

Action plan

Part I – General information

Project: Future Ecom

Partner organisation: North Denmark Region

Other partner organisations involved: Business Development Centre North Denmark (BCD North Denmark)

Country: Denmark

NUTS2 region: North Denmark Region

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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:

“Regional Growth and Development Strategy” combined with “Business Development in Denmark 2020-2023” submitted by the “Danish Business Development Board” (In Danish “Erhvervsfremme i Danmark 2020-2023” submitted by the “Danmarks Erhvervsfremmebestyrelse”).

Since starting 2019 the Business Development in Denmark has been centralized going from a regional approach to a nation-wide approach now governed by the Danish Business Development Board.

Each region provides - relevant for the regional strategy inputs to the nation-wide strategy for business development. The responsible for collecting, compiling and providing such regional input to the nation-wide strategy is the BCD North Denmark.

The policy instrument which this program seeks to influence is thus the “Business Development in Denmark 2020-2023” by influence the regional input to the nation-wide strategy.

The regional strategy inputs focus on 6 main driving forces

- 1) Skilled Labour and Social Inclusion
- 2) Entrepreneurship
- 3) Green transition and Circular Economy
- 4) Innovation
- 5) Digitalization and Automation
- 6) Internationalization

The Business driving forces focus on

- 1) “The Smart” (ICT and Digitalization)
- 2) “The Green” (Energi and Green Transformation)
- 3) “The Blue” (Maritime business and fishing)
- 4) “The Attractive” (Turism)

The Danish Business Development Board grants funding - both national funding and EU funding to programs and projects.

The policy influence is done on the Digitalization and Automation strategy and seek to promote and influence competence development for both companies and employees.

The funding used for phase 2 of this project is primarily funding already granted and used in the daily work of BCD North Denmark. The funding comes primarily from EU ERDF and EU ESDF and combined with national funding from the Danish Business Development Board.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

ACTION 1: Company Competence Mapping and Development (CCMD)

The CCMD will be used throughout the phase 2 of the project for engaging companies in a competence development program. The action will initially do a maturity mapping of companies and then the companies will be segmented and offered differentiated competence development in the digital and e-commerce areas.

Relevance to the project: The action is derived from the good practices:

- *"Industry 4.0 Vouchers to promote SME digital transformation"*,
- *"Training Program for transfer mediators to promote innovation"*
- *"E-export via online marketplaces"*
- *"Focus Digital"*

Action 1, 2, 3 and 4 is all based on the experience gained in the Danish Local Support Group and in the inspiration from partner meetings in particular the above-mentioned good practices.

The Danish LSG discussed the challenges facing B2B E-commerce in North Jutland, and in all discussion, it returns that the competences and view for digitalization of the companies or lack thereof are some of the most experienced barriers. The LSG mention a lack of recognition of the potentials of digitization, a lack of strategic outlook at management level, including board level and a lack of motivation to change the business model. We have therefore chosen to focus on these barriers and, through screening and mapping, identify relevant developments that can be realized through co-creation.

From the partner meetings, we are particularly inspired by the "Training program for transfer mediators to promote innovation" as a mediator who can identify the needs and challenges of companies while matching it with potential ways to walk can be seen as a value-adding effort in the light of the Danish barriers. Business Development Center North/Erhvervscenter Nordjylland has as its core task in other contexts to act as an independent mediator and to guide the companies in a number of specialized areas.

In its Good Practice "Focus Digital" inspired by its approach, Coventry has structured its path to improve skills and the use of digital technology in SMEs through workshops, among other things. This corroborates that the Danish LSG has highlighted the value of co-creation.

Vouchers are well known in the Danish business promotion system, which is why *"Industry 4.0 Vouchers to promote SME digital transformation"* has

naturally inspired. This is both in terms of investment in technology and equipment and in terms of competence development.

"E-export via online marketplaces" has inspired, among other things, mapping and methodology.

The 4 practices promote different ways of competence building and innovation building within the digital space. The later practice provides competences in e-commerce space together with a virtual CMS platform easing the way forward for the company's online present.

Succeeding with B2B e-commerce and ongoing digitalisation in companies requires a paradigm shift within each company's mindset, competences and internal processes. Digitizing and automatizing the internal and external processes and interactions of the SME with its customers and suppliers are keys to managing and keeping up with the ongoing competition in the global e-commerce business arena.

Nature of the action: In the continuation of the good practices the action will focus on performing a regional maturity mapping of the competences in the companies with respect to digitalization and e-commerce skills. The action will be divided into two parts.

Part one will be the mapping that will be used for segmenting the companies thus been able to approach the companies at their currently maturity level.

Part two will be dedicated offerings for competence development both individual and in segmented workshops with multiple companies.

Findings in phase one of the project indicates the importance for meeting the companies on their maturity level in order to move them forward. The same applies for setting up workshops, if the maturity level of the participating companies varies too much none of companies feel safe and the outcome of the workshop drops drastically.

The target for this action is to get at least 30 companies competence mapped and competence developed.

The workshops are intended to be constructed as networks and based on the co-creation platform principle described in action 3 "*Establishing a CO-Creation Platform (CCP)*"

Stakeholders involved: The BDC North Denmark will be involved in both part one and part two of the action. Part two of the action will be done together with other regional and inter-regional players that can provide competence development to companies in the area of digitalization and e-commerce.

The other players are among others Arbejdsmarkedskontoret Midt Nord (Inter-regional partner who also participates in the LSG group).

Timeframe: The action will run throughout phase two.

Costs: The operational cost in part one will be carried by the participating players of the action; however, it is deemed to be minimal and mainly related to personal resources. The cost for part two comprising of the individual company competence development and the workshops has not been estimated currently. However, it will be incorporated as part of the ongoing business in BDC North Denmark.

Funding sources: Funding is covered by existing programs such as Vilje til Vækst (funded by the ERDF and the ESDF) and national programs under the among others Arbejdsmarkedskontoret Midt Nord.

ACTION 2:

Executives Competence Mapping for “Digital Power of Imagination” (ECM-DPI)

The ECM-DPI will be used throughout the phase 2 of the project for competence mapping of Board of Directors and Executives with respect to “Digital Power of Imagination” for the companies in the Region. The purpose being able to provide competence development to primarily the Board of Directors and Executives (white collar workers, both groups referred to as Management) and secondarily the employees (blue collar workers).

Relevance to the project: The action is derived from the 3 same good practices as action 1 including the LSG inputs.

Action 1 is focusing on the companies whereas action 2 is focusing on the employees and mainly the management. Succeeding with B2B e-commerce and ongoing digitalisation requires a paradigm shift on the Management mindset and competences.

The strategy of a company is (ideally) developed by the Management and it is of vital importance the Management knows and understands the possibilities and the future of digitalization and e-commerce. Both with respect to the product and service development but also with respect to the actual digital development of the company.

In order to make a solid digital strategy the project does believe in the importance of “Digital Power of Imagination”. In other words, you need to be able to understand (and imagine) where the digitalization takes you, your company and the World both in the short-term, in the medium-term and particularly in the long-term perspective.

Nature of the action: In the continuation of the good practices the action will focus on establish a regional maturity mapping of the competences in the companies with respect to "Digital Power of Imagination". The action will be divided into two parts.

Part one will be a maturity mapping of the Management inspired by "Digital Power of Imagination" to be used for segmenting the Management thus been able to approach the Management at their currently maturity level.

Part two will be dedicated offerings for competence development both individual and in segmented workshops with multiple Management.

Findings in phase one of the project indicates the importance for meeting the Management at their maturity level in order to move them forward. The same applies for setting up workshops, if the maturity level of the participating Management varies too much none of Management feel safe and the outcome of the workshop drops drastically.

The target for this action is to get at least 30 Management teams competence mapped and competence developed.

The workshops are intended to be constructed as networks and based on the co-creation platform principle described in action 3 "Establishing a CO-Creation Platform (CCP)"

Stakeholders involved: The BDC North Denmark will be involved in the part one action regarding the maturity mapping likely in corporation with some external consultancy expertise.

BDC North Denmark will also be involved in the part two action together with external consultancies and regional and inter-regional players that can provide competence development to companies in the area of "Digital Power of Imagination".

Timeframe: The action will run throughout phase two.

Costs: The operational cost in part one will be carried by the participating players of the action. The cost for part two comprising of the individual company competence development and the workshops has not been estimated currently, however it will be incorporated as part of the ongoing business in BDC North Denmark.

Funding sources: Funding is covered by existing program such as "Vilje til Vækst" (funded by the ERDF and the ESDF) and national programs under the among others Arbejdsmarkedskontoret Midt Nord.

ACTION 3: Establishing a Co-Creation Platform (CCP)

The CCP will be used throughout the phase 2 of the project for engaging companies, leaders and employees in the different activities of the action plans hereunder providing competences in specific areas.

Relevance to the project: The action is derived from the 3 same good practices as action 1 as is supposed to be the foundation of the workshops in action 1 and action 2.

Succeeding with B2B e-commerce requires a paradigm shift within company's mindset and internal processes hereunder competences.

Among others the customers suddenly become virtual and digital. Digitizing and automatizing the internal and external processes and interactions of the SME with its customers and suppliers are considered keys to managing and keeping up with the potential growth in the global e-commerce business.

Action: In the continuation of the good practices the action will focus on establish a set of co-creation platforms that will initiate further creative innovation and competence development in the digital and e-commerce business market.

The Co-Creation platforms will be used to perform workshops for action 1 and action 2 and for the ongoing work of the LSG group

Co-Creation means openly and transparently engaging customers and suppliers in the product offering development hereunder sharing data. The co-creation paradigms are "Purpose over Profit" and "Involvement".

It is a facilitating forum and process of jointly value creation by the company's, the customers and the suppliers in the product and service offering development. The value creation will ideally fuel the transformation of the e-commerce eco-system and enable companies to cross the barriers and enter the e-commerce market place. The value creation will also enable company's and suppliers to exceed current customers' expectations and reach new customers.

The co-creation platform and method are thought to be a good alternative to traditional information workshops and individual company consulting which are often used in the business development process.

The project is with the co-creation platform utilization avoiding yet another “me too coming late” or “more from the same drawer (Danish saying)” project offering.

The barriers identified in the phase 1 of the project in the B2B E-commerce space are among others

- Lack of motivation and lack of strategic view from the management and board
- A genuine wish to keep the personal contact with the customer
- Product complexity is thought as a blocking point for e-commerce
- Way too busy to get involved in an e-commerce business
- Lack of education and competences in the e-commerce space
- Lack of “power of imagination” with respect to the digital world

The barriers or a subset of the barriers will be addressed as initial working areas for the co-creation platforms together with the competence development.

Stakeholders involved: The players involved are initially the stakeholders from the Local Support Group (LSG) or a subset of them either in combined or in parallel co-creation platforms with the companies mapped in action 2 and action 2.

The LSG group members are among others:

Name	Organisation	Representing
Per Rasmussen	Dansk Erhverv	Cluster
Sven Vestergaard	Smartlog	Logistic Cluster
Karina Jensen	AAU	University
Pernille Kræmmergaard	Digitaliseringsinstituttet	Company
Martin Dommerby	Systemate	Company
Jens Erik Pedersen	DIH^2	Project
Niels Have	Logimatic	Company
Frank Christensen	UCN act2learn	College
Susanne M. Nielsen	Arbejdsmarkedskontor Midt Nord	Government

Reimer Ivang	Reimer Ivang Holding	Consultant
Christine Knudsen	Business Aalborg	Consultant
Helle Duus	Business Aalborg	Business Consultant
Henrik Marcher Larsen	Dansk Industri	Cluster
Ole Madsen	Erhvervshus Nordjylland	Business Development Centre
Dan Skovgaard	Erhverv Væksthimmerland	Director
Lone Johansen	Region Nordjylland	North Denmark Region
Morten Lemvigh	Region Nordjylland	North Denmark Region

Timeframe: The co-creation platforms will start in phase 2 of the project. The duration of the co-creation platforms is expected to reach beyond the phase 2 and ideally it will institutionalise itself and develop a “life of its own” going forward.

Costs: The cost will be carried by the participating players of the action; however, it is deemed to be minimal and mainly related to personal resources

Funding sources: Additional funding is not deemed necessary directly for establishing and running the co-creation platform.

Overview of the actions combined:

Action 1 Company Competence Mapping and Development (CCMD)	Action 2 Executives Competence Mapping for "Digital Power of Imagination" (ECM-DPI)	Action 3 LSG Group
Action 3 Co-Creation Platform CCP	Action 3 Co-Creation Platform CCP	Action 3 Co-Creation Platform CCP

ACTION 4: FremKom 4 analysis with STEM focus (FremKom)

FremKom is in Danish a contraction of "Fremtidens kompetencebehov" in English "Labour and competence needs of the future". STEM is a contraction of Science, technology, engineering & mathematics. In phase 2 we will make a gapanalyse of the labour and competence needs of the future 5 years forward in order to secure a qualified labour which support B2B e-commerce.

Relevance to the project: The action is derived from the 4 same good practices as action 1. From the Future Ecom project both partnermeetings and stakeholder meetings we know that the lack of digital and technological competences in the SME's in North Denmark Region is a barrier to succeed with B2B e-commerce. For example it is a problem that many companies have outsourced their IT competences the last 5-10 years and because of that they have problems seeing the potential in the new digital and technological possibilities of development which are necessary to succeed with B2B e-commerce. Most companies don't have digital and technological strategies for developing their companies.

The basis digital and technological competences for both leaders and employees needs to be increased but to what exactly? We need knowledge about the future competence needs and we will get more knowledge about that through a Fremkom 4 analysis with a focus at STEM competences. In order to analyse the need of STEM competences we will use the knowledge from the Future Ecom project.

Action: The strategy of North Denmark Region "North Denmark of opportunities" focuses at:

1. The right competences – must be available throughout the region to ensure a match between available jobs and citizens.

2. Ensuring a qualified workforce - a general increase in competences and ensuring a workforce that matches the needs of the business community.

3. Lifelong learning for all citizens - All citizens are able to continuously enhance their qualifications.

FremKom 4 is initiated by the Council of North Denmark Region and it's a project with a strategic aim to focus on what kind of competence needs in North Denmark Region is relevant now and 5 years ahead. FremKom researches the competence need in North Denmark Region companies and public institutions. The FremKom cooperation is build upon three phases:

- 1) *Analysis* – creating new knowledge about competence needs of the future,
- 2) *Debate* – attempt to create a debate and dialog from the results of the analysis both regionally and locally,
- 3) *Initiatives* – to support the activities and initiatives which emerge from the previous debate and dialogue.

The FremKom project is therefore both knowledge generating e.g. for visualization of challenges in the businesses, the educational system and on the labour market, and it is useful for dialogue inside organizations and between relevant cooperation partners and finally the analysis is useful for action according to e.g. specific initiatives or planning of new educations.

Stakeholders involved: FremKom is a strategic cooperation between a long line of different stakeholders representing the entire geography in north Denmark Region and the project is a triple helix organization, where the political system cooperates with stakeholders from the educational system, the employment system and the business system.

Timeframe: The Fremkom 4 analysis with a STEM focus will be made in 2021 and the results will be ready in December 2021. Phase 2 and 3 will be implemented in 2022.

Costs: The cost will be carried by the Council of North Denmark Region and the stakeholders of the Fremkom cooperation.