



Action plan for Sogn and Fjordane County Municipality

This action plan is a result of an exchange of experience process throughout phase 1 of Interreg project P-IRIS (“Policies to Improve Rural Area’s Innovation System by professionalising networking activities and use of innovation tools”). The action plan specifies the nature of the actions to be implemented, their timeframe, the players involved, the costs, funding sources, and desired results. For more information about P-IRIS, please visit our website at interregeurope.eu/p-iris/

General information

Project: P-IRIS

Partner organisation: Sogn and Fjordane County Municipality

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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: The regional plan for value creation in Sogn and Fjordane 2014-2025



Details of the action envisaged

1. **The background** (please describe the lessons learnt from the project that constitute the basis for the development of the present Action Plan):

Connection to P-IRIS application form:

Sogn and Fjordane County Council states in the application form, that we will create a rural innovative networking toolbox and a scheme for developing skills to use the toolbox. We are building on previous work. Western Norway Research Institute and Western Norway University of Applied Sciences developed "A toolbox for strategic leadership of innovative networks" in 2014. Continuing, we refer to this as the toolbox. The toolbox builds on the same theoretical foundation as for the Interreg IVC report (2013) on innovation systems.

A common theory as foundation for P-IRIS:

The toolbox is about developing, renewing and operating innovative networks in rural areas, and serves as the theoretical foundation for P-IRIS. Authors of the toolbox introduced this theory in semester 1 for all partners at the kick-off in Norway. LP made a template based on the toolbox for mapping regional situations. The purpose was to give comparable information based upon the agreed theoretical reference of the toolbox.

Practical test of the toolbox and the template:

Each partner used the template, with support from the toolbox, when mapping regional situations in semester 2. It was obligatory for the project coordinator to conduct the mapping, because the template and the toolbox required skills. Project coordinators mapped three innovative networks and four relevant tools for boosting innovation in their area.

Interregional learning has improved the toolbox:

During a workshop in Slovenia in semester 4, all partners presented a thorough evaluation of the toolbox and the template based on their experiences from the mapping exercise. LP gained valuable learning from partner's experiences.

Three examples of partner's experiences that contributed to change in the toolbox:

- a) The Interreg IVC analysis on innovation systems (2013) refers to lock-in and fragmentation as "generic problems expected to interfere with the success of regional innovation systems". How to overcome lock-in and fragmentation has been a subject throughout mapping activity and study visits in the P-IRIS project. The toolbox does not address this issue heavily, and partners have commented that more information would be beneficial. The new toolbox includes more information about lock-in and fragmentation, in addition to a case from one of the partners mapping on how to overcome such problems.
- b) To make the toolbox relevant across rural areas in Europe, partners asked for examples from P-IRIS as learning cases in the toolbox. Mapping activity from the project has provided us with examples of knowledge sharing, risk handling, co-working and creating membership benefits, among others. The new toolbox should include cases from the interregional learning process on relevant matters.
- c) Our partners confirm our belief that the toolbox of today, a written report available online, has limited use. The report is not easy to find, the report itself is theoretical and long so very few people have the patience to go through it, and an important target group, network leaders, might have trouble following parts of the scientific language. Our partners encourage the need to make the content of the toolbox easier to understand and more available.

LP collected and forwarded the evaluations to the authors of the toolbox. The authors were also given access to partner's analysis of regional situations to gain knowledge from the mapping exercises. During semester 5, the authors revised and improved the toolbox based on lessons learned from the P-IRIS partnership's evaluations and regional mapping. The authors handed in the result, the toolbox 2.0, to LP by the end of June 2019/Semester 5. The collected data may serve as a foundation for another academic paper on the toolbox, by the authors. The revised model is available in English.

2. **Action** (please list and describe the actions to be implemented):

The toolbox is theoretical. In this form, it is not easily accessible to business stakeholders and public policy funding schemes. We want to do something about that.

The action will be to develop and test an educational program in how to use the toolbox. The purpose of the educational program will be to build human resource capacity among managing authorities and network managers for using the toolbox. With the educational program, we hope to make it easier to adopt the theory and gain the knowledge in the toolbox. The educational program will be available in English and free to use by anyone who would like to. P-IRIS partners may voluntarily adopt this educational program by making it part of their individual action plans.

List of actions:

- Announcing a tender about developing and testing the educational program
- Deciding the winner of the tender
- The winner/supplier develops the educational program
- Supplier tests and improves the educational program
- Supplier evaluates the educational program
- Supplier delivers a revised and complete educational program

What kind of supplier are we looking for:

Our ambition is to create an educational program of the toolbox that is relevant over time for innovative networks in rural areas. The program must be easily accessible to network managers and other relevant stakeholders, such as managing authorities. We would also like the program to be available in English, and transferrable to rural areas in other countries.

- Relevant over time: the content is easy to update according to the development of the toolbox
- Easily accessible: the program is available when needed, self-explanatory and easy to use

In order to be relevant over time and easily accessible, we would like the educational program to be digital, like an online tutorial program. The supplier must come up with a solution for how to treat data plotted in by users, with caution. One solution might be that the program is for download only, and this way you never plot data outside you own firewall. The downside of a download version might be lack of statistics on frequency of use.

We expect the supplier to address our ambition and come up with a solution that is ready for testing during the spring/summer of 2020. We expect the supplier to be creative, pedagogic and knowledgeable on information technology. The supplier must be ready to develop, test, evaluate and complete the educational program on time, on our terms, in our region. It is also important that the supplier involve the authors of the toolbox, to assure qualitatively and correct content.

3. **Players involved** (please indicate the organisations in the region who are involved in the development and implementation of the action and explain their role):

The supplier with responsibility for the educational program plays an important role in our action plan. We ask Western Norway Research Institute and Western Norway University of Applied Sciences to assist the supplier. LP will follow up on the supplier on all the steps, from development to complete product. LP will recruit participants for testing the educational program. The test panel will consist of stakeholders from our Regional Stakeholders Group, other relevant actors and LP.

4. **Timeframe** (document an early implementation):

Time	Task
1.7.-30.09.2019	Announcing a tender about developing and testing the educational program
1.10.-30.10.2019	Deciding the winner of the tender
1.11.-28.2.2020	The winner/supplier develops the educational program in close cooperation with the authors

1.3.-30.06.2020	Supplier tests and improves the educational program
1.7.-30.9.2020	Supplier evaluates the educational program
1.10-30.11.2020	Supplier delivers a revised and complete educational program

5. Costs and funding sources (if relevant):

Lead Partner has prepared a budget to finance the work on developing, testing, evaluating and completing an educational program. The budget is 280 000 NOK (about 28 000 Euro). The Committee for Economic Development approved the matter without amendments in a meeting the 19th of March 2019.

6. Results (quantitative or qualitative):

With the educational program, we will make the toolbox easily accessible and relevant over time for users. We invite our P-IRIS partners to join the testing of the educational program in phase 2.

On long term, our ambition is that the educational program will complement the toolbox as a joint “package” to help professionalising network activities and management in rural areas. Our goal with this ambition is to:

- Accelerate the creation of jobs that attracts young population
- Tone down the domination of public sector in the innovation system and reinforce participation of the business sector
- Make the public sector more skilled in facilitating arenas for cooperation aimed at commercialising innovation
- Make the public sector more skilled in facilitating well-functioning innovative networks

During the fall of 2018, Sogn and Fjordane County Municipality updated the policy instrument. The work from P-IRIS directly influenced the update of parts of this policy instrument. As a result, the revised policy instrument gives a clear priority to development of innovative networks.

Now, we have to build on this progress by educating relevant people from the public sector as well as the business sector and the business support system, in how to set up, how to develop and how to restructure a network in our rural context. The educational program will promote this achievement.

From 01.01.2020, Sogn and Fjordane merges with the neighbour county, Hordaland. The new county is named Vestland County Municipality, covering both areas. With the ongoing work of P-IRIS, it is our ambition to influence the new regional plan for development in the same way as we have influenced the policy instrument of Sogn and Fjordane County Municipality.

- We would like to see the same priority given to development of innovative networks in rural areas
- We would like to see clear strategies for how to facilitate urban-rural spill-over
- We would like to see relevant people (from public and business sector) using the educational program in order to professionalise networking activities

In order to introduce and spread the educational program, we have invited relevant clusters and innovative networks in Hordaland to join the P-IRIS stakeholder group. The new and bigger stakeholder group will be included in the test and demonstration of the educational program. We have no intentions to end the engagement with this stakeholder group after the P-IRIS project period has ended. The engagement that has arisen during P-IRIS phase 1, which will grow and develop during phase 2, have become a network itself for exchange of experience and building skills in networking activities.

Date: _____

Signature: _____

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____