

INSIDE OUT EU PROJECT

Region: Hedmark (NO)

Partner: Hedmark County Council

ACTION PLAN: HEDMARK COUNTY COUNCIL



HEDMARK
FYLKESKOMMUNE

Inside Out EU

Interreg Europe



European Union
European Regional
Development Fund

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PART 1 – GENERAL INFORMATION

Project	Inside Out EU
Partner Organisation	Hedmark County Council
Other Partner Organisations Involved	Klosser innovation Innlandet university
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NUTS2 Region	Hedmark and Oppland
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PART II – POLICY CONTEXT

- Investment for Growth and Jobs Programme
- European Territorial Cooperation Programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

NAME OF POLICY INSTRUMENT ADDRESSED

International strategy for Hedmark County

(Innlandet County from 1 January 2020)

The Action plan will address the international strategy for Hedmark by implementing a pilot project inspired by a partner region and will contribute to:

- Linking businesses with Innland university and the public sector through the development of the Export Development Program
- Providing competence on Export to SMEs
- Retaining and attracting talents to the region for growth and competitiveness.

Creating and implementing the Export Development Program adopted to a Norwegian context in Innland County will bring together a range of expertise and stakeholders across industry, academia and the public sector to stimulate increased competence regarding export among SMEs.

PART III – DETAILS OF THE ACTION ENVISAGED

Action 1

The Background

Since export is the most common mode of SMEs' internationalization, export performance is regarded as one of the key indicators of the success of a firm's operations. Indeed, SMEs are export generators in many EES countries, with medium-sized enterprises (50-249 employees) accounting for the largest average export value per exporting SME (Eurostat Trade by Enterprise Characteristics, TEC 2014). There are still many SMEs with untapped export potential. Internationalization poses difficulties for these firms due to, among other aspects, the lack of scalable business models, financial resources, and the process of selecting international business partners (Eurobarometer survey 2015). Additional to limited financial resources, an important SME-specific barrier for internationalization is the human resources constraint: the lack of necessary managerial skills, employee qualifications, knowledge and time. In order to avoid unnecessary use of scarce resources, entrepreneurs need to prepare their internationalization activities carefully.

Consequently, the need of internationalizing SMEs for young international talent in the field of international business is growing rapidly. The challenge for Universities and Universities of Applied Sciences are, therefore, to prepare students well enough for working in the complex international business practice are to ensure a smooth transition for an international starting position.

In Hedmark the main part of businesses are SMEs and many of them with export potential that has not yet been explored. Hedmark could benefit of a closer cooperation between academia and private businesses on how to prepare students for an international work in regional businesses. The EDP (Export Development Program) demonstrates that a strong cooperation between universities and businesses not only increase revenues and export for the SMEs, it also develops and retain talents in the region. The university and higher education have also identified closer cooperation with private sector and SMEs and their representatives as a prioritised objective for the newly established Innland University.

Action

During the study tour to province Overijssel the Export Development Program was presented. It has demonstrated outstanding results not only in the provinces of Overijssel and Gelderland, but also in a cross-border context with neighbouring regions in Germany. This project inspired participating stakeholders from Hedmark to investigate if this good practice would be of interest for relevant stakeholders in Hedmark.

During a stakeholder meeting the 29th of April 2019 the good practice was presented for the whole stakeholder group in Hedmark and it was decided to go further with the initiative.

The program will be implemented as a pilot project in Hedmark and is expected to contribute to an increased focus on the importance of export among SMEs in the

International Strategy. It will also address the shortage of competence among SMEs concerning export. The future international strategy will highlight the need of improved cooperation between businesses and higher education to prepare students for work in trade. The implementation of the pilot project will deliver both directions, objectives and measures to the policy instrument.

The Export Development Program aim to enhance international entrepreneurship of SMEs in the region by practically prepare bachelor or master students for their international career. The program also aims to retain and attract talents in the region. Talented students with an international scope or mindset are key to the program in order to achieve the objectives. The program in Netherlands has demonstrated how to identify talents for international businesses for SMEs.

The program consists of two phases:

Match making students-business

A key for a successful implementation of EDP is the match making between students and businesses. Therefor the students are recruited and selected after interviews to ensure they have the right mind set for an international business context.

Participating businesses are offered to have a student conducting a graduation research during 5-7 month in their company. The thesis is based on a challenge/opportunity the business faces and are assessed thoroughly by the EDP team so academic requirements are fulfilled.

After the thesis have been assessed and students interviewed and selected, businesses are appointed a student to carry out the graduation research.

Graduation research- Trainee

During the graduation research the student have support from a professional coach, well experienced in international/export activities. After the research graduation the students is offered to stay as a trainee in the company to implement their results and findings finished thesis. Additional the professional export coaching continues during the traineeship.

Players involved

The joint implementation of EDP in Hedmark will demonstrate the importance of a) linking businesses with higher education and the public sector, b) competence on Export in SMEs, c) retaining and attracting talents to the region for growth and competitiveness.

Hedmark County Council will initial coordinate the action until roles and responsibilities are clarified among involved stakeholders which will be discussed and decided in the first phase

of the implementation of the action. Innovation Norway will be an important player in the implementation other action since they will be financing a part of the implementation. Innland University will have a major role together with the Foundation of University College, in the planned action but a close and strong cooperation between stakeholders representing businesses such as Klosser Innovation, the cluster 7sterke, NHO is required. The students will be recruited from the Universities and the companies will be found by the members in the cluster and NHO. But marketing of the program among students and business will be carried out by all stakeholders.

Timeframe

The aim of the predicted activities is twofold a) implementing EDP in Hedmark b) improving Hedmark International Strategy. The activities will be carried out parallelly during the period.

The following activities are predicted:

1. August 2019 – Establishment of a steering group of above mentioned stakeholders. The steering group will have an important role in the development, implementing and marketing of the EDP. Beside the implementation of EDP the steering group will also have an important role in the improvement of existing and future policy instrument. The steering groups experience and conclusions from the implementation will be an important input to policies aiming at increasing the internationalisation among SMEs. The members of the Steering Group consist of the most important players concerning business development, higher education, public sector and internationalisation.
2. August-October 2019 – Investigation if adoption of Norwegian curriculum is needed.
3. August-December 2019 – Investigation of possible funds for financing the program
4. October 2019 – Detailed project plan and budget to be finished.
5. January-Mars 2020 – Development and adaptation of EDP to Norwegian context.
6. January Lessoned learned so far and possible other improvements of existing policy instruments.
7. June 2020 – A new International Strategy for Innlandet to be developed and decided with a stronger focus on export among SMEs and cooperation between higher education and businesses.
8. Mars-May 2020 – Recruitment and assessment of SMEs
9. May-September 2020- Recruitment and assessment of students
10. September – November 2020 – Matching businesses (thesis) with bachelor/master students
11. January 2021 – 5 students starts their thesis in five businesses for six months followed by 6 month as a trainee.
12. 2021-2022 Conclusions and lessoned learned

Budget

One of the first task for the steering group is to develop a detailed budget for implementation of an adopted EDP to Norwegian context.

Financing

Hedmark County Council has allocated funds for Klosser Innovation, dedicated for preparation of the Export Development Program. A decision is pending in Hedmark County Council on allocating 2 million kr for the implementation of EDP. But because the merge with the Oppland County Council funds will not be decided until the new authority is formally established.

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