SOS2LearnDBS
Danube – Black Sea

Source to Sea: Leveraging community knowledge and action for restoring the Danube River basin and the Black Sea region

Research and Innovation Action - Project 101217667

1ST Transition Agendas Open Call

Guidelines for developing a Transition Agenda

OC-TAg1-SoS2LearnDBS-2026

Call deadline: 11th December 2026 17:00 (Brussels Time)

Introduction

This document is part of the 1st call for Transition Agendas of the SoS2LearnDBS project. It should be read complementarily with the remaining documents of the Call, all of them available on the SoS2LearnDBS project website:

- Call conditions
- Technical Annex template
- Budget template
- Documents for selected applications: Sub-grant Agreement template, Declaration of Honour template, Bank Account & Legal Entity Declaration Form, SME declaration form (for SMEs only).

The document provides additional information and guidance on specific aspects identified in the Call Conditions and Technical Annex, including information on:

- The objectives and targets of the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030"
- The priority pillars defined for the Danube–Black Sea Region
- The Mandatory KPI Framework

Important Note for Applicants: Distinguishing proposal preparation from TAg execution

To ensure clarity during the application process, please distinguish between these two phases:

1. **Proposal Development Phase (Current Stage / Pre-Award):** In this phase, the applicant consortium prepares and submits an application (Online application form with the 12-page Technical Annex and Budget annex) for the Open Call. At this stage, you are **not** writing the final Transition Agenda roadmap itself. Instead, you are presenting a structured **project plan and methodology** explaining *how* your consortium will conduct activities (such as the baseline assessment, engaging diferent stakeholders, etc.) over a 4-to-12-month period, leading to the TAg roadmap.
2. **TAg Execution & Roadmap Co-Creation Phase (Post-Award / Funded Project):** If your application is selected for funding, your consortium will implement the proposed work plan. Over the 4-to-12-month project lifecycle, you can carry out activities to actively co-create, validate, and finalise the strategic **Transition Agenda (TAg) Roadmap** deliverable.

1 Call snapshot

What do we fund?	Who can apply?	Where?
Development of Strategic Roadmaps (Transition Agendas - TAgs) that facilitate the transition towards more sustainable and resilient aquatic ecosystems. Projects (4 to 12 months) will contribute to reaching the targets of the Mission 'Restore our ocean and waters by 2030'.	Consortia of **2 to 4 independent legal entities** located in EU Member States or Horizon Europe Associated Countries. The **consortium leader** shall be based in the Danube-Black Sea region and at least one partner must have an established link with the local/regional communities.	Project activities must target and take place in one of the five target regions: **Upper Danube**, **Middle Danube**, **Lower Danube**, **Danube Delta**, or **Black Sea**. In this call, we aim to fund a minimum of 1 and a maximum of **3 projects per region**.
When?	**Funding:**	**Support provided:**
Submission deadline: 11th December 2026, 17:00 CET (Brussels time) **Projects expected starting date**: May 2027	**Three funding tiers**: €25,000-€50,000 or €50,000-€75,000 or €75,000-€100,000 per project **Maximum per organisation**: €60,000	Selected projects will receive dedicated technical assistance from **SoS2LearnDBS** partners, capacity-building activities, networking opportunities, access to the Mission Implementation Platform, and communication support throughout implementation.

2 What is a TAg? What should a TAg address?

A **Transition Agenda (TAg)** is a strategic, multi-year planning and governance instrument designed to guide local and regional communities toward sustainable water resource management, aquatic ecosystem restoration, and a climate-resilient blue economy.

Key Characteristics & Scope

- **Strategic Roadmap:** A TAg is not an individual restoration project or physical construction work. It is a structured blueprint outlining the policy adaptations, governance mechanisms, stakeholder commitments, and investment priorities needed to transition away from unsustainable practices.
- **Policy & Regional Alignment:** A TAg must address **at least one Objective and Target** of the EU Mission "Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030" (see more details in section 4) and align with **one Regional Priority Pillar** of the Danube–Black Sea (DBS) region (Pollution Reduction, Water Quantity & Adaptation, Ecosystem Restoration, Urban Water Management, or Cross-Border Governance) – see more details in section 5.

- **Multi-Stakeholder Co-Creation:** It must be co-designed with a broad network (involving, for example, local/regional authorities, businesses, CSOs/NGOs, research bodies, and citizens), integrating gender equality, youth involvement, and Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) where applicable.
- **Follow-Up Investment Pathways:** A TAg must define a clear financing pipeline, acting as an actionable blueprint to secure post-grant capital from larger public or private funds (e.g., EU structural funds, Interreg, LIFE, or municipal budgets)

3 Methodology: How to develop a TAg?

To develop the TAg application, it may be useful to consider the following methodological steps. They will help you to work on the information required in the Technical Annex of your application:

1. **Baseline Assessment & Problem Definition *(Where are we?*):**
    - Evaluate the local socio-ecological baseline and current water management challenges.
    - Leverage existing assets: Use official data, ecological statuses, and pressure registers from current River Basin Management Plans (DRBMP / ICPDR) as proof of existing problems and system gaps.
2. **Stakeholder Mapping & Co-Creation Strategy (*Who is involved?*):**
    - Map local actors across different categories and establish an engagement strategy.
    - Ideate possible Living Lab sessions and workshops to co-design solutions and secure local ownership.
3. **Strategic Priority & Objective Setting (*What do we want to change?*):**
    - Select your primary **EU Mission Objective** and **DBS Priority Pillar (see chapters 4 and 5 of this document)**.
    - Formulate 4–5 **SMART Objectives** and define your project's Theory of Change.
4. **Action Planning (*How do we implement in practice?*):**
    - Structure logical tasks/activities (max 4) covering, for example, policy briefs, governance frameworks, regulatory gap analyses, and formal Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) with public bodies.
5. **Monitoring, Risk & Sustainability Planning (*What remains after the project?*):**
    - Establish the **4-part KPI framework** (Common Impact, Regional Impact, Governance Delivery, and Performance) with explicit baselines and targets **(see chapter 6 of this document).**
    - Assign a **Risk Owner** for operational/governance risks, outline institutional adoption mechanisms by competent authorities, and specify post-grant financing streams.

4 Contribution of the TAg for the EU Mission objectives

According to the SoS2LearnDBS TAg call 1 conditions, all funded projects must contribute to at least one of the three objectives of the EU Mission “Restore our Ocean and Waters by 2030”. Each TAg application needs to select at least one Objective and Target of the above-mentioned EU Mission. In the Online Application form, you will be requested to select one of the three objectives. In the proposal description, you will be requested to refer to the objective selected and at least one target. Besides, in the proposal description, you will be requested to:

- Justify how your TAg proposal aligns with the selected objective and target(s)
- Define at least one KPI aligned with the selected objective and target.

The table on the next pages provides an overview of the three Mission Objectives, the respective Targets, Indicators, and Expected Achievements for the Mission. Although in your application you only need to refer to at least one objective and one target, the detail of the indicators and expected achievements may help better refine the TAg concept and define the requested KPIs.

Objective 1: Protect and restore marine and freshwater ecosystems and biodiversity, in line with the EU Biodiversity Strategy 2030[1];		
Target	**Indicator**	**Expected Achievements for the Mission**
Contribute to relevant marine nature restoration targets including degraded seabed habitats and coastal ecosystems.	Marine restoration to enhance biodiversity	• Developing solutions to enhance ecosystem services, including through control of invasive species by Mission activities. • Testing nature-based solutions for restoration of vulnerable marine ecosystems by Mission projects.
	Marine restoration: financing, ecosystem services, and monitoring	• Developing monitoring technologies to measure effectiveness and to design restoration interventions developed by Mission projects. • Testing novel assessment and financing models to evaluate societal benefits of healthy ecosystems and secure their long-term sustainability.
Protect at least 30% of the EU's seas and integrate ecological corridors, as part of a true Trans-European Nature Network	Marine protected areas (MPAs)	• Engaging 50+ existing MPAs in testing new governance and management tools by Mission activities. • Identifying 50+ new sites by Mission projects as suitable to become MPAs.
Strictly protect at least 10% of the EU's seas	Marine strictly protected areas	• Supporting selection and designation through blueprints and road maps developed by Mission projects. Strengthening management of protected areas through ecosystem-based approaches and blueprints developed and tested by Mission activities.
Restore at least 25,000 km of free/flowing rivers	Floodplains and wetlands with restored connectivity	• Implementing solutions for restoring 50+ floodplains through Mission activities. • Developing solutions for restoring 57,000 ha of wetlands through Mission activities.
Restore at least 25,000 km of free/flowing rivers	Rivers restored to free-flowing rivers	• Testing solutions for restoring 500+ km of rivers into free-flowing rivers by Mission activities. Assessing 100+ barriers and eventually removing them through Mission activities.
Objective 2: Prevent and eliminate pollution of our ocean, seas and waters, in line with the EU Action Plan Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil[2];		
Target	**Indicator**	**Expected Achievements for the Mission**
Reduce nutrient losses by 50%	Nitrate in rivers	• Testing technologies to reduce fertiliser use by 20-40%, potentially achieved at selected demo sites by Mission activities. • Developing solutions to reduce nutrient levels by 30% in targeted ecosystems through Mission activities.
	Total phosphorus in lakes	Testing solutions to reduce nutrient enrichment by 15% at selected demo sites through Mission activities.
Reduce the use and risk of chemical pesticides by 50%	Chemical pesticides in water environments	• Testing technologies for reduction and prevention of chemical pesticides, including nature-based solutions and treatment technologies, by Mission activities • Developing technologies for on-site monitoring of pesticides by Mission projects

[1] https://environment.ec.europa.eu/strategy/biodiversity-strategy-2030_en

[2] COM(2021) 400 final. Pathway to a Healthy Planet for All – EU Action Plan: 'Towards Zero Pollution for Air, Water and Soil'. URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52021DC0400

Reduce plastic litter at sea by 50%	Litter in marine ecosystems	• Collecting 422 tons of marine litter by activities conducted by Mission projects at selected demo sites • Testing solutions to prevent up to 11,000 tons of lost gear every year if these Mission solutions are implemented to EU fishing fleet. • Testing solutions to prevent up to 40,000 tons of marine litter every year if these Mission solutions are implemented in the EU fishing fleet.
	Litter in freshwater ecosystems	• Up to 80% plastic litter prevented from entering rivers potentially achieved by Mission solutions. Up to 93% plastic litter removed in rivers at demo sites from technologies tested by Mission projects.
Reduce by 30% microplastics released into the environment	Microplastics released to the environment	• Testing technologies to remove up to 90-95% of microplastics in wastewater through activities conducted by Mission projects. • Engaging citizens and industries to promote alternatives to plastic materials thanks to Mission activities. • Developing and testing monitoring technologies for in-situ monitoring of microplastics through Mission activities.
Objective 3: **Ensure a sustainable, carbon-neutral and circular blue economy[3],** in line with the proposed European Climate Law and the holistic vision enshrined in the Sustainable Blue Economy Strategy.		
Target	**Indicator**	**Expected Achievements for the Mission**
Achieve net zero maritime emissions	CO2 emissions from maritime transport	• Testing retrofitting solutions for small-fishing vessels potentially reducing their CO2 emissions by 40% through Mission activities. • Developing and demonstrating fully electric engines for small-scale fisheries by Mission projects
Develop zero-carbon and low-impact aquaculture	Sustainable fishing gears	• Promoting the use of degradable fishing gears through the development and deployment of alternatives to common plastic-based gears by Mission activities. • Fostering collection and recovery of lost gears thanks to Mission activities engaging with fishermen and local communities.
	Sustainable aquaculture practices	• Promoting and expanding cultivation of low trophic species, including algae and bivalve by Mission activities. • Fixating up to 1.3 tons of CO2 thanks to algae production as part of activities conducted by LOCALITY Mission project at selected demo sites.
Promote circular, low-carbon multi-purpose use of marine and water space	Areas with optimised and sustainable use of marine space	• Fostering the coexistence of offshore wind and nature restoration through novel solutions developed by Mission projects. • Enabling the coexistence of offshore wind and aquaculture through novel Mission technologies for cultivation of low-trophic species in harsh offshore environments • Fostering regenerative aquaculture practices through Mission solutions for the coexistence of sustainable farms with nature restauration/ protection activities

Table 1. Mission objectives and their related targets and indicators

Source: https://water.europa.eu/marine/europe-seas/eu-mission-restore-our-oceans-and-water

[3] COM/2021/240 final. Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament, the Council, the European Economic and Social Committee and the Committee of the Regions on a new approach for a sustainable blue economy in the EU Transforming the EU's Blue Economy for a Sustainable Future. URL: https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=celex:52021DC0240

5 Local/regional challenges and priorities

According to the SoS2LearnDBS TAg call 1 conditions, all funded projects must address specific local/regional challenges that are more relevant to the specific applicant community. Each TAg application needs to select at least one specific challenge or priority pillar. In the proposal description, you will be requested to:

- Indicate the priority pillar selected.
- Justify how your TAg proposal aligns with the priority pillar selected and why it is particularly relevant for your community.
- Define at least one KPI aligned with the selected pillar and respective indicators.

The SoS2LearnDBS project has identified the following 5 shared development priorities, so-called Priority Pillars, for the Danube and Black Sea Region:

1. Reduction of water resource pollution (municipal, industrial, agricultural).
2. Sustainable water quantity management and climate adaptation.
3. Restoration of ecosystems and biodiversity.
4. Improvement of urban water management and protection of drinking water sources.
5. Strengthening governance and cross-border cooperation.

The next table provides an overview of the indicators and results associated with each of the 5 Priority Pillars defined by SoS2LearnDBS for the Danube-Black Sea region.

Table 2. List of pillars and assigned indicators and results for TAg projects of the Danube-Black Sea region

Priority Pillar	Indicator	Results
Reduction of water resource pollution (municipal, industrial, and agricultural pollution)	% of population connected to wastewater treatment systems; number of constructed / upgraded Wastewater Treatment Plant facilities; number of inspection controls per year.	Reduction of the number of central pollution sources by 10%; Percentage reduction of untreated wastewater discharge by 10%; Nr of inspections per year; improvement of the chemical and ecological quality of water; reduction of algae proliferation in water; reduction of phosphates in water by 10%.
Sustainable water quantity management and climate adaptation (droughts, floods, water level decline, irrigation)	km of restored river courses / branches; nr of constructed retention zones; number of green infrastructure projects (Sponge City, NbS); ha of area under irrigation systems.	Reduction of flood damage; 10% increase in the area of land that can absorb water; more efficient use of water in agriculture.
Restoration and protection of ecosystems and biodiversity (wetlands, river branches, habitats, fragmentation)	ha of restored wetlands and floodplain areas; km of reactivated river branches; nr of removed or mitigated barriers (dams, weirs); nr of habitat restoration projects.	Increase of connected habitats through which animals can move between areas by 15%; Improvement of biodiversity quality by 15% (more diverse plant species); increase in the number of fish / animals indicating that the water is clean.
Improvement of urban water management and protection of water sources (sewerage, urban runoff, drinking water sources)	km of constructed/restored sewerage network; nr of implemented “green infrastructure” projects; increase in the number of protected drinking water source zones;	increased security of drinking water supply; improved quality of life in urban areas; greater resilience of cities to climate extremes.

	nr of urban plans with an integrated water component.	
Strengthening of governance and cross-border cooperation (Danube–Black Sea region, institutions, policies, communities)	nr of joint monitoring programmes; nr of regional working groups (Danube–Black Sea); nr of joint projects between countries.	nr of joint river basin management plans; level of stakeholder involvement in decision-making; long-term regional coordination in water management.

6 KPI framework

The implementation of the TAg will be monitored through a system of measurable indicators with the aim of assessing the success, effects and long-term sustainability of the proposed measures and activities. Applicants submitting a TAg proposal are required to define a structured Key Performance Indicator (KPI) framework to monitor progress, verify results, and align with regional and European goals.

6.1 Mandatory data parameters for each KPI

For every indicator proposed in the application, applicants must explicitly define:

Table 3. Data parameters for each KPI

KPI 1. Common/Long-Term impact	
KPI name and description	The operational scope and title of the metric
Baseline Value	The initial starting point before project implementation
Target Value	The quantified result to be achieved by project completion or by 2030.
Unit of Measurement	e.g., hectares, kilometres, %, tonnes, number of sites/people
Verification Method / Data Source	The origin of evidence and measurement approach (e.g., GIS maps, monitoring logs, survey datasets, official reports)
Frequency of Monitoring	The timeline for evaluation (e.g., mid-term, final, half-yearly).
Responsible organisation	Designated lead partner or entity accountable for tracking the metric

6.2 Core KPI Categories

For the Project Description Template (Section 2.1), applicants must provide four types of KPIs: i. Common / Long-Term Impact KPI; ii. Regional Impact KPI; iii. Governance / Roadmap Delivery KPI; iv. Performance KPI. To define and describe each type of KPI, consider the following:

1. **Common / Long-Term Impact KPI**: Please refer to Table 1 in this document to select the Mission Objective and Target that your TA will contribute to.
2. **Regional Impact KPI** (Selected Danube–Black Sea priority pillar): Please refer to Table 1 in this document to select the Mission Objective and Target that your TA will contribute to.
3. **Governance / Roadmap Delivery KPI** (Immediate policy outcomes, MoUs, or adoption): See examples in the table below:

Table 4. Governance/Roadmap Delivery KPIs and targets as an example.

Indicator Category	KPI name and description	Example Targets
Institutional Adoption & Formal Commitments	**Signed Institutional MoUs / Endorsements:** Number of formal Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs), political letters of support, or official council resolutions signed by local/regional authorities to adopt or endorse the TAg roadmap	2 signed MoUs / official institutional endorsements by project end
Policy Alignment & Regulatory Integration	**Policy Alignment & Gap Analysis Briefs:** Number of structured policy gap reports, regulatory adaptation proposals, or policy briefs delivered to local/regional decision-makers to align local rules with EU directives (e.g., WFD, Nature Restoration Regulation)	1 validated Policy Alignment Matrix and 2 policy briefs delivered to regional authorities
Multi-Stakeholder Governance Mechanisms	**Establishment of Joint Governance Platforms:** Formal creation of multi-level steering committees, regional working groups, or cross-sectoral coordination platforms to oversee long-term roadmap execution	1 joint TAg Steering Committee established with regular quarterly meeting cycles
Follow-Up Investment Pathways	**Follow-On Funding Applications Prepared:** Number of concrete grant applications, co-financing plans, or municipal investment proposals prepared using the TAg blueprint to secure post-grant funding (e.g., Interreg, LIFE, EU structural funds, municipal budgets)	1 follow-up funding application prepared and submitted to public/private funding streams

4. **Performance KPI** (Measuring the success, quality, and engagement of the agenda development process itself): See examples in the table below:

Table 5. Performance KPIs and targets as an example.

Indicator Category	KPI name and description	Example Targets
Stakeholder Co-Creation & Active Engagement	**Multi-stakeholder Co-Design Participation:** Number of local entities (public authorities, NGOs, SMEs, research organisations, citizens) actively participating in TAg co-creation events.	≥ 25 local organizations / actively engaged in 3 co-creation events
Capacity Building & Water Literacy Delivery	**Water Literacy & Strategy Workshops Delivered:** Number of structured training seminars and workshops delivered to build technical skills, water literacy, and strategic planning capacities among local actors	4 capacity-building workshops conducted with a total of ≥ 50 participants trained
Gender & Social Inclusion (Cross-Cutting)	**Diversity & Inclusion in Agenda Co-Design:** Proportion of women, youth, and underrepresented/vulnerable community members participating in TAg governance and co-creation activities	≥ 50% women participation and ≥ 20% youth/vulnerable group inclusion across all events
Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK) Integration (Cross-Cutting)	**TEK Co-Design Sessions & Community Satisfaction:** Number of co-design sessions integrating local/traditional ecological knowledge with scientific methods, and community satisfaction with the process	2 TEK co-design sessions held with traditional knowledge holders; ≥ 80% satisfaction

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