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## Rural Growth Action Plan Southwest Drenthe.

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*provincie* Drenthe

Commissioner: Province of Drenthe  
Project leader: Catrien Scholten - van der Scheer  
Version: 3.0 English Definitive (approved by JS)

Approval

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Date: 01-07-2019

Signature:



A red circular stamp from the Province of Drenthe is visible. The stamp features the provincial coat of arms in the center, surrounded by the text 'PROVINCIE DRENTHE'. A blue ink signature is written over the stamp.

## RURALGROWTH

### ACTION PLAN, Final version 2018, July – update April 2019

#### Province of Drenthe

### Dutch summary

Het Interreg RuralGrowth project is gestart met een aanvraag in de zomer van 2015. Gedeputeerde staten hadden een collegeprogramma opgesteld met een focus op versterken van vrijetijdseconomie in Zuidwest Drenthe. Het Interreg project werd goedgekeurd in het voorjaar van 2016. Ondertussen was de provincie gestart met een eigen programma Vrijetijdseconomie. In de afgelopen 2 jaar hebben we het RuralGrowth project en het programma vrijetijdseconomie goed op elkaar afgestemd en gezorgd dat RuralGrowth daarop aanvullend was.

### Gebied- en probleemanalyse

In de analyse van de situatie zuidwest Drenthe (status qua analyse) komt de volgende situatie naar boven: Een regio rijk aan natuur en cultuurhistorie. Er vindt schaalvergroting in de landbouw plaats, waarmee werkgelegenheid in die sector terugloopt. Vrijkomende agrarische gebouwen worden deels gevuld met toeristische ondernemingen. Zuidwest Drenthe kent vanuit de jaren 60 vorige eeuw al veel toeristische accommodaties. Voor een deel van deze accommodaties geldt echter dat investeringen de laatste jaren (mede als gevolg van een trend naar meer buitenlandse vakanties) zijn achtergebleven. Vastgesteld is door de LSG (lokale stakeholder groep) dat het imago van Drenthe niet altijd klopt met het werkelijke aanbod. Maar ook dat we niet precies weten wat de (potentiële) toeristen verwachten van een vakantie in Drenthe.

## Doelstelling Interreg Rural Growth

Als doelstelling voor het actieplan Zuidwest Drenthe is geformuleerd dat we een levendige toeristische sector willen in een regio met hoge natuur en cultuurhistorische waarden. Waarbij we graag seizoensverbreding willen en meer Duitse en Belgische bezoekers.

De LSG heeft als doelen geformuleerd:

1. Verbeteren van dataverzameling over wat toeristen willen en doen in de regio (gebleken is dat we wel denken te weten wat bezoekers willen, maar dat niet of nauwelijks met cijfers kunnen onderbouwen)
2. 10% meer Duitse en Belgische toeristen in 2020 t.o.v. 2016
3. Verbreden van het toeristisch seizoen door in voor- en naseizoen meer evenementen te organiseren
4. Samenwerking tussen MKB bevorderen ten behoeve van marketing en organisatie van evenementen
5. Gezamenlijke marketing agenda en online platform Zuidwest Drenthe.

## Leren van elkaar

In het project zijn in fase 1 (september 2016 tot en met september 2018) alle partnerregio's bezocht. Daarbij heeft iedere partner in zijn regio goede voorbeelden van MKB bedrijven of initiatieven getoond die de toeristische sector een impuls kunnen of hebben gegeven.

Voor Drenthe hebben we het budget dat beschikbaar was voor externe expertise ingezet om Motivaction en Marketing Drenthe opdracht te geven marktonderzoek te doen onder respectievelijk potentiële gasten uit Nederland, België en Duitsland en onder de huidige bezoekers in 2018. Hiermee krijgen we inzicht in de hele gastreis en wensen van bezoekers, combinaties van bezoek en wat nog beter kan.

In Finland, Savonlinna, bezochten we een hotel en camping in heel dun bevolkt gebied. Beide trokken publiek door heel persoonlijke aandacht aan gasten te geven. En in ontwikkeling in Savonlinna regio was een 5 sterren spa hotel.

In Spanje, Medina del Campo, bezochten we 2 zeer inspirerende voorbeelden van samenwerking en seizoenverbreding. Het eerste was de Rueda Wine route; een initiatief om wijnboeren en wijnproducenten te verbinden met lokale restaurants, hotels en cultuurhistorische rondleidingen. Met een sterk gezamenlijk logo dat overal terugkomt, werd promotie van vele kleine ondernemingen samen opgepakt. De gemeente zorgde voor de aanjager en coördinator. Een voorbeeld dat voor bijvoorbeeld de Koloniën van Weldadigheid zou kunnen werken.

Een tweede voorbeeld in Medina is hoe verschillende kleinschalige historische spelen (rondom middeleeuwse gebouwen) samenwerking in een Mediëval week (half augustus). Waarbij een groots theaterspektakel in de stad zorgt voor volgeboekte hotels (en reclame voor evenementen later in het jaar). Een vergelijkbaar evenement is mogelijk toepasbaar voor Frederiksoord e.o., Shakespeare village Diever of Heerlijkheid Ruinen.

In Hongarije maakten we kennis met een keten van hotels die gespecialiseerd zijn in fietsen. In Drenthe als fietsprovincie, waar de infrastructuur al goed op orde is, kan een keten van verblijfsaccommodatie en restaurants die inspelen op de doelgroep helpen om het product te versterken. Overigens ook in Ootmarsum zagen we in de gebiedsafari in het najaar van 2017 al een goed voorbeeld van Vila Velo.

In Roemenië was sprake van een vakantiepark gebouwd met oorspronkelijke huisjes uit de regio. Plaggenhutten, boomhutten en koloniehuisjes zouden in onze regio daarin ook kunnen passen.

Tot slot bezochten we de Po Delta in Italië. Daar werd een krachtig voorbeeld van gezamenlijke promotie van lokale (natuur) musea getoond die samenwerkten onder 1 gezamenlijke organisatie. Traditioneel is de kustregio in Italië vooral in juli-augustus in trek voor vakantie. De Po Delta verlengt het seizoen door een combinatie van “bird watching” en “Slow tourism”. Dat laatste concept wordt letterlijk genomen door ook fietsen en wandelen te promoten, in combinatie met authentiek eten en persoonlijke aandacht/beleving. De filosofie is wanneer je mensen de regio laat voelen en proeven dat meer indruk maakt dan een vluchtig bezoek.

## Actieplanning fase 2.

### Actie 1: dataverzameling

In fase 1 hebben we bezoekersonderzoek gestart om de voorgenomen plannen te toetsen aan behoefte van (potentiële) bezoekers. Deel 1 van het onderzoek onder potentiële bezoekers is afgerond. Dit heeft opgeleverd dat er niet heel veel meer evenementen hoeven komen, maar dat ze wel beter vindbaar moeten zijn (vooral ook via boekingskanalen voor accommodatie) en dat er meer samenhang in mag. Uitkomsten van het onderzoek leveren input voor ondernemers om het aanbod en de kwaliteit ervan te verbeteren. De LSG gaat zorgen voor verspreiding van resultaten en inspiratie van ondernemers. Het doen van onderzoek als gezamenlijk project voor ondernemers is vaak lastig te financieren. Meer mogelijkheden voor het aanvragen van gezamenlijke financiering (zonder noodzaak een nieuwe rechtspersoon op te richten) binnen de subsidieregels kan helpen de drempel te verlagen. Actie is om samen met SNN partners te proberen de volgende EU-regelingen voor OP-EFRO in de aanloop te beïnvloeden door met goede voorbeelden uit INTEREG Europe te onderbouwen dat dit meerwaarde heeft.

### Actie 2: 10% meer Duitse en Belgische bezoekers

Voor Duitse bezoekers is Duitstalige informatie van belang om de drempel te verlagen, net als online betalingssystemen die aansluiten bij wat in Duitsland gangbaar is. Duitse schoolvakanties bieden kansen voor verbreding vakantieperiodes. Duitse bezoekers willen vooraf weten wat ze kunnen verwachten, zodat ze hun bezoek kunnen plannen

Vlaamse bezoekers zijn op zoek naar gezelligheid, ze waarderen het fietsen in de natuur en het landschap. Voor Vlaamse bezoekers moet kwaliteit (van eten, drinken en accommodatie) omhoog ten opzichte van het huidige aanbod. Vlaamse bezoekers boeken vaak via boekings- en voordeelplatforms. Vindbaarheid van Drentse accommodaties op die sites kan beter.

Om de buitenlandse nabije markt te bereiken, helpt het om grensoverschrijdende samenwerking te zoeken en gezamenlijk arrangementen te ontwikkelen. Met de huidige regels van OP-EFRO is dat niet toegestaan. We gaan lobby inzetten op basis van geleerde lessen om de volgende periode meer aandacht te krijgen voor nut van grensoverschrijdende samenwerking.

#### Actie 3: Seizoen verbreding

Om het seizoen te verbreden is organisatie van evenementen in voor- en naseizoen van belang. Ook focus op specifieke doelgroepen zoals bijvoorbeeld ATB'ers die niet alleen van mooi weer afhankelijk zijn. En schoolvakanties in Duitsland wijken deels af van de Nederlandse vakanties. Zie de opmerkingen over beïnvloeden van OP-EFRO onder actie 2

#### Actie 4: stimuleer samenwerking tussen ondernemers

Door samenwerking tussen ondernemers kan naar bezoekers een beter en uitgebreider aanbod gegeven worden van wat er te doen is. Met een gezamenlijke agenda (via Drenthe.nl) is op 1 plek duidelijk wat er te doen is. Ondernemers en organisatoren moeten gestimuleerd worden activiteiten en evenementen aan te melden. Ook openstellen van faciliteiten bij een bedrijf voor gasten van anderen kan helpen (bijvoorbeeld een sauna of zwembad ook kaartverkoop aan gasten van andere accommodaties in het dorp). Samenwerking, ondernemers die elkaar leren kennen, leidt tot gezamenlijke ontwikkeling van nieuw aanbod of evenementen. Van belang is dat ook cross overs tussen lokale voedselproducenten en restaurants bijvoorbeeld gestimuleerd worden. In OP-EFRO wordt het inzetten van triple Helix benadrukt. Door het ontbreken van relevante HBO en Universitaire opleidingen in de regio, is dit voor veel ondernemers een lastige hobbel. Via samenwerking en overheid beïnvloeding trachten we de drempel te verlagen.

#### Actie 5: gezamenlijke promotie van de regio via Marketing agenda

Natuur, wandelen en fietsen zijn de belangrijkste bezoekmotieven voor Zuidwest Drenthe. De oorspronkelijke actie voor een nieuwe slechtweer accommodatie voldeed niet aan de criteria van Rural Growth. Op basis van geleerde lessen en het onderkende belang van samenwerking, hebben we een project ingediend voor LEADER zuidwest Drenthe om een gezamenlijke regiopromotie op te zetten. Diverse voorbeelden van de partners (Rueda Wine Route Spanje, Internetplatform Savonlinna, coöperatie Po Delta) bevestigen de effectiviteit van samenwerking. Om binnen de huidige regelingen voor financiering in aanmerking te komen is 1 rechtspersoonlijkheid voor de aanvraag nodig. Voor de Marketing agenda is gekozen om de aanvraag door Marketing Drenthe te laten indienen. Voor brede betrokkenheid en het benadrukken van gezamenlijk belang en verantwoordelijkheid, hadden we liever de aanvraag gezamenlijk in willen dienen. Actie in de lobby voor nieuwe EU financiering zal ingezet worden om projecten ook door meerdere partijen aan te laten vragen.

## Aanpassing van (Europese) programma's en beleid

Reflectie op de Europese programma's, financieringsinstrumenten en beleid laat zien dat er veel mogelijk is. Maar dat vooral minder omvangrijke (investerings)plannen vanwege regelgeving en controle buiten de boot vallen. Enerzijds kan samenwerking tussen ondernemers uitkomst bieden. Maar we stellen ook vast dat lokale en provinciale overheden een deel van dat gat kan vullen, juist voor de kleinere bedrijven.



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## Part I – General information

Project: Rural Growth – increasing competitiveness of SMEs in rural visitor economy sector

Partner organisation: Province Drenthe

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): None

Country: The Netherlands

NUTS2 region: NL 13

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## Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact: (Please mark relevant programme(s) with X)

Investment for Growth and Jobs programme, ERDF 2014 - 2020

Other regional development policy instrument, e.g. Programme for Leisure Economy (VTE), Economic Investment Program (KEI)

Name of the policy instrument addressed: Operational Programme EFRO Noord (and Leader Programme)

### Policy tools for financial support

The base for the different policy tools for financial support is the Research and Innovation Strategy for Smart Specialisation (RIS3). This was the foundation for developing the programmes for OP ERDF Northern Netherlands, European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD), Leader and regional economic plans. All these European programmes align with their respective programme regulations. Of course, all these European programmes align with the RIS3 programme regulations. In addition to this, certain provincial (or local) policy tools have been developed.

## Part III – General overview of the current situation and the desired state

### 1. Status quo situation

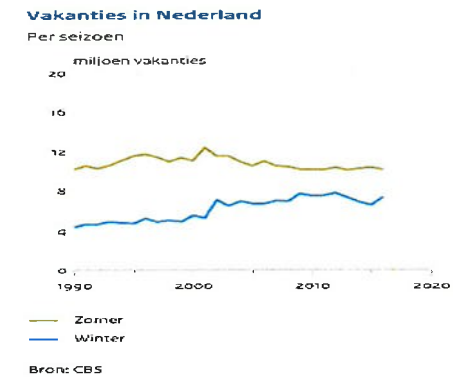
Southwest Drenthe is a rural area in the north of the Netherlands. It is located between the provincial capitals of Zwolle (Province of Overijssel) and Assen (Province of Drenthe), about one and a half hours drive from Amsterdam.

Southwest Drenthe is a region with a number of extensive nature areas (e.g. the two National Parks Dwingelderveld and Drents-Friese Wold). Over the last years some new attractions have been added, (e.g. Drentse Koe and Boomhut XXL). Drenthe was also awarded Bike Region of the World by the Union Cycliste Internationale (UCI) in 2017. Therefore, tourism is an important economic factor. Furthermore, farming and service delivery are important economic sectors. Since the 1950s the area for agriculture has increased significantly. As a result of the introduction of fertilizers the poor sandy soils were reclaimed and made suitable for tillage. A lot of nature was lost and in the 1980s upscaling became the norm, meaning that the more attractive aspects of small-scale landscapes had to make place for larger farms. The split between nature areas on the one hand and largescale farms on the other became increasingly sharp. Nowadays the continuous upscaling and ever stricter environmental legislation has resulted in a reduction in the number of farming businesses. In parts of the countryside new service delivery companies have arisen. Moreover, the decrease of employment in the agricultural sector and vacant farms offer new opportunities to focus more on recreation and services – including possible combinations with healthcare (wellness, well-being and recreation).

Besides the treasured natural environment there is a long history of human activity and cultural heritage in the area. For example, the Colonies of Benevolence represent one of the earliest social experiments (in 1818) to tackle extreme poverty on a national scale. Based on the ideas of the Enlightenment, agricultural colonies were established, a utopian concept to re-educate the poor and the needy.

In the 1960s the region became increasingly popular for camping holidays. Mobile homes and chalets were built on these camping sites in the 80s. More than half of these are so outdated now that they no longer match with tourist expectations. Hotel refurbishment and renovations has also been non-existent over the past 20-30 years and some hotels have even closed down. There are no big tourist attractions in this region (zoo, museum etc.), with the exception of the National Parks' Visitors Centres which attract more than 50,000 people per year. Employment prospects in the agricultural sector are decreasing fast as a result of up-scaling. Meanwhile 1 in 5 jobs is related to tourism.

In the tourism sector, we see a decline in overnight stays and expenditure in Southwest Drenthe. This corresponds with the national trend that the Dutch book fewer holidays in their own country since 2000 (see figure). The figures for 2015 are slightly better, a slight upturn, most likely due to a little more consumer confidence. We see big differences in the sector. Some companies are doing very well. The companies that are doing well generally have received a new owner recently or started a new concept. In doing so, cooperation with other entrepreneurs, passion for the profession and hospitality towards the guests (responding to what guests wants) seems to be the key for success.



Entrepreneurs who are not doing well often haven't invested for years - accommodations are outdated/worn out. There is no match between the guest's expectations nowadays and what these companies offer. They are working hard, but not together with other companies (fear of competition). There is a lack of private resources to invest. Banks no longer want to invest, because business plans lack vision and show nothing new.

Problems indicated: lack of entrepreneurship, outdated image, lack of investment resources.

The Colonies of Benevolence, coordinated by the Province of Drenthe, have adopted a community based approach. All the steps taken over the past twenty years in terms of restoration, preservation and the development of the areas were largely the result of local initiatives, or were realized in consultation with the local community. The main stakeholders and beneficiaries are regional authorities, local authorities, local entrepreneurs and investors, cultural organizations, and marketing organizations

## 2. Vision

The aims for the Rural Growth project (with a focus on Southwest –Drenthe) overlap to a certain extent with those of Leisure Economy Programme (“programma Vrijetijdseconomie”) which covers the whole province of Drenthe. The project application for Rural Growth was submitted before this programme was fully developed. For both (project and programme) action is required on the following:

- SMEs in the tourist sector must become more competitive
- What is on offer should be of higher quality and include more unique and locally distinctive activities

Because of the phase of the European Funding Programme (OP North Netherlands ERDF 2014-2020) changes and emendations to the policy instrument were out of the question. We try to influence the next Funding programmes by demonstrating effective ways to stimulate SME competitiveness. Therefore we explore the best practices in other regions, try to implement them in the next two years in our region and then/parallel influence the next programmes and calls. In the meanwhile we have financed new projects with regional money, just demonstrating the effect of good criteria and fitted financial instruments.

Our vision for the future is of a vibrant tourism sector with the area's high environmental quality at its centre and a tourist season stretching from early spring to late autumn. A co-ordinated tourism offer will be developed by businesses that is tailored to contemporary tourist needs. This will include new market segments such as Germany and Belgian tourists and development of a small number of larger, year-round 'anchor' attractions. Individual businesses will show improved competitiveness through innovation and supplying goods and services which correspond closely with tourist wants.

## Part IV – Lessons learnt from inter-regional exchange

Lessons learnt from best practices often influence more than one action. So we describe in general what we've learnt from partner regions and how this effected our actions.

Brief description (What, where)	Features that are of interest and possibly relevant for your region.
<p>1. Renaissance week in Medina Co-ordination of activities into one week; community involvement in staging; exciting costumes and lights</p>	<p>Event, extra visitors, collaboration between different kinds of SME. Organisation started with a small group of volunteers. The municipality supports the group by a (paid) project manager. You can't expect entrepreneurs to finance such a project manager, because in the first years, SME don't earn extra money due to this cooperation and if they do, they first need to invest to improve their own company.</p>
<p>2. Slow Spring in Delta 2000 region Combination of bird watching with "slow tourism", such as serving local products in restaurants and promoting bike tours</p>	<p>Broaden the season; every weekend is an entertaining weekend, fitting to regional identity, strong communication</p> <p>Investments in SME's are more effective if they are used for a longer period each year.</p>
<p>3. Rueda Wine Route Medina Initiative that co-ordinates many wineries and other local SMEs Develop a strong brand (also Po Delta) and make this visible by using social media and internet (visit Savonlinna, online platform)</p>	<p>The concept of telling stories, linked to the wine route can be interesting for our region. Maybe linking to the story of poor people getting a second change (Colonies of Benevolence) to the development of the landscape and the large nature areas.</p> <p>Economic spin off is provided by a strong and attractive event and brand. Therefore, a strong tourist brand (especially in nature-sustainable tourism as we conceived for Drenthe) directly affect to a high extent the competitiveness of local rural SMEs. While the governance of the branded tourist area should develop and maximize the conditions for long term sustainability of local SMEs (knowledge, partnerships, people, resources, positive impacts, etc.).</p> <p>Without this "push" tourism can provide, the majority of local SMEs in Drenthe are too small to survive in global markets, even in consortia/partnerships.</p>
<p>4. Hungary, Lispezsentadorján Cycle network run collectively by SMEs</p>	<p>The cooperation between hotels around bicycle tourism is interesting. Drenthe has the UCI bike region label and hosts international races (Ronde van Drenthe). The infrastructure around cycling is excellent. Hotels can better tailor service to cyclists.</p>

## Part V – Details of the actions envisaged

### Policy objectives

In addition to the actions resulting from the Leisure Economy Programme there are more opportunities for Rural Growth in the areas of

- OP North Netherlands ERDF 2014-2020 is focussed on innovation, investments in singular SME's. Rural Growth project offers new possibilities and insights. For small SME's big investments are not possible if they don't cooperate with others. But cooperation needs formal (new) identity for applies for subsidy in OP ERDF. We try to find solutions for this problem identified.
- Knowledge exchange with international partners
- Researching (potential) visitors and their wishes in terms of attractions in SW Drenthe. How can we make SW Drenthe more attractive?
- Rural Growth can be the platform for entrepreneurs in various sectors of the leisure economy (hotel/camping sites, catering, bicycle rent, local supermarkets, event organizations etc.) for collaboration and mutual learning. The aim is to increase awareness and strengthen the connection with the region, collect and share knowledge (also towards guests regarding what there is to do and experience). Influence OP ERDF so that collaborative projects are easier to apply for.

### How to reach the policy objectives

We'd like to inspire local SMEs by best practices from the partners in Rural Growth. We are looking for a way to stimulate more collaboration between different types of SMEs in the region. For example on- and offline meetings and platforms, sharing best practices and ideas.

<b>Policy objective 1 (broad goal): Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector</b>	
<b>1.1 SMART objectives: SMART Data: Visitor survey, to identify potential improvements in the supply of goods and services which are matched to visitor requirements</b>	
The specific outcome that you want?	<p>More SMEs profiling their business on expectations of their (potential) guest. Information about what current guests do and what they had expected about the region and accommodation will be obtained by an online survey of visitors completed after their visit (Survey sent by email)</p> <p>Visitors survey was carried out in phase 1 to support the actions in the action plan. This action is aimed at the entrepreneurs, to make them aware of (and to act upon) the fact that they should continually research the needs of their visitors to keep in touch with their market. Awareness of the need for solid and continued market research is contributory to competitiveness. Small businesses cannot do this alone but need to cooperate with others.</p>



How will you measure this?	Evidence that the survey findings have been disseminated to SMEs, local government and other bodies (potential impact). E.g. number of dissemination events; written report; availability on-line
How much change do you expect?	SMEs providing new services based on understanding the real expectations of visitors. More effective policies by municipalities and province of Drenthe.
When will this change occur?	End of 2020 and later
<p>1. Is this possible under existing policy instruments or projects? Partly Please explain your choice: It is possible to achieve the result of this SMART objective in Rural Growth but the accessibility of OP ERDF North for this type of innovation could be improved. There is too little focus on collaborations within current EU policy. We aim to change this. As an effect of the Rural Growth visitor survey, results are added to criteria for LEADER programme to improve the effectiveness of new projects.</p>	
<b>Interim steps (=actions)</b>	
Together with stakeholders draw up the survey. (completed, 2018)	
Administer the survey and analyse data (completed, 2018)	
Dissemination of results to businesses, local government and trade bodies. Results are shared with entrepreneurs cooperation Weldadig Oord.	
Discussions on the gap between supply and demand with entrepreneurs:	
Action plans on strategic level for innovation, identifying and developing new services/arrangements, developing new networks.	
Re-align regional policies to encourage actions supporting SMEs wishing to innovate based on opportunities identified in smart data. Advice for the evaluation group on OP ERDF North on how to change rules to be better aligned with the needs of SMEs. Looking also to the Leader Programme / Leader Action Plan to adopt the new smart data monitoring approach. Results of visitor research are added to criteria for LEADER programme to improve the effectiveness of new projects.	

<b>Policy objective 1 (broad goal): Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector</b>	
<b>1.2 SMART objectives: 10% increase tourists from Belgium and Germany in the region</b>	
The specific outcome that you want?	Extra tourists from abroad. This action is about raising awareness. Results of research in phase 1 indicate that there is no growth in the number of Dutch tourists, but there is an increase in the Belgian and German market. To ensure growth and competitiveness for the future it is necessary to expand and explore new markets. These visitors have different standards and expectations and businesses must anticipate and adapt to these if they are to remain in the market.
How will you measure this?	Using the existing visitor monitoring system of visitors
How much change do you expect?	10% extra compared to 2015
When will this change occur?	2020

1. Is this possible under existing policy instruments or projects? YES  
Please explain your choice: Marketing Drenthe has been given the task of investigating the German and Belgian markets. With the right information this market can be approached more effectively and investments in SME can be better argued. The annual surveys of 'Drenthe in Numbers' provide information per municipality on overnight stays and where visitors are from.

**Interim steps (=actions)**

Develop a cooperative vision on development of this market segment with SMEs and Marketing Drenthe (trade organisation)

Sharpen the identity of the region for marketing purposes

Sharing knowledge among businesses about handling Flemish and German guests. For example, we had a meeting about identity of German guests in cooperation with Emsland Touristik.

Encourage SMEs to make investments to adapt services and goods supplied to meet the expectations of foreign guests

**Policy objective 1 (broad goal): Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector**

**1.3 SMART objectives: Widening the season by offering extra events especially during German holidays and set up new attractions**

The specific outcome that you want?	More collaboration between SMEs to ensure a critical mass of activities are open during the traditional low and shoulder seasons. Marketing to extra target groups, and improved customer satisfaction to enhance reputation. Extending the season is a way to increase efficiency and results with the same investments, thus increasing competitiveness and strengthening market position. Here the steps for action are again concrete as to what we will do and stimulate.
How will you measure this?	Change in total visitor numbers during low and shoulder season. Increase number of overnight stays and number of visitors to attractions in low and shoulder season
How much change do you expect?	10% extra visitors in April-May and September- October
When will this change occur?	2020

Is this possible under existing policy instruments or projects? Yes, but can better  
Please explain your choice: The existing rules of the policy instruments (OP ERDF North / Leader Programme / Regional policy instruments) are not really supporting innovative cooperation projects in Tourism and Leisure sector. Although a lot can be handled in the existing policies improvement of the policies could boost the achievements in this SMART objective.

**Interim steps (=actions)**



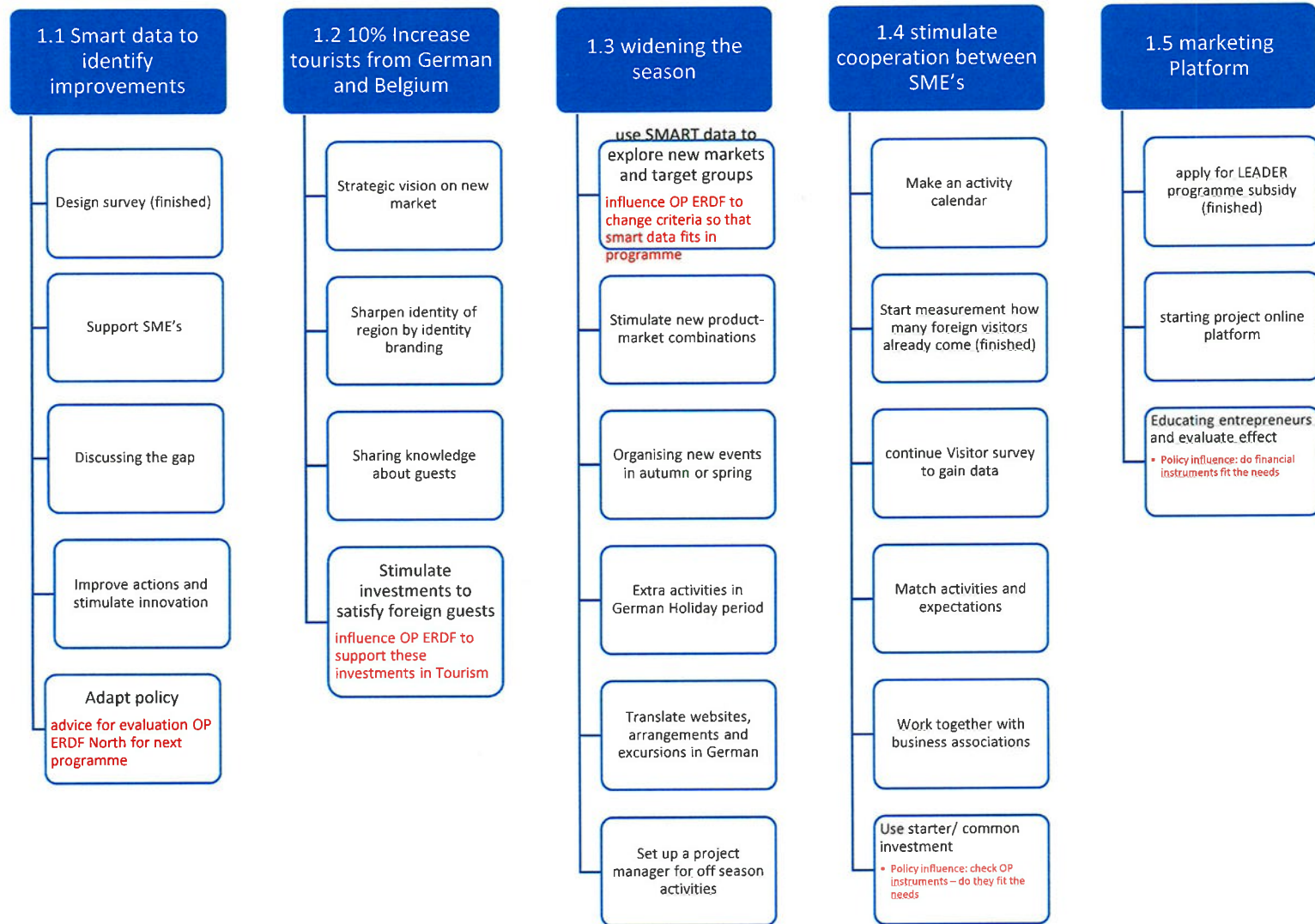
Research on possible new attractions, especially for new target groups (based on smart data).
SMART data based new services aligned to the new seasons.
Organising new events in autumn or spring to stimulate tourist visits
Organising excursions for SME's and working groups to make arrangements and web portals

<b>Policy objective 1 (broad goal): Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector</b>	
<b>1.4 SMART objectives: Realize collaboration between SMEs</b>	
The specific outcome that you want?	SMEs collaborate in strengthening the visibility of the region and the identity (why should one visit the region) Businesses contribute to an online calendar of events, administer a survey to guests, and collect and pool visitor comments/ messages received. It is evident, from both research in the region and the shared experiences of the partners from the other EU regions (lessons learned from cooperation/exchange) that SMEs increase their competitiveness by collaborating. We have staged steps to stimulate more collaboration.
How will you measure this?	Check online messages and customer survey
How much change do you expect?	Promotion using maximum of 5 messages about what is attractive in this region instead of 100 different messages
When will this change occur?	2020
Is this possible under existing policy instruments or projects? YES,. Please explain your choice! we want to underline the positive influence of OP ERDF by funding cooperative initiatives / improving joint applications by more entrepreneurs.	
<b>Interim steps (=actions)</b>	
Make all activities in these periods visible for visitors in a Calendar; what can they expect?	
Visitors survey; what do they miss in the region?	
Scan of activities; is there enough for every target group?	
Formulate the essence of a marketing message promoting the best attractions/activities.	
Adapt regional policies to this enhanced visibility approach. Ensure that the availability of funding for investments is more structured. Influence EU policy Instruments by discussing a best practice and trying to fit this into OP EFRO	

<b>Policy objective 1 (broad goal):</b> Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector	
1.5 SMART objectives: cooperative marketing platform South West Drenthe	
	Cooperation between SME en Marketing organisation, to promote region together. Designing a platform and training programme as a quasi top-down process on goals and clear comprehension of SME needs, we do believe could highly increase the risk of ineffectiveness of investments. Delivering a best practice for cooperation in promoting en marketing and effect on SME competitiveness to change criteria for OP ERDF financial instruments
	Number of visitors (we expect increasing numbers) and visitor satisfying
	Increased level of awareness of the region, better results online searching
	2020
<b>Interim steps (=actions)</b>	
Apply for LEADER subsidy	
starting platform by attracting new project manager	
developing online platform	
educating entrepreneurs to upload events and activities	
research effect on visiting the region.	



## Part VI – Actions



<b>Policy Objective Title:</b> Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector		<b>Policy Objective Number: 1</b>
<b>Action Title:</b> SMART Data: Visitor survey, to identify potential improvements in the supply of goods and services which are matched to visitor requirements		<b>Action Number: 1.1</b>
<p><b>Background:</b> There is currently a lack of evidence with regard to the needs of potential visitors. Such information (obtained from a visitor survey) could increase the confidence of businesses that any new products and services they develop will be successful. This evidence could help identify gaps in current provision and the type of policy support which might be beneficial.</p> <p>Visitors survey was carried out in phase 1 to support the actions in the action plan. This action is aimed at the entrepreneurs, to make them aware of (and to act upon) the fact that they should continually research the needs of their visitors to keep in touch with their market. Awareness of the need for solid and continued market research is contributory to competitiveness. Small businesses cannot do this alone but need to cooperate with others. There is too little focus on such collaborations within current EU policy. We aim to change this.</p>		
a. From which partner/presenter/expert/LSG member(s) have you learnt the good practice which feeds this thematic action?	In LSG meeting about SQA it was emphasised that the lack of evidence regarding needs of potential visitors, makes SMEs hesitating to invest. Data from OP ERDF projects show that smaller SME's in tourism don't apply for subsidy, while we see (also in Partner regions like Savonlinna) that investments are needed to improve the quality and innovation/sustainability.	
b. What have you learnt?	<p>Facilitate the use of information and marketing for SMEs "who want to be involved". The Finnish team mentioned this at an early meeting (the feeling of being involved or of missing out). It is effective to involve SMEs later on in the process. Development and sales of regional products adds value.</p> <p>Intra-regional learning inspired by interregional knowledge exchange has been the most valuable outcome of the project. It is quite obvious for anyone with experience in regional development that the challenges of improving SME competitiveness cannot be addressed by copying good practices from one European region to another. Therefore, most as we see it, the APs also reflect a much deeper understanding and intervention logic for the development processes and the need to build regional consensus concerning the implementation of policy instrument to support methodological change (e.g. development of digital capacities and infrastructures, using big data based on scientific research).</p>	
c. How have you learnt (through a presentation, site	Good examples from Italy and Medina show that it takes time for collaborations to achieve results. Supporting a 'project' for 1-2 years for more collaboration is not enough to secure structural results.	



visit, discussion, workshop etc)?	Continuing support from municipality to platforms and networks. There is a need for long-term vision from politicians. Continuous collection of smart data is needed to monitor developments and effects of investments			
Action Steps (What will be done)	Responsibility (Who will do it)	Resources (Information, money, materials)	Timeline Start and end dates*	1) Name of the PI to be influenced/ already influenced 2)Change needed (e.g. new project, new call).
1. Design and administer the survey together with the stakeholders. Analysis and dissemination of findings	Province of Drenthe in cooperation with the LSG of RG and Regional Marketing Organisation (Marketing Drenthe)	Marketing survey specialists; money arranged (external expertise budget to RG)	Sept 2017-sept 2018. Mid-term overview July 2018	Already influenced. Marketing organisation will continue the visitor survey budget € 30.000 every year.
2. Adapt policy and subsidy rules promoting smart data. Adapt rules of Leader Programme to this end.	Municipality	Leader Programme, Local policy plans	Sept 2018-sept 2019	Change is needed.
3. Support SMEs to give an innovative response on the results of the survey	Province/Municipality	Networking activities, meetings	May 2018-sept 2018 (bad period for SMEs in tourism) Sept 2018-May 2019	-

4. Start with discussions on the gap between supply and demand with entrepreneurs	Province/Municipality	Networking activities, meetings	Sept 2018-May 2019	-
5. Draw up action plans for innovation, new arrangements, new networks	SME's	Financing Bank, European Funding, Provence	2018-2020	-
<b>Implications for other sectors of rural economy?</b> e.g. increases demand for restaurants /locally grown food etc. Reduces skilled labour available for other operators <b>Mitigation</b> e.g. implement training courses	Increasing the number of tourist and visitors will also affect demand for locally grown food, for contractors for maintenance and new buildings, and for SMEs in the creative industry and supermarket etc. retail sector			
<b>Implications for other actions or policy objectives</b> (e.g. conflicts, synergies, overlaps, possibility of double funding)	Action/Policy objective number:	Description of implications: We have to align our advice on improvement of the policy instruments with the process of evaluation of these instruments by the authorities. In Drenthe this is a continuous process of informing the involved civil servants on the needs in this sector.		

<b>Policy Objective Title: Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector</b>	<b>Policy Objective Number: 1</b>
<b>Action Title: 10% increase tourists from Belgium and Germany in the region</b>	<b>Action Number: 1.2</b>
<b>Background</b> Visitor numbers from the Netherlands (Dutch tourism in own country) are stable in the long run (after a decline since 2000). Growth can be realized by getting more visitors from neighbouring countries (Belgium and Germany). Entrepreneurs need therefore insight in the country specific expectations from these visitors. With this (and courage and innovative entrepreneurship) business cases can be built around approaching these markets.	



<p>Results of research in phase 1 indicate that there is no growth in the number of Dutch tourists, but there is an increase in the Belgian and German market. To ensure growth and competitiveness for the future it is necessary to expand and explore new markets. These visitors have different standards and expectations and businesses must anticipate and adapt to these if they are to remain in the market. The aim is 10% growth. Concrete action for SMEs for phase 2 is stated under “steps” Investments to satisfy special expectations of foreign guests.</p>				
<p>a. From which partner/presenter/expert/L SG member(s) have you learnt the good practice which feeds this thematic action?</p>		<p>Savonlinna has also a focus on the German Market (also China and Russia). They offer unique experiences and there is a correspondence between the Wellness / Kurort habits of Germans with Finnish spa resorts. In this region the absence of German translation didn't seem to influence the attractiveness for German visitors. In Drenthe on the other hand – as a nearby region – we know perfect German is a key factor in attracting German visitors. Learned from Italian expert about destination marketing; people are not looking for a destination but looking for a unique experience. So you have to show what makes your area unique in terms of experiences, not only by describing landscape and culture. We saw such an example in Italy, where they focus on the Po Delta area by offering a food-experience – making your own tagliatelle or spaghetti with local products referring to traditional habits.</p>		
<p>b. What have you learnt?</p>		<p>Adhering to habits / unique expectations of visitors is more important than the language (although translation to the language of visitors will help to encourage them to visit the region) And small scale, personal stories are very important to welcome visitors. The well-implemented promotion of programs and related services as in Savonlinna area can increase the volume of visitors, that helps directly to local SMEs interested in visitor economy to raise their incomes and to develop their services, program offers and also to build common structures (brands, branch cooperation, etc.) based on the local program schedule, thus initiating more attractive visitor economy. So, we started the Marketing agenda for South West Drenthe, partly financed by LEADER programme.</p>		
<p>c. How have you learnt (through a presentation, site visit, discussion, workshop etc.)?</p>		<p>By site visit to a spa hotel in Savonlinna. By presentation in Rural Talk in Italy during the IE meeting</p>		
<p><b>Action Steps (What will be done)</b></p>	<p><b>Responsibility (Who will do it)</b></p>	<p><b>Resources (Information, money, materials)</b></p>	<p><b>Timeline Start and end dates*</b></p>	<p><b>1) Name of the PI to be influenced/ already influenced 2)Change needed (e.g. new project, new call).</b></p>



1. Generate a vision on development to address the Belgian and German markets	Municipalities together with province with Rural Growth as linking pin.	Strategic Narrative, Marketing vision existing budgets	2018 -2019	-
2. Sharpen the identity of the region by method of destination branding (discussion meetings with experts, entrepreneurs and inhabitants about unique characteristics of the area)	Municipalities and Leisure sector businesses	Company “Business Openers” – developed a structured method for destination branding	Jan 2018 -Feb 2019	Regular budget regional government. Already influenced
3. Sharing knowledge by meetings and training about Flemish and German guests	Exchange of knowledge between Marketing Drenthe and Emsland Touristik about needs from German guests. Province of Drenthe based on the smart data survey	From existing budgets Marketing Drenthe	Sept 2017  May 2018 – Sept 2018	Regular budget Marketing organisation - € 5.000 invested each year in sharing knowledge (already influenced)
4. Investments to satisfy special expectations (for example excursions in German language or hairdryer in hotel room (not standard in Dutch hotel rooms) and excellent food, starting dinner after 19:30 o clock etc)) of foreign guests	Entrepreneurs	Leader budget, Development budget Province	End 2018-2022	-
<b>Implications for other sectors of rural economy?</b> E.g. increases demand for restaurants /locally grown food etc. Reduces skilled labour available for other operators <b>Mitigation</b> e.g. implement training courses	Foreign guests expect higher quality in accommodation and food and regional products fit well with these demands. Parallel development of distribution and processing local food.			

<b>Implications for other actions or policy objectives</b> (e.g. conflicts, synergies, overlaps, possibility of double funding)	Action/Policy objective number:	Description of implications: Synergies with local food production policies, food markets etc.	
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<b>Policy Objective Title: Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector</b>		<b>Policy Objective Number: 1</b>	
<b>Action Title: Widening the season by offering extra events especially during German holidays and set up new attractions</b>		<b>Action Number: 1.3</b>	
<p><b>Background</b></p> <p>The tourist season is relatively short (2 weeks spring holidays, 2 weeks in May, summer months and 2 weeks Christmas holidays. The occupancy rate is on average 20 weeks per year. By widening the season the occupancy rate can be improved which leads to higher sales volume. For this to be successful it requires the commitment (buy-in) of many individual businesses to remain open. The steps for action are concrete as to what we will do and stimulate</p> <p>Extending the season is a way to increase efficiency and results with the same investments, thus increasing competitiveness and strengthening market position. Here the steps for action are again concrete as to what we will do and stimulate.</p>			
a. From which partner/presenter/expert/LSG member(s) have you learnt the good practice which feeds this thematic action?	<p>Hungary, Lispezentadorján</p> <p>The cooperation between hotels around bicycle tourism is interesting. Drenthe has the UCI bike region label. The infrastructure around cycling is excellent. Hotels can better tailor service to cyclists. Extra services for MTB-cyclist can widen the season, because they don't care about rainy weather.</p> <p>Hotel &amp; Spa Resort Järvisydän Finland. The new lake spa, completed in the last investment phase in April 2017, was designed to be the solution to this challenge, providing 'reason to come' all year round and a memorable experience independent of variable weather conditions. Also, the resort needed to diversify its customer base and strengthen its position in the international market and FITs and build international distribution through tour operators. This required revitalizing the product on offer and product innovation.</p> <p>"Slow Spring" in Italy, where bird watching is combined with biking and good food, makes the area also attractive in spring, extending the focus on tourism beyond summertime and beach.</p>		



	Medina, by organising platform (facilitated by municipality) have involved lots of SMEs and volunteers (inhabitants) in organizing the festival and creating the wine route			
b. What have you learnt?	By cooperation in developing and co-ordinating activities and clear marketing, it is possible to create a programme to attract visitors in pre- or late season. Drenthe would like to initiate a program in Spring or Autumn around nature experience and selling tourism packages including food, biking and discovering local fauna and flora. Drenthe learnt from Medina that interesting routes, combined with local food are attractive for tourist thus Drenthe decided to create such biking routes around cultural heritage in the Colonies of Benevolence which has stops at local food producers.			
c. How have you learnt (through a presentation, site visit, discussion, workshop etc.)?	Site visit Delta 2000 to Comacchio valley Site Visit/cultural event round the castle in Medina Site visit Hungary, bike hotels Presentation plans Spa resort during Site visit Savonlinna			
<b>Action Steps (What will be done)</b>	<b>Responsibility (Who will do it)</b>	<b>Resources (Information, money, materials)</b>	<b>Timeline Start and end dates*</b>	<b>1) Name of the PI to be influenced/ already influenced 2)Change needed (e.g. new project, new call).</b>
1. Identifying new attractions, especially for new target groups	SMEs	External expertise budget RuralGrowth Market research	Sept 2018-2020	-
2. Stimulating new product-market combinations	Province/municipalities	Innovation budget Province (KEI) and Programme for Leisure and Tourism Economy	Sept 2018-2019	-
3. Organising some new events in autumn or spring	Municipalities in cooperation with entrepreneur collectives.	Existing budget municipalities	2018-2020	-
4. Use German holiday periods in spring and late	Entrepreneurs. (German holiday periods differ from Dutch holidays, so it widens the season.)	No costs, just a mindset	2019	-

season and offer more activities				
5. Arrangements and excursions also in German language	Entrepreneurs, initiated by Marketing Drenthe, starting website <a href="http://www.besuchdrenthe.de">www.besuchdrenthe.de</a> E-learning module for entrepreneurs to learn the German language.	New budget Marketing Drenthe	May 2018	-
6. Set up a project (manager) for off-season activities	Business associations, province, municipality. Already started: LEADER 'Grootste en Groenste Sportpark'	Temporary budget Province to stimulate SMEs	Nov 2018	-
<b>Implications for other sectors of rural economy?</b> E.g. increases demand for restaurants /locally grown food etc. Reduces skilled labour available for other operators <b>Mitigation</b> e.g. implement training courses	Extra activities in spring could be conflicting with demands in Natura 2000 areas. Activities and services have to be concentrated outside these areas to fit in with the needs of nature (bird watching, nature expeditions)			
<b>Implications for other actions or policy objectives</b> (e.g. conflicts, synergies, overlaps, possibility of double funding)	Action/Policy objective number:	Description of implications: Working on eligible criteria: Amongst others promoting financing for interregional cooperation based on RIS3 is needed		

<b>Policy Objective Title: Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector</b>	<b>Policy Objective Number: 1</b>
<b>Action Title: stimulate collaboration between SMEs</b>	<b>Action Number: 1.4</b>
<p><b>Background</b> In the region there are a lot of small enterprises. Each is individually hardly traceable on the internet, budgets on marketing are small, and visiting such attractions is only a part of the day and not worth extended travel. Cooperation delivers more strength, bundling of market budgets, extending offers and with that higher attraction.</p>	



It is evident, from both research in the region and the shared experiences of the partners from the other EU regions (lessons learned from cooperation/exchange) that SMEs increase their competitiveness by collaborating. We have staged steps to stimulate more collaboration. And we want to underline the positive influence of OP ERDF by rewarding cooperative initiatives / improving joint applications by more entrepreneurs.

We want to start with the most effective investment. Therefore, we thought it is useful to explore first what we already have (action step 1) (but is difficult to find), then do research what people expect (make an action plan and check (step 2). After that we compared the offer with the expectations and target groups (step 3 ongoing) and now we make plans for new activities and investments (4 and 5)

<p>a. From which partner/presenter/expert/LSG member(s) have you learnt the good practice which feeds this thematic action?</p>	<p>All partners concluded in the RG workshops that cooperation is indispensable. In a workshop during IE meeting in Nagykanisza we discussed that co-operation and networking among businesses seem likely but will be occur before private economic benefits are realised. Formally, in Italy this is helped by regional law which supports networking e.g. 30 to 40% support for joint marketing activities. Informally, local SHs (and municipalities) have seen the value of working together, although it can be hard to convince them. The LSG has been a good vehicle for networking, and participants disseminate material further to their own networks.</p> <p>Good practices that inspired us were Po Delta internet platform where different companies share information and knowledge about events and stay for tourists, Medina Renaissance week, combining different (small) events in just one week, to attract more visitors, and the website Visit Savonlinna where different entrepreneurs show their offers.</p> <p>Douro Duero good practice from Spain. (Also operates across the Spain/Portugal border.) This is encouraging entrepreneurs to co-operate so that there is greater variety and quantity of attractions on offer.</p>			
<p>b. What have you learnt?</p>	<p>Cooperation of SMEs is a necessity. But start small with enthusiastic entrepreneurs. If it goes well, others will follow. Such a small start needs support from the authorities with money and manpower.</p> <p>We started organising excursion for entrepreneurs, so they can learn from each other's best practices. But this also stimulate that they work together, because the experience that others face the same problems.</p> <p>For online marketing we've started a new initiative the Marketing agenda (see action 1.5)</p>			
<p>c. How have you learnt (through a presentation, site visit, discussion, workshop etc)?</p>	<p>Presentations at inter-regional exchange meetings, and LSG discussions.</p>			
<p><b>Action Steps (What will be done)</b></p>	<p><b>Responsibility (Who will do it)</b></p>	<p><b>Resources (Information, money, materials)</b></p>	<p><b>Timeline Start and end dates*</b></p>	<p><b>1) Name of the PI to be influenced/ already influenced 2)Change needed (e.g. new project, new call).</b></p>

<p>1. Make all activities in these periods visible for visitors in a Calendar (inspired by Medina Calendar); what can they expect?</p>	<p>Municipality, Tourist director</p>	<p>Deliver central website, time for coordination, keeping smart data up to date. Drawing up the calendar is part of the website. Changes are included in the assignment to the marketing organization. Budget is not one to one to be assigned to changes (total amount Website changes is € 25.000)</p>	<p>2018</p>	<p>Programme for <b>Leisure and Tourism Economy</b> and regular budget regional marketing organisation</p> <p><b>Policy change:</b> A new policy instrument has been established: the Programme for Leisure and Tourism Economy which financed this action step</p>
<p>2a. Start measurement among entrepreneurs how many German guests they receive and how they are prepared.</p>	<p>Municipality, Province</p>	<p>Survey Budget € 30.000</p>	<p>Sept-Nov 2018</p>	<p>Regular budget Marketing Organisation (budget comes from regional Government (province Drenthe) goals changed so € 30,000 is available every year starting in 2019.</p> <p><b>Policy change:</b> The marketing organization receives a regular budget every year. But as a regional government, the Province of Drenthe do set annual requirements for implementation to be reached with this budget. In 2019 they made changes to these requirements, based on the results of the Rural Growth study. (as also stated in the application form, part B2.2.1: “The ambition setting/regional status quo analysis and elaborating an Action Plan will give the province and its municipalities a sound base to also improve their efficiency in formulating own policies such as the</p>



				planning and implementation of overall regional and local economic strategies.”) The policy influence consists of <b>changes in Drenthe’s own policy / instruments</b> , based on learning experiences from Rural Growth
2b. E-safari survey – Innovative method for visitor research, in which a representative group of 10-12 people is followed during the entire customer journey	Province (see action 1.1)	External expertise RG budget, Guest journey survey	Feb-Mar 2018	Already finished, no direct effect on PI
2c. Visitors survey; what do they miss in the region?	See action 1.1	Online survey € 30.000	Apr-Sept 2018 Apr-Oct 2020	Development of new survey – Rural Growth external expertise survey - ongoing;
3. Scan of activities; is there enough for every target group?	See 1.1 action 4 and 5			-
4. Start new business platform with existing business associations	Cooperation with existing business associations. Creation of new entrepreneur platform Southwest Drenthe. It is an off line platform (such as network café’s ) where entrepreneurs can exchange knowledge, but also work together on new events.	Municipality, ‘Ondernemerssafari’ – a tour with entrepreneurs budget available in 2019 € 500.000	2017-2020	<b>Policy change:</b> A new policy instrument has been established: the Programme for Leisure and Tourism Economy which will finance the second visitor survey in 2020
5. Use starter /common investments	Joined projects like Greatest Green Sports Park (new project	Leader, OP ERDF (now common investments by different owners is not	2017-2019	Change is needed in EU-program to share the risk. Now one of the partners must apply for the subsidy and take responsibility





	<p>financed by LEADER to promote outdoor sports and sport events in the region) or Marketing Agenda (see 1.5). Intention to develop a project in collaboration with entrepreneurs at the Colonies of Benevolence to create a joint brand. Inspired by the Wine Route of Medina Del Campo, whereby enterprises share the responsibilities and risks for the project.</p>	<p>supported by OP ERDF - therefore they need to start a common identity or company first to apply for money together)</p>		<p>and risk for the total project. We want to share responsibility and risk among partners.</p> <p>Discussion (8 May 2019) with Managing Authority (MA) about changing application procedure for the <b>OP North Netherlands ERDF 2014-2020</b> that joint application is possible. MA is willing to experiment.</p>
<p><b>Implications for other sectors of rural economy?</b> E.g. increases demand for restaurants /locally grown food etc. Reduces skilled labour available for other operators <b>Mitigation</b> e.g. implement training courses</p>	<p>Longer visitor stays and greater spending. Sectoral cross overs between SMEs in Tourism and food production, health and wellness can add value to the visitor economy (storytelling, personal attention)</p>			
<p><b>Implications for other actions or policy objectives</b> (e.g. conflicts, synergies, overlaps, possibility of double funding)</p>	<p>Action/Policy objective number:</p>	<p>Description of implications:  It is difficult to find a balance between complete information and clear offers. Every SME wants to be mentioned in marketing campaign, but we need to focus because of visitor needs and clear stories/identity brand</p>		

<b>Policy Objective Title: Increasing competitiveness of SMEs in the rural visitor economy sector</b>		<b>Policy Objective Number: 1</b>		
<b>Action Title: cooperative Marketing Agenda Southwest Drenthe</b>		<b>Action Number: 1.5</b>		
<b>Background</b> Based on the SQA. The quality of the region is in the outdoor experience (nature, culture history, landscape). Cooperation between SME en Marketing organisation, to promote region together.				
a. From which partner/presenter/expert/L SG member(s) have you learnt the good practice which feeds this thematic action?		Visit Savonlinna platform inspired us to start a project Marketing Agenda.		
b. What have you learnt?		Working together in online information is effective. And when you organise it well, entrepreneurs can upload their own activities. But some support and facilities organised by (local) government are necessary to start movement.		
c. How have you learnt (through a presentation, site visit, discussion, workshop etc.)?		The site visit in Savonlinna was helpful to understand the need in quality for these activities. And discussions with other regions during international knowledge exchange.		
<b>Action Steps (What will be done)</b>	<b>Responsibility (Who will do it)</b>	<b>Resources (Information, money, materials)</b>	<b>Timeline Start and end dates*</b>	<b>1) Name of the PI to be influenced/ already influenced 2)Change needed (e.g. new project, new call).</b>
1. Apply for LEADER subsidy	municipalities in cooperation with entrepreneurs	partner money (€ 41.000) and knowledge	15 October 2018	LEADER program € 164,000 total budget for all actions mentioned in this Action (1.5). Change is needed in EU-program for sharing risk (now one of the partners must



				apply for the subsidy and take responsibility and risk for the total project. We want to share responsibility and risk among partners. To be influenced
2. Starting online platform by attracting new project manager	Municipalities, Marketing organisation	Employees of municipalities Money from LEADER programme	Leader subsidy approved 1 April 2019	Leader Program which financed a new project, the Marketing agenda project.
3. Developing online platform to inspire SME's and share information	Marketing organisation/project manager	Leader budget € 11.250 euro/private investors € 3.750/change regular budget Marketing organisation € 20.000/other SME funding	2019-2020	Leader Program which financed a new project, the Marketing agenda project including the setup of an online platform
4. Educating entrepreneurs to upload events and activities, e-learning to improve communication skills, networking platforms, excursions to learn from each other.	Project manager	Included in the project money (€ 26.000 from Leader program, € 5.000 change in regional subsidy to marketing organisation	April 2019	Leader Program which financed a new project, the Marketing agenda project including the education of entrepreneurs how to use the platform and improve communication skills.
<b>Implications for other sectors of rural economy?</b> e.g. increases demand for restaurants /locally grown food etc. Reduces skilled labour available for other operators <b>Mitigation</b> e.g. implement training courses	Increased visitors will lead to improved quality for existing companies and possible to extra jobs.			
<b>Implications for other actions or policy objectives</b> (e.g. conflicts, synergies, overlaps, possibility of double funding)	Action/Policy objective number:	Description of implications: The municipalities has to align this with the demands of Natura 2000.		





## Part VII – Policy context

<b>PRE-DEFINED IN THE APPLICATION FORM: please fill in accordingly!</b>	
<b>Policy addressed:</b> OP North Netherlands ERDF 20142020	<b>Body responsible for the addressed policy:</b> Province of Drenthe
<b>Self-defined performance indicator:</b> best practices to substantiate changes for ERDF	<b>Target value of the indicator:</b> 5

### **Evaluation of the current operation of the policy:**

OP North Netherlands was drawn up based on the RIS3 Strategy of Northern Netherlands. In line with the RIS3 setting the aim to develop the region into a living lab region, the OP supports i.e. innovation actions for SMEs such as cooperation framed in the Quadruple Helix. In Priority 1, with 76% of the total OP budget allocated, increasing the research and innovation intensity of SMEs and improving their uptake of innovation is treated. As the OP has no sectoral preferences, actors related to the regional visitor economy (bringing together stakeholders from tourism and related supply chains) have a range of funding opportunities to strengthen this complex and highly innovative ecosystem.

Yet as a precondition better access should be facilitated to the OP's means for rural SMEs who are further from classical innovation hubs and knowledge transfer points to ensure conditions for undisturbed growth, cross-sectoral cooperation and thus competitiveness and. Cooperation, i.e. maximizing innovation based productivity represents an enormous opportunity for growth in the visitor economy sector. One way of tackling this issue to be adopted in RuralGrowth is facilitating development of projects with clusters of SMEs, planning and implementing activities based on network utilisation, matching innovative spinoffs in the field of ICT based/eco-innovation and other actors of the visitor economy (knowledge institutes, thematic organizations related to slow tourism etc.).

### **Kind of change and why it is needed:**

First during the analyses of RuralGrowth it appeared that especially in the visitors economy eligible criteria set by the OP made it really difficult for small SMEs to fit in their projects in the OP. Solution had to come from addressing the OP directly, but the province of Drenthe also took the responsibility to make additional regional funding specific for this target group available.



Second on initiative of the Province Drenthe (with the projects OSIRIS and RuralGrowth) and the SNN (cooperation of the three northern provinces, with the projects ClusterFy and Beyond EPD) a workshop has been held on the possibilities to influence the OP more directly.

All 15 Interreg Europe projects with partners from the Northern provinces were invited. The first meeting was in early July. SNN and Drenthe provided analyses the 15 projects, on their contribution to the OP, possibilities for strengthening the ambitions and cooperation between the projects, opportunities for starting up new (multi-funding? Creating synergies between funding) projects. The analyses were carried out by a trainee, Drenthe and SNN (not funded by the projects) supervised by Drenthe and SNN and in close cooperation with the OP Noord executors. Also, the National Contact Point was involved in the preparation and present in the meeting.

The result was that was decided that in little working groups 6 major issues on influencing the OP shall worked out more in detail:

### Targeted policy instrument Changes top 6

1. Increase effectiveness of the OP, without (major) changes promote cooperation, interaction knowledge institutes - business, working more in triple helix:

- a. Encourage cross sectoral working
- b. Encourage living labs
- c. Promote risk taking

2. Improving the OP by making the OP more implementation-oriented ('prescribing on the how'):

- a. How do you make Living Labs?
- b. How do you ensure attention for gender equality in (all) projects?
- c. How do you improve entrepreneurship?

3. Improve Governance:

- a. New evaluation methods
- b. More bottom-up with local stakeholders
- c. More organising in the triple helix way
- d. New models must lead to new instruments



4. Working towards multi-fund approach (hybrid financing):
  - a. Coordination between programs
  - b. Coordination financing
  
5. Working on eligibility criteria:  
Amongst others promoting financing for interregional cooperation based on RIS3
  
6. Make the OP more specific:  
(geographic, sector, target group, action)
  - a. Delta areas
  - b. Islands
  - c. Sectoral/thematic: Green chemistry, Water technology
  - d. SMEs in rural areas
  - e. Gender equality
  - f. Visitor economy

Early 2019 the 15 projectmanagers will come again together and discuss the results and finding new opportunities to implement the desired changes in the OP.

We believe that best practices started with Rural Growth can emphasis the need for change in the new European funding programmes, starting 2021.

Action Number (1.1. etc)	Action Title	What policy change is linked to the Action
1.1	Smart data to identify improvements	Priority action in OP: Strengthening of research, technological development and innovation. Lessons learned from RuralGrowth: the visitors research provided the first analyses for this action. Recommendation policy change: make the OP better accessible for small SMEs.
1.2 and 1.3	Increase tourist from Germany and Belgium	Increase effectiveness of the OP, without (major) changes promote cooperation, interaction knowledge institutes - business, working more in triple helix:



		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Encourage cross sectoral working</li> <li>b. Encourage living labs</li> <li>c. Promote risk taking</li> </ul> <p>Make funding available for foreign activities (Not yet allowed in OP Noord) Realized for 2018 as the province of Drenthe published a new subsidy for SMEs to participate in acquisition activities abroad. This could support SMEs to contribute to the ambition in the action plan to get more German and Belgium visitors to Drenthe. Lessons learned from RuralGrowth: the cooperation on the whine route between Medina and Portugal.</p>
1.4	Stimulate cooperation between SMEs by using starter/common investments subsidy	<p>Not yet possible in the OP Noord. Improving the OP by making the OP more implementation-oriented ('prescribing on the how'):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. How do you make Living Labs?</li> <li>b. How do you ensure attention for gender equality in (all) projects?</li> <li>c. How do you improve entrepreneurship?</li> </ul> <p>Improve Governance:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. New evaluation methods</li> <li>b. More bottom-up with local stakeholders</li> <li>c. More organising in the triple helix way</li> <li>d. New models must lead to new instruments</li> </ul> <p>Lessons learned from RuralGrowth: The visit Savonlinna online platform and the cooperation in Po Delta shows how you can create more cooperation and an effective online platform. Development of a project in collaboration with entrepreneurs at the Colonies of Benevolence to create a joint brand. Inspired by the Wine Route of Medina Del Campo, whereby enterprises share the responsibilities and risks for the project. Discussion (8 May 2019) with Managing Authority (MA) about changing application procedure for OP Efro so that joint application is possible. MA is willing to experiment.</p>
1.5	Marketing Agenda South West Drenthe	Do the financial instruments fit the needs? Overall funding from OP ERFD doesn't, but bottom up programmes like LEADER fit to this needs..





		<p>Delivering a best practice for cooperation in promoting en marketing and effect on SME competitiveness to change criteria for OP ERDF financial instruments</p> <p>Recommendation policy change: perhaps less focus purely on innovation but also on cooperationg and creating new jobs.</p> <p>Lessons learned from RuralGrowth: Marketing agenda is inspired by Visit Savonlinna, but also the biking hotels offer great possibilities to introduce this in Drenthe</p>
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Policy Influencing Activities (What will be done)	Responsibility (Who will do it)	Resources (Information, money, materials, workshops, meetings)	Timeline Start and end dates*
<b>1. Analysis of the needs of SMEs</b>	Province of Drenthe	SQA analyses of RuralGrowth	01-01-2017 30-12-2017
<b>2. Looking for possibilities to use the OP (and other instruments)</b>	Municipalities in cooperation with SMEs	Action plan of RuralGrowth	01-01-2017 01-01-2020
<b>3. Analyses of processes that hinder participation and possible changes in programmes</b>	Province of Drenthe	Regularly meetings with colleagues responsible for steering the OP , input from Drenthe and Netherlands for the new programmes	Ongoing
<b>4. Direct influencing the OP</b>	Province of Drenthe / SNN	Approaching the OP directly through cooperation IE projects and executers of the OP, regular workshops and meetings	Investigating possible adaptation with MA 8 May2019 2019-2020
<b>5. Input for new programmes</b>	Province of Drenthe	Participating in Online consultations, input for lobby activities, input for national lobby	2019-2021 Workshop date in June 2019



### **RuralGrowth as an engine for change:**

How has the RuralGrowth project contributed to identifying and possibly achieving the proposed change(s) to the policy?

In case of Province of Drenthe, the intention is to influence OP North Netherlands (based on the RIS3 Strategy of Northern Netherlands). RuralGrowth reported on the strong need in the province for tourism developments, which was proved by the RG project. To stimulate the uptake of innovation in addition to the OP North Netherlands new funding possibilities were created for tourism SMEs, funded and managed by the Province itself. It focuses on the quality of overnight possibilities of accommodations. Ambition is to realize 100 million EUR extra spending in the Province of Drenthe (see Attachment 1 table Visitors Economy Budgets).

RuralGrowth will affect the implementation of OP North. Drenthe's Action Plan will generate improvement regarding the quality and added value of projects financed from ERDF/regional funding this way upgrading the efficiency and synergic impact of Structural Funds. RuralGrowth will influence the OP as the targeted policy instrument by generating projects to be supported from the OP, focusing on product and service development with the participation of regional SMEs in the visitor economy sector by integrating their innovative potentials.

The ambition setting/regional status quo analysis and elaborating an Action Plan will give the province and its municipalities a sound base to also improve their efficiency in formulating own policies such as the planning and implementation of overall regional and local economic strategies. These relevant regional policy instruments are the Framework for Economic Investments, a regional development programme for supporting innovation in SMEs and the Regional Development Strategy supported by a Local Stakeholder Group which aims at innovation, product development, quality improvement largely focused on small businesses in the visitor economy sector.

### **Project initiatives realised:**

- Applying RuralGrowth good practice Drentse Koe for an innovative extension of "Farmhouse Experience" for families and children in Leader (result of working visit RuralGrowth).
- With RuralGrowth a broader discussion in the province took place on how to promote the visitor economy. How can we put Drenthe on the touristic map and challenge campsites to innovate in their offers? The province of Drenthe did ask that question herself two years ago. The answer was a surprising idea: let us cooperate with a television channel, organize a treehouse building contest, and invite campsites to participate. An innovative campsite in Southwest Drenthe did win this Treehouse XXL contest. This Treehouse XXL was partly financed by Leader. The contest on television draw a lot of positive attention to the region, the result was a new offer of 5 magnificent Treehouses XXL in Drenthe. The owner of the treehouse: "for the first time I see Porches on the parking place of my campsite". Innovative and attracts new public.
- Inspired by Visit Savonlinna, we started a new project Marketing Agenda, to realise an online platform for tourism and marketing.




Attachment 1 Overview Resources SMEs and innovation 2018 in the OP Noord and regional funds

<b>Instruments</b>	<b>Available budget 2018</b>	<b>Description</b>
Valorisation	€ 8,000,000	The aim of the Valorisation 2018 subsidy scheme is for SMEs, but also large companies and/or knowledge institutions to achieve more promising innovations with a lot of economic and preferably also sustainable impact in the region and, if possible, also beyond. The innovations have market potential and generate turnover and jobs.
Knowledge development	€ 7,000,000	The Knowledge development 2018 subsidy scheme aims to encourage more northern SMEs to develop knowledge. This means that they will enhance their knowledge position by tapping into, generating and bringing in new knowledge together with other entrepreneurs and/or knowledge institutions.
Experimental grounds	€ 7,000,000	The Experimental grounds 2018 subsidy scheme facilitates innovation clusters in the (further) development of Experimental grounds around societal challenges. With the aid of subsidies, an innovation cluster can set up, expand or improve a testing ground. It is also possible to connect Experimental grounds with each other or to improve the connection.
Human Capital	€ 4.500,000	The Human Capital 2018 subsidy scheme is intended for collaboration projects between SMEs and education. Objective: to clarify the future labour market demand.



Instruments	Available budget 2018	Description
Open Innovation	€ 20,000,000	The SNN invites consortia of companies, knowledge institutions and civil society organisations to come together with initiatives that structurally improve the innovation ecosystem in the Northern Netherlands. We are looking for initiatives where open innovation is of paramount importance and that actively involve SMEs and end users in innovation. Examples are initiatives around promising new technologies. But also the development of new value chains with great economic and social significance are also eligible for subsidies.
VIA	€ 13,000,000	The Innovative Ambitions Accelerator (Versneller Innovatieve Ambities; VIA) promotes innovation and economic development in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Northern Netherlands. Entrepreneurs with an innovative idea for a new product or process or a new service can receive a subsidy for development costs.
MIT feasibility	€ 4,000,000	The MIT promotes innovation in small and medium-sized enterprises in the Northern Netherlands by subsidising feasibility projects. The purpose of a feasibility project is that you can make a decision based on the research in order to proceed to further research or development.
KEI	€ 2,500,000	With the Knowledge & Innovation Subsidy (Kennis & Innovatie-subsidie; KEI) you acquire more knowledge. Knowledge for technological innovation, organisational innovation or market innovation. For the temporary employment or the posting of highly trained personnel or a PhD candidate, you will receive subsidy on the gross wage costs or posting costs.
€ 66,000,000		

<b>Visitors Economy budgets</b>			
Infrastructure	3,750,000	For improvement of the (biking) infrastructure SMEs and local government	
Innovation	3,000,000	For Innovation and attractiveness SMEs	
Vital Leisure parks	6,500,000	SMEs	
<b>Total</b>	<b>13,250,000</b>		





Infographics



**Some important figures of Southwest Drenthe**

- Population 0.75 %
- Land Area 568 km<sup>2</sup>

**Regional attractions and strengths**

Culture  
High Quality Touristic services  
Unesco heritage (aanzicht 2011)  
(Categorie of Benevolence)  
Innovation and sustainability on forward

**Challenges identified by local stakeholder group**

- Stimulate creativity
- Improve hospitality
- Outdated image to improve
- Encourage entrepreneurship
- No money to invest
- Diversity
- Build better cooperation

**Positions by field of trade**

Field of Trade	Value (x 1000)
Commercial services	~3500
Trade & Transport	~1500
Services	~1000
Non-commercial	~2500
Culture, Leisure	~1500

**OP EFRO Noord and RISS**

**Four Societal Challenges in OP Noord**

**Visitors using overnight accommodation by year in Drenthe (x 1000)**

Year	Visitors (x 1000)
2007	~8000
2008	~8000
2009	~8000
2010	~8000
2011	~8000
2012	~8000
2013	~8000
2014	~8000
2015	~8000
2016	~8000
2017	~8000

**Solutions and aims of local stakeholder group**

- Education Entrepreneurs
- Connecting the successes
- Emphasise the sense of urgency
- New attraction, make it worth the trip
- Gather the stories and promote them
- Encourage innovation
- Find Key Persons and Entrepreneurs

**Next Steps**

- Involve more Key Persons
- Involve sector organisations
- Broaden the L&G
- Link projects to the Leader Programme
- Cluster the solutions
- Draw up a draft action plan in a co-creation process

**PROJECT PARTNERS:**  
Municipality of Medine del Campo (ES)  
Sevontina Business Services Ltd (FI)  
Local Government of Naghanza (HU)  
DELTA 2000 Consortium Ltd (IT)  
Province of Overthe (NL)  
Harghita County Council (RO)  
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**Vision**

A vibrant tourism sector centred around the beautiful nature in our area with an extended tourist season from early Spring to late Autumn.

**1. Improve use of Smart Data**

- Visitor survey
- Analysis
- Accounting

**2. Increase Foreign Visitors by 10%**

- Address Belgium and Germany
- Identify branding of region
- Exchange knowledge between Belgians and Germany

**3. Extending tourist season**

- Minor indoor city/tourism
- New product-market combinations
- How events of arrangements to spring & autumn
- Target Common holidays
- Use Common Language
- Collaborate project manager

**4. Collaboration between SMEs**

- Who, what, when and where
- Understanding local needs and gaps
- Stimulate SMEs to work together

**5. Increasing competitiveness of SMEs**

- Use Resource possibilities
- Actions from Visitor Survey
- Check conditions based special planning
- Increase Use efficiency

Budget overview

	Staff	Overhead	Travel and accommodation	External expertise	EQUIP	TOTAL
Semester 6	€ 2.068	€ 310	€ 0	€ 1.129		€ 3.507
Semester 7	€ 1.892	€ 284	€ 840	€ 0		€ 3.016
Semester 8	€ 2.728	€ 409	€ 420	€ 1.129		€ 4.686
Semester 9	€ 3.872	€ 581	€ 1.170	€ 1.129		€ 6.751
<b>Totaal</b>	<b>€ 10.560</b>	<b>€ 1.584</b>	<b>€ 2.430</b>	<b>€ 3.386</b>	<b>€ 0</b>	<b>€ 17.960</b>