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DRAFT PROPOSAL FOR APPLICATION IN THE INTERREG 6B NORTH SEA REGION PROGRAMME



January 2022

About the new INTERREG NSR programme

In december 2021, the first call for proposals has been launched. As to regular projects, this call is open for both expressions of interest or a full application. The submission date for full applications is 22 April 2022.

Main features of the new programme

The **cooperation area will be enlarged**.

9 new regions - 3 in France, 2 in Flanders and 4 in the Netherlands - are set to be added to the current programme. This means that all of Flanders and the Netherlands will be covered by the new programme and the French regions along the North Sea will be members. Norway will exclude its two northernmost counties, while the remaining 9 counties (91% of the Norwegian population) will stay in.



The programme is **structured by 4 thematic priorities**, each covering specific objectives:

1 Robust and smart economies in the NSR

- 1.1 Enhancing research & innovation capacities and the uptake of advanced technologies
- 1.2 Developing skills for smart specialisation, industrial transition and entrepreneurship

2 A green transition in the NSR

- 2.1 Energy efficiency measures & reduction of GHG emissions
- 2.2 Renewable energy
- 2.3 Smart energy systems, storage and grids
- 2.4 Transition to a circular economy
- 2.5 sustainable multimodal urban mobility

3 Climate resilience

- 3.1 Climate change adaptation, risk prevention and disaster resilience
- 3.2 Biodiversity, green infrastructure in the urban environment, reducing pollution

4 Better governance

- 4.1 Better cooperation governance

As a part of the framework, 3 spotlight themes are identified. These are additional dimensions of special importance in the region and apply across all four priorities (but not necessarily relevant for all projects):

- Digitalisation
- Rural-urban linkages
- Strengths & challenges in the North Sea basin

This leaflet is about preparing a proposal to the 2021-27 INTERREG 6 NSR programme

The core of the proposal: Climate change adaptation through finding, applying and testing landscape-based solutions and their revenue streams.

Peatlands can function as carbon stores and potential carbon sinks. However, in many regions they are degraded, which counteracts climate mitigation and adaptation and threatens biodiversity. Therefore, our project aims to explore how innovations in peatland development contribute to address climate adaptation. Working with, developing and renewing peatlands can help protect us from climate change impacts while slowing further warming, supporting biodiversity and securing economic prosperity. In addition, peatlands have a special role to play in future economic developments. They can contribute directly, for instance by providing resources and raw materials, or indirectly, through new business models and green or blue ecosystem services.

With our project we want to

- Contribute to climate adaptation;
- Shape wonderful landscapes to enjoy, walk and wander freely;
- Provide sound new earning models for the people living and working there.

Please find our contact details at the end of this leaflet.

Draft for a shared proposal

Rationale: what problem are we tackling?

Our proposal is about global climate change and its impacts on the environment. Frequent wildfires, longer periods of drought in some regions, more rains and storms in terms of number, duration and intensity and rising sea levels in others. Due to deforestation, increased agricultural activities and resources depletion, climate impacts are made even more severe, as seen in threats to biodiversity, food security, soil erosion, water scarcity and viable habitats for humans, animals, plants etc.

It is one of the most complex issues we have to face. Society as a whole with its diverse moral and ethical perspectives, politics and policies, sciences and economies are all involved at global as well as local scales. The problem is: even if we would stop emitting all greenhouse gases today, global warming and climate change will continue to affect future generations.

Two approaches are needed. Firstly, climate change mitigation: actions to limit global warming and its related effects. Secondly: climate change adaptation: actions to prepare for climate change are already at hand. Our proposal is directed towards adaptation in the first place. However, it will have mitigating impacts as well.

Focus on priority 3:

Climate Change Adaptation

The proposal outlined here is directed towards priority 3 'Climate resilience', with a focus to specific objective 3.1 'Climate change adaptation', not excluding objective 3.2 and its biodiversity aspect. Possibly, we could also relate the proposal to the spotlight theme of 'Rural-urban linkages'.



The core of the proposal: finding, applying and testing peatlands-based solutions and their revenue streams

For several years now, the Region Groningen-Assen in the North of the Netherlands works on challenges and sees chances for climate change adaptation in the marshland area west, east and south of the city of Groningen. They want it to become a climate positive region. To this purpose, it is necessary to acknowledge the value of this area and to take care of the peatlands. Peatlands can function as carbon stores and potential carbon sinks. But, if they are degraded, they counteract mitigation and adaptation goals and threaten biodiversity. Therefore, through our project we want to explore how innovations in

peatland development contribute to address climate adaptation. Areas in which natural processes are given space may function as a buffer against climate change. Working with, developing and renewing peatlands can help protect us from climate change impacts while slowing further warming, supporting biodiversity and securing economic prosperity. This fits excellently the three most urgent tasks we are faced with: mitigating and adapting to climate change, protecting biodiversity and ensuring human well being. Healthy peatlands have a special role to play in future environmental and socio-economic developments and in supporting economic activity. They can contribute directly, for instance by providing resources and raw materials such as water, timber, reed, food and minerals, or indirectly, through green or blue ecosystem services, such like

carbon sequestration, water purification, managing flood risks and nutrient cycling. Finally, they have an impact on our well being, through outdoor sports and recreation and are important to cultural and historical identities. Focusing on peatlands and their contribution to climate adaptation measures could result in adapting to climate change and mitigating its threats. In order to make them sustainable, we must develop new revenue models. These might be new solutions for construction and agriculture sectors based on circular approaches. New business models might also lie in developing new value creation models, ecosystem services or other novel payments mechanisms.

The Project structure

In fact, four fundamental frames and related principles might serve to determine the approach to develop and implement novel business models for landscape-based climate resilience. These are:

- Nature: Which geomorphological, geological and ecological principles and measures need to be identified for supporting climate resilience?
- Culture: Which cultural and historical grounded principles can help to shape new measures to best fit the landscape?

- Business models: Which business principles can we relate to our measures making investments viable, profitable and durable
- Governance: Who are the actors to cooperate, according to which agreements do they cooperate, what attitude do they expect from each other, what are their respective tasks and what new policy do they design to anchor their cooperation?

Of course we will dive into more detail and draft the specific objectives and activities once the partnership is developed.



Demonstration pilots

Each region has its specific issues and challenges and also opportunities to create new commons to draw stakeholders into dialogue and to create new regional activities and futures. Landscape in general, and peatlands in particular, provide a platform to connect people who may not be connected at the present. It offers an opportunity to recreate local space and to offer leadership and cohesion through new 'commons' or projects that go beyond individual interests, sectors and politics.

Together with our partners, we want to design a project to promote and facilitate multi-stakeholder coope-

ration and collective action for effective peatland management and ecosystem rehabilitation in the region. This might be done by using demonstration pilots.

What pilots are we aiming for?

In the case of the Northern Netherlands, we are aiming at the peatlands landscape. It has been harnessed over centuries through drainage, harvests (peat for fuel) and lowered ground water (agricultural usage), are recognized for their potential threat to climate change due to risks of CO₂ emissions on a major scale. However, they also offer solutions to erratic weather patterns when used as water catchment areas to offset sudden rain or river floods and provide water supplies during drought. They have additional benefits of creating new habitats supporting wetland ecologies as well as new recreational spaces.

What partners are we aiming for?

We are looking for partners with similar types of landscapes. We will share a cooperative quadruple helix approach, which is grounded in the idea that innovation is the outcome of an interactive process, involving different spheres of actors, each contributing according to their 'institutional' function in society. Contribution to innovation is envisaged in terms of knowledge co-creation, sharing and transfer. Together we aim to develop a set of good practices and joint measures to address climate change and biodiversity loss.

Examples of project outputs

We will develop, encourage and facilitate multi-stakeholder cooperation and collective action for effective land management and ecosystem rehabilitation in the programme area. This leads to increase in climate resilience, a reduction in the risk of CO2 emission, local flooding and droughts, and improvements in water quality and biodiversity. This calls for a set of joint measures which address climate change and biodiversity loss and in an integrated manner to fully exploit co-benefits and avoid ecosystem feedback issues that could accelerate global warming.

These outputs may be:

- Creation of buffers against climate change on the basis of natural processes to create, such like catch and store water, counterbalance water shortages and

reduce emissions of greenhouse gasses;

- Development of new wetlands and water crops, resulting in new businesses and earnings models;
- Redevelopment and new creation of tourism and leisure arrangements;
- Best practice for novel nature management policy as a regular part of spatial and economic planning;
- Demonstration and training events showing best practices in integrating the stewardship of land and water at the farm scale;
- Practical guides on best practice, along with a 'self-assessment toolkit' that land managers can use to check what action is most appropriate for their enterprise and location.

Potential project impacts

- A measurable reduction in the risk of soil erosion and local flooding;
- Improvements in water quality;
- Drought resilience;
- Biodiversity at a farm scale.

Next actions per regional partner

1. At regional levels

- Decide to participate and make arrangements for co-funding
- Identify regional pilot (if desired) and engage with regional partners for commitments on content and co-funding.

2. At transnational level:

- Describe the shared territorial challenges that will be tackled
- Develop the project's approach in addressing the shared challenges and/or joint assets
- Illustrate what is new about the approach the project takes
- Explain why transnational cooperation is needed to achieve the project's objectives and result (probably in the field of developing or applying new technical solutions, new governance and business models)
- Develop a decent project summary, including the aspects just mentioned as well as the project's detailed objectives and expected results.



Are you working on a regional pilot and / or interested in sharing the partnership?

For more information, please contact: Sabine Lutz, salut@share-link.eu



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