



Action plan InnoHEIs Northern Netherlands

Part I – General information

Project: Improving Research and Innovation Infrastructure Performance: from Fragmented to Integrated and Sustainable Cooperation (InnoHEIs)

Partner organisation: Northern Netherlands Provinces Alliance (SNN)

Other partner organisations involved: Hanze University of Applied Sciences

Country: The Netherlands

NUTS2 region: Groningen

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Part II – Policy context

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|---------------------------------|-------------------------------------|--|
| The Action Plan aims to impact: | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | Investment for Growth and Jobs programme |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | European Territorial Cooperation programme |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> | Other regional development policy instrument |

Name of the policy instrument addressed: The Operational Programme ERDF 2021-2027 Northern Netherlands

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1

1. The background

A case study of the Northern Netherlands (by the Joint Research Centre of the EU) on the role of Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) in the design and implementation of the Smart Specialisation Strategy acknowledged the importance of HEIs in supporting collaborations within the regional innovation ecosystem and having an important position in the innovation ecosystem to connect, align, accelerate and integrate 'loose' SMEs into networks, evolving into local regional strengths. To support and streamline HEIs and related knowledge infrastructures (hubs, field labs, clusters, etc.), improvements in the regional innovation ecosystem governance is highly recommended.

The recommendations of the case study combined with new funding from REACT EU (resulting from the COVID-pandemic and related economic impact), the renewed RIS3 and based on dialogues between HEIs, SNN and the three northern provinces resulted in a new call "Open Innovatiekans Noord-Nederland". The call consisted of three parts, of which part 3 ('REACT EU: Innovatie-ecosysteem Kennisinstellingen was aimed to improve and strengthen the valorisation task of HEIs in an effective and collaborative effort.

More information on the call: https://www.snn.nl/sites/subsidie/files/2021-06/Uitvoeringskader%20REACT%20EU%20uitvragen%202021_0.pdf

2. Action

With the launch of the call in June 2021 this action has been implemented. The InnoHEIs-project has influenced this policy change for the amount of € 4 mln.

3. Players involved

The following regional organisations were involved as stakeholders:

- Education Institutes (EIs)
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
- Cluster organizations
- Hubs
- (Innovation) Networks
- (Innovation) Environments
- Field Labs
- Business support & business development agencies
- University and University of Applied Sciences
- Regional VET institutions

The following regional organisations were involved as policy owners:

- Regional Development Agency & Managing Authority (SNN)
- Provincial governments (the provinces of Drenthe, Friesland and Groningen)

4. Timeframe

Action completed in June 2021.

5. Costs:

n/a

6. Funding sources:

€ 4.000.000,- REACT EU (as part of The Operational Programme ERDF 2014-2020 Northern Netherlands

ACTION 2

1. The background

Already during the first phases of the design of the call, SNN and provinces reached out to the HEIs. The ultimate aim was to create a joint project in which all HEIs (and vocational education institutes) would work together amongst each other and improve their services and activities for companies. The joint project they developed is called 'KONNECT' (it has yet to be approved by SNN at the time of writing this action plan, a final decision is expected in Q2 of 2022).

SNN and the provinces have tried to experiment and innovate, thereby creating a call which is not an average call. A project for this call is based upon a strong and substantiated vision for the future (in this case: the valorisation task of HEIs) and includes important elements, such as: integral, futureproof, more coherence, collaboration and synergy. Also the project activities yet remain to be determined in more detail, you could say it is an experimental way of working (based on the vision of the project). The call challenges a consortium of HEIs and business support and development agencies to create an open environment, with room for experiments, room for learning, sharing experiences and 'trial and error'. Thereby making the project a kind of stepping stone towards the new programming period, both in the type of projects, the process of working with stakeholders (like monitoring), and the way the project is carried out.

We expect to learn a lot from this process (the management, monitoring and evaluation of both the (design of the) call and the KONNECT-project) and have already noticed that we have made mistakes along the way. For example: a) the text of the call was perhaps too open and provided too little context, thereby leaving room for mis-interpretations and b) during the design process of the call we noticed a lack of structural lines of communication between government and regional stakeholders. The latter made it harder to receive ideas and input when designing the call and managing our policy instruments in general. As already mentioned in the case study by JRC, the Northern Netherlands can benefit from having better (mutual) relationships with our stakeholders.

During the partner meeting of Mid Sweden, hosted by the Mid Sweden University, the InnoHEIs partners discussed the importance of a continuously active dialogue between stakeholders. In Sweden this is part of their governance in the form of a so-called 'Partnership'. The stakeholders involved include national government (agencies), local municipalities, universities, chamber of commerce, etc. The partnership provides a structural line of communication to talk about things as (a mission based approach towards) regional challenges and targeting specific problems (to fill gaps in the innovation ecosystem) and opportunities (create distinctiveness from other regions). The structural way and the kind of topics discussed are not (yet) part of the way we are used to collaborate with our stakeholders. Another interesting element of this partnership is the role municipalities play.

During a bilateral meeting in Q2 of 2022 between both regions we aim to explore and better understand this partnership into more detail, thereby providing more targeted input for our action.

2. Action

The ambition of the Operational Programme ERDF 2021-2027 Northern Netherlands and the renewed RIS3 is to create a better dialogue between quadruple helix stakeholders and to improve the exchange information in order to (more jointly) create future calls and thereby working towards a more integrated innovation ecosystem is an ambition.

To achieve this ambition we plan **to create so-called 'gesprekslijnen'**, they are (in)formal lines of communication between government and regional stakeholders as part of the RIS3-governance in programming period of 2021-2027. These 'gesprekslijnen' will in turn (further) strengthen the position of Higher Education Institutes (HEIs) as engaged partners in regional governance models for developing and maintaining effective regional innovation ecosystems.

Input for this action will come from the 'Partnerships' in Sweden.

Input will also come from the continuous evaluation of the process surrounding the KONNECT-project and the monitoring of the project. Since this will create (policy) learning possibilities and

improve and develop (and evaluate) future calls within the Operational Programme ERDF 2021-2027 Northern Netherlands.

3. **Players involved**

Regional stakeholders (to be) involved in the so-called 'gesprekslijnen':

- Education Institutes (EIs)
- Small and medium enterprises (SMEs)
- Cluster organizations
- Hubs
- (Innovation) Networks
- (Innovation) Environments
- Field Labs
- Business support & business development agencies
- Regional Development Agency & Managing Authority (SNN)
- University and University of Applied Sciences
- Regional VET institutions
- Provincial and local governments

4. **Timeframe**

The actions are planned in Q2 of 2022 until the end of Q2 in 2023. In this period we will be able to start up one (or more) 'gesprekslijnen' with groups of stakeholders related to certain topics. It will be possible to achieve this, because specific targeted customized new calls need to be designed and implemented in 2023.

5. **Costs**

SNN staff costs: € 10.000,-

HEIs staff costs: € 10.000,-

6. **Funding sources:**

The costs will be funded by the managing authority SNN and participating HEIs in the KONNECT-project.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____