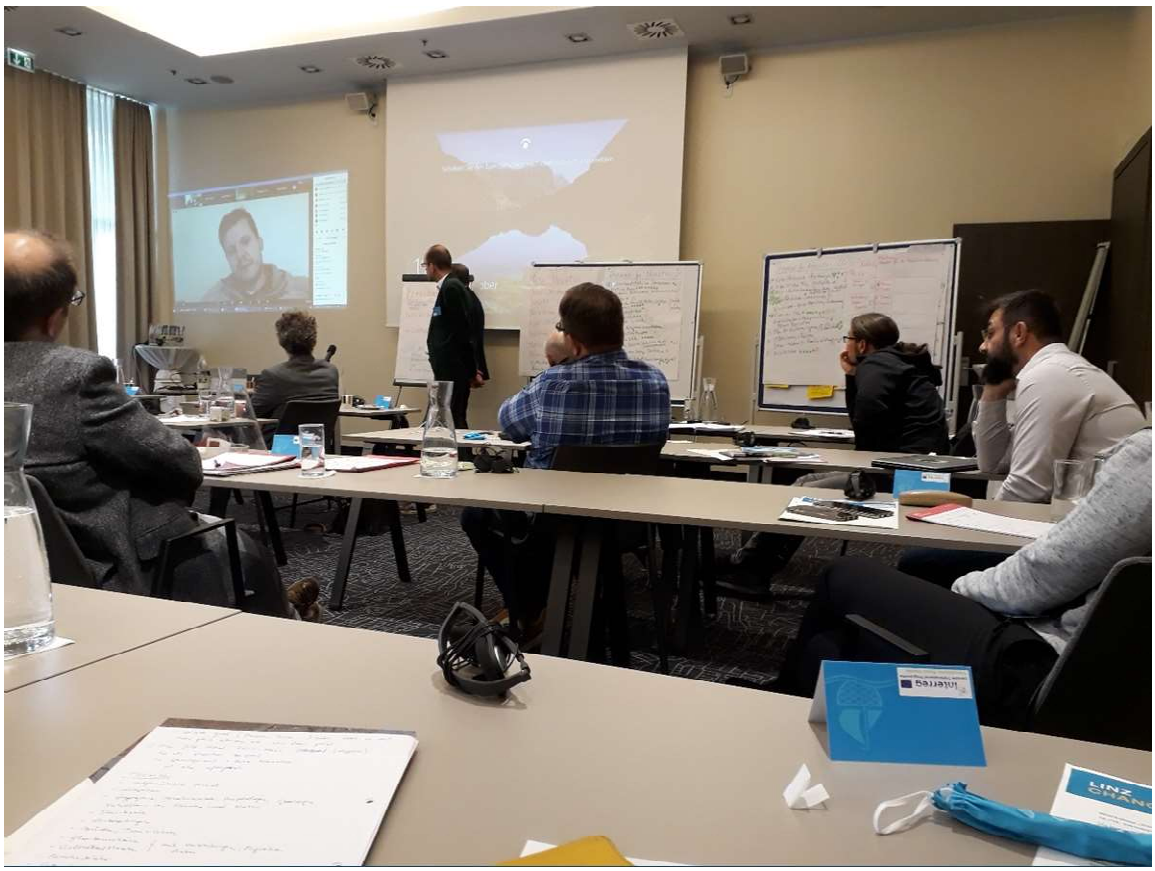
Project co-funded by the European Union Funds (ERDF, IPA)

Transdanube Travel Stories

Guideline for the development of Danube Stories



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1 Introduction: General remarks

The UN Environment programme stated that against all odds, COVID-19 can also be understood as a chance for transformation of tourism towards the Paris climate goals and more sustainability at both, social and ecological level.

Mass tourism only provides superficial experience for tourists (you check boxes, but you don´t really get in contact with local realities and experience the country). Over-tourism also affects local communities in a negative way in terms of reduced quality of daily life (crowds, waste, water usage, pollution). With the COVID-19 pandemic, this concept of tourism was highly challenged. Local residents are regaining appreciation of their own cultural and natural heritage. At the same time, they value tourists more now that the impact of no tourists has also become obvious (mitigate love-hate-relationship). Cycling tourism, camping, hiking are on the rise and are one of the only touristic areas that are thriving during COVID-19.

This is the time to reconsider touristic strategies and ask ourselves what kind of tourism we want? With our project "Transdanube Travel Stories", we are aiming to use sustainable tourism as a chance to

- deepen the tourists´ understanding for natural and cultural heritage and link it to local communities;
- include tourism more into local communities for them to benefit more (indicator no longer only number of visitors), implementation of overall strategy at destination level (=product club) who are more flexible to adapt to changes;
- include domestic (local and regional) tourism in the strategy (more resilience) and also increase local appreciation for their own cultural and natural heritage;
- include cycling, hiking, and other means of sustainable transport into all trails as a COVID-19 resilient means of transport and experience.

2 Definitions

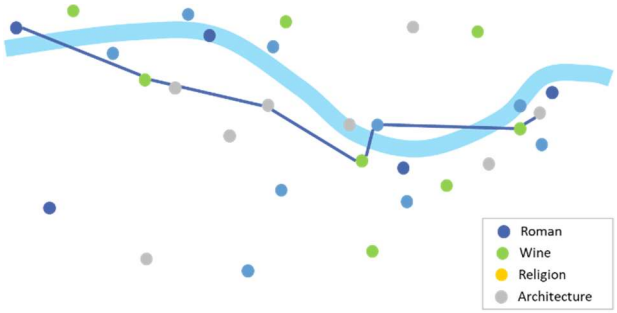
2.1 Definition of the Danube region

The Danube region can be defined in various ways. The Danube unites ten riparian states. Widening the definition, we can add another four countries with inflow rivers to the Danube. The Danube Transnational Programme includes all these 14 countries.

The project consists of partners from Germany, Austria, Hungary, Slovenia, Croatia, Romania and Serbia. They represent the cultural routes "Emperors and Kings – the Danube", "Saint Martin of Tours", "Jewish Heritage", Iter Vitis", "Art Nouveau" and "Roman Emperors and Danube Wine". Natural heritage is reflected by the DANUBEPARKS Network. The sustainable mobility management was already implemented in the Danube.Pearls Network.

2.2 Definition of destinations and trails

The project includes natural and cultural heritage routes certified by the Council of Europe. Select a set of heritage sites (points of interest) and arrange them in a particular order that together tell a specific story.



A destination is a village or town where a point of interest is located. Destinations shall be chosen that can be reached in a consecutive way and which therefore define a certain trail. We use the term *trail* in order to distinguish them from the existing cultural heritage routes.

Destinations can be combined from different cultural routes and thematic backgrounds (cluster of themes) according to the story.

A table of potential destinations is attached to this document.

2.3 Meta Narratives

Meta-narratives are horizontal values that are reflected in each story. They are abstract concepts that represent the **new Danube image** that we want to sell to visitors and that shall result in a collective Danube memory.

The main two **meta-narratives** were defined being

- *Diversity* (biodiversity, verity of landscapes, multi-ethnicity, mix of architecture styles, plurality of philosophy/ideology/religions reflected in literature/music/art, etc.) The Danube stands for Europe, in its diversity and as a way for travelling Europe.
- *Transition/Change* (change over time, all thematic topics seen from the perspective of history, development, and manifold influences, roots of where we are today, legacy of history found in today´s world)

The third and fourth meta-narrative is seen as **means of transporting this image** to the visitors (will be reflected in the experiences of the story):

- *Encounters* (personal encounters with local people as well as encountering historic personalities through the stories, also via myths and spirituality, the connection between Orient and Occident)
- *Slow travel /sustainable pace* (travelling sustainably at a slower pace, taking time to listen/to reflect/to feel)

3 The bigger picture: Branding

Many destination areas in Europe and around the world trigger some kind of image that we intuitively associate with this area. For the Danube region, this image shall reflect the meta-narratives and be created by the stories and their experiences.

Each story, as different as they might be in terms of theme, destinations, and plot shall follow the same kind of approach for a common branding and later promotion.

"Fairy tales are the oldest store of knowledge of mankind
and a huge mirror of their dreams, fears and tragedies."
Michael Kohlmeier

The LP of WP T1 now tried to bring the different suggestions of themes and storylines together into one system of strong Danube narratives. To this end he has come upon the image, the metaphor of a symphony:

Danube Symphonies

Scores as a basis for travel programs and the valorisation of the Danube.

Metaphor "Symphony"

A symphony is a multi-movement instrumental work designed to bring the entire orchestra together - a whole, a vast richness in which various details work together impressively. From the Greek: "Sounding together", "harmonious".

A symphony consists of different **tempos** - fast (Allegro), slow (Adagio, Andante), medium fast (Minuet, Scherzo).

A symphony consists of very powerful, loud parts where all instruments work together and quiet parts where only certain groups of instruments or even single instruments are used. These terms are used to subsume the themes of "smart", "sustainable", and the use and experience of different modes of transport for travel programs.

Different instrumental genres are involved in a symphony. This metaphor is also suitable for travel programs. It is about the traveller himself, about the means of transport, about food and drink, about cultural experiences, about insights, about guided tours, about the inhabitants who act as hosts, etc. All of this together forms the overall experience of a trip - like a symphony.

It is about fast and slow, about loud and quiet, about enthusiasm and inspiration or contemplation etc.

A symphony with all that, also reflects the Danube itself. It is small and quiet, it is strong and loud at another part.

The movements of a symphony should serve as the basis for the integration of the so-called meta-themes, which we have defined (see below):

In the meta-themes, terms like "change", "connect", "relax", "discover" should play a role.

Nicknames to symphonies

Symphonies have nicknames, themes, which are to be understood as a program:

- Ludwig van Beethoven, VI. Symphony "Pastorale" - Here natural events such as bird calls, a scene by the brook, storm and thunderstorm are included.
- Ludwig van Beethoven, IX. Symphony - here the poem "To Joy" by Friedrich Schiller as a model
- Anton Bruckner, IV Symphony "The Romantic"
- Gustav Mahler, “the tragedy” or “symphony of a thousand”.

We should find appropriate nicknames and themes for the respective narratives. Jörg Zinker has already suggested the respective colour.

Connecting the outcome of the first workshop and the various feedback of different experts and partners, the following structure and further steps were elaborated:

Transdanube Travel Stories - Narrative

Topic	**Discover Europe on the Danube - politics - connection Orient-Occident and connected Culture**	**Nature and mankind - the Danube between wilderness and taming**	**From prehistory to the Romans**	**Art, culture and architecture - experience formative epochs and their creators - wealth, pomp, landmarks**	**Trade routes, connections and human encounters, folk culture, love and joy of life**	**Religion, spirituality, gods and saints in the Danube region**
Coordinator First Coordinators-Meeting 25.1.2021	Marton Mehes	Eszter Buchert	Guido Pinkau	Dr. Roland Kastler/Mag. Andreas Rathberger-Reiter,	Jörg Zenker	Kurt Farasin
Experts participating (Partners still working on experts-acquisition 13.1.2021)	See sperate list	See sperate list	See sperate list	See sperate list	See sperate list	See sperate list
Partners of the project, who provide input	Danube Competence Center, Via Sancti Martini, Jewish	DANUBEPARKS, WGD	Danube Competence Center, WGD, Route of Emperors&Kings	Route of Emperors&Kings, WGD, Danube Competence Center, Via Sancti Martini, Jewish	Danube Competence Center, WGD (Nina Druckenthaner, Petra Riffert)	Via Sancti Martini, Jewish Heritage

	Heritage, Route of Emperors&Kings			Heritage, Art Nouveau Route		
Colours for the Trail-branding according to the proposal by Jörg Zenker	White	Green	Black	Golden	Red	Purple
POI's Examples	European Capitals of Culture on the Danube, Visegrad, sites of historical battles (Mohacs, Blackbird Field, others)	Upper Danube (3): Donau Auen National Park, The Narrow Valley of the Danube in the Passau district, Special Protected Area Dunajské luhy Middle Danube (3): Fertő-Hanság National Park, Kopački rit Nature Park, Gornje Podunavlje Nature Reserve Lower Danube (2): Persina Nature Park, Danube Delta	Carnuntum, Lebinski Vir, Ulm (cave paintings), Venus of Willendorf, Village Krapje in Nature Park Lonjsko polje (traditional wooden architectu re), Europska Avenija street in Osijek (Art Nouveau architecture), Tikveš Castle in Nature Park Kopački rit (Presentation and Education Center Tikveš)		Bridges (Stone Bridge Regensburg, destroyed bridges like in Novi Sad, Nibelungen Bridge Linz, Limes,	Rusenski lom Nature Park (Rockhewn Churches of Ivanovo)

Other EU projects to be integrated	DanUrb, Danube Pearls, CultPlatForm21,	Danube Pearls, DANUBEparksCONNECTED, Amazon of Europe Bike Trail, Danube Guides Action	Danube Pearls, Living Danube Limes	Danube Pearls, CultPlatForm21,	Danube Pearls, Danube-Guides.net	Danube Pearls, CultPlatForm21,
Course of the trail (to discussed in the coordinators-meeting) ideal would be 500 km for each topic, to be travelable	Regensburg – Belgrad	Hungary – Delta	Ulm – Belgrad	Regensburg-Belgrad	Ulm – Belgrad	Passau - Romania
Trail-Names („Nicknames“ in the sense of Symphonies)						

4 Expected output by experts

Expected output = **6 stories** defining 6 trails in the Danube region.

- A story is a 5-10 pages long document that tells the topic it was created about in a holistic way. Connected to the story are the destinations, like in a Mosaic, which let the traveller experience this story. (attached at the end of the story)
- Each trail follows a different story.
- All stories follow the same approach, standard, script and branding.
- To each stories the destinations out of the destination-pool (defined by the partners) that reflect the story shall be attached.
- Each story/trail can be travelled along by sustainable means of transport. All included destinations and sites have to be accessible! Potentially, sustainable transport can be part of the story: train ride in an old Art Nouveau train carriage, pilgrimage by walking, cycling for experiencing nature, bus ride to encounter local people, ship to experience ancient-day travelling etc.
- Each story reflects at least some of the defined meta-narratives. (see 2.3)
- Each working group defines the outline of their story and the covered trail course.
    - Answer to the question why someone should go on this journey.
    - Define the message the guests should take home from their journey.
    - Take care of integration of the meta topics.
    - Define the storyline and design the plot (keep potential experiences in the back of your mind).
    - Maybe already find a catching name for the story (suggestion for a branding-colour already exists).
    - Each working group selects relevant destinations for their story and puts the selected destinations into a specific order … Define the trail along the storyline (The coordinator has to pay attention, that all POI's given by the partners are included in the trail).
- Elaboration of the story
    - Combining different aspects of the story (from the clusters of themes)
    - Research and collection of relevant input
    - Design of the story line
    - The story does not have to be an academic work, the facts should have a true contentbase, but it is important to look at the topic on a meta level and to find out the top highlights to be covered.... Example: The romans have left some effect on todays life – bathing culture, culinary, culture, trade, etc. for each of these different aspects one point of interest or destination can be named as a top-worth-to-see-destination.
    - The top visiting-points should also be really travelable (regarding distance, itinerary, etc.)

The defined 6 trail-topics each have one defined **coordinator** – who is managing the working-group for the topic (arranging meetings, coordination of working-steps and researches), The coordinators will be briefed by the WP1 Leader in the very beginning in an online-meeting.

The **experts** (around 5 experts per group) are invited for at least 2 meetings with each coordinator to think of the trail course and the story to be written afterwards.

Experts provide their ideas and knowledge on the topic they are working on. Interesting details on destinations named to be in the trail or ideas on the storyline, etc.

The group is coming across one person being the **writer** of the story. He/She puts together the elaborated story on the trail that can be exploited further in the project. (see definition below).

The defined trail is the basis for the so called **STOMP**s (**Sustainable Tourism Mobility Plan**) It is therefore very important to provide the ready trail to the project partners being responsible to elaborate a STOMP for each trail. (please find the **timetable** in the end of this document)

Coordinators, Experts and Writers are served with the **Danube Considerations-Document** from Georg Steiner, giving an overview of 16 Danube-books and the different picture on the Danube.

4.1 Guideline of a Story

In every story that will be developed, these four meta-narratives should be represented. The destinations (chosen from the pool of destinations defined above) included derive from the story.

Each **story** shall meet the following **standard**:

- *Catching* (Why should someone choose the trail for a trip along the Danube. Define a message every visitor should be able to bring home remember from the trip along the Danube).
- *Simple* (start from people´s knowledge and perception of the Danube, what has to be corrected/extended? Evolve from there an easy to grasp topic and a clear storyline)
- *Unexpected* (start with a common schema or myth, go on a treasure hunt, trigger curiosity, following a dramaturgy of climax and unexpected twist/revelation/new perspective, open the visitor´s mind for new aspects)
- *Concrete* (translate the abstract concept of the meta-narrative into concreate, tangible material = heritage sites etc., set abstract conditions into understandable proportions and relationships, get a feeling for pace of the Danube/for dimensions/for time)

- *Locatable* (story materialising in space = concrete events at concrete destinations evolving the story along the geography of the trail, overlapping events at destinations throughout history)
- *Experienceable* (how can we translate the story into experiences along the trail and within destinations?)
- *Credible* (distinguish between "story" as a "myth" and "story" as "history", oppose fake news)
- *Emotional* (attach people to the story, situations/problems/needs/ longings that are inherent in every human´s psyche, experience with all senses)
- *Personal* (develop the story along people´s lives, fates, fortunes etc., from former ways of living to today´s lifestyle)

The **story** shall evolve along the trail and reflect in each destination. Therefore, the story shall include the following **script**:

- *Main storyline* for the whole itinerary
- *Specific parts* of the story in selected destinations (not everything everywhere, but clear emphasis of what you can see and experience at the specific destination, but always reflecting the main storyline) that work like puzzle pieces that link to the main storyline
- Ideas for *experiences*
- *Modular composition* (in case of too long itineraries for general travellers´ vacation span, split the story into modules that can be woven together in consecutive trips)

5 Interlinks of the Danube stories to the project

The results of this exercise will be stories and trails:

- For each story, experiences will be created for the visitors to get a deeper understanding of the story.
- For each trail, a Sustainable Tourism Mobility Plan will be elaborated that guide the visitors on their itinerary using sustainable means of transport.

5.1 Definition of Sustainable Tourism Mobility Plans (STOMP)

Building upon the 6 stories, for each of the 6 resultant trails a Sustainable Tourism Mobility Plan (STOMP) will be elaborated by the project partners. Once the approximate outline of the story is set and the destinations are chosen, the trail appears and will be assessed according to its accessibility by sustainable means of transport.

The responsible partners are:

- Tourism Board Linz (LT)
- West Pannon Regional and Economic Development (WP)
- Institute for Culture, Tourism and Sport Murska Sobota (IC)

- Croatian Association for Tourism and Rural Development „The Village Membership Club" (CA)
- Association for promoting tourism in Oradea and its region (OR)
- DANUBEPARKS Network (DP)

This means that each trail needs will be linked to one of these partners:

- Each STOMP partner will be assigned to one trail.
- This trail will have to lead through this particular partner's territory.

5.2 Definition of Experiences

The project partners elaborate tools that help to translate the stories into concrete experiences (such as cooking classes for Roman recipes, a pub where a famous person had a beer, etc.) and bridge the natural/cultural heritage and people´s modern life (as stated in the Faro Convention). The tools are meant to make invisible things visible, to make people feel a specific part of a story.

The project partners plan to develop the following experiences:

- Digital tool providing geo-located information and experience background to pilgrims/walks (WP)
- Self-guided application for Jewish heritage sites in Slovenia (IC)
- Tool for a section of Iter Vitis route (CA)
- Augmented reality tool for the central square in Oradea (OR)
- Tool for a section of the DANUBEPARKS network (DP)
- Virtual guided tour through mosaics covering Roman Emperor and Danube Wine Route (IC and Danube Competence Center)

6 Time Plan (Next Steps)

Activity	Responsitility	Deadline
Step 1: Preparation phase Building upon the 1st WS in Linz, this guideline was elaborated and subject to discussion: • Input from partners and/or experts for branding ideas • Input from partners of destinations that shall be included in the stories (destination map)	Project Partners (PP)	December 2, 2020
Step 2: Clarification of approach Online Workshop with project partners • Discussion and final definition of branding approach • Formation of 6 working groups for 6 stories	Project Partners	December 9, 2020

• Assignment of each partner who is responsible for the elaboration of a STOMP to one particular trail (part of the working group)		
Step 3: Establishment of working groups Online Coordination meeting hosted by Georg Steiner • Briefing of the coordinators of the 6 groups • Understanding of concrete scope of work (along this guideline)	WP T1 Leader	Date to be agreed, right after December 9, 2020
Step 4: Finalize Destination-List Provision of a LIST with necessary Destination/POIs-to be covered in the different Trails to the working Groups.	Project Partners /WP T1 Leader	Until 4.1.2021

Step 5: Definition of trails
Collaborative work within each working group (directed by the coordinators) - see 4./page 10
• Each working group defines the outline of their story and the covered trail course.
  • Answer to the question why someone should go on this journey.
  • Define the message the guests should take home from their journey.
  • Take care of integration of the meta topics.
  • Define the storyline and design the plot (keep potential experiences in the back of your mind).
  • Maybe already find a catching name for the story (suggestion for a branding-colour already exists).
  • Each working group selects relevant destinations for their story and puts the selected destinations into a specific order … Define the trail along the storyline (The coordinator has to pay attention, that all POI's given by the partners are included in the trail).
	Experts with queries to the project partners if necessary under the lead of the Coordinator	End of January 2021
		(→ start for PPs to work on the STOMPs)

Step 6: Elaboration of the story Collaborative work within each working group (see. 4./p.10) • Combining different aspects of the story (from the clusters of themes)	Coordinators with Experts (and writers)	**Beginning** of February 2021

• Research and collection of relevant input • Design of the story line		
Step 7: Presentation of first draft of stories 2nd Workshop on Danube Narratives in Linz (alternatively online, depending on COVID-19 regulation) • Presentation of 6 stories • Discussion of implementation strategies and related experiences	Experts (PP in discussion)	Mid-March 2021 (→ start for PPs to work with Product Clubs)
Step 8: Online Webinar on experiences: What is a good experience in the sense of the project quality idea. The local product clubs and project partners will be served with knowledge on experiences in an online-webinar.	Participants: Project Partners as coordinators of the product clubs, maybe key-product club members	February 2021
Step 9: The local product clubs start working on experiences according to the provided stories. (Ideas what experiences will be developed would be ready by Aug. 2021)	Project Partners as coordinators of the product clubs	Mid-March – to August 2021
Step 10: Finalisation of stories • Incorporation of input from the workshop • Compilation and writing of the Danube stories	Writer	End of April 2021