



business development friesland



Gemeente **Leeuwarden**

Part I – General information

Project: UpGradeSME _____

Partner organisation: Business Development Friesland (BDF) _____

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): Gemeente Leeuwarden _____

Country: The Netherlands _____

NUTS2 region: NL12 – Friesland (NL) _____

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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

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

Name of the policy instrument addressed: 'Groen Werkt!' (Green Works!)

ACTION 1

1. **The background** (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

Leeuwarden is the city of water technology, agro-food and sustainability/energy. Through our campuses, we deal regionally with international challenges as climate, water quality/scarcity, food quality/scarcity and circular economy. Our campuses are created from our roots. Also, in 2019 the first university in Leeuwarden opened, which brings in international talent with a worldwide focus and sustainability goals – RUG Campus Fryslân. We want to be a front-runner in the circular economy in which we see new economic opportunities, business development and benefits related to our climate.

We have learned from our partners from San Sebastian and from Steinbeis that the action plans supporting the policy could have a more explicit International approach and vision. Firstly, San Sebastian has a very well-structured plan for internationalisation of organisations and companies and especially on the attraction of talent. For example, San Sebastian stimulates young talent to move and work abroad, after which they might return. But if they do, they bring knowledge and an international network, which will bring economic benefits. Moreover, San Sebastian attracts international researchers, by accommodating them fully in living and doing their research in San Sebastian. In our project 'Groen Werkt!' until 2018, there is room for internationalisation, but not as specific and well described as we could have done. This is shown to us by the examples from San Sebastian. Secondly, Steinbeis has showed us that a more sectoral approach bring many benefits for new connections and innovation. This is shown by the use of the Steinbeis Network. The Steinbeis Network stimulates knowledge and technology transfer from/towards SMEs by involving them in international research-business cooperation projects. Our former programme, Groen Werkt!, touches specifically on 'green' sectors, but Steinbeis advocates to not limit only to "green" or sustainable, but also target technology or innovation as indicators for company support.

More specifically, in San Sebastian we became familiar with new approaches to fostering talent. In San Sebastian, as is the case in our region too, there is a reduction in talent: more talent moves away than is attracted. Therefore, they adapted new tools: investing in talent by sending them abroad (to attract new networks and knowledge) or by investing strongly in research centers. In Leeuwarden, we support our campuses too through for example 'Groen Werkt!'. But investing in talent by sending them elsewhere before they can return with new knowledge and networks is something we will consider implementing. During the meeting in San Sebastian in October 2018 we were also put in touch with an extensive network through presenters from Norway, Portugal and The Netherlands. This has helped us too in reconsidering our own practices and offers new opportunities.

What we have learned from 'Groen Werkt!' is that we will remain our focus on our main sectors (dairy, water-tech and sustainability) but by not losing sight on other sectors that benefit the regional economy. Moreover, Living Labs have become more important, as is the circular economy. Living Labs are created by different organisations and individuals and are a kind of platform in which answers and innovations are

found for societal (local) challenges. Both living labs and the promotion of the circular economy have a large role in 'Samenwerken aan Innovatie' (in English: Working Together on Innovation). The focus will be mainly on stimulating actual, local projects that enhance living labs, the circular economy and entrepreneurship. Focusing on our main sectors and providing these sectors with a network, tools and finance will give them a competitive position in a European market and beyond.

As described above, UpGradeSME provided us with lessons on internationalisation from our international partners, but also provided us with an extensive network. This helps us and our region in new European-wide projects, but also gives our region a view on how we are functioning at the moment: what goes well, what can we improve and what should we do differently? On top of that, the partners themselves provide our local companies (through us) with a European-wide network that is willing to assist in the internationalisation of SMEs e.g. by connecting our entrepreneurs with their local businesses.

Moreover, participating in UpGradeSME assisted us in meeting and cooperating with our local stakeholders, by giving us a platform to discuss internationalisation. Within our region, the province of Friesland, internationalisation of SMEs has become a very important topic. Not only for the SMEs themselves, but also in politics, our universities and other organisations that can accommodate businesses. Internationalisation makes local business stronger, more competitive and more attractive for (young) talent. Therefore, it is now incorporated in policies such as 'Samenwerken aan Innovatie', but also in regional policies of our provincial government.

2. Action (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

Groen Werkt! was a program developed by and for the Municipality of Leeuwarden. Its focus was on stimulative tools to enhance sustainable entrepreneurship. Among others, the program included a Green Innovation Fund, which could provide companies with loans or subsidies to help them with their 'green' innovation. The program itself stopped in 2018, when 'Samenwerken aan Innovatie' (Working together on Innovation) was approved and launched in June 2018.

Our lessons learned from previous experience with Groen Werkt! and from the input of our partners in UpGradeSME project come together in the new program for innovation for the Municipality of Leeuwarden 'Samenwerken aan Innovatie'. For example, Fomento San Sebastian has confirmed our idea that it is very important for international talent that you invest locally in research locations and positions.

The following actions have been taken in this perspective or will be executed in the next years:

- revise the Groen Werkt! agenda for the coming years into our new program 'Samenwerken aan Innovatie' (in English: Working Together on Innovation). The Green Innovation Fund is renamed to Innovation Fund. The Innovation Fund is part of the program 'Working Together on Innovation'. Up until 2020 the Municipality has access to € 250.000,- to finance innovation projects from the fund.
- implement the lessons learned from San Sebastian and Steinbeis (following directly from the UpGradeSME project)
 - make the Innovation Fund available for other sectors too (e.g. serious gaming, healthy ageing) – before, the focus was only on energy and sustainability. Now, what we do is that we have made the Fund available for all sectors, but we incorporate a sustainability aspect in every project that is funded. Moreover, during our meetings with the project developer the Municipality connects them with international talent through International Welcome Center North (IWCN, see below), as well as with people that have trouble finding a job. Since then, we helped for example medical entrepreneurs such as RelieVR.
 - increase cooperation with campuses (research labs) and stimulate Living Labs that focus on our important sectors (dairy, water-tech and sustainability). We organize at least 2 large meetings every year in which we are joined by the directors of our campuses. Moreover, we invest in at least 6 projects related to these top sectors yearly.
- go to the responsible Alderman, Friso Douwstra, and check the items politically, during our weekly meetings. He is responsible for economic affairs in the Municipality of Leeuwarden and is a member of the Christian Democratic Party (CDA).
- go to the Municipality Board to ask for green light for the follow-up of Groen Werkt!, Samenwerken aan Innovatie
- During the execution of the program by our policy advisors, project managers and local

organisations:

- Connect entrepreneurs with our (inter)national network, through: our project developers in Brussel in the EU-Office, the IWCN, Water Alliance, Ynbusiness, and by supporting the WTC Northern Netherlands. We meet every 6 weeks with our project developers from Brussels in Leeuwarden. The other organisations are connected with our local entrepreneurs by e-mail or invitation for meetings (following directly from the UpGradeSME project).
- Connect actively with local entrepreneurs in our main competitive sectors. We do this through organisations such as Inquibrator, BeStart, Ynbusiness, but also by going to conferences, workshops and other types of meetings. Moreover, the Municipality has an active group of account managers within the Economic Affairs team. The Municipality assists in, but also organises itself, various meetings for entrepreneurs to network or inspire each other (following directly from the UpGradeSME project).
- Provide financial assistance through the Innovation Fund or by connecting entrepreneurs with other sources of finance (banks, loans or grants)
- Advise on business development when possible (following directly from the UpGradeSME project).
- Act as 'Launching customer' for innovative products or services
- All these actions leads to an active involvement of around 40 SMEs, but even more are informed of our actions

As stated above, both San Sebastian and Steinbeis have inspired us through relatively their internationalisation strategy focusing on international(ising) talent and on the inter-sectoral approach of policies.

3. Players involved (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

- **Municipality Leeuwarden**, owner and executor of the program 'Samenwerken aan Innovatie'. Main goals are: (I) to strengthen and make use of our local, national and international networks; (II) stimulate local entrepreneurship and innovation, (III) enhance the City as a Campus.
- **Business Development Friesland (BDF)**, providing input from the current market and trends for the new program; actively assisting SMEs and start-ups to grow and export through for example Inquibrator (an incubator for startups)
- **Bureau Zelfstandigen Fryslân (BZF)** (in English: Bureau for Self-Employed Friesland), actively supporting welfare recipients in starting a business; sharing information on current labour market and status of SMEs
- **Water Alliance**, providing (international) networks to water technology companies
- **International Welcome Center North**, a one-stop shop for expats, that also attracts international talent. IWCN: assists local governments in supporting expats, creates communities of expats and locals, and finds new talent for companies in the Northern Netherlands.

4. Timeframe

The new plans for 'Samenwerken aan Innovatie' had to be delivered to the Alderman and Municipality Board around the summer of 2018. The program is now active and already successful, since several entrepreneurs have been helped with their innovative products and research. Lessons learned from our project partners are used during the execution of the program and shared with other programs, as for example the Young Professional Programme Friesland. This is a yearly project-group of young professionals that work on the goal of keeping young talent in the region. The program of Samenwerken aan Innovatie is evaluated during its execution, but the main evaluation will be at the end of the program in 2020.

5. Costs (if relevant)

New budget should be allocated for the policy. That budget will come from the general support budget for SMEs. We think it should be 400.000 euro.

6. Funding sources (if relevant):
The general budget from the municipality of Leeuwarden maybe with additional funding of OP EFRO.

ACTION 2

7. The background (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan)

In San Sebastian there are special programmes to support SMEs to stimulate international talent attraction (International Mobilitiy Programme: “Donostia Gaztekin: integration adapted to the employment market of qualified Young jobseekers in the city's emerging and strategic sectors”). More specifically, the programme finances and fully accommodates researchers from abroad to come and do their research in San Sebastian. This leads in many cases to the researchers staying in San Sebastian. Within the same programme Fomento accommodates young talent to find work abroad at large MNEs. This young talent is an ambassador for the San Sebastian region. When (and if) the young talent returns, it brings new knowledge and a large network to share with others. During our visit of 29-30 January 2018, we have been explained the talent program of San Sebastian and were inspired by it.

8. Action (please list and describe the actions to be implemented)

As for many regions in Europe, the agricultural region of Friesland is in a challenging situation when it comes to attract new talent and to keep its own talent. While this issue is underlined by many local organisations and companies and action is taken on this issue (as will be explained below), it would be of utmost importance to put a plus on maintaining and attracting talent in Leeuwarden and Friesland. The policy instruments that are used by San Sebastian Fomento have inspired us by their innovative way of thinking and using a large global network of companies and regions.

In our region Friesland, we are connected to the North of the Netherlands, which forms a uniform document at first. In the Northern Innovation Agenda (NIA 2014-2020) internationalisation has been outlined as one of the key horizontal targets for the North of the Netherlands. This has been translated in some assignments for partners supporting the NIA. Two of the partners of concern for our region (Friesland) are the Province of Friesland and the NHL Stenden University. Some relevant assignments from this plan are:

To obtain knowledge from international contacts
To attract knowledge workers from other countries
Invest in language education at the universities
Attractive landing zone for international companies and their (highly educated) staff
For intermediate bodies to stimulate export activity

The assignments from this NIA document have been translated in Friesland by the Province of Friesland into several tasks. One of the instruments which has been launched is the organization International Trade Support. This instrument focuses on bridging the gap between SME company demand and execution organizations to meet the demand (like universities, World Trade Centre, Entreprise Europe, consultancy companies, etc.) Another instrument of the Provincie Friesland is Innovation Pact Fryslan. An organization set up to stimulate innovation and internationalisation. The latter is important in this document.

There is an agreement (in writing) between the Provincie Friesland, Innovation Pact Fryslan and the universities in Friesland. In this ‘treaty’ Friesland aims to get an agreement on internationalisation agenda in the coming years. There are regional elections for the Province planned for 20th March 2019. After this date, a new regional coalition will be formed and installed.

The Municipality and BDF are at this moment actively promoting the international talent strategy to the

bodies influencing the regional strategy. Innovation Pact Friesland and International Trade Support are heavy influencers here. As well as the university NHL-Stenden. Our idea is that by securing the support of IPF and ITS, we will be able to get the talent recognition in the new Provincial Policy. These talents can be described as knowledge workers coming from abroad to land in Friesland and the stimulation of young talents to go abroad.

BDF is co-operating with International Welcome Centre North in attracting talented people (new entrepreneurs) to the North. A new strategy will be due in summer 2019, where start-ups and also talents from abroad will be supported to integrate smoothly in the province of Friesland (and the rest of the North of the Netherlands).

The Municipality of Leeuwarden is currently reforming its economic strategy as well. One of the spearheads are start-up companies. A policy is formed by clustering important sectors in Leeuwarden (water technology, dairy/agri-food, health, ict/cybertechnology). Start-ups will form a separate sector next to these 4. Obviously, Leeuwarden will reach out to start-ups in these 4 sectors, but new start-ups are so important, that other start-up talents from other fields are equally important and can meet strong support to start their business activity in Leeuwarden.

BDF and the Municipality of Leeuwarden are lobbying to have a place for Talents in the economic plans at the Province of Friesland and especially at their instrument for that: in the plans of Innovation Pact Friesland. These plans will be unveiled after summer of 2019. Talent development will be a strong part of these plans based on the lobby of BDF and Municipality of Leeuwarden after having seen the effects of talents to a region/city in San Sebastian.

The main goal of 'Action 2' is to set up a program which is inspired by Fomento San Sebastian, that will focus on internationalising talent from our region and bringing foreign talent to our region. During the UpGradeSME periods, we need to make this wish concrete, know which partners are interested and who will be the best organisation to run such a program. To make this possible, the concrete actions we foresee in the coming period are as following:

3 meetings with the new formed Provincial government leading to international talent attraction in the policy papers of Innovatie Pact Frieslan

2 awareness raising events for young talent with international skills to be able to promote the international work development

2019 and 2020 shared meeting between ITS and Ynbusness, organised by BDF and Innovatie Pact Frieslan to get more aligned in the international SME support program.

Two years from now, we want to see a clear place for attracting international talents in the operational strategy of Innovation Pact Friesland (operating body of innovation and internationalization plans of the Region).

9. Players involved (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role)

- **Province of Friesland** – funding ITS
- **Municipality of Leeuwarden** – supporter and contributor in content and in actions for ITS
- **Business Development Friesland** – main partner to develop this program with ITS
- **NHL Stenden** – university of applied sciences that can accommodate incoming and outgoing talent
- **EEN Northern Netherlands** – support in network to make exchange possible
- **ITS** – executive of the international talent scouting programme.
- **Innovation Pact Frieslan – economic board programme in Friesland region**

10. Timeframe

Discussions between the players involved are ongoing. Planning is to have implementation ready after the summer of 2019 and ongoing in 2020. Innovation Pact Frieslan will have their new policy plan ready early 2020. We will organize the activities foreseen in 2019/2020.

11. Costs (if relevant)

There will be no costs involved other than the organization costs of the events. We budget 10.000 euro maximum for event planning.

12. Funding sources (if relevant):

ITS funding. The funding of ITS will come from the Province of Friesland. ITS has some budget for events planning and we will co-operate with them to realize the goals we foresee.

Date: _____ 30 January 2019 _____

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____