

Regional Report on Covid-19 IMPACT on SME internationalization

Key findings

Dijkman, Drogendijk, Gerkes

Friesland - Leeuwarden

► The basics

- *Inhabitants Friesland* 650.000
- *Inhabitants Leeuwarden* 125.000
- *Next to Dutch:* Own language (Frisian)



- *Friesland is considered as the “happiest” province in the Netherlands, but:*
- *From a European point of view: the Frisian economic structure is unstable and employment opportunities remain insufficient in rural areas. This, partly due to the development of services and industries in cities which enhances urbanisation.*

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SME Survey Results (1/2)

- ▶ Wide range of fields, such as but not limited to:
 - ▶ Watertechnology, renewable energy, IT and Agri-Food
- ▶ Companies are highly aware of their societal impact and feel the urge to make the swing into a more inclusive business style.
- ▶ The COVID-19 pandemic has worked as a catalyst for innovative ways with respect to digitalisation.
- ▶ **Minimal** effects on exports and **existing** partnerships due to Covid-19. Exports remained the same or better than before the pandemic.
- ▶ **But**, new export partnerships haven't been realised, because building a trustful relationship without a physical setting remained a tough job.



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SME Survey Results (2/2)

▶ However, the exports **did** lack, because:

- ▶ Scarcity of electronic printing plates
- ▶ Stranded ship: Ever Given (Evergreen)
- ▶ Scarcity of qualified personell

▶ To sum it all up: The SMEs in Friesland found more difficulties in the supply chain and human capital, than from the impact of Covid-19.



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Conclusion

On COVID-19 impact on SME Internationalisation

- ▶ COVID-19 **did not** significantly affect the adsorption of export stimulating instruments in the region of Friesland
- ▶ There **has** been an effect on companies in the early phase of exporting or without export experience. In fact, they were unable to enter the export market
- ▶ Organizations like World Trade Center Leeuwarden, Ynbusiness and the Enterprise Europe Network consortium provide sufficient assistance to first-time exporters