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Danube DNA

A 2.1

Cross-border knowledge transfer between Danube DNA molecules (Digital Transformation Centers) and their capacity building to become “one-stop-shop” for SMEs digitalization

D.2.1.1

Danube DNA one-stop shop creation

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List of abbreviations

PP(s)	- Project Partner(s)
SMEs	- Small and Medium Enterprises
SO	- Specific Objective
DTC	- Digital Transformation Center
PTP	- Pomurje Technology Park
CEM	- Chamber of Economy of Montenegro
VŠTE	- Vysoká škola technická a ekonomická
STP MNE	- Science and Technology Park Montenegro
SERDA	- Sarajevo Economic Region Development Agency

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Summary

This document is the Danube DNA report on capacity building of the Danube DNA molecules aimed to become “one-stop shop” for SMEs digitalization in the Danube Region. As such, it could serve as a set of guidelines for establishing adequate procedures to create a common foundation for mutual knowledge exchange and transfer among the project partners (referred to as molecules) and the national SMEs. This deliverable is linked to Activity 2.1 and encompasses the following objectives: (i) screening existing services offered by project partners; (ii) strengthening the connections among “molecules” of the Danube DNA essential for the digital transformation of SMEs in Danube Region; and (iii) establishing common knowledge transfer channels between the molecules to enhance their capabilities and foster skills development, and ultimately deliver seamless “one-stop shop” digitalization services.

1. Introduction

1.1. Document background

This document outlines the strategy for enhancing the capacity and skills of the Danube DNA molecules, which marks the initial phase of SO2: Digital transformation capacity building and joint solution development. This specific objective (SO) focuses on establishing "one-stop shop" digital transformation centers for SMEs through cross-border knowledge transfer between Danube DNA molecules. The "one-stop shop" centers will support stakeholders by fostering skills development for the synchronized implementation of smart specialization strategies and facilitating the transformation of SMEs towards Industry 4.0 along the Danube Region. This will be achieved through specially created knowledge transfer and capacity building training modules. To achieve this, the first step for the molecules is to increase their abilities, capabilities and capacities through efficient knowledge sharing and transfer. This process will include lessons learned and knowledge accumulated vial mutual visits and online workshops between molecules. These visits is carefully planned and coordinated to ensure they focus on accumulating knowledge and building a solid foundation for the second phase of SO2 – Knowledge transfer between Danube DNA molecules (Digital Transformation Centers) and national SMEs. This activity is fully aligned with deliverables D.1.3.1 (Gap analysis and technology solutions inventory) and D.1.3.2 (Transnational Guidelines for the smart specialization of the Danube Region).

1.2. Objectives of the Activity 2.1 and Deliverable 2.1.1

The molecules of the Danube DNA, also referred to as Digital Transformation Centers (DTC), participating in the project have a different industry focus, experiences, capacity and technical/technological infrastructures. To align these differences and enable them to provide comprehensive synchronized skills development and knowledge transfer to SMEs, it is essential to facilitate mutual exchange of knowledge, skills, and experiences. By learning from one another and building their capacity through collaboration, the DTCs will collectively form comprehensive "one-stop shops" for SMEs' digitalization across the entire Danube region.

Through this activity, each "one-stop shop" will increase its capacity, equipping it to effectively carry out the next activity – knowledge transfer to the national SMEs. As part of Activity 2.1, mutual visits among DTCs, digital events, and hybrid events with PPs will be conducted, focusing on fostering knowledge exchange and capacity building. ***The primary objective of Activity 2.1 is to facilitate comprehensive knowledge sharing and increase the capacity of every "molecule" (PP)***.

The outcomes of Activity 2.1 are detailed in deliverable D2.1.1, ***which is aimed at:***

- ***assess existing services offered by project partners;***
- ***strengthen the connections among the "molecules" of the Danube DNA essential for the digital transformation of SMEs in Danube Region; and***
- ***establish common knowledge transfer channels between the molecules to enhance their capabilities and foster skills development, and ultimately deliver seamless "one-stop shop" digitalization services***.

2. Collaborative online events: partner presentations

The first part in this activity consisted of a ***series of collaborative online meetings***, during which each partner presented themselves, the services they offer, and the relevant resources they bring to the Danube DNA project. This series of presentations, each lasting approximately 45 minutes, focused on mutual introduction and capacity building, offering numerous opportunities for participants to gain valuable insights and lessons.

2.1. Timeline and overview of online events

A total of six online events was held between June to October 2024. During each meeting, two or three partners presented their work. The online events were conducted according to the agreed schedule provided in Table 2.1. All these presentations were recorded and stored in Trello, where they are available to all partners.

Table 2.1: Schedule of collaborative online events

Term:	***Partners who presented themselves:***
June 11, 2024	PP1 (FTN, Serbia), PP12 (CEM, Montenegro)
June 18, 2024	PP10 (CAMPUS 02, Austria), PP7 (PTP, Slovenia)
August 20, 2024	PP9 (TUM, Germany), PP8 (SOVA, Slovakia)
August 28, 2024	PP5 (VSTE, Czechia), PP4 (TERA, Croatia)
September 3, 2024	PP6 (STRIA, Hungary), PP11 (SERDA, Bosnia & Herzegovina), PP2 (ITCLD, Romania)
October 9, 2024	PP3 (ICT CLUSTER, Bulgaria)

2.1.1. Details on 1st collaborative online event

During the first collaborative online event, organized on June 11, 2024, two PPs had the opportunity to present themselves. The partners from Serbia (PP1) and Montenegro (PP12) introduced the key characteristics of their base institutions, highlighting their organizational structure, core competencies, and areas of expertise. They provided an overview of their personnel's skills and qualifications, emphasizing their technical and technological resources that support their work in digitalization initiatives. This included a description of the tools, technologies, and infrastructure available at their institutions, which are instrumental in driving digital transformation projects. Additionally, both partners shared insights into their prior experiences and accomplishments in the field of digitalization, demonstrating their capacity to contribute effectively to the goals of the DNA project. Their presentations also showcased their commitment to cross-border collaboration and knowledge sharing, setting the tone for the series of online events aimed at fostering mutual understanding and capacity building among PP.

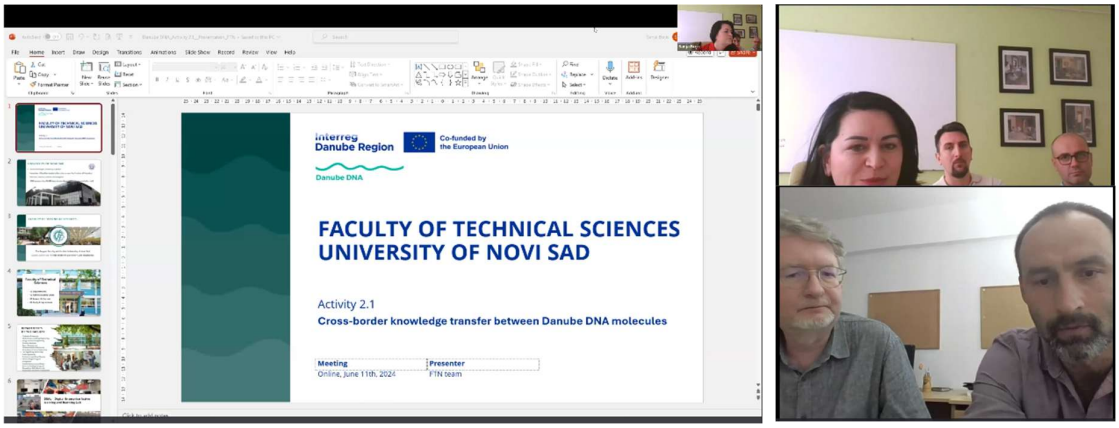

Figure 2.1: Participants on the 1st collaborative online event: June 11, 2024

2.1.2. Details on 2nd collaborative online event

During the second collaborative online event, organized on June 18, 2024, another two PPs presented their institutions. The partners from Austria (PP10), and Slovenia (PP7) highlighted their organizational structures, core expertise, and available technical resources that support digital transformation initiatives. Both partners also shared their prior experiences and achievements in digitalization, showcasing their ability to contribute effectively to the objectives of the DNA project.

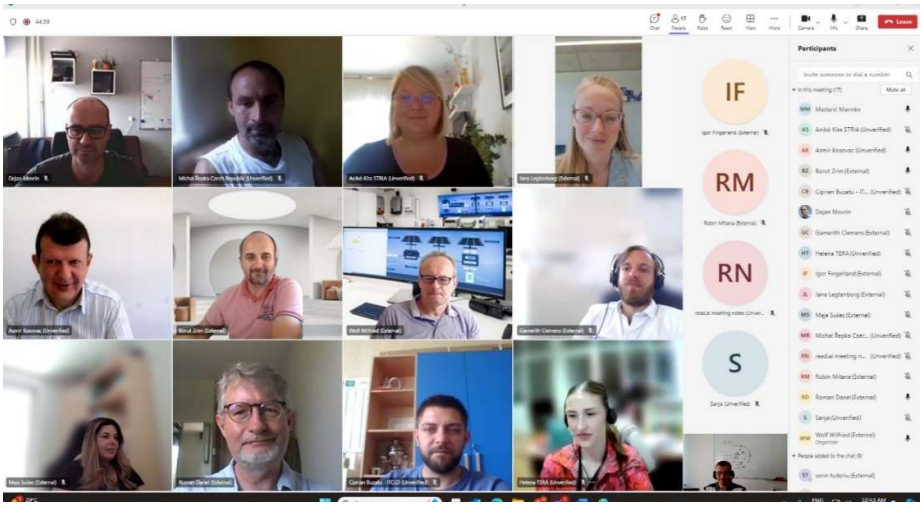

Figure 2.2: Participants on the 2nd collaborative online event: June 18, 2024

2.1.3. Details on 3rd collaborative online event

During the third collaborative online event, held on August 20, 2024, partners from Germany (PP9), and Slovakia (PP8) presented their institutions. They also highlighted their organizational structures, core expertise, and available technical resources that support digital transformation initiatives. Both partners also shared their prior experiences and achievements in digitalization, showcasing their ability to contribute effectively to the objectives of the DNA project.

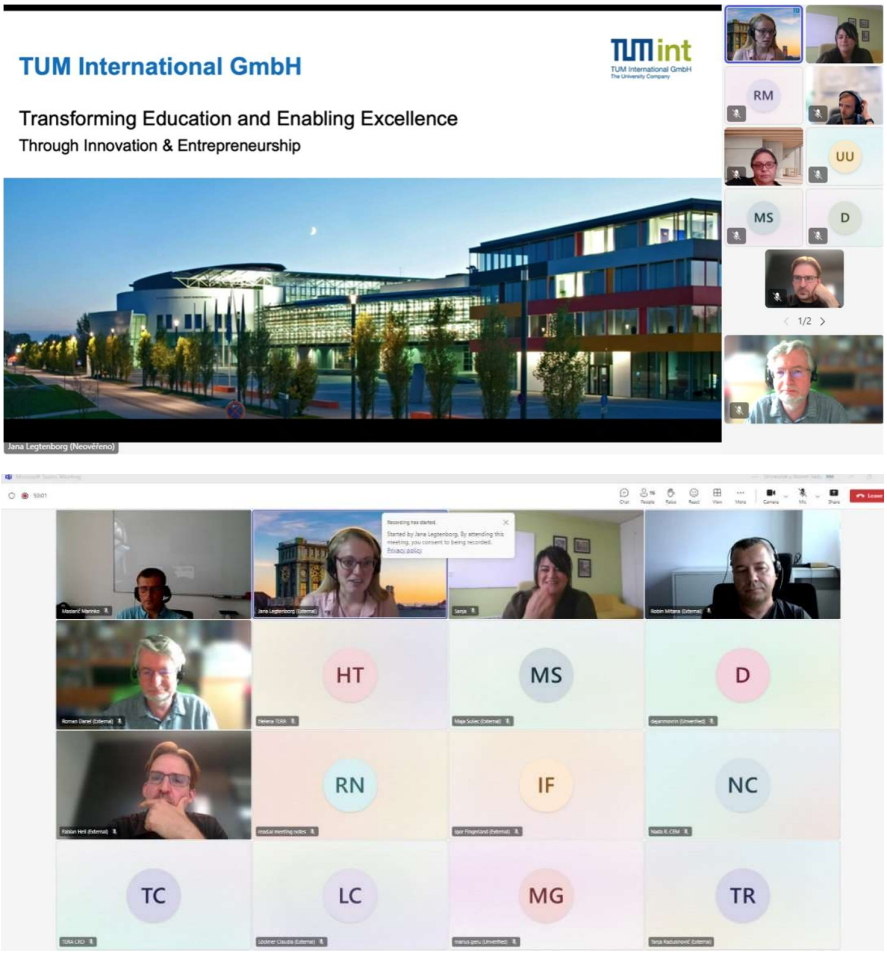

Figure 2.3: Participants on 3rd collaborative online event: August 20, 2024.

2.1.4. Details on 4th collaborative online event

During the fourth collaborative online event, held on August 27, 2024, partners from Czech Republic (PP5), and Croatia (PP4) presented themselves. According to established

procedure, they first introduced their organizational structures and core expertise, after which they presented their available technical resources that support digital transformation initiatives. Both partners also shared their prior experiences and achievements in digitalization, showcasing their ability to contribute effectively to the objectives of the DNA project.

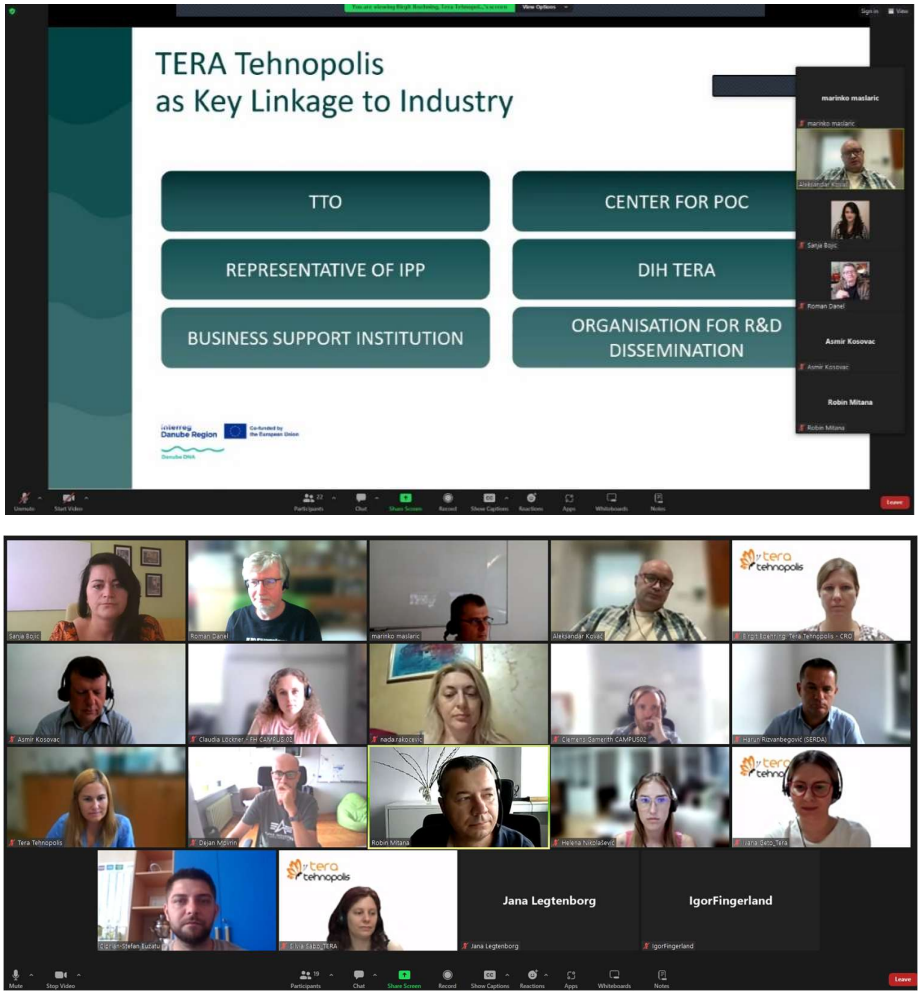

Figure 2.4: Participants on the 4th collaborative online event: August 27, 2024.

2.1.5. Details on 5th collaborative online event

During the fifth collaborative online event, organized on September 3, 2024, the PPs from three institutions were presented themselves: PP6 from Hungary, PP11 from Bosnia & Herzegovina, and PP2 from Romania. Following the established procedure, they began by outlining their organizational structures and core areas of expertise. They then highlighted the

technical resources at their disposal that facilitate digital transformation initiatives. Additionally, all three partners shared their previous experiences and accomplishments in digitalization, demonstrating their capability to contribute effectively to the goals of the project.

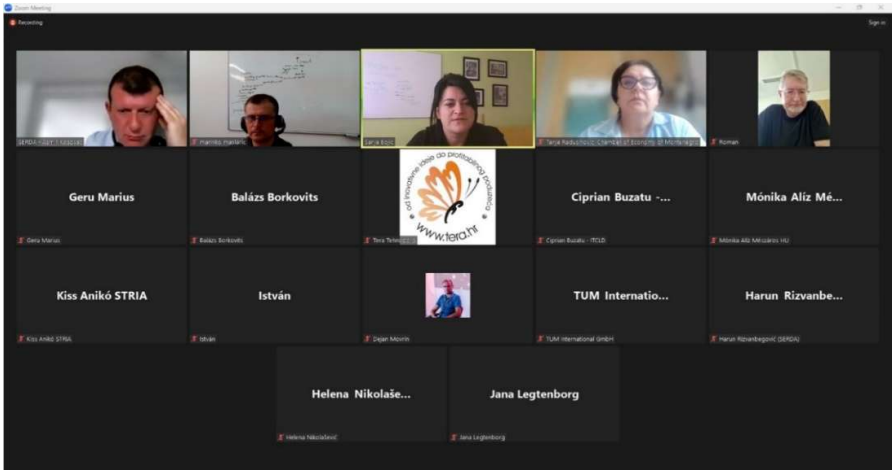

Figure 2.5: Participants on the 5th collaborative online event: September 3, 2024.

2.1.6. Details on 6th collaborative online event

The final collaborative online event was held on October 9, 2024. At this online event, PP3 from Bulgaria introduced their organizational structures and core areas expertise, after which they showcased their available technical resources that support digital transformation initiatives. This partner also shared their prior experiences and achievements in digitalization, highlighting their capacity to contribute effectively to the project's objectives.

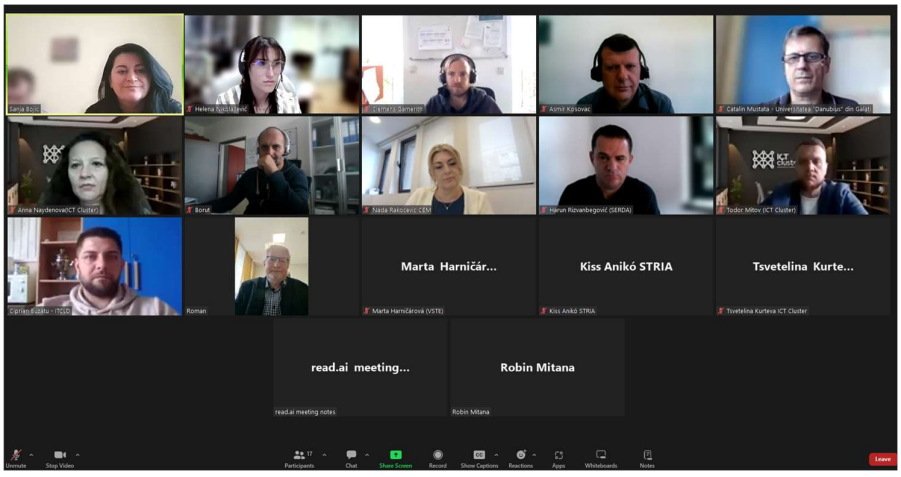

Figure 2.6: Participants on the 6th collaborative online event: October 9, 2024.

2.2. Lesson learned

The contribution of the aforementioned online meetings to the **improvement of project partners' capacities** and their **development into one-stop shop providers** is outlined below:

- *Understanding partner strengths and expertise*: by presenting themselves to other PPs, participants can gain a clear understanding of each partner's strengths, areas of expertise, and available resources. This knowledge fosters collaboration by helping partners identify complementary skills and avoid duplication of efforts.
- *Best practices in digital transformation*: PPs may share their successful strategies, methodologies, and tools used in their respective fields or industries. Learning these best practices can inspire innovation and guide partners in applying similar approaches in their own contexts.
- *Cross-cultural collaboration*: in a cross-border project, online events provide a unique opportunity to understand cultural differences and similarities among partners. Participants learn how to adapt to various working styles, communication preferences, and problem-solving approaches, improving the project's overall cohesion.
- *Identifying common challenges*: by sharing experiences, PPs can identify common challenges faced during digital transformation initiatives, such as skill gaps, technology adoption barriers, or resource limitations. Recognizing these shared obstacles allows for joint problem-solving and the development of unified (joint) solutions.
- *Networking and relationship building*: mutual introduction events lay the groundwork for stronger professional relationships between PPs. Building trust and rapport through these interactions can lead to more effective collaborations and long-term partnerships beyond the project's scope.
- *Flexibility in digital collaboration*: conducting events online showcases the potential of digital tools and platforms for collaboration. PPs may learn how to better leverage these tools, improving their ability to work together remotely and manage distributed teams.
- *Insights into regional needs*: through presentations and discussions, PPs can better understand the specific needs and priorities of SMEs in different regions of the Danube area. This knowledge is critical for tailoring digital transformation strategies to address local challenges effectively.
- *Setting the stage for next project activities and goals*: all these events help PPs align their goals and expectations for subsequent project phases, such as knowledge transfer to SMEs. Lessons learned can inform the design of future activities, ensuring they are more efficient and impactful.

3. Capacity building through collaborative physical partners visits

The second part of Activity 2.1, implemented from the end of September to mid-December 2024, involves ***mutual in-person visits*** by one PP representatives to other PP institutions. According to the Danube DNA plan for Activity 2.1, each partner is required to visit at least two selected partner institutions. These institutions were chosen during the previous online collaborative events and partner presentations, with the aim of gathering detailed information about the services and resources of individual partners.

3.1. Timeline and overview of collaborative partner visits

A total of 24 in-person visits was held between September to mid-December 2024. The all visits were conducted according to the agreed schedule provided in Table 2.2. Reports of all these visits were recorded and stored in Trello, where they are available to all partners.

Table 2.2: Matrix of collaborative in-person visits

	PP1	PP2	PP3	PP4	PP5	PP6	PP7	PP8	PP9	PP10	PP11	PP12
PP1				x			x	x		x		
PP2									x			
PP3							x					
PP4						x	x					
PP5							x	x	x	x		
PP6				x			x					
PP7										x		x
PP8					x							
PP9					x					x		
PP10									x			
PP11							x					x
PP12									x		x	

3.1.1. Details of the visit of PP1 and PP5 to PP10

After the initial introductions of the participants, the PP10 partner provided a concise yet insightful presentation of their workplace, highlighting their scientific research areas, key projects, and innovative initiatives. This overview emphasized the institution's expertise and served as a foundation for identifying synergies with other partners. Additionally, the presentation included a detailed description of Campus 02, with a particular focus on the TOPIS Innovation Management framework, showcasing its relevance to fostering interdisciplinary approaches and advancing innovation. In the second part of the event, participants were given the opportunity to visit the laboratories, where advanced equipment

and cutting-edge technologies were presented. This segment was particularly valuable for visitor's capacity building (PP1 and PP5), as it allowed attendees to observe the technical infrastructure and expertise in action. The centerpiece of the technical demonstration was the laboratory of robotics and 3D printing, which showcased advanced manufacturing processes, prototyping capabilities, and automation technologies. These demonstrations not only highlighted PP10's capabilities but also sparked discussions on how similar technological approaches could be applied or adapted by other partners. The event concluded with a collaborative discussion focused on exploring opportunities for cooperation. PP10 presented the concept of a Pilot Action, outlining its potential impact and providing a clear method for its implementation. The discussion further reinforced the importance of knowledge exchange and joint development, setting the stage for practical, impactful collaboration among the participants.

Figure 3.1: Visit of PP1 and PP5 to PP10: September 12, 2024

3.1.2. Details of the visit of PP1 and PP5 to PP7

The event began with an organized visit to the labs in Maribor, located at the Faculty of Mechanical Engineering, which collaborates with Pomurje Technology Park (PTP) in

research and development activities under a signed memorandum of cooperation. During the visit, visitors from PP1 and PP5 had the opportunity to explore four state-of-the-art laboratories. This visit served as a platform to exchange knowledge about the lab's capabilities, ongoing research, and the potential for applying these innovations to shared initiatives, fostering a deeper understanding of mutual expertise and laying the groundwork for future collaborative efforts.

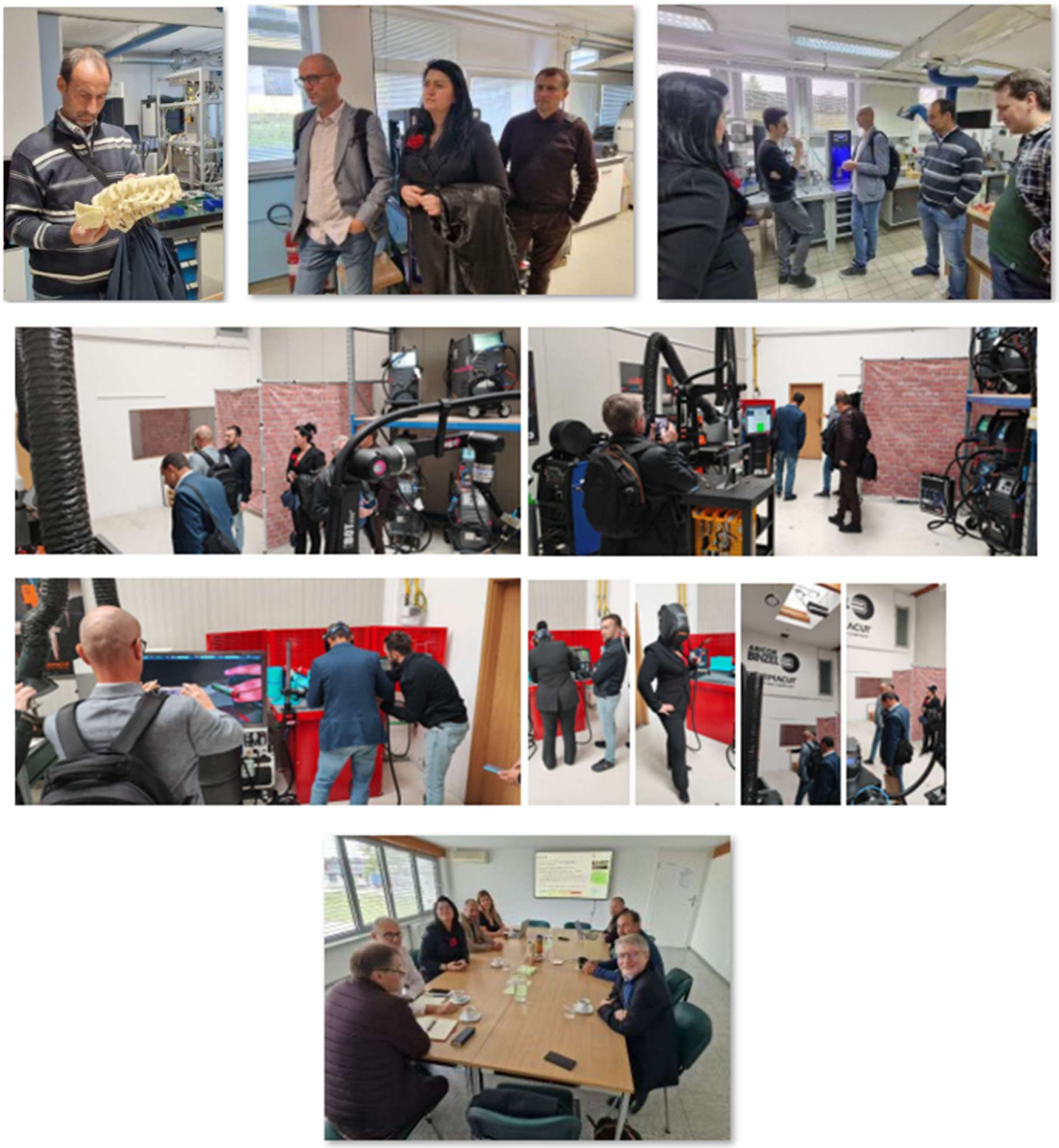

Figure 3.2: Visit of PP1 and PP5 to PP7: September 13, 2024

Following the Maribor visit, participants traveled to city of Murska Sobota to explore the facilities of PTP. The meeting commenced with a formal introduction of the participants, setting the stage for open dialogue and collaboration. Partner PP7 then delivered a comprehensive presentation on the park's history, development journey, services, and innovative business model. The presentation emphasized PTP's plans, focus areas, and potential avenues for future cooperation, demonstrating how PTP's strategic vision aligns with the broader goals of its international partners. The hands-on aspect of the visit continued with a tour of two demonstration laboratories, which are joint ventures between PTP and its partners. The first lab, focused on rapid prototyping and 3D scanning, is operated in collaboration with 3DS and highlights advanced capabilities in additive manufacturing and digital design. The second lab, developed in partnership with company specializes in welding technology and training, showcasing ongoing testing and research activities utilizing PTP's equipment. These visits not only highlighted the technical expertise and resources available but also illustrated the value of collaborative infrastructure in driving innovation and industry-relevant applications

3.1.3. Details of the visit of PP4 to PP7

Partners met at PTP (PP7) premises. The meeting began with a formal introduction of all participants, creating a platform for establishing connections and fostering dialogue. Following the introductions, PP7 provided a detailed presentation of its history and development, outlining its services, innovative business model, strategic plans, key activities, and focus areas. The presentation also highlighted potential opportunities for future cooperation and referenced successful past initiatives, positioning PP7 as a strong partner in fostering innovation and collaboration. As part of the meeting, participants toured two demonstration laboratories, which exemplify PTP's collaborative approach to technology and innovation.

The first lab, a joint venture with 3DS, showcased advanced capabilities in rapid prototyping and 3D scanning, emphasizing the potential applications of these technologies in various industries. The second lab, developed in partnership with company Abicor Binzel, demonstrated welding technology and training services, where testing activities with PTP's equipment are currently underway. These site visits allowed participants to observe cutting-edge technology in action, enhancing their understanding of PTP's capabilities while exploring how such infrastructure could be leveraged in their own contexts. By sharing expertise and exploring synergies, the visit contributed to strengthening the collective capacity of all involved parties, fostering innovation and long-term cooperation.

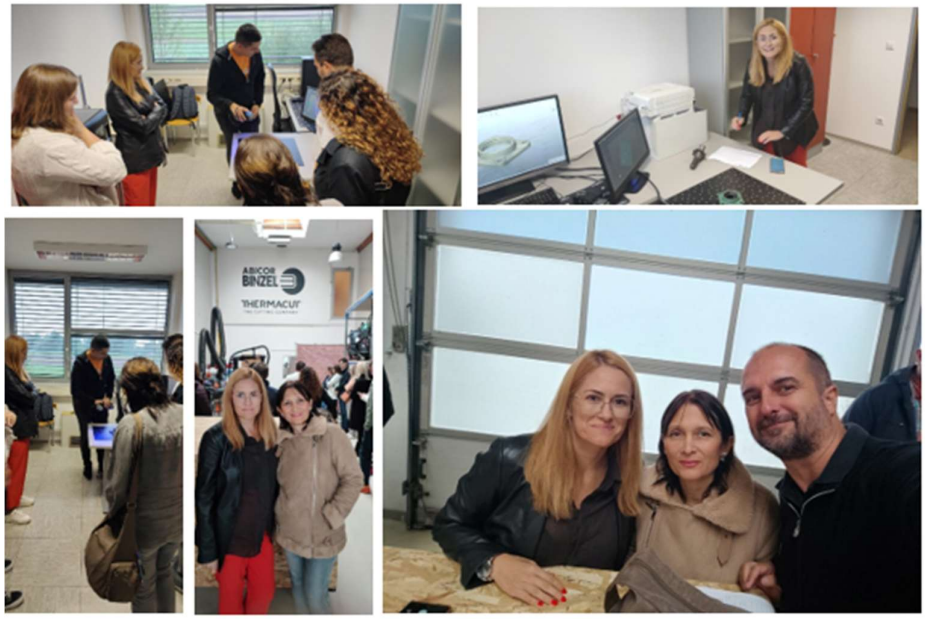

Figure 3.3: Visit of PP4 to PP7: September 16, 2024

3.1.4. Details of the visit of PP3, PP6 and PP11 to PP7

The project partners visited PTP during the “Forum of 3D and Welding Technologies”. The event began with an engaging presentation on 3D technologies setting the stage for productive discussions. Following the presentation, the partners participated in a dialogue with PTP's management team, who provided valuable insights into the park’s history, ongoing initiatives, and strategic plans. These discussions aimed to explore innovative business models and services, identify potential areas for collaboration, and reflect on lessons learned from past projects. A key focus of the discussions revolved around opportunities for cooperation and implementation within the framework of the Danube DNA project. Specific attention was given to pilot and training activities, highlighting their importance in fostering mutual capacity building and advancing shared objectives.

The visit concluded with a tour of the demonstration laboratory at Abicor Binzel company, a leading provider of welding technology and training. Here, partners observed collaborative testing activities utilizing PTP’s equipment, gaining firsthand insight into the practical applications of these technologies. During the visit, PTP expressed interest in collaborating with Bosnia and Herzegovina and/or Bulgaria as potential partner countries for its potential pilot initiative in 3D scanning and rapid prototyping. However, further discussions with stakeholders from both sides will be necessary to confirm interest and formalize plans.

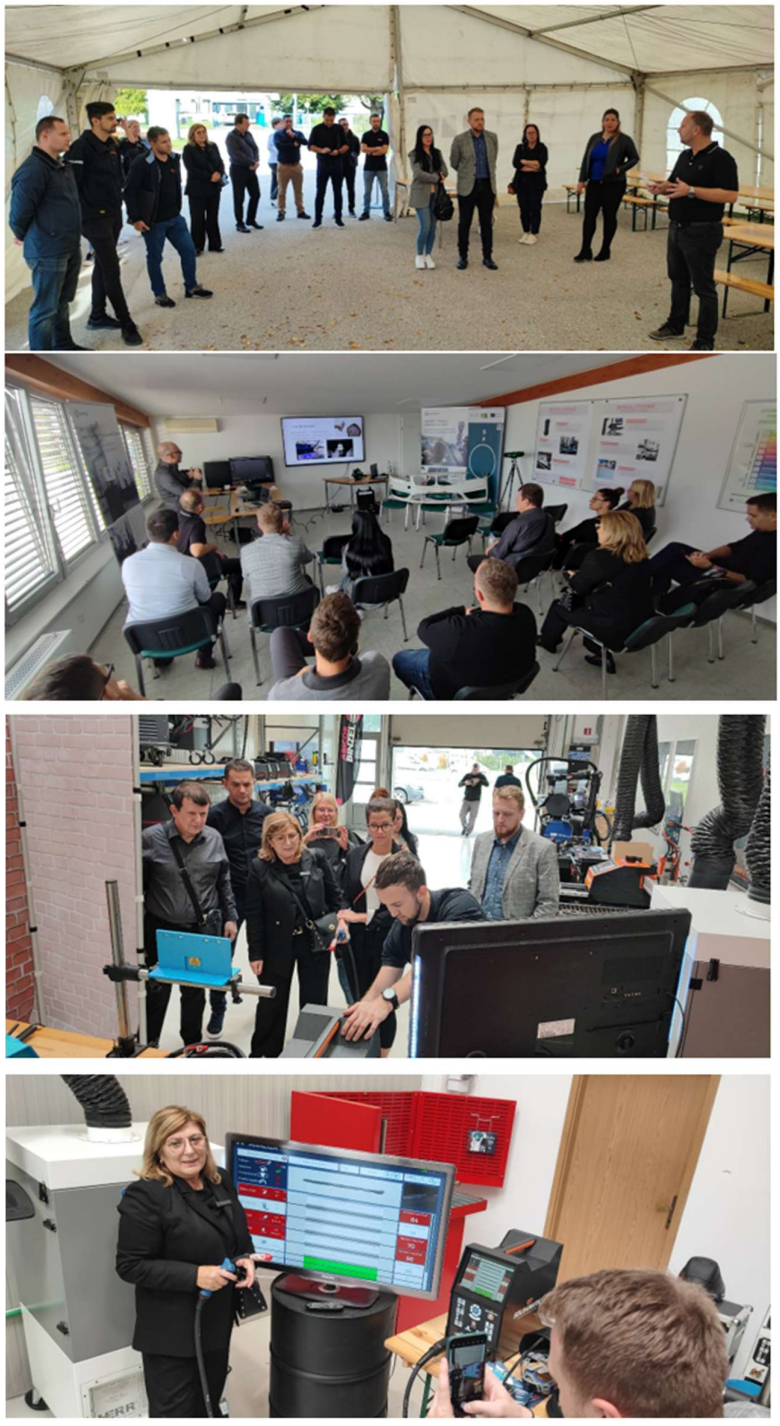

Figure 3.4: Visit of PP3, PP6 and PP11 to PP7: September 26, 2024

3.1.5. Details of the visit of PP1 to PP4

PP4 and PP1 convened at PP4's offices to review the project's upcoming activities and to discuss PP4's specific role in their implementation. This initial session provided an opportunity for both partners to align their expectations and better understand how PP4's expertise could contribute to the project's success. Subsequently, PP4 delivered a comprehensive presentation of their digital tools, showcasing how these innovations support their ongoing initiatives. They also shared insights into both current and past projects, highlighting best practices, lessons learned, and the tangible impact of their work. This knowledge-sharing session enabled PP1 to gain a deeper understanding of PP4's capabilities and explore potential applications of these tools within their own context.

Figure 3.5: Visit of PP1 to PP4: October 4, 2024

Building on PP4's presentations, the partners engaged in a collaborative discussion about the possibility of future partnerships. They explored opportunities for joint activities within the Danube DNA project, particularly focusing on pilot initiatives, as well as potential collaboration on other future projects. These discussions reinforced the mutual capacity-building potential of the partnership, enabling the visiting partners to benefit from PP4's expertise while laying the groundwork for innovative, cross-border initiatives.

3.1.6. Details of the visit of PP6 to PP4

PP4 and PP6 met in Zagreb, Croatia, during PP4's 48th International Invention Show and 20th Prototype and Business Plan Competition. The event began with the grand opening of the exhibition, which provided an inspiring backdrop for fostering collaboration and showcasing innovation. Following the opening ceremony, the partners reviewed the project's upcoming activities, discussing their respective roles and contributions. This session allowed both partners to align their efforts and strengthen their understanding of how their expertise could support the project's objectives. In subsequent discussions, the partners shared insights into their involvement in other projects, exchanging best practices and identifying potential synergies. They explored opportunities for future collaborations, particularly within the Danube DNA project, as well as other initiatives, reinforcing their shared commitment to advancing innovation and cooperation.

Figure 3.6: Visit of PP6 to PP4: October 16, 2024

The visit concluded with PP4 guiding PP6 through the exhibition. This tour offered PP6 an opportunity to gain firsthand insights into cutting-edge inventions, prototypes, and business

plans, further enhancing their knowledge and understanding of the latest developments in innovation. This experience served as a valuable capacity-building opportunity for PP6, enabling them to draw inspiration and identify potential applications for similar initiatives in their own work

3.1.7. Details of the visit of PP11 to PP12

Representatives of the SERDA partner from Bosnia and Herzegovina (PP11) visited the Chamber of Economy of Montenegro (CEM) as part of Activity 2.1. The visit focused on exchanging information about the activities carried out by both institutions and exploring the services they provide to representatives of SMEs. A key segment of the discussions emphasized the importance of strengthening the innovative ecosystem, highlighting shared challenges and opportunities for fostering innovation in the region. The meeting also included discussions about planned activities within the Danube DNA project, underlining the initiative's significance in enhancing connectivity and empowering SMEs across the Danube Region. These conversations highlighted the potential for collaborative efforts to support SMEs and improve their competitiveness through shared resources and expertise. Additionally, SERDA representatives had the unique opportunity to engage with representatives of PTP, who were also visiting the CEM at the same time. This interaction facilitated the exchange of good practices and experiences, creating a platform for mutual learning and identifying synergies among the institutions.

PP11 representatives further enriched their visit by attending the Montenegro Economy Conference 2024, which gathered 420 participants from the region. The conference provided a valuable networking platform, enabling PP11 to connect with SME representatives and key institutional stakeholders critical to advancing the innovative ecosystem. Through these interactions, the visiting partners gained insights into regional best practices, expanded their networks, and identified potential opportunities for collaboration, contributing significantly to their capacity building and the broader goals of the Danube DNA project.

3.1.8. Details of the visit of PP8 and PP9 to PP5

The meeting began with a detailed presentation of the PP5 - Vysoká škola technická a ekonomická in Češke Budejovice (VŠTE) laboratories, showcasing advanced facilities and their capabilities. These included the CNC machines laboratory and the laboratory of civil engineering, where the possibility of 3D printing with concrete was demonstrated, highlighting innovative approaches to construction technologies. Additionally, the *Bioloid* robots, developed by the Korean company *Megarobots* and used for teaching automation and control theory, were presented, illustrating the institution's commitment to modernizing education through advanced technology. The session continued with a presentation of hardware acquired as part of the Danube DNA project, underscoring the initiative’s role in enhancing

technical infrastructure. The highlight of the tour was the laboratory specializes in 3D printing and serves as a hub for innovation and prototyping activities. Partner PP8 concluded the session by outlining a pilot project to be developed and implemented within the Danube DNA project. This initiative reflects the shared commitment to fostering innovation and strengthening collaboration in the region.

Figure 3.7: Visit of PP8 and PP9 to PP5: October 23-24, 2024

For the visiting partners, the presentations and demonstrations provided valuable insights into advanced technologies and their practical applications. The exchange of ideas and exposure to innovative facilities served as a significant capacity-building opportunity, enabling the partners to explore how such technologies and methodologies could be adapted

or integrated into their own contexts. This meeting reinforced the mutual goal of leveraging cutting-edge technology to drive progress within the Danube DNA project and beyond.

3.1.9. Details of the visit PP7 to PP12

PTP utilized its visit to Montenegro to achieve two main objectives: advancing the goals of the Danube DNA project and engaging with key representatives of the SME support ecosystem, including the Science and Technology Park Montenegro (STP MNE) and the CEM. During the visit, PTP explored the newly opened premises of STP MNE, gaining insights into the park's current status, the open tenders for tenants, and the planned next steps in the development of its service ecosystem. Discussions also touched on potential future cooperation between PTP and STP MNE, fostering an exchange of ideas for mutual development and collaboration. This visit was coordinated and facilitated by CEM, further emphasizing its role as a vital connector within Montenegro's innovation ecosystem.

The following day, PTP attended the CEM conference, which was partially combined with a RISE project meeting, where CEM is a project partner. This provided another opportunity to engage in discussions for the Danube DNA project, specifically focusing on potential collaboration between PTP and CEM. Over the course of the two days, CEM presented its capabilities and outlined the topics it aims to develop as part of its service enhancement initiatives. These sessions included debates on the current progress of related project activities and the exchange of experiences, offering PTP valuable insights into CEM's approach to fostering SME support and innovation.

Figure 3.8: Visit of PP7 to PP12: October 24, 2024

Additionally, the visit provided networking opportunities with other partners, enabling discussions on potential cooperation within future projects. For PTP, this trip was a significant capacity-building experience, as it allowed the park to learn from Montenegro's ecosystem development efforts, explore new collaborative opportunities, and share its own expertise in supporting SMEs. These exchanges not only strengthened the ties between the participating organizations but also laid the groundwork for future joint initiatives aimed at advancing innovation and SME growth in the region.

3.1.10. Details of the visit of PP9 to PP10

The meeting began with a series of presentations from various departments, showcasing PP10 expertise and contributions to innovation. PP10 provided a comprehensive overview of its R&D activities, highlighting key thematic areas and its innovative role in fostering regional development. A detailed presentation on ongoing projects in innovation management underscored their relevance and alignment with the objectives of the Danube DNA project. The Department of Automation Technology also presented its R&D activities and project portfolio, emphasizing its cutting-edge work in technological innovation. Participants were introduced to the AT-LABS facilities, featuring state-of-the-art equipment and technologies, with a special focus on the Robotics and 3D Printing Laboratory. This allowed visiting partners to gain insights into advanced tools and methodologies that could inspire similar initiatives within their own institutions. In the afternoon, a brainstorming session was held to foster collaboration and innovation. Participants worked together to identify innovative solutions and define thematic focus areas for upcoming activities. The session also explored potential joint projects, emphasizing the sharing of resources, leveraging complementary expertise, and identifying funding opportunities to support collaborative initiatives.

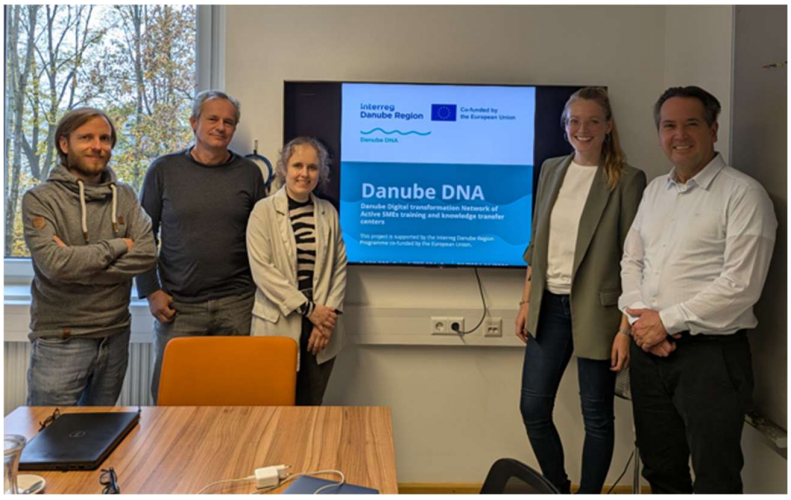

Figure 3.9: Visit of PP9 to PP10: October 28, 2024

3.1.11. Details of the visit of PP12 to PP11

PP12 from Montenegro (CEM) visited PP11 (SERDA) to exchange experiences and learn about the services SERDA provides to SMEs. After an initial introduction of participants, the SERDA project team delivered a comprehensive presentation on their workplace and the business incubator for startups, showcasing their support for entrepreneurial growth. The presentation also highlighted more than 20 ongoing projects in which SERDA is actively engaged, with a special focus on initiatives designed to deliver tailored services to SMEs. The discussions during the visit delved into opportunities for collaboration and implementation within the Danube DNA project. Particular attention was given to pilot and training activities, emphasizing their potential to strengthen SME support ecosystems across the region. For the visiting partner, CEM, this visit represented a valuable capacity-building opportunity. By gaining insights into SERDA's extensive project portfolio, innovative service delivery approaches, and startup incubation strategies, CEM was able to identify best practices and explore how similar initiatives could be adapted or implemented in their own context. The exchange also reinforced cross-border cooperation and provided a platform for shared learning and mutual growth within the framework of the Danube DNA project.

Figure 3.10: Visit of PP12 to PP11: October 28, 2024

3.1.12. Details of the visit of PP1 and PP5 to PP8

The meeting took place in Košice, on the premises of the Technical University of Košice. The partner presented laboratories, equipment and commercial solutions it has prepared in the field of Digital Twin and robotics, especially for discrete manufacturing and logistics. The partner also presented projects in which it is involved.

The meeting took place in Košice, on the premises of the Technical University of Košice, strategic partner of PP 8. The hosting partner began by showcasing their cutting-edge laboratories, state-of-the-art equipment, and a range of commercial solutions they have developed in the fields of Digital Twin technology and robotics. These solutions are tailored specifically for discrete manufacturing and logistics, demonstrating the partner's innovative approach to addressing industry challenges and enhancing operational efficiency. In addition to the technical demonstrations, the partner delivered a comprehensive presentation of their involvement in various national and international projects. These projects highlighted their expertise in applying advanced technologies to real-world problems, as well as their ability to collaborate effectively across disciplines and regions.

The visiting partners had the opportunity to engage in in-depth discussions about the practical applications of the presented technologies, exploring how they might integrate such innovations into their own contexts. The exchange of ideas fostered a collaborative atmosphere, allowing both the hosting and visiting partners to identify potential synergies and opportunities for joint initiatives.

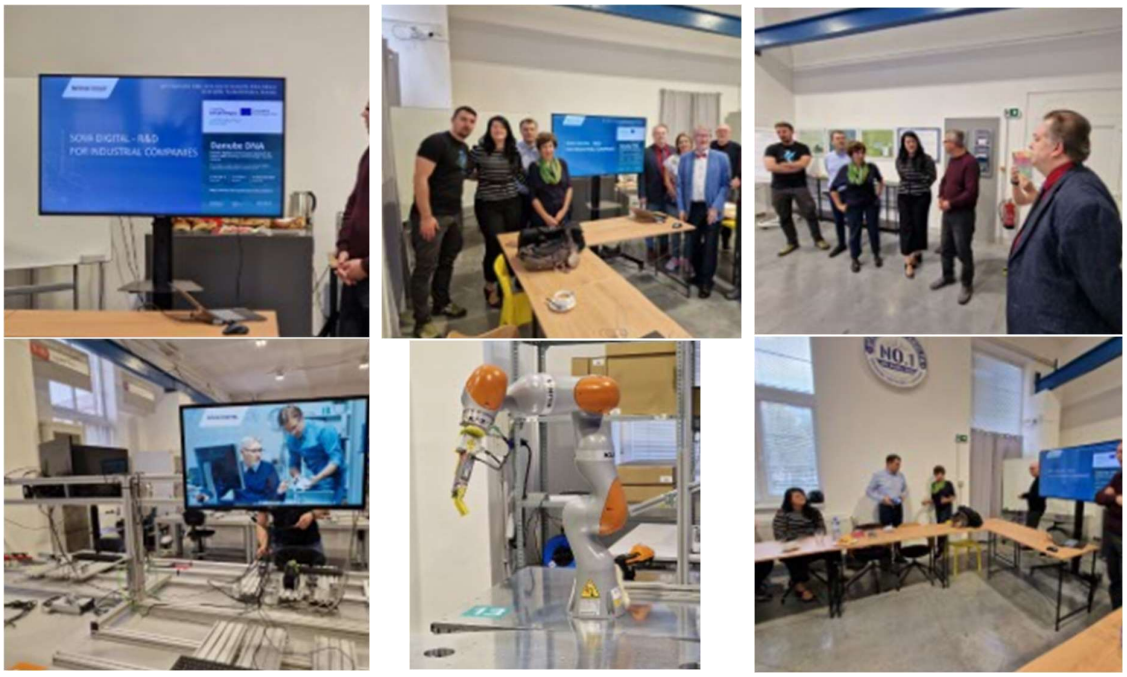

Figure 3.11: Visit of PP1 and PP5 to PP8: October 30, 2024

3.1.13. Details of the visit of PP2, PP5 and PP12 to PP9

The meeting at PP9 began with an introduction to the Bavarian AI Agency, a leading institution in the field of artificial intelligence dedicated to fostering innovation and supporting

SMEs in adopting AI technologies. The presentation provided a detailed overview of the agency's mission, structure, and ongoing initiatives. Particular attention was given to two flagship projects: AI Compass, a comprehensive guide designed to help SMEs navigate the complexities of adopting artificial intelligence solutions, and DInO (Digital Innovation East Bavaria), an initiative aimed at driving digital transformation in the region through tailored support for businesses. These projects sparked valuable discussions, with participants exploring how similar methodologies and frameworks could be adapted or implemented in their respective regions.

Figure 3.12: Visit of PP2, PP5 and PP12 to PP9: November 6, 2024

The second part of the meeting featured a visit to the Munich Urban Colab, a state-of-the-art innovation hub that serves as a collaborative workspace for startups, researchers, and industry leaders. The presentation highlighted the Colab's unique ecosystem, its role in fostering cross-disciplinary collaboration, and its success stories in supporting innovative ventures. As part of the visit, participants had the opportunity to meet with startups specializing in robotics and sensor development. These dynamic exchanges provided a platform for sharing ideas, exploring cutting-edge technologies, and discussing potential applications in various industries. The startups also presented their challenges and successes, offering insights into the entrepreneurial landscape and the role of innovation hubs like the Munich Urban Colab in supporting early-stage ventures. Through this collaborative session, both the hosting and visiting partners strengthened their capacities to foster innovation, support SMEs, and contribute to the broader goals of regional development and technological advancement

3.1.14. Details of the visit of PP10 to PP9

The meeting at the Munich Urban Colab, organized by PP9, provided a dynamic platform for exchanging ideas and fostering collaboration between diverse stakeholders. The discussions emphasized the unique model of close collaboration among various companies, startups, and institutions within the Colab's ecosystem. This collaborative approach was showcased as a powerful driver of innovation, with participants gaining insights into how the integration of expertise from different sectors accelerates problem-solving and leads to impactful outcomes.

Figure 3.13: Visit of PP10 to PP9: December 11, 2024

A key focus of the meeting was the exploration of future opportunities, particularly in the realm of sustainable innovation. Participants delved into pressing challenges such as energy efficiency, climate-friendly technologies, and resource optimization. These discussions not only highlighted the Colab's commitment to fostering sustainability-driven projects but also underscored the potential for applying similar strategies in other regions. The visiting partner had the opportunity to engage with representatives from the Colab, learning about their ongoing projects, success stories, and innovative approaches. This interaction provided valuable inspiration and practical insights into building effective innovation ecosystems, fostering entrepreneurial growth, and scaling up sustainable solutions.

3.1.15. Details of the visit of PP4 to PP6

Partners met at PP6’s office, where the meeting began with providing a guided tour of their premises. This tour offered PP4 valuable insights into PP6 operations, infrastructure, and resources, showcasing their capabilities and highlighting potential areas for collaboration. Following the tour, the partners sat down to discuss their roles within the Danube DNA project, providing updates on the status of activities and sharing insights into their respective contributions. This exchange allowed both partners to better understand each other's expertise and approaches, fostering a stronger foundation for collaboration. The discussion then expanded to include other ongoing projects and activities. Both partners explored potential synergies between their current initiatives and identified opportunities for future collaborations. Specific attention was given to aligning mutual strengths and leveraging complementary expertise to develop impactful projects.

Figure 3.14: Visit of PP4 to PP6: December 18, 2024

3.2. Learnings and insights

The consolidated list of contributions from the mutual in-person visits by PPs to each other's institutions, focusing on capacity building is as follows:

- *Knowledge exchange and technology insights*: visiting partners gained firsthand exposure to cutting-edge technologies like 3D scanning, rapid prototyping, Digital Twin, and robotics. PPs shared best practices, innovative tools, and lessons learned from current and past projects, enabling visitors to identify potential applications in their own contexts. Insight into advanced technological practices and commercial solution development provided visiting partners with actionable ideas for their projects.
- *Enhancement of project management practices*: visits included discussions on project management methodologies, with a focus on improving efficiency and collaboration. PPs exchanged strategies for effective cross-border cooperation, innovative approaches, and fostering long-term partnerships.
- *Joint solutions and pilot action development*: exploratory discussions during visits allowed PPs to identify synergies and potential collaboration on pilot initiatives, such as PTP's 3D scanning and rapid prototyping project. Partners explored frameworks for joint solution development and implementation of pilot projects, strengthening their collaborative capacity.
- *Mutual learning through networking*: networking opportunities during visits facilitated connections between various PPs and stakeholders, including startups and SMEs. Collaborative sessions fostered an exchange of ideas, allowing partners to identify areas of complementary expertise and potential avenues for joint projects.
- *Strengthening of innovation ecosystems*: visits provided insights into regional innovation ecosystems, such as Montenegro's efforts in SME support and ecosystem development. Hosting partners shared their infrastructure and collaborative models, inspiring visitors to adapt similar systems in their own regions. The interaction supported efforts to improve services to SMEs and foster innovation at the regional level.
- *Showcasing best practices*: PPs shared their experience in the successful implementation of digital tools, prototypes, and business plans, helping visitors benchmark and adapt successful practices. Presentations of startup ecosystems, collaborative labs, and innovation hubs inspired visiting PPs to strengthen their own capabilities.
- *Practical applications for SMEs*: visits demonstrated how technological advancements, and innovative services could be tailored to support SMEs, addressing real-world challenges in various sectors. PPs identified opportunities to adapt shared tools and practices to enhance SME competitiveness across the Danube Region.

- *Building complementary expertise*: the combination PPs expertise in diverse fields (e.g., AI, automation, rapid prototyping, startup ecosystem development) enabled the identification of complementary strengths, promoting joint capacity building.

4. Conclusions

This report highlights the crucial role of the capacity building of the future Danube DNA molecules in shaping a comprehensive and cohesive strategy for SMEs digitalization within the Danube Region. The activities outlined in this document, particularly those focused on capacity building, knowledge exchange, and the establishment of common transfer channels, form the foundational steps toward creating a unified and efficient ecosystem for supporting SME digital transformation. By screening existing services, fostering stronger connections among PPs, and promoting the sharing of expertise and best practices, the Danube DNA initiative is poised to significantly enhance the digital capabilities of SMEs across the region. The capacity-building efforts outlined here not only improve the collective expertise of the involved partners but also lay the groundwork for the sustainable delivery of innovative and impactful digitalization services.

Moving forward, the established frameworks and procedures will enable a more integrated approach to SME support, ultimately facilitating smoother, more effective digital transitions for businesses in the Danube Region. This will contribute to the long-term economic growth and competitiveness of SMEs, ensuring that they are well-equipped to thrive in an increasingly digitalized global economy. Through continuous collaboration and knowledge transfer, the Danube DNA molecules will be positioned to become a driving force in the digital evolution of SMEs in the region, promoting cross-border cooperation, innovation, and shared success.