

Sharing Experiences on Innovation Funding

8th Interregional Working Group Meeting and Visit to the Brightlands Campus Greenport Venlo

On 21 and 22 February, S3Chem partners came together to the eighth S3Chem partner meeting which took place in Venlo (NL). During the interregional working group meeting the participants had the opportunity to present their preliminary results from their thematic analysis on ERDF funding measures and instruments in the framework of the Regional Innovation Strategies (RIS). In particular, project partners discussed the current status of the implementation of the funding instruments and how innovation projects related to chemistry and bioeconomy are supported in the framework of ERDF. Additionally, in the fourth thematic study, the partners analyse funding objectives and the thematic focus of funding, eligibility rules and funding rates. Moreover, experiences regarding the implementation of application development procedure, implementation phase, reporting procedure as well as the finance are revealed through interviews with beneficiaries (companies and research organisations) and managing authorities in order to identify strengths and weaknesses of the funding instruments. To complete the analyses, the partners draw conclusions and make recommendations based on the identified strengths and weaknesses of the funding instrument and describing the needs for improvement. Finally, expectations to learn from the other regions in the interregional learning process within the framework of the S3Chem project were exchanged by every partner region during the meeting. Other issues addressed during the meeting were the organisation and project management as well as communication and dissemination activities.



Site Visit to the Brightlands Campus Greenport Venlo

On 22 February 2018, the project partners and stakeholders from Asturias and Catalonia visited the Brightlands Campus Greenport Venlo and listened to an interesting presentation about the national developments in chemistry and implications for the Limburg situation by Prof. Dr. Emmo Meijer (former CTO of DSM and Figurehead of national Topsector) and got to know the Bio Treat Center which was presented by Patrick Lemmens (Innovation Broker and Business Developer at BTC). Moreover, the participants had the opportunity to take a guided tour to the VillaFlora which is home to numerous R&D and laboratory facilities, incubator sites, testing locations (including a cooking lab) as well as training possibilities used by researchers, students, entrepreneurs from within and outside the region. The Brightlands Campus Greenport Venlo is one of the four Brightlands Campuses located in Limburg that are specialized on bio-based materials, smart services and health. At Brightlands Campus Greenport Venlo, the focus is on healthy food and nutrition. Innovators from business, science and education work together on innovations in healthy nutrition, plant breeding and growing, alternative raw materials and food sources. They therefore contribute to finding innovative solutions in global challenges such as food security, food safety as well as healthy and sustainable food.



Read more about the Brightlands Campus [here](#).

ERDF Innovation Funding Instrument in Limburg

The main instrument for the funding of innovation in Limburg is the Operational Program South Netherlands 2014-2020 (OPZuid), priority axis "Increase the research and innovation intensity in SMEs and improve their uptake of innovation". But because Limburg is a border region (2/3 of its border is with neighbouring countries), also the Interreg-VA programs in which Limburg participates are of importance.



With the OPZuid the region of Southern-Netherlands, consisting of the provinces Zeeland, North-Brabant and Limburg aims to strengthen its potential for Research and Innovation while at the same time supporting the shift to a resource-efficient, low-carbon economy. The program is focused on innovative SMEs and strengthening collaboration between industry, universities and governments.

The total budget for the OP Zuid 2014-2020 is set at € 321,591,238 with a total ERDF contribution of € 113,627,056. The ERDF funding rate in general is 35% and there is no formal maximum funding amount. However, the volume of a project is certainly an issue in terms of value for money for the requested part of the program's budget.

The program uses thematic calls for proposals for the selection of projects to be funded. A part of the total ERDF amount is allocated to each call. There are no specific budgets assigned to specific top sectors. Therefore, project proposals from the chemical/bioeconomy sector have to compete with project proposals from the other top sectors.

Read more about the OP Zuid [here](#).

Digital Procedure

Eligible organisations such as knowledge institutes, intermediary organisations, governmental organisations as well as larger and small and medium sized companies can submit their proposals under a dedicated call by using the [OP Zuid web portal](#). During the period that a specific call is open, applicants can fill in a complete application form in the web portal. Supportive documents to the project can be uploaded into the web portal. Once all questions are answered and all required annexes are uploaded, the application can be digitally submitted by using the "Submit" button. Once the deadline for submitting proposals has passed, the Program Secretariat checks the submitted proposals on completeness and compliance with the Program and subsequently the complete proposals are assessed by an independent Panel of Experts who at the end rank all the proposals submitted under the specific call. After a subsidy has been granted, the same web portal must also be used for the submission of progress reports (with respect to content and finances). Again, supportive documents (e.g. paid invoices, time sheets, prove of used tender procedures) can be uploaded.

The Interreg V-program between the Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium), the Interreg V-program Germany – The Netherlands and the Interreg V-program for the Meuse-Rhine Euregio provide similar opportunities for organisations and consortia from Limburg when it comes to the funding of innovative projects. Obviously, they would need to have partners from across the border in their project proposals. These programs also use similar web applications for the application procedure and for reporting purposes.

Interviews

In the framework of the 4th S3Chem Analysis Report recently representatives of small and large companies, knowledge and research institutes as well as the Management Authority of the OPZuid program have been interviewed for their experiences with the execution of the above mentioned funding instruments. In general the level of satisfaction is quite high: the availability of these instruments enhances the establishment of new consortia around new and innovative projects. Results until now show that a lot of qualitatively high ranked proposals have been submitted and already granted as well. Possible improvements could be found in simplification of the application procedure. It is stated to be very complex and time consuming.

Upcoming Events

On 7th to 8th June 2018 partners will meet in Asturias to discuss and open the thematic work of the 5th project semester which is focused on the question of measuring the impact of funded innovation projects as a basis for an impact oriented steering process. For that purpose an interregional working group meeting and a site visit to INCAR – CSIC will be organized.

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