

Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

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Foreword

“Zeeland has a long history as an entrepreneurial region, which is unique within Europe. At a very early stage the Province recognised the importance of corporate social responsibility as well as sustainable development. The region wants to remain the beautiful green and blue oasis that makes it famous, as well as simultaneously maintaining a favourable entrepreneurial climate.

The result is that our organisation has built up a sturdy reputation as the initiator and stimulator of projects which are focused on sustainable development and visionary entrepreneurship. Moreover, the scarcity and high price of raw materials, the problems with waste-disposal and an ageing population, have strengthened the need of renewed visionary entrepreneurship focused on the future. The result is that in Zeeland a movement has developed involving a considerable number of entrepreneurs, the majority of them representing small to medium-sized enterprises. They inspire and motivate each other by way of courses and networking sessions. And they also cooperate with larger industrial companies, for example in the project Warm CO₂. In this particular project heat and CO₂ from an industrial company are delivered to the horticultural complex, which consists of SMEs. With this mutual approach, the conviction that forward-looking vision and corporate social responsibility are the essential conditions for continuity, is a widely supported view in Zeeland. A designation of ‘European Entrepreneurial Region’ is exactly right for us.”

Marten Wiersma, Executive Member, Economic Affairs, Energy & Climate Policy and the Environment, Province of Zeeland



Contents

Foreword	2
Zeeland's Basic Facts	4
• Employment according to sector	4
• Zeeland's Partners	4
Zeeland's Vision	5
• Introduction	6
• The Zeeland Approach	6
• Zeeland's Ambition – Sustainable Development	6
• Focus on MKB (Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Zeeland)	8
• Corporate Social Responsibility	8
• Zeeland's Special Resources	8
Action Plan	10
1. Rewarding Entrepreneurship	10
2. Stimulation and Guidance of Entrepreneurship	10
3. The Dynamic MVO Policy (Corporate Social Responsibility)	13
4. Encouragement of entrepreneurial expertise	13
5. Network Formation	18
6. Extra attention for Starters	23
7. Stimulating and Facilitating Innovation	23
8. Rural Development and Tourism	27
9. Commercial Relations	29
Communication	30



Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Zeeland's Basic Facts

Zeeland's Basic Facts

Number of inhabitants: 380,897
Number of municipalities: 13
Number of km²: 2,993.89
Potential working population (aged 15-64): 245,871 = 64.6%
Number of established businesses: 28,700

Employment according to sector:

Agriculture & Fisheries: 6.6%
Industry: 21.7%
Services Sector: 46.7%
Public Administration, Education, Healthcare: 25.1%

Source: De Zeeuwse Economie in Cijfers (Zeeland's Economy in Figures) published 2009

Zeeland's Partners:

BZW (*Employers' Organisation Large-Scale*)
Chamber of Commerce South-West Netherlands
CNV Zeeland (*Employees' Organisation – Trade(s) Union*)
De Unie (*Employees' Organisation – Trade(s) Union*)
Edudelta Onderwijsgroep (*Preparatory & Secondary Vocational Training – green sector*)
FNV Zeeland (*Employees' Organisation – Trade(s) Union*)
Hogeschool Zeeland (*University of applied sciences*)
Hoornbeeck College (*Secondary Vocational Training – Reformatory*)
MKB Zeeland (*Employers' Organisation Small & Medium-Sized Enterprises SME*)
NV Economische Impuls Zeeland (*Regional Development Organisation*)
ROC Westerschelde (*Secondary Vocational Training*)
ROC Zeeland (*Secondary Vocational Training*)
Syntens (*Innovation Network*)
UWV Werkbedrijf (*Employment Office*)
VZG (*Association of Zeeland's Municipalities*)
Zeeuwse Milieufederatie (*Environmental Federation of Zeeland*)

Fishing becomes Aquaculture



Adri Bout

No gas connections, no high energy bills, no stressed or diseased fish. This is a description of Seafarm, which is an ultramodern breeding installation for turbot in Kamperland, located on the Oosterschelde [1]. This business is very progressive in regard to an animal-friendly approach, energy-saving and food safety. Adri Bout, who descends from an old fisherman's family, experimented with fish-farming back in the 1990s; however he decided to take on the business with new energy in 2004, after he had sold his fishing cutter. Learning by experience, and with the support of advisers and innovation subsidies (in part from the European Community), he developed his business so that it linked up with the requirements of the 21st century. The fish-breeding energy comes from geothermal energy and from bacteria; the fish have a comfortable life which enables them to grow well without too much feed and without medication. Bearing in mind that Seafarm does its own filleting, packaging and transporting, the fish arrives rapidly, and freshly, to its customers

throughout the whole of Europe. This business is extremely successful, and is often awarded prizes. In 2008, Seafarm won the Verantwoorde Visprij [2] and in 2009 the Emergo prize, which is Zeeland's Innovation Prize. Entrepreneur Bout has commented on the fact that he is 'extremely impressed' by Zeeland's business climate, and most especially by the Province's role in it all. He says, 'For me, Zeeland is a big playground. I have an enormous network here, and I can also find all of the contacts I need here. Of course, sometimes you have to be prepared to share your expertise and to be willing to work together – that's when the doors open for you.'

[1] East Scheldt | [2] Prize for Responsible Fish-breeding



Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Zeeland's Vision

Introduction

The major sectors of Zeeland's economy – agriculture, basic industry, harbours/ports and tourism – are all influenced by global economic developments. The provincial government has chosen to exercise a strong policy position in bundling all its strength in 'home affairs', in stimulating innovation and in combining the sectors. This is more than adequate reason for the title of *'Strengthen, Sustain, Stimulate'* which has been given to the Provincial Socio-Economic Policy Plan 2009-2012 (abbreviated as PSEB). Zeeland makes optimal use of its expertise, infrastructure and physical circumstances which are present in the province.

Bearing this in mind, the following aspects play an important role:

- the special situation in regard to the sea, with its deep seaports;
- the enormous amount of water for recreation and inland navigation;
- the agricultural areas and horticultural complexes;
- good infrastructure (roads, train connections and the *Westerschelde Tunnel*);
- tourist attractions;
- the great variety of medium and small-sized businesses;
- Zeeland's own energy production;
- good cooperation with Flanders, as well as with the surrounding provinces of the Netherlands.

The Zeeland Approach

Zeeland works in 'clusters of strength'. The aquaculture (see: *Seafarm*) is an example on page 5. If we think about innovative fish-breeding, or about alternative ways of mussel and oyster fishing, or about experimenting with cultivating mussels on

land, these sectors (which often consist of family businesses with a long tradition) are looking towards:

- sustaining:** new breeding and catching methods,
- strengthening:** working together with knowledge institutes and the use of innovation subsidies, and
- stimulating:** cooperation with other branches of business such as horticulture. In the greenhouses, algae can be grown which can later be used as fish feed.

Zeeland's Ambition – Sustainable Development

Our Target

This is our target for the period 2009-2012:

'An economy in Zeeland in which it is possible for the inhabitants and for the entrepreneurs to supply their own needs in a sustainable and in a sustainable manner and with corporate social responsibility. Not only now, but also in the future. The economy is further sustained according to the principles of 'people, planet, profit'. The beautiful green and blue oasis of Zeeland – between the agglomeration of the *Randstad*, North Brabant and Flanders – will increasingly become the guideline for new economic activities.'

From this target, it is clear that Zeeland definitely chooses **sustainability**. The economic growth is aimed at in an integral way, which means that attention is given to the people, the environment and to added value. This means that Economy, Environment and Social Affairs are not separate areas of policy anymore; the main themes will be mutually tackled by administrative Zeeland, and stimulating measures will be focused on increasing integration of the *'three P's'*.





Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Zeeland's Vision

Focus on MKB

(Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises in Zeeland)

The most important protagonists in such an integral development are the businesses in Zeeland. The contacts between the provincial organisation and Zeeland's trade and industry, which mainly consists of medium and small-scale businesses, are closely-knit. Based on practical experience, the Province defines its policy and creates conditions for entrepreneurs who have vision. The focus is particularly aimed at starters, at those who are starting-up again, at innovators and at enterprises that want to establish themselves in Zeeland. In order to maintain the economic dynamics, the Province stimulates those who want to start-up a business, and ensures that there is guidance during the starting phase of the enterprise. In addition, there are facilities for entrepreneurs, who want to grow. Moreover, the partners in Zeeland [government, education and entrepreneurs] consider it a challenge to be contributing towards expanding the level of innovation of the MKB (SME).

This occurs in diverse forms of cooperation and by the application of subsidy schemes and economic programmes. This Zeeland tailor-made approach receives an extra impulse from the European structural funds, which is equally focused on innovation, sustainability and rural development.

Corporate Social Responsibility

For a number of years, the Province has stimulated the choice of sustainable entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurs are encouraged in every possible way to grasp all opportunities which will contribute towards a sustainable (operational) management and a corporate socially responsible supply of production and services. At the same time, the Province also offers a variety of facilities such as training, advising, the promotion of expertise

and network formation in order to stimulate the sustainable entrepreneurs to follow their well-chosen path. Up to now, the highlight of this policy was the 'MVO (CSR) Event' ^[3] which took place in March 2008. There were over 2200 visitors, including people from Zeeland, other parts of the Netherlands and Flanders (Belgium). They were able to take part in workshops, lectures, round table conferencing and an extensive information market giving information about the many positive aspects of the MVO. The principal guests were the Dutch Prime Minister Jan Peter Balkenende, Professor Michael Braungart (cradle to cradle) and the famous pop group Bløf. The same sort of grand Event is planned with the partners in Flanders on 31 March 2011. And this is exactly the year in which Zeeland wants to profile itself as European Entrepreneurial Region.

Zeeland's Special Resources

Zeeland's target is an ambitious one, which is focused on being a sustainable province in which business is carried out with corporate social responsibility. The Province dares to take on such ambitions because it can call on a large number of *very special resources*:

- A lively network of entrepreneurs, which are often family businesses with a long and trusted tradition.
- Personal contact, direct communication and mutual appreciation between the partners in Zeeland: government, education and entrepreneurs.
- A progressive and advanced MVO (CSR) approach with many good examples of this.
- Zeeland's own implementing organisations: NV Economische Impuls Zeeland and Zeeland Seaports.
- Good and intensive contacts with employer's umbrella organisations i.e. BZW and MKB Zeeland.

^[3] Corporate Social Responsibility CSR

Handling the Crisis as 'tour de force'



Startmeeting Mobiliteitscentrum

In January 2009, Executive Member Wiersma (Provincial Executive of Zeeland) invited representatives of the local government, education, social partners and entrepreneurs to meet up and discuss how the partners could mutually tackle the financial and economic crisis. The motto for this crisis approach was: 'Sterker en Duurzamer Zeeland'. [4] The special focus was: first of all, look at the chances offered by the crisis situation, and try to limit the short-term negative consequences. This meeting resulted in concrete projects and campaigns which became effective in the course of 2009 and which will continue during 2010. A few examples:

- Setting-up a Mobiliteitscentrum [5] for giving coaching and advice to businesses who apply for a reduction of working-hours, part-time Unemployment Pay, dismissal and reappointment of employees. The Mobility Centre opened on 30 March 2009 and has already helped more than 90 businesses.

- Bringing to the fore investments in soil decontamination and in the construction and management of infrastructure.
- Research into the deregulation and less rigid application of rules and regulations. The objective is to reduce by 25% the administrative burden for businesses.
- Speeding up implementing the 'Covenant Meer met Minder' [6]. This covenant stimulates private house-owners to invest in energy saving measures and/or sustainable renovations.
- The Symposium and network 'Stronger and More Sustainable Zeeland'. On 14 October 2009 there were more than 300 guests at the Symposium 'Stronger and More Sustainable Zeeland', which was a direct result of tackling the crisis. The champions of sustainability, Ruud Koornstra (entrepreneur and supplier of the LED lamp) and Herman Wijffels (Professor of Sustainability) presented passionate arguments for making the change towards a sustainable economy and society. The Symposium was, likewise, the starting signal for a new Zeeland network of 'Stronger and More Sustainable Zeeland'.

[4] A Stronger and More Sustainable Zeeland | [5] Mobility Centre | [6] More with less Covenant



Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Action Plan

- Good and intensive contacts with partners in education and advice, such as Syntens, Hogeschool Zeeland, ROC Zeeland, ROC Westerschelde, and the Chamber of Commerce.
- Many cooperative projects initiated by the Province, often nurtured and supported by European funds. Zeeland is an active participant in OP-Zuid, Interreg IV and POP.

Action Plan

Further explanation of the projects of cooperation and activities can be found in the Action Plan. The significance of these Zeeland resources became, yet again, evident in January 2009, when the Province took the initiative of a joint handling of the crisis. This Action Plan shows the effect of the Zeeland approach with its focus on creating the most favourable business climate possible, together with making good use of Zeeland's special resources. This plan gives an overview of concrete projects, forms of cooperation and activities which already exist and will continue through 2010 and 2011.

1. Rewarding Entrepreneurship

In general: Entrepreneurs' initiatives can be rewarded. In particular, the entrepreneurs who are innovative, creative and show future vision can be rewarded for their efforts. Such a reward can be a prize for entrepreneurship and, more generally, being given positive publicity in the appropriate media (in this respect, please refer also to the Communication Plan on page 30. An overview of what is happening in Zeeland in this regard is:

1.1 Prizes at the initiative of the Province

Prize: Emergo, Zeeland Innovation Prize

Partner: Syntens

Frequency: Annually

Type of prize: Work of art

Prize: Innovation Prize Tourism + Encouragement Prize *

Frequency: Annually

Type of prize: Money & work of art

* Encouragement Prize: photo reportage

1.2 Prizes at the initiative of the Chamber of Commerce

Prize: Leen van Gelder Starter's Prize

Frequency: Annually

Type of prize: Money and image-study

Prize: Prize for Creative Entrepreneurship

Frequency: Annually

Type of prize: Work of art

1.3 Positive Publicity

The regional newspapers PZC and BN/De Stem contain a monthly supplement called 'De Ondernemer' (*The Entrepreneur*). The Province regularly supplies information for this supplement by way of 'business portraits' of innovative and sustainable businesses. Besides this, the Province offers annually a platform to sustainable entrepreneurs on its own stand (Theme Plaza) at the *Bedrijvencontactbeurs voor Zuid-Nederland, Contacta* [7]. At this Fair and in magazines and brochures, the best practices in Zeeland – of which there are very many – are given special attention and brought into the limelight.

2. Stimulation and Guidance of Entrepreneurship

In general: Interest in the world of business and the connected opportunities and risks, should be encouraged at quite a young age. For this reason, the Province attaches much importance

[7] Entrepreneurial Contact Fair for South-West Netherlands





Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Action Plan

to the fact that entrepreneurship should occupy a permanent place in the curriculum of secondary schools as well as in vocational education (MBO, HBO). In this respect, the Province works together with partners in education and advice. Even when entrepreneurs are carrying out their business, they must be able to call upon guidance and advice. And likewise here, there are different initiatives in Zeeland with a view to financing, subsidy possibilities, a supply continuation of business, as well as questions and problems due to the economic crisis.

2.1 Stichting Jong Ondernemen (Foundation for the Young Entrepreneur)

This national foundation is also active in Zeeland. From the principle of 'learning by doing', the Foundation offers material and activities for all types of education, from the elementary school to academic education. In addition, a *Student Business of the Year* is chosen annually. The schools in Zeeland actively participate in what this Foundation has to offer. For more information, please go to: www.jongondernemen.nl

2.2 Entrepreneurship in Vocational Education

In Zeeland's educational institutions for vocational education (ROC Zeeland, ROC Westerschelde, Edudelta Onderwijsgroep, Hoornbeeck College and the Hogeschool Zeeland), ample attention for entrepreneurship is given in lesson programmes and in practical simulations. The Hogeschool Zeeland even has a lecture-ship in '*Innoveren en Ondernemen*' (Innovation & Enterprise). Students have the possibility, on the basis of experiences in their own company, to graduate.

2.3 Financial Support

Starters and those who are starting-up anew, who have a need

of some financial support, can make a credit application to the Zeeuws Participatiefonds^[8]. This fund is an initiative of the Province, the ABN-Amro Bank and Zeeland's insurance company ZLM. Businesses can appeal to this fund for start-up capital in the form of participating in share capital, a subordinated loan or a combination of both.

You will find information on: www.zeeuwsparticipatiefonds.nl

2.4 Subsidy Desk and Europe Desk

In order to give as much information as possible about subsidy possibilities, the Province's website contains a Subsidy Desk: <http://loket.zeeland.nl/subsidies>

and a Europe Desk: <http://loket.zeeland.nl/europa>

The majority of the subsidies can immediately be requested on-line. However, entrepreneurs can also send a mail message requesting further information.

2.5 Information and Advice

As well as on-line desks, entrepreneurs can also make a request to advisers for explanation about subsidies, and for guidance in drawing-up a request. These advisers work at the Province (e.g. Steunpunt OP-Zuid), at NV Economische Impulse Zeeland (e.g. projects InnoGo, Pieken in de Delta and Actieplan Groei) and at Syntens (innovation subsidies). Advice given and received from these organisations is usually free of charge.

For more information, please go to:

www.zeeland.nl, www.impulszeeland.nl and www.syntens.nl

2.6 Project 'Opvolgorde'^[9]

In 2008 and 2009, the Hogeschool Zeeland and consultancy *Justion Bedrijfsovername* carried out a project about a matching procedure between entrepreneurs who were looking for

^[8] Zeeland's Participation Fund | ^[9] Free English translation: Project 'In Succession'

Action Plan

a successor, and graduated students from Higher Vocational Education (HBO) who wanted to start-up a business. In order to make this matching procedure as successful as possible, learning material was developed and coaches were trained. The result was that an infrastructure was developed and available in order to ensure, as far as possible, the continuity of successful businesses.

2.7 Setting-up the Mobility Centre (*Crisis Approach*)

In 2009, in cooperation with the Government and the social partners, a Mobility Centre was started for giving guidance and advice to businesses who apply for a reduction of working-hours, part-time Unemployment Pay, dismissal and reappointment of employees. The Mobility Centre opened on 30 March 2009, and up to now has given its services to over 90 businesses. The partners in this Centre are: ROC Zeeland, ROC Westerschelde, Hogeschool Zeeland, UWV Werkbedrijf, BZW, MKB Zeeland, FNV, CNV, De Unie, VZG, and NV Economische Impuls Zeeland.

3. The Dynamic MVO (CSR) Policy

In general: Zeeland has been, for many years, the promotor of corporate social responsibility. In this regard, the Province really is the trendsetter in the Netherlands. In 2009, the organisation took the initiative to bundle together all of the activities around the MVO policy, and to strengthen them in an integral implementation memorandum. In this type of integral approach, the environmental, economic and social aspects of the CSR are equally examined.

Ambitious aims are included in this memorandum, such as: in 2015 there will be 1000 businesses in Zeeland working with

corporate social responsibility, the awareness of MVO has increased in comparison with 2009, and the stimulating measures and incentives are clear and accessible.

In order to reach these goals, a number of activities have been planned for implementation in 2010 and 2011, of which the following is an outline:

- local informative meetings together with partners;
- regional strengthening of national campaigns;
- lectures, symposiums and events;
- in-depth meetings for leaders in the field, and trendsetters;
- Zeeland MVO Desk with information, contact names and possibilities of e-learning;
- expert meetings and MVO lunches;
- support by means of communication, such as a Newsletter or business portraits in various media.

4. Encouragement of entrepreneurial expertise

In general: Entrepreneurs who want to carry out their work in a sustainable and visionary manner, have been able to rely for many years on Zeeland's support, guidance and encouragement of expertise. A number of entrepreneurs from Zeeland have long been familiar with the phenomenon of the 'Duurzaam Ondernemen' course ^[10] and the *Environmental Barometer* (see 4.1). In 2008, these incentive(s) projects were integrated into the inter-regional project with Flanders (Interreg IV Gensregio/*Border Regions*) under the title of 'Duurzaam is gewoon doen' ^[11].

Also in 2008, a start was made with the guidance and exchange of expertise concerning the 'cradle to cradle' project.

[10] 'Sustainable Business' | [11] 'Sustainability - just do it!'

Action Plan

The experience of former course-participant, Jack van Loon, KAM Coordinator at GEA Goedhart BV in Sint-Maartensdijk, producer and distributor of refrigeration systems.



Jack van Loon

'I am still in contact with the entrepreneurs whom I met during the course in Tholen (2007-2008). We work together to cluster waste streams and we make agreements with waste product processing companies. If we manage to save money by working together, that money then goes to charity. Besides this, we're also working with a sustainable business/industrial park in Sint-Maartensdijk. From an energy scan, it would appear that we can connect with residual heat. Within my own business, I often use the following procedure: monitoring the process, collecting key indicators, thinking of alternatives, looking at the subsidy possibilities and then presenting a well-founded plan to the Executive Board. In this way, we've already achieved a great deal; for example, an automatic separation of waste and a special skylight on the roof. The environmental barometer is also still doing a good job. A course like this supplies a network as well as new ideas.

I now know my fellow-entrepreneurs much better, as well as the service providers in the region. We also know where to find one another for practical and innovative projects, and there is accelerated development which is noticeable in the whole of industrious Tholen!'

Example C2C production development, as illustration



Ruud Baaijens, mechanical engineering student

The metalworks company of 'Metaloterm Ontop', in Middelburg, produces flue tubes. The Production Development Manager formulated the following research project: 'Try and find an alternative for the lead flashing which is now used to seal the chimney shaft on the roof. Apply the principles of cradle to cradle in working this out.' A mechanical engineering student at the Hogeschool Zeeland, under the guidance of his teacher as well as the Manager of Ontop, got down to working on this and designed a chimney shaft where the steel cone was enlarged with a surface sheet so that less sealing material was necessary. As an alternative for lead, the choice was a product of plastic with bitumen which was provided with flexible aluminium strips. Ontop has put this design into production and has introduced it onto the Danish market where the use of lead is forbidden.

Action Plan

Entrepreneurs of manufacturing companies, tourism and the construction industry started enthusiastically with the application of these principles. And there are more research programmes planned for the forthcoming years. Here is a summary of the achieved results and planned projects:

4.1 Sustainable Business Course

Since 2005, this course has been carried out twelve times in cooperation with municipalities in Zeeland. More than 200 entrepreneurs participated in this course. During the course, they learn how to work with the environmental barometer, which is an on-line measuring instrument to show what the environmental impact and the environmental costs are. The barometer also gives insight into the CO₂ emission of a business.

On the basis of this data, a business can rapidly determine the economic efficiency of environmental measures. Besides this, the environmental barometer is a recognised instrument for the Environmental Inspectorate, and the data from the barometer can be used in the Licensing Report. For more information, you can refer to:

www.milieubarometer.nl

In 2009, a sustainability barometer was developed. This instrument not only gives insight into the environmental impact of a business, but also measures the indicators on personnel and the social area (P for people). During the period until 2011, Zeeland and Flanders will provide a minimum of another ten courses of 'Sustainable or Corporate Social Responsibility' in which the participants will learn to work with the environmental barometer and the sustainability barometer. More information can be found on:

www.duurzaamisgewoondoen.eu

4.2 C2C Projects for Trendsetters

The Cradle to Cradle projects present an innovative angle for designing products and for establishing production processes. This philosophy is particularly challenging for manufacturing companies, for enterprises involved in tourism and in the construction industry. With the help of subsidy from the Province of Zeeland, the Hogeschool Zeeland has set-up projects since 2008 in which entrepreneurs, in cooperation with students, can gain experience with the application of C2C principles. Such a project usually concerns the practical case of a business, which is examined in a team of one or more students, together with a teacher of the Hogeschool and the entrepreneur. The results of the first project are incorporated into a brochure, which is utilised as tailor-made lesson material.

During the projects that follow, certain bottlenecks affecting businesses are given more in-depth attention. Two examples:

- 1) In cooperation with a producer of acrylic (plastic) sheets (raw material for caravan windows), research was done into the possibility of closing the acrylic chain.
The first step was to make an inventory of the chain and the parties involved, from the production up to and including the moment when the caravans were ready for the scrap-heap. The possibilities were then researched of bringing the dumped product back into the production chain.
- 2) In cooperation with Jachthaven Marina Port Zelande, designs were made for recreation homes, industrial buildings and landing jetties, carried out according to C2C, which will later form part of the sustainable Marina of the future. These research projects are carried out in close cooperation between the company which brings in the case-study, the experts in the



Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Action Plan

area of C2C, and the teachers of the Hogeschool Zeeland. The projects are finished with a presentation as well as advice.

4.3 Masterclasses Industrial Cluster Harbour/Port Area

The businesses in the harbours of the Sloe area and Kanaalzone Terneuzen^[12] have already been working together for some time in the industrial cluster called 'Vitaal Sloegebied en Kanaalzone'^[13]. One of the various activities of this cluster is the organisation of a series of Masterclasses, which are mainly about sustain-

able enterprise, safety, biodiversity and sustainable chemistry. More information can be found on:

www.vitaalsloegebiedenkanaalzone.nl

5. Network Formation

In general: A good entrepreneurial climate is greatly encouraged by lively and active entrepreneurial networking. In Zeeland, a great many entrepreneurs' associations are active. We shall put the spotlight on just one of them – the Junior

The case of a InnoGo participant



Florentijn van den Bos [1]

Florentijn van den Bos is a born and bred entrepreneur, and is brimming over with ideas. He set up the company Energy@work for the purpose of generating renewable energy in an innovative way. For this purpose, he developed a bio-energy power plant which functions on second generation bio-oils. The designs for the plant are now ready and the permits can now be requested. InnoGo advises and guides Van den Bos during this starting period.

[12] Canal Zone | [13] Dynamic Sloe Area and Canal Zone

Action Plan

Chambers – which is an international networking organisation for entrepreneurs up to 40 years of age. This organisation devotes a lot of attention to the personal development of the entrepreneurs, and encourages them to do their very best in managing socially responsible and socially involved enterprises. In Zeeland, there are four Junior Chambers active: in Schouwen-Duiveland, Walcheren, De Bevelanden and Zeeland Flanders. The province itself coordinates two networks.

For more information, go to: www.jcl.nl

5.1 Network 'Sterker en Duurzamer Zeeland' (A Stronger and More Sustainable Zeeland)

In response to the symposium 'A Stronger and More Sustainable Zeeland' on 14 October 2009, entrepreneurs and social economic partners were able to register for the new network 'A Stronger and More Sustainable Zeeland'. For the first meeting, which will take place in February 2010, there are already 120 registered entrepreneurs. The network will meet up a couple of times a year.

The patron of the network is Herman Wijffels (born in Zeeland and former top-man of the Rabobank, SER ^[14] and the World Bank. At present, he is Professor in Sustainability at the University of Utrecht).

5.2 Partner Group

At the initiative of the Province, the Partner Group Zeeuws MKB has been active in Zeeland for at least five years. The Province coordinates and chairs the meetings. The Partner Group's goal is to reach *structural* collaboration between the partners in order to encourage business in the most sustainable and future-focused manner. The Group's participants are

the authorities (provincial and municipal), trade and industry (MKB Zeeland and Rabobank), knowledge institutes (Hogeschool Zeeland and ROC Zeeland), Syntens, Chamber of Commerce, Delta (energy company) and the Zeeuwse Milieufederatie.

5.3 Innovation Network (INZ)

This network is a collaboration of employers' organisations, educational institutions, Syntens, NV Economische Impuls Zeeland and the Chamber of Commerce. The Province also participates in this network. The situation in Zeeland of working together in unison is quite unique in the Netherlands. The network bundles various innovative projects, such as:

- **De Toekomstbedrijven** ^[15]
(Cooperation of Syntens-Chamber of Commerce)
- **Zorginnovatievouchers** ^[16]
(issued by the *Zorg Innovatie Platform*)
- **InnoGo**
(NV Economische Impuls Zeeland)

Besides this, and under the umbrella of the network, there are various larger and smaller information meetings which take place, where experts come together in three innovation groups: Maintenance Innovation Community, High Performance Academy and Innovatiekring Watertechnologie ^[17] (Innovation Group for Water Technology). Each year, the Innovation Network exhibits in its enormous ZIE Event (please refer to 7.2) all of the good examples and interesting projects from Zeeland; in 2009 this Event was organised for the sixth time.

For more information, please go to:

www.innovatienetwerkzeeland.nl

[14] National Socio-Economic Council | [15] Enterprises of the Future | [16] Healthcare Innovation Vouchers | [17] Innovation Group for water Technology

Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Action Plan



Action Plan

5.4 MVO (CSR) Event 2011

In 2011, there is once again going to be a great network event – namely, the second MVO Event to be held on 31 March in Flanders. This event will also be arranged and prepared by the Province of Zeeland, Oost- en West-Vlaanderen (Interreg IV – programme Grensregio/Border Region).

The ambition is to bring more than 2000 entrepreneurs toge-

ther on that day, so that they can both inspire – and be inspired – by the excellent examples, ambitions and opportunities for corporate social responsibility. Experience from 2008 has shown that such an event as this is enormously attractive and that it generates a great deal of very positive publicity in such a way that MVO's positive image really gets through to the entrepreneurial groups. For further information, go to:

www.duurzaamisgewoondoen.eu

Quote of Professor Wim Soetaert from the University of Ghent, telling about Bio Base Europe:



Wim Soetaert

'The industrial bio-technology is developing new processes for the production of bio-fuels, bio-plastics and bio-detergents with the help of micro-organisms such as fungi, bacteria and yeasts. For many inventions, the step from basic research in a laboratory to industrial production in a factory is too great. And thus, the Bio Base Europe project provides for the step in-between: businesses can test their innovations in a pilot plant. The training centre is really meant for the operators who will be working with the new bio-based processes. Moreover, Bio Base Europe will also function as a network centre.

Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Action Plan



Action Plan

6. Extra attention for Starters

In general: Entrepreneurs need extra support and attention at a number of different times. Generally speaking, this is particularly at the beginning or at starting-up again, and by a company takeover. Bearing the starters in mind, the Province is involved in various advisory projects. A summary:

6.1 InnoGo Project

Especially focused on innovative techno-starters. The project is further discussed under section 7.

6.2 MicroStarter Zeeland Project

In this project, the starting entrepreneur works with a coach who advises the entrepreneur with regard to applying for micro-credit (max. 35,000 euros). This type of credit is often difficult to get from the established banks, but is indeed offered by a special credit bank which cooperates in this project. The *MicroStarter* is, in practice, extremely suitable for people who are receiving social benefit and who want to start a business.

Further information to be found on: www.microstarter.nl

6.3 Stimulating MVO for Female Entrepreneurs

Those who participate in the 'Sustainable Enterprise' course and who want to start a new business, can be assured of personal guidance and coaching. In the promotion of these courses, female entrepreneurs are strongly encouraged to orientate themselves in entrepreneurship with corporate social responsibility.

7. Stimulating and Facilitating Innovation

In general: Within the general stimulation policy for entrepre-

neurs, there is extra attention for entrepreneurs who want to innovate, and for designers of technological innovations who need a bit of extra support and 'push' in order to be successful. The emphasis in Zeeland is in the knowledge-based economy, and the Province bears a warm heart towards those innovative people and their enterprising business plans. Here are a few of the stimulating measures:

7.1 InnoGo Project

InnoGo is primarily aimed at (techno)starters. The project's goal is to guide and advise these starters towards a financially feasible business plan and, if appropriate, to a working prototype. Likewise, they can also be eligible for a 'pre-seed' (personal) loan between 30,000 and 50,000 euros. They can also be given support in finding (business) accommodation, linking-up to networks and the protection of intellectual property. Another part of the project is the development of *incubators* for innovative initiatives which strengthen one another. The background of this project is that it is advantageous if the entrepreneurial climate in Zeeland has a certain percentage of innovative companies in the technical field. InnoGo is partly financed by the Dutch Ministry of Economic Affairs and implemented by NV Economische Impuls Zeeland. For more information, go to: www.innogo.org

7.2 ZIE

The *Zeeuws Innovatie Netwerk* ^[18] (please refer to 5.3) presents annually at Zeeland's Innovation Event (ZIE) the state of the art in the field of innovation in Zeeland. In 2009, the sixth event took place and it is clear that, as the years pass, the ZIE has grown into a widely valued event. The exchange of knowledge

[18] Zeeland's Innovation Network

Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Action Plan



Action Plan

and the stimulation of expertise which is present in Zeeland's trade and industry occupies the central position. At the opening of the event, the Emergo is presented – the Prize for Innovation in Zeeland (see: 1.1).

7.3 Innovation Bus visits Business Parks

From 2010, a specially-fitted innovation bus will be riding along to visit the various business parks in the province. On board the bus will be advisers who can answer – on location – the frequently asked questions, for example about subsidies and about cooperation with advisory consultants and knowledge institutes.

7.4 C2C Projects

Zeeland occupies the trendsetter's position when it comes to projects which apply the C2C principles (production and consumption in closed loops and making use of renewable energy). In addition to the projects mentioned in 4.2, the initiatives in regard to the bio-based economy (see below) are other examples of the application of cradle to cradle.

7.5 Cooperating with knowledge institutes

In Zeeland, there are top-ranking institutes of knowledge that work intensively together with Zeeland's entrepreneurs. For example:

- **Imares**, which is a part of the University of Wageningen; it is specialised in aquaculture, ecology, the environment and fisheries.

For more information, go to: www.imares.wur.nl

- **Kenniscentrum Kusttoerisme** ^[19], which is a collaboration between the Hogeschool Zeeland and NHTV (National

Hogeschool for Tourism and Traffic). This centre of knowledge carries out research into the figures and trends in tourism and recreation, and is available for undertaking research and tailor-made projects.

You can find more information on:

www.kenniscentrumkusttoerisme.nl

- ***Kenniscentra (Centres of Knowledge) of the Hogeschool Zeeland***

This collage of higher education harbours a number of centres of knowledge. We mention, in particular, the new 'Knowledge Centre of Smart Technologies', which is a centre of knowledge for handling specialised questions posed by entrepreneurs about micro system technology; if necessary, they are referred to universities either at home, or abroad.

- ***Bio-base Europe***, which is a new centre of knowledge as well as being the first example of Zeeland's ambition to become a bio-based region in Europe.

In a bio-based economy, the residual process waste from a certain sector is linked, as far as possible, to be useful to another sector. For example: onion foliage or potato peelings are converted into bio-plastics or incinerated in a bio-energy centre. Or the surplus CO₂ from a manufacturing company is used to heat horticultural greenhouses. The conditions in Zeeland are good in order to make the bio-based economy successful, such as open water, space, a logistical organisation and sufficient agricultural farming and basic industry to link up the processes. In this first phase, pilot projects are set-up and the possibilities of collaboration are researched. The

[19] Coastal Tourism Centre of Knowledge

Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Action Plan



Action Plan

first result has already been achieved with the start of Bio Base Europe (part of the Interreg Project). In Ghent a pilot plant will be started, and in Terneuzen a training centre will be set-up which will help gain experience with new technologies and production methods.

8. Rural Development and Tourism

In general: Important sectors in Zeeland's economy are agriculture, horticulture and tourism. The businesses in these sectors are almost entirely small to medium-sized enterprises and they operate under the influence of market fluctuations. The Province supports and encourages entrepreneurs to develop in a visionary way and to contribute towards the future of a sustainable Zeeland, with an excellent quality of life. If we consider rural development, the Province makes active use of the European programme POP-2 (Rural Development). The objectives of this programme and that of the Province are very comparable, and can be summarised as follows:

1. strengthening the competitiveness of the sectors of agriculture and forestry;
2. improving the environment in the countryside;
3. improving the rural quality of life and the diversification of the rural economy.

Projects in regard to objective nr. 2 above:

Municipalities and the Province will develop plans to make the villages more attractive and comfortable for the inhabitants and, in some cases, also for the tourists. These extra efforts concerning the quality of life have had, in almost all of the cases, spin-off for local trade and industry. Building contrac-

tors, the hotel and catering industry, shop-keepers and the service providers benefit from this impulse, all of which contributes to the quality of life by creating employment and investments. For a number of years, these projects have been successfully implemented, and they will receive more interest and priority in the forthcoming years.

Projects in regard to objective nr. 3 above:

Within this framework, organisations and associations can present projects which contribute towards the quality of life in the countryside, most of which will have spin-off for local trade and industry. In this way, the Province helps financially in the building, or rebuilding, of a community centre, a building for the scouts or a mobile educational service. In this regard, these projects will continue in the forthcoming years; it is also important that organisations are made aware of these stimulating measures which can be made good use of.

For the sectors of agriculture and tourism, the motto is: Strengthen, Sustain and Stimulate. We note a few of the innovative and promising projects which are supported by the Province:

- developing and promoting the local products under the name of 'Zeeuwse Zilte Zaligheden' [20];
- the development of new product-market combinations such as tourism in combination with fitness, wellbeing and vitality;
- developing the links between the sectors of healthcare and tourism;
- developing the economic potentials of water sports.

[20] Free English translation: Zeeland's Salty Delicacies

Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Action Plan



9. Commercial Relations

The Province of Zeeland and partners maintain contacts with various regions abroad. A recent example of this is a trade mission to Yangzhou in China.

9.1 Trade Delegation to China

In April 2009 a trade delegation from the South-Western part of the Netherlands (West-Brabant and Zeeland) visited the Chinese city of Yangzhou; this delegation was led by Burgomaster Van der Velden from Breda. The delegation consisted of over 80 representatives of government, education and trade and industry. The trade mission to Yangzhou was a direct follow-up to earlier contacts and to an Agreement of Intent effectuated in 2007 with this Chinese city. The entrepreneurs who travelled in the delegation made a great number of very promising contacts with Chinese businesses, with a view to palpable results. An illustration of this: since the trade mission, a construction company from Zeeland purchases (on quite a large scale) steel products from China, and another firm in Zeeland is going to test hydraulic pumps produced in China, with the objective – possibly via a distributor – of importing these pumps. In the autumn of 2009, the Chinese entrepreneurs made a return visit to Zeeland.

Zeeland: A Strong Entrepreneurial Spirit in the Region

Communication

In 2011, the following activities are planned:

1. Networking Sessions: Stronger and More Sustainable Zeeland

- The networking is focused on the fact that organisations can learn from one other. The accent is on entrepreneurship, sustainability and the relationship with the economic crisis. The emphasis is not only on entrepreneurship, but also on the role of education and the authorities. In 2011, diverse sessions will be organised, to which participants will deliver the specific subjects to be handled at these meetings. The tools necessary are: press releases, flyers, interviews, opinion articles, web-reporting, direct mailing.

2. Partner Group

- The 'Partnerkring Zeeuwse MKB' ^[21] is becoming an increasingly important instrument. The objective of the Partner Group is to create structural cooperative links between the partners. The Partner Group is made up of the authorities



(provincial and local), trade and industry (MKB Zeeland and Rabobank), institutions of knowledge (Hogeschool Zeeland and ROC Zeeland), Syntens (Innovation Network), Chamber of Commerce, Delta NV (energy) and the Zeeuwse Milieu-federatie. The tools necessary are: press releases, flyers, interviews, opinion articles, web-reporting, direct mailing.

3. MVO (CSR) - Event

- In 2011, the second 'event' of MVO will be held in Flanders. This cooperation between Zeeland and Flanders is intended to make entrepreneurs more socially aware, particularly in relation to the environment. The tools necessary are: press releases, flyers, interviews, opinion articles, web-reporting, direct mailing, three-monthly Newsletter.

4. PSEB – Provinciaal Sociaal Economisch Beleidsplan ^[24] Working Sessions

- Within the course of the Provincial Socio-Economic Policy Plan, working sessions will be held, also in 2011, which will



^[21] Partner Group for Zeeland's Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises [SME] | ^[24] Provincial Socio-Economic Policy Plan

Communication

be mainly focused on developing new links between the various branches/sectors.

5. Specific use of various helpful resources:

- One (administrative) desk, where every entrepreneur can go with queries about regulations and bye-laws, permits, possible subsidies (both national and European) and for advice.
- An information package, in which the province communicates with entrepreneurs in a proactive way; this can also be supplied on request.
- Workshops, symposiums, network sessions, expert meetings and courses in order to promote and increase the knowledge of each other's branch, as well as mutual cooperation. What works well for one person, can also work well for another. The idea is to organise this sort of thing a few times a year, in consultation with the partners.
- A communication calendar, which includes the planning and the necessary resources.
- An action plan, in which all of the previously mentioned

aspects are presented in a clear and well-organised manner (who does what, where, when, why and how).

- Giving continuous attention to the European Union; the EU has helped to make all of this possible.

6. Cooperation in regard to the economy, environment and energy.

- Within the provincial organisation, 2010 marks the starting-point of determining a number of joint themes in the area of energy, the economy and the environment. The Departments of Environment, Economics and Communications will give specific attention to these themes in 2011. Some of these topics will be tidal energy, CO₂ (storage and management), BioBasedEurope (generating energy based on biological fuel), ECO XXI (sustainable municipalities) and sustainable operational management of the authorities. The tools that are necessary for this are: press releases, flyers, interviews, opinion articles, web reporting, direct mailing, extranet, excursions.





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