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Action Plan

Province of Limburg

provincie limburg



PART I – GENERAL INFORMATION

Project: Medtech4 Europe

Partner organisation: Province of Limburg (NL)

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant):

Country: The Netherlands

NUTS2 region: Limburg-NL (NL42)

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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: ERDF – Operational Program SOUTH-Netherlands 2014-2020

For Action 2 and 3 the policy instrument addressed is: ERDF – Operational Program SOUTH-Netherlands 2021-2027

Regional context

Limburg is the southernmost province of the Netherlands. Because of its location between Belgium and Germany, the province is internationally oriented. Together with the other southern provinces of the Netherlands, the ERDF-region South-Netherlands is one of the most innovative and competitive regions in Europe.

To support the transition of Limburg to a knowledge society, provincial government is facilitating entrepreneurship and innovation. New industries, such as medical technology (MedTech) or the transition of fine chemistry to high performance materials, are an increasingly important economic base for Limburg. To support this transition, Limburg has taken the initiative to establish four 'Brightlands' campuses: life sciences/MedTech (Maastricht), chemistry/materials (Sittard-Geleen), smart services (Heerlen) and agrofood (Venlo).

Open innovation is the driving force behind the renewal of Limburg based firms. Innovation must lead to new products or services and therefore to higher revenues and more (high-profile) jobs in Limburg. SME's are a specific target group of innovation policy because innovation is not something that can be taken for granted there. The provincial government wants more exchange of knowledge between knowledge institutions and SMEs. This way, SMEs are also encouraged to innovate.

MedTech in Limburg

Limburg has since many years developed a strong MedTech cluster within its borders. The MedTech cluster is formed by organisations such as Brightlands Maastricht Health Campus, the University Hospital of Maastricht, Maastricht University, Medtronic, Scannexus BV, Chemelot InSciTe and Medace BV.

When you look at the subsidies received from the various European programmes in Limburg, you can see that a large part of these subsidies are allocated to the MedTech sector. These subsidies demonstrate the strength of the Limburg MedTech sector. Subsidies from both Horizon2020 and ERDF OP South are supporting MedTech projects.

The high returns from Horizon2020 show that the organisations of the Limburg MedTech cluster are one of the leading parties in Europe. Within these Horizon2020 projects there is a lot of cooperation with parties from other regions all over Europe.

Actions addressed in this action plan

This action plan addresses a sector “Medical technology” that covers many different products, all intended to perform a therapeutic or diagnostic action on human beings to improve health. Medical technology is a regulated EU sector (2017/745, 2017/746) and covers:

- Medical devices (MDs) which are products, services or solutions that prevent, diagnose, monitor, treat and care for human beings by physical means;
- In vitro diagnostics (IVDs) which are non-invasive tests used on biological samples (for example blood, urine or tissues) to determine the status of one's health.
- Tools and services for Digital Health and Care can be included, depending on sectorial definition and regulatory status.

Medical technology is used to diagnose, prevent, monitor, treat or alleviate a disease or injury. In addition to the above, the Medtech4Europe project will also consider the link to Enabling technologies (ICT, manufacturing, materials...) that contribute to the improvement of MDs and IVDs.

In order to strengthen the MedTech cluster in Limburg and to learn from other strong MedTech players in Europe, the provincial government is participating in Medtech4Europe. Due to this project a number of actions will be undertaken:

- The province of Limburg is one of the organisations responsible for OP South-Netherlands. One action that will be taken, is to use this influence to obtain more funding for MedTech from OP South.
- The province also wants to further deepen the (international) network of MedTech organisations in Limburg. Therefore knowledge-sharing events for stakeholders/parties from the various clusters will be organised. These project ideas can be used to demonstrate the importance of having opportunities to fund projects of international consortia from ERDF OP South/REACT-EU.
- The province also wants to establish cooperation with Lombardy. The aim of this action is to draw attention in the new ERDF OP SOUTH 2021-2027 to the new possibilities offered by the regulation for implementing international projects.

Through the various actions to be taken, the goals of this action plan are threefold:

- Increase ERDF funding for the MedTech sector in Limburg;
- Deepen and better connect the provincial network of MedTech organisations (triple-helix organisation);
- Deepen and enrich the international network of MedTech organisations (cross border cooperation).

PART III – DETAILS OF THE ACTIONS ENVISAGED

ACTION 1

Name of the action: **More Medtech projects in ERDF OP South**

1. Relevance to the project

On 12th December 2018 during the interactive Interregional Seminar organised by Steinbeis in Baden Württemberg and during the Market Place in the same event, we learned from the Italian partners that they work with dedicated calls in their ERDF Program. This works very well to have more focussed means connected to specific themes like medtech. This inspired us to formulate this action to have more specific themes calls in our own ERDF-programme.

The ERDF OP South-Netherlands programme 2014-2020 awards several grants to projects each year. All kinds of organisations are eligible for these grants, for example government organisations, large companies and SME's. To obtain funding from this programme these organisations have to submit proposals for projects. After the closure of a call and a check for completeness by the program secretariat (Stimulus), the Panel of Experts ranks the proposals based on quality. The most qualitative proposed projects, meaning they offer most to achieve the programme's goals, receive funding. The main goal of the programme is: 'to further develop southern-Netherlands and become a top economic world class region'.

The available budget is divided between a couple of priorities that contribute to the main goal of the programme. These priorities determine what kind of projects receive funding. MedTech projects are possibly eligible for funding from the programme, because to reach the main goal, OP South-Netherlands fosters projects in the Life Sciences and Health Cluster. This is especially relevant for projects in MedTech region Limburg, having a lot of specialized projects in this sector.

Due to the COVID-19 crisis the European Commission has set up REACT-EU. This programme adds additional funding to the existing ERDF-programmes in the Netherlands to mitigate the economic/health impact of the COVID19-crisis. These funds can be used to support the Limburg MedTech sector.

Also it is possible that a residual call at the end of 2020/ beginning of 2021 will be opened for subscribing. Considering this call will have a rather small budget, there will be a lot of competition for the scarce funding. Securing a part of this budget exclusively for MedTech-projects will greatly improve the chances for acquiring the necessary funding for these projects. In this way making the OP South Programme an effective instrument for reaching the goals of Medtech4Europe.

The possible additional funding will increase the number of MedTech projects. A higher number of projects creates opportunity for cooperation and learning between triple helix partners and members of Medtech4Europe. Leading to a more competitive MedTech sector in Europe, contributing to the solution for societal challenges.

2. Nature of the action

The budget for the REACT-EU call is not known yet but is likely to be around fifty million euro. The ERDF programme OP South Netherlands 2014-2020 is almost at the end of its term and therefore has allocated most of its budget in different tender calls. For now, there are no new regular calls foreseen. The programme secretariat (Stimulus) is expecting a possible new call because of 'free fall' and residual budget. The aim of the activities described in this action is the allocation of funding from new calls (free fall/residual budget and REACT-EU) to MedTech projects in Limburg.

These new calls (both residual and REACT-EU) will be open for submitting proposals in the end of 2020/beginning of 2021. The residual budget/free fall call is expected not be very high. This is because much of the budget has already been allocated so there is little residual/free fall budget. The limited size of the call makes it even more important to set up a good lobby to make sure that a part of the budget is

available for MedTech projects. Lobby is focused on both calls because there are no substantive differences.

The lobby will focus on three activities:

- Liaising with relevant authorities on opportunities for MedTech success within these new funding opportunities;
- Informing Limburg MedTech partners about new funding opportunities;
- Development of MedTech projects.

These lobbying activities started 2020. This is because this year decisions were being made about the thematic interpretation of the new calls. Interreg Europe S3CHEM project has proven that lobbying can be useful. So far OP South Netherlands has had three thematic calls: biobased, maintenance and logistics. The fact that there has been a biobased call is due to the active lobbying from Limburg within the S3CHEM project.

In the course of these lobbying activities, contact was made with both the steering committee and the programme management as relevant officials of the province. During these contacts, it has become clear that in the event of new calls, there are (many) possibilities for MedTech projects to receive funding from ERDF OP South. Contacts now focus on the question of when these calls will be opened.

Now that it is known that funds will be made available for MedTech projects, it is important to inform the various medtech organisations in Limburg about the opportunities that will come. We are going to do this by organising a stakeholder meeting where these organisations come together and are informed about these opportunities. During this meeting, information will be shared on REACT-EU and a residual call through a presentation and a memo.

In addition, our contacts at programme management made it clear that it is important to make a start with the reprocessing of MedTech projects that would be eligible for project financing from OP South. This has two goals. Firstly, the lobby is easier when it can be conducted on the basis of concrete projects. This creates a head start with regard to themes where no projects have yet been worked out in more detail. Secondly, it is important to start reprocessing projects because projects must be completed by 2023 at the latest. This is because OP South will then be closed. It is unrealistic that a substantive, highly innovative project will only start in 2021 and then be completed in 2023. The expert committee will not want to spend the last part of the budget on meaningless projects. Here, too, the head start is acquired when projects are already being worked on.

3. Stakeholders involved

Stakeholder	Role
Province of Limburg	The province of Limburg takes the lead in the lobby towards the steering committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They draw up a memo; - seek contact with members of the steering committee; - Initiate start working on MedTech projects
Steering Committee	The steering committee takes a decision on whether the residual call will be about MedTech.
Medtech cluster Limburg	For a successful lobby it is important to make a start with the reprocessing of MedTech projects that would be eligible for project financing from OP South. This is a responsibility for the different MedTech companies/organisations in the Limburg region.

4. Timeframe

- September 2020: Province of Limburg starts to draw up a memo
- October 2020: The Province of Limburg seeks contact with members of the Steering Committee
- October 2020: In cooperation with the MedTech cluster companies in Limburg, the Province of Limburg starts with the reprocessing of MedTech projects.
- Fall 2020: Decision by the Steering Committee about possible new calls.

5. Indicative costs

Staff resources of the Province of Limburg will be used to implement this action. Costs are estimated at 2 man months: € 10.000.

6. Indicative funding sources

The costs for this action will be paid out of own means of the Province of Limburg.

ACTION 2

Name of the action: Organizing online knowledge-sharing events for stakeholders/parties from the various partner regions.

1. Relevance to the project

ERDF OP South finances innovative projects (e.g. from the Medtech sector). At present, there are limited opportunities for financing foreign parties. This action should better connect international networks. These international consortia should lead to projects that can receive funding from REACT-EU or ERDF OP South, thus demonstrating that it would be good if there were more opportunities to finance international projects within ERDF OP South.

During the first phase of the Medtech4Europe project, there have been several moments of knowledge sharing between the partners and stakeholders of the project. Such as the seminars during the study visits in Maastricht, Pécs and Silesia. The stakeholders from Limburg which participated in these events were enthusiastic about it and thought the information shared was very useful. In Maastricht for example the ecosystem of Brightlands as a governance model for open innovation was shared and discussed.

Besides formal events like the seminars, there was also a lot of informal knowledge sharing. Stakeholders from other partner regions know more about certain topics than stakeholders from Limburg and vice versa. During these study visits it has become clear that stakeholders from partner regions have an interest in (amongst others) the following subjects learnt in Limburg:

- The organisation of the Brightlands Ecosystem;
- Financing by revolving funding;
- The “MedLim” ecosystem to accelerate medtech start-ups

To fully exploit the contacts that are now established and to accommodate optimal learning from each other, it is necessary to continue the exchange of good practices and useful knowledge. This knowledge can be used in the ERDF OP South programme projects. This sharing of knowledge will be made possible by setting up a continued exchange of information through webinars during the second phase of the Medtech4 Europe project. This exchange of knowledge can lead to projects. However, these projects are difficult to finance through the ERDF OP South, even though they contribute to regional development.

The webinars will be organized and participated by stakeholders from the different partner regions. In doing so the information reaches immediately the right place and has the most impact. As an additional benefit, the participation in these webinars by the stakeholders increases the contact between the stakeholders from the different partner regions. The stakeholders become more aware of expertise's held by stakeholders from other regions, which can be useful to them as well. And in that way opening possibilities for further cooperation between the various regions.

This action is also inspired by the renewed awareness of the possibilities of digital media. During the current COVID-19 outbreak and its subsequent crisis, the use of digital media as a way of communicating with each other is adopted throughout Europe. Creating the opportunity for easier and more accessible exchange of knowledge and experiences (over longer distances by webinars). The project has proven that good knowledge sharing is possible through digital means. Examples from the project are CETIM on 25.05.2020 and CEA showroom virtual visit on 24.06.2020.

These webinars will lead to a number of webinars which are used for knowledge sharing. This will eventually lead to inspiration for new projects that can be financed by the ERDF OP South. In addition, there are opportunities for project consortia with foreign partners to apply for funding from REACT-EU. If it is demonstrated that such international consortia deliver high-quality projects, there is a window of opportunity to increase the possibilities for funding of international consortia in ERDF OP South.

Another effect of this action is a better connected provincial network of MedTech organisations (triple-helix organisation) and a stronger international network of MedTech organisations (cross border cooperation). This is achieved by Limburg partners taking care of the Limburg webinars together. This leads to more and better cooperation because parties get to know each other better. It also expands the international network by allowing partners from different countries to get to know each other better and exchange ideas, which can lead to project ideas.

2. Nature of the action

During this action, once every quarter a webinar is organised by one of the stakeholders of the whole Medtech4Europe project. The province of Limburg has a coordinating role in the organisation. In consultation with the project partners, the province of Limburg will draw up a calendar indicating when the webinars should approximately take place. It is then up to the project partners to mobilise the stakeholders in their own network to organize and participate in the webinars. This means that the project partner is responsible for the enabling conditions of the webinar and the stakeholder for the content of the webinar. The stakeholders prepare a topic and present the webinar and lead an eventual discussion.

The province of Limburg has identified which project partners are interested in participating in this action. The result was that all project partners were eager to participate. They will link this action to an action in their own action plan.

The project partners organizing a webinar must all make a decision in cooperation with the stakeholders, about which subjects will be addressed in the webinars. It is important that no subject comes up twice. The province of Limburg is responsible for coordinating this action and keeps track of which topics are covered.

The province of Limburg will decide its subject based upon the preferences expressed during the events in the first phase of Medtech4Europe and the subjects that the stakeholders are able to provide. These subjects are:

- The Brightlands research and innovation ecosystem
- Financing by revolving funding
- MedLim to accelerate medtech start-ups

The webinars will only be organised as an online meeting. This is done by using video conferencing software. The partner and stakeholder organising the webinar will lead that specific webinar. The stakeholder will present the subject and their experience with or knowledge about it. There will also be an opportunity for questions and a discussion after or during the webinar. The prescribed time for a webinar depends on what is necessary to fully present the subject. However, 1,5 hours can be taken as a standard. By organizing this event online, the organisation and participation do not take too much time and resources of the different partners and stakeholders.

Another important part of this action is the selection of the attendees. To make the exchange of knowledge and experience more impactful and in depth, the participants must have some knowledge about or experience with the subject treated during the webinar. It is up to the partners to invite the relevant stakeholders.

3. Stakeholders involved

Stakeholder	Role
Province of Limburg	As coordinator of this action: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting an overview of the Project Partners organizing a webinar - Getting an overview of which subjects are in demand - Align the subjects addressed by all project partners - Making a rough agenda/planning As a project partner: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Getting an overview about what subjects interests the stakeholders in the cluster of the Province of Limburg -
Project Partners Medtech4 Europe	Partial organization of the webinar: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Planning the precise date for the webinar - Coordination between own stakeholders - Getting an overview in what subjects the stakeholders are interested and what they can offer
Stakeholders Medtech4 Europe	Organizing the substantive part of the webinar:

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| | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The content of the webinars is formed by the stakeholders willing to do so- Expressing their wishes for subjects |
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4. Timeframe

- A pilot will take place in fall of 2020.
- Every quarter a webinar will be organised starting from the beginning of 2021

5. Indicative costs

Due to the fact that webinars are organized to implement this action instead of a physical meeting, indicative costs are low. The costs are indicated on 1,5 man month: € 7.500. These are the costs for Limburg only for the next two years.

6. Indicative funding sources

The costs for this action will be paid out of own means of the Province of Limburg. Costs made by other partners will be paid out of own means of the partner concerned.

ACTION 3

Name of the action: Cooperation Limburg and Lombardy

1. Relevance to the project

Within the good practices, we introduced our REGMEDXB project amongst the Medtech4 Europe project partners. After an exchange of details between Limburg representatives and the Italian colleagues during the Stuttgart meetings in December 2018 the MIND initiative arose as an interesting case for cooperation. During a self-organised site visit organised by the Lombardy Region and Assolombarda in the framework of this project the Brightlands Materials Center, the Brightlands Chemelot Campus and the Province of Limburg were introduced to the developments of Arexpo/MIND (Milano Innovation District) in January 2020.

The governance structure of MIND is still under construction. The presentations have shown that there is an interest for a transfer of knowledge about the governance structure (triple helix model and open innovation) of Brightlands to the MIND governance. Therefore, a learning transfer in Limburg for Lombardy could be organised on the governance. This exchange can be bidirectional since MIND and MERLN Institute of the Maastricht University, as well as MUMC+ could also benefit from a scientific exchange of experiences that could lead to a closer cooperation on the regenerative medicine themes.

This action differs from Action 2 in that it focuses on in-depth organisational exchange. Whereas in Action 2 webinars take place to quickly create an international network that will enable international project consortia to participate in the new ERDF OP SOUTH 2021-2027 and above all in REACT-EU, Action 3 aims for more entanglement and a first funded project in 2022. In this way, we can prove within the new OP South 2021-2027 that international consortia are an added value in regional development and that it is therefore important that OP South releases funding for them.

2. Nature of the action

The aim of this action is to build up and deepen an international network around MedTech between Limburg and Lombardy so that they can carry out projects together in the new European programming period. In order to give shape to this cooperation, the Province of Limburg, together with the Lombardy Region, will give follow-up to the previous study visit in 2020 in Milan. This action will address the implementation of the first forms of cooperation as envisaged and developed during the first study visit.

The action will include different initiatives, starting from a preparatory analysis phase (desk research, matchmaking, feasibility study) which will lead to a study visit in order to have the opportunity for a concrete interaction on strategic project ideas and/or other synergic activities. Through this direct exchange, the stakeholders from Limburg and Lombardy can get a better understanding of the areas for a stricter collaboration and the advantages they can reciprocally have. This paves also the way for a further development of additional project ideas at a later stage. By doing this more cross-border collaborations are thus possible, to be pursued also in other key relevant frameworks.

Study visits to Milan and Limburg will help to deepen the cooperation between Lombardy and Limburg. This will be further enhanced when the strengths of different parties are combined and parties from Limburg and Lombardy will work together in a MedTech project. Incorporating the possibility of exchanging project ideas in the study visit increases the possibility of setting up such a collaboration. In this way, by deploying the knowledge and expertise of both partners, a situation can be created from which both could benefit. This action will help in increasing the cooperation between the two regions within the context of the S3 platform, in which both regions are involved, creating a scientific and institutional bridge across Europe.

In addition to the in-depth exchange of good practices, cooperation also provides economies of scale and better access to different markets. Because of the European character of the cooperation, the European market is more accessible and because of the larger scale it is also possible to look beyond European borders.

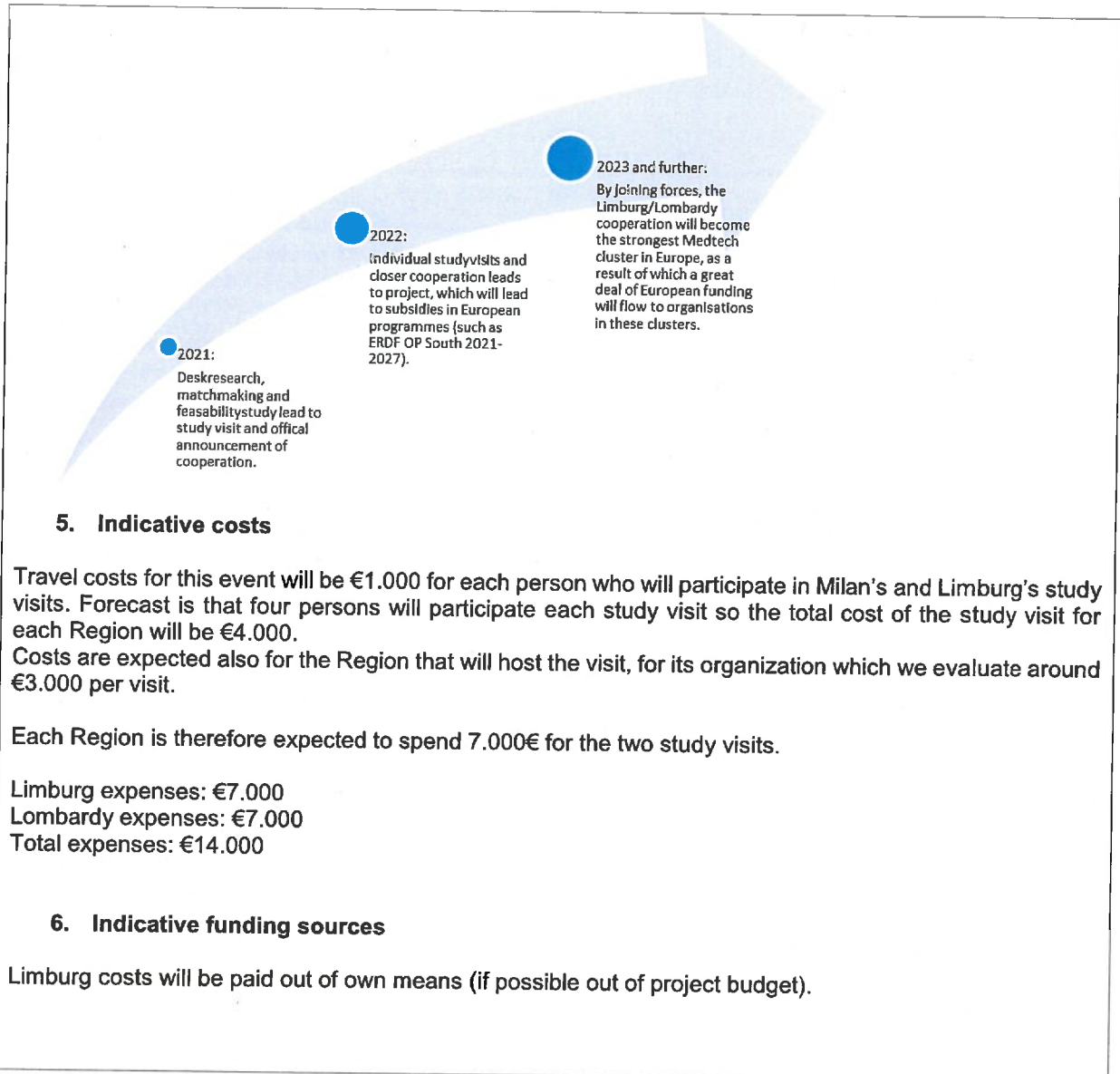
3. Stakeholders involved

- Province of Limburg
- Maastricht University MERLN Institute
- REGMEDXB
- MUMC+ (University Hospital Maastricht)
- Arexpo/MIND
- Lombardy Region
- Assolombarda
- Politecnico di Milano
- Cluster Technologies for Living Environment (TechforLife)
- Brightlands Maastricht Health Campus

4. Timeframe

In the next two years the following actions will take place to deepen this cooperation:

Date	Action
Quarter 1 2021	Desk research: During the desk research an overview of the medtech ecosystem in Lombardy and in Limburg will be drawn up. In this overview the organisations that are active in the Medtech, but also the specialisations of these organisations, are mapped out.
Quarter 2 2021	Matchmaking: This step investigates where there is overlap between organisations and activities in Limburg and Lombardy. This so that organisations can be linked together for cooperation.
Quarter 3 2021	Feasibility study: which parts of the ecosystem are we going to link? Based on the matchmaking, a feasibility study is drawn up to investigate whether cooperation can take place on these different subjects and between these organisations.
Quarter 4 2021	Study visit (group): A study visit is planned to complete the feasibility study. During this study visit, the various organisations will get to know each other and the official starting signal will be given for the cooperation between Lombardy and Limburg in the field of Medtech.
Quarter 1 2022	Start of cooperation: In the first quarter of 2021, the organisations will get to know each other for the first time at an individual level. Following the study visit to Milan, the partners from Lombardy will now be invited individually in Limburg to become acquainted with Limburg's work in Medtech. These are therefore individual visits, which will immediately allow the seed to be sown for further cooperation.
Quarter 2 2022	Follow up of the start of the cooperation. During this phase, the two ecosystems will be more linked. This is because, as a result of the visits, cooperation has got off the ground.
Quarter 3 2022	Initial project ideas are exchanged and, when opportunities exist within European programmes, the first joint grant applications are prepared.
Quarter 4 2022	The first joint grant applications (e.g. through ERDF OP South 2021-2027) will be submitted.



5. Indicative costs

Travel costs for this event will be €1.000 for each person who will participate in Milan's and Limburg's study visits. Forecast is that four persons will participate each study visit so the total cost of the study visit for each Region will be €4.000.

Costs are expected also for the Region that will host the visit, for its organization which we evaluate around €3.000 per visit.


Each Region is therefore expected to spend 7.000€ for the two study visits.

Limburg expenses: €7.000
Lombardy expenses: €7.000
Total expenses: €14.000

6. Indicative funding sources

Limburg costs will be paid out of own means (if possible out of project budget).

Date: 15 March 2021

Signature:  (Theo Bovens – Commissioner of the King)

Stamp of the organisation (if available):

