

**HOW
TO SET UP
AN INFORMATION
PLATFORM FOR
MIGRANTS**

**Lessons learned from the transnational
multilingual tool Danube Compass**



www.danubecompass.org

**THE FOLLOWING PROJECT PARTNERS WERE
INVOLVED IN PRODUCING
THIS HANDBOOK:**

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INTRODUCTION



Despite the wealth of information available online, finding the right information in the right place at the right time remains a challenge for everyone.

When one is new to a country, the challenge becomes even greater. Information is often fragmented and only available in local languages. Many studies have found lack of information to be the critical barrier to a successful integration of migrants.

Our desire to overcome this barrier spawned a transnational multilingual information tool called the **Danube Compass**, part of the DRIM project (Danube Region Information Platform for Economic Integration of Migrants) financed by the European Union's Danube Transnational Programme. The realization of the idea took a lot of preparation, time, energy and resources and the tool is currently implemented in eight countries across the Danube region.

What we have learned in the process is what this handbook is all about. It aims to support the creation of similar platforms in other regions. **The handbook is intended for organizations and institutions involved in the integration of newly arrived migrants.** It should be helpful for anyone who is thinking of gathering focused information about arriving, working and living in another country. It provides hands-on checklists and ideas about how to implement one's own platform.

We hope that the lessons learned from the Danube Compass project will help you in your own endeavours to improve access to information for migrants and other mobile individuals in your communities.

BACK GROUND UND



The Danube region, like many other regions across Europe, has been affected by increased migration and refugee movements from Asia and Africa as well as by intra-regional mobility flows. These movements integrate this otherwise very diverse region into a single migration system with challenges that call for transnational solutions. Among these challenges, providing access to information is of paramount importance.

To raise awareness of the need for and the right to information, the DRIM consortium created the DANUBE COMPASS.

The innovative approach of this multi-country and multilingual (19 languages) information platform lies in its transnational character that attempts to address the need for improved access to information in a transnational rather than national framework. The platform is primarily intended to provide various groups of migrants and mobile individuals with information on different aspects of work and life in the eight countries of the Danube region.

The benefits of the Danube Compass transnational information platform are:

- ◆ to improve access to information for both newly-arrived and resident migrants in the eight countries of the Danube region,
- ◆ to provide a multilingual information hub for existing and future information about work and life in the Danube region,
- ◆ to facilitate information transfer from public institutions (information providers) to migrants (information users),
- ◆ to work as a “translation tool” between migrants and service providers,
- ◆ to give decision-makers an overview of the stakeholders and existing services for migrants in the region and,
- ◆ to provide examples of best practices that could be adopted within and beyond the Danube region.



Map of the partner countries of the Danube Region

BEFORE
RE
YOU
START





Needs assessment: What is the problem?

A precise analysis of both local needs and the regional or transnational environment is essential in the initial phase.

Our experience shows that local needs and environments can vary considerably. Asking the right questions thus helped us keep the project focused.

For example:

- ◆ What information is already available and what information is lacking?
- ◆ Who provides information?
- ◆ Do I approach a reasonably small group of (local) sources or many different kinds of sources?
- ◆ What are the most common categories of information required (e.g. working, housing, education)?
- ◆ Where and how does the target audience currently obtain the relevant information?
- ◆ What kind of technology is used by the target group? Smartphones, tablets, laptops?



Learning from best-practices: What has already been done?

A systematic review of the existing information platforms is a necessary “first step” of the planning phase because it shows what has already been done, what are the newest trends, what is lacking as well as what are less successful solutions you would wish to avoid.

We recommend that sufficient time is set aside for this phase because it is difficult to adjust the basic framework and structure at a later stage.



Target groups: Who are the users?

Needs are a matter of perspective. Get as much feedback from your target group as possible. Better still, actively involve your target group in developing the first steps and the main categories of the platform content. Through preliminary tests or a focus group setting, you will learn the best way to formulate specific content and what signs, symbols and classifications will or will not be readily understood.

Involving future users from the start is an excellent way to ensure that your product accurately reflects the real perspectives of your specific target group.

Caritas Graz, Austria: “It would be useful to provide the Danube Compass in more than five languages to reach as many migrants as possible. The main focus has to be on usability for the target groups (simple language, graphical visualization, IT solutions, etc.).”



Language issues: The more, the better?

In most cases of existing information platforms for migrants, only the local language and English are used. However, the idea of launching a transnational information platform suggests a multilingual content. You are still left with the question which languages to use.

First, take a look at the statistics to ascertain/determine the countries of origin of most migrants.

Second, check which migrant group has particular difficulties in accessing information since numbers are not always the only criterion.

Also, think carefully about translation costs, the organization of work, quality control, costs of updates and human resources. From the technical point of view, it is also important to note that entering different language scripts (e.g. Arabic script) in a content management system can cause difficulties for non-specialists. The golden rule, therefore, is - plan ahead.

Caritas Graz, Austria: “Remember that translation costs are extremely high. Flexible budget allocation is therefore vital. Also, it is wise to see translations themselves as a major part of the project – and hence of the budget plan.”



Finances: Expect the unexpected?

Despite a solid budget plan, collecting and checking information might demand more resources than initially expected. This is due to difficulties in finding reliable resources, double or triple checking and constant flow of new information (e.g. change of legislation, new services).

Take into consideration that information availability, access to stakeholders and the scale of information may vary significantly across different countries. That, in turn, can lead to different timeframes and create a need for (financial) flexibility in the project.



IT solutions: Is change here to stay?

Today's websites quickly "age". Technical developments advance fast. Mobile is now becoming the standard, rendering "old" websites increasingly obsolete. We found that the planning stage would have benefitted with more time to explore technical possibilities and improvements.

In the age of agile methods, we recommend that you:

- ◆ begin with a small prototype in order to test structures, functionality and user experience,
- ◆ plan for a more extended test phase in which you can still adjust the technical and structural framework before launching the full-scale information platform,
- ◆ involve the target groups in usability tests and feedback cycles.



Project team: Whom do we sign up?

Transnational teams need people with strong communication and negotiation skills, and the ability to come up with workable shared solutions. However, each project demands a specific set of partners. The best way to assemble a project team is to use a checklist:

- ◆ What kind of expertise, qualifications and work ethic do you need/should they hold?
- ◆ What resources are available in your team?
- ◆ What kind of expertise could you obtain from outside sources?
- ◆ Do they have a track record of dedicated and interesting projects?
- ◆ How compatible are your work style and ethics with potential partner organizations?

Once you establish a solid partnership, it is essential to strike the right balance between top-down and bottom-up decision-making processes.

While both approaches have their positive and negative aspects, the complex nature of the Danube Compass demanded not only full commitment and input from all partners but also a clear chain of command (activity leaders, work package leaders, etc.) to streamline the decision-making process.



Work breakdown structure: The road to success?

A partnership needs a shared understanding of the project plan, of the steps ahead, of how decisions are made and of what role the partners play in the decision-making process.

In order to share information in a transparent way that everyone understands, it is helpful to create documents such as project structure plans, manuals and network diagrams with project milestones and deadlines.

Milestones indicate the time when a sub-project ends with a specific outcome.

They must be simple, manageable and include commentary functions. To ensure all partners keep track of the milestones, you might need to use a specific project management software (e.g. Asana, Trello). While deadlines are crucial for the overall success, you should also plan for delays with respect to most challenging tasks that require additional time.

STEPS



PLANNING

Several challenges must be addressed in the initial planning phase:

- ◆ Do you want to include one or several target groups?
- ◆ How do you reconcile your aims to IT solutions given the resources available?
- ◆ What scope and depth of information do you want to provide?
- ◆ Do you want to build on existing information platforms or create a new one from scratch?

To develop a solution-oriented project idea, the following key questions should be addressed:

- ◆ What is the problem?
- ◆ What is the ideal state that you want to achieve?
- ◆ What should the situation look like when the problem has been solved?
- ◆ What steps could help you achieve this ideal state?

Next, you need to re-examine your ideas against the performed needs assessment. Now it is time to evaluate whether the project can be realized at all with the means and possibilities at your disposal.

The following “Project Development” checklist can help:

The online information platform is special because:

What advantages would we gain from the implementation?

Which target groups does the information platform address?
(Describe them as accurately as possible and substantiate your choice with facts.)

What benefits will the target group gain from the tool?

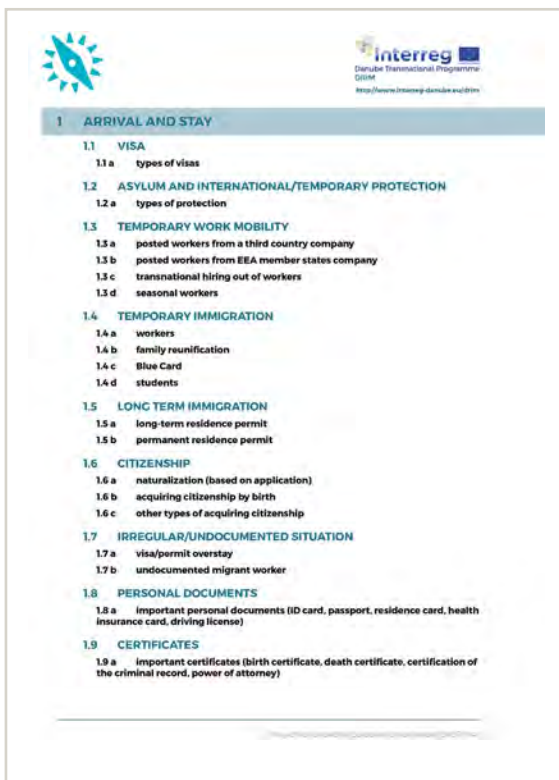
KDRIU, Hungary: “I would highlight the importance of early-stage planning. Since the complexity and the amount of information are quite significant, I would plan more thoroughly the process of collecting information. A brief period of research is necessary to analyze the approximate amount and availability of information. Also, it could be useful to contact the “information owners” in advance, as that will help assess their willingness to collaborate and share information.”

COLLECTING

One of the main challenges in collecting information for a transnational platform is how to organize “the collecting phase” across several countries.

Our solution was to come up with a conceptual framework that consisted of:

- ◆ structure of topics and subtopics to be covered in the information platform,
- ◆ phases and timeline of collecting information,
- ◆ design manual covering the use of language and forms of presenting information (e.g. “plain English”) and necessary elements of each sub-topic,
- ◆ common terminology to be used throughout the platform (e.g. glossary).



The image shows a screenshot of a document's table of contents. At the top left is a logo with a blue sun-like symbol. At the top right is the 'interreg' logo with the text 'Danube Transnational Programme' and 'Cooper' below it, and a URL 'http://www.interreg-danube.eu/dtm'. The main content is a list of sections and sub-sections under the heading '1 ARRIVAL AND STAY'. The sections are numbered 1.1 through 1.9, with sub-sections lettered a through d. The sub-sections include 'types of visas', 'types of protection', 'posted workers from a third country company', 'posted workers from EEA member states company', 'transnational hiring out of workers', 'seasonal workers', 'workers', 'family reunification', 'Blue Card', 'students', 'long-term residence permit', 'permanent residence permit', 'naturalization (based on application)', 'acquiring citizenship by birth', 'other types of acquiring citizenship', 'visa/permit overstay', 'undocumented migrant worker', 'important personal documents (ID card, passport, residence card, health insurance card, driving license)', and 'important certificates (birth certificate, death certificate, certification of the criminal record, power of attorney)'.

1	ARRIVAL AND STAY
1.1	VISA
1.1 a	types of visas
1.2	ASYLUM AND INTERNATIONAL/TEMPORARY PROTECTION
1.2 a	types of protection
1.3	TEMPORARY WORK MOBILITY
1.3 a	posted workers from a third country company
1.3 b	posted workers from EEA member states company
1.3 c	transnational hiring out of workers
1.3 d	seasonal workers
1.4	TEMPORARY IMMIGRATION
1.4 a	workers
1.4 b	family reunification
1.4 c	Blue Card
1.4 d	students
1.5	LONG TERM IMMIGRATION
1.5 a	long-term residence permit
1.5 b	permanent residence permit
1.6	CITIZENSHIP
1.6 a	naturalization (based on application)
1.6 b	acquiring citizenship by birth
1.6 c	other types of acquiring citizenship
1.7	IRREGULAR/UNDOCUMENTED SITUATION
1.7 a	visa/permit overstay
1.7 b	undocumented migrant worker
1.8	PERSONAL DOCUMENTS
1.8 a	important personal documents (ID card, passport, residence card, health insurance card, driving license)
1.9	CERTIFICATES
1.9 a	important certificates (birth certificate, death certificate, certification of the criminal record, power of attorney)

Structure of (sub)topics

DESIGN & CONTENT MANUAL

1. Description

The template for Danube Compass covers eight large areas of everyday life and work in eight countries. Among them the last two categories („support services“ and „useful contacts“ will gather all information from the category „support services for migrants“ at sublevel (e.g. from support services at „employment“, „health“, etc..))

2. The timeline for collection of information

The information will be collected in three steps:

- Step 1: Categories „Arrival and entry“ and „Work“
DEADLINE: March 31 2017
- Step 2: Categories „Education“ and „Learning local language“
DEADLINE: April 30 2017
- Step 3: Categories „Everyday life“ and „health“
DEADLINE: May 31 2017

All materials should be sent to Slovak partner UE SAV's communication manager Tomas Hrustic at tomas.hrustic@savba.sk.

IMPORTANT! All materials sent should be in English language which at this point should not yet be proof read. For the partners that will collect information in local language and translate it to English using the budget funds, please contact LP (Martina Bofulin or Nataša Rogelja). For the language used please see the section „Text style“.

3. Instructions for collecting information

➢ The levels:

Zero level: fixed and no modification is possible. The LP and UE SAV will

Project co-funded by European Union funds (ERDF, ERDF)

provide one sentence description. Example: 2. WORK

Level 1: fixed and no modification is possible. The LP and UE SAV will provide one sentence description. Example: 2.1 EMPLOYMENT

Level 2: fixed and no modification is possible. Example: 2.1.1. JOB SEARCH

Level 3: Partner can add a category to accommodate local needs. In case a category is not relevant only enter the sentence "The service/ information not applicable in X country". Example: 2.1.1. a) job centres

Level 4 (in same cases also level 3): Here you should fill in the information on one of three below indicated ways, which we call "Prototypes":

- Prototype 1 (questions): reply to the given questions
- Prototype 2 (table): fill in the given table
- Prototype 3 (steps): describe the steps

➢ The prototypes:

We need to use prototypes in order to be able to transform Word templates into the uniformed electronic templates for Danube Compass Info Tool. Prototype = one entry on the fourth level. Below see examples for each prototype:

PROTOTYPE 1: Questions

TITLE:
121. RIGHT TO ASYLUM

WHAT/OVERVIEW:
International protection, or asylum, protects individuals whose basic human rights have been violated in either their home country or in country of permanent residence and are subsequently forced to look for protection outside the territory of their home country.

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Example of design manual




Once the basic structure is agreed upon, the next step is the creation of the articles – units of texts under each topic.

We created three prototypes of articles:

- ◆ descriptive articles,
- ◆ articles listing services/directories (containing necessary information in response to questions such as what and where),
- ◆ articles detailing the relevant processes (describing the steps involved in obtaining a service: steps 1, 2, 3, etc., where to go, good to know, essential points).

We set a maximum character length for all articles.

Get medical help



WHAT

Steps to get medical aid differ in emergency and other cases. If you need urgent medical aid, another person should call an ambulance or you should go to the closest ambulance station.

GOOD TO KNOW

Health protection and its providers: <https://goo.gl/b5aNBO>

STEPS

Step 1: You need to choose a doctor in the health centre in your residence area and officially register with the Croatian Health Insurance Fund as that doctor's patient.

Step 2: On arrival to the health centre, you can ask at the reception desk where your doctor's office is located. When you visit the doctor, you either wait in the waiting room, or you set up an appointment in advance, in person or by telephone.

Step 3: If an additional specialist examination or test is needed, your doctor will give you a referral and direct you to the appropriate medical institution which you should visit or set up an appointment.

WHERE

Croatian Health Insurance Fund: <https://goo.gl/UW92kT>
Directory of medical institutions in Croatia: <https://goo.gl/NuzCIW>

ATTENTION

Persons under international protection don't choose their doctor, but go to the closest one or any other health centre.

Example of an article from www.danubecompass.org

Despite the clear conceptual framework partners encountered the following problems:

- ◆ The conceptual framework did not always fit the kind of information that was available or could not be easily adapted to regional specifics (e.g. the decentralized nature of public institutions in Austria and Germany due to which public institutions' organization and regulations are locally and regionally specific).
- ◆ We often found it difficult to rewrite complicated legal terminology in a way that was user-friendly but still legally accurate. The balance was sometimes hard to achieve.
- ◆ Information is constantly changing, especially for the topics of “arrival and residence” and “work”. Meticulous attention was therefore paid to updating the links and contact information.

Our solution to these problems was the following:

We realized that, in addition to clear guidelines, the partnership needed one full, country-specific version of the Danube Compass in order to complete the task and improve the quality of articles.

This “model Danube Compass”, created by one of the partners in collaboration with the lead partner, gave other partners an insight into the structure, content, language and length of articles. Partners thus had a much clearer idea about what had to be done.

The guidelines were also adapted to accommodate real problems that arose during the process, all of which resulted in a better quality of articles across the partnership.

The model Danube Compass also revealed the need for some fine-tuning, such as adding specific local-language terms for particular institutions or services and adding information on the languages used in the links provided. This helped users avoid unnecessary clicks on links that would be of no use to them.



WHAT

If you're ill please contact a general practitioner (*Familienarzt*) near you. You can find a general practitioner under “*Arzt für Allgemeinmedizin*” and dentists under “*Zahnarzt*” at (in German): www.herold.at or at www.docfinder.at. General practitioners are your initial point of contact; they carry out general examinations and offer simple blood tests. They'll refer you to a specialist or outpatient clinic or hospital, if needed.

Example of added local language from www.danubecompass.org

KDRIU, Hungary: “To tailor the collected information as closely as possible to the needs of the target groups, it would be useful to circulate the methodology among those target groups (e.g. public administrators, migrants, the staff of migrant support organizations, etc.). Where necessary – depending on the recommendations of the target groups – changes could then be made in the methodology to achieve a better user experience.”

YUCOM, Serbia: “The greatest challenge was not only to learn all the procedures – how to satisfy certain requirements and access services – but also to formulate all these issues from the perspective of migrants. We tried to think from their point of view to help us recognize their primary needs.”

The issue of simple language

In line with modern approaches to governance and public institutions' dissemination of information, we placed considerable emphasis on using simple language that is easy to understand. This plain language ensures that a wide variety of target groups (e.g. non-native speakers and less educated persons) can understand the information provided. It also increases transparency and improves users' satisfaction with public institutions.

In trying to formulate more understandable language for users, we drew on guidelines from well-known initiatives for the use of plain language in public services, such as the UK's government information portal GOV.UK. This portal provides many useful suggestions on how to structure articles and how to make language structures more accessible. Below you can see an example of the "normal" language usually used by public institutions (the "before" version) and the rewritten plain version of the same sentence (the "after" version).

Before

The hospital patient has the right to information relevant to his situation that must allow the patient the fullest insight into all aspects of his situation, medical and otherwise, and, on an informed basis, enable him to make his own decisions or to participate in decisions which have implications for his or her wellbeing.



After

You have a right to information about your condition that helps you fully understand it and make informed choices about your treatment.

TESTING

Having collected the information and created a beta version of the information platform, the next step is to test the platform. Still a “work in progress”, the beta version of the information platform allows both the partnership and the target groups to test the platform’s usability features and technical capabilities.

The testing of the Danube Compass was organized in the form of pilot actions taking place in four locations chosen for their different characteristics regarding the information infrastructure for migrants.

We started off with pilot action methodology that covered procedures concerning:

- ◆ testing amongst target groups,
- ◆ testing through peer reviews.

To execute a successful pilot action, the following questions should be addressed:

What does a piloting activity look like?

There are many possibilities in formal and non-formal environments. A piloting activity can, for example, be organized as a treasure hunt or a game to make it more attractive for your target groups. You might also want to combine it with a related event or workshop to increase the number of participants. Having face-to-face experience is crucial. Online questionnaires or quizzes are recommended as additional tools to increase the number of pilot testers. Regardless of the method chosen, you need to guarantee meaningful feedback and results by involving the largest possible number of test persons from your target groups. That will help you optimize the final, fully-fledged version of the information platform. Many of our partners designed questionnaires. Other partners and target groups saw a guided, content-focused discussion as the key to success.

How to assure the quality of the piloting activities?

We prepared step-by-step guidelines for the piloting activities. Following these guidelines, project partners planned, performed and evaluated the piloting activities in their respective territories over a four-month period. During this process, activity logs were prepared to monitor the process of pilot implementation and to make it easier for other partners to reconstruct their findings. The activity log for each step made the process transparent. All observations were recorded and reported to all of the other partners.

How do you obtain feedback from target groups?

The Danube Compass was tested by several target groups: refugees, asylum seekers, highly skilled migrants, students at local language schools, public institutions' front-desk employees, employment office call centers' employees, local government officials, volunteers... A total of 294 people took part in the piloting activities. They were approached directly or through mediating organizations. The piloting activity was either part of their regular activity (e.g. local language class) or they were invited to an event dedicated specifically to test the Danube Compass. Their feedback was collected through surveys and focus group debates with the support of experienced moderators.

How do you obtain feedback from peer reviewers?

The piloting activities were also monitored and reviewed by project partners. They each visited at least two activities organized by two different project partners. The resultant peer reviews were designed as “friendly audits” and took place in an atmosphere of mutual learning, understanding and trust. Following the peer reviews, the peers prepared reports containing recommendations for adjustment or further development of the national implementation of the Danube Compass.

I am left with an abundance of recommendations.
How can I proceed?

Once your pilot testing is over, you will be left with an abundance of recommendations, improvements, suggestions and comments. Based on the principle of seeing activities “through as many eyes as possible” – obtaining feedback from diverse target groups, stakeholders and peer reviewers – we compiled a very long list of findings that were subsequently analyzed and discussed. One member of each transnational review team was the coordinator.

The role of the transnational review coordinators was to collect all the feedback forms and main findings and summarize them in a transnational review report. This method enabled us to optimize the transferability of the learning outcomes and enhance both reciprocal involvement and transnational value added. It was important to distinguish between technical issues (intuitive design, missing functions, layout) and content issues (information accuracy, clarity of meaning, language issues).

Often, some recommendations could be implemented right away, allowing new findings to come to light.

KDRIU, Hungary: “Once the online platform is ready, it might be also a good idea to test it with just a few entries (prepared in advance specifically for testing purposes) before starting to gather information and prepare the entire text.”

Caritas Graz, Austria: “The piloting activities in Zagreb, Munich, Ljubljana and Graz were useful. The process of “learning by doing” enabled us to gain crucial insights into the layout, usability content and technical issues of the Danube Compass. Interaction with the different target groups – in our case migrants, project partners and stakeholders – also gave us valuable feedback, taught us about the pros and cons and identified certain issues that have to be improved.”

FINALIZING

Once you have finished the testing phase, it is time to implement the findings and complete the final steps.

Since the feedback usually covers a wide variety of recommendations and suggestions, you have to make a list of priorities. What is crucial to increase users' satisfaction? What improvements are feasible given the resources available and the time constraints?

We classified these recommendations as either “must-have” or “implement in follow-up projects”. These classifications distinguished between the necessary improvements to be implemented before the launch and possible improvements that could be implemented after the launch or in follow-up projects.

Based on the findings of the piloting activities, some partners focused only on the necessary improvements.

Others performed a thorough review of the whole content.

Again, relevant stakeholders were invited to comment on the necessary improvements. While in some countries the public institutions eagerly responded, in others, they were not always willing to cooperate.

To tackle these challenges, we suggest drafting a “to-do list” with a corresponding timetable.

TO DO :

	Necessary	Optional	Time	Note
List of technical improvements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
List and guidelines for content Improvements	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Implementation of changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Review by relevant authorities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Proofreading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Translations	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Input to platform content management system	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Quality control of input	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Additional content (legal aspects, disclaimers, cookie policy, project info)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

What did we change in the Danube Compass?

The Danube Compass went through many changes and improvements. The feedback most often referred to technical problems. One example is the platform's search engine. A suggestion was made to use a Google-based search engine. This improved the results because all the keywords were included and the search engine could disregard typos or misspellings. Another aspect was the mobile version of the platform that involved too much scrolling. The technical improvement of this aspect allowed for much better user experience. Content-wise, some sections that were too long were revised and the content was updated for accuracy. Following experts' feedback, we added a gender equality aspect in relevant articles and gave an additional introduction to common civic principles governing European societies.

How to ensure a successful launch?

The launch of the information platform has to “make a splash” nationally and transnationally. On the one hand, extensive media coverage will give the information platform a boost in the eyes of the general public. On the other hand, subsections of the target groups must be targeted strategically – in migrants' language courses, hospitals and employment offices, for example. This two-tiered approach allows us to reach target groups more widely. Additionally, the information platform can serve as a “teaching tool” in various courses to improve public institutions' services, e.g. in the context of intercultural awareness campaigns.

Caritas Graz, Austria: “It is of fundamental importance to have the beta version of the Danube Compass finished and the information updated and improved before work begins on translations into all other languages.”

Employment Service of Slovenia, Slovenia: “Obtaining and implementing the feedback from public institutions was often challenging. We wanted to have sections of the Danube Compass approved by relevant authorities. Some were very cooperative, some less so.”

ACHIEVING SUSTAINABILITY

Sustainability addresses measures for the information platform to remain “alive” after the project ends. Information platforms need constant care: technical updates and new information require monitoring, updating and editing of content and the technical framework.

In the case of the Danube Compass, we identified a variety of challenges:

Organizational sustainability

- ◆ Can the DRIM partners ensure sustainability in the long run?
- ◆ What kind of organization would be an ideal caretaker for national sub-sites of the Danube Compass?
- ◆ Should it be an international organization?
- ◆ An NGO?
- ◆ A public authority?

Technical sustainability

- ◆ What are the ground rules for technical and content updates to the platform?
- ◆ How can we provide legal and organizational aspects of technical updates for the content management system to respond to the editing and updating needs of national sub-sites?
- ◆ How can we ensure the accuracy and smooth functionality of the platform in light of each partner’s resources?

Financial sustainability

An estimate of the cost of updating the information platform for the next five years must be prepared.

- ◆ Most important of all, what possible financial sources could be used for updates and further development of both content and new technical solutions (e.g. bots, apps)?
- ◆ Can the partner consortium find a viable business model that does not require public funds but is still in line with legal and other aspects of the existing platform funding?

Communication and dissemination sustainability

A successful information platform should attract many user clicks. A clear and focused communication and marketing strategy is therefore crucial to make the information platform a success among the target groups.

- ◆ Which activities could improve the visibility of the information platform?
- ◆ Do we need a media partner?
- ◆ Who will take the lead in coordinating international communications activities?

KDRIU, Hungary: “We also learned the importance of a clear vision about sustainability. This also concerns financial sustainability (the cost of maintaining the web platform, staff costs etc.), as these aspects correlate directly to the availability of up-to-date information, given that updating involves a significant workload.”

SPF Group, Czech Republic:

“We believe that the issue of the sustainability of the Danube Compass information platform could already have been dealt with during the project creation process. This applies in particular to ensuring the continuous updating of large volumes of information, establishing links to national systems to support the integration of migrants and upholding the international dimension of this information platform.”

Based on the above challenges, we have prepared several possible scenarios that might be of assistance when developing strategies for similar projects:

Scenario 1:

Keep the transnational approach and the platform alive

In our ideal scenario, the Danube Compass should be monitored and updated by a transnational team of dedicated editors. They could either be representatives of the project's partner organizations or stakeholders' institutions.

This team should be organized along the lines of a news site, where responsibilities and rights are clearly defined and both national editors and an editor-in-chief can be appointed.

The editors would monitor and update national chapters of the Danube Compass and handle dissemination among interest groups. An editor-in-chief would look after the technical side of the platform and handle transnational dissemination.

Regular updating would keep the platform relevant to users, while a possible expansion could include new regions and content. This arrangement naturally requires the availability of funding for the editors' organization – ideally from a transnational agency or a follow-up project fund.

Scenario 2:

“Go private” and create a sustainable business model

In recent years, several social innovation initiatives have emerged that see providing information dissemination services for migrants as a business opportunity. One of the most prominent examples is the Swedish mobile app Mobilearn. The app is not set up as a transnational project but was launched by a company to target local communities in Sweden. It provides an information platform where access is sold to “partners” – local and regional governments – who further disseminate it among migrants in their region. This could also be a solution for the Danube Compass, which could be taken over by a private company or public institution that would come up with a viable business model.

Scenario 3:

“Go local”: Break the platform down into national/regional chapters owned by local institutions

Another option is to break the platform down into eight regional versions. The content would then be updated and developed by local organizations in each country. However, this scenario could raise questions about the “owner” of the technical platform with overall responsibility for maintaining the information website. It also jeopardizes the transnational character of the platform and ignores the importance of movements within the intra-Danube region. The advantage would be that the work and resources would be in local hands, which can generally be more flexible and adaptive to local needs.

Scenario 4:

The transnational platform is kept on “life support” without further development

This least favourable scenario would mean the project partners keep only minimum update of the information platform in terms of technical viability and content accuracy for the next five years in order to fulfil the demand of the project’s funding body.

The partnership identified three measures that were deemed most viable under the present circumstances:

- ◆ applying for EU and national funding to continue with the technical development of the Danube Compass,
- ◆ finding local partners among public institutions that are in charge of the migrants' integration,
- ◆ looking for a possible partnership with the private sector that could further develop the Danube Compass into a successful spin-off company.

ZRC SAZU, Slovenia: “While creating the Danube Compass with its vast quantity of information and wide focus was anything but easy, especially within one project, our example shows that a group of dedicated partners can achieve a lot. In this sense, we are very proud that the Danube Compass is building the foundations of information structure for migrants in some countries, while in the others importantly contributes to the existing sources. Our main mission now has to be to work relentlessly on sustaining and therefore achieving a genuine change on a long-term basis.”

HOW TO SET UP AN INFORMATION PLATFORM FOR MIGRANTS

Lessons learned from the transnational multilingual
tool Danube Compass

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