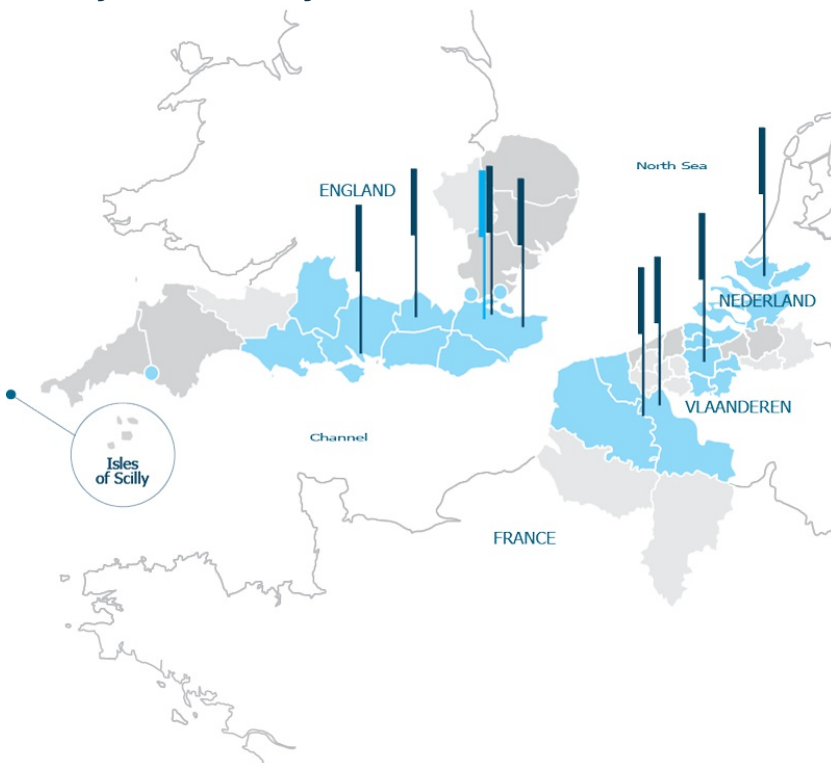


FUSION

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■ Project summary



The FUSION project aims to promote sustainable development among small companies and to engender environmentally-responsible enterprise in the 2 Seas area, by supporting SMEs in understanding and benefiting from new business models and eco-innovation. 9 organisations involved in business support services will collaborate in the FUSION project to help over 250 SMEs from the pre-start-up to high growth phase. These SMEs will then become the driving force of the eco-innovation revolution, embedding new business models such as the “life-cycle mindset” and “continuous optimisation”. By bringing together recognised experts in the provision

of business support services, the FUSION project will work to identify, test and implement a range of innovative business support services and tools designed to help SMEs.

■ Activities

What was the project trying to achieve?

Fusion ambition was to increase growth within the region's economy whilst reducing its environmental impact by promoting an eco-innovative mindset in small businesses from the pre-start to high growth phases. We wanted to encourage the implementation of a life philosophy to develop businesses by increasing the sustainability of their products/services, encourage implementation of new business models and processes for constant innovation. To support the change for businesses, the partnership, would in parallel develop the relevant support packages for small businesses. Finally, the partnership aimed at working with policy makers to translate business needs into practical strategies via a cross border Observatory. This would contribute to the development of the cross border area by increasing the creation of

new sustainable businesses, jobs, strengthening the life expectancy of companies, improving long term competitiveness. Our objectives were to: *Provide intensive guidance to businesses on sustainability and innovation from start up to high growth, with services adapted based on the enterprises'needs, potential, market evolution,change ability and knowledge. Topics covered ranged from sustainability matrix, internationalisation, commercialisation of eco-products. * Establish an Observatory acting as a translation box between businesses and policy makers on the circular economy topic. * Review and develop tools on business sustainable/innovation journey. * Identify and promote more sustainable models in the region such as servitisation * Progress the design of a cross border structure for long term small business assistance for the region, with the potential to replicate to other regions

What were the activities implemented?

Activity 1: Pre-start & start up. Partners looked at 564 of "to-be or new entrepreneurs". Individuals were recruited through events, referrals, training..etc and assessed for potential to introduce the concept of life cycle thinking . 186 Selected beneficiaries were then taken through for small group support or one-to-one sessions and /or even offering incubation space. over 4,267 hours of support delivered. Several training sessions took place in 2012 up to 2014 on support tools available amongst the partnership. During those meetings, some partners presented their solutions for example Sustainable matrix, business model canvas, Megabrainstorm. Several tools were transferred from one country to another, VOKA took on the more= less tool from WSX and several partners adapted the business model canvas to the sustainable business model canvas. New developed and translated tool were then used to provide intensive assists to the selected beneficiaries. In total 4267 of hours of support completed for 186 intensive coaching and also included 48cross border completed either via webinars, event visits, etc. Activity 2: Transition (New business models) Similar to activity 1, partners involved in the Transition activity recruited 410 beneficiaries and offered to the 91 selected businesses support on topics such as renewables, resources management, and of course new business models. A knowledge transfer session for was set up in June 2012 for partners to present their tools. Results of this work package were included in the consolidated activity 2 report.In this activity KCC completed 13 key researches seeking to identify the opportunities in the low carbon sector for small businesses. Activity 3: High Growth Activity 3 focused on companies with a high growth potential and included Internationalisation. 31 companies selected and 62 supported via 2536 hours, 37 cross border, topics covered included strategy, finance, new markets..etc Knowledge transfer was a key action of this activity with VOKA leading by example with several sessions organised.

■ Results

What were the key results of the project?

Activity 1: pre-start & start up. 564 companies assessed and 186 Businesses supported 31 tools looked at 1 summary report 66 events & 48 participants to cross border Activity 2:Transition 410 companies assessed and 91 Businesses supported 40 tools looked at 1 summary report and 13 research reports 32 events & 48 participants to cross border Activity 3:High growth 311 companies assessed and 62 Businesses supported 13 tools looked at 1 summary report 12 events & 37 participants to cross border

Did all partners and territories benefit from the results?

All the territories benefited from the project but not at the same level due to the variation in number of partners and their priorities/focus. Our primary target groups were entrepreneurs, across the 4 participating countries they benefited from expert guidance a wide range of topics, helping them decide if they were ready to start a business and how their business new or not could be more sustainable. Overall we supported 692 entrepreneurs with 9,549.5 hours of coaching. With 4 English partners, the south of England received 3,680 hours of support to 514 companies this resulted in over Euros 8M raised and 75 jobs. With 2 partners, France supported 86 companies via 2,570.5 hours of expert advice and raised over Euros 1.5M. VOKA represented Belgium, 74 companies were supported via 2,134 hours of guidance. The Netherlands were represented by TU Delft and Enviu. The local team worked with 18 companies offering 1,165 hours of guidance helping 12 entrepreneurs start a business. The region also benefited from the work partners have done in adapting tools or developing new ones as well as the research done by KCC. All those will continue to help the region moving towards a more sustainable future and will be available to local support organisations. Finally, thanks to the work done by the Observatory, policy makers have also gained on the level of awareness of circular economy amongst SMEs and have received tips on how they could integrate circular economy into mainstream policies.

What were the effects / outcomes for the territories involved?

Please be aware that the data below is not fully reflective of all the work done by the partners. Working with pre-start up means that some individuals may never start a business and this a positive impact for the region, also entrepreneurs may have personal reason not to start immediately a company (studies, redundancy), the region will still benefit but it cannot be counted by Fusion at this stage. Finally, not all participants responded to the partners and therefore would not have been included in the impacts below. The project had also some other non quantifiable impact, for example raising awareness of circular economy, raising the profile of new business models, strengthening relationship between support organisations and small companies, showing to SMEs where are the opportunities in the low carbon sectors, increase understanding of new technologies. Overall we supported 692 entrepreneurs with 9,549.5 hours of coaching. With 4 English partners, the south of England received 3,680 hours of support to 514 companies this resulted in over Euros 8M raised and 75 jobs. With 2 partners, France supported 86 companies via 2,570.5 hours of expert advice and raised over Euros 1.5M. VOKA represented Belgium, 74 companies were supported via 2,134 hours of guidance. The Netherlands were represented by TU Delft and Enviu. The local team worked with 18 companies offering 1,165 hours of guidance helping 12 entrepreneurs start a business. Thanks to the Observatory work, the region, especially France and the UK benefited from unique data on circular economy, coupled with a review of the local policies, the team was able to provide recommendations as well as will be able to continue to support local policy writers in how to engage SMEs on circular economy.

■ Distinctiveness

What was the real added-value of doing this cross-border project?



The core added value of Fusion has been the pooling of knowledge, partners gained from other partners knowledge and tools. For examples, number of partners learned from the Dutch makerspace and experience on crowdfunding. VOKA's gained insight from BSK-CIC's high growth coaches and the access to finance for growth. CfSD's work on grassroots innovation inspired VOKA in trying out a repair cafe. CD2E presented its work on Life Cycle Analysis and KCC was very interested in the Belgian support on sustainability. Observatory members learned about circular economy but also about policies in the other participating countries.

Have any synergies been developed with other projects or networks?

Yes most of the partners are connected to other organisations working EU project in the region and outside the region. Several partners participated in the 2seas clusters. Some examples of synergies with other projects were: In France the project VAL+ and the organisation Ecopal In the UK Zerowin (FP7), Low Carbon Plus (UK ERDF), NOSTRA(Interreg IVB),E-Inet, Safe-Ice. In Belgium- MVOVlaanderen - Ik MVOok for guidance on sustainability reporting and Environmental Charter - ACE with City of Ghent - Ghentrepreneur - HoGent en Ugent All partners are connected to Enterprise Europe Network.

What are the key messages , key lessons learned you would like to share?



■ Project Information

Title	FUSION
Total project budget	€ 5 012 333
ERDF	€ 2 506 166
Priority & objective	Priority 1 c. Support innovation, research and cooperation between universities, knowledge institutes and businesses
Timeframe	2010-02-01 - 2014-09-30
Lead partner	Kent County Council
Project Coordinator	Carolyn McKENZIE(carolyn.mckenzie@kent.gov.uk)

