

WP T2.4.2

Report on the operation and performance of the E-Channel DMCP with SMEs

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1. Introduction

This report covers the operation and performance of the Data Management Control Platform (DMCP). A separate report summarises the work to create the DMCP¹, and discusses how Vertical Plus and Soledis brought their technological approaches together to provide an innovative technical offer to participant SMEs who were looking to e-commerce as a way to access new market opportunities.

In the project bid (p28), we said:

- *The outcomes will be reviews of the performance of the DMCP in the support of export / new markets:*
- *Lessons learnt from supporting individual SME export / new market work will feed into overall adjustments to E-Channel Platform tools [5]. Months 9, 12, 15, 18 and 21.*
- *This will add to the work done by V+ and Soledis to address technical and cultural exchange, undertaken at the start of the project.*

As part of a project modification (05.11.2019) we clarified that the outcomes would be:

- *A set of e-commerce tools;*
- *Two Launchpads, in the UK and France, where the participant SMEs access bespoke systems, tools and processes.*

From the beginning, the E-Channel Project had a clear vision that, working in a collaborative partnership with their Launchpad Managers, the participant SMEs would select a subset of E-Channel tools from the DMCP which were appropriate for them. Lessons learnt from supporting individual SME e-commerce aspirations were built into Launchpad operations and fed into overall adjustments to E-Channel Platform tools.

From March 2020, Covid-19 caused disruption across Europe and initially, some uncertainty for E-Channel. To mitigate against this, a second project modification was agreed in June 2020 with the Joint Secretariat. The deliverables and outputs contained in the original proposal would still be delivered but the work to be completed was undertaken in an adapted order with a greater reliance on technology to allow the project to be flexible with reference to the overall circumstances and those of individual SMEs. Specifically, more time was given to the additional technical development of the DMCP.

1.1 What is a DMCP?

The DMCP is a data and support model, linked to the E-Channel consultancy model, for organising inventory, identifying opportunities and measuring success in online marketplaces.

The DMCP incorporates four important stages of E-Commerce new market entry and growth.

¹ A report which summarises the work to create the DMCP is available at <https://www.e-channel.org/resources/>

- Product Inventory Standardisation
- Market Assessment
- Costing Assessment
- Business Growth

These stages do not need to be completed in order but are used to support a new market plan that is dependent on the position and opportunities for each SME. A new market can be defined as a distinguishable group of potential customers that might buy a company's products.

The DMCP is a crucial part of the Consultancy Package offered by E-Channel, to support participant SMEs. It enables them to understand, identify and track their product sales, and target them to specific audiences rather than placing their products online or on platforms and hoping for the best. The DMCP is fundamental in generating a bespoke sales and growth plan for each SME.

The five quarterly review periods of the E-Channel DMCP operation and performance were part of a collaborative technical exchange and part of a process of supporting individual SMEs to access new markets. Lessons learnt fed into Launchpad operations and overall adjustments to the participant SMEs' new market entry plans and their use of the DMCP.

2. Methodology

This report focuses on the operation and performance of the DMCP. The information is taken from five quarterly review periods which took place in Months 9, 12, 15, 18, and 21. These review periods have been summarised in one report.

Each review period lasted for a month. During these review periods, information was gathered from a variety of sources to track and log issues. These sources include formal meetings such as Project Management Meetings (PMM), technical meetings, meetings between Launchpad staff, discussions from informal catch-up meetings, informal conversations and comments, and email communications from different stakeholders at various points during that month. There were recurring themes during the cycle of reviews. Progress and analysis of these themes was updated during each review period.

Table 1 below is an overview of the five quarterly technical reviews of the DMCP.

Month	Review	Notes
Month 9	May 2020	DMCP Quarterly Review Period 1 May 2020
Month 12	August 2020	DMCP Quarterly Review Period 2 August 2020
Month 15	November 2020	DMCP Quarterly Review Period 3 November 2020
Month 18	February 2021	DMCP Quarterly Review Period 4 February 2021
Month 21	May 2021	DMCP Quarterly Review Period 5 May 2021

Table 1: Overview of the five quarterly reviews of the E-Channel Platform tools.

As part of the technical engagement process, it is important to note that:

- The technical teams interacted with Launchpad teams to discuss and share the technology to be used with the SMEs.
- A DMCP update was a standing agenda item at the formal Project Management Meetings.
- Headlines and significant trends from this process were discussed monthly at the formal Project Management Meetings, attended by the CEOs of both Vertical Plus and Soledis, the Project Manager, the Project Coordinator, with a non-executive director from the Lead Partner as chair.
- The DMCP meetings focussed on function and operation so there were limited opportunities for cultural exchange even pre Covid-19.
- Any opportunities there might have been for greater collaborative working and cultural exchange were lost because the teams worked remotely.

Additional reports written by E-Channel to support this work are available at <https://www.e-channel.org/resources/> and include the following:

- Team briefing document on the shared technology to be used for E-Channel;
- Briefing document outlining E-Channel technological model for participants;
- Report that summarises the work to create the DMCP;
- 1. Launchpad Account Manager and SME Guide to using 1 of 4 of the E-Channel DMCP Tools: Inventory Management;
- 2. Launchpad Account Manager and SME Guide to using 2 of 4 of the E-Channel DMCP Tools: Market Assessment;
- 3. Launchpad Account Manager and SME Guide to using 3 of 4 of the E-Channel DMCP Tools: Business Planning;
- 4. Launchpad Account Manager and SME Guide to using 4 of 4 of the E-Channel DMCP Tools: Business Growth;
- Product Inventory Standardisation Tool;
- Market Assessment Tool;
- Costing Assessment Tool;
- Business Growth Tool;
- Set of web pages providing guided access to DMCP including how to download the software.

3. Chronology, Context and Covid-19

It is helpful to consider the work undertaken and reviewed from May 2020 onwards against the backdrop of Covid-19.

Table 2 below sets the E-Channel project in the context of Brexit and against the backdrop of Covid-19; both of which impacted upon the development and operation of the DMCP.

Month	May 2020	June 2020	July 2020	Aug 2020	Sept 2020	Oct 2020	Nov 2020	Dec 2020	Jan 2021	Feb 2021	March 2021	April 2021	May 2021
Review	Review 1	Project Modification agreed		Review 2			Review 3			Review 4			Review 5
SMEs	SME selection, recruitment and on-boarding phase												
Brexit		UK rules out transition period extension	Legal deadline for signing off an extension				Dec 2020 UK and EU agree Free Trade Agreement UK Parliament Approves EU Trade Deal Brexit Transition Period Ends		Jan 2021 Border Control Introduced				
Covid-19 UK	UK Tier system including full lockdown in some areas						Tiers	Tiers	UK Lockdown				Phased re-opening
Covid-19 FR	FR Lockdown					Oct FR Lockdown 2 until Mid Dec 2020						3 April FR Lockdown	Phased re-opening

Table 2: DMCP operation in the context of Brexit and Covid-19

- France was put into lockdown on March 17th. The UK was put into lockdown on 23rd March 2020.
- As far as possible, E-Channel continued to work towards the outcomes and deliverables in the project plan. This was also a condition of funding. Throughout this critical period, communication with the Joint Secretariat was timely and supportive.
- As a direct result of Covid-19, the lockdowns during this time, and feedback from potential participant SMEs, the project partners agreed that the DMCP should be more remote access friendly, not least because the potential participant SMEs were very interested in these features.
- It was originally agreed that all the DMCP technical development should be done by the end of June 2020. Additional technical work as a result of Covid-19 required a Project Modification.
- A project modification was submitted in April 2020 and approved by the JS in June 2020 so that additional work could be done to improve the functionality of the DMCP. More time was spent on the technical work so that the DMCP would be a better distance

learning tool for SMEs to access remotely. The modification was complex because of its impact across the project, including changes to the budget and viring funds to make these technical changes. The Project Partners allocated additional staff to this in the short term.

- Technical exchange and collaboration between technical teams, to support the design of the DMCP was impacted by lockdowns and travel bans due to Covid-19. A planned exchange of technical staff, with French and UK technical staff working alongside each other, and sharing ideas, would have been an effective cultural, as well as technical exchange and might potentially have speeded up the completion of the DMCP but this was no longer possible. All technical exchanges had to take place virtually.
- In addition to the five quarterly review periods, remote working between the French and UK technical teams suited shorter, more frequent technical micro-meetings to track and monitor progress as the DMCP model was refined and clarified.

4. The Quarterly Review Periods

This section captures the headlines and main points from the five review periods, under four headings so that context, progress, and ways forward can be identified:

1. Challenges
2. The UK and French DMCP Review
3. DMCP Technical Exchange
4. Lessons learnt

4.1 Challenges

4.1.1 Challenges - Review Period 1 May 2020 - Delays due to Covid-19

- This was an unsettling time for the project and, in May 2020, it was unknown how long the impact of Covid-19 would last.
- A project modification, submitted in April 2020, had not been approved by May 2020.
- To mitigate the circumstances, the E-Channel UK and French technical teams had started thinking about adding additional DMCP features, with enhanced remote distance learning and access for the participant SMEs. A DMCP with enhanced remote features would be very helpful for SMEs to understand their data and see opportunities while navigating the pandemic.
- The project partners agreed they would not wait for the project modification to be agreed with the JS before implementing work on the additional DMCP features, with enhanced remote distance learning.
- The technical teams were concerned that if they had to wait for up to three months for approval, they would be unable to complete this work.
- The technical teams were mindful that they did not want to make the changes too complicated or give themselves too big a job to do in the time they had.

- The technical teams knew that this work, in the timeframe they had, would therefore be a challenge and they were still working on a DMCP core model.

4.1.2 Challenges - Review Period 2 August 2020

- From June 2020, intensive work took place on the further technical development of the DMCP to support the SMEs remotely, with the agreement of the JS.
- This was time-consuming work for the UK and French technical teams so, in the short term, some of them were pulled off other non-E-Channel projects to concentrate on the DMCP.
- The project partners had agreed in the modification that the DMCP would be finalised by the end of October 2020 i.e., in two months. This work was on track and the technical teams were confident that it would remain so, as long as the appropriate number of personnel were allocated to it.
- It was exciting that ten SMEs joined the project but the Launchpad Account Managers reported difficulty in accessing the SMEs' data before it could be connected to the DMCP.

4.1.3 Challenges - Review Period 3 November 2020

- The DMCP development work was finalised by the end of October 2020, as planned.
- Both UK and French Launchpads reported that an emerging pattern was the lack of participant SMEs' technical competence.
- This had an impact on the operation of the DMCP as many of the participant SMEs did not understand or actively interact with their data to support their online business.
- A significant number of participant SMEs had not previously set up e-commerce data tools, such as Google Analytics. Without e-commerce tracking enabled, the SMEs were missing vital conversion data.
- It was more difficult for the Launchpads to access SME data, and once that data was accessed, it was often of insufficient quality or volume. This meant that there were delays, including having to wait for sufficient data to become available, harvested and entered into the DMCP.
- To get the most out of the DMCP, at least one but ideally three months of quality data was needed. Where this was missing or the data was not of sufficient quality, this impacted on the ability of the DMCP to generate meaningful data and the market analysis required for the Launchpads to write detailed and focussed New Market Entry Plans for the SMEs.

4.1.4 Challenges - Review Period 4 February 2021

Challenging, or unexpected issues so far have included:

- Obtaining the data from the SME was not as straightforward as expected but it was time-consuming.
- A significant number of participant SMEs had less e-commerce experience than was suggested from the onboarding process.
- Some SMEs did not work directly with their own data and lacked first-hand experience of using data analysis tools such as Google Analytics.
- If the SMEs' data was not complete, relevant, or if there was not enough of it, this impacted on DMCP analysis.
- Both French and UK Launchpads reported that it was a challenge to support the SMEs remotely to get their data into the DMCP.
- The SMEs were using a variety of different e-commerce sales platforms and some of them were easier to connect to the DMCP than others.
- SMEs who were already using Shopify had their data linked to the DMCP

- Both French and UK Launchpads reported that it was important to manage the introduction of the DMCP with all the SMEs. To share too many of the DMCP tools too soon, with inexperienced SMEs caused some initial confusion and anxiety.

4.2. UK and FR DMCP Review

4.2.1 UK and FR DMCP Review Period 1 May 2020

- This quarter was mainly focussed on technical work as the plan was to work with SMEs from July 2020 onwards.
- Physical visits by the project partners, Launchpad, or technical staff to see each other was not possible from March 2020.
- The project partners had agreed to an exchange of technical staff, but this collaborative work had to take place virtually.
- Technical meetings became shorter, more frequent remote micro-meetings. This strategy proved effective for short duration, technical work, but did not support deeper or longer-term cultural understanding or engagement as much as face-to-face working would have done.
- A Project Modification was submitted in April 2020 but had not yet been approved.
- From March 2020 to May 2020, a series of micro-meetings to address the fine technical detail of the DMCP continued, to mitigate against Covid-19, as the potential participant SMEs specifically asked for more remotely accessible features from the DMCP. The April 2020 meetings concluded that a flexible DMCP process was needed, to support both B2B and B2C SME journeys so this was a focus of the work undertaken during the May 2020 review period.
- A way forward was to finish an initial 'live' version of the DMCP on schedule but continue to do more technical development as the participant SMEs joined the project.
- This was an opportunity to carry out more interactive planning with the SMEs and obtain feedback about DMCP performance.
- The team briefing document on the shared technology to be used for E-Channel, and the briefing document outlining the E-Channel technological model for participants, were both written in January 2020² and were updated in light of the changes to the DMCP.
- The goal from the additional technical work was that the DMCP would be more flexible and include aspects to support SMEs to learn, and then use, the tools remotely. Processes were put in place to ensure SME feedback would be captured.
- The DMCP was not automatically updating inventory or orders and work was done to support this.
- By the end of the May review period, the ability to store product views in the DMCP database was fully integrated, and could be expanded to support other data sources with a simple processing file plugin for each data source.
- The UK and French technical teams redesigned the interface around the initial login/registration page to make it more remote-user friendly.

4.2.2 UK and FR DMCP Review Period 2 August 2020

- The Technical Modification was approved on 18/06/2020.

² The team briefing document on the shared technology to be used for E-Channel, and the briefing document outlining the E-Channel technological model for participants are available at <https://www.e-channel.org/resources/>

- Work already started on DMCP enhancement was extended by 4 months to allow further development of the remote features.
- Reporting of completion of activities moved from Period 2 to Period 3, so will be reviewed in Month 18 (February 2021).
- Both project partners invited some SMEs who were not part of E-Channel, to use the DMCP as a dry run.
- It was important to consider how E-Channel would engage with the SMEs so the project partners explored opportunities for distance support, remote access, and learning for the SMEs. There was now a huge demand for SMEs to have online capability. Both UK and French potential participant SMEs advised that they were particularly interested in this remote-friendly aspect of the DMCP.
- Key operational changes included:
 - 1. Greater use of the remote DMCP to achieve SME growth with consultations using remote video conferencing;
 - 2. More remote webinars and tutorials for participants to replace face-to-face meetings;
 - 3. Enhanced remote monitoring and assessment tools.
- Access to SME data and the different e-commerce sales platforms they were using, was far more time-consuming than anticipated and required careful management to prevent causing delays as the SMEs so far recruited to E-Channel were using many different e-commerce platforms. In addition, the SMEs were not necessarily not using them effectively, which took up a lot of consultancy time.
- The range of e-commerce systems included Shopify, Khan, Squarespace, WooCommerce, Magento among others. Each of these platforms had advantages and disadvantages in terms of usability, speed and performance, Search Engine Optimisation (SEO) and ease of integration with other systems.
- Some of the SMEs had websites that could not accurately track transactions.
- A number of SMEs were not able to track transactions, which severely limited the usefulness of their data. Nearly all the SMEs onboarded so far were aware that they did not understand their analytics data and so they did not fully engage with it.
- Making the B2C or B2B focus decision was a key step in the onboarding stage. Many of the participant SMEs were not strong on stock management and inventory or how their online store could share or integrate with their shop-based stock management systems. Therefore, to put SME data into the DMCP was more time-consuming than anticipated.
- There were delays due to issues with the connectors³ and which software the SMEs were using.
- For some SMEs to access the DMCP, data had to be taken manually from their websites, which was time-consuming.
- Shopify connected really well with the DMCP so data connection was more successful for the SMEs who used Shopify in conjunction with Google Analytics.
- Both the UK and French technical teams worked on designs and improvements to the DMCP to make it more user-friendly for SMEs, particularly for SMEs who had limited experience, if any, with e-commerce. A set of guides and web pages providing guided access to DMCP were written.⁴

Table 3 is a description of the four tools.

³ The work on connectors refers to the developments needed so as to be able to connect the various e-commerce systems the participant SMEs were using, to the E-Channel DMCP so that data can be sent from one system and received by another, and allows two systems to talk to each other. These connectors are also known as an API (Application Programming Interface).

⁴ Further information about the four tools is available at <https://www.e-channel.org/resources/>

The four tools offered by the DMCP	
Tool	Description
Inventory Review	The SME can check their inventory against a range of common mistakes or set their own objectives with the inventory review and checking tool, and try to get a quality score as close to 100% as possible.
Marketing Opportunities	E-Channel's marketing opportunities engine identifies marketing opportunities from the data collected. SMEs can use this tool to regularly see what opportunities are arising and take action accordingly.
Business Growth	SMEs can track long-term objectives for their market entry using the business growth tool to see how well their business has done and project potential sales growth based on current trends.
Profit and Costs	For SMEs who are not sure how much money they are making from their e-commerce operations, the E Channel Profit and Cost tool shows them how much they are making from each order.

Table 3: The four tools offered by the DMCP

4.2.3 UK and FR DMCP Review Period 3 November 2020

- The DMCP development work was finalised by the end of October 2020, as planned.
- Issues with accessing SME data were being addressed.
- The project partners and the technical teams agreed they might want to revisit the DMCP in the future and possibly do some work to add finesse to the algorithm, but it was done.
- The focus was now on the practical application of the DMCP.
- It was exciting to start the process of putting the SMEs' data into the DMCP, but as more were onboarded, it became clear that a significant number of the participant SMEs had limited knowledge of their data and systems.
- In many cases, a third-party company was commercially managing a lot of their systems and in some cases, this was seriously hindering the online success of these businesses.
- Responsibility for SEO optimisation, the process of improving the quality and quantity of website traffic to a website or a web page from search engines, and advertising expertise, was a grey area. A significant number of the SMEs lacked knowledge and confidence with this work and their website hosting suppliers did not necessarily see this as their responsibility.
- All these factors caused delays in putting SME data into the DMCP.
- Deployment of the DMCP with the SMEs started quite well, although some minor adjustments to the connectors had to be made. Some very minor technical adjustments had already been made to the DMCP so it would be easier for the SMEs to use.
- Some of the earlier participant SMEs who had not been fully able to access the DMCP, benefited from the tweaks which were made in October 2020.
- Making the DMCP operational was more complicated, depending on which e-commerce sales platform the participant SMEs were already using.

- A set of guides and web pages providing guided access to DMCP including how to download the software⁵ were updated.

Inventory Tool

- All the SMEs were introduced to the DMCP Inventory Tool first, as the preparation to access the other tools. All the SMEs were weak in this area.
- Inventory management is a cornerstone to any company's success as much of their revenue is tied up in inventory. With e-commerce, a key determinant of customer satisfaction is a website where it is clear if inventory is available immediately, available to order within a period of time or is completely out of stock.
- As the DMCP is an automated system, real-time and meaningful data about sales trends can be obtained, providing intelligence for accurate ordering of inventory.
- Some of the participant SMEs were using multiple sites as well as their own website, without the proper integration of all platforms, and were therefore overselling and had too many out-of-stock products.
- Many of the SMEs were not using their software to accurately forecast customer demand, nor to consider sensible minimum stock levels and purchasing trends.
- Many of the SMEs did not have efficient processes whereby they could look at the inventory in versus inventory out balance. In addition, they could not necessarily differentiate between sales and profit.
- The DMCP gives the SME a quality score out of 100 but also breaks down issues, such as which products are missing data, such as the price, an image or description. For example, it will allow the SME to look at the quality of an image or photograph.
- These basic but key pieces of information impact the consumer's decision to make a purchase.

Marketing Opportunities Tool

- The Marketing Opportunities Tool allowed the SMEs to capitalise on their current situation and to work on products immediately to improve their sales.

Profit and Cost Tool

- Once the inventory and sales data had been accessed, the Profit and Cost Tool allowed the SMEs to monitor the monthly number of sales per item, the value of those sales and how much profit they made from those sales. A high sales turnover did not necessarily mean high profits. This tool allowed the SMEs to see which products were giving them the best return month by month. By comparing the data over time, they could also monitor sales against any marketing activities they undertook, or any improvements made to their websites etc.

SME Feedback - Business Growth Tool

- The Business Growth Tool allowed the SMEs to track long-term objectives, including potential sales growth based on current trends. As this tool focussed on potential long-term strategies and objectives, many of the SMEs did not initially use this tool as they were more interested in short-term gains.

4.2.4 UK and FR DMCP Review Period 4 February 2021

- The technical teams reported they were pleased with the operation and performance of the DMCP. November 2020, and specifically December 2020 and January 2021, were busy times for the participant SMEs in terms of online sales, so once the SMEs' data

⁵ A set of guides and web pages providing guided access to DMCP are available at <https://www.e-channel.org/resources/>

had been connected to the DMCP, this period yielded some very useful data for the DMCP.

- Some SMEs were able to access the DMCP faster than others due to the systems they already had in place.
- There was steady progress in getting the SMEs to engage with the technology, albeit at basic levels.
- Any SMEs who were using Shopify had an advantage as Shopify could be connected to the DMCP immediately.
- As already identified, some of the SMEs did not have a lot of data to work with, and quality data was necessary before a New Market Entry Plan could be written.
- Not all the SMEs had enhanced e-commerce sales data tracking enabled, some had this fully in place and others only partly.
- Operationally, the DMCP did what it was designed to do, but getting the data into it was a slower process than envisaged.

4.3 DMCP Technical Exchange

A full report on joint technical, operations, cultural exchange, and innovation is available at <https://www.e-channel.org/resources/>

4.3.1 DMCP Overview and Technical Exchange Review

Period 1 May 2020

- The UK technical team made progress on getting the DMCP for B2C to a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and shared their technology with the French technical team so they could use the same or similar technology in France, as part of the collaborative process.
- The French technical team worked on getting the DMCP for B2B to a Minimum Viable Product (MVP) and shared their technology with the UK technical team so they could use the same or similar technology in the UK, as part of the collaborative process.
- The technical teams' different approaches to the DMCP contained some fascinating synergies for both project partners to benefit from.
- As part of the technical exchange, the project partners discussed how the UK and French technical teams could work together, and also with the UK and French Launchpads to design ways in which the Launchpads could offer additional support by way of E-Channel distance learning and short, online courses.

4.3.2 DMCP Overview and Technical Exchange Review

Period 2 August 2020

- The technical teams collaborated on the design of a diagram for the repository of DMCP tools that could be used for both B2B and B2C DMCP.⁶
- The project partners and the technical teams agreed that the content, view, and operation of the DMCP would differ depending on the B2C or B2B focus of the SME

⁶ The diagram of a repository containing tools that could be used for both B2B and B2C DMCPs is available at <https://www.e-channel.org/resources/>

and their location in France or the United Kingdom due to cultural and operational differences.

- Both the UK and French technical teams began installing the repository with all tools available on both Launchpads, to then use it or refine in their respective national contexts as appropriate.

4.3.3 DMCP Overview and Technical Exchange Review

Period 3 November 2020

- The project partners and technical teams reviewed DMCP progress with Prestashop⁷.

4.3.4 DMCP Overview and Technical Exchange Review

Period 4 February 2021

- The project partners discussed ongoing and future collaboration on B2B and the use of Prestashop.

4.4 Lessons learnt

4.4.1 Lessons learnt - Review Period 1 May 2020

1	Shorter, more frequent micro-technical meetings were a more effective way to approach working on the DMCP, during Covid-19 restrictions.
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4.4.2 Lessons learnt - Review Period 2 August 2020

2	The SMEs so far recruited were using many different e-commerce systems and platforms. The time needed to connect to the DMCP varied depending on which platform the SME was using.
3	A number of SMEs had websites that could not accurately track transactions, for example in Google Analytics, which severely limited the usefulness of their data.

4.4.3 Lessons learnt - Review Period 3 November 2021

4	Input from the technical teams supported the Launchpads to give specific advice and support to the SMEs who did not understand what data their websites could capture. This was an opportunity for both teams to work together.
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⁷ Prestashop is an open source e-commerce platform. More information is available at <https://www.prestashop.com/>

4.4.4 Lessons learnt - Review Period 4 February 2021

5	The decision to invite SMEs who were not part of E-Channel to try out the DMCP as a dry run was helpful, especially if those SMEs were using Shopify.
6	Many of the participant SMEs were very busy over the Christmas period and for many, this was their peak sales time. This provided several months of key data which was put into the DMCP. This was an effective way for the SMEs to see the data in their DMCP dashboard, and to understand the implications from that data as the DMCP tools created a narrative for them.
7	An effective strategy for introducing the DMCP to the SMEs was to share selected areas, screens and tools and then build up to sharing more. Sharing too much too soon with some of the SMEs too soon caused them some confusion and anxiety.

5. Month 21 Review Period 5

Final Review of The Impact of the DMCP May 2021

5.1 Challenges - Final Review

- The Launchpads and technical teams did not fully anticipate the range of different platforms the participant SMEs were using so connecting data across the many different platforms being used by the SMEs was a challenge.

5.2 UK and FR DMCP - Final Review

- COVID-19 had a substantial impact on the technical development of the project;
- The demand for e-commerce consultancy rose after April 2020;
- Connecting data across many e-commerce sales platforms was a challenge;
- The participant SMES had highly diverse needs and IT skills;
- The consultancy was often wide and varied to have maximum impact and to support the many different needs of the SMEs. Any initial generic modelling had to be adapted for individual SMEs;
- The DMCP allowed the participant SMEs to benefit from a carefully constructed view of their own performance. Using the DMCP tools they could analyse their data, in real time, according to key categories:
 - Inventory Review
 - Marketing Opportunities
 - Business Growth
 - Profit and Costs
- Many of the participant SMEs used the DMCP, with the support of their Launchpad Account Manager;
- Some of the participant SMEs started by using only a limited set of DMCP tools with their specific dashboards;
- Some of the participant SMEs have started using specific dashboards independently;
- The project partners have started to promote the DMCP to more French and UK SMEs, outside the project.

5.3 DMCP Overview and Technical Exchange- Final Review

- Despite remote working, a technical and cultural exchange⁸ took place, although not necessarily in the ways which were initially envisaged.
- Many different factors disrupted the smooth technical operation of the project:
 - A project modification, which impacted heavily on the technical development of the DMCP, was made to mitigate against Covid-19;
 - Additional time was needed to work on greater remote project access;
 - More time was needed to connect the SMEs data to the DMCP. This was due to connection challenges as a result of the many different e-commerce platforms being used by the SMEs and it took longer to do this remotely;
 - More time was needed for SME technical support;

These factors impacted how the project was modified and reorganised. Many of the technical team engagements were of a different type than had been envisaged in the initial project proposal, as they adapted the DMCP to support the Launchpads and the participant SMEs with remote working.

5.4 Lessons learnt - Final Review - Summary

- The DMCP was successfully developed as a data modelling system to assist SMEs with Key Performance Indicator (KPI) assessment.

Time

- Time was a crucial element in DMCP development. Minor project delays during the initial Covid-19 period, the project modification and then the extension in DMCP development led to a delay in the onboarding of SMEs.
- Coding the data connections took longer than envisaged so it took longer to access SME data.
- Then it became clear that many of the participant SMEs did not have sufficient, high quality data.
- It took longer than anticipated to set up the participant SMEs Google Analytics with e-commerce tracking enabled so the DMCP could access vital conversion data.
- With hindsight, it is arguable that as a result, the remaining time available to the Launchpads to carry out the consultancy work during the intensive support period was tight, particularly as some of the SMEs required a lot of support with redesigning or restarting their websites.

The DMCP Tools

- The additional work carried out by the technical teams on remote-friendly access was effective as it supported the Launchpad Account Managers in their consultancy with the SMEs. As a result, the SMEs had a better understanding of their data and the metrics generated by the DMCP.
- Once the DMCP tools had been configured, they provided self-explanatory reports for the SME, which were designed to be as user-friendly as possible as the aim was for SMEs to access and use them remotely. The main issue was if there was not enough data for the tools to provide useful output.

⁸ A separate report on the project partner's collaboration on technical, operational, cultural exchange and innovation is available at <https://www.e-channel.org/resources/>

- Once the data was collected and entered into the DMCP, the SMEs were particularly interested in how it could provide them with short-term wins before targeting longer term gains. This short-term outlook was in part, caused by Covid-19 related business stress.

SME feedback - The Inventory Tool

- The SMEs agreed that this tool was the gatekeeper tool to accessing the rest of the DMCP, and on its own, the Inventory tool was paramount to preparing the SMEs to enter e-commerce markets.

SME Feedback - Marketing Opportunities Tool

- Most of the SMEs started by using the Marketing Opportunities Tool to take fast action to capitalise on their current situation, so it was an effective, quick win and gave them confidence in the process. The Marketing Opportunities Tool provided the SMEs with the ability to work on products immediately to improve their sales. This tool was also used to focus on quick wins before long-term gains.

SME feedback - Profit and Costs Tool

- This was a popular tool for the SMEs because it allowed them to monitor and compare product sales with how much profit they made from those product sales. Some SMEs cut their inventory and focussed on less stock with higher profit margins to mitigate against Covid-19. This tool sometimes required larger pieces of work to populate the DMCP with their data so was seen by the SMEs as a medium-term goal.

SME Feedback - Business Growth Tool

- The Business Growth Tool became more popular with the SMEs towards the end of their intensive consultancy.
- By the end of the consultancy, many of the SMEs had gained greater confidence and understanding of e-commerce and were more interested in the potential long-term strategies and objectives offered by this tool.

Measuring the impact of the DMCP with the SMEs

- Feedback from the SMEs about the DMCP has been positive.
- Getting the SMEs to a point where they could see their inventory on their DMCP screens was time-consuming. Many of the SMEs expected the rest of the process to be long and arduous as well. They were pleasantly surprised when, once everything was set up for them, they were able to use the tools to effectively manage their e-commerce business.
- The SMEs were initially interested in quick wins but once they started their New Market Entry Plans and their intensive period of consultation, they could see how the DMCP could be used to support them with longer term strategies.
- The DMCP has brought about a change in the participant SMEs' attitude to e-commerce. As the SMEs understand and interrogate their own data on the DMCP, they will be better placed to make informed decisions about their future e-commerce strategy.