannot be members of such a cooperation e.g. a private-owned port.

An EGTC enjoys "the most extensive legal capacity accorded to legal persons under [...] national law" (Koen 2011). Nonetheless, this wording needs to be put into context, as the EGTC's capacity is in particular limited to carrying out the tasks that are assigned to it by its statutes. This principle of specialisation, common to all cooperation bodies applies to EGTCs. However, the cumulative effect of the EGTC Regulation's provisions limiting EGTCs' capacity for action leads to excessively restrictive arrangements. Unless these are interpreted very flexibly, EGTCs will be very limited in terms of what they can do. However, the EGTC Regulation is characterized by some important features, which can impede possible approximation tendencies.

The recourse to this legal framework is not mandatory, which means that local and regional authorities are always entitled to create also other forms of cooperation. This might be the case, where an interstate agreement does already provide a sound basis for trans-frontier collaboration. Thus, the tool of an EGTC might be rather used in border areas, which are not yet covered by such an agreement.

The Regulation is restricted by the limitations stemming from national law (since the final decision on whether an entity is entitled to participate in an EGTC is in the hands of the national state and is dependent on the respective national legislation). Furthermore, **various characteristics of an EGTC are determined by the respective national law of the state, where the EGTC has the headquarter.** Therefore, an EGTC with the

same members and same tasks will have different features if it has its headquarter in state A or state B because of the different legal framework provided by each state.

Certain aspects are left open for a concrete determination by the national enactments (above all the competences and the legal status of an EGTC). The Member States decide in their respective national provisions the legal status and the competences of an EGTC (i.e. whether it is just entitled to manage Community funds or whether it can carry out activities outside EU funding). Different national provisions can create legal uncertainty and obviously constrain the creation of an EGTC in practice. If, for instance, country A decides in its national provisions that an EGTC is of public law nature and can take over tasks outside EU funding, whereas country B allows a private-law EGTC just for the management of EU funds, the local and regional authorities would—in order to establish a trans frontier for the collaboration in various areas independently of EU funds— probably have to recourse to another form of cooperation, such as a private-law Euroregion, Euro district etc.

Non-EU countries are entitled to participate in an EGTC just under certain conditions outlined above. The establishment of a 'bilateral' EGTC between entities of one EU Member State and entities of a third state is in any case not possible, since an EGTC must be composed of entities from at least two EU Member States. Therefore, any bilateral forms of territorial cooperation between an EU state and a third state necessarily has to adopt a form other than the EGTC.

### 8.3.2 EEIG

The European Economic Interest Grouping introduces a legal instrument at EU level in the form of a European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) designed to minimise the legal, fiscal and psychological difficulties that natural persons, companies, firms and other bodies face in cooperating across borders.<sup>25</sup>

#### **Advantages**

Some of the advantages offered by a grouping are as follows:

- It is a legal framework which aims to develop and facilitate the collaboration between entrepreneurs and can represent a profit centre for its members of its own;
- It is a very flexible and unbureaucratic legal instrument, whose rules can be decided by the members in observance of a few guidelines fixed in the European regulation;
- A grouping can be founded with or without a assets, investment or know-how transfer;
- A grouping can be established by subjects with a different legal status: self-employed persons, private limited company, chambers of commerce etc.;
- The members of a grouping go on carrying out their own activities autonomously. They maintain the activities they ran before and besides obtain new business opportunities;
- A grouping can guarantee a high-level liability: members have unlimited and several liability for its debts;
- Profits and losses resulting from its activities are taxable only in the hands of the members; profits must be divided up among the members, if not reinvested;
- A grouping pays neither company taxes nor taxes on earnings;

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<sup>25</sup> Regulation (EEC) No 2137/85 – the European Economic Interest Grouping



- The grouping can run its own business and can have a trade mark;
- The official address of a grouping can be easily transferred within the Community. Other legal instruments require a previous winding up of the enterprise, which involves costs, activities and loss of corporate image;
- Due to the European regulation no. 2137/85 constituting the legal basis of EEIG and being drafted in each European official language, entrepreneurs do not feel discriminated because of the use of a foreign language (as it would be e. g. for an Italian partner in a German limited private company);
- The members of the grouping are not required to show their previous knowledge in EU Single Market, the establishment of a grouping could be very useful for consortiums which apply for EU programmes;
- Their members can improve their knowledge of the European Single Market, as entrepreneurs meet regularly and facilitate a process of globalisation.

### Potential disadvantages

The EEIG represents a recent innovation and most of the implementation laws came into force in 1992. The most common problems, which can arise during the maintenance of an EEIG:

- Internal communication and its costs;
- Linguistic problems;
- Doubts what taxation is concerned at the beginning;
- Distribution of profits and losses where the members did not find an agreement in advance;
- Lack of confidence in the other members.

A written contract is required by the EC regulation when funding an EEIG. This contract for setting up a grouping shall include at least:

- The name of the grouping preceded or followed either by the initials EEIG or the words European Economic Interest Grouping,
- The official address of the grouping,
- The object of the grouping,
- Information about each member (name, company name, legal form, permanent address, number and place of registration if any),
- Duration of the grouping, except where it is indefinite.

Consequent, the grouping may not:

- Be a member of another European Economic Interest Grouping;
- Employ more than 500 persons (this limit has been introduced on a request of the German government aiming to avoid the application of the Employees Representation Act, which determines a form of joint management or co-determination);
- Directly or indirectly hold shares in a member enterprise (so called holding prohibition; exemptions are foreseen);
- Exercise a power of management or of control over its members' own activities;
- Issue loans to members (prohibition of loans; some exceptions are foreseen).

### 8.3.3 Loose cooperation agreement

A cooperation agreement, operating as a partnership as such is an agreement between two or more persons to carry on business with profit motive, carried on by all or any one of them acting for all.

#### **Advantages in general**

The following are the advantages of partnership business based on the article of Money Matters:

- **Easy to form:** a partnership can be formed without any legal formalities and expenses. Even if there is any, the expenses are not much compared to a company form of organization;
- **Skill and talent:** talented persons may be taken as partners. More skill and talent will be available;
- **Division of labour:** the division of labour can be introduced which increases the efficiency in the management. One partner may take care of purchases, another sale, a third accounts and so on;
- **Contact with customers:** all the partners in a partnership may take part in the management of the business. So, they get in touch with the customers during the course of the business. It enables them to study the tastes and needs of the customers;
- **Cooperation between partners:** the partnership enables partners to provide mutual help to each other. Partners behave as members in a joint family;
- **Flexibility:** changes in the cooperation can be adopted easily. There are no legal restrictions;
- **Economy in operation:** if there is cooperation among the partners the partnership can be run efficiently. A good number of economies in management can be derived;
- **Division of risks:** all losses and risks of the business are shared by all the partners. So risky ventures can also be taken up;
- **Incidence of tax:** compared with company form of organization the tax payable, if any, will be less.

#### **Disadvantages**

There are also some disadvantages of a partnership:

- **Division of responsibility:** in a partnership the management is divided. As such responsibilities are also divided. Every partner might try to shift the burden on to the shoulders of others; finally, none takes the responsibility properly;
- **Delay in decisions:** sometimes the partners may not agree with one another in taking decisions. As a result, partners will not be in a position to take quick decisions;
- **Lack of continuity:** a partnership gets dissolved on the death, insolvency, insanity or retirement of any partner. So, there is no guarantee for the continuity of the cooperation;
- **Lack of secrecy:** it may not be possible to maintain secrecy in partnership because of the number of partners;
- **Internal conflicts:** differences and disputes among the partners are very common. These conflicts harm the partnership as a whole;
- **Misuse of assets:** the partners may use the assets of the partnership for their personal purposes. Misuse of assets is harmful to business interests;
- **Lack of public confidence:** a partnership is purely a private organization and is not controlled or regulated by the Government. As such public may not have confidence in it.

## 8.4 Comparison of the organisational forms

To support partners to make decision on the final form of organization, some aspects for comparison are recommended below. These aspects were considered during the Novi Sad partner meeting in November 2018 when several other organisational questions had to be decided also by the partners so that the 5-year Business Plan can be elaborated accordingly. Key topics to be decided in Novi Sad:

- The list of current/potential members and the target group;
- The legal form of the organisation (based on the previous decision);
- The basics of the organizational and operational rules;
- The Platform’s main profile, its services, their timing and prioritization (including the main field(s) of intervention the Platform aims to focus on first, e.g. navigability);
- Resource needs (including the financial and human resources).

The definition of the institutional framework will start with the development of the 5-year Business Plan which will analyse in-depth the financial and institutional durability of the Platform.

In the Table below, three organisational form can be assessed along the main comparison aspects. The table includes the following aspects:

- Members;
- Commitment of members;
- Level of political influence;
- Diversity of financial sources, income, debt;
- Operational aspects;
- Financial sustainability;
- Marketing effect.

Aspects of comparison	Common organization		Loose cooperation agreement
	EGTC	EEIG	
<b>Members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Min. of two members from two different European states</li> <li>• States, regional or local authorities, communities, or other public bodies</li> <li>• For private companies it is difficult to be members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• At least two members from two different European states</li> <li>• Companies or legal bodies also</li> <li>• No limit to the number of members</li> <li>• Closed companies, stock companies, free lancers, self-employed persons, associations, public law corporate bodies and other legal bodies</li> <li>• Max. number of employees: 500</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Two or more legal entities</li> </ul>
<b>Commitment of members</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher level of commitment</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Higher level of commitment to develop economic activities</li> <li>• Members cooperate within EEIG, but in a legal and economic sense remain independent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low level of partners’ commitment</li> </ul>
<b>Level of political influence</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Political backing</li> <li>• Easy acquisition of EU funded projects</li> <li>• Endowed with legal status</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Endowed with legal status (except in some EU Member States, e. g. Italy or Germany)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Low level of political influence</li> <li>• Hard acquisition of EU funded projects</li> </ul>

Aspects of comparison	Common organization		Loose cooperation agreement
	EGTC	EEIG	
<b>Diversity of financial resources, income, debt</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>In-kind contributions are allowed</li> <li>Services for fees</li> <li>Public funds</li> <li>Participate in EU programmes as single beneficiary</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fiscally transparent</li> <li>Members of a grouping have unlimited joint liability for its debt in proportion to its financial contribution</li> <li>Pays value added tax (V.A.T.) according to national laws and does not pay any company taxes</li> <li>Members can decide freely to contribute or not to</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Certain services only operate in a bound organization (especially if they generate revenue)</li> </ul>
<b>Operational aspects</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should have a headquarter, staff and board</li> <li>More bureaucratic internal communication and its costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should have a headquarter, board and staff</li> <li>More bureaucratic internal communication and its costs</li> <li>Distribution of profits and losses is hard where the members did not find an agreement in advance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Should not have a headquarter</li> </ul>
<b>Financial sustainability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial resources must cover operational costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Financial resources must cover operational costs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Marginal operational costs</li> </ul>
<b>Marketing effect</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher-level visibility through an EU accredited institution</li> <li>Higher capacity to involve new stakeholders, share information and build the DBS region brand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Higher-level visibility through an EU accredited institution</li> <li>Higher capacity to involve new stakeholders, share information and build the DBS Gateway region brand</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lower-level of visibility</li> <li>Low capacity to enlarge the membership and build a determinative brand</li> </ul>

46 Comparison of the possible organisational forms

### Members

The most important criterion to decide on the final organizational forms might be the potential members, specifically who could be a member. It is necessary for any EGTC or EEIG to have at least two members from two different European states. But unlike EEIG, it may be difficult for a private company to participate in an EGTC. Because private companies may participate only by expert groups or by advisory bodies. A loose cooperation agreement does not have any restrictions in terms of the legal entity of members.

### Commitment

A cooperation agreement does not require very strong engagement from partners. Whereas in an EGTC or EEIG, members must have a high level of commitment. The members of the EEIG are committed to exercise economic activities.

### Political influence

The political influence of the Cooperation Platform refers to various factors e.g. potential for resource acquisition, or political backing. As regards funding opportunities, the EGTC is the most potent organisational form. In terms of political influence, EGTC and EEIG have similar potentials. Along with this aspect, the agreement is not likely to have a strong influence.

## Diversity of financial resources

Unlike a cooperation with no legal entity, an EGTC can provide revenue-generating services, get in-kind contributions. A very important potential of EGTCs is that they are eligible to participate in EU programmes as beneficiaries, because they EGTCs perse fulfil the criteria of multicounty cooperation.

EEIGs are also fiscally transparent organisations, whereas members have unlimited joint liability for its debt in proportion to its financial contribution and the grouping pays value added tax (V.A.T.) according to national laws but does not pay any company taxes.

A cooperation agreement has very limited opportunities to obtain any revenues, since external services for example can be provided in a bound organization only (especially if they generate revenue).

## Operational aspects

Operational aspects, in particular, refer to maintaining a headquarter and a permanent staff. To maintain a cooperation agreement, naturally, it does not require a headquarter, staff or high operational costs. Operational concerns occur when establishing a new EEIG or EGTC. The comparison of the three level of cooperation is similar when it comes to **financial sustainability**.

## Marketing effect

EGTC and EEIG can have high-level visibility through the strong joint voice of an EU accredited institution and can easier build the necessary human capacity to involve new stakeholders, share information and build the DBS Gateway Region brand. It is likely to be more cumbersome to attract new stakeholders into a cooperation agreement.

The Knippschild study can provide with some recommendations for project partners on how to manage transboundary issues, which can be considered during the decision process about the key organisational questions and during the initial phase of the Platform operation:

- Objectives need to be clearly defined. Overdrawn objectives and expectations can result from too diverse and broad objectives—with harmful consequences. Intensive phases of goal definition and agenda-setting have proven to be useful in the other two case studies;
- Set “soft” and general objectives first, then craft more tangible goals;
- Perceived difficulties change during different stages of the process. While the language barrier and differences in mentality might be a problem the beginning, they might even be perceived as enrichments later on. Then again, the lack of a legal framework may not hinder “soft” and general level cooperation, but it may challenge implementation of joint projects;
- Ensuring the continuity of cooperation is more important than producing a joint strategy that is not implemented. This might take a politically legitimized steering unit, regular feedback and decision-taking on cooperation processes such as joint strategies or concepts, and in the long term, a joint decision-making body. Also, communication should be continuous. Not just negotiation, but also discussion forums, meetings, and excursions;
- Cross-border strategies and concepts must be politically legitimized by decision-making, otherwise it is likely that they don’t have any effect.

(Knippschild, R. (2011))

## 9 Forward looking conclusions and recommendations for the post-project period on the functioning of the Platform

### 9.1 Technical background of the operation

Technical background of the e-Platform operation covers the following elements, which must be prepared to operate the new Cooperation:

- Legal preparation and establishment of the new organisation, which hosts the Cooperation Platform – official registration
- Office where the Platform operates, with all the necessary equipment depending on the number of the staff
- Technical establishment of the online platform and uploading all the project related content

Details of the technical background for the operation must be elaborated in the 5-year Business Plan of the Platform followed by the Novi Sad transnational event.

### 9.2 Personal background and planned resources to operate the Platform

Personal background of the Platform refers to the following aspects:

- Number of the staff working in the Cooperation Platform
  - permanent and/ or temporary staff
  - necessary qualification and experience of the staff
  - status of the staff – employment/ entrepreneurial/ in-kind contribution
- Management structure
  - members of the board, election rules
  - reporting and decision-making processes
- Membership rules – differentiation on the membership status, rights and obligations

The institutional setup of the Cooperation Platform will be further elaborated in the 5-year Business Plan.

### 9.3 Basic marketing and communication concept on how to promote the Platform, including the identification of the internet-based channels to be used

The marketing and communication concept of the Cooperation Platform is a crucial element of the preparation activities to operate a new organisation. Since the core activities of the Platform are mostly communication related, without a relevant and sound marketing plan, the Cooperation is not likely to reach the main goals.

It is important to explain the Cooperation Platform in an easily understandable way to potential new members and other key stakeholders in the region. It is of key importance to get as many stakeholders in the region to join the Cooperation Platform as possible. At the same time, it is important to address those potential members that are key actors within the interest field of the Cooperation Platform's agenda. Therefore, it is recommended to launch a video that shall explain the Cooperation Platform and will reflect the content of the e-platform (see chapter 9.1).

The video will bridge this mutual understanding of what the Cooperation Platform stands for and who is addressed by it. It will motivate new members to join and transport the key messages of the partnership. This will bring a best fit membership of the Cooperation Platform!

In particular the video shall consist of answers to the following questions:

- Why a Cooperation Platform?
- What is the main agenda of the Platform?
- Who stands behind the Cooperation Platform?
- Who is addressed by the Cooperation Platform?
- How can I join it?

As seen in the concept of the Business Canvas model in the next chapter, the main components of the Business Model should be consistent with the communication concept.

## 9.4 Business model for the Platform operation

The proposed concept for the 5-year Business Plan to be prepared based on the Platform Strategy is the methodology offered by the Business Canvas Model<sup>26</sup>.

The Novi Sad transnational workshop in November 2018 gave the opportunity to invite all relevant stakeholders to provide input for the Business Plan in the framework of a 2-hour interactive Business Canvas workshop.

Gathering recommendations from stakeholders along with the Business Canvas Model, the basis of the Business Plan could be well-established.

### **Business Canvas model**

The Business Model Canvas, developed by Alexander Osterwalder, is a visual representation of current or new business models, generally used by strategic managers. The Canvas provides a holistic view of the business as a whole. Although the Cooperation Platform will not typically operate in a private business environment, the approach for modelling the Platform operation can be adopted from the Canvas model.

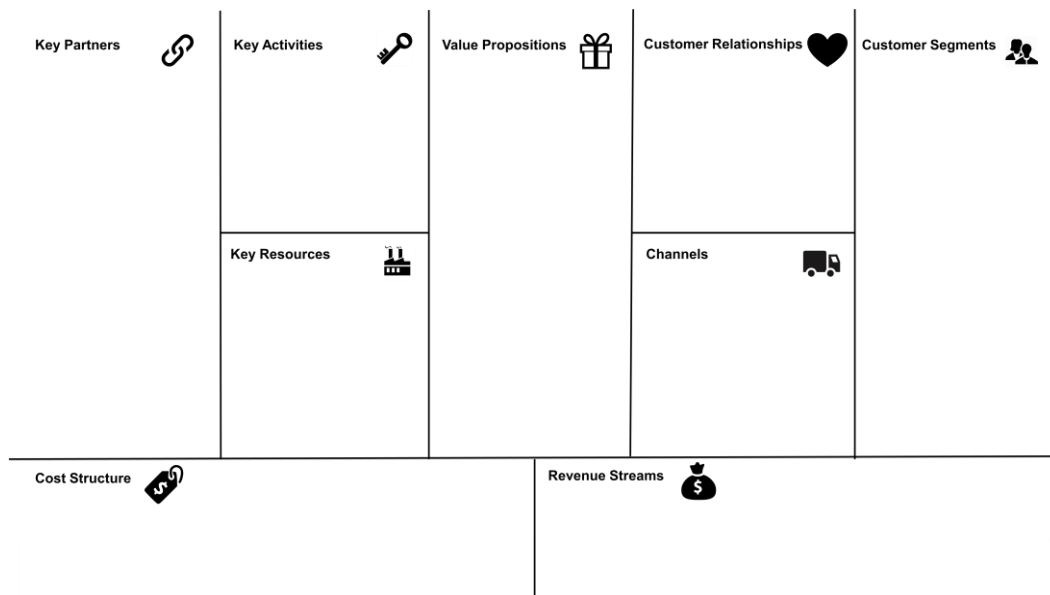
The Business Model Canvas gives people a common language through which they can evaluate traditional processes and bring innovation into their business models. The transnational workshop in Novi Sad brought the relevant people together to have a dialogue along with the business components of the Model.

The Business Model Canvas reflects systematically on the future business model, and maps each of its elements to the real business components.

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<sup>26</sup> <https://strategyzer.com/canvas/business-model-canvas>





47 Business Canvas Modell

The participants of the workshop brainstormed together based on the following questions:

**Key partners**

- Who are our key partners/suppliers?
- What are the motivations for the partnerships?

**Key activities**

- What key activities does our value proposition require?
- What activities are important the most in distribution channels, customer relationships, revenue stream...?

**Value proposition**

- What core value can we deliver to the customer?
- Which customer needs are we satisfying?

**Customer Relationships**

- What relationship that the target customer expects us to establish?
- How can we integrate that into the business in terms of cost and format?

**Customer segments**

- Which classes are we creating values for?
- Who is our most important customer?

**Key resources**

- What key resources does our value proposition require?
- What resources are important the most in distribution channels, customer relationships, revenue stream...?

**Channels**

- Through which channels that our customers want to be reached?

- Which channels work best? How much do they cost? How can they be integrated into our and our customers’ routines?

**Cost structure**

- What is the most cost in the future business?
- Which key resources/ activities are most expensive?

**Revenue streams**

- For what value are our customers willing to pay?
- What and how would they pay?
- How much does every revenue stream contribute to the overall revenues?

The above presented business components will form the structure of the 5-year Business Plan as well.

**9.5 Future steps for the development of the Platform**

Having approved the Platform Strategy, the following steps are ahead of the project partners towards the functional operation of the Cooperation Platform:

1. Official approval of the Platform strategy by each project partner – Novi Sad SCOM
  - a. decision on the organisational form of the Platform
2. Gathering inputs for the Business Plan from project partners (Business Canvas workshop), associated partners and other stakeholders – Novi Sad transnational workshop
  - a. interactive transnational workshop in line with the Business Canvas model
3. Elaboration of the 5-year Business Plan
4. Creating the IT platform of the Cooperation
  - a. creating content for the IT platform
5. Legal preparation and registration of the new organisational form
6. Official signature of the Cooperation Agreement
7. Institutional and technical setup of the Cooperation

FUTURE STEPS FOR THE PLATFORM	2018		2019									
	11.	12.	01.	02.	03.	04.	05.	06.	07.	08.	09.	10.
Approval of the Platform Strategy												
Inputs for Business Plan from stakeholders												
Elaboration of the 5-year Business Plan												
Creating the IT platform												
Creating content for the IT platform												
Legal preparation of Cooperation Platform												
Signature of the Cooperation Agreement												
Setup of the Platform												
Platform operation												

48 Future steps for the Platform

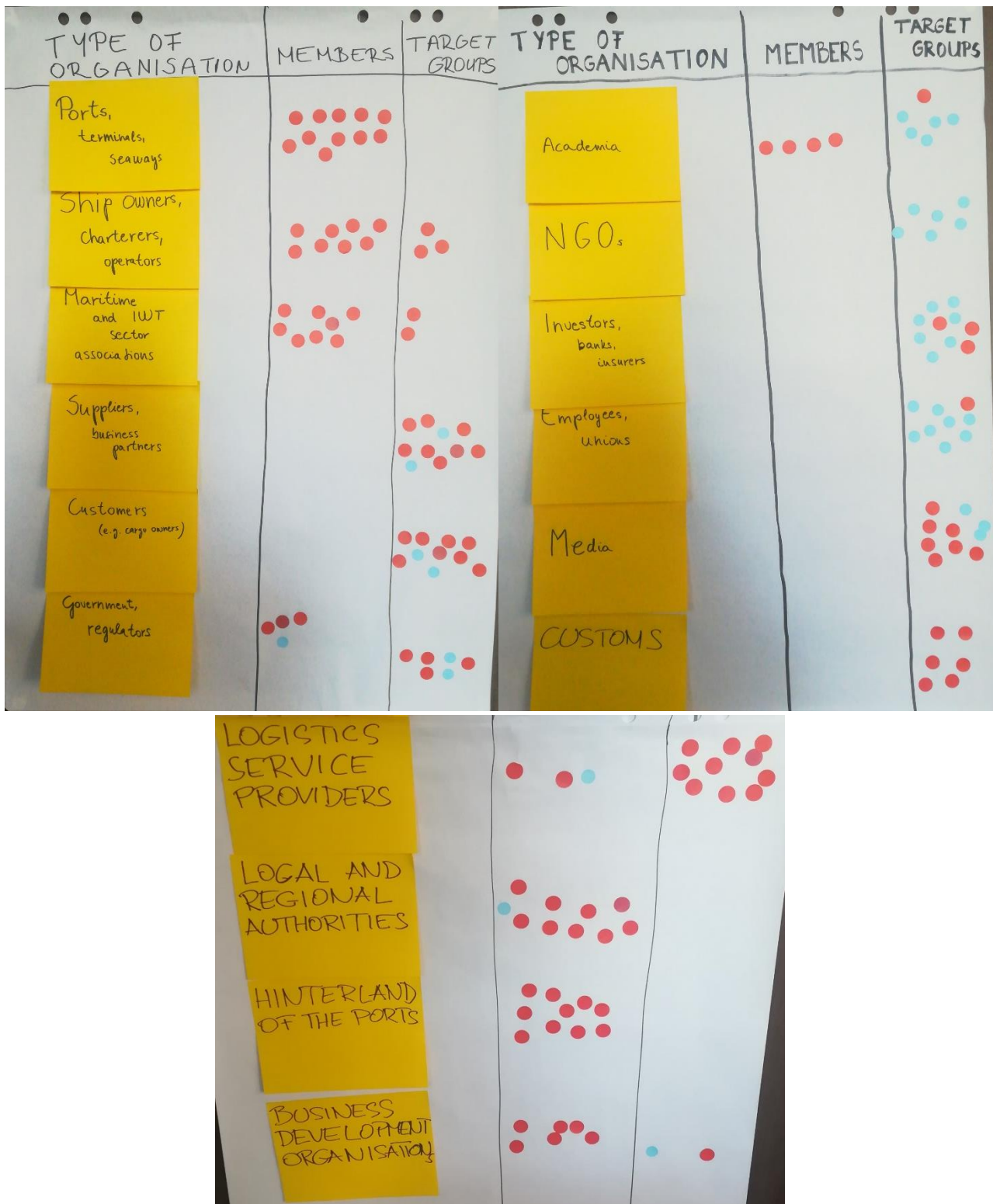


## 9.6 Recommendation on the functioning of the platform

It was very important that the partners considered all the aspect mentioned in the Chapter 8 while deciding on the organisational form in the Novi Sad partner meeting and the 5-year Business Plan will need to be developed accordingly.

They made a lot of key decisions in connection with the further operation of the Cooperation Platform. The first key topic was the potential **members and the target group**.

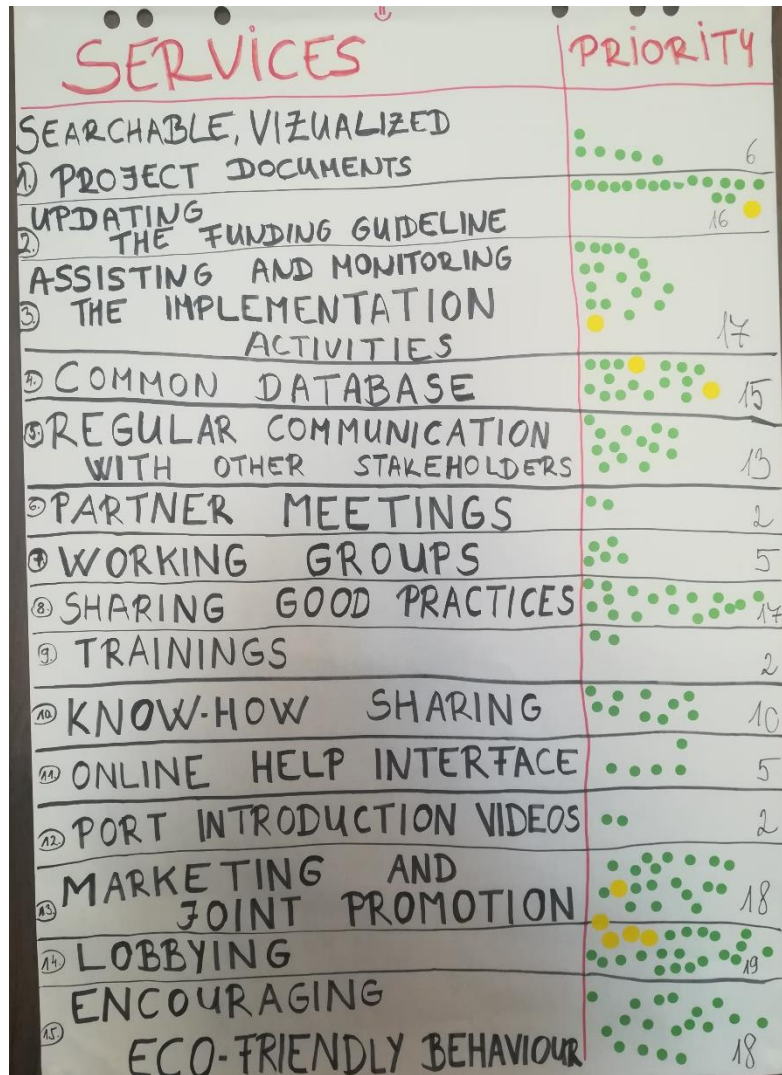
The possible organizations were listed in advance, and each participant indicated that they were considered as a member or only as a target group. They then decided that their participation was essential, (red dot) or just important, but not vital (blues dot). Each organization had one vote. The Figures below show the result of the voting.



49 Potential members and target groups

Based on the result, it can be stated that the most determinative are the ports, terminals, seaways, ship owners, charterers, local and regional authorities, hinterland of the ports, business development organisations and operators and maritime and IWT sector associations.

The second important topic was related to the optional **services**. A list of possible services was outlined on a flipchart board, and the participants prioritized their usefulness by using stickers. An important factor is that it could be also weighted (green dots). After that, the second task was to choose the most important one of all and put there a yellow dot. The Figure below shows the end result of this task.



50 List of potential services

The most preferred ones were after the first task:

- Updating the Funding Guideline;
- Assisting and monitoring the implementation activities;
- Common database;
- Sharing good practices;
- Marketing and joint promotion;
- Lobbying; and
- Encouraging eco-friendly behaviour.



Most yellow dots are located at lobbying which is followed by marketing and joint promotion, by updating the Funding Guideline, by assisting and monitoring the implementation activities and by common database service.

After analysing of the two lists, the sharing good practices and encouraging eco-friendly behaviour alone are not the same.

After this very interactive section, the participants were asked about the **legal form** of the future organisation. They voted by show of hands for the organizational form they found the most ideal, of the following: EGTC, EEIG and loose cooperation. Eight out of ten had chosen EGTC, while the other two votes fell to EEIG. The reason behind their choice later turned out clearly, they represent private companies, which cannot be a member of an EGTC. However, if they can overcome this barrier with an option, then they are also open to EGTC.

After that, LP and PP1 voluntarily took the lead in the future if they will establish an EGTC and another important decision was to have also an **online platform** to promote the offered services and market more efficiently the whole DBS Gateway region.

## 10 Annexes

### 10.1 Questionnaire

**INTRODUCTION**

In order to continue efforts after the completion of the DBS Gateway Region project, to ensure further action in the region and to increase awareness about the possibilities offered by the DBS Gateway Region, a Cooperation Platform will be established, which is part of WP6, led by the Freeport of Budapest Logistics (FBL), Hungary. This Cooperation, which ensures institutional sustainability, increases the cooperation between Danube and Black Sea ports, port's associations, public authorities, business agencies, universities, enterprises, freight forwarders and other strategic partners (such as the EUSDR PA 1a Coordinators, the Working Community of Danube Regions) who will establish close ties during the project implementation and beyond. This questionnaire helps and facilitates to incorporate the ideas of each PPs and ASPs for a more effective future cooperation.

QUESTIONNAIRE	
For DBS Gateway Region PPs and ASPs of the Cooperation Platform Strategy	
<b>Name of organisation:</b>	
<b>Acronym:</b>	
<b>Project partner code:</b>	
<b>Address:</b>	
<b>Contact person:</b>	
<b>Contact details:</b>	Telephone number: _____ E-mail address: _____
<b>What do you think is a cooperation platform?</b>	



<p><b>Which platform type would you prefer?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- non-formalized cooperation between the platform members (very loopy form of cooperation without any legally binding document, online solution etc.)</li> <li>- common internal communication interface (e.g. sharing data, documents and messaging between the platform members)</li> <li>- cooperation agreement between the platform members</li> <li>- common organization (legally established like in a form of a company or association or EGTC etc.) without permanent staff</li> <li>- common organization (legally established like in a form of a company or association or EGTC etc.) with permanent staff</li> <li>- common external communication interface (e.g. common webpage, online cloud)</li> <li>- other (please specify):</li> </ul>		
<p><b>Have you ever been part of a platform/similar cooperation or are you familiar with one?</b></p>	<p>Name of the platform</p>	<p>Platform information (website)</p>	<p>Which functions/services of the platform did you find useful?</p>
<p><b>What is your opinion who should be the members of the platform?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project Partners (PPs) and Associated Strategic Partners (ASPs) only</li> <li>- Other similar organizations</li> <li>- Organizations connected to inland waterway or maritime transport</li> <li>- Other (please specify):</li> </ul>		
<p><b>What is your opinion who should have right to access the platform and its services?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Project Partners (PPs) and Associated Strategic Partners (ASPs) only</li> <li>- Other similar organizations</li> <li>- Organizations connected to inland waterway or maritime transport</li> <li>- Other (please specify):</li> </ul>		



<b>Indicative list of the platform functions</b>		Do you find this function useful to be one of the services of the platform? (YES/NO)	Could you commit to the participation of the below listed services? (YES/NO)
	Presenting of the DBS Gateway Region project results, outputs (e.g. mid-term and long-term goals based on Joint Vision 2040)		
	Continuous monitoring of new funding opportunities (building on the Funding Guideline)		
	Provide assistance by the implementation of Roadmap measures for other platform members with the help of the relevant PP		
	Cargo consolidation		
	Lobbying		
	Searchable, visualized output and project documents (e.g. measures and funding guidelines in a displayable way) on the online platform		
	Monitoring the implementation of the Regional Action Plan measures		
	Organising partner meetings every year/half a year, etc.		
	Creating working groups/discussion boards in specific topics (to discuss the progress of measures/know-how transfer, etc.)		

	Well-structured common database of the platform members (e.g. description of port infrastructure, facilities, freight volumes, stakeholders)		
	Sharing good practices (e.g. in using state aid instruments, related to the implementation of measures)		
	Know-how sharing on port logistics through online trainings (training material provided by the platform members; obtaining certificates)		
	Know-how sharing on port logistics on regional online discussions		
	Online help interface (e.g. asking questions related to the DBS Gateway region)		
	Coordination of common marketing activities of the DBS Gateway Region		
	- Common marketing materials		
	- Common media appearance		
	- Common appearance on events		
	- Common sales activities		
Communication with other institutions and stakeholders			
Encouraging the eco-friendly behaviour (e.g. ecological footprint counter)			
Sharing introduction videos of the partner ports			
Other (please specify):			

Support to the implementation of measures	<i>See Annex I.</i>
Beside a new online platform, do you find useful to set up a new organisation to operate the Cooperation Platform or include an existing one?	
Please mark the appropriate line/lines if you have a vision of the organizational form	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- EGTC (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation)*</li> <li>- Established under the national law of a DBS Gateway Region member state               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>~ for profit organisation</li> <li>~ not for profit organisation</li> </ul> </li> </ul> <p>*The EGTC is an European legal instrument designed to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation. Unlike the structures which governed this kind of cooperation before 2007, the EGTC is a legal entity and as such, will enable regional and local authorities and other public bodies from different member states, to set up cooperation groupings with a legal personality. For example, an EGTC or EGTC members can be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Member States</li> <li>- Regional or local authorities</li> <li>- Associations</li> <li>- Any other public body</li> </ul>
Should the Cooperation Platform act only on „working level“, or should it have also an „decision level“ like a political board or something else?	
What political stakeholders of your country could be relevant to the platform?	

<p><b>How could we involve these stakeholders so that they support the achievement of the objectives of the platform?</b></p>	
<p><b>Which financing model of the platform can you imagine?</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- financed by a host organisation</li> <li>- annual membership fee</li> <li>- in-kind contribution of the members</li> <li>- own revenues from services provided by the platform</li> <li>- operation from tender sources</li> </ul>
<p><b>Other comments and suggestions regarding the operation of the platform</b></p>	
<p><b>Date: City, XX July 2018</b></p>	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>Thank you for the cooperation!</b></p>	

## 10.2 List of the RAP measures

		Name of measure	Could the platform support the implementation of the given measure? Mark with "X"!	How (e.g. working groups, joint lobbying, know-how transfer, etc.)?
<b>Austria/ Wien</b>	Measure 1	Strengthening cooperation between local and relevant stakeholders (port authorities and business) on urban planning development (setting up cooperation platforms, public consultations, etc.)		
	Measure 2	Developing a toolbox for supporting shippers and their logistic providers in their strategic and operational planning for increasing the share of multimodal transport (specific focus on IWW)		
	Measure 3	Joint development (by ports and potential partners) of a business model for the transshipment of Heavy Goods (e.g. wind power plants)		
	Measure 4	Further development of regional business funding with specific funding options for companies located at ports		
	Measure 5	Establish regional information and service agencies including a network of all these agencies in the DBS-region to support regional and local shippers and logistics Establishment of an exchange platform (online, regularly events) between ports, infrastructure providers (via donau, rail, road) and transport operators (rail, road) and logisticians in Austria set up a cooperation platform for relevant associations (clusters, NGO'S)		
	Measure 6	Include (all relevant aspects of) IWT transport solutions in all logistics education (from apprenticeship to university)		
	Measure 7	Set up of a Danube logistic qualification and education series for the management (especially for public operators of ports)		

	Measure 8	National funding for IWW operation (similar to funding of freight trains operation (CT and single load) - it has to be ensured that price for shippers is reduced due to funding for operators Funding of private sector for implementing and operating container services (similar funding as for CT-Trains)		
	Measure 9	Increase active information on IWT and ports to logistic sector by using existing information from via donau (see homepage) and an exchange of information between DBSGR-partners + Inform shippers that have a "green" CI and marketing strategy about ecological footprint of different transport options and the advantage of IWW		
	Measure 10	Provide a Best Practice Tool Box with successfully implemented Danube logistic solutions		
<b>Bulgaria/ Burgas</b>	Measure 1	Improvement of the road structure at the entry and exit points of port Burgas		
	Measure 2	Development of multimodal terminal Burgas		
	Measure 3	Construction of liquefied natural gas facilities in port Burgas		
	Measure 4	Feasibility study for the construction of facilities for generation of energy from sea waves and the transformation thereof into electricity		
<b>Bulgaria/ Sofia</b>	Measure 1	Developing the transport infrastructure through mechanisms of public-private partnership		
	Measure 2	Improvement of the infrastructure to ensure smooth and safe navigation on the Danube River by dredging and construction of hydrotechnical facilities		
	Measure 3	Modernization of railway line Vidin - Sofia by areas		
	Measure 4	Modernization of railway line Rousse – Dimitrovgrad		
	Measure 5	Construction of an intermodal terminal in North Central Planning Region in Bulgaria - Rousse		
	Measure 6	Project “PORT BULGARIA WEST – SAFE AND COMPETITIVE MULTIMODAL PORT”		
	Measure 7	Building Integrated Intermodal Informational System		



	Measure 8	Construction of systems along the two corridors passing through the territory of the Republic of Bulgaria (Rhine - Danube and Orient - Eastern Mediterranean) for management, optimization and automation of logistic processes and multimodal transport (Port Community System)		
	Measure 9	Creating and executing marketing strategy for ports in the Bulgarian part of Danube River		
<b>Bulgaria/ Varna</b>	Measure 1	Turning the Varna-Ruse railway into a two-way electrified, robotized railway connection		
	Measure 2	Rehabilitation and modernization of Ferryboat Complex - Varna		
	Measure 3	Construction of the "Black Sea" motorway, with priority in the section Varna - Burgas		
	Measure 4	Building a speed route Varna-Ruse, with a continuation – building a first-class road Shumen-Ruse		
	Measure 5	Support for the creation of a Black-Sea High-Tech Business Park		
	Measure 6	Finishing and modernisation of the R&D base for maritime scientific research		
	Measure 7	Design and construction of reception and purification of ballast and santinas waters facilities		
	Measure 8	Creating Black Sea networks to popularise joint initiatives for tourist and maritime sector development		
	Measure 9	Set up a cooperation platform for relevant associations		
	Measure 10	Development of the complex of Port Varna and the ports in the Lakes of Varna and Beloslav and turning it into a logistic and distribution connection center of Pan-European transport corridors VII, VIII, IX and TRASECA		
<b>Croatia/ Vukovar</b>	Measure 1	Increasing interoperability with neighbouring countries		
	Measure 2	Preparation of projects and planning documents in inland navigation		
	Measure 3	Development of the port of Vukovar (TEN-T basic network)		
	Measure 4	Encouraging companies in inland waterway transport		

	Measure 5	Increase administrative capacity / training		
	Measure 6	The introduction of systematic identification of traffic bottlenecks (infrastructure, administration, operational and legal issues, etc.) by the transport operator		
	Measure 7	Long-term agreements between port operators and port users		
<b>Hungary/ Budapest</b>	Measure 1	Harmonisation of the GBER articles		
	Measure 2	Port management studies		
	Measure 3	Preferential loan for SMEs in inland navigation		
	Measure 4	Improving the Hungarian Danube section, ensuring 2.5 m water depth		
	Measure 5	Intermodal development of the Hungarian ports' infrastructure		
	Measure 6	Upgrade the railway link between Budapest Freeport and the core network		
	Measure 7	Connecting road to TEN-T port in Paks		
	Measure 8	Budapest-Belgrade railroad		
	Measure 9	Integrated Port Information System (KIR)		
	Measure 10	Biomass based power plant concept in Danube ports		
<b>Romania/ Galati</b>	Measure 1	Expansion and modernization of Galati city ring road		
	Measure 2	Modernization of Galati-Buzau rail section		
	Measure 3	Modernization of road connection Galati-Buzau road; Galati-Slobozia road section		
	Measure 4	Improving Navigation Conditions on the Danube between Calarasi and Braila – works and FS		
	Measure 5	Dredging works on the Danube for fairway maintenance		
	Measure 6	Rehabilitation and maintenance / Procurement of equipment		
	Measure 7	Galati multimodal platform		
	Measure 8	Setting up business facilitators in ports (business incubators, business centres, one-stop-shop)		
	Measure 9	Implementation of Port Community Systems in DBS ports		
	Measure 10	Set up joint awareness and planning for accidental water pollution management		

	Measure 11	Enhance cooperation and innovation uptake on Danube ports by clustering relevant stakeholders		
	Measure 12	Set up technology information centres in DBS ports		
	Measure 13	Set up a centre for port labour training		
	Measure 14	Elaborate a toolkit for stimulative charging of the port infrastructure		
	Measure 15	Elaborate Smart Specialization strategies for Danube ports development		
	Measure 16	Development passenger and touristic services in maritime Danube ports		
	Measure 17	Implement LNG facilities in core TEN-T ports		
<b>Serbia/ Novi Sad</b>	Measure 1	Construction of storage - increase of the temporary storage capacity for bulk cargos		
	Measure 2	Transformation of the ports in Vojvodina to logistic centres – development of a container terminal at the Port of Novi Sad		
	Measure 3	Procurement of new transshipment equipment – development of handling capacities for containerization of bulk freight		
	Measure 4	Development and installation of facilities for frigo containers and storage for agro products in the Port of Novi Sad		
	Measure 5	Taxing external costs – introduction of incentives for development of IWT		
	Measure 6	Development and implementation of RIS TLS software for transport planning – IT networking of the Danube ports		
	Measure 7	Establishment of the One-stop-shop for investors – setting up Technical and Business Development Center		
	Measure 8	Development of stronger relationship between the Port of Novi Sad and logistic companies in their hinterland		
<b>Slovakia/ Bratislava</b>	Measure 1	Construction of engineering facilities in public port Bratislava		
	Measure 2	Intermodal terminal in the public port Bratislava		
	Measure 3	Modernization of public port of Komárno		



	Measure 4	Modernization of infrastructure in cargo port BA and completion of bollards in cargo port		
	Measure 5	Modernization and completion of the port quays and hard standings		
	Measure 6	Building up facilities for vessels in a public port of Bratislava		
	Measure 7	Security and protection of ports		
	Measure 8	Construction of the LNG Terminal in public port of Bratislava		

### 10.3 Agenda for the interviews

1. Short summary of the Platform work package, the desired results and the planned workflow of the process
2. *Question:* How much have you understood from the objectives of the Platform so far, what is your overall personal opinion about the Platform idea?
3. Short summary of the results of the questionnaire
4. *Further Questions:*
  - Have you had any experience with any similar Platform or cooperation initiative? If so, what were your experiences?
  - What added value of such a Platform can you imagine after the completion of DBS Gateway Region project?
    - What are your expectations towards the Platform?
    - What are your concerns?
  - What do you think about the ideal level of contribution/ intensity of cooperation of the DBS Gateway Region partners? (strong cooperation, more personal meetings throughout the year, just formal partnership, etc.)
    - What kind of organisation can you imagine operating the Platform?
    - Which country should lead/ host the organisation?
    - Could the members financially contribute to the operation of the Platform?
    - Do you know about any financing opportunity, which could financially support the Platform operation?
  - Based on the first results of the questionnaire, what do you think about the possible services?
  - Looking at the selected measures of your country and the others' - which ones do you find the most strategic? Which ones could the Platform cooperation support and in what way?
  - What stakeholders of your country could politically support the Platform? How could we involve them?

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