

Agenda 2025

Short version



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Preliminary note

This document is a short version of the MCN Agenda 2025. It focuses on the core contents of the long version of the Agenda agreed by the general meeting of the MCN e. V. The long version can be downloaded from the MCN website at www.maritimes-cluster.de.

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Foreword

Foreword from the Federal Government Coordinator for the Maritime Industry, Norbert Brackmann

Dear All,

The Corona pandemic has turned our lives upside down within a very short space of time. During the lockdown, our personal freedom was severely restricted and our economy, the driving force that determines our daily routine, almost ground to a halt. Large parts of the German economy – spanning all industries – were affected. The maritime industry was no exception. Cruises were suddenly out of the question and freight rates plummeted. This situation has taken its toll on the entire supply chain. Short-time work and layoffs are now under discussion at the major cruise shipyards. Coming after years of booming business, it feels like a car crash. The supplier companies are also suffering. Shipowners are fighting to stay in the market despite falling freight rates and travel restrictions.

In an unprecedented effort to support the German economy, the German Federal Government has introduced a special scheme worth a record amount of 156 billion euros. This is aimed at mitigating the consequences of the crisis while safeguarding as many jobs as possible. Only when the crisis is over will we know to what extent the scheme has been successful.

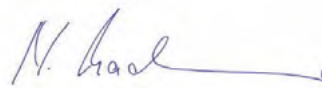
The economic fallout from the corona pandemic will be with us for a long time to come – all the more reason to look to the

future, focus on our strengths and adopt a sound strategy for dealing with the challenges that lie ahead. The MCN Agenda 2025 is a roadmap for the work of the cluster over the next five years. The core elements of the Agenda are the megatrends: digital transformation, sustainability, demographic change and globalisation/internationalisation.

These trends are ongoing – despite the corona crisis. There can be no doubt, however, that the crisis has brought about a different perspective on certain issues. The trends call for us all to work together. This applies to the worlds of business, science and politics. If we pursue this strategy, I am confident that we will continue to have a strong German maritime industry in the future.

The MCN Agenda 2025 will contribute to achieving this goal.

Yours,



Norbert Brackmann



Foreword from the five North German ministers for economic affairs

Working together to shape maritime future!

In the five North German *Länder* (regional federal states), the maritime industry – with its high value-added capacity – is of paramount economic importance. Due to global developments and changes and, not least, the economic fallout from the Covid-19 pandemic, the maritime sectors are facing new challenges. Shipbuilding, the supply industry, maritime service providers, ocean technology, offshore wind technology, shipping and ports: the maritime industry is multifaceted and still has considerable future potential. Sustainability in shipping and at ports, the retention of shipbuilding expertise, demographic change and digital transformation are the key issues that are already revolutionising the maritime industry and will continue to do so in the future.

Today, the Maritime Cluster Northern Germany (MCN) has more than 350 members from the fields of business, science and politics in the five North German *Länder*: Bremen, Hamburg, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Lower Saxony and Schleswig-Holstein. The role of the MCN is to support its members and raise awareness of the key future issues and technologies. Given the current situation, it is increasingly important for the maritime industry to operate in a cluster in order to ensure that all stakeholders are capable of weathering the storm and maintaining competitiveness.

The MCN facilitates cross-*Länder* networking and cooperation among its members. With its strategic cornerstones

of human resources, knowledge and innovation, the MCN also provides fertile soil for staff development, synergy effects and technical progress. Thanks to the growing trend towards networking and continual dialogue with respect to successes, problems, opportunities and risks facing the industry, we are all well equipped for the future – because together we are strong, innovative and capable of making a difference!

Numerous stakeholders have contributed to the MCN Agenda 2025 by providing good ideas, constructive criticism and a high level of commitment.

On behalf of the *Länder*, we would like to take this opportunity of thanking them.

The implementation of the activities proposed in the Agenda will only succeed if all parties concerned make a joint effort on a permanent basis. This will take us a major step closer to achieving our overriding objective of strengthening the innovativeness and international competitiveness of North German businesses.

The MCN's activities aimed at boosting the economy and innovation across the North Germany *Länder* will continue to be an important factor in making the maritime industry fit for the future.



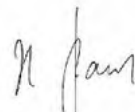
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Minister for Economic Affairs, Labor and Europe of the Free Hanseatic City of Hamburg



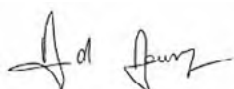
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Minister for Economic Affairs, Transport, Labour, Technology and Tourism of the State of Schleswig Holstein



Dr. Bernd Althusmann

Lower-Saxony's Minister for Economic Affairs, Labour, Transport and Digitalisation



Introduction

In recent years, the MCN, which since 01.01.2017 has been run by the MCN e. V. founded on 21.04.2016, has established itself as an important player in strengthening the maritime industry in Northern Germany. The association covers all five coastal *Länder* in Northern Germany, where the MCN e. V. now maintains branch offices, either on its own or in cooperation with other organisations. The Maritime Cluster Northern Germany has 367 members (as on 31.07.2020) from the fields of business, science, politics and public administration.

Since 2015, the strategy of the MCN (up until the end of 2016) and of the MCN e. V. (as from 2017) has been set out in the "MCN Agenda 2020: Competitiveness through Innovation and Cooperation". The MCN e. V. owes its successful track record to the implementation of this Agenda.

Past achievements are confirmation of the need – in 2020 – to persevere with and update the strategy pursued to date. On the one hand, this strategy has been implemented very successfully; on the other hand, the economic, social, political, ecological, technological and organisational framework conditions have changed significantly since 2015. This being the case, a participative strategy process was drafted in 2019 and launched at the beginning of 2020.

The present MCN Agenda 2025 is the product of a strategy process lasting several months. The process was conducted in consultation with the association members, the advisory board of the MCN e. V., the working groups of the MCN e. V., the full-time staff, the North German *Länder* funding the cluster, and the executive board via a comprehensive participative procedure in order to ensure not only high quality, but in particular widespread acceptance. Moreover, the parties involved strived to incorporate an outside perspective by requesting feedback from maritime organisations and associations (DMZ, GMT, IG Metall, IHK Nord, the Foundation for Offshore Wind Energy (Stiftung Offshore Windenergie), VDI, VDMA, VDR, VSM, ZDS).

In order to ensure that the Agenda tied in with European and national strategies and policy documents relating to the maritime field, the evaluation of such documents also formed part of the strategy process.

Following final approval by the general meeting, the Agenda will serve the MCN e. V. as a guideline for its activities over the next five years and thus help to ensure a consistent, targeted and effective course of action. The association's annual work programmes are drafted with close reference to this Agenda, thereby ensuring that the latter is set out in detail and implemented at an operative level.

Thanks to the MCN's cross-*Länder* Agenda, which is valid until 2025, there will be no need or justification for regional agendas within the cluster in future. Notwithstanding the above, partial strategies aimed at setting out concrete measures in individual fields or responding to new technical opportunities will be possible if necessary.

1. Megatrends in the maritime industry

Like other industries and service sectors, the maritime industry must adapt to ongoing developments, generally referred to as megatrends. The latter bring about changes with global consequences, which impact various areas of life and business sectors, including the following:

- Sustainability requirements and increasing standards with respect to climate protection, the systematic protection of nature and the environment, and purely technical environmental protection
- The need for a comprehensive digital transformation with a holistic approach including social implications
- Demographic change and the resulting shortage of skilled workers
- Globalisation, its consequences, dependencies and risks
- Geopolitical restructuring and changes in spheres of power and the resulting economic consequences
- The growing complexity and vulnerability of highly integrated networked systems of an economic and technical nature
- Increasing trade restrictions, new transport and trading routes
- The ever growing demand for transparency in the value and transport chains aimed at holistic product responsibility during the entire product life cycle

As far as the strategic orientation of the MCN e. V. is concerned, the megatrends **digital transformation**, **sustainability**, **demographic change** and **globalisation** play a significant role in its content-based work and corresponding activities, projects and measures. By means of concrete activities, the MCN e. V. aims to support its members during the transformation process and help them adapt to these global trends.

When focusing on the megatrends, the MCN e. V. takes into account its actual capacity for shaping and taking action.

2. Effects of Covid-19 on the maritime sector in Northern Germany

The corona pandemic has had a serious impact on the maritime sector. During the corona crisis, the MCN e. V. focused on providing targeted support and consulting services for its members, particularly with respect to emergency and bridging aid aimed at avoiding insolvencies. In addition, members were asked to provide feedback about their perceptions and sensibilities, which was then made available to the government administrations of the North German *Länder*. However, the fallout from the corona pandemic has not yet been overcome, which is why the effects triggered by the pandemic are also included in this Agenda. These effects can be divided into three different categories, as shown below.

2.1 Direct effects due to government regulations

These effects were brought about directly by government measures aimed at combating the pandemic, e.g. border closures, quarantine measures, contact bans or social distancing regulations. In the short to long term, they will gradually diminish as regulations are relaxed. This has already happened to some extent. However, if widespread uncertainty results in the population continuing to abide by these restrictions voluntarily even when they have been lifted, the effects may persist for a longer period of time. They include docking bans and quarantine arrangements on cruise ships, etc.

2.2 Downstream effects due to the economic slump

The pandemic and the resulting restrictions have indirectly led to a massive economic slump. These effects will be felt for a much longer period of time, in particular due to the international interdependence of the maritime sectors. Therefore, in many cases, recovery will depend in part on how the international situation develops. Examples of these effects are the low capacity utilisation of seaports and shipping companies due to the decline in both export and import trade flows.

2.3 Effects due to experience with the pandemic

In addition, pandemic experience will bring about effects that are likely to be felt on a permanent basis across all economic sectors. This will pose a major challenge for businesses – one that they will not be able to avoid. Effects of this kind include increased standards of resilience and flexibility in workflows and processes, in order for businesses to adjust to constantly and rapidly changing external conditions.

The fields of action, recommendations for action, project ideas and proposed measures set out in this Agenda were updated in the course of its compilation in response to the concurrent pandemic.

3. Vision and mission of the MCN e. V.

3.1 Vision of the MCN e. V.

Our vision for 2025 is a global maritime hotspot in Northern Germany, a maritime industry that is strong and competitive on a global basis, one that is characterised by innovation, sustainability, efficiency, international competitiveness and an attractive working environment; moreover, we see the MCN e. V. developing into a highly professional, powerful and ever-growing network that offers its members significant added value.

The maritime industry has faced up to the changes, developed new technologies, and is recognised both nationally and internationally as a trendsetter and driver of innovation. The MCN e. V. intends to continue supporting this process in the interests of strengthening value creation within our members' businesses and their supplier companies.

In future, the maritime businesses in Northern Germany will cooperate even more closely than today, both among themselves and with the scientific institutions in Northern Germany, in order to tackle the current challenges jointly and swiftly via new market and technological developments. The MCN's members are open to national and international partnerships and seek to enter into such alliances in order to facilitate the development and marketing of the best possible products, processes, services and systems at global level. The MCN e. V. and its members are helping the maritime industry develop a positive image, attract young talent or career changers and thus counteract the shortage of skilled workers.

3.2 Mission of the MCN e. V.

The MCN e. V., and hence the MCN, have made it their mission to provide a highly professional, member-orientated service structure for the members and, as important drivers of innovation in the maritime industry in Northern Germany, to develop a cross-Länder and cross-sector platform for networking among a broad-based membership – primarily in Northern Germany, but open to all those who consider themselves part of the maritime industry further afield. This being the case, the MCN e. V. is engaged in shaping current and future maritime issues while also facilitating and promoting dialogue among its members.

The MCN e. V. assists the maritime industry in Northern Germany with tackling the current structural transformation and adapting as necessary to the new demands brought about by climate change, sustainability requirements and the urgent need for digitalisation, while also helping the industry deal with requirements resulting from globalisation. It initiates the necessary transfer of information and knowledge and promotes skill development and retention among the

members as well as the development of an innovation culture within the member companies.

In particular, the MCN e. V. initiates the development of innovative, integrated and holistic concepts and solutions at a product, process, service and system level.

Furthermore, the MCN e. V. strives to translate growing social demands across the entire value, logistics and disposal chain into meaningful action guidelines and concrete projects and to communicate these to the maritime industry in order to encourage readiness to take responsibility internally and counteract possible acceptance problems externally.

To this end, the MCN e. V. organises targeted cooperation among businesses, scientific institutions, educational establishments and politics. The MCN e. V. creates added value for its members. It ensures that Northern Germany is an attractive and leading international maritime hub for investors, businesses, scientists and researchers, employees and co-operation partners.

In the interests of forming a maritime alliance, the MCN e. V. works closely at a national and international level with other stakeholders in the maritime industry, for example the maritime associations, the maritime structures of the chambers of industry and commerce and IHK Nord as well as the Brussels office of IHK Nord and other organisations. By pooling their strengths synergistically, these organisations can achieve more together than they would be capable of achieving individually. This does not mean that the MCN e. V. is in competition with the maritime associations. It sees itself as one component of the maritime alliance currently developing in Germany.

The MCN e. V. is not engaged in any political lobbying, nor is it represented on (inter)national political committees. It does not offer policy advice, conduct company-specific marketing activities or undertake any tasks normally performed by regional business development and funding agencies, such as location marketing.

3.3 Key objective of the MCN e. V.

The overriding objective of the MCN e. V. is to strengthen the innovativeness, innovation culture and national and international competitiveness of the North German maritime enterprises and, in particular, their members.

The Maritime Cluster Northern Germany pursues its goals via a multitude of different operative targets and activities spanning five strategic fields of action set out in the MCN Agenda 2025.

Based on the previous Agenda 2020, which identified four fields of action, and on the analyses, surveys and ideas it contained, the new Agenda MCN 2025 now addresses five fields of action:

- **MCN Networking**
- **MCN Innovation**
- **MCN Human Resources**
- **MCN Knowledge and Technology Transfer**
- **MCN International**

The megatrends **digital transformation, sustainability, demographic change, globalisation/internationalisation** intersect the fields of action, thus creating a matrix for further planning activities. By way of illustration, a number of project ideas to be implemented within the association over the next five years are assigned to the interfaces between fields of action and megatrends (see the “Temple Model” on the next page).

The “Organisation and funding of the MCN e. V.” is dealt with in chapter 5, as it forms the basis for all future action on the part of the association (which is why it is depicted as forming the foundations of the temple).

Vision & mission					
	MCN Networking	MCN Innovation	MCN HUMAN Resources	MCN Knowledge and Technology and Transfer	MCN International
Digital transformation	Digital platform for MCN members	Digital shipbuilding	Digitalisation in human resource management	Information about cyber security and cyber safety	Participation in international innovation projects
Sustainability	Making shipbuilding sustainable in the future	Pollutant reduction strategy	New training course content	Supporting the Green Deal	Establishing contact with international partners in the Green Offshore Tech network
Demographic change	Assistance with start-ups via business angels	Technologies for optimising the deployment of human resource	Image campaign for the maritime industry	Continuation & further development of maritime foundation training	Development of maritime language courses
Globalisation/ Internationali- sation	Networking with foreign clusters in line with the needs of MCN members	Technologies for optimising the deployment of human resource	Definition of job profiles for the employment of skilled workers from abroad	Providing information about foreign markets	Hosting <i>Länder</i> theme days
Organisation and funding of the MCN e. V.					

Matrix of the MCN Agenda 2025, list of possible courses of action

4. Fields of action and implementation



4.1 MCN Networking

The field of action MCN Networking encompasses all activities undertaken by the MCN e. V. with the aim of bringing together maritime stakeholders from business, science, associations, politics and public administration in order to encourage creativity through dialogue and establish solution-orientated partnerships, capable of expanding existing business models or forming new ones by furthering familiarity among the various stakeholders.

The MCN's primary goal is to build and expand specialist, project-related or business networks. The exchange of information and current knowhow and the introduction of possible employers to potential network partners, contractors and scientific and research facilities engaged in innovation and technology transfer, e.g. application-orientated research institutions, university transfer establishments, patent exploitation agencies, etc., provide businesses with a significant knowledge and skill advantage, which in turn promotes competitiveness and thus economic success. Innovation projects are centered around interdisciplinary exchange, which the MCN e. V. intends to intensify by means of suitable event formats.

In the field of action MCN Networking, the MCN e. V. has a wealth of experience as well as proven tools and formats, which it will continue to deploy in future. These include working groups and events such as the Maritime Business Breakfast or the Maritime Marketplace.

In addition to the traditional events, the MCN e. V. intends to facilitate further opportunities for dialogue that are specifically geared towards members' current requirements and therefore address issues of a more specific nature; contact of this kind may be arranged via groups on digital platforms such as LinkedIn, XING, Microsoft Teams, etc.

In the field of action MCN Networking, the MCN e. V. plans to expand on various ideas in terms of content and concept so that viable projects and measures materialise. Once implemented, these should assist members in overcoming the challenges posed by the megatrends. By way of example, the

further development of the membership directory and the business directory on the website will facilitate the search for partners. The long version of the MCN Agenda 2025 contains numerous other recommendations for action.

At present, the corona pandemic is also impacting the field of action MCN Networking. As long as hygiene and social distancing rules are in place, networking will have to take place primarily via digital media. Although this is increasingly becoming the "new norm", it lacks the spontaneity and intuition associated with face-to-face interaction, for which there is no real substitute, especially when establishing initial contact. In order to compensate for the resulting deficits in communication among members and in the search for partners for R&D projects, it is crucial that the executive board, the advisory board and the branch offices maintain regular contact with the members; in the current situation, good specialist group work is also becoming increasingly important.

Another field where there is need for action is cross-cluster networking (cross-clustering, cross-innovation), as members will have to seek sales markets for their products and services outside the maritime setting if they are to become more resistant or resilient to crisis-related fluctuations. The MCN e. V. can provide assistance in establishing contact with other clusters and initiating business with member companies and science-based members from other clusters at a local or regional level in Northern Germany and even beyond.

4.2 MCN Innovation

The field of action MCN Innovation is primarily concerned with initiating, supporting and monitoring innovation projects and helping to compile and define technical, service-related process and social innovations.

By "innovation", the MCN does not only mean the development and rolling out of ideas on the market, but the entire process of turning ideas into products, services, business models and processes. While the MCN's understanding of the term "innovation" is primarily science and technology-based, social, ecological, global or cultural issues are also taken into consideration.

Innovations are generally the product of free, creative minds that stimulate each other. Therefore, human beings are the key factor in creative and innovation processes. This is what we understand by “innovation management” in businesses. Necessary prerequisites include group interaction aimed at generating complementary knowledge (crowd intelligence), a forward-looking approach, an error-friendly culture, targeted, impact-orientated, process-based and positive thinking, and methodological knowhow. The MCN network is an excellent platform for this type of activity.

The innovation process cannot be controlled mechanistically; businesses can only facilitate innovative processes and create a stimulating in-house environment for innovation. This is an integral part of a modern innovation culture and creates a solution-orientated climate for innovation.

In addition to its existing activities in the field of action MCN Innovation, e.g. consulting services with respect to funding options, the MCN plans to expand on various ideas in terms of content and concept so that viable projects and measures materialise. Once implemented, these should assist members in overcoming the challenges posed by the megatrends. One example is utilisation of the EU Green Deal. The long version of the MCN Agenda 2025 contains numerous other recommendations for action.

At present, the corona pandemic is also impacting the field of action MCN Innovation. In the short and long term, it is highly likely that cruise ship construction in German shipyards will fall dramatically and thus lose its significance as a driver of innovation.

As the pandemic is accompanied by a fall in economic output and hence in business turnover and profits, there is less capital available for investment and innovation. The innovation driver “sustainability” will no doubt gain increasing importance in the medium and short term, as national and European economic recovery packages along with the Green Deal are calling for and funding the development of CO₂ and pollutant-reduction technologies. It remains to be seen whether the need to build alternative supply chains based on current experience of shortages will provide stimuli for growth in the maritime industry in Northern Germany.

4.3 MCN Human Resources

The field of action MCN Human Resources has two key objectives: firstly, to assist the maritime sectors and businesses in recruiting and retaining skilled workers, and secondly, to promote needs-based training and further education schemes for the maritime industry in Northern Germany. Without sufficient numbers of appropriately trained workers, the maritime industry will not be competitive. The MCN is focusing on cross-sector activities in this field.

By means of a joint image campaign on the part of all maritime associations, the DMZ and the MCN, we aim to make occu-

pations in the various sub-sectors of the maritime industry an attractive career prospect for the young generation. This could lead to a continual increase in the demand for maritime jobs among young people and help the maritime industry in Northern Germany to counteract the shortage of skilled labour resulting from demographic factors.

In future, the digital transformation of the maritime industry will generate completely new job requirements and employment opportunities in occupations not traditionally associated with the maritime industry. Given the limited workforce available, the maritime industry is in competition with other sectors and therefore needs to work especially hard on boosting its appeal.

This campaign also aims to encourage skilled workers from sectors and regions hit by structural change, e.g. the lignite and hard coal mining industry and the related energy sector or the automotive industry, to switch jobs, by offering them attractive career and lifestyle prospects. It remains to be seen to what extent workers from the aeronautical engineering industry can be recruited to alternative jobs in the maritime industry; close collaboration with the North German aeronautical cluster could lead to the rapid development of important staff rescue solutions.

One of the MCN's flagship projects in the field of human resources is the “Maritime Foundation Training” scheme, which has always been booked up well in advance. The plan is to continue offering this format in future and, if possible, extend it. The MCN e. V., together with its external partners, was also represented at the Bremen Shipping Congress, and in 2019 founded the MCN Apprenticeship Network (MCN.AZUBI-Netzwerk) in an attempt to deepen the bond between newcomers and the maritime industry.

In the field of action MCN Human Resources, the MCN plans to expand on various ideas in terms of content and concept so that viable projects and measures materialise. Once implemented, these should assist members in overcoming the challenges posed by the megatrends. One example is the development of e-learning courses in consultation with and on behalf of the cluster members. The long version of the MCN Agenda 2025 contains numerous other recommendations for action.

At present, the corona pandemic is also impacting the field of action MCN Human Resources. The maritime labour market has been badly hit by the current economic conditions resulting from the pandemic. However, it is difficult to predict the medium and long-term effects on the existing shortage of skilled labour and future staff requirements in the maritime industry. As soon as the global economy has returned to anything like pre-Covid-19 levels, the need to take action and the options available for overcoming demographic change and the shortage of skilled labour will gain renewed relevance. It is therefore advisable to observe the labour market and the human resource situation systematically and initiate projects in this field in adequate time if necessary.

In the short and medium term at least, there will be less demand for maritime services, e.g. further education schemes, consulting services, etc. However, requirements regarding infection prevention in all maritime fields, workplace hygiene and future crisis management in the event of similar outbreaks will inevitably increase. Once this pandemic is over, it will be time to start preparing for the next.

4.4 MCN Knowledge and Technology Transfer

The field of action MCN Knowledge and Technology Transfer encompasses all measures aimed at optimising the reciprocal transfer of information and knowledge and accelerating the transfer of technology among MCN members and other maritime stakeholders – in Northern Germany and beyond.

Here the focus is on strengthening the technical systems capability and systems expertise of the maritime industry in Northern Germany as a whole. The knowledge and technology transfer is intended to kick-start and support innovation processes at the interface of science, business and the market.

This type of knowledge and technology transfer is facilitated, for example, by bachelor and master theses, internships, contract research, the movement of staff from scientific research institutions to the business world and vice versa, work shadowing and traineeships, spin-offs, joint research projects, publications, patents, licences or informal dialogue. These short and medium-term projects can be complemented by systematic and strategic collaborations in the form of long-term partnerships. The interdisciplinary working groups, which form the pre-competitive framework for successful implementation of research findings, already play an important role in the MCN.

In the field of action MCN Knowledge and Technology Transfer, the MCN e. V. plans to expand on various ideas in terms of content and concept so that viable projects and measures materialise. Once implemented, these should assist members in overcoming the challenges posed by the megatrends. One example is the gradual establishment of a publicly accessible “Wikipedia” on the maritime industry, e.g. on the MCN’s website. The long version of the MCN Agenda 2025 contains numerous other recommendations for action.

At present, the corona pandemic is also impacting the field of action MCN Knowledge and Technology Transfer. However, it is probable that the projects in this field of action could be implemented in full or even stepped up during the corona crisis because they can generally make use of digital communication formats.

4.5 MCN International

In the field of action MCN International, the MCN pools all ideas and proposals that have an international dimension

in terms of planning, preparation, execution and follow-up and/or that support internationalisation efforts on the part of members. This field of action primarily addresses companies with little or no experience and few or no structures or sales channels transcending national borders; in most cases, these are SMEs. Global effects, such as shifts in sales markets, call for companies to tap into new foreign markets on a continual basis. Ultimately, internationalisation is a question of individual business strategy.

In the field of action MCN International, the MCN plans to expand on various ideas in terms of content and concept so that viable projects and measures materialise. Once implemented, these should assist members in overcoming the challenges posed by the megatrends. The MCN will address the topic of internationalisation with the help of its own volunteers and full-time staff and via workshops or working groups. One way in which this can be achieved is through the staging of *Länder* Theme Days in collaboration with other suitably qualified institutions and organisations. The long version of the MCN Agenda 2025 contains numerous other recommendations for action.

At present, the corona pandemic is also impacting the field of action MCN International. The freight shipping sector has been especially hard hit by the pandemic, as global trade relations have been negatively affected. At present, it is not possible to foresee the medium to long-term consequences of effects such as the fall in freight rates and the return to producing certain goods on domestic or European markets. Nor is it possible to predict when and to what extent it will be feasible to resume international air travel for the purpose of initiating business transactions and what impact behavioural changes resulting from the pandemic will have on communication. Therefore, projects aimed at helping members form international business relationships will have to be reviewed at regular intervals for their relevance and practicality.

The continual optimisation of the organisation and the funding of the MCN e. V. will remain a key issue in the forthcoming funding period. Useful new developments aimed at achieving 1) further professionalisation of work, 2) permanent funding, and 3) improved cooperation with other clusters, while strengthening the association as a whole, need to be analysed and implemented swiftly.

In the course of the strategy process, numerous ideas and proposals were put forward on this topic. They are not all included in the list below. All the observations made during the strategy process on the subject of organisation and funding will be presented in full in the form of a working paper drawn up by the executive board, and will serve as a basis for further discussion and dialogue with the *Länder*.

5. Organisation and funding of the MCN e. V.

5.1 Further professionalisation of work

As far as further professionalisation of work is concerned, the main focus will be on the following subject areas:

- Membership, e.g. alternative forms of member support
- Working groups, e.g. a uniform concept
- Events, e.g. when transforming event content into concrete projects
- Branch offices, e.g. a synergistic division of labour, taking account of region-specific issues
- Central cluster management, e.g. optimisation of the business directory
- Operations management, e.g. increased delegation of responsibility by the executive board
- Executive board, e.g. the appointment of a managing director
- Communication, e.g. via the development of a holistic PR strategy
- Review and modification of the present legal form if necessary

5.2 Permanent funding

The MCN e. V. will remain dependent on public funding from the *Länder* to maintain its structure, role and services. Therefore, in the interests of obtaining funding for the Central Cluster Management and the branch offices, we need to further develop and improve the corresponding prerequisites and processes in collaboration with the *Länder*. Special attention should be paid to measures aimed at simplifying the funding process so that the association's limited staff resources can be largely deployed for directly assisting members.

5.3 Improved cooperation with European, national and North German clusters

The MCN e. V. operates primarily in Northern Germany. The maritime industry is less restricted to specific regions.

Stronger European networking would make it possible to identify new European developments at an early stage, strengthen and support the transfer of information, knowledge and technology within Europe, and access funding from the new European Research Framework Programme more easily by collaborating with other *Länder*. Science-based and business partners could also be found more readily via cluster cooperation at European level.

Cooperation with national clusters, e.g. via membership in the initiative "go cluster", would assist us in accessing up-to-date information and knowledge in these fields. Knowledge of projects run by leading-edge or excellence clusters in Germany would help improve the MCN's service expertise.

Maritime players are also based in other *Länder*, e.g. in the field of logistics or the supply industry. It is therefore in the interests of the MCN's members that the association expand its network in an intelligent way beyond the boundaries of Northern Germany, possibly in cooperation with other parties involved, such as the DMZ or IHK Nord.

Collaborations with other North German clusters are extremely expedient for systematic cross-clustering, but the association as a whole should focus primarily on collaborating with stakeholders operating in Northern Germany or on a cross-*Länder* basis. Regional collaborations should be agreed among the branch offices and implemented predominantly at the respective branch office level.

The initiation of concrete projects and value creation processes for the benefit of members and hence the regional economy should always be at the forefront of all activities at the three levels outlined above.

