



**Destination
SMEs**
Interreg Europe



Destination SMEs project
Cork County Council
Action Plan
04/2019 – 03/2021



**Cork
County Council**
Comhairle Contae Chorcaí

Introduction

Phase 1 of the Destination SMEs project extended from April 2016 until March 2019. During Phase 1, partners identified interesting practices and initiatives which could inspire an improvement in public policy, or the duplication of interesting practices and initiatives in their region.

Phase 2 of the Destination SMEs project will last for two years, until March 2021, during which project partners will seek to improve their policies and capitalise on the outcomes of the project. This document is the road map for the second phase.

1 General information

Partner organisation: Cork County Council

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): None.

Country: Ireland

NUTS2 region: Southern Region – IE05

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2 Improvement of the target policy

At the application stage of the project, all partners identified a public policy which needed improvement. Cork County Councils (CCC) proposal to seek influence the current Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme (SEROP) (2014-2020) was accepted. It was initially intended to influence the identified target policy instrument, the SEROP (2014-2020) by actively engaging with the Southern Regional Assembly [i.e the Managing Authority (MA)] on a regular basis, by making informal representations to local Elected Representatives of the Southern Regional Assembly and making formal submissions to the programme review.

However during the project, on foot of interactions with the Southern Regional Assembly, it became apparent that it was not procedurally possible to influence the identified target policy within the timeframe of the Destination SMEs project as there was no facility for amendment of the Operational Programme prior to its expiration. This has also been recently confirmed by the Acting Assistant Director of the Southern Regional Assembly on the 09/09/19. At the outset of the project the MA had not determined the format of the programme review. An internal mid-term evaluation was carried out by the Southern Regional Assembly with a financial rather than policy review focus. The MA did not notify the Project team of the mid-term review and there was no facility for input into same as part of a public consultation process.

Having regard to this procedural difficulty with influencing the current SEROP and in response to reservations expressed by the Interreg Joint Secretariat at the end of Phase 1 of the project, the target policy improvement has been revised to focus on improving an existing internal local level policy instrument which can be directly influenced by CCC, namely the Economic Development Fund (EDF), further details of which are set out below.

Name of the target policy: Cork County Council's Economic Development Fund

Name of the Managing Authority of the target policy: Cork County Council

Cork County Council has a policy instrument and an associated fund, the Economic Development Fund (EDF), which is employed to promote and support economic development in Cork. The EDF supports enterprise initiatives such as mentoring, soft supports, enterprise space and the promotion of partnership projects. It is also used to encourage FDI, indigenous enterprise and the branding and marketing of the county and its products under the following five different priority

funding areas including Strategic Marketing and Tourism. Further specific details of the EDF are provided in the following background section to Action 1.

A review of the EDF is scheduled for 2019. Applying our experience from participating in the Destination SMEs project we will seek to influence the review of this target policy by demonstrating the importance of providing funding and other supports for clustering / tourism destination management bodies at a local level. In addition we will also seek to influence the policy framework at regional level through the next Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme.

2.1 Actions Identified

The background and details associated with each of the actions identified is commented on individually below.

Action 1: Cork County Council will employ its Economic Development Fund and other support mechanisms, where appropriate, to promote and support the establishment of Destination Management Bodies to further enhance the tourism sector within our region.

a. Background

EDF Background

The National Tourism body (i.e. Fáilte Ireland) has developed two brands of national significance to collectively promote and enhance the visitor experience in Ireland, namely Irelands Ancient East (IAE) and the Wild Atlantic Way (WAW). In Ireland, Cork County is uniquely placed within the catchment area covered by these two brands. The County Council considers that it can grow the number of domestic and international visitors to the county by maximising its potential as a tourism destination within both IAE and the WAW brands. Growth of the Tourism sector will promote rural economic development and secure rural renewal to allow towns, villages and outlying rural areas to grow sustainably in line with national / regional policy objectives.

The policy context in Ireland reflects a hierarchical structure whereby policies must be aligned, top down, from National to Regional and Local levels. An issue encountered during the project is the lack of policy supports for Tourism clusters as a priority development area at national and regional levels. Within the framework of the project it is an objective to influence regional level policy (i.e. the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme) by demonstrating how supporting tourism clusters / destination management bodies at a local level (through Cork County Councils Economic Development Fund) illustrates the need for recognition for such bodies with necessary funding / supports within the Regional Operational Programme.

The role of Irish Local Authorities in the promotion of Economic Development was enhanced by the Local Government Reform Act 2014, the County Enterprise Boards (Dissolution) Act 2014 and other legislation. Cork County Council now has responsibility for preparation and implementation of Local Economic and Community Plans (LECP) and for the establishment and support of Local Enterprise Offices, Local Community Development Committees and Public Participation Networks.

Tourism is regarded as being a sector with extensive opportunity for growth and job creation. Working with Cork City Council and local stakeholders the County Council has adopted a strategic tourism development strategy, deployed additional resources to promote Tourism in the region and employs the EDF to promote and support economic development initiatives and job creation opportunities in Cork. It has also implemented an economic marketing strategy for the Cork Region as a place for enterprise development under the *Pure Cork* brand, see <https://purecork.ie/>.

The Councils role in promoting the economic development of the County requires that it works to encourage FDI, indigenous enterprise and the branding and marketing of the county and its products. Through the regional *Action Plan for Jobs*, the LECP, the Regional Skills Forum and the marketing of the region, the Council now has the central role in making Cork a great place to live, work, visit and invest in. The Department of Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism (DEDET) of Cork County Council is responsible for realising this ambition.

One policy instrument that the DEDET has available to help the County maximise its full potential is the Economic Development Fund (EDF). The EDF, funded by an annual allocation of 1% of the Commercial Rates income, approximately

€1m / annum, supports prioritised enterprise initiatives such as mentoring, the provision of soft supports and enterprise space and the promotion of partnership projects. It is also used to encourage FDI, indigenous enterprise and the branding and marketing of the county and its products under the following five different priority funding areas including Strategic Marketing and Tourism. The prioritised enterprise initiatives supported by the EDF are as set out below.

Strategic Marketing and Tourism

Studies have shown that the development of a sustainable enterprise culture benefits from the quality of life of the region. It is a given that a place should be a place to live, to work and to visit in that order. Cork County and City as a Second City Region comprise a region of 500,000 people with high education and skill levels, where quality of life is good and which features a healthy enterprise development and start-up ecosystem. National connectivity is excellent; international connectivity is good and improving. The region has a strong economic base and potential to grow significantly. Cork County and City Councils have a shared policy to advance the economic, educational, and tourism marketing of the region as a place for enterprise development.

Tourism has been identified as an area where there is extensive opportunity for growth and job creation. In partnership with Industry and other stakeholders, the Council has prepared a regional strategy for the development of tourism, leading to an international offering that can be incorporated in the international marketing of Tourism Ireland and Fáilte Ireland within the primary products of Wild Atlantic Way and Irelands Ancient east. Cork occupies a unique place in this international strategy as it is the one county that features both products extensively. With its stakeholder group and the Councils Tourism Strategic Policy Committee it prepared a Regional Strategy with dependent Action Plans to maximise the opportunities for Cork to grow and create jobs in this sector of the economy. This includes the development of infrastructure and support of community and other stakeholder groups to develop product around the key international offerings.

Such products include festivals and events with a high growth potential. The support from EDF helps these festivals to grow and become eligible for Fáilte Irelands national festivals funding. Given the strategic asset of Cork Airport, Cork County Council has a unique opportunity to engage in direct marketing campaigns in the cities served by a direct flight to Cork Airport, where Tourism Ireland might not target directly.

A successful tourist area relies on the scenic beauty, the attractions, the people and entertainment to make it memorable. By supporting festivals, artistic, cultural and heritage initiatives the EDF assists in adding richness to the mosaic that is Cork. Development of a vibrant screen and film industry will allow images and stories of the region to reach customers and potential visitors all over the world. By supporting the recently established Screen Commission we can provide for the work of artists and crafts people to enrich the tourist experience, add value to the local economy and generate employment.

Partnerships with Local and Regional Stakeholders

The EDF has led to the establishment of extensive Partnership arrangements and initiatives such as IGNITE, CorkBIC, Greenshoots, Cork Smart Gateway and Innovation Hubs that have successfully contributed to economic development and job creation. Support for such Partnerships continues and are being augmented to improve our enterprise ecosystem.

Town Retail / Development

The last recession had a significant impact on the retail sector in rural towns and villages. The EDF provides supports to make the retail experience in town and village centre more attractive for shoppers. Other measures to improve the town and village enterprise atmosphere will be developed in partnership with communities, commercial representative groups and the Municipal District Councils.

Development of Food Production and Export Supports

Cork has the most productive agricultural land in the country. It has centuries of tradition in production and export of food and drink. The removal of agricultural output quotas has led to a significant increase in production of farm gate produce. Extensive production facilities have been established and are extending to manufacture consumer products for export. Cork also has a rich tradition and quality reputation for the production of artisan foods. This sector has significant opportunity for job creation and growth. Existing support mechanisms such as the development of artisan food production facilities, enterprise training and mentoring and supports for international marketing will lead to improving opportunities for Cork based enterprises. Through the Local Enterprise offices and partnership programmes, SMEs are supported in start-up, preparation for export and marketing. The Council continues to develop facilities such as food grade buildings and Pay As You Go (PAYG) commercial food kitchens to support food production in the SME arena.

Co-Funding Initiatives

Recent Government Initiatives for Economic Development such as the Rural Economic Development Zones, Regional Economic Development Funds, Urban and Rural Economic Development Funds etc. also included a requirement to provide local cofunding, sometimes in part through the provision of local voluntary labour but more usually with a proportion of money. The EDF provides for the co-funding element for relevant projects and initiatives.

EDF Application

Cork County Council employs the Economic Development fund (EDF) to support the hosting of festivals and the marketing campaigns of SMEs operating in the Tourism sector (i.e. Destination Management Bodies) on an annual basis. The appropriate level of financial support is allocated from the EDF following the evaluation of applications for support from the EDF. This application, evaluation and allocation is managed by the Department of Economic Development, Enterprise and Tourism at Cork County Council. Applying the knowledge obtained during the project, it is proposed that the next revision of the policy governing the implementation of the EDF will include a priority to support the establishment, development and operation of cluster organisations, including Destination Management Bodies.

A specific example of a tourism initiative that has been grant aided from the EDF in 2019 is marketing supports for *Cork Harbour Islands* (CHI), see <https://www.corkharbourislands.ie/>. CHI was established as a collaborative initiative (i.e. Destination Management Body) by local SME's that collectively saw the benefit of pooling their resources to directly fund marketing for the region. CHI's objective is to create a link between strong tourism brands and support tourism products within their defined Cork Harbour geographical area. The group identified the opportunity to create a destination brand and its key objective is to bring to life the experiences and to support all of the efforts to drive tourism in the area. Its members include various SMEs in the tourism sector within the Cork Harbour Region.

Another example supported by the EDF is *Munster Vales*, see <https://munstervales.com/>. Munster Vales is a tourism destination group of domestic and international significance linking the Counties of Cork, Limerick, Waterford and Tipperary aligned with the Fáilte Ireland Brand, Ireland's Ancient East. The overall objective of the group is to promote the geographical area as a unique regional brand and to develop outdoor recreational activities (walking, cycling and angling) in conjunction with the rich heritage and cultural amenities in a region that has previously struggled to attract tourists. This objective is achieved by creating synergy between SMEs in the Tourism sector in the region (over 300 stakeholders involved) whereby collaboration and collective destination brand recognition facilitates exposure to national / international markets which would not otherwise be available to SMEs. This year Cork County Council is providing grant funding support towards the appointment of a Marketing Co-ordinator for the group.

The experience we have gained from participating in the Destination SME Project has demonstrated that there are opportunities to be capitalised upon by using the EDF to support the establishment and operation of other local Destination Management Bodies in suitable locations throughout our region. We consider that this model can be replicated across the County thus indicating a direct influence on improving existing local level policy instruments. Cork County Council will support the operations of these and new Destination Management Bodies throughout the County as appropriate.

Following the election of a new council in June 2019, the current policy governing the implementation of the EDF will be reviewed and amended as considered appropriate. It is anticipated that the revised policy will be amended to include a priority enabling the EDF to be used to support the support the establishment, development and operation of cluster organisations, including Destination Management Bodies. This priority may be encapsulated with the section that will address supports for the Strategic Marketing and Tourism of Cork County or may be in a separate section addressing Clustering. By extension this will provide the facility to upscale financial support for the operation and establishment of Destination Managements Bodies initiatives in the region.

The procedure involved in reviewing / amending the policy governing the implementation of the EDF includes:

- Preparation of a proposed future direction document for discussion at the Economic Development and Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC) of the Council,
- Preparation of a Draft Policy document for approval by SPC,
- Adoption of the revised policy by the SPC,
- Subsequent adoption of the revised policy by Full Council.

b. Relevance to the project

This initiative is inspired by the **Regio Vitalis network** of SMEs in the Pomurje Region of Slovenia. This combined network of over 80 members (comprising 34 accommodation providers, 18 restaurants, 7 cafes & bars, 8 wine producers and 37 enterprises) has a collective marketing strategy through its internet site and boards with business cards advertising other members of the network.

c. Nature of the Action

Cork County Council will seek to secure explicit reference to economic clustering (including Destination Management Bodies) either within the Strategic Marketing and Tourism section or as a stand alone section of the revised EDF which will enable the allocation of funds to support the establishment, development and operation of Destination Management bodies initiatives in the region.

d. Stakeholders/Players Involved

Cork County Council and the Economic Development & Enterprise Strategic Policy Committee (SPC).

Strategic Policy Committee

Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) are local authority committees in city and county councils whose membership includes elected councillors, representatives of business, farming interests, environmental/conservation groups, trade unions and community and voluntary members. It is the task of the Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs), as committees of the council, to advise and assist the council in the formulation, development and review of policy. There are eight Strategic Policy Committees (SPCs) in Cork County Council. The Economic Development and Enterprise SPC oversee policy development and review with regard to the internal Economic Development Fund.

e. Timeframe

Estimated start dates: Q4 2019 EDF Review

Main milestones: Q4 2019 EDF Review

Estimated Approval / enforcement date: Q1 2020

f. Indicative Costs (if relevant)

There are no significant upfront associated costs associated. The areas where costs will be incurred are confined to staff time.

g. Indicative Funding sources:

Cork County Council's own resources will be used to fund any associated costs.

Action 2: Cork County Council in collaboration with the Local Enterprise Offices will engage with the SMEs operating in the tourism sector in our region to make them aware of and help them avail of the full range of business information advisory services, capacity building, mentoring and financial supports that are available from the South, North and West Cork LEOs. The LEO network will provide local SMEs with appropriate ongoing support for the establishment and operation of Destination Management Bodies within the region.

a. Background Information

Tourism is a most suitable sector for establishment of localised cluster activities. Tourism enterprises in an area already have a geographical relationship and association, they are outward looking as international markets / travellers represent their highest value customers and can benefit significantly from co-operative activity such as collective destination marketing, branding initiatives etc.

Taking elements from the Latvian Cluster Programme best practice model, Cork County Council will advocate for and support a bottom up approach to the development of a Tourism Cluster within the region. The LEOs will play a key role in this regard by facilitating networks between Tourism SMEs in the Cork Region by raising awareness of the benefits of clustering and available supports for SMEs. The network of Local Enterprise Offices is the First Stop Shop for anyone seeking information and support on starting or growing a business in Ireland (see further details in section d. Below). As one of the main objectives of the project is to encourage the establishment of SMEs in the Tourism Sector, the LEO network is the most appropriate structure to influence the local level target policy.

The LEOs are available to assist the facilitation of such networks throughout the County by raising awareness of the benefits of clustering, the supports that are available to Clusters and the supports that are available to SMEs. For example, the North and West Cork LEO has previously facilitated the development of an SME led initiative to support the establishment of the North Cork Engineering Cluster. The LEOs will support and advice those SMEs who want to establish their own DMBs. By empowering SMEs and assisting them to establish and develop DMBs the LEOs will facilitate the development of the tourism sector in the region in line with the project objectives.

It is proposed to hold an awareness event(s) to raise awareness about the role of the LEOs amongst SMEs in the Tourism sector. Holding an awareness event (s) and subsequently supporting SMEs in the Tourism sector in the region through the LEO network will increase the likelihood of the SMEs and DMBs operating in the tourism sector applying for support from the local target policy instrument i.e. the EDF.

A secondary focus of this action is aimed at influencing the regional level policy. At present in Ireland there is a policy gap whereby Destination Management Bodies are specifically excluded from ERDF/Enterprise Ireland support funding and do not have a dedicated funding support stream from Fáilte Ireland, the National Tourism Body. Taking learnings from the project Cork County Council has identified this policy gap and proposes to demonstrate the need for DMB support by engaging the Cork LEOs to hold an event(s) to raise awareness amongst smaller tourism enterprises in the region about the range of services/supports available and also to provide ongoing mentoring support working with stakeholders to support the establishment of destination management bodies and the development of the tourism sector within the region. This in turn will act as an exemplar for influencing regional level policy.

b. Relevance to the project

During the study visit to Vidzeme in Latvia, the project partners were introduced to the 'Enter Gauja' tourism cluster. The cluster was initiated in 2011 in order to strengthen the destination, enhance its competitiveness in international markets, reduce seasonality, encourage co-operation, promote quality in the tourism product and link with research organisations. It has over 60 members and is run by a management group of 13 mostly entrepreneurs. While the majority of members (2/3) are tourism business operators, the cluster also contains members from academia and the state and local government sectors – adopting the triple-helix approach. A membership fee is charged. While the management group are the key decision makers in relation to strategic issues, budget, staff etc., working groups or 'mobile teams' are formed to address specific objectives or needs.

c. Nature of the Action

In Q4 2019, CCC will organise an event(s) for relevant groups in the region to raise awareness about the role of the Local Enterprise Offices, to demonstrate how the LEOs can support existing/new destination management bodies and to promote the development of the tourism sector within the region. In line with their mandate the LEOs will provide ongoing mentoring and support for SMEs/DMBs in the Tourism sector (following the awareness event) which will increase the likelihood of the such enterprises/bodies applying for support from the target policy (i.e. the EDF).

d. Stakeholders/Players Involved

Cork County Council and the Local Enterprise Offices.

Local Enterprise Offices

In Ireland support for micro enterprises is delivered by the Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) who provide business information, advisory services, capacity building, mentoring and financial supports. The role of the LEOs is to drive the development of local enterprise, putting micro and small business at the heart of job creation. The LEOs support business start-ups and work to increase the job potential of new and existing micro and small businesses with information, advice, training, mentoring, seminars and selective financial support. They are the First Stop Shop for those seeking information and support on starting or growing a business, they provide a range of advice, information and supports to assist with the establishment and / or growth of enterprises, limited companies, individuals / sole trader, cooperatives and partnerships, employing up to ten people. There are 31 dedicated teams across the Local Authority network in Ireland with 18 LEO's in the region. The remit of the LEO's includes:

- Promoting entrepreneurship, foster business start-ups and develop existing micro and small businesses to drive job creation and to provide accessible high quality supports for business ideas.
- Driving the development of local enterprise, putting local micro and small business at the heart of Irish job creation.
- Driving and support business start-ups and promoting a 'can-do' business culture.
- Increasing the job potential of new and existing micro and small businesses
- Increasing the number of innovative businesses with potential to export.
- Responding proactively to the needs of clients.

The ERDF, through the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme, co-funds the LEOs to administer grants and soft supports.

e. Timeframe

Estimated start dates: Q4 2019

Main milestones: Q 4 2019 LEO Support Awareness event

Estimated Approval / enforcement date: Q4 2019

f. Indicative Costs (if relevant)

Staff time and meeting event costs of approximately €500 – €1000.

g. Indicative Funding sources:

Cork County Council's own resources will be used to fund any associated costs.

Action 3: Participate in the Public Consultation process during the next Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme (2021- 2027) so as to raise awareness about the extent of the opportunities for micro, small and medium enterprises in rural communities servicing the Tourism Sector to contribute to rural economic development.

a. Background Information

The Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme (SEROP) (2014-2020) details the development strategy and investment priorities to achieve a set of objectives for the region for the delivery of the Europe 2020 strategy of smart, sustainable and inclusive growth. Investment priorities were selected as the most appropriate priorities to address the needs and challenges facing the region as identified in a Comprehensive Needs Analysis.

Priority 3 addresses SME Competitiveness and is the focus of the policy change being sought through the Destination SME's project. The specific objective of this priority is to increase employment levels in micro-enterprises in the region by supporting business start-ups, business expansion and higher innovation levels in micro-enterprises and a budget of approximately €70m is allocated to this priority. This is currently delivered through initiatives rolled out by the 18 Local Enterprise Offices (LEOs) in the Southern and Eastern region.

The current SEROP (2014-2020) finishes in 2020 and there is no facility for any review or amendment of same. The review of the next Operational Programme will go out for public consultation within the timeframe of the Destination SMEs project and the Managing Authority considers that the next programme will benefit from the Destination SMEs project learnings. A secondary focus of the policy change being sought through the Destination SMEs project will be to include recognition and specific funding/ supports for the Tourism sector at Regional level in the next Regional Operational Programme. In particular the promotion of clustering initiatives and Destination Management Bodies as a vehicle for enhancing and growing SME's involved in the tourist sector in the region.

A key learning CCC has taken from the Destination SMEs project is that the Council can have more of an impact County/local level utilising local funding/resources. Further, the development of local networks and encouraging a "bottom up" approach is key to the development of the Tourism sector in Ireland. Ultimately empowering SMEs in the Tourism sector in the region to come together as organised tourism clusters/destination management bodies has the most potential to influence tangible policy change.

b. Relevance to the project

This policy change is inspired by the **Latvian Cluster Programme** witnessed on the study trip to Latvia. The Programme is the measure used to address the Growth and Employment investment priority no. 3.2 "Supporting capacity of SMEs to engage in regional, national and international markets, and innovation process" from their national Operational Programme. In particular national policy instruments provide support for the competitiveness and export capacity of SMEs in the tourism sector as demonstrated through supports for the "Enter Gauja" tourism cluster.

c. Nature of the action

CCC will make representations to the Managing Authority from Q2 2019 through to the closure of the public consultation period for the next Operational Programme and make a formal submission to same requesting funding/support recognition of the extent and importance of SME's in the Tourism sector contributing to rural economic development.

d. Stakeholders/Players Involved

CCC and the Southern Regional Assembly.

Southern Regional Assembly

The Southern Regional Assembly which covers Carlow, Clare, Cork City and County, Kerry, Kilkenny, Limerick City and County, Tipperary, Waterford City and County and Wexford was established in January 2015. It is one of three Assemblies in the Republic of Ireland.

Thirty three Councillors are nominated to the Southern Regional Assembly, 27 are from the constituent local authorities and six are ex officio members of the Regional Assembly by virtue of their membership of the Committee of the Regions.

The functions of the Southern Regional Assembly are to:

- Prepare the Regional Spatial and Economic Strategy to realise the objectives of the National Development Plan and to promote regional economic development.
- Manage and monitor EU programmes of Assistance
- To co-ordinate, promote and support strategic planning and sustainable development of the region
- To promote effective local government and public services in the region, in conjunction with the National Oversight and Audit Commission
- To prepare and oversee the implementation of Regional Spatial & Economic Strategies (RSES).
- The Assembly is the Managing Authority for the Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme 2014-2020.

e. Timeframe

Estimated start dates: 2020

Main milestones: Public Consultation on the Draft Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme for the period 2021 – 2027.

Estimated Approval / enforcement date: Unknown – likely to be prior to 2021.

f. Indicative Costs (if relevant)

There are no significant upfront associated costs associated. The areas where costs will be incurred are confined to staff time and travel/subsistence in connection with any face-to-face meetings.

g. Indicative Funding sources:

Cork County Council's own resources will be used to fund any associated costs and travel/subsistence in connection with any face-to-face meetings.

A summary of the inspiration for each of the project actions, stakeholders involved, financing and timeframe for implementation is set out in the table below.

| Source of Inspiration | Action | Sub-actions | Stakeholders Involved | Costs | Financing Source | Timeframe |
|-----------------------|---|--|-----------------------|--|------------------|--------------------|
| Regio Vitalis Network | <u>Action 1:</u> Cork County Council will employ its Economic Development Fund and other support mechanisms, where appropriate, to promote and support the establishment of Destination Management Bodies to further enhance the tourism sector within our region. | Cork County Council will seek to secure explicit reference to economic clustering (including Destination Management Bodies) either within the Strategic Marketing and Tourism section or as a stand alone section of the revised EDF which will enable the allocation of funds to support the establishment, development and operation of Destination Management bodies initiatives in the region. | CCC & SPC. | Cork County Council's own resources will be used to fund any associated costs. | CCC | Q4 2019 EDF review |

| Source of Inspiration | Action | Sub-actions | Stakeholders Involved | Costs | Financing Source | Timeframe |
|-----------------------------|---|---|-----------------------|--|------------------|-----------|
| Enter Gauja Tourism Cluster | <u>Action 2:</u> Cork County Council in collaboration with the Local Enterprise Offices will engage with the SMEs operating in the tourism sector in our region to make them aware of and help them avail of the full range of business information advisory services, capacity building, mentoring and financial supports that are available from the South, North and West Cork LEOs. The LEO network will provide local SMEs with appropriate ongoing support for the establishment and operation of Destination Management Bodies within the region. | In Q4 2019, CCC will organise event(s) for relevant groups in the region to raise awareness about the role of the Local Enterprise Offices, to demonstrate how the LEOs can support existing destination management bodies, encourage the establishment of new destination management bodies and to promote the development of the tourism sector within the region. In line with their mandate the LEOs will provide ongoing mentoring and support for SMEs/DMBs in the Tourism sector (following the awareness event) which will increase the likelihood of the such enterprises/bodies applying for support from the target policy (i.e. the EDF). | CCC & LEOs | Staff time and Meeting event costs of approximately €500 - €1000 | CCC | Q4 2019 |

| Source of Inspiration | Action | Sub-actions | Stakeholders Involved | Costs | Financing Source | Timeframe |
|---------------------------|---|--|-----------------------|---|------------------|---|
| Latvian Cluster Programme | <u>Action 3:</u> Participate in the Public Consultation process during the next Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme (2021- 2027) so as to raise awareness about the extent of the opportunities for micro, small and medium enterprises in rural communities servicing the Tourism Sector to contribute to rural economic development. | Make a formal submission to the next Southern and Eastern Regional Operational Programme (2021- 2027) requesting funding/support recognition of the extent and importance of SME's in the Tourism sector contributing to rural economic development. | CCC & SRA | Staff time and any associated travel/subsistence. | CCC | SEROP public consultation stage in 2020 |

3 Other results of the project

Thanks to the Destination SMEs project, many interesting practices, initiatives and policies were observed. Some of them offered inspiration to improve the main policy instrument tackled by the project as presented in part 2 of this action plan.

But these learnings can also benefit to other policy instruments or local and regional strategies. Destination SMEs partners intend to make use of as many interesting learnings from the project as possible, to make the most of this project.

This is the reason why, in addition to the actions presented in Part 2 dedicated to the main policy instrument target, we identified effective good practices which may be transferrable to our region while under the main remit of the project i.e. Destination management.

3.1 Good practices transferred

During the study visits undertaken in the first three years of the project, a number of good practices were observed that were considered may be applicable and relevant to our region. While a variety of good practices were explored, having carefully examined these in more detail, four good practices have been selected with potential to transfer.

A. West Cork / North Cork Craft Villages

- **Name of the transferred good practice and region of origin**

Gozo Craft Village – Ministry for Gozo, Gozo, Malta

- **Name of the owner of the good practice**

The Ministry for Gozo

- **Description of the good practice**

The Gozo Craft Village provided a collective location for the showcasing of Gozitian crafts. This group of workshops and shops is the property of the Ministry for Gozo and is rented to craft makers and SMEs.

The objectives of the initiative are:

- To create a stream of tourists / customers to help these SMEs develop
- To help develop tours organized by local agents by providing a place where various traditional crafts skills and products can be found

- **Name and location of the organization implementing the transfer**

Cork Craft & Design in conjunction with Cork County Council, Local Enterprise Offices, Design & Crafts Council of Ireland , Fáilte Ireland & Local Business Associations.

- **Description of the transfer (is the practice fully transferred, or only part of it?)**

The full transfer / part transfer of this practice is yet to be determined. Currently Cork Craft & Design which is a voluntary organisation and a company limited by guarantee is run by its members with 1.5 staff has set up an exhibition space & craft shop in Douglas Woollen Mills, Cork City (opened 2016). This venue exhibits on a rotating basis the craft of its members with the shop staffed on a voluntary basis by its members organised by a full time Operations Manager & part-time Book Keeper.

The focus of Cork Craft & Design is on centralised marketing and locally organised events. They also run a very successful Cork Craft Month in August of each year.

The current exhibition space & craft shop is doing well and benefits from passing business as the location has a number of other shops adjoining this property including a very well known cafe located next door which promotes Cork Food Produce and located nearby are two high street shopping centres. The annual Cork Craft Month also increases the footfall to the shop.

However the shop is located within mixed retail, i.e. retail warehousing, small scale retail and low grade services, e.g. lawnmower repairs. Whilst the shop is performing well, it is not well known to the visitor and would benefit if located in an area with more footfall of domestic & international visitors.

The Gozo Craft Village provided a collective location for the showcasing of craft which has become a visitor attraction in its own right.

Initial steps:

Examine the potential for a co-operative sales location in West Cork followed by North Cork replicating the Douglas Woollen Mills Model initially setting up pop up shops in locations of high visitor footfall.

If successful examine the availability of appropriate vacant buildings to set up longer term craft shops.

- Players involved

CCC, Local Enterprise Offices, Cork Craft and Design and local Business Associations

- Expected timeframe of the transfer

2019 – 2020

- Costs

To be determined.

- Funding sources

LEADER, Cork County Council, Local Enterprise Offices, Design & Craft Council of Ireland

B. Experience Animation/ Storytelling

- Name of the transferred good practice and region of origin

Cēsis Culture and Tourism Centre – Vidzeme region, Latvia

- Name of the owner of the good practice

Cēsis Municipality

- Description of the good practice

While Cēsis Medieval Castle was an interesting attraction in its own right, the good practice witnessed here related to the animation of the experience and in particular the storytelling behind the attraction. This enabled the attraction to be brought to life and contributed to the authenticity of the experience.

- Name and location of the organization implementing the transfer

Cork County Council

- Description of the transfer (is the practice fully transferred, or only part of it?)

The element of the good practice that we will look to transfer relates to the animation/ storytelling and how this might be integrated to Cork County Council's own attractions. The intention is to consider this initially in the Council owned attraction, St. Mary's Collegiate Church, in Youghal. This approach compliments the visitor experience brand, Ireland's Ancient East (IAE), within the area of which Youghal is located. Within IAE an emphasis is placed on experience and storytelling by 'the best story tellers in the world' and this good practice offers an example of how to achieve this on the ground.

This medieval church in Youghal is one of the largest in the country, it is currently a hidden gem that is unknown, underutilised and crying out to tell its story to the visitor in an appropriate and dignified way.

Currently funding has been approved under the Ireland's Ancient East Capital Grants Scheme for Storytelling Interpretation 2017 Scheme and including Cork County Council support provides a budget of €235,000. This funding will be used to create and deliver a new high quality bespoke interpretative experience in the church. The story will be based on the people of the place and how its origin, development, history and relevance as a major community focal point from medieval times to today can be viewed through their eyes, their stories and experiences. This storyline will be developed with the guiding principles of Fáilte Ireland's, Ireland Ancient East – A Toolkit for Storytelling Interpretation Booklet.

It is intended to engage an Interpretative Consultant with the appropriate specialist skills and experience to design and deliver this Voices of St Mary's story.

The result will be an enhanced visitor experience, generating increased visitor numbers resulting in aiding the overall economic vitality of the town of Youghal.

Enhancement of guided tour

One of the project deliverables is the enhancement of the existing guided tour to include its script, presentation and overall demeanour of the tour guides and what new or other mediums can be used to support the guides in delivering the tour.

It is for this purpose that it is hoped to gain from the storytelling experienced in particular at Cēsis Medieval Castle.

- **Players involved**

CCC, Fáilte Ireland.

- **Expected timeframe of the transfer**

2019 – 2020

- **Costs**

Will be funded under existing approved funding from Fáilte Ireland and Cork Co Council as stated above in the overall sum of €235,000.

- **Funding sources**

Fáilte Ireland, CCC.

C. E-bikes

- **Name of the transferred good practice and region of origin**
ITER Project – Grand Paradis, Italy

- **Name of the owner of the good practice**
Foundation Grand Paradis

- **Description of the good practice**
This good practice was funded by the EU financed ITER project. This allowed Fondation Grand Paradis to buy bicycles and electric bikes in order to:
 - Lend them to tourist in exchange of an expenditure of 10 € per person in the Grand Paradis area.
 - Provide them to hotels in the Grand Paradis area who then lend them to their customers for the length of their stay, which is of particular use to hotels located a little bit far from the centre of their town/ village.

- Remark: following a question from P6, P2 explains that when the ITER project was implemented, there was no bike rental operator in the area. There was a lack of private initiative in this field. The ITER project was implemented and showed the way: customers are interested in electric bikes and use it a lot during their stay. Then private operators invested and created bike rental companies. Fondation Grand Paradis stopped buying new bikes, and contracted one of these private companies for the maintenance of the existing fleet.

- **Name and location of the organization implementing the transfer**
Cork County Council in conjunction with Kinsale Chamber of Commerce & Tourism and Clonakilty Community Cycle Scheme.

- **Description of the transfer (is the practice fully transferred, or only part of it?)**
Part transfer - Model of free to rent if you spend a minimum amount in the locality could be considered as a means to pilot an initiative and prove to the private sector that there is a market there, as was the case in Gran Paradiso. Need to explore potential for such a scheme in Kinsale in conjunction with Kinsale Chamber of Tourism and Business and also how this would complement existing schemes such as the Clonakilty Community Cycle scheme.

Clonakilty Community Cycle Scheme

Establishment & Management - Scheme was established in 2014 and is Ireland's first rural bike scheme. The scheme was established by management of 10 of the participating businesses who form this scheme. The scheme is managed by the owner of one of the hotels in Clonakilty, while volunteers help out with day to day running such as maintenance of bikes, promotion of services etc.

Availability of bicycles & cost - There are a total of 60 bikes available with currently no child sized bicycles. The scheme is aimed at locals and tourists but is mainly used by tourists. A €10 daily rate applied to the rental of the bicycles. The bicycles can be picked up/returned at any of the 9 locations which are all hotels with the exception of one service station.

Website - Clonbike.com enables visitors to the website to check how many bicycles are available and in which location.

Marketing & Promotion of the scheme - Flyers are available at the local Tourist Office and at participating hotels and businesses. There is potential to increase the number of bicycles hired with

further marketing and promotion and aiming to introduce the model of free to rent with a minimum spend would contribute to this.

Potential expansion of Cycle Scheme - This scheme has received interest from other areas in West Cork within a 20 mile radius with a view to possible expansion of this existing cycle scheme who have all expressed an interest in collaborating. The options of doing so need to be explored.

- **Players involved**

Cork Co Council
Clonakilty Community Cycle Scheme
Kinsale Chamber of Tourism & Business

- **Expected timeframe of the transfer**

2019 – 2020

- **Costs**

To be determined

- **Funding sources**

Cork County Council – Community Development Initiative
LEADER funding

D. Cross Selling

- **Name of the transferred good practice and region of origin**

Regio Vitalis – Pomurje Region, Slovenia

- **Name of the owner of the good practice**

Regio Vitalis network

- **Description of the good practice**

Regio Vitalis is a network of SMEs in the tourism sector of the Pomurje region. The network has 80 members comprising 34 accommodation providers, 18 restaurants, 7 cafes & bars, 8 wine producers and 37 enterprises. Within the network the main communication tool for marketing is internet site www.regiovitalis.si and boards with business cards. Each member has a board with 48 places for marketing and promotion of other members of the network. These boards are also put in the tourist information offices and in the big hotels.

- **Name and location of the organization implementing the transfer**

Munster Vales in conjunction with Cork Co Council. Munster Vales is a tourism destination of domestic and international significance with the aim of promoting and developing the outstanding walking, cycling and heritage product as a regional brand linking the counties of Cork (North Cork), Limerick, Waterford and Tipperary aligned with the Fáilte Ireland Brand, Ireland's Ancient East.

- **Description of the transfer (is the practice fully transferred, or only part of it?)**

Part transfer - The mutual marketing among members is a significant benefit to the visiting tourist but the awareness of other businesses in the area/ network also informs the member of what's on offer to visitors to the region. The study trips organized among this network also allow businesses to benchmark with others and provide the motivation for continuous improvement. Munster Vales network - in place, will now explore the most appropriate mechanism of introducing the boards with business cards and deciding on businesses/hotels/attractions best suited in which to place them.

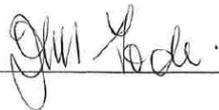
- **Players involved**
Cork County Council, Munster Vales.
- **Expected timeframe of the transfer**
2019-2020
- **Costs**
To be determined.
- **Funding sources**
Cork County Council/Munster Vales/LEADER

3.2 Endorsement of the Action Plan

Date: 30/09/19

Name of the partner organisation: Cork County Council

Signature(s) of representative of the relevant organisation(s):



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "JMM Kade", is written over a horizontal line.