



Project: Sustainable Tourism for Attractivity of Riverside Cities

FINAL REPORT ON THE PROJECT STAR CITIES (IDEAS, CONCLUSIONS, POLICY GUIDELINES)

FINAL REPORT, for the period from March 2020 to October 2021, ON
THE PROJECT STAR CITIES (THE SESSIONS ON 1-PRODUCTS &
MARKETING, 2-GOVERNANCE & COOPERATION, 3-ENVIRONMENT
& SUSTAINABILITY, 4-FUTURE PARTNERS' COOPERATION
PROJECTS)

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STAR CITIES
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CONTENTS

1. INTRODUCTION	2
2. TOPIC 1: TOURISM PRODUCTS & MARKETING (Hamburg on-line session)	3
2.1 Workshop conclusions f	3
2.2 The results of the introductory POLLS, showing common challenges across partners' regions	11
2.3 Guidelines & policy recommendations on the topic TOURISM PRODUCTS & MARKETING – prepared for the publication in the Good Practices guide	13
3. TOPIC 2: GOVERNANCE & COOPERATION (Val-de-Marne on-line session)	16
3.1 Workshop conclusions	16
3.2 The results of the introductory POLLS, showing common challenges across partners' regions	18
3.3 Guidelines & policy recommendations on the topic TOURISM PRODUCTS & MARKETING – prepared for the publication in the Good Practices guide	21
4. TOPIC 3: ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY (Ljubljana on-line session)	24
4.1 Workshop conclusions	24
4.2 The results of the introductory POLLS, showing common challenges across partners' regions	26
4.3 Guidelines & policy recommendations on the topic ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY – prepared for the publication in the Good Practices guide	29
5. FUTURE COOPERATION PROJECTS (Ljubljana study visit)	33

1. INTRODUCTION

PLANNED DATES FOR 3 INTERREGIONAL LEARNING SESSIONS IN 2020

There were all together 5 Interregional Learning Sessions planned within the project STAR CITIES Sustainable Tourism for Attractivity of Riverside Cities. Two had been organized in 2019 (the 1st one in Rome – from 17-18 July, 2019, and 2nd one in Kaunas, from September 11-13, 2019). Three were planned for 2020 (as part of the project contract for ALOHAS).

1. The 3rd Interregional Learning Session was initially planned to take place in **Hamburg, April 21-24, 2020, on the topic Tourism Products & Marketing.**
2. The next one was planned to take place in **June/July in Ljubljana on the topic of Environment & Sustainability,**
3. And the last one in **September/October in Val de Marne on the topic of Cooperation & Governance.**

POSTPONED DATES FOR 3 INTERREGIONAL LEARNING SESSIONS

Due to the COVID-19 travel restrictions and a complete lock down in mid-March 2020 in many countries across Europe, **the Hamburg study trip was first postponed to September 22-25, 2020 (and the Val de Marne fixed for October 20-23, 2020, with Ljubljana to take place in late Spring 2021).**

THREE LEARNING SESSIONS WERE ORGANISED ON-LINE (FOR THE THREE TOPICS), WITH ADDITIONAL ONE ON THE FIELD, IN LJUBLJANA

In summer 2020, the decision had to be taken to postpone the study trips into the year 2021, without any fixed dates.

But in order to make the best use of the time on the project, **partners decided to take the STAR CITIES learning process on-line, through a series of at least two on-line sessions,** on the topics planned in Hamburg and Val-de-Marne. Next to this, a Kaunas Webinar took place on June 16, 2020, from 14.00 to 15.30 (4 good practices were presented). Because of the uncertainty of the travelling possibilities, also the third topic (on Environment & Sustainability) was planned to be organized on-line, with a further possibility to have an addition on-site study trip to Ljubljana.

In the period from October 2020 to April 2021 the following 3 3-day on-line sessions (a combination of webinars and workshops) were organized:

- Hamburg on-line session (on Tourism Products & Marketing): October 20-22, 2020.
- Val-de-Marne session (on Cooperation & Governance): February 9 – 12th, 2021.
- Ljubljana session (on Environment & Sustainability): April 20th – 22nd, 2021.

Next to this a study trip to Ljubljana (with a workshop) was organized, from October 5th to 6th, 2021.

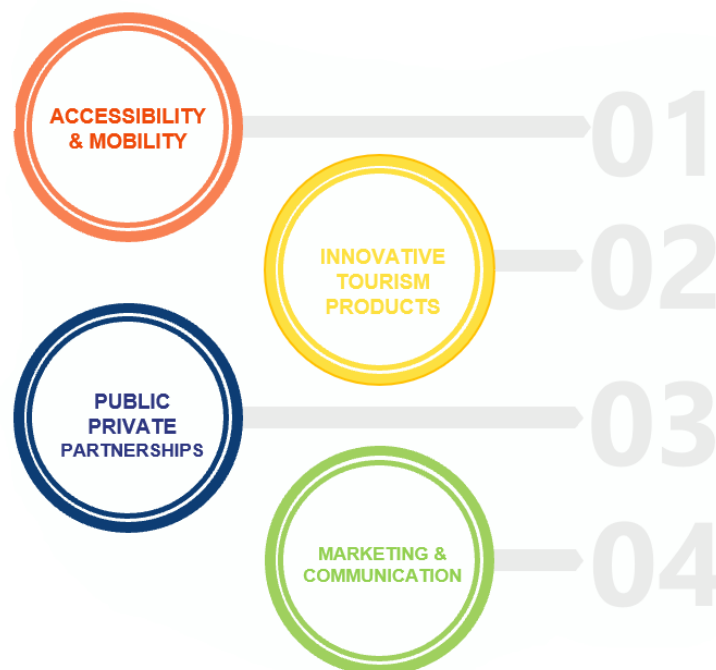
For each of the workshops, separate reports were prepared (4 all together), with a detailed presentation of the process, the inputs (contribution papers as well as the conclusions reports) as well as results.

In addition, the **POLICY GUIDELINES** for the 3 topics were prepared.

The report from here onwards summarizes to have it all in one document.

2. TOPIC 1: TOURISM PRODUCTS & MARKETING (Hamburg on-line session)

Picture 1: The 4 sub-topics within the theme Tourism Products & Marketing



2.1 Workshop conclusions

SUB-TOPIC 1: ACCESSIBILITY & MOBILITY

Introductory insight into the topic

The first topic of the Hamburg session addressed two separate, but highly co-related topics: ACCESSIBILITY & MOBILITY. These are often discussed together with CONNECTIVITY, in this way forming so called CAM (connectivity, accessibility, mobility), with the three being key measures of transport network performance.

The difference between the two concepts (that we addressed in Hamburg first topic) is as follows:

MOBILITY is how far you can go in a given amount of time (= is the ability and level of ease of moving goods and services). It's about the ease of physical movement, and therefore the quality (availability, frequency, speed, comfort, etc.) of travel modes (walking, bicycling, taxis, public transport, air travel, etc.).

ACCESSIBILITY is how much you can get to in that time. Accessibility refers to people's overall ability to reach desired services and activities and therefore the time and money that people and businesses must devote to transportation.

Since accessibility is the ultimate goal of most transportation activity (excepting the small amount of travel that has no desired destination), transport planning should be based on accessibility.

The topic of accessibility is especially relevant in partner's river-tourism destinations, where one of the identified challenges is to make the hinterland accessible – only by making it accessible is it possible to connect city centres with rural and less visited hinterland, along the rivers or using the rivers as a transport route.

The group highlighted the following inspirations from individual GPs:

- BLUE WAYS:
 - > Integrated system incorporating accessibility and nature/waterways
-> the tour is a product in itself
 - > Integration of initiatives of product
- ELBE CYCLE BUS:
 - > Good practice for a product (which is still in project preparation phase that also benefits locals)
- WATER MUSEUM VENICE:
 - > Digital offer used to attract people to waterways + transferability -> „light“ action, no „real“ infrastructure needed
- TIBERTOUR:
 - > Interesting: idea of experiencing water by being active on water
 - > A good example of Intermodality
 - > Accessibility for all / inclusive
 - > Shortcoming: only available once a year -> but: a way to improve the touristic permanent offer
- ETE DU CANALE:
 - > inspiring since it offered a lot attraction for younger people

Key lessons:

1. Accessibility can mean more than „how to get there“, but also involves making a region accessible to tourists that is usually not accessible.
2. Events can „open the door“ to enable more permanent offers.
3. It is important that offer also serves the needs of locals, not only tourists.
4. Connection between city/coast or other areas with high tourism to hinterland.
5. Develop digital / virtual offers to make products more attractive and accessible and to reach other (younger) target groups.
6. Develop offers for younger people to attract them (out of the cities).

Conclusions:

1. Topic has two dimensions:
 - a. transportation (as Elbe Cycle Bus), intermodality;
 - b. making regions accessible by creating new products.
2. Reduction of traffic by means of public transport.
3. Important way to direct tourist flows.
4. It is important that mobility services benefit locals.
5. Virtual accessibility: use of digital media offers chances (esp. for networks).
6. Changing habits and awareness of tourists.
7. Nature-appropriate accessibility is important.

Guidelines, as prepared through STAR CITIES PARTNERS' process:

1. The importance of understanding the two-fold dimensions of accessibility & mobility: firstly, it's about transportation (also intermodality) in itself. Secondly, it's about making regions accessible by creating new products as a means to spread tourist flows.
2. Accessibility should be addressed not only as a challenge „how to get there“, but also involves making a region accessible to tourists as well as locals, that is otherwise not accessible. This gives ground to be able to develop it.
3. With overtourism in city centres and many destinations, the importance of spreading tourist flows has become a very hot issue (regardless of the COVID-19 situation) Accessibility is a necessary tool to be able to spread the flows.
4. It is vital to have in mind that transport options also serve the needs of locals and not only tourists. This has in many destinations proven to be a decisive factor of success and sustainability of the mobility projects in the long run.
5. Improving accessibility & mobility in a sustainable / soft way has a huge impact on the reduction of individual traffic. This needs to be accompanied by working on changing habits and awareness of tourists as well as locals. Sustainable mobility can add value to the travel and tourism experience (also referred to as “soft mobility” or “sustainable mobility”). Developing and encouraging the use of different modes of transport with low impact on the environment, e.g. cycling, walking, car sharing, fuel-efficient transport systems and the use of electric vehicles, is a key to reducing the travelers' ecological footprint. In partners destinations this also means that it adds appeal to the product and the overall image of tourism.
6. Consistent and innovative sustainable mobility strategies and measures need to be formulated and introduced at destination and business level.
7. Accessibility can also be understood in the role of making products more attractive and accessible digitally, and to reach other (younger) target groups.

TOPIC 2: INNOVATIVE TOURISM PRODUCTS

Introductory insight into the topic

There is a widely recognized need for innovation in the tourism industry to maintain a certain level of competitiveness and, above all, to attract tourists. But in contrast to drastic innovations in industrial and technological sectors, innovations in services and especially tourism were

usually secondary. With limited capital allocations for innovation, innovations with high impact cannot happen.

Innovation in tourism has many faces and can involve: product innovation with new products and services; process innovation with new ways of delivering tourism services; market innovation focusing in new ways of marketing and consumer behavior. Innovation is similarly used in this sector as in any other; innovations are simply “new combinations of things”, – like the ice hotel in Sweden or the antelope park in Africa.

When talking about tourism innovation the following concepts need to be taken into consideration: have sustainability in mind; new technologies, mobile and digitalized, virtual; a different (unique, authentic) and immersive experience.

In tourism, organizations often chase creativity, but what they really need to pursue is innovation. More than ever now, the tourism industry needs innovation. Currently, in challenging economic times, consumers are looking for improved cost/value relationships and this will come through innovations in tourism practice.

The group started by discussing the understanding of innovative tourism products: “What does innovative tourism means to you?”

- > New technologies; Apps; Close relation with local communities working with new products.
- > Storytelling / oral history; Unusual, not used before, related with tourism; Involving people making a new products / taking part at the specific tourism form.
- > IT tools; Apps; Digitization; Mapping and accessibility; variety of tourism forms.
- > Unusual, surprising, „wow“ effect.
- > In order to create innovative tourism product, it is necessary to be modern in terms of the tools and attitude (to build a relationship with local stakeholders, to learn to work and grow together).

Inspirations highlighted:

- > Events, organized by local communities, local understanding of the place.
- > Global experience visiting The place; one-day visit; local tourism; Inspires to discuss about the future tourism; local communities presenting identity of the place / region.
- > (Re)use of industrial heritage – promo of the cultural heritage.
- > Open for other activities – multifunctional use.

Key lessons:

- > Underdeveloped topic in terms of infrastructure and content (new, innovative ideas, etc.) - new businesses + sustainability + cooperation with different local stakeholders.
- > Involve more local stakeholders and community; increase the offers of digital tourism; reaching a new target (young audience).
- > Promotion of cultural heritage among the young audience; raising awareness of IT technology / IT sector creating new tourism forms.
- > Local stakeholders are important for creating new offers; to make public transport more popular.

Transferability:

- > Communities businesses (community based) close to the river, e.g. Coffee shops, ceramics, bakeries could work in Kaunas.

- > Food related places. The issue in case of Val de Marne is private belonging; idea of digital museum could be used by local stakeholders; Creation of brand or improving a marketing / communication of tourism products.
- > Lazio Region – audience development – to provide services to young people and visitors; New content for touristic places / improving accessibility.
- > Hamburg – USP (Unique selling proposition); small steps at the beginning (stable growth).

Conclusions through the challenges' perspective:

- > Audience development – reaching new partners, local stakeholders, young people especially!
- > The budget issues – financial mechanism and strategic approach.
- > Sustainable models – community businesses, new commercial spots along the rivers, re-use of heritage.
- > Digitization and capacity building.
- > Accessibility improving the infrastructure as well as rethinking the content – creating a new message / modern narrative (marketing campaign) of the region / area.

Guidelines:

1. Innovation in tourism is an underdeveloped topic in terms of infrastructure, competences, resources, sustainability and product solutions. Covid-19 will further accelerate the need for innovation and digital transformation. Governments and destinations will have to call for innovators and entrepreneurs to put forward new solutions to help the tourism sector recover from COVID-19.
2. There is a high potential for development of community's businesses (community based small businesses) close to the river, e.g. coffee shops, ceramics, bakeries, etc.
3. A need and opportunity for sustainable models – community businesses, new commercial spots along the rivers, re-use of heritage, as well as digitization and capacity building.
4. Accessibility improving the infrastructure as well as rethinking the content – creating a new message / modern narrative (marketing campaign) of the region / area.

SUB-TOPIC 3: PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Introductory insight into the topic

In the right circumstances, public-private partnerships (PPPs) can allow governments to lead the development of tourism assets in accordance with government priorities and high environmental and social standards, while harnessing the efficiency and creativity of the private sector.

Opportunities for PPPs in tourism can be applied across a huge span of activities, offering both public goods, like historical artifacts, natural parks, and museums, and private goods and services, like hotels, entertainment events, and theme parks.

While a PPP is not the best tool for every scenario, the strategic use of these partnerships can contribute significantly to the development of a sustainable tourism program, and can be a part

of a broader strategy to facilitate tourist access, enhance quality and efficiency, and improve the destination experience.

Key take-aways:

- > Profitability – Private Sector - Financial feasibility % margin (-20% -30% -40% ?) Transferability helps scale-up economy.
- > The permission to build toilets and facilities for clients. Licenses and permissions. Launch activities Sup Club Stad developed step by step. Support work and joint monitoring between private and public authority.
- > Economic leverage from the public policy the drivers from the Public Sector. Public infrastructures and public services.
- > Awareness of private sector on raising the land value in the case of L'Été du canal most of private investors are real estate development companies: their motivation is to give value and attractiveness to territories they have activities in.
- > Private sector investment in marketing SUP CLUB Stad.
- > Sustainability – Environment (can be perceived as an attraction enrichment for the private offer) Preserve the environment for the future generation to enjoy the rivers. Burden as costly activities to keep clean the areas offered to tourists.
- > Feasibility criteria → Sustainable development (operating costs for keeping areas clean and tidy and respect the environment) including the civic association offering their services for free.
- > All actors must think about this. In SUP CLUB Stad the owner invests in controlling the area and is responsible for all the environmental-related issues. He invested what he could do to reach the breakeven.
- > The investment of the L'Été du canal is 650.000 € participation of local authority 35 % and private 40 % and ticket sale 25% (150.000 €). Is it replicable in other areas of Paris, France, Europe?
- > The L'Été du canal was thought to rehabilitate an area and turn the image of that area of the region into a better one. The SUP CLUB Stad intervened in an area not in need for requalification.

Conclusions:

PUBLIC SIDE

- > Any investment on river tourism in European city needs a strong commitment by the public authority in terms of smooth administrative procedures (licenses, permissions, authorizations, etc.)
- > A plus is the realization of infrastructures.
- > A plus is co-financing interventions with private.

PRIVATE SIDE

- > By the side of the private relevant investments in marketing.

BOTH SIDES

- > By both side: joint collaboration and monitoring of the activities.

Guidelines:

1. Private and public stakeholders have to be aligned in their goals, vision and values (cohesion).
2. Any investment on river tourism in European city needs a strong commitment by the public authority in terms of smooth administrative procedures (licenses, permissions, authorizations, etc.).
3. Key success factors are the realization of infrastructures and co-financing interventions with private.
4. The importance of profitability (and financial feasibility) for private sector. Transferability helps scale-up economy.
5. Importance of awareness of private sector on raising the land value as a motivation to give value and attractiveness to territories they have activities in. Furthermore, sustainability can be perceived as an attraction enrichment for the private offer, but represents also a financial burden.

SUB-TOPIC 4: MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Introductory insight into the topic

In the world of rapid technological evolution and economy of digitalization, consumers are continuously changing - tourists are among the first. Their behavior, media consumption, engagement level and expectations must influence on transformation of applied communication tools. In recent decades, the pace of change became faster. Media consumption has shifted to Internet, Mobile and innovative mediums.

In the new normal (post COVID-19), the visitor is becoming more demanding, makes their decisions more prudently and expects a more trustworthy, safe and personalized experience. We live in exceptional times when, in addition to changes, uncertainty is becoming our constant. This is a time that obliges us to approach the changed purchase routes and values with outstanding flexibility and creativity. Furthermore, this is the time when vision, trust and brand are all the more important, including authentic communication, socially responsible marketing and people.

The group presented the 3 aspects for each of the 3 GPs, with conclusions at the end.

Kurs Elbe Festival		
INSPIRATION	KEY LESSON	TRANSFERABILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Cohesion among the partners > The festival could improve cycling? > One of its kind: Presenting the whole range of boating and river activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Cooperation among stakeholders is the most important things. Join forces in a common marketing strategy for a chance for a better income. > Going from competitors to cooperation. Stronger than alone. Comprehension. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Lazio: Regional call on sustainable tourism. Cooperation could be complicated. > RRA LUR (Not Tourism Ljubljana): Similar event in Ljubljana. More oriented in the nature park (Natura 2000). > NECSTouR: Cultural activities as territorial storytelling

Let's go on-line portal, Ljubljana Urban Region		
INSPIRATION	KEY LESSON	TRANSFERABILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > 8 municipalities in the region collaborating to create an online portal > Data available freely > Hiking, running and cycling activities in an event calendar (separate entities in Hamburg) > the organizers upload the information in the calendar (and one entity is collecting and feeding calendar) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > From bottom to top: exploiting existing infrastructures and knowledge > Top-down approach: created first with the perspective of the suppliers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Hamburg: difficult to set-up like this in Germany, too many competitors, big budget to run it permanently, communication to users > NECSTouR regions could be interested in the region new tourism marketing strategy > Lazio: online portal as well but not possible to book accommodation yet (to be improved)

Explore Paris Booking Platform		
INSPIRATION	KEY LESSON	TRANSFERABILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Unique compared to other regions (everyone is running its own portal with the main attractions) > Bring together all the hidden attractions to book > Budget Security: No profitability for the institution (breaking even is the goal) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Platform is dedicated to niche tourism (suburban areas): visibility to stakeholders > Fair retribution for stakeholders and they can be still independent > More smaller players have an opportunity to be visible as providers of services > Double management public structure manages the booking platform 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > NECSTouR members: Financial management > Lazio: possible and interesting to promote unusual guided tours and touristic activities to explore the alternative attractions and secret spots of the capital city and its suburbs. > RRA LUR: at this moment not relevant, perhaps in future (e.g. heritage, outdoors guided tours...) > Hamburg: opportunity for e.g. nature guides or smaller museums, booking platform for the Elbe Cycling path > It was because it was complicated to integrate this offer in the main platform

Conclusions: cohesion, cohesion, cohesion

INSPIRATION	KEY LESSON	TRANSFERABILITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Cohesion within private and public stakeholders > Uniqueness of each offer, adapted to its territory > Niche tourism (nature, hidden attractions, sport, water) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Joining forces is the key: Common marketing strategy, double management, collaboration > Bottom-top vs. Top-bottom approach: disagreement within the team > Fair retribution for smaller players with an 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> > Each region thought collaboration among its own region could be too complicated to transfer: too many competitors, not that much cohesion, not enough products... > Solutions > Adapting the Storytelling to their territory > Financial management model

	opportunity to be visible and remain independent	> Data use
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Guidelines:

1. Using cultural activities as territorial storytelling as a marketing strategy, especially for less known and under visited areas and hinterland.
2. Developing the mindset “from competitors to cooperation”. Joining forces is the key: common marketing strategy and collaboration.
3. Targeting locals before international tourists is important to maintain the integrity and sustainability (in the long run) of the offer.
4. Create thematic routes in order to connect the hinterland to the tourist centres.
5. Creation of offers for younger target groups.
6. Creation of a joint booking platform for lesser known offers.
7. Developing digital services (audio guides, virtual tours, etc.) in order to provide accessibility to tourist offer.
8. Focus on de-concentration, breaking the seasonality of tourism areas and tourism flows management is key.
9. Events or a limited offer can work to create attention and open doors for further development.
10. Exploiting existing infrastructures, data and knowledge from the grounds while assuring a fair retribution for the small private stakeholders is important to maintain a valuable and sustainable offer.

2.2 The results of the introductory POLLS, showing common challenges across partners’ regions

SUB-TOPIC 1: ACCESSIBILITY & MOBILITY

POLL ON TOPIC 1	
Please, choose one biggest challenge in ACCESSIBILITY & MOBILITY:	Answers
Creation of easy access to the river and river embankments (infrastructures, such as docks, small ports ...)	3
Financing accessibility & mobility investments	3
Integration of the topic of accessibility/mobility as part of the tourist offer	4
Soft (sustainable) mobility solutions	1
<i>Total</i>	11

TOPIC 2: INNOVATIVE TOURISM PRODUCTS

Before the manager of the group presented the conclusions, a POLL was run on the topic among participants, with the following results:

POLL ON TOPIC 2	
Please, choose one biggest challenge in INNOVATIVE TOURISM PRODUCTS:	Answers
Failing to understand and establish synergies across industries	2
Lack of big-scale innovative tourism products, with very attractive value proposition	7
Lack of competences in design management	1
Not enough work done in continuous innovation	6
<i>Total</i>	16

SUB-TOPIC 3: PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

Before the manager of the group presented the conclusions, a POLL was run on the topic among participants, with the following results:

POLL ON TOPIC 3	
Please, choose one biggest challenge in PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS:	Answers
1. How to encourage privates in investing into river tourism offer	8
2. Profitability and sustainability of these partnerships for private investors	1
3. Public sector understanding the incentives and needs of the privates – and giving enough and timely incentives	3
4. Offering a wholesome supportive investment environment	4
<i>Total</i>	16

SUB-TOPIC 4: MARKETING & COMMUNICATIONS

Before the manager of the group presented the conclusions, a POLL was run on the topic among participants, with the following results:

POLL ON TOPIC 4	
Please, choose one biggest challenge in MARKETING & COMMUNICATION	Answers
'New normality' (post COVID-19): new models of acting and promoting river tourism	2
Building a strong and innovative storytelling	2
How to attract visitors from the city center to the outskirts using the river	3
How to develop a tourism marketing system around the river, intended as a product in its own right and not only as an integral part of a cultural and landscape	8
<i>Total</i>	15

2.3 Guidelines & policy recommendations on the topic TOURISM PRODUCTS & MARKETING – prepared for the publication in the Good Practices guide

Covid-19 will further accelerate the need for product innovation, strong branding, digital transformation, and marketing, which engages people and is more socially responsible

In the world of rapid technological evolution and the digital economy, consumers are continuously changing – tourists are among the first to do so. In the new normal (in post-pandemic times), the visitor is becoming more demanding, makes decisions more prudently and expects a more trustworthy, inclusive, authentic, safe and personalized experience. At such a time, **vision, trust, and branding become all the more important**, including **more socially responsible engagement through marketing** and building stronger relationships. **River tourism can capitalize on the trend towards open spaces, nature and outdoor activities** – visiting a city is more and more connected with exploring a wider region. River tourism and local tourism could be "winners" of the pandemic.

LEARNING FROM GOOD PRACTICES

ACCESSIBILITY & MOBILITY

Poor accessibility to more peripheral areas of the river landscape makes development of new tourist provision unsustainable and challenging. Good practices show that this hindrance can be overcome by creating new (innovative and sustainable) mobility solutions that become intrinsically attractive and sustainable products themselves.

Elbe Cycle Bus (Hamburg) has managed to improve the regional mobility of non-motorized visitors and residents. It is also an attraction in itself, and works to promote public transport use. Furthermore, it addresses not only a question of accessibility, but also of integrated mobility – for example, adjusting timetables to join up various means of transport (ferries and trains). Another good example is the **Blue Ways project** (NECSTouR-Barcelona Province), an integrated system incorporating a network of sustainable local mobility and a product in itself – cycling and hiking tourism along the Blue Ways, as a means of promoting diversification, deconcentration and deseasonalisation. **Tibertour** (Lazio Region/Rome) approached the topic in a different manner, by launching an event to create a river route, as the first step in convincing municipalities and other stakeholders of the feasibility of such an initiative. This serves as a great example of how an event can work to create attention and open doors for further development. The **Water Museum of Venice** (NECSTouR-Veneto Region) used digital routes to enhance cultural and natural river heritage, involving local people in the collection of oral stories and the subsequent creation of related digital routes based on them.

INNOVATIVE TOURISM PRODUCTS

Many new tourism products as well as inclusive and authentic experiences have been developed along STAR Cities partners' rivers and in hinterland (thematic routes; boat cruises; water activities; guided biking, hiking and nature tours; events; culinary experiences, etc.), but there are still too few. There is a challenge to build up innovation in the process and to strengthen tourism infrastructure outside city centres.

Herzapfelhof Apple Farm (Hamburg) has proven how a non-typical tourist product can become an attraction for visitors and how good storytelling and high-quality branding can help build an authentic experience for domestic and international visitors. Constant innovation is a must. This kind of experience is sorely needed.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS

There is an increased pressure from public authorities to turn to the private sector as a partner in creating and maintaining new products, services and infrastructures. Sustainability features highly on the public authorities' agenda in this process, whereas for the private sector profitability and financial feasibility are the main priorities. Private investments are attracted by open market conditions, and swift, transparent and predictable policies and procedures. Funding cultural heritage adds to the challenge.

The private initiative **Sub Club Stade** (Hamburg) became a popular meeting place for recreation, with a smart “step by step” approach, with the city as well as a public tourism organisation supporting the project from the beginning in terms of marketing as well as infrastructure. A total win-win! A public-private partnership approach is also being used in the **Summer in the Canal Festival** (Paris Region/Seine-Saint-Denis), with the right mix of public funds and private sponsors, focusing on slow, sustainable, and culture and nature-based tourism.

MARKETING & COMMUNICATION

There are no ‘one-stop shop’ information platforms for rivers as tourist destinations – each DMO develops its own communication tools to promote the river tourism offer, which decreases efficiency and is less user-friendly. There is a need for new marketing approaches promoting not only the must-sees, but capitalizing on the trend to travel to lesser-known spots in search of more authentic experiences.

The **Explore Paris Booking Platform** (Val-de-Marne) manifests how these challenges can be addressed in one solution. It is a joint booking platform for lesser-known offers, supporting smaller initiatives. In addition, it works as an effective booking tool and a platform which helps tourism boards to develop even closer relations with local stakeholders.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS to enhance tourism product development and more socially responsible marketing

AN ABSOLUTE NECESSITY FOR INNOVATION AND NEW BUSINESS MODELS

Innovation in tourism is an underdeveloped topic in terms of infrastructure, competencies, resources, sustainability and sustainable product solutions. Covid-19 will further accelerate the need for innovation and digital transformation. Governments and destinations will have to call upon innovators and entrepreneurs to put forward new solutions to foster innovation, help the tourism sector recover from Covid-19, and to capitalize on the new opportunities it presents for river tourism.

THE TIME HAS COME FOR MORE UNIQUE RIVER EXPERIENCES

Next to the already-established boat tours, riverbank festivals, hiking and biking routes, museums, etc., there exists a significant potential for developing more local, authentic, inclusive and more boutique (smaller, premium) river experiences along the river and in the hinterland. Offers developed close to the river, such as coffee shops, bakeries, street food corners, arts shops, etc. are also very important, when it comes to increasing the attractiveness of the river's ambience. There is also a strong need for more sustainable models and circular economy solutions.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS START WITH AN ALIGNMENT OF VISION AND VALUES

While public-private partnership is not the right tool for every scenario, the strategic use of these partnerships can contribute significantly to the development of sustainable river tourism programmes, and can be a part of a broader strategy to accelerate and facilitate tourist access, infrastructure, marketing, and to improve the attractiveness of the river destination experience. Any investment in river tourism requires a strong commitment from the public authorities in terms of smooth administrative procedures. It also falls to DMOs to support private tourism providers in the promotion of their products, using the destinations' own marketing and communication tools. However, it all starts with the cohesion of vision and values.

THERE IS NO RIVER TOURISM WITHOUT RIVER LANDSCAPE ACCESSIBILITY

When establishing new tourist attractions and products along the river or promoting events on riverbanks, we need to make sure that these places are connected to public transport links, or provide green transport options. A mobility option can work as a product in itself. Accessibility can also be understood in terms of how products are made more attractive and accessible digitally, and whether they reach younger target groups.

TARGETED PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT TO ENABLE BETTER MANAGEMENT OF VISITOR FLOWS AND GUARANTEE NATURE PROTECTION

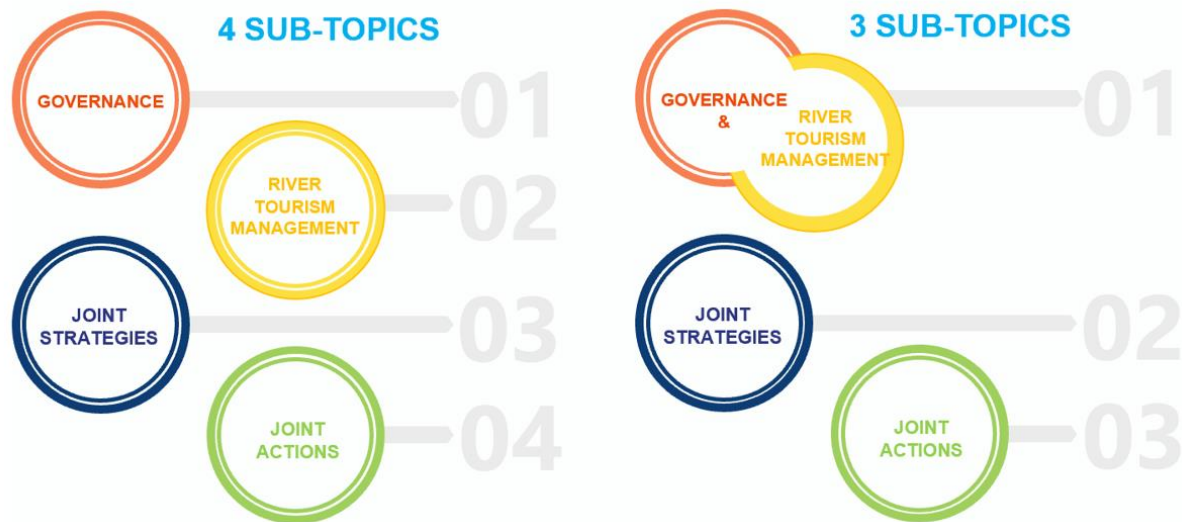
With many destinations struggling with high visitation numbers (despite the pandemic), alternative destinations should be developed to decrease the environmental and social impact on certain key destinations or on the river itself. More active work managing tourism flows should be done by DMOs – through sustainable product development, accessibility via public transport, the promotion of soft mobility options (hiking and biking, slow tourism activities such as bird watching, etc.), and also developing products in off-season.

MARKETING AND COMMUNICATION TO BECOME MORE SOCIALLY RESPONSIBLE AND ENGAGING

Better management of river tourism needs to go hand-in-hand with better marketing. It is not only a matter of joining up fragmented approaches and resources, and developing stronger river brands; more socially responsible marketing is of equal concern. Marketing needs to be communicating the green river pledges and targeting more responsible visitors, who want to make a positive difference to the local community they visit. All stakeholders must align their stories, values and vision towards appreciating rivers as green lifelines of the region.

3. TOPIC 2: GOVERNANCE & COOPERATION (Val-de-Marne on-line session)

Picture 2: The 3 sub-topics within the theme Governance & Cooperation



3.1 Workshop conclusions

Conclusions were formulated in the group work during the thematic workshop, but also the poll conclusions are added, since they are well synchronized and the latter support the group findings.

CONCLUSIONS and GUIDELINES: governance & river tourism management

1. River tourism involves a lot of (different) stakeholders and levels of local authorities. All regions are sharing a common challenge: how to gather all stakeholders and engage them through a joint strategy. Cooperation is the main solution to face this fragmented governance.
2. There is a strong need for better strategic positioning of the river in the governance models and better coordination between different DMOs about river policies and marketing activities.
3. Involvement of citizens is a key success factor and that initiatives coming from citizens can be more effective than from local authorities.
4. To have support from politics is also very important.
5. Governance models often lack political support and engagement.
6. There is a strong need for more active and efficient coordination between different DMOs, which cover the area of the river.
7. A “plan B” for tourism river development after Pandemic is needed.
8. With many destinations struggling with high visitations (despite the pandemic), alternative destinations should be developed to decrease the environmental and social impact on the destination/river. Work on tourism flows management should be done

(through product development, new initiatives to develop new tourism offer along the river, festivals to target off-season months etc.).

9. Private investors are important, but it is often difficult to fund cultural heritage (since the prime motive of a private sector is profit). However, sport events and music festivals are easier financeable. Therefore, there is a strong need for a political support capable enable wider involvement of citizens and different stakeholders, and to attract private sponsors.
10. The legislation authorizes that river tourism management should be streamlined and clear.
11. Streamlined legislation supports the regulation for the river usages, env. protection and private sustainable investments.
12. Transparency, communication, information flow and cooperation play vital role in improving efficiency of river tourism management.
13. There was a lack of sustainable approaches in governance models and in river tourism management practices.

CONCLUSIONS and GUIDELINES: joint strategies

14. DMOs cooperation works! But DMOs need to be reassured and have a trusting relationship to implement a joint strategy. Thus, sometimes the implementation of joint actions is a necessary first step to set up this trusting relationship and a joint strategy can be elaborated in a second step.
15. Self-sustainable management models are hard to find (needs of money for projects and human resources for both projects and cooperation).
16. Marketing and communication are an important challenge: how to promote the river as a brand or a destination without making the identity of each DMO disappear?
17. Establishing the river as a brand is a key lesson and a transferability idea. This was also indicated by the polls results – that there is a strong need for developing the brand and unifying approaches on this basis or at least for unifying approaches.
18. Partners in majority believe that joint and well-prepared river tourism strategies (covering several municipalities and administrative entities) would help in better river tourism development and marketing. If they consider they are not needed, they believe they should consider to find a way to unify approaches between different DMOs. Partners agreed that a good way to move forward is to work on joint pilot actions at the beginning - to test collaboration, and only then move on with joint strategies. The challenging questions still remains: do we really need a river tourism strategy or just a better promotion of river tourism in our general strategy?
19. Projects vs contracts? Quick wins vs. long-term structures.
20. The river is a common good and needs to be managed in partnership, but a strong need for allocation of tasks: who does what. Each DMO coordinates at least one action.
21. Finding common goals (or win-win) between all stakeholders is a key element for the action.
22. Cross-border cooperation with other DMO and administrations is essential along rivers.

23. A common storytelling, brand and strong digital platforms is important for all stakeholders. Digital storytelling: high demand from tourists.
24. There is a need to set up a network of infrastructures and stakeholders around the river strategy - establishing a Network of stakeholders
25. All the service providers in the territory may be considered also for services for tourists – set up a network of infrastructure for the residents and visitors: safe routes, cycling and hiking roads, entry points, etc. - to develop a more self-sustainable management model, in order to avoid the funding crisis.
26. Volunteers' work, NGOs, citizens can make a change.
27. The surroundings (hinterland) are as important as the river itself.
28. A strong need to monitor the effect of individual measures.
29. Spill-out effects: new joint projects and/or actions are created following the strategy plan.
30. It's important to change policy instruments to support actions.

CONCLUSIONS and GUIDELINES: joint actions

31. It's important to turn competitors into partners - to join forces.
32. Sponsorship is a solution to finance events. Sport events are also a tool to promote the region's assets.
33. Pilot actions (test) is successful to convince stakeholders for bigger projects. Consider starting with projects/actions (and finance them) - and later changing structures and formulating strategies.
34. Challenge: how to bring tourism into environmentally protected areas in a sustainable way.
35. Problem: many things are inspirational, but do not fit all partners' policy instruments.
36. River tourism and local tourism could be a "winner" of the pandemic.

3.2 The results of the introductory POLLS, showing common challenges across partners' regions

Before the start of the thematic workshop 5 quick POLLS were run (prepared by the facilitator, on the basis of the topics, ideas discussed in Q&A on the previous 2 days in Webinars) – in order to get a “bigger picture” insight into the topic.

The results are presented below. Results show a very unified picture in terms of the challenges that need to be addressed in the topic area discussed:

POLL FINDINGS 1: The river is in majority not positioned strategically in partner's GOVERNANCE MODELS. When the strategic position of the river is defined, the problem lies in the fact that river management models (in different areas/run by different DMOs) are too fragmented and therefore less efficient.

> There is a strong need for better strategic positioning of the river in the governance models and better coordination between different DMOs about river policies and marketing activities.

POLL FINDINGS 2: The river is not managed as a whole, the approach is fragmented (managed by different DMOs) – the coordination and cooperation of DMOs is either in progress, but still space for improvement, or it is not yet coordinated.

> There is a strong need for more active and efficient coordination between different DMOs (management, marketing, brand), which cover the area of the river.

POLL FINDINGS 3: The rivers are not developed and promoted as a brand (= different DMOs include it into their activities in different ways) – but partners think they should consider to brand it and to unify approaches.

> There is a strong need for 1-developing the river as a brand and 2-to unify approaches on this basis or at least to unify approaches.

POLL FINDINGS 4: River tourism strategies do not exist.

> Partners in majority believe that well prepared river tourism strategies would help in better river tourism development and marketing. If they consider they are not needed, they believe they should at least consider to find a way to unify approaches between different DMOs.

POLL FINDINGS 5: Cooperation with tourism providers is of prime importance.

> Partners believe that the most efficient way is to promote and support joint projects/actions and private initiatives in river tourism.

Here are the results for each of the POLLS:

POLL 1: RIVER in your GOVERNANCE MODEL

Choose one statement that best describes your view on the positioning of the RIVER in your GOVERNANCE MODEL. 1 answer only.

Nu.	STATEMENT	Number of votes
1	<i>I think our river is properly positioned strategically</i>	0
2	<i>I think our river is properly positioned strategically, but lacks operational tactics</i>	1
3	<i>I think our river is properly positioned strategically, but the river management models are too fragmented and therefore less efficient</i>	4
4	<i>I think we need to re-evaluate the strategic approach and position of the river in our governance model, to make it better coordinated and efficient</i>	9
5	<i>Other – please, name it in the discussion after the poll</i>	0

	TOGETHER	14
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POLL 2: RIVER TOURISM MANAGEMENT

Choose one statement that best describes present state of RIVER TOURISM MANAGEMENT in your region. 1 answer only.

Nu.	STATEMENT	Number of votes
1	<i>The river is managed as a whole entity in tourism market – I think our approach is the right one and it works</i>	0
2	<i>The river is not managed as a whole, the approach is too fragmented (managed by different DMOs) - and NOT coordinated</i>	7
3	<i>The river is not managed as a whole, the approach is fragmented (managed by different DMOs) – but it's well coordinated and works</i>	1
4	<i>The river is not managed as a whole, the approach is fragmented (managed by different DMOs) – the coordination and cooperation of DMOs is in progress, but still space for improvement</i>	8
5	<i>Other – please, name it in the discussion after the</i>	0
	TOGETHER	16

POLL 3: RIVER as a BRAND in tourism

Choose one statement that best expresses your view on RIVER as a BRAND. 1 answer only.

Nu.	STATEMENT	Number of votes
1	<i>Our river is developed and promoted as a brand</i>	0
2	<i>Our river is NOT developed and promoted as a brand (= different DMOs include it into their activities in different ways) – and this works</i>	0
3	<i>Our river is NOT developed and promoted as a brand (= different DMOs include it into their activities in different ways) – but I think we should consider to brand it and to unify approaches</i>	11
4	<i>Our river is NOT developed and promoted as a brand (= different DMOs include it into their activities in different ways) – we should only try to unify our approaches</i>	4
5	<i>Other – please, name it in the discussion after the poll</i>	0
	TOGETHER	15

POLL 4: RIVER TOURISM STRATEGY

Choose one statement that best expresses your view on the need for RIVER TOURISM STRATEGY. 1 answer only.

Nu.	STATEMENT	Number of votes
1	<i>We have a river tourism strategy (for river as a whole)</i>	1
2	<i>I think we should consider preparing a river tourism strategy – it would help in better river tourism development and marketing</i>	12
3	<i>We do not need it</i>	0
4	<i>We do not need it, but we should consider to find a way to unify approaches between different DMOs</i>	4
5	<i>Other – please, name it in the discussion after the poll</i>	1
	TOGETHER	18

POLL 5: COOPERATION

Please, express your view on COOPERATION BETWEEN STAKEHOLDERS in tourism in your region – where do you need more cooperation? 3 answers possible.

Nu.	STATEMENT	Number of votes
1	<i>We have a well-defined and functioning stakeholders' system and I think it works well on all levels; of course, it's a never-ending process – we just need to keep going</i>	1
2	<i>We need more active cooperation with tourism providers</i>	3
3	<i>We need more active cooperation with tourism providers – to promote and support joint projects/actions and private initiatives in river tourism</i>	9
4	<i>We need more active cooperation among DMOs</i>	1
5	<i>We need more active cooperation with federal/regional structures</i>	1
6	<i>Other – please, name it in the discussion after the poll</i>	0
	TOGETHER	15

3.3 Guidelines & policy recommendations on the topic TOURISM PRODUCTS & MARKETING – prepared for the publication in the Good Practices guide

Rivers are a common good and should be managed through strong partnerships, with a strong commitment not only to management, but stewardship of these delicate ecosystems

River tourism involves a **complex network of stakeholders**, as well as different local authorities and management systems. All STAR Cities partners' regions share a common challenge: **how to bring together key stakeholders and engage them through a joint strategy**, working towards a common goal and vision – managing river tourism in the best and most sustainable possible way. Cooperation with various stakeholders coming from public, private, and non-governmental sectors, as well as cross-sectorial collaboration, are crucial in this process.

LEARNING FROM GOOD PRACTICES

STAR Cities partners' current state of play show there are strong and established partners in river governance and river tourism management, but the systems are often fragmented. By and large, the river is not positioned strategically in partners' governance models. The substantial complexity of river legislation and governance (monitoring, preservation, enhancement of the river and floodplains, navigation regimes, tourism) further adds to this challenge. River tourism is integrated into local tourism strategies, but rarely prioritised. There are no joint development or marketing strategies for rivers as a whole (the river, the riverbank and the hinterland). Furthermore, rivers are not developed and positioned as brands. Tourist offers often end at the district border.

Good practices in joint strategies and actions show the efficiency of bottom-up approaches, which over time grow into long-term partnerships and strategies. However, dependency on a project-led approach represents a challenge (providing quick wins but with a lack of stability versus long-term structures). Self-sustainable models are scarce.

The SAGE Marne Confluence (*Val-de-Marne*) is a good example how different stakeholders, including citizens, can work together to ensure the balanced and sustainable management of water resources. The **Agenda Tevere** (*in the Lazio Region*) is also a showcase of how to work together as a hub of associations and individual citizens, as a catalyst for change vis-à-vis policy makers, collaboration and shared responsibility.

Another display of the importance of good organisational structure is the **Regional Destination Organization of Central Slovenia Region** (*Ljubljana*), where 26 municipalities have been working together as one tourist destination through a strong platform of regional tourist destination organisation, all sharing one vision and contributing to the budget.

But joint strategies can also start with joint projects. The partnership agreement in the **Joint action plan implemented by Marne river DMOs** (*Val-de-Marne*) was a great kick-starter for developing common activities along the river Marne. **Kurs Elbe** (*Hamburg*) is one of the projects that has successfully transformed cooperation into sustainable working structures. It shows how cross-border cooperation between tourist destination marketing organisations can work, with a permanent office, joint marketing for boat trips, cross-border package deals, etc.

Elbe-Cycle-Route (*Hamburg*) is a testament to how having a single clear objective (1,300 km of a cycling route) proves helpful in bringing together two countries, four coordination bodies, seven states, dozens of administrative districts, and hundreds of tourism providers, all under one brand name. The **Nautical Trails label** (*Paris Region-Val-de-Marne*), in which all the stakeholders took part by collectively paddling along the river route, shows the importance of collaboration. **The Vltava, a river full of experiences** (*NECSTouR - South and Central Bohemian Tourist Boards*) introduces the river to visitors in all its beauty as a single, attractive tourist destination.

The **Day-trip Tourism Campaign** (*Hamburg*) shows that when it comes to day trips, competition within a region can be overcome and that cooperation between the city center and peripheral areas is a win-win. The **Barjanka Cycling Race** (*Ljubljana*) unites sport, tourism, culture, nature, and education in a cross-sector cooperation which includes the local community.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS to increase efficiency of river tourism management and enhance cooperation

RIVERS SHOULD BE BETTER POSITIONED STRATEGICALLY IN GOVERNANCE MODELS

There is a strong need for better strategic positioning of rivers in governance models and better coordination between different DMOs about river tourism policies, river tourism product development, brand identity and marketing activities. Post-pandemic time is the right time to re-think strategies, join forces and to better position rivers within strategic frameworks.

RIVERS NEED FOCUSED & COOPERATIVE RIVER TOURISM STRATEGIES

STAR Cities partners, in the majority, believe that joint and well-prepared river tourism strategies (stretching across several municipalities and administrative entities) would contribute to better river tourism development, management and marketing. In cases where such strategies are deemed not to be necessary, partners still believe that they should at least consider finding a way of unifying approaches between different DMOs. The challenging question still remains: do we really need a river tourism strategy, or just a better promotion of river tourism in our general strategy? Focusing on one clear objective/product/theme in joint strategies and actions is helpful in enhancing the commitment and cooperation of stakeholders.

BUILD TRUST: FIRST THROUGH PILOT ACTIONS, THEN MOVE TO STRATEGIES

Cooperation between DMOs works! But DMOs need to be reassured and have a trusting relationship in order to implement a joint strategy. STAR Cities partners agree that a good way to move forward, in the beginning, is to work on joint pilot actions – to test collaboration and build trust – and then, subsequently, to move on with joint strategies. Pilot actions can prove successful in convincing stakeholders to move to bigger and more formal structures.

RIVERS HAVE THE POTENTIAL TO BECOME TOURIST DESTINATIONS

At present, rivers are not developed and promoted as a brand – different DMOs include rivers into their activities in different ways – but STAR Cities partners think they should consider to brand them or at least to unify DMOs' branding and marketing approaches in the process. The river (and the hinterland offers) should be considered as a tourist destination in its own right, and not only part of individual territories. This raises the question of whether it is possible to promote a river as a brand without making the identity of each DMO disappear.

PROJECTS THAT COME FROM RESIDENTS OR WORK FOR THEM IN THE FIRST PLACE ARE THE KEY TO SUCCESS

Involvement of local residents is a key success factor and good practices show that initiatives coming from communities can be more effective in the long run than those coming from local authorities. The need for more resilient and sustainable models and solutions, which work locally, has been increased with the pandemic.

THE EVOLVING ROLES OF DMOs – FROM MARKETING TO MANAGEMENT

The roles of DMOs have been shifting in recent years, mainly due to overtourism, but this has been intensified even further with the Covid-19 pandemic and the climate crisis. Destination marketing is becoming destination management. DMOs must now dedicate more time to developing sustainable products, directing visitor flows, managing carrying capacities, using new technologies to help accelerate green transformation, cooperating with a wide network of

stakeholders, and – last but not least – to winning the political support of local authorities in the first place.

4. TOPIC 3: ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY (Ljubljana on-line session)

Picture 1: The 4 sub-topics within the theme Tourism Products & Marketing

4.1 Workshop conclusions

CONCLUSIONS and GUIDELINES: Sustainability

1. It is necessary to include residents into tourism development decisions and educate them. The resident has to be at the core of sustainable (river) tourism; sustainable tourist products have to benefit locals in the first place.
2. Quality over quantity! The number of tourists is not as important as their spending, average stay, quality of life for locals... Finding the right balance.
3. Start with small, pragmatic projects and build up - but know the final goal from the start.
4. Businesses - sustainability is a must, but they also need income: finding the right balance.
5. Destination support (and supporting models) is crucial for more green practices among businesses.
6. Inhabitants will adopt projects when they serve them as well, especially in the countryside (when and where possible, not always).
7. Smaller activities form a bigger system, one vision.

CONCLUSIONS and GUIDELINES: Sustainable mobility

1. It's important to give information about public transport - integration of ticketing and information – it should be made more user friendly.
2. Strong support of municipalities to set up sustainable businesses and promotion is needed.
3. Using the river and sustainable mobility - not only in tourism, but for residents (commuting and leisure).
4. Opportunity for more socially oriented businesses (they are not so profitable in the first place).
5. The target is not to make money - but to help people (and nature) – it should be seen as a win-win situation.
6. Intermodality is the most pressing issue that needs to be addressed – integrating different modes of transport.
7. When you establish a new attraction - make sure that it's connected to the public transport (too often it's mode of transport should be included in the project).
8. If we want to promote rivers - we need to think about the mobility as well - how people are going to get there (public-eco).
9. Incentives for companies to promote sustainability is important.

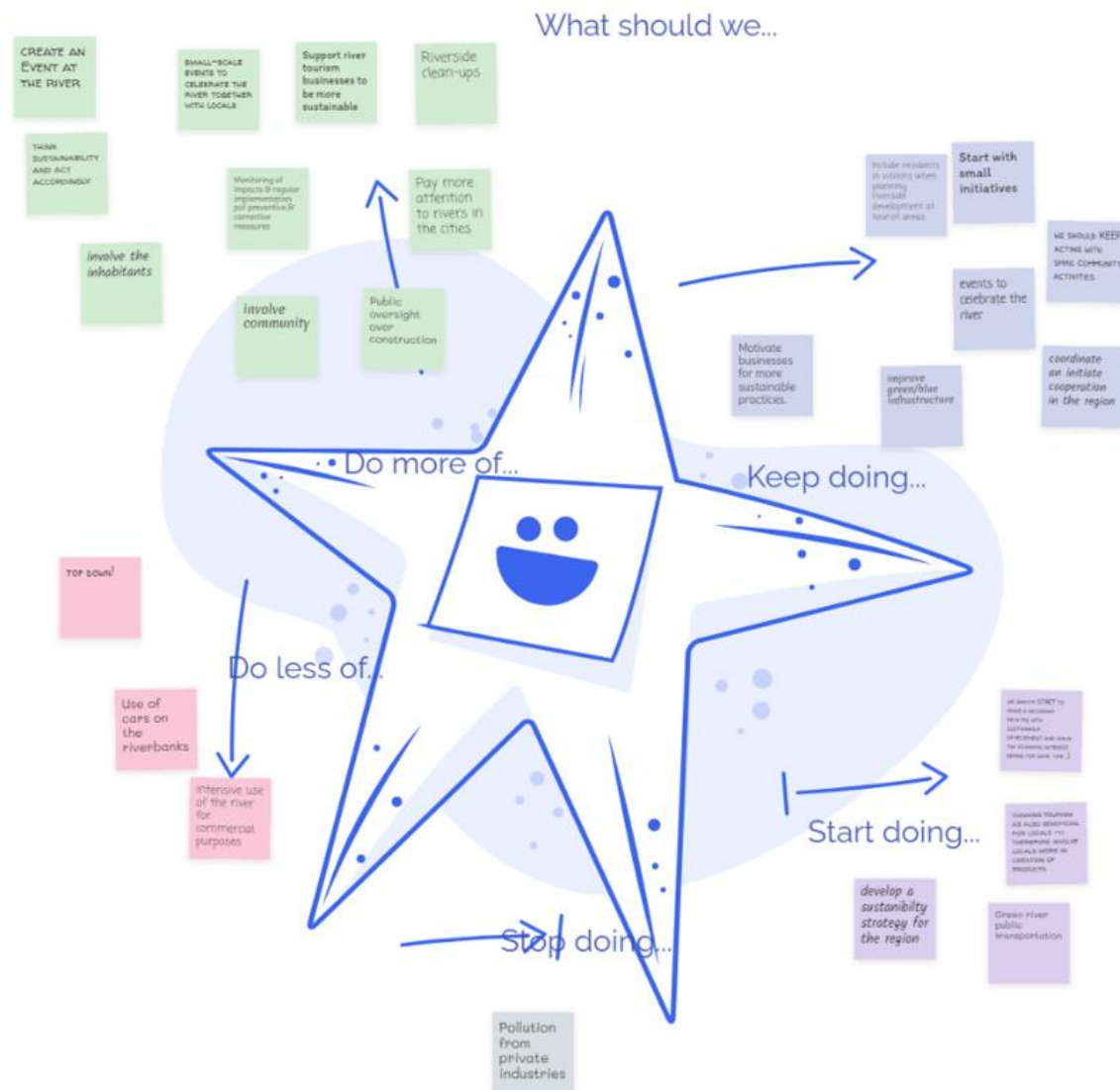
CONCLUSIONS and GUIDELINES: Environment

The DMO's role is to conduct a bottom-up approach to organize small regular events to develop the sense of belonging to attract the attention to the environment.

At the beginning of the workshop, partners were asked to post just one idea:

Picture 4: The Metro retro board visualization (transcripts of the boards are below)

Listening to the Webinars made me think ...



We should KEEP DOING:

- > Events to celebrate the river.
- > Start with small initiatives.
- > Coordinate an initiate cooperation in the region.
- > Motivate businesses for more sustainable practices.
- > Improve green/blue infrastructure.
- > Include residents in visitors when planning riverside development at tourist areas.
- > We should keep acting with small community activities.

We should do LESS OF:

- > Intensive use of the river for commercial purposes.
- > Use of cars on the riverbanks.
- > Top down!

We should do MORE OF:

- > Support river tourism businesses to be more sustainable.
- > Create an event at the river.
- > Small-scale events to celebrate the river together with locals.
- > Think sustainability and act accordingly.
- > Involve residents.
- > Monitoring of impacts & regular implementation of preventive & corrective measures.
- > Involve community.
- > Pay more attention to rivers in the cities.
- > Riverside clean-ups."
- > Public oversight over construction.

We should START DOING:

- > Thinking about tourism as also beneficial for locals ->> therefore involve locals more in creation of products.
- > Develop a sustainability strategy for the region.
- > Green river public transportation.
- > We should START to make a decisions related with sustainable development and leave the economic interest behind for some time.

We should STOP DOING:

- > Pollution from private industries.

4.2 The results of the introductory POLLS, showing common challenges across partners' regions

In Ljubljana sessions POLLS were run during the 2 Webinars (and not during the Thematic Workshop, as was the case in Va-de-Marne session), with the goal to make the Webinars more interactive.

The results are presented below. Results show a very unified picture in terms of the challenges that need to be addressed in the topic area discussed:

WEBINAR DAY 1

POLL 1: SUSTAINABILITY

Choose one statement that best describes your view on sustainable tourism development in strategic planning; 1 answer only.

Results:

Nu.	STATEMENT	Number of votes
1	<i>I believe sustainable actions start with a clear sustainable strategic framework</i>	10
2	<i>Sustainability in strategic development models is often too vague and not concrete</i>	4
3	<i>Sustainability in strategic planning is not enough – we need a good national/regional operating model that enables and promotes sustainable actions</i>	24
4	<i>None of the above – challenges lie elsewhere (let's talk about it in Q&A section)</i>	/
5	<i>Other – please, name it in the discussion after the poll</i>	/
	TOGETHER	38

POLL FINDINGS 1: Even though nearly a third agree that sustainable actions start with a clear sustainable strategic framework, majority believes that sustainability in strategic planning is not enough – that we need a good national/regional operating model that enables and promotes sustainable actions.

> There is a strong need for a clear strategic sustainability framework, which needs to be supported with good operating models that promote sustainable actions across the sector.

POLL 2: SUSTAINABLE MOBILITY

Choose one statement that best describes your view on sustainable mobility in river tourism; 2 answers possible.

Nu.	STATEMENT	Number of votes
1	<i>I believe there is no sustainable river tourism without sustainable mobility on the river</i>	8
2	<i>I believe sustainable mobility on the river is of prime importance in promoting sustainability also among residents</i>	10
3	<i>I believe sustainable mobility on rivers is of vital importance and should therefore be in the forefront of river strategies</i>	4
4	<i>None of the above – challenges lie elsewhere (let's talk about it in Q&A section)</i>	/
	TOGETHER	22

POLL FINDINGS 2: Sustainable mobility is a key factor in developing a river in sustainable way and helps importantly in promoting sustainability among residents.

> There is a strong need to make sustainable mobility an integral part in sustainable river strategies.

WEBINAR DAY 2

POLL 3: ENVIRONMENT – PROTECTION

Choose up to 2 statements that best describe your view on tourism in the role of environment and heritage protection; 2 answers possible.

Nu.	STATEMENT	Number of votes
1	<i>I believe that tourism – when developed and managed in a sustainable way – can play an important role in environment and heritage protection</i>	16
2	<i>I believe tourism can have a positive role, but only if we know, manage and respect the caring capacity</i>	6
3	<i>I believe tourism can have a positive role, but many bad practices across the globe show it is not operational & responsible enough – in managing the negative impacts before they happen</i>	1
4	<i>I believe that tourism has also an important role in promoting responsible behaviour and appreciation of the natural & heritage assets among the residents</i>	1
	TOGETHER	24

POLL FINDINGS 3: River tourism – when developed and managed in a sustainable way (based upon knowing and managing caring capacity) – can play an important role in environment and heritage protection.

> There is a strong need for active and responsible sustainable management of tourism in its role of environment and heritage protection.

POLL 4: ENVIRONMENT – EVENTS

EVENTS TO CELEBRATE THE RIVER AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Choose up to 2 statements that best describe your view on events celebrating the river – from the sustainability perspective; 2 answers possible

Nu.	STATEMENT	Number of votes
1	<i>I believe events are a great tool to attract people to a certain area and promote a certain topic – they are powerful to test ideas and build up long term partnerships</i>	18
2	<i>I believe events are a great tool to attract people to a certain area and promote a certain topic – they have a strong, but not lasting impact</i>	3
3	<i>I believe destinations should develop a balanced mix of sustainable river tourism products and also events – a winning combination</i>	10
4	<i>All river tourism events should be showcases in sustainability (zero waste)</i>	/
5	<i>I believe events should be directed to the areas that are not yet congested and have adequate infrastructure (bigger events not in peaceful areas)</i>	/
	TOGETHER	31

POLL FINDINGS 4: Partners agree that events are a great tool to attract people to a certain area and promote a certain topic – they are especially important for testing ideas and building up long term partnerships.

> It's important to establish a balanced mix of sustainable river tourism products and also events – to balance events shortcoming – because they do not have a lasting impact.

POLL 5: WRAPPING UP

Choose one of the statements that best describes your IMMEDIATE (MOST PRESSING) CHALLENGES in the field of environment and sustainability in river tourism; 1 answer only.

Nu.	STATEMENT	Number of votes
1	We need to move from sustainability in strategic frameworks to concrete and operational sustainability actions – we need a system/platform/model	10
2	We need to foremost increase relevance of sustainable actions for users (more added and immediate value for visitors)	4
3	We need above all to motivate businesses for more sustainable practices	4
4	We believe tourism largely helps in our efforts to protect and enhance environment and heritage protection – but we need to measure it more actively and increase its management (directing flows, caring capacities, use of new technologies ...)	14
5	Our challenges are elsewhere – please share it in CHAT or speak	0
	TOGETHER	32

POLL FINDINGS 5:

> In wrapping up, participants agreed that we need to move from sustainability in strategic frameworks to concrete and operational sustainability actions, which can be accelerated by a good operating system/platform/model. Furthermore, tourism largely helps in our efforts to protect and enhance environment and heritage protection – but we need to measure it more actively and increase its management (directing flows, caring capacities, use of new technologies ...)..

4.3 Guidelines & policy recommendations on the topic ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY – prepared for the publication in the Good Practices guide

Rivers are the lifelines of river cities and should be the showcases of environment protection and sustainable development for tourism use

River tourism has the potential to **turn rivers and their hinterland into a sustainable economic and social asset**. Through tourism, rivers can be utilized as an engine for regional development, **improving the city's connectivity with rural areas**, acting as a mode of transport, and as a means of **protecting unique ecosystems and biodiversity**. Finally, they

can **improve people's quality of life** – but only when managed in a sustainable way. Furthermore, sustainable river tourism can work as tool for promoting more responsible behaviour from residents and visitors.

LEARNING FROM GOOD PRACTICES

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM IN STRATEGIC PLANNING AND GOVERNANCE MODELS

STAR Cities partners noted that there is a lack of sustainable approaches in governance models as well as in river tourism management. Sustainability is not central to local tourism strategies, and overarching sustainable river tourism strategies do not exist. There is a strong need for actionable models that would accelerate and promote sustainable practices.

To this purpose, *the **Green Scheme of Slovenian Tourism** (Slovenia)* is a showcase for how a nationwide approach with a widely recognized vision of green boutique Slovenia and an internationally recognised set of sustainable criteria can bring together destinations and service providers in a process which makes tourism operations more sustainable. Meanwhile, ***Ljubljana as the European Green Capital 2016*** endorses the importance of internationally acclaimed awards that also serve as a tool for ambitious goals for further environmental improvement and sustainable development.

SUSTAINABLE RIVER MOBILITY

Many peripheral areas along the rivers are not connected by public transport. Rivers need to be viewed as a means of sustainable mobility, and of daily commuting. It is equally necessary to accelerate the transition from fossil fuels to greener solutions in river transport (for both urban mobility and the transport of merchandise).

***Au fil de l'eau boat trips and shuttle services** (Val-de-Marne)* are not only a greener river shuttle option, but they also engage and help unemployed people to integrate into the social and economic life, by doing riverbanks maintenance works, organising boat cruises and other activities to promote environmental awareness along the river Marne.

TOURISM IN RELATION TO PROTECTING THE ENVIRONMENT AND HERITAGE

There is a need for the active management and measurement of the environmental as well as the social impacts of tourism, through caring capacity models, smart management of tourist flows, and new information technologies. Without this tourism cannot be a positive force. The future will be green and digital, so we also need to promote new innovative digital solutions across the sector.

***Haute Ile Nature Park – Natura 2000 site** (Val-de-Marne)* is a great example of how to observe unique wetlands of fauna and flora in a responsible way, adhering to the highest environmental standards, whereas – at a cultural level – the river research platform ***UPYNÉS – TēKA platform** (Kaunas)* offers an innovative virtual tool for the collection and archiving of memory concerning the rivers, streams, and riverbanks of the Kaunas region.

EVENTS TO CELEBRATE THE RIVER AND PROMOTE SUSTAINABLE TOURISM

Events have proven to be a great tool to attract people to a certain river area. However, despite strong and well-established traditional events along the partners' rivers, events often bring pressure to bear upon a certain spot (also transport-wise), but do not promote wider river

territories. High numbers of visitors in bigger-scale events are not sustainable, and any positive outcomes are not long-lasting.

The **organisation of big cultural walks as events to discover the territory** (*Val-de-Marne*) successfully addresses two of the challenges: firstly, it promotes walking as the perfect way to visit and discover delicate river ecosystems, and secondly, it promotes a wider territory. Another good practice, **Let's Celebrate the River** (*Kaunas 2022*), is an inspiration, since it's not just an event, but a community festival, aiming to develop the dialogue between sustainable river tourism forms and activities.

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS to support and accelerate development of sustainable river tourism

SUSTAINABILITY IS TO BECOME THE NEW NORM

We consider that the development of sustainable forms of river tourism is not only essential for the long-term viability of this economic sector, but is also the only way to achieve a more environmentally and socially sustainable, climate smart, and resilient industry, across its supply chain. Tourism is taking more and more action to become more sustainable, but there is still a long way to go. A strategy/road map for sustainable transition of river tourism is needed, supported by investments in green infrastructure, more sustainable business models and products, and clearly defined sustainability standards.

HOLISTIC SUSTAINABLE STRATEGIC FRAMEWORKS ARE IMPORTANT, BUT NOT ENOUGH

We believe that sustainable actions start with a clear vision and a holistic sustainable strategic framework. But it is vital that these are supported with good operating models and actionable policies that direct and accelerate sustainable actions across the sector. In order to be able to develop rivers in a sustainable way, cross-border cooperation across different municipalities and governing bodies along the river is essential. Furthermore, there is a strong need for a dialogue between governing bodies responsible for nature/water protection and tourism organisations. Good practices show the importance of starting with small, “pragmatic” projects and building up – but following a clear vision from the start.

SUSTAINABLE TOURISM NEEDS TO BENEFIT LOCAL COMMUNITIES

In the years of rapid growth, we have somehow missed measuring success according to the attitudes and sentiments of the local population concerning tourism. We have mostly focused on visitor numbers, revenues and tourist satisfaction. The local resident has to be at the core of sustainable (river) tourism and sustainable tourist products must primarily benefit local people.

SUSTAINABLE RIVER MOBILITY MUST BE AT THE HEART OF SUSTAINABLE RIVER TOURISM

Sustainable mobility is a key factor in developing a river in a sustainable way. Furthermore, it significantly helps in promoting more responsible practices. There is an urgent need to make sustainable mobility an integral part of all sustainable river strategies (and beyond) and to develop public-private sustainable mobility models, which will accelerate a transformation from fossil-fuel boats to greener options. Furthermore, we need to integrate different modes of transport into user-friendly one-ticket (digitalised) models. It is vital to have in mind that transport options also serve the needs of locals and not only tourists. In many destinations,

this has proven to be a decisive factor of success and sustainability of the mobility projects in the long run.

A BALANCED MIX OF EVENTS AND ALL-YEAR ROUND TOURISM PRODUCTS IS ESSENTIAL

Events have proven to have a very important role in raising awareness about the importance of environment and heritage protection. They are especially important for testing ideas that can gradually develop into more long-term and sustainable products, with more added value for local communities. Zero waste events standards should be applied and preferably bigger events should evolve into smaller events, dispersed in time and area. There is also a need for a variety of sustainable all-year round privately-run tourism products that open new business opportunities and increase the quality of visitor experience and the local residents' quality of life.

IT'S AN IMPERATIVE TO PROVIDE MORE SUSTAINABLE OPTIONS

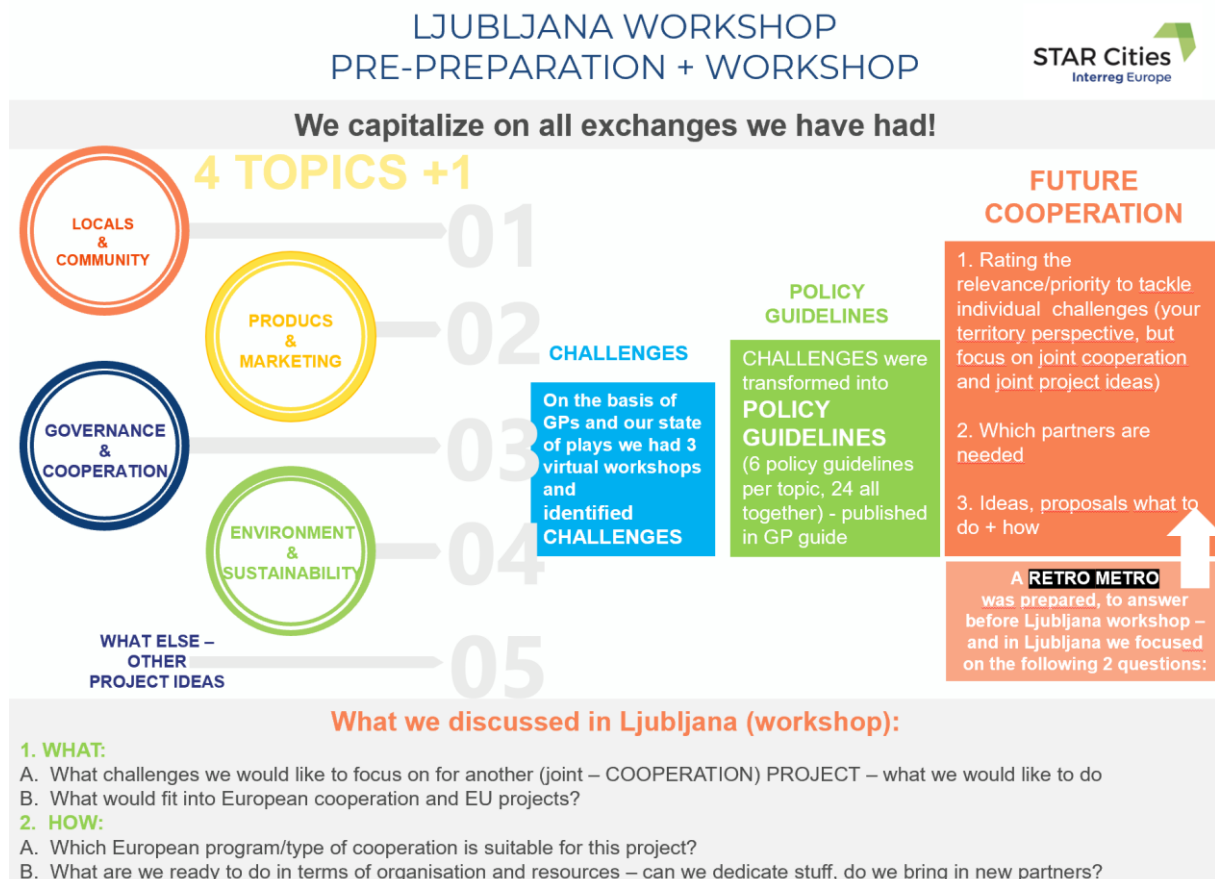
Covid-19 has brought a significant change in the lifestyle of hundreds of millions of people across Europe and the globe and travel priorities have changed radically. Recovery will be uneven. Travel will become more inclusive and smaller communities will play a bigger role. The pandemic has shown how important it is for people to have access to open spaces and to nature. River cities with abundant green spaces along the rivers and easy accessibility from the cities to the countryside can benefit from these shifts, but this also means we will have to be better in managing these flows (generated by residents and visitors) and providing more sustainable options (including new offers, products, and experiences).

5. FUTURE COOPERATION PROJECTS (Ljubljana study visit)

FOCUS OF THE WORKSHOP (FIRST PART – Tuesday, October, 5th; 180 minutes)

The focus of the workshop in Ljubljana was agreed to be the identification of joint cooperation projects of riverside cities for near and mid-term future.

The picture below shows the concept:



QUESTIONS FOR GROUP DISCUSSION

The challenges/guidelines for each of the topic (6 per topic) sum up what we have been discussing in our workshops – challenges that need to be addressed – this can be done on the level of individual city or we can do something together as RIVER CITIES, in cooperation.

Think of what we can do together as RIVER CITIES in the next few years!

We are interested in joint project ideas (in cooperation, not on the level of individual city, since this is a topic of your action plans)!

Write down project ideas. Be concrete and also think you are possible partners and funds/platforms.

In the workshop partners were divided into 5 groups (4 topics + “what else”) and each of the group worked on all 5 topics, discussing possible joint future cooperation projects. They were given the pre-posted ideas (on Metro Retro) and the 6 identified challenges/guidelines per topic. The results (project cooperation ideas) are presented per topic in the sequel of the report.

At the end of group work each individual was allowed to give 4 votes (POINTS) to the project that he or she finds most interesting, relevant and important and one STAR for the top idea. In the tables the results of the voting are presented next to the individual projects identified.

Here are the ideas that were identified in the workshop:

Topic 1: LOCALS & COMMUNITIES

Policy guidelines for the topic:

1. Engagement of locals starts with the reappropriation of riverbanks.
2. Keeping the memory of the river's history alive helps to strengthen the storytelling potential of riverside destinations.
3. As institutions or public bodies, adopt bottom-up approaches by involving citizens.
4. Turn locals into active stakeholders to increase the positive reception of tourism.
5. Think small and start with small-scale events carried out on a voluntary basis for more sustainable tourism.
6. Tourism is becoming increasingly local!

Nu.	PROJECT IDEA Locals & Communities	POINTS	STARS
1.	River connects: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities • Inspiration for various projects (bottom up) • Theme – connection 	0	0
2.	Local producers – in different events	1	0
3.	Keep memory living: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Defining identity • Understand community and engage • Local stories about rivers • Future visions for river banks • Relevant for stakeholders, policy makers, tourism center 	14	7
4.	Artists and community collaboration: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community art projects • Local communities • Foreign artists 	3	0
5.	New platform for locals' inclusion: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ambassador program • Community empowerment 	1	0
Fund: CREATIVE EU + local funds			

Topic 2: PRODUCTS & MARKETING

Policy guidelines for the topic:

1. An absolute necessity for innovation and new business models.
2. The time has come for more unique river experiences.
3. Public-private partnerships start with an alignment of vision and values.
4. There is no river tourism without river landscape accessibility.

5. Targeted product development to enable better management of visitor flows and guarantee nature protection.
6. Marketing and communication to become more socially responsible and engaging.

Nu.	PROJECT IDEA Products & Marketing	POINTS	STARS
1.	River brand (storytelling + unique experience)	4	0
2.	Joint narrative for our river (cities)	2	0
3.	European river routes	1	0
4.	European river museum (digital)	5	0
5.	River week – with river forum + river awards	6	5
6.	Toolkit for infrastructure & attractions	1	4

Topic 3: GOVERNANCE & COOPERATION

Policy guidelines for the topic:

Governance & Cooperation

1. Rivers should be better positioned strategically in governance models.
2. Rivers need focused & cooperative river tourism strategies.
3. Build trust: first through pilot actions, then move to strategies.
4. Rivers have the potential to become tourist destinations.
5. Projects that come from residents or work for them in the first place are the key to success.
6. The evolving roles of DMOs – from marketing to management.

Nu.	PROJECT IDEA Governance & Cooperation	POINTS	STARS
1.	Riverside cities network	0	0
2.	Open to new European/€ partners	0	0
3.	Manifest for the river <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Or digital event • Or label or brand signed by policy makers 	14	2
4.	Implement new projects or concrete actions to engage partners	4	0
5.	Communicate on this European/€ network at local level	0	0
6.	Structured but informal network	1	0
7.	Create an official organization/NGO to endorse and manage the network	0	0
8.	Rotating presidency and coordination	0	0
9.	Regular meetings	0	0

Topic 4: ENVIRONMENT & SUSTAINABILITY

Policy guidelines for the topic:

1. Sustainability is to become the new norm
2. Holistic sustainable strategic frameworks are important, but not enough

3. Sustainable tourism needs to benefit local communities
4. Sustainable river mobility must be at the heart of sustainable river tourism
5. A balanced mix of events and all-year round tourism products is essential
6. It's an imperative to provide more sustainable options

Nu.	PROJECT IDEA Environment & Sustainability	POINTS	STARS
1.	Electric boat start-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Public private ● Develop a company to transition the tourism float in electric boats with destinations as target markets 	3	1
2.	Common sustainable river tourism strategy <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Guidelines ● Actions ● Policies ● Lobbying ● Marketing ● Tool to recruit new regions 	6	0
3.	Clean water foundation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Awards a prize or develop a label for sustainable tourism destination ● Blue flag ● Link between government and citizens 	2	0
4.	INTERREG EU Green mobility for river cities project <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Intermobility ● Support businesses ● Expert assessment ● Bike infrastructure ● Electric boat ● Funding for experimentation ● Accessibility 	11	4
5.	STAR CITIES PLUS project – same partners, same practices, sustainability oriented + focus on implementation phase	0	0
6.	Bring back nature policies <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Standards for zero waste events ● Education on waste management ● Move cars away from the river ● Reduce noise pollution ● Green mobility 	0	0

Topic 5: WHAT ELSE (what other project outside the 4 topics may be of interest to riverside cities)

Nu.	PROJECT IDEA Other project ideas	POINTS	STARS
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1.	Link between central and peripheral areas through an experiential journey (cultural, architectural, heritage ...)	13	2
2.	Standardization of the DMOs procedures: layout of a guideline and a European label green and sustainable DMOs (not only river)	2	0
3.	Climate change and its effect on rivers (floods, economic, ecosystem); European green day – clean-up day; Innovation prize for enterprises	3	0
4.	The most sustainable city connecting the river award; European competition to make it better (jury-mayor-experts-celebrity)	3	0
5.	The river rights (common chapter of river rights)	5	0

FOCUS OF THE WORKSHOP (SECOND PART – Wednesday, October, 6th; 45 minutes)

The goal of the workshop was to make a selection of most relevant and priority projects. Three pillars were identified:

THE FIRST PILLAR – THE NETWORK

Riverside cities network

- Networking between local stakeholders with shared challenges
- Valorization of territories through networking local stakeholders and locals at EU level > bottom-up approach EU stakeholders' network

THE SECOND PILLAR – EVENTS PROMOTING THE IMPORTANCE OF RIVERS

River events

- Events at local/European scale + shared promotion
- River week – as a platform to keep network and share ideas
- Stories of the rivers, including valorization tools
- River museum (collective memory; rivers past-present-future)

THE THIRD PILLAR – SUSTAINABILITY & CLIMATE CHANGE

Sustainable mobility and climate change

- Sustainable mobility (exchange of experiences, + investments)
- Climate change

FINAL status of the report

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