



Danube DNA

Activity 1.4 Establishment of the Danube DNA platform

D1.4.1

Danube DNA Platform Sustainability Plan

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December 23rd, 2024



Introduction

The Danube DNA project aims to drive the digital transformation of SMEs across the Danube Region towards Industry 4.0. By establishing a robust network of training and knowledge transfer centers, the project addresses critical challenges in digitalization. This sustainability plan outlines the integration of the Danube DNA platform with other relevant initiatives, ensuring its longevity and continuous impact.



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1 Platform - a tool to support transnational network of growing expert competences (training and knowledge center for whole ecosystem)

In today's rapidly evolving global landscape, fostering expertise across borders is essential for driving innovation, collaboration, and sustainable development. A **Platform as a Tool to Support Transnational Networks of Growing Expert Competences** serves as a pivotal mechanism for enabling knowledge sharing, professional development, and the creation of a robust ecosystem. This platform aims to act as a training and knowledge center, providing a central hub for experts from various regions and disciplines to exchange ideas, upskill, and collaborate on common challenges.

However, for this tool to effectively support the growth of such a network or ecosystem, several key elements must be considered. These include fostering seamless communication across diverse cultures and languages, integrating scalable learning resources, ensuring accessibility and inclusivity, and facilitating the transfer of tacit knowledge within a virtual environment. Moreover, for the platform to be sustainable and impactful, it must support continuous adaptation and improvement based on evolving needs, technological advancements, and real-time feedback from its users.

Therefore, for building and sustaining such a platform requires some pillars upon which technology, expertise, enhanced cross-border collaboration and development of expert competencies can be assured:



1.1 Fostering Transnational Collaboration: Creation of synergies with similar platforms and projects to leverage shared resources and experiences.

Creating a comprehensive platform of services for multiple target groups, such as SMEs, policy stakeholders, and intermediate organizations focused on fostering the digital and green transition of SMEs, is a key strategy for addressing the challenges and opportunities in today's rapidly changing business environment. This approach not only provides immediate support but also enables SMEs to adopt long-term strategies that make them more digital, agile, and competitive in a global marketplace.

The core of such a platform lies in offering **digital tools and services** that help SMEs navigate daily challenges, such as improving operational efficiency, reducing costs, and enhancing overall competitiveness. These tools can range from software solutions for digitalization, to resources that assist with the transition towards more sustainable and green business practices. Such services could include energy management tools, carbon footprint calculators, and platforms that help SMEs comply with environmental regulations or integrate digital solutions into their production processes.

However, beyond addressing immediate business needs, this platform can also play a crucial role in supporting SMEs in shifting towards more **strategic, long-term goals**. The idea is not only to help SMEs cope with the present, but to help them become more resilient, forward-thinking, and adaptable. For example, tools and services could be designed to support SMEs in becoming more **digitally enabled**, allowing them to integrate emerging technologies like the Internet of Things (IoT), AI-driven data analytics, or Industry 4.0 standards into their operations. Additionally,



offering expertise and consultancy services focused on **digital transformation strategies** would allow businesses to evolve into more **agile organizations**, equipped to react swiftly to market changes.

The platform could also facilitate **cooperation and synergies** across different regions and industries, enabling SMEs to collaborate and learn from each other. By establishing a framework that encourages **transnational collaboration**, it creates opportunities for shared resources and expertise, further enhancing the value of the platform. Through such synergies, businesses can access knowledge and tools they might not have been able to develop on their own, which is especially important for smaller enterprises with limited resources. **The cross-border knowledge exchange** ensures that the best practices, innovations, and solutions developed in one region can be applied and adapted in others, thus accelerating the overall digital and green transition.

Such initiatives can be effectively achieved through transnational projects and platforms, which bring together partners from various countries to work on shared goals. Our **Danube DNA platform** is exemplary case, since it is already part of a broader ecosystem of EU-funded projects. The platform is closely linked with several major European initiatives, including:

- Interreg Central Europe (GREENE 4.0 and REUSE 2023)
- Interreg SI-AT (REUSE)
- Interreg Danube Region Programme (CI-Hub, RISE, IaaS4DR, and others)
- Interreg Horizon or H2020 initiatives (DIH2, Change to twin, DIH WORLD...)

Each of these projects and platforms aims to foster the digital and green transition of SMEs within the respective regions by offering a comprehensive set of services and tools. These initiatives align logically and operationally toward **a common**



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ecosystem designed to assist SMEs with the tools, expert knowledge, and services needed to grow and compete in a rapidly evolving market.

Key aspects of this ecosystem include:

- **Proven Services and Tools:** By leveraging the resources and services from these EU-funded projects, the platform offers SMEs access to tested, scalable, and effective tools that support their transition towards more sustainable and competitive practices.
- **Expert Knowledge:** Access to expert knowledge in digital transformation, sustainability practices, and industry best practices is vital for SMEs. The platform facilitates the sharing of knowledge between businesses, experts, and organizations, helping SMEs learn from others and apply these insights to their own operations.
- **Demo Centers and Test Before Invest Facilities:** The platform can integrate demo centers, where SMEs can test new technologies and tools before investing in them. This reduces the risks associated with new technology adoption and enables businesses to make more informed decisions. These centers also serve as valuable learning environments, where SMEs can see real-world applications of digital and green innovations.
- **Transnational Collaboration:** A key driver of this platform's success is its ability to foster **horizontal and vertical transnational collaboration** among SMEs, policy stakeholders, and other intermediaries. By participating in a larger network of projects across borders, SMEs can tap into a rich pool of expertise, tools, and resources that they might not have access to locally. This collaboration also opens up new market opportunities, encourages innovation, and helps to align policies and regulations across regions, ensuring that SMEs can operate seamlessly in an interconnected European market. Idea is to sign the memorandums of collaboration - MoU)



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- **Synergies through Shared Resources:** The various EU-funded projects involved, such as **GREENE 4.0, REUSE, and IaaS4DR**, bring together shared resources that can amplify the impact of the platform. These shared resources—whether in the form of funding, infrastructure, or expertise—create synergies that help to scale the impact of each individual project and contribute to the overarching goal of supporting project partners' competences or those of targeted SMEs in their transition to digital and green business models.
- In conclusion, the creation of **a platform of services** for multiple target groups such as SMEs, policy stakeholders, and intermediaries is a highly effective approach for supporting the **digital and green transformation of SMEs**. By fostering **transnational collaboration**, leveraging **shared resources**, and offering **digital tools, expert knowledge, and test-before-invest facilities**, platforms like the Danube DNA platform, in collaboration with other EU-funded initiatives, can create an **ecosystem** that drives **long-term growth, competitiveness, and sustainability** for SMEs across Europe. This ecosystem not only strengthens the position of all involved (facilitators-partners' institutions, SMEs, stakeholders) but also contributes to the broader European goal of **a digital and green economy**.

1.2 Enabling Ongoing Knowledge Transfer: Ensuring that training materials and digital solutions remain accessible beyond the project's duration.

The sustainability of the Danube DNA platform relies not only on the success of its current initiatives but also on ensuring that its resources, including training materials and digital solutions, remain accessible beyond the project's initial duration. To achieve this, it is crucial to establish mechanisms for ongoing knowledge transfer, ensuring that all target groups like project partners' personnel, SMEs, solution



providers, and other stakeholders continue to benefit from the platform long after the official project period has ended.

This document outlines the key approaches to ensuring continued knowledge transfer and sustaining the momentum of the platform. It also identifies the roles of partners (see also Appendix Terms of Reference=ToR in D1.4.2), the methods to motivate them to contribute, and the strategies to enable seamless collaboration and information exchange between SMEs (specially manufacturing companies) and solution providers (offering technologies, processes, and services).

1.2.1 Role of Partners and Motivation for Ongoing Contribution

Partners play a critical role in the success and sustainability of knowledge transfer. Their active involvement ensures that the training materials, digital tools, and services continue to evolve and remain relevant for SMEs. Here's how the role of partners can be defined and how to motivate them:

Engagement of Partners in Knowledge Creation and Sharing:

- Solution Providers (e.g., technology developers, service providers, and consultants) can help identify and share new tools, technologies, and best practices as they emerge in the market.
- Intermediary Organizations (e.g., clusters, industry associations, research institutes) can facilitate the sharing of knowledge and best practices within their networks.
- Policy Stakeholders can contribute by ensuring the ongoing alignment of platform activities with relevant regulatory frameworks and policies, enabling SMEs to access funding and incentives for digital and green transitions.



Motivating Partners:

- **Recognition:** Highlighting the achievements of partners in terms of the value they bring to the platform through public recognition, co-branding opportunities, and inclusion in high-visibility events can incentivize active participation.
- **Incentives:** Offering financial or non-financial incentives, such as opportunities for further collaboration, access to new funding streams, or visibility at major industry events, can motivate partners to contribute.
- **Long-term Collaboration Benefits:** Emphasizing the long-term value of collaboration, such as access to a growing network of SMEs and visibility in an expanding ecosystem, can keep partners engaged and committed.

Feedback Mechanisms:

- Regular feedback from SMEs about the tools and services they use can guide solution providers in refining their offerings, ensuring the relevance and effectiveness of the platform's resources. Board of partners representatives will be in charge for platform operating.
- Continuous engagement through surveys, user testing, and focus groups can help identify emerging needs and areas for improvement.

1.2.2 Approaches to Facilitate Knowledge Transfer

To ensure that knowledge transfer is effective, accessible, and sustainable, a variety of approaches should be used to engage different stakeholders and continuously update the content:



Digital Platforms for Knowledge Sharing:

Create a centralized knowledge hub where all training materials, webinars, toolkits, and success stories are stored. This hub can be accessible to all platform participants beyond the project duration. It should include both open access and member-specific content (such as exclusive reports or tools for SMEs)

Establish online repositories that are continuously updated by partners and solution providers with the latest research, tools, and case studies.

Webinars and Online Training:

Regular webinars, e-learning modules, and online workshops should be used to engage SMEs and solution providers. These events can provide training on the latest digital tools, technologies, and sustainable practices, and allow SMEs to interact directly with experts.

Webinars can also serve as a platform for peer learning, allowing SMEs to share experiences and challenges in adopting new technologies or digital solutions.

Cascade Tenders and Pilots:

Cascade tenders offer SMEs the opportunity to receive support for piloting new technologies or processes, encouraging them to experiment with solutions that align with their specific needs. These tenders can be particularly useful in helping manufacturing SMEs test new technologies with the support of external experts. Partners contribution-inputs on transnational tenders – will be included in B2Green Hub catalogue – list of funding opportunities, for intermediaries and/or for targeted groups – to assure non-stop updating. The online template will be prepared by PTP.



Pilots in SMEs can also be a powerful demonstration tool, showcasing how digital and green solutions have been implemented in similar organizations, thus facilitating knowledge transfer between businesses.

Vouchers for Expert Consultations:

Vouchers for expert services can provide SMEs with access to specialized knowledge and support. These vouchers can cover consultations on digital transformation strategies, green technologies, or process improvements, making expert services more accessible to SMEs.

Partners can contribute by providing these services, and SMEs can apply for vouchers to receive tailored advice and solutions for their unique needs.

Continuous Feedback and Iteration:

Implementing feedback loops where project partners' facilitators and/or SMEs can provide input on the effectiveness of tools, training materials, and digital solutions ensures that the platform evolves based on real-world needs. The quality will be monitored by board of experts to monitor quality?).

Facilitators can seek new and adapt the contents and delivery methods based on SME feedback, ensuring that future training remains relevant.

1.2.3 Transnational Collaboration and Information Sharing

Ensuring effective knowledge transfer requires not only strong cooperation within the platform itself but also the establishment of a broader transnational network that enables the exchange of information between SMEs and solution providers across borders. Here's how this can be facilitated:



Transnational Learning Communities:

- Creating cross-border communities of practice where SMEs from different countries can collaborate, share experiences, and learn from each other will foster a continuous exchange of knowledge. Digital Transformation Survey will be created by Slovak partner regarding to the companies on their readiness for digitalization, including the existence of a digital transformation plan).
- Facilitators from different regions can work together to organize international events, conferences, and knowledge-sharing initiatives, offering SMEs access to a wider array of tools and resources.

Knowledge Transfer Events:

- Organize knowledge exchange events in different regions to enable SMEs to learn from each other and from solution providers. These can be both physical (e.g., conferences) and virtual (e.g., webinars, online roundtables).
- Success stories from SMEs in other regions can be highlighted during these events, showing practical examples of successful transitions.

1.2.4 Leveraging Follow-Up Projects to Boost Platform Sustainability

Follow-up projects, including those led by Danube DNA partners, are crucial to sustaining and expanding the impact of the platform. These projects can introduce new tools, technologies, and approaches that contribute to the continued development of the platform.

Integration of New Tools and Resources:

By aligning with future EU-funded projects, such as those under Interreg, Horizon Europe, and other funding programs, Danube DNA can continuously integrate new



solutions and technologies into its ecosystem. These follow-up projects can provide access to new digital tools or green technologies that can be tested and disseminated through the platform.

Dissemination and Expansion:

Follow-up projects should use Danube DNA as a dissemination channel, leveraging its established networks and reputation to spread awareness of new tools and initiatives. New projects can widen the platform's reach, engaging new communities of SMEs in regions previously not covered by the initial project. This helps ensure that the platform remains relevant and accessible to a growing number of SMEs across Europe.

Complementary Topics and Areas of Focus:

Follow-up projects should explore complementary topics such as circular economy, green finance, or advanced manufacturing technologies, further enriching the ecosystem and offering SMEs access to a broader range of support services.



2 Linking to Other Platforms

Linking the Danube DNA Platform to Other Knowledge and Community Platforms - the objective of this proposal is to outline a detailed and structured approach for linking the Danube DNA platform, a facilitator for learning, sharing, and transferring knowledge, to other similar platforms. This will enable the expansion of knowledge exchange and digital transformation for SMEs, increase cross-border cooperation, and provide opportunities for continuous sustainability through joint funding and synergies.

2.1 European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH)

The European Digital Innovation Hubs (EDIH) are strategic structures designed to support businesses, particularly SMEs, in adopting digital technologies. EDIHs offer a wide array of services including technology consulting, access to expertise, and the provision of funding opportunities to accelerate digital transformation.

2.1.1 Partnering with EDIHs:

- **Objective:** To share knowledge, best practices, and resources on digital transformation strategies for SMEs.
- **Action Items:**
 - Organize joint events (webinars, workshops, roundtables) where both platforms share their expertise on digital tools and services available to SMEs.
 - Set up a mutual exchange of resources such as digital tools, educational content, and case studies.



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- Establish a mentorship program where EDIH representatives can assist SMEs within the Danube DNA network with specific digital transformation challenges.
- Facilitate joint training programs and initiatives focusing on specific digital solutions relevant to SMEs in the region.

2.2 Leveraging EDIH Funding Structures:

- **Objective:** Utilize existing EDIH funding mechanisms to ensure long-term sustainability and continuity for the Danube DNA platform.
- **Action Items:**
 - Align the Danube DNA platform's projects with EDIH funding calls to access financial resources.
 - Explore co-funding opportunities for joint projects, such as pilot initiatives in specific SMEs or industries.
 - Work on expanding the Danube DNA platform's scope by developing collaborative proposals for funding that cater to both SME digitalization and innovation.

2.2.1 Monitoring and Evaluation:

- **Objective:** Ensure the success of the partnership by tracking the outcomes of joint activities and shared resources.
- **Action Items:**
 - Set up a shared reporting system to track the impact of events, workshops, and funding initiatives.
 - Use feedback loops to refine the strategy, ensuring maximum value for both the Danube DNA network and EDIHs.



2.2. SME Digitalization Initiatives

Various initiatives and programs support the digital transformation of SMEs across Europe. One such initiative is Digital SMEs, which advocates for SMEs' digitalization, offering resources, networking opportunities, and advocacy for policy changes.

2.2.2 Aligning with Digital SMEs Initiative:

- **Objective:** Integrate the Danube DNA platform with established SME digitalization initiatives to maximize resource availability and knowledge sharing.
- **Action Items:**
 - Incorporate best practices and toolkits from Digital SMEs into the Danube DNA platform's resources.
 - Facilitate joint webinars, conferences, and digital events that provide insights into trends, challenges, and opportunities in SME digitalization.
 - Establish a digital community where SMEs from the Danube DNA network can directly engage with peers from the Digital SMEs initiative, exchanging success stories, challenges, and solutions.
 - Collaborate on digital diagnostic tools for SMEs that allow a thorough evaluation of their digital needs and capabilities.

2.2.3 Joint Events and Workshops:

- **Objective:** Increase visibility and encourage active participation in the Danube DNA network.
- **Action Items:**
 - Co-host events with Digital SMEs to engage a broader audience, particularly SMEs that are just starting or in the early stages of digitalization.



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- Focus on creating hands-on workshops, where SMEs can learn practical skills such as software adoption, cybersecurity basics, or e-commerce integration.
- Organize hackathons or innovation challenges that encourage SMEs to develop and showcase their digital solutions, with winners receiving support from both platforms.

2.2.4 Collaborative Research and Content Creation:

- **Objective:** Drive innovation and thought leadership in SME digital transformation.
- **Action Items:**
 - Conduct joint research projects and produce white papers on the future of SME digitalization, focusing on emerging trends, barriers, and opportunities.
 - Share articles, blogs, and case studies between both platforms, ensuring continuous flow of updated content.
 - Establish a shared repository of knowledge resources (guides, toolkits, industry reports) that is accessible to SMEs across both networks.
- **Integration:** Align with initiatives focused on SME support in digital transformation, such as Digital SMEs, to enhance resource availability.
- **Impact:** Joint events and workshops will increase visibility and encourage engagement with the Danube DNA network.



2.3 Cross-Border Cooperation Networks

Cross-border cooperation networks focus on fostering collaboration between countries, regions, and businesses to tackle shared challenges, such as digital transformation. These networks can provide platforms for joint activities, sharing of knowledge, and coordinated efforts across borders.

2.3.1 Collaboration with Cross-Border Networks:

- **Objective:** Ensure that the Danube DNA platform's initiatives have scalable and adaptable solutions across multiple borders, particularly in the Danube Region and Central/Eastern Europe.
- **Action Items:**
 - Foster relationships with cross-border cooperation networks like the Danube Transnational Programme, which connects multiple countries across the Danube region.
 - Establish joint task forces or working groups to address regional challenges in digital transformation, focusing on harmonizing efforts across countries and businesses.
 - Develop a joint knowledge-sharing portal that integrates the resources, tools, and digital transformation case studies from various cross-border networks.

2.3.2 Funding and Sustainability through Joint Applications:

- **Objective:** Ensure the long-term sustainability of projects by pursuing joint funding opportunities for collaborative projects.
- **Action Items:**



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- Identify and apply for EU funding programs (e.g., Horizon Europe, Interreg, Digital Europe Programme) with cross-border cooperation and digital transformation objectives.
- Develop a financial model where multiple networks can pool their resources to fund common initiatives, ensuring projects are scalable and have a regional impact (see also revenue generation model in 6.5).
- Explore public-private partnerships that can contribute additional funding or in-kind support to sustain cross-border collaboration projects.

2.3.3 Tracking Impact and Scalability:

- **Objective:** Ensure that projects are not only successful but also scalable and adaptable across different regions.
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- **Action Items:**
 - Use cross-border data and reporting mechanisms to assess the impact of joint activities and digitalization efforts across multiple countries.
 - Identify regional differences in digital maturity levels, and tailor solutions to meet the specific needs of different countries within the network.



3 Offer – Services

The platform is designed to support the digital and green transformation of SMEs, policy stakeholders, sectoral agencies, and other key players across multiple regions. By offering a variety of services, it creates a dynamic and sustainable ecosystem that fosters collaboration, knowledge exchange, and practical solution development. Below is an expanded description of each service offered by the platform:

3.1 Transnational Network of “One-Stop Shops”

Service Description:

The **Transnational Network of “One-Stop Shops”** formalizes the role of 26 partner organizations, establishing them as key support hubs for SMEs and other stakeholders in the digital transformation journey. These organizations serve as localized points of contact where SMEs can access tailored support, expert advice, and resources related to digital and green transformation.

The network ensures that businesses can get personalized guidance, such as:

- **Consultancy on Digital Solutions:** SMEs receive expert advice on the adoption of digital tools, from automation to data analytics.
- **Sustainability Expertise:** Guidance on implementing green technologies and sustainable practices, helping businesses minimize their environmental footprint.
- **Capacity Building:** Partner organizations provide tailored workshops, events, and pilot initiatives that support ongoing learning and adaptation.

By formalizing the role of these “One-Stop Shops,” the platform ensures a streamlined, cohesive, and accessible support structure that helps SMEs and other stakeholders navigate the complex landscape of digital and green transformation.



3.2 Communication and Knowledge Sharing Platform

Service Description:

The **Communication and Knowledge Sharing Platform** is a critical service for fostering collaboration and information exchange among a diverse set of stakeholders, including SMEs, technology providers, policy stakeholders, and sectoral agencies.

Key features of the platform include:

- **Interactive Forums & Discussion Boards:** A digital space where stakeholders can engage in discussions, ask questions, and share insights, fostering an open exchange of ideas and expertise.
- **Real-Time Collaboration Tools:** A suite of tools that allows users to collaborate on projects, share documents, and communicate directly in real-time.
- **Multilingual Support:** To ensure accessibility and inclusivity, the platform will offer multilingual capabilities, facilitating communication across different languages and regions.

This service ensures that users can quickly access critical information, stay updated on trends, and connect with peers and experts from around the world.



3.3 Transnational Guidelines Development

Service Description:

The platform will regularly develop and update **Transnational Guidelines** to assist stakeholders in navigating the complexities of smart specialization and digital transformation. These guidelines will serve as roadmaps for SMEs, sectoral agencies, and public authorities, ensuring that they remain aligned with the latest digital trends and global best practices.

The **key features of these guidelines include:**

- **Smart Specialization Strategies:** Tailored advice on how regions and countries can focus their resources on emerging sectors and technologies.
- **Digitalization Frameworks:** Step-by-step guides for SMEs to implement digital solutions based on their specific needs and capabilities.
- **Green Transformation Pathways:** Sustainable strategies for businesses and regions looking to integrate green technologies and reduce their carbon footprint.

Regular updates ensure that these guidelines remain relevant and applicable to current market demands, fostering adaptability and long-term success for stakeholders across the network.



3.4 Knowledge Transfer Modules

Service Description:

The **Knowledge Transfer Modules** service is aimed at providing comprehensive training and skill-building opportunities for stakeholders, particularly SMEs. The platform will create and disseminate dynamic training materials in multiple languages to ensure accessibility across regions.

Key components of this service include:

- **Modular eLearning:** A flexible, on-demand learning system that allows SMEs to access training materials at their own pace. This will include introductory and advanced topics on digitalization, sustainable practices, and industry-specific technologies.
- **Specialized Training Series – Expandi 4.0 / ING 4.0:** These specialized training and webinar series focus on key areas of industrial digitalization, such as robotics, maintenance, production digitalization, and logistics. The series provides SMEs with foundational knowledge and practical skills they can implement in their operations.
- **Multi-Language Support:** Ensuring that training materials are available in several languages to accommodate the diverse backgrounds of SMEs and other stakeholders in the ecosystem.

These knowledge transfer modules provide a crucial opportunity for continuous skill development, which is essential for staying competitive and innovative in a rapidly changing global market.



3.5 Joint Solutions Development

Service Description:

The **Joint Solutions Development** service focuses on fostering collaboration between stakeholders to co-create open-source digital and green solutions. This service enables the creation of tools, platforms, and systems that can be continuously accessed and utilized by all stakeholders involved.

The platform will provide:

- **Open-Source Repository:** A central, accessible space where stakeholders can upload, download, and modify tools and solutions. These resources will range from software solutions to best practice templates for green technologies.
- **Collaborative Development:** Stakeholders, including SMEs, technology providers, and sectoral agencies, will have the opportunity to collaborate on the development of joint solutions tailored to specific industry needs.
- **Continuous Improvement:** The open-source nature of the repository ensures that tools and solutions are continuously updated and refined, reflecting the latest advancements in digital transformation and sustainability.

This service fosters innovation through collaborative problem-solving, ensuring that all participants have access to cutting-edge tools and solutions that can enhance their operations and competitiveness.



3.6 Verification of Solutions' Impact

Service Description:

The **Verification of Solutions' Impact** service is designed to assess the effectiveness and outcomes of implemented solutions, providing stakeholders with a clear understanding of the value created by the platform's tools and resources.

Key features include:

- **Impact Assessments:** Conducting rigorous evaluations to measure the success of digital and green solutions deployed across various SMEs and sectors. These assessments will focus on key performance indicators such as cost reduction, efficiency gains, sustainability improvements, and overall business growth.
- **Transparent Reporting:** Sharing the results of these impact assessments widely through the platform, enabling stakeholders to learn from each other's experiences and identify the most successful approaches.
- **Data-Driven Insights:** Providing detailed reports that can inform future policy decisions, business strategies, and investment opportunities.

By verifying and sharing the impact of solutions, this service ensures accountability and fosters confidence in the platform's offerings, encouraging more stakeholders to engage and adopt innovative solutions.



3.7 Editable B2B Database

Service Description:

The **Editable B2B Database** service aims to create a comprehensive, dynamic database that facilitates the integration of SMEs into regional value chains. This service enables businesses to connect with potential partners, suppliers, and customers, thereby expanding their market reach and opportunities for collaboration.

Key features include:

- **Comprehensive Business Profiles:** SMEs and other stakeholders can create detailed profiles showcasing their capabilities, products, and services, making it easier for others to find and engage with them.
- **Search & Matchmaking Tools:** The platform will feature advanced search functionality to help businesses find the right partners for collaboration based on industry, location, and specific needs.
- **Regional Value Chain Mapping:** The database will provide tools to help map out regional value chains, allowing SMEs to identify new opportunities for sourcing materials, distributing products, or forming strategic partnerships.

This service plays a crucial role in fostering cross-border collaboration, market expansion, and the creation of more resilient, interconnected business ecosystems.



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4 Platform benefits for multiple target groups/actors

A knowledge exchange and training center focused on digital and green skills offers substantial benefits for various target groups, fostering a collaborative ecosystem that drives innovation, enhances competitiveness, and accelerates sustainable development. Through targeted engagement, capacity-building, and transnational collaboration, the center can support SMEs, local, national, and regional policy stakeholders, sectoral agencies, and business support organizations. Below is a refined and more substantial description of the specific benefits for each group:

4.1 Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs)

Key Benefits:

- **Skills Development & Knowledge Transfer:** SMEs are at the heart of economic growth, and continuous engagement in skills development is vital for their survival and competitiveness. By targeting SMEs, the platform will offer tailored workshops and pilot actions aimed at upskilling employees and owners in both digital and green technologies. This includes topics like digital marketing, e-commerce, data analytics, and sustainable production practices. This knowledge will help SMEs optimize operations, reduce costs, and become more adaptable to changing market demands.
- **Increased Competitiveness & Innovation:** By adopting new technologies and sustainable practices, SMEs can remain competitive within regional and global markets. The platform provides access to cutting-edge tools, best practices, and case studies that empower SMEs to innovate, leading to improved products, services, and processes. The knowledge gained will help SMEs differentiate themselves from competitors, attract new customers, and open up new business opportunities.



4.2 Sectoral Agencies

Key Benefits:

- **Enhanced Capacity to Support SMEs:** Sectoral agencies play a key role in fostering economic development within specific industries. Through the knowledge exchange and training center, agencies will gain access to a wealth of information on digital and green technologies, enabling them to better support regional SMEs. These agencies will be equipped to offer specialized guidance, implement joint solutions, and provide more effective services that meet the evolving needs of SMEs in their sector.
- **Joint Solution Development:** By engaging in collaborative activities with SMEs and other stakeholders, sectoral agencies can co-develop solutions that address industry-specific challenges. These joint solutions can range from sustainable production processes to innovative digital tools, which in turn enhance the resilience and productivity of SMEs. This collaboration strengthens the role of sectoral agencies as central players in fostering innovation and economic growth.

4.3 Interest Groups & Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs)

Key Benefits:

- **Broadened Access to Knowledge & Best Practices:** The platform will act as a gateway for interest groups and NGOs to access a variety of resources, including case studies, best practices, and research materials on digital and green transformations. This information can be used to support advocacy



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efforts, inform policy recommendations, and enable NGOs to drive grassroots initiatives that align with sustainability and digital inclusion goals.

- **Facilitation of Stakeholder Involvement:** NGOs and interest groups often act as bridges between marginalized communities and mainstream economic activities. By engaging with the platform, these organizations can expand their outreach, collaborate with other stakeholders, and contribute to the development of local or regional policies that promote sustainable and inclusive digital transformation. Their involvement will ensure that no group is left behind in the shift towards digital and green economies.

4.4 Business Support Organizations (BSOs)

Key Benefits:

- **Strengthening Competence in Digital Transformation:** Engaging 12 BSOs in collaboration with SMEs offers a unique opportunity to enhance their roles as competence centers for digital transformation. Through training modules and knowledge sharing, BSOs will be better equipped to offer advisory services to SMEs, helping them navigate the complexities of digital technologies, green practices, and regulatory frameworks. This, in turn, will improve the overall support ecosystem available to SMEs, creating a more resilient and future-ready business environment.
- **Boosting Business Ecosystems:** As trusted intermediaries between SMEs and larger institutions, BSOs can use the knowledge gained from the platform to strengthen regional business ecosystems. They can also support networking opportunities, connecting SMEs with potential collaborators, investors, and technology providers, thereby fostering growth through strategic partnerships and market expansion.



4.5 Local and Regional Public Authorities

Key Benefits:

- **Development of Localized Digital Strategies:** Local and regional public authorities will benefit from transnational guidelines and resources that provide a roadmap for assessing SMEs' digital and green capacities. With this information, authorities can create localized strategies that cater to the unique needs of their region, driving both digital and green transformation at the local level. This helps authorities design policies that promote sustainable economic growth, digital inclusivity, and job creation.
- **Informed Policy Design & Implementation:** The platform's resources will allow authorities to stay updated on best practices and emerging trends in digital and green technologies. By integrating this knowledge into regional policies and initiatives, public authorities can create a supportive environment for SMEs to thrive. Additionally, they can better allocate public funds for training, infrastructure development, and digital transition programs.

4.6 National Public Authorities

Key Benefits:

- **Strategic Roadmaps for National-Level Transformation:** National authorities can leverage the platform's knowledge exchange to develop comprehensive digital transformation strategies for the entire country. The guidelines and best practices shared on the platform will inform national policy agendas, including the integration of green technologies and the



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promotion of digital entrepreneurship, thus contributing to long-term economic development and resilience.

- **Enhanced Policy Coordination & Support:** By engaging with cross-border collaborations and staying informed on regional innovations, national authorities will be able to design policies that support both local businesses and national industries. This can also include creating incentive structures for SMEs to adopt sustainable practices, advancing the green transition, and enhancing digital literacy across the workforce. Furthermore, the platform facilitates ongoing dialogue among stakeholders, ensuring that national policies remain relevant and responsive to global trends.



5 Dissemination Strategies

An effective dissemination strategy for a platform focused on open-source solutions, best practices, training modules, and digital transformation expos requires a multi-faceted approach tailored to the needs of different target groups, including facilitators, SMEs (Small and Medium Enterprises), technology providers, and policy stakeholders. The goal of the strategy is to ensure that key content is widely promoted, accessible, and engaging for each audience, driving collaboration and knowledge exchange.

5.1 Open-Source Solutions: Promoting Access to Jointly Developed Tools and Resources

Target Groups: SMEs, technology providers, facilitators

Dissemination Approach:

- **Dedicated Portal for Resources:** Create a user-friendly section on the platform where open-source tools and resources are readily available. This could include downloadable software, templates, APIs, and documentation, with clear guidance on how these can be integrated into various operations.
- **Targeted Newsletters & Updates:** Regularly distribute newsletters that highlight new tools, updates, and key releases, tailored to the specific needs of each group. For example, SMEs could receive updates focused on cost-effective tools for growth, while technology providers may be alerted about new open-source projects they could collaborate on or integrate into their own solutions.
- **Webinars and Workshops:** Organize online workshops and webinars to guide users on how to implement these open-source solutions. These sessions



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should be interactive, allowing facilitators to demonstrate practical applications and answer questions from the community.

- **Collaboration with Technical Influencers:** Partner with respected industry figures to promote open-source tools. These influencers can help validate the credibility and utility of the resources, making them more appealing to both SMEs and technology providers.

5.2 Best Practices: Sharing Insights & Lessons Learned from Pilot Actions

Target Groups: Facilitators, policy stakeholders, SMEs

Dissemination Approach:

- **Case Studies and Success Stories:** Publish detailed case studies and success stories from pilot actions, focusing on how different groups (e.g., SMEs or policy stakeholders) have implemented solutions or practices that led to tangible outcomes. These should be accessible through the platform, as well as in targeted reports or documents shared via email or webinars.
- **Interactive Knowledge Hubs:** Build a space for the community to share their own best practices, with peer-to-peer learning opportunities. This could be a forum or a database where participants can upload their experiences, solutions, and lessons learned, facilitating knowledge sharing within the ecosystem.
- **Workshops and Expert Panels:** Host regular virtual or physical workshops that bring together experts and practitioners to discuss the best practices identified in the platform's pilot projects. These sessions will allow participants to engage directly with those who have implemented these practices, offering valuable insight into real-world application.



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- **Policy Recommendations:** For policy stakeholders, disseminate best practices through policy briefs and position papers, outlining the impact and potential for scaling up solutions within specific regions or sectors. These documents can be shared through official platforms, webinars, and networking events to engage policymakers effectively.

5.3 Training Modules: Disseminating Knowledge Transfer Materials for Continuous Capacity Building

Target Groups: Facilitators, SMEs, technology providers

Dissemination Approach:

- **Modular eLearning Platform:** Develop a comprehensive, on-demand eLearning platform where users can access training modules that cover a wide range of topics. These modules should be categorized by target group needs: SMEs might focus on digital skills and business transformation, while technology providers could explore advanced technical training.
- **Blended Learning Approaches:** In addition to online training, provide hybrid learning options (e.g., live online sessions combined with self-paced modules) that allow users to participate in real-time, interact with instructors, and follow up with recorded materials for further learning.
- **Certification Programs:** Offer certification or accreditation for completed training modules, helping participants build credibility and motivation. These certificates could be useful for SMEs to demonstrate their newly acquired skills or for technology providers to show their team's proficiency in specific tools or methodologies.



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- **Targeted Outreach to Stakeholders:** Use personalized email campaigns and social media engagement to promote specific training modules that align with the interests and needs of different target groups. For example, promote leadership training to facilitators, while targeting SMEs with digital transformation courses.

5.4 Digital Transformation Expo: Expo to Promote Joint Solutions and Facilitate Connections

Target Groups: SMEs, technology providers, policy stakeholders, facilitators

Dissemination Approach:

- **Pre-Event Campaigns:** Use the platform to promote the Digital Transformation Expo well in advance through email marketing, social media campaigns, and partnerships with industry organizations. Highlight the expo's role in showcasing joint solutions, success stories, and cutting-edge technologies.
- **B2B Networking Opportunities:** Feature networking and matchmaking tools within the platform to allow participants to schedule meetings with potential business partners, investors, or collaborators prior to the event. This can increase engagement and ensure that the expo fosters valuable business connections.
- **Virtual and Physical Engagement:** Ensure the expo is accessible in both physical and digital formats to cater to various stakeholders. For virtual participants, provide access to live-streamed sessions, virtual booths, and roundtable discussions. For physical attendees, ensure they can participate in



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real-time workshops and demonstrations, showcasing the practical applications of platform-based solutions.

- **Post-Expo Resources:** After the event, disseminate key outcomes, joint solutions, and resources from the expo through the platform. Host recordings of sessions, panel discussions, and expert talks, making them available to those who couldn't attend in person. This also ensures ongoing engagement with the community after the expo has concluded.
- **Other annual Event Promotion:** Position the Digital Transformation Expo as an annual milestone event within the ecosystem, continually increasing its significance. Engage in year-round promotion by highlighting the achievements of past expo, sharing testimonials, and featuring innovations that were introduced during the event.



6 Sustainability Strategy for Long-Term Success

To ensure the **sustainability** and **long-term viability** of the **Danube DNA platform**, it is crucial to implement a robust strategy that focuses not only on continuous improvements, updates-inputs of information but also on revenue generation models and community engagement. The following key actions will be taken to ensure that the platform remains operational, self-sustaining, and responsive to the evolving needs of its stakeholders:

6.1 Continual Content Updates

- **Regular Refreshing of Training Materials:** To keep the platform relevant, training modules and knowledge transfer materials will be continuously updated based on stakeholder feedback, emerging digital trends, and technological advancements. This includes adding new content, case studies, and best practices, particularly focusing on the dynamic nature of digital and green technologies.
- **Customization for Stakeholder Needs:** Tailoring content to the diverse needs of SMEs, policy stakeholders, sectoral agencies, and business support organizations ensures that the platform remains valuable to all participants. The platform will be adaptable to new industry demands, ensuring long-term engagement.

6.2 Community Engagement

- **Active User Involvement:** To ensure the platform's continued success, fostering an active user community is essential. By encouraging stakeholders to contribute content, share experiences, and engage in collaborative



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discussions, the platform can maintain a high level of interactivity and value for all users.

- **Incentivizing Contributions:** Developing a recognition system for top contributors, such as badges, certificates, or networking opportunities, can motivate users to actively participate and help grow the platform's content and user base.
- **Peer-to-Peer Knowledge Sharing:** Community-driven initiatives, such as webinars, roundtables, and collaborative projects, will be promoted to ensure that stakeholders continue to learn from each other's experiences and expertise. This will help to maintain a vibrant, engaged, and supportive community of practice.
- **Establish a governance model** that includes regular reviews of progress, ensuring all stakeholders are actively involved in decision-making (board).

6.3 Long-Term Strategic Partnerships

- **Collaboration with Educational Institutions:** Partnering with universities, technical schools, and research organizations can both support content development and bring in new funding streams, particularly for training, research, and innovation-focused activities.
- **Engagement with Corporate Partners:** Collaborating with large enterprises, industry leaders, and technology providers will provide not only funding but also valuable resources such as expertise, tools, and access to markets, further enhancing the platform's offerings.
- **Public-Private Partnerships:** Strengthening relationships between public authorities, SMEs, and private sector companies can help establish long-term partnerships that ensure the platform's resilience and expansion.



6.4 Performance Monitoring

- **Tracking Platform Usage:** Regular analysis of platform usage metrics, such as the number of active users, engagement rates, and content consumption patterns, will provide insights into which services and features are most beneficial. This data will be used to continually optimize the platform's offerings.
- **Impact Assessment:** Establishing clear performance indicators to assess the effectiveness of the platform, including metrics on SME growth, knowledge transfer, and digital and green transformation impact, will be essential for evaluating success and identifying areas for improvement.
- **Feedback Loops:** Implementing structured feedback loops, including surveys and user interviews, will allow stakeholders to voice their needs and suggestions, ensuring the platform evolves based on real-time user input.

6.5 Funding Opportunities (during & after Danube DNA project)

- **Regional & EU Funding:** The platform will actively pursue funding opportunities from regional and European Union sources. This can include funding programs like Horizon Europe, Digital Europe Programme, or national innovation and technology development funds. These funds can help to support ongoing platform activities, such as content development, infrastructure upgrades, and scaling of services.
- **Collaborative Funding Proposals:** The platform will explore co-funded initiatives, where regional and EU stakeholders, including SMEs, public authorities, and business support organizations, partner on joint funding



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proposals for collaborative projects. These projects could focus on areas such as training, joint solution development, or sustainability initiatives.

- **Corporate Sponsorships & Partnerships:** Engaging with large corporations or technology providers that have an interest in supporting SMEs' digital and green transformation will open additional funding streams, possibly through sponsorships or partnerships focused on platform expansion and event organization.

6.6 Revenue Generation Strategy Considerations (after Danube DNA ending)

To ensure the platform's sustainability beyond initial project funding, a robust revenue generation strategy will be put in place, encompassing the following elements:

- **Commission on Services:** The platform can charge a commission on value-added services offered to SMEs and stakeholders, such as consultancy, expert advisory services, or the development of custom solutions. For instance, SMEs could access advanced training or tailored digital solutions for a fee, generating consistent revenue.
- **Membership Fees:** Introducing a tiered membership model for various stakeholders, including SMEs, public authorities, and business support organizations, would create a steady income stream. Benefits of membership can include:
 - Priority access to specialized training or events
 - Access to exclusive research, data, and industry insights
 - Networking opportunities with peers and experts
- **Event Fees:** Hosting paid events, including conferences, training sessions, and webinars, can generate revenue. Events such as the Digital Transformation



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Expo (mentioned earlier) could include registration fees or sponsorship packages for companies and organizations looking to promote their solutions and services.

- **Project Partners' Staff:** For follow-up projects, particularly those connected to Digital Innovation Hubs (DIHs) or other similar initiatives, the platform can involve project partners' staff who will be compensated through these ongoing projects. For example, they could support activities such as:
 - Event organization (workshops, training, study visits)
 - Providing ongoing inputs to the platform (e.g., updates to content, assisting in solution development)
 - Offering specialized advisory services to SMEs

The revenue generated through these activities can be reinvested into platform maintenance, expansion, and further service development, ensuring its continued growth and relevance.

NOTE: Develop a memorandum of understanding (MoU) with key Danube DNA project partners as well as with EDIHs, Digital SMEs, Cross-border networks to formalize the collaboration and define roles, contributions, and expectations.



7 Conclusion

The Danube DNA platform is positioned to become a central hub for digital transformation resources and collaboration among SMEs in the Danube Region. By linking with similar initiatives and implementing a robust sustainability plan, the project will ensure lasting benefits for all stakeholders involved, ultimately driving regional economic growth and innovation.

Network

Enabling ongoing knowledge transfer within the Danube DNA platform requires the active engagement of partners, continuous innovation, and the use of diverse formats like webinars, training sessions, pilot tenders, and vouchers. By creating a strong transnational network of SMEs, solution providers, and experts, the platform can ensure that resources remain accessible beyond the project's duration. Furthermore, follow-up projects offer an important opportunity to sustain and expand the platform's impact, providing SMEs with continuous access to cutting-edge tools, technologies, and knowledge that help them stay competitive and sustainable.

Cooperation

By linking the Danube DNA platform to EDIHs, SME digitalization initiatives, and cross-border cooperation networks, we can create a dynamic, resilient ecosystem for knowledge sharing and digital transformation. The proposed collaboration models ensure both short-term impact and long-term sustainability, addressing the digital needs of SMEs across regions while facilitating continuous innovation and knowledge exchange.

Offer

The services provided by the platform are designed to create a comprehensive and sustainable ecosystem that supports the digital and green transformation of SMEs,



policymakers, and other stakeholders. Through a combination of practical tools, knowledge sharing, collaborative solution development, and capacity building, the platform will enable stakeholders to not only navigate the challenges of digital transformation but also thrive in an increasingly interconnected, sustainable world.

Benefits

A knowledge exchange and training center focused on digital and green skills provides an invaluable opportunity to foster collaboration, build capacity, and drive innovation across multiple sectors. By targeting SMEs, policy stakeholders, sectoral agencies, business support organizations, and NGOs, the center ensures that stakeholders at every level are equipped with the skills, resources, and tools needed to navigate the challenges of digital transformation and sustainability. This collective approach to capacity building not only enhances individual competitiveness but also strengthens the overall ecosystem, fostering a more resilient and sustainable future for all.

Promotion/Dissemination

For this dissemination strategy to succeed, consistent and clear communication with all target groups is crucial. The platform should serve as a central hub where users can find resources, engage in discussions, and access tailored content specific to their needs. Regular updates, personalized outreach, and collaboration with industry leaders will ensure that the platform not only delivers value but also fosters a sense of community among stakeholders. By using a combination of digital and face-to-face engagement, the platform can amplify its impact and support long-term growth in expertise and collaboration.

Sustainability of platform



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By focusing on **continual content updates, active community engagement, securing diverse funding sources, tracking performance**, and introducing a **revenue generation strategy**, the Danube DNA platform will ensure its **sustainability** long after the initial project funding ends. Through a combination of public and private sector collaboration, and the development of flexible, user-centered services, the platform will remain a valuable resource for stakeholders involved in digital and green transformation initiatives. This approach will create a self-sustaining ecosystem, ensuring long-term success and impact. Technically the platform will be initially governed by Pomurje Technology Park, however contents, its quality and governance of specific Danube DNA related contents however will be subject of verifications and consent by/of partnership (board of experts/representatives delegated from project partners – MoU).

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