

# Development plans for Baltic short sea shipping promotion centers

## Plany rozwoju bałtyckich biur promocji żeglugi morskiej bliskiego zasięgu

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**Abstract:** Short sea shipping is the movement of cargo and passengers by sea between ports located in Europe or between these ports and ports located in non-European countries that have a coastline in closed seas bordering Europe. Short sea shipping includes domestic and international sea transport. It includes feeder services along the coast, to and from islands, rivers, and lakes. The aim of this study was to create a functional and feasible development plan for Short Sea Shipping Promotion Centers (SPCs). There were surveys made for SPCs located in the Baltic Sea region (from Germany, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania and Poland) to obtain information on the scope and type of activities. There is a great potential for the development of SPC in Europe. However, there are certain barriers to overcome like formalities, customs documentation etc. Diverse legal forms of the SPC in individual countries also make it difficult to undertake integrated activities. The topic raised in the article is in line with current plans for the development of inland waterway transport in Poland and coincides with the Assumptions for development of inland waterways in Poland for 2016–2020 with 2030 perspective. The aim of the article was to consolidate the structures and tasks of all SPCs studied and to create a joint six-point development plan for these centers in order to fully use their potential.

**Keywords:** Short sea shipping, short sea shipping promotion centers, development plan

**Streszczenie:** Żegluga morska bliskiego zasięgu definiowana jest jako przewóz ładunków oraz pasażerów drogą morską pomiędzy portami położonymi w Europie lub pomiędzy tymi portami, a portami znajdującymi się w krajach pozaeuropejskich, których linia brzegowa przebiega na zamkniętych morzach graniczących z Europą. Żegluga ta obejmuje wewnętrzny oraz międzynarodowy transport, na co składają się przewozy kontenerowe wzdłuż wybrzeża, na i z wysp, a także poprzez rzeki i jeziora. Celem tej pracy było stworzenie funkcjonalnego i możliwego do zrealizowania planu rozwoju dla biur promocji żeglugi bliskiego zasięgu. Stworzono 5 ankiet dla biur promocji (zlokalizowanych w Niemczech, Szwecji, Finlandii, Litwie oraz Polsce), aby uzyskać informacje o zakresie i typie działań tych biur. Istnieje bardzo duży potencjał rozwojowy biur promocji w Europie. Niestety obecne są również liczne bariery rozwoju, jak na przykład formalności czy zasady prowadzenia dokumentacji. Różnorodne formy prawne w poszczególnych krajach również utrudniają podejmowanie zintegrowanych działań. Temat poruszony w artykule jest zgodny z aktualnymi planami rozwoju żeglugi śródlądowej w Polsce i zbiega się z założeniami rozwoju wodnych dróg śródlądowych w Polsce na lata 2016–2020 z perspektywą do 2030 roku. Celem pracy było skonsolidowanie struktur i zadań wszystkich badanych biur oraz stworzenie wspólnego 6 punktowego planu rozwoju tych centrów.

**Słowa kluczowe:** Żegluga morska bliskiego zasięgu, biura promocji żeglugi bliskiego zasięgu, plan rozwoju

## INTRODUCTION

Short sea shipping is the movement of cargo and passengers

by sea between ports located in Europe or between these ports and ports located in non-European countries that have a coastline in closed seas bordering Europe. It includes domestic and

international sea transport, including feeder services along the coast, to and from islands, rivers, and lakes<sup>1</sup>. The total gross weight of cargo transported in the EU by short sea shipping in 2016 amounted to 1.9 billion tons. In 2016 short sea shipping accounted for nearly 60% of total maritime transport of goods to and from major EU ports<sup>2</sup>. However, the potential of maritime transport is much greater. Improved waterway connections to inland networks and the establishment of “motorways of the sea” between key ports are still needed.

There exists an extremely important barrier for short sea shipping when it comes to competing with road transport – formalities, customs documentation, etc. In its 2016 report, the European Community Shipowners’ Associations published an example of transporting a container from Nijmegen in the Netherlands to Borås in Sweden, showing differences in the amount of documentation necessary for such transport between road transport and sea transport:

**Road transport:**

- ◆ the driver receives an international CMR waybill.

**Short sea shipping:**

- ◆ transport to the port of loading – the driver issues a note,
- ◆ sender declares the status of cargo,
- ◆ the forwarding company introduces a container to the Port Community System in the port of loading,
- ◆ the forwarding company transfers the waybill to the terminal and declares the status of cargo,
- ◆ the terminal operator checks the cargo documentation in the system,
- ◆ ship’s manifest (detailed list of the ship’s cargoes) is updated by the transport company,
- ◆ the ship issues the required IMO FAL forms to various Dutch authorities and the Port of Rotterdam before departure,
- ◆ the ship sends cargo information to the destination in Gothenburg before and after arriving at the port,
- ◆ the transport company enters the container into the Swedish customs system by sending a manifest,
- ◆ the transport company declares the cargo status in the Gothenburg port system,
- ◆ the terminal operator checks the cargo documentation,
- ◆ transport from the unloading port – the driver issues a note.

The key challenge for the EU is to maintain the dynamics and competitiveness of the sector while improving its environmental performance and energy efficiency. With the aim of promoting short sea shipping, promotion centers have been established in almost all coastal EU Member States.<sup>3</sup>

Considering the importance of building awareness about the potential of short sea shipping and intermodal transport, pro-

motors such as SPC<sup>4</sup> constitute an important source of support for the launch of new intermodal services. The activities of SPC are diverse – from providing general information on SSS, to actively developing the concept of modal changes for intermodal transport users and suppliers. SPC are the only entities actively promoting SSS on a European scale. Despite the obvious variability in the activities of the current SPCs, European Short Sea Network (ESN) is seen as the most capable to extend SSS promotion to intermodality.<sup>5</sup> SSS is an integral part of the entire supply chain, therefore SPCs should also assume the role of IPC – centers for the promotion of intermodal transport. As IPC, they would also be involved in the promotion of inland water transport.

The EU is striving to set up the ESN network consisting of the model Centers for the Promotion of Short Sea Shipping. The aim of the research work, the effect of which is this article, was to create and propose a joint six-point development plan for centers within the EMMA project, which will be able to strive for a set model in accordance with the assumption in the current economic and social realities. The task of the EMMA project is to raise awareness of the benefits of sea transport and inland waterway transport and to prove the competitive position of water transport due to the reduction of freight transport costs and the use of modern and environmentally friendly infrastructure solutions.

The topic raised in the article is in line with the current plans for the development of inland waterway transport in Poland and coincides with the Assumptions for development of inland waterways in Poland for 2016–2020 with 2030 perspective. The ongoing works at national and regional level aiming at the revitalization of inland waterways should be strengthened with promotional activities, including by creating an Inland Waterway Promotion Centers. This article analyzed such issues as: institutional fundament, organization financing, objectives, tasks, budget, members, member development, public relation, and handling of inland waterway transport (IWT) issues.

**SHORT SEA SHIPPING PROMOTION CENTERS**

On April 10th, 2003 the European Commission adopted a new program for the promotion of short sea shipping together with a proposal for a directive on the standardization of a new type of container: the so-called European intermodal loading units. The European Union created the Short Sea Shipping Promotion Program by publishing a communication in 2003: Communication from the Commission: Program for the Promotion of Short Sea Shipping, COM (2003) 155 final.<sup>6</sup>

The program focuses on 14 actions to increase the role of short sea shipping in Europe, in particular on measures aimed at

<sup>1</sup> European Shortsea Network webpage - <http://www.shortsea.info/definition.html>, accessed on 05/04/2018

<sup>2</sup> EUROSTAT

<sup>3</sup> European Commission Mobility and Transport webpage - [https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/short\\_sea\\_shipping\\_en](https://ec.europa.eu/transport/modes/maritime/short_sea_shipping_en), accessed on 05/04/2018

<sup>4</sup> SPC – Shortsea Promotion Center

<sup>5</sup> Analysis of EU goals and policies with references to SSS promotional issues, Deliverable 1.1. – PROPS Project, Norway 2008.

<sup>6</sup> European Union Short Sea Shipping - European Union Transport Initiatives to achieve sufficient mobility in order to sustain economic growth, U.S. Department of Transportation, Maritime Administration Office of Ports and Domestic Shipping 2004



Fig. 1. Map of SPCs in Europe  
Source: Maritime Institute in Gdańsk

harmonizing a large number of technical specifications currently existing for trade exchanges in the EU. Other short and medium-term actions address the problem of removing obstacles to the development of short sea shipping and no less important marketing activities aimed at improving the overall image. Other activities focus on the need to create the so-called “motorways of the sea”, to computerize customs procedures, and to simplify customs procedures in seaports. The first promotion office was founded in the Netherlands in 1997, followed by Belgium, France and Finland. From the very beginning it was clear that the promotion of information in one country would not be sufficient, and for a more effective way of developing short sea shipping, there had to be a collective action as a single European network.

Currently there are 21 short sea shipping promotion centers in Europe. They are economically motivated and offer neutral, impartial advice on the use of short sea shipping to meet the needs of transport users. The National Centers are connected to the ESN network which offers a common virtual tool for European promotion. The Commission strongly supports these centers, their work and their networking and expects that this

support will be tailored at the national level.<sup>7</sup> The development of motorways of the sea and the implementation of the Marco Polo program have been identified as important activities for the promotion of short sea shipping. Thanks to the financing of almost 100 projects on Motorways of the Sea (MoS), mainly through the TEN-T and Marco Polo programs, the Sea Motorways supported the short sea shipping sector. MoS projects covered a variety of activities and resulted in several promising changes and developments in this sector.<sup>8</sup>

## STUDY AREA

Short Sea Centers are located in 21 countries – Finland, Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Belgium, Great Britain, Ireland, France, Germany, Poland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, Croatia, Greece, Bulgaria, Turkey, Cyprus, and Malta.

<sup>7</sup> Communication from the commission to the council, the European parliament, the European economic and social committee and the committee of the regions, Mid-Term Review of the Programme for the Promotion of Short Sea Shipping (COM(2003) 155 final), Brussels, 13/7/2006

<sup>8</sup> Motorways of the Sea: An ex-post evaluation on the development of the concept from 2001 and possible ways forward, European Commission, Brussels 2017

Tab. I. Survey completed by SPC points located in the Baltic Sea region.

SECTION	QUESTIONS
1: Institutional fundament/ organizational structure	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· What is the institutional fundament of your organization? Are you a private, public or PPP organization?</li> <li>· What is your relation to governmental organizations and public administrations?</li> <li>· How does your organization work?</li> <li>· What is your staff number?</li> <li>· Do you have separate departments?</li> <li>· Do you have an organizational plan or a similar document you can provide?</li> </ul>
2: Tasks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· What are the tasks of your organization? Do you have specific tasks or just a general task to promote short sea shipping? Who determines your tasks? Do you have to report those activities?</li> <li>· Are there any statutes or similar papers/agreements where these tasks are fixed? Can you provide a copy?</li> <li>· Do you have any provisions/limitations regarding your work?</li> <li>· How do you see your task distribution with sector organizations?</li> </ul>
3: Objectives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· What are the objectives of your organization? How do you decide on them? Do you have some priorities?</li> <li>· How is your relation to IWT (International Waterway Transport)? Do you implement objectives and tasks related to IWT? What are your priorities? What are your IWT competences? Are your members/stakeholders interested in IWT? What are IWT priorities?</li> <li>· If not: Would you be interested and do you think it would make sense to integrate IWT into your portfolio? In what regions, market segments do you see opportunities?</li> <li>· If yes: Do you have IWT objectives from the beginning or did you add IWT at a later stage? How did the extent of your IWT activities evolve over time?</li> <li>· If added at a later stage: What was the reason? Who initiated this? Has this changed your organization, financing etc.?</li> <li>· What are your objectives regarding the exchange of IWT experience and know-how among SPCs/European stakeholders?</li> </ul>
4: Financing and budget	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· How is your organization financed?</li> <li>· Do you have any revenues?</li> <li>· What financial sources do you use to finance your activities?</li> <li>· What is the budget of your organization? How is it distributed among tasks/activities? Are you flexible to shift budgets?</li> <li>· Is your budget negotiated year to year? Do you receive any other support like volunteers, office rooms or office equipment from any kind of public or private body?</li> </ul>
5: Members	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· Do you have members? How many? What types of institutions etc. are members in your organization (public, private)?</li> <li>· How is the membership development?</li> <li>· Do they pay a membership fee? Does the membership fee depend on the services provided by SPC?</li> <li>· Do you offer specific services for your members?</li> </ul>
6: Public relations/marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· How do you manage your public relations? Do you manage it internally or use external service providers? How is the work division?</li> <li>· What is the objective of public relations? What information channels do you use?</li> <li>· What do you communicate?</li> <li>· What are the intended recipients?</li> <li>· How would you evaluate your standing and your level of awareness in your country?</li> </ul>
7: Cooperation and exchange in EMMA project to strengthen inland waterway transport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· What potential do you see from a closer cooperation/exchange with other SPCs in EMMA?</li> <li>· Do you have any specific topics you would like to discuss?</li> <li>· Could you think of certain areas with particular potential for cooperation/exchange, e.g., development of transport solutions in certain markets?</li> <li>· Do you see opportunities to strengthen your IWT competences through cooperation/exchange with SPCs more experienced in this field? How?</li> </ul>

All of the centers located in the Baltic region are part of the EMMA project. All of them – Germany, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania and Poland – were chosen for the study.

## METHODOLOGY

For this study there were five surveys made for centers located in the Baltic Sea region. Responses were received from short sea centers points in:

1. SPC Finland – University of Turku, Brahea Centre, Centre for Maritime Studies
2. SPC Lithuania – Marketing Department of Klaipeda State Seaport Authority

3. SPC Sweden – Swedish Maritime Forum
4. SPC Germany – Association of members: Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure
5. SPC Poland – Szczecin, Association

The surveys were divided into seven sections. Each section concerned different aspects of SPC activities in a given country. The section consisted of 4–6 questions.

## RESULTS

In order to identify good practices, the activities of all SPCs in Europe over a ten-year period, i.e., 2007–2017, were analyzed.

**Tab. II.** The main tasks of short sea shipping promotion centers

Encouraging users and potential users to choose short sea shipping and intermodality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· providing information,</li> <li>· distribution of promotional materials,</li> <li>· communication with current and potential users,</li> <li>· joining interested parties, including organizing meetings, events, seminars, conferences, etc.</li> </ul>
Promoting knowledge and innovation/improvement in the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· providing information,</li> <li>· communication with operators,</li> <li>· encouraging operators to develop new and existing services in the field of short sea shipping and intermodality,</li> <li>· preparation of reports and market research,</li> <li>· organizing meetings and events.</li> </ul>
Influencing political decisions affecting the sector	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· providing information,</li> <li>· lobbying (at local, national, regional and EU level),</li> <li>· organizing meetings.</li> </ul>
Identifying bottlenecks and indicating solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· communication with carriers, users and authorities,</li> <li>· identification of bottlenecks (research) and providing solutions,</li> <li>· involvement in the consultation processes, finding the right solutions.</li> </ul>
European cooperation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>· ESN meetings and events,</li> <li>· interdisciplinary meetings ("contact points"),</li> <li>· communication with other European stakeholders to solve national problems.</li> </ul>

Data for this part of the study were obtained from ESN annual reports, websites of individual SPCs and other digital sources. As a result, a set of good practices was created, which gives an example of effective and proper functioning of short sea shipping promotion centers. The analysis of good practices aimed at obtaining information on the effective way of operation of promotion centers, which brings measurable benefits. The good practices described below can be successfully applied by SPCs covered by the study as part of the six-point development plan. All of these tasks can be classified as shown in the table below.

As a result of the analysis of surveys, this study proposes a six-point development plan for short sea centers in Baltic Sea region.

### Development of organization structure

It seems like the most effective form of organization for SPC is an association working in the form of a public-private partnership (PPP). The basic idea of PPP is that the skills and resources of each sector (public and private) are made available to provide services to the general public. In addition to sharing resources, each party shares the risk and performance potential.

As a result of this analysis, it seems that SPC in Germany is the closest to fulfilling the criteria of the SPC model. It is an association operating within the framework of a public-private partnership. The members are the Federal Ministry of Transport and Digital Infrastructure, 11 federal states, trade associations from the transport and logistics industry and about 50 companies operating in the port, logistics, and forwarding industries. This structure allows to reach the largest number of potential end-users. Close cooperation with the government administration facilitates influence on decision-making process, allows for a faster information flow, and without a doubt, increases the chances of positive actions of governmental bodies towards supporting the development of short sea shipping.

Sweden offers a different approach. In Sweden, the SPC is registered as an association. It is an organization complete-

ly independent from the government administration, which has no direct impact on the functioning of this SPC. However, it cooperates with the government administration and regularly meets to discuss the needs, plans and methods of their implementation. Government administration bodies are in the network of SPC members, and therefore actively support its activities.

SPC in Finland has no form of association and is not an independent organization. The hub for the Promotion of Short Sea Shipping in Finland is the Center for Maritime Studies, part of the Brahea Center, a unit of the University of Turku. Without being an independent organization, it remains under the influence of the University and the Brahea Center. The current structure is quite convenient. SPC does not have to worry about financial liquidity – the problem is taken care of by the university. However, this situation is non-progressive.

The Short Sea Shipping Promotion Center in Lithuania operates within the marketing department of the Port of Maritime Authority in Klaipeda. As in the case of SPC in Finland, this is not an independent organization and it is subject to a mother institution. There are no people dedicated only to work on the promotion of short sea shipping. These activities are part of the responsibilities of employees of the marketing department. Although the situation seems to be similar to that in Finland, in fact it is different in this case. SPC operates under a seaport, whose principal functions are activities closely related to maritime transport, including short sea shipping. The port of Klaipeda is a port subject to governmental bodies. This means that it works closely with the government administration. It derives similar benefits as in the case of public-private partnerships. However, functioning in the organizational structures of the Port of Klaipeda is associated with absolute subordination of the rules prevailing in the port.

In Poland, the SPC is an association. It is an organization independent of the government administration, but it establishes cooperation with it. This center has no permanent employees,

and those responsible for its functioning work on a voluntary basis. The form of this organization could be beneficial. As an association, it has a great potential for a wide range of action. This implies many ways to obtain financing for their activities and certainly nothing prevents the SPC from developing like other leading SPCs in Europe. A threat to further efficient functioning may be the lack of people employed exclusively to perform SPC tasks.

### Obtaining additional sources of financing

The most frequently used sources of financing are membership fees and governmental funding. Some SPCs organize events with an entrance fee. Participation in research and development projects is quite common, also taking into account joint projects implemented with ESN members.<sup>9</sup> This article recommends sources of financing such as governmental subsidies, research and operational grants, fees charged from customers, business sponsorship, donations, bank credit, and Internet tools. Acquiring funds from the EU is a propitious way to finance the activities of the SPC. However, they do not generate revenues. SPCs that are member associations can charge membership fees. These fees vary from country to country. This form of obtaining financing may constitute a significant part of the annual budget of a given SPC and may have a serious impact on its functioning. An additional source of obtaining financing can also be the use of online tools, such as banner ads. Private entities can advertise their businesses on the SPC website by placing their logo and link in the advertising banner. The last way is research and development work and the publishing publications, studies and expert opinions for governmental administration or for the needs of private entities. Income from such activities varies depending on the complexity of the issue and may range from several to over ten thousand euros.

### Development of membership network

The members' network composition largely determines what they can achieve. SPCs define membership parameters to indicate who is included and excluded, and why. Organizations join the network of SPC members if they are convinced that it is beneficial to them and brings significant value to their work. It is important that the SPC establishes and communicates its membership criteria to inform potential members who can benefit from joining the SPC membership network. Having clear membership criteria provides members with common interests and concerns to which national associations are trying to answer. Even though membership criteria vary from organization to organization, they often include the following common requirements, such as proof of financial stability, good management and annual reporting, readiness to pay membership fees, consent to comply with the regulations or declared values and declaration of readiness to be involved in the work of the organization. Most organizations offer different types of membership and varied fees to provide members with greater

accessibility. Types of membership can depend on different levels of involvement and can include full members, network members, affiliates and experts. Others, such as donors or government officials, may belong to the observer category.

The membership network development strategy defines who the SPC wants to attract as a member and presents different ways to do so. There are different strategies for creating a network of members. However, the basic mechanism for engaging and retaining members is the SPC's response to the needs and interests of its member network and the entire transport sector.

Creating innovative ways of attracting and retaining members is a constant challenge faced by member organizations. Each SPC should provide their members with unique services.

According to the analysis of surveys provided by individual SPCs within the EMMA project, membership in individual SPCs varies in number and type: SPC in Finland has no members, SPC in Lithuania also has no members, SPC in Sweden has 4–5 old members leave annually, with the same number of new members coming in. The members of SPC in Germany are BMVI, 11 federal states, 6 trade associations as well as 45 companies from shipping, port, logistics as well as freight forwarders – there are no significant changes in the number of members. SPC members in Poland are divided into ordinary and supporting members – currently, the organization has 29 ordinary members and 14 supporting members.

### Development of activity areas and tasks

First of all, SPC members should be considered as clients. Considering that the benefits depend on the user, practical services must differ for different clients. SPCs must proactively learn the needs of their clients. Customers usually do not know what their needs are, but SPCs can learn them and, in addition, design their service packages to create measurable value. SPCs should define their services as packages presented and sold to customers or to attract sponsors.<sup>10</sup>

It is recommended that the SPC's offer includes at least three service packages, such as a package for current users and potential users, a package for transport service providers and a package for associations. According to the characteristics of local SPC markets, these packages can be defined and sold on the Internet. The SPC Council should decide on the pricing policy.<sup>11</sup> Short sea shipping and inland waterway promotion centers should support and engage in such European projects as MONA LISA, which aims to make a concrete contribution to efficient, safe and environmentally friendly maritime transport.<sup>12</sup>

Short sea shipping cannot be treated only as competition for other modes of transport. In order for a coherent and efficient

<sup>9</sup> Report on embedded networking actions by SPCs to promote SSS and intermodality, Deliverable 5.3 – PROPS Project 2011

<sup>10</sup> Report on embedded networking actions by SPCs to promote SSS and intermodality, Deliverable 5.3 – PROPS Project 2011

<sup>11</sup> *Ibidem*

<sup>12</sup> Mona Lisa Project webpage – <http://www.sjofartsverket.se/en/MonaLisa/EU-project-for-the-Baltic-Sea/>, accessed on 16/04/2018



**Ryc. 3.** Marketing-mix strategy in the SPC.

Source: Maritime Institute in Gdańsk.

pan-European transport system to be created, all modes of transport must harmonize and complement each other. Therefore, SPCs should take measures to also promote intermodal transport, not just short sea shipping.

**Tools and services effectively supporting the development of short sea shipping and inland water transport**

There is no denying that technology develops exponentially and gives more and more opportunities. Many tools are created that are helpful in making decisions, indicate the best transport so-

lutions for specific input parameters, and provide calculation results in transparent interactive multimedia platforms. These tools, combined with the developed Internet network, offer much greater opportunities to promote short sea shipping and inland waterway transport compared to a few years ago.

In order for logistics operators and freight forwarders to choose rivers for transporting cargo, they must know what is waiting for them on the rivers and have constant access to information on changing water conditions. Thus, the task of centers promoting short sea shipping and inland water trans-

port should be to disseminate information about such services and tools, and if necessary, help in reaching them and learning how to use them. There are many examples of such tools, such as Transport simulator, River Information System or fixbo.eu.

### Development of marketing and promotional activities

Taking into account similar fixed objectives defined for all Short Sea Shipping Promotion Centers (SPC) analyzed in this study, it can be assumed that the marketing activities for SPC in Germany, Sweden, Finland, Lithuania and Poland will be of similar character. Marketing and promotional activities in SPC in each country should be based on three main activities.

Identification of the target group is the first element of any marketing strategy. If the SPC intends to focus on supporting development of short sea shipping through, among other things, promotion, apart from defining characteristics of the target group, it should also determine its size. Due to the dynamically changing conditions on the shipping market (creation of alliances, acquisitions, liquidations, and changes in the forms of operation), the identification process of the target group should be repeated and updated periodically. The recommended optimal deadline for the SPC for carrying out the update will be four years.

Choosing the way of proceeding is the second element of marketing activities included in the marketing strategy. Two types of procedures for the SPC can be distinguished, namely a defensive or offensive approach to the identified target group. When the SPC decides to choose a defensive approach to the identified target group, it familiarizes itself with the preferences and needs of individual organizations in order to satisfy them in activities of unchanged and existing character. The point is that the SPC should make its stakeholders perceive their services as not inferior to those offered by other entities. In the literature, such activities are also referred to as the so-called defensive planning strategy. On the other hand, when the SPC decides on an offensive way of proceeding, it learns the needs of an identified target group and their preferences, in order to know how to create and shape their own new services. This is done to lead target group entities to believe that "our" offer (service) is better than the offers of other organizations and is called offensive planning strategy.

Another element of marketing activities included in the SPC marketing strategy is activity instruments, otherwise referred to as action instruments. The SPC may choose the instruments

of action from among all marketing instruments and should aim at selecting those that allow pursuing the expected goals most efficiently. Chosen types of instruments should be related to marketing-mix. The main fields of Marketing Mix widely known as the 4 Ps are as follows:

Different combinations of the above-mentioned variables have a direct impact on the effectiveness of the SPC. The marketing mix instruments are very closely coordinated, which is why changing any of the elements has consequences in adjusting the other elements. It is also not advisable to analyze one of the above marketing mix elements separately, as each of them is directly dependent on the others. The creation of the SPC image is one of the most important elements of marketing-mix activities that belong to the Promotion group. The promotion and creation of the SPC image can take place through the SPC network in the Baltic Sea Region and should take into account the characteristics and potential of the Baltic Sea area where SPCs operate in particular countries.

## CONCLUSION

It cannot be denied that that Short Sea Shipping Promotion Centers play an important role in boosting and stimulating the activities aimed at the development of maritime transport and the entire maritime economy. It is difficult to undertake integrated activities within the European ESN network while legal forms of the SPC in individual countries are so diverse. In order to fully use their potential, all SPCs operating in the Baltic Sea Region should create their national strategies based on the six-point development plans presented in this article, which provide a development stimuli and a basis for creating a strategy for the entire ESN. Taking into account the results of the work carried out, including the above analysis, it can be concluded that there is a great potential for the development of SPC in Europe. The conducted analysis shows many good practices in SPC activities. The performed assessment of SPC services indicates that it is necessary to undertake activities that would aim to create a stimulus causing the SPC to increase their influence on sea transport. Such an impulse could be constituted by the development and implementation of new services adapted to the rapidly changing market conditions. The lack of a long-term financial policy based on a fixed source of funding in some SPCs does not allow them to take actions in the long run. Relying solely on funds received as part of the membership fees without clear financial support from the national or EU level may limit the development of each SPC.

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