

EIS – Everywhere International SMEs

Action Plan by

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Other partners / players involved (if relevant)	Enterprise Ireland, Udaras na Gaeltachta and Letterkenny Institute of Technology
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1. Policy context

1.1 Aim of the Action Plan

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: **Enhancing the competitiveness of SMEs, Investment Priority 3(d) – support for SME competitiveness, innovation capacity and internationalisation,**

1.2 Peer Review Summary of reviewed measure

The interregional Peer Review for the addressed policy instrument – as mentioned above – with particular focus on the measure “Export Assistance Programme” took place as part of the Interregional Learning Workshop end of June 2017 in Aarhus. As preparation Donegal County has provided relevant information about the addressed policy instrument/the “Export Assistance Programme” in written form for all EIS partners by filling in the respective EIS template for these Peer Reviews. More information about the applied Peer Review methodology is available in the “Guideline for Peer Review (PR) Workshops”. The full documentation of Donegal’s Peer Review workshop is available in the internal, full documentation of the Peer Review.

The findings of the Peer Review process regarding the addressed policy instrument in particular regarding the measure “Export Assistance Programme” are a very important contribution of the interregional learning process to the elaboration of the actions of this Action Plan.

Ireland is a small open economy and is heavily dependent on both exporting and inward investment. Over the years the country has been very successful at attracting foreign direct investment from all over the world and in particular from the USA, the UK and Europe.

In 2016 the economy grew by 5.3% making it the fastest growing economy in Europe, however some of the statistics are volatile and may have distorted this figure particularly in the last quarter. However in 2016 export growth slowed to 2.4% and while there was growth in chemical and electrical equipment exports to the US due to a strong dollar, in 2016 overall, excluding these two sectors exports fell by 4.5% year on year revealing a weakening for the indigenous export sectors. Goods exports to the UK fell by 3.4% due to the weakening sterling. With the decision of the UK to leave the European market there are very likely to be significant new challenges for Irish firms currently operating in the UK market and an urgency required for firms to identify new export markets particularly within the

European Union. Traditionally Irish firms have limited themselves to English speaking markets as their primary focus for internationalisation but with Brexit and the current US administration there is a need to focus on alternative locations and develop alternative strategies.

Currently there are a range of agencies and supports available to firms to investigate and enter new international markets. These include mentoring and Feasibility/Market Study support from agencies such as the Local Enterprise Offices, Udaras na Gaeltachta and Enterprise Ireland, Trading Online Vouchers and Technical Assistance grants from the Local Enterprise Office, marketing support from Bord Bia for food businesses, market research and entry support from InterTradeIreland under the ACUMEN and Elevate programmes.

However the key agency at national level in Ireland that supports Irish firms export is Enterprise Ireland www.enterprise-ireland.com. This agency has a range of supports for firms with high-growth potential and/or export potential. The Local Enterprise Offices within the Local County Councils work closely with Enterprise Ireland and the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation in reviewing current policies and in developing new support instruments.

The Peer Review assessed the Export Assistance support programme of Enterprise Ireland – being part of the policy instrument addressed – as the main focus within the Peer Review. Export assistance is the broad policy instrument to describe a range of supports for Irish businesses available from Enterprise Ireland aimed at assisting them consider, prepare for and make initial entry into export/global markets. It is thus a programme aimed at enabling firms overcome the initial challenges in exporting.

For the Local Enterprise Office the Export Assistance measure is a critical measure as it can be accessed by LEO portfolio clients

The policy context of this measure within Enterprise Ireland is the strategic objectives set out in its 2020 strategy of enabling more Irish firms expand their reach by growing and diversifying their export markets.

The strategic objectives set by Enterprise Ireland in its 2020 Strategic Plan are to:

- Increase the level of exports to €26bn per annum by 2020 and
- Accelerate exports to markets outside the UK to 67% of total exports by 2020.
- Increase exports to the Eurozone by 50% by 2020.
- Achieve significant reorientation of client exports from the UK to Eurozone.

Enterprise Ireland seeks to facilitate the development of a strong exporting sector by increasing the number of firms exporting and increasing the capability and actual sales of exporting firms from a national point of view. In this context the Export Assistance Programme has a key role to play as a “pipeline” of potential future exporting companies feeding the achievement of these objectives.

The www.enterprise-ireland.com/en/Export-Assistance provided by Enterprise Ireland is a key support offering and provides a comprehensive support to SMEs intending to enter export markets. As well as offering these supports there are a number of useful tools for businesses accessible through their website.

The following is an outline of the key elements of the Export Assistance measure and cover all of the six stages in the Six Step Model:

1. Get Export Ready – a series of Q&A sections which prompts a firm/owner manager to assess how export ready they and their firm is with the objective of getting the owner manger to prepare an export plan.
2. Export Workshops – a series of workshops aimed at assisting new and early stage exporters to enhance their knowledge and help them develop techniques and tools to succeed in their chosen export markets
3. Get Export Ready Helpdesk - Through the helpdesk dedicated executives are available to answer questions and make referrals to assist the company/promoter prepare for and overcome any export challenge.
4. The Market Research Centre - which provides access to market intelligence in the form of company, sector, market and country information needed to explore new opportunities in international markets.
5. International Office Network – through an international office network in 30 countries Enterprise Ireland provides access to its clients to more than 60 countries broken down by geography in the following regions – Europe, Americas, Asia Pacific and Middle East & Africa. Through their on-the-ground executives they offer access to their in-market contacts and access to current market information at local level in the respective countries.
6. Trade Events and Missions - On an annual basis Enterprise Ireland organises a programme of trade missions (out-bound and in-bound), trade fairs and knowledge events to give clients the opportunity to connect with new and existing customers, increase sales in international markets, make key contacts in identified markets and increase knowledge. Attendance on these is available to Enterprise Ireland clients only.
7. Building Export Selling Capabilities - These programmes, workshops and accelerators are provided to assist companies strengthen their export capabilities and include a graduate placement option, an international selling programme, mentoring and access to industry specific expert.

However from the Peer Review it was identified that:

- There was no formal, structured co-ordination of the support for SMEs to internationalise at County level,
- While Enterprise Ireland's supports were openly accessible through their website, there was no pro-active or on-going promotion or awareness campaigns to make these supports widely known to the broad base of SMEs,
- As the Export Assistance measure has a broad national focus it cannot sufficiently reflect the needs of regional SMEs in County Donegal and accordingly cannot provide services in a sufficient manner at local level.
- Consequently there is a gap at local level in the county in raising awareness of internationalisation and of the supports at regional level for SMEs.

A summary of the combined SWOT of the Export Assistance instrument carried out by Donegal and the project partners identified the following:

<p>STRENGTHS</p> <p>S1 Linked to key strategic objectives of the agency and Government.</p> <p>S2 Highly focussed on achieving pipeline of new exporting companies.</p> <p>S3 Integrated range of supports and also linked to other measures within Enterprise Ireland.</p> <p>S4 Covers all steps in the Six Step model with strong focus on stages 1 and 2 – the why and situation analysis.</p> <p>S5 Good core content and market knowledge.</p> <p>S6 Very well funded instrument.</p>	<p>WEAKNESSES</p> <p>W1 Dublin centric – strongly centralised approach.</p> <p>W2 Weak regional presence.</p> <p>W3 Lack of co-ordination with limited, if any, integration with regional and local stakeholders.</p> <p>W4 Not linked to regional and local infrastructure and support structures.</p> <p>W5 Limited measurement of outputs and outcomes.</p> <p>W6 Not transparent outside of EI client portfolio.</p>
<p>OPPORTUNITIES</p> <p>O1 More analysis at local level and the development of more local supports.</p> <p>O2 Explore possibilities for greater co-operation locally/nationally.</p> <p>O3 Greater promotion of the measure to SMEs outside EI client portfolio.</p> <p>O4 Increased focus from LEOs to access the measure to support their clients.</p>	<p>THREATS</p> <p>T1 BREXIT</p> <p>T2 USA tax reform and changing trade policies.</p> <p>T3 Unstable/uncertain international situation</p> <p>T4 Increased international security and bureaucracy</p> <p>T5 Focus only on successful companies.</p>

O5 Improved measurement and sharing of information.	
O6 Potential to develop a strong regional focus to delivery with linkages to regional and local stakeholders, infrastructure and support ecosystem.	
O7 BREXIT as a stimulant to the need to identify alternative markets.	

Through the Peer Review Process and taking into consideration the identified common approaches and Good Practices of the EIS project and partners the identified areas for improvement are:

1. Seek to identify ways that there can be better co-ordination at and regional level in combination with national level,
2. Increase the knowledge and capability of owners and managers of regional SMEs in relation to internationalization through a bespoke internationalization program at regional level,
3. Improve the measurement of outputs and outcomes of public support for regional SMEs,
4. Develop a regional response based on assessment of the needs of regional firms.

2. Context of the Proposed Actions

The EIS programme Peer Review identified the lack of co-ordination of effort and the very centralised nature of the Export Assistance Programme of Enterprise Ireland as a key weaknesses in the Border and Western region. This has resulted in a lack of engagement with local stakeholders in both the promotion and delivery of the measure, low levels of engagement by local firms in the measure and in firms having limited knowledge of the supports available to them.

There was also identified a lack of urgency with the SME sector, of which some 95% are micro firms with less than 10 employees, in relation to the potential impacts of BREXIT and in particular how it will negatively affect firms trading into and with the firms in the UK.

A key challenge in the delivery of these actions to get buy-in from the main enterprise agencies such as Enterprise Ireland, which has national policies and programmes, and other agencies with a similar role in specialised sectors such as BIM and Bord Bia.

A key challenge and limiting factor identified in our Peer Review – like in most of the Good Practices within the EIS project was the limited capability of many SMEs and their management to manage the processes and challenges associated with taking their businesses into new export markets or engaging in international trade. Most SME have very limited resources such as market and technical knowledge, staff skills, time, money and management time. The development of a bespoke support programme based on identified business needs as part of the Action Plan will seek to address this issue.

The Action Plan seeks to raise the level of awareness among regional SMEs of the range of existing supports available for internationalisation and of the opportunities which it offers. This will be done through the delivery of a series of awareness workshops.

The Action Plan for Donegal County is fully taking into account the existing internationalisation services at national level complementing these with activities and services at regional level, which are:

1. Awareness Raising Workshops in Donegal,
2. Screening of internationalisation potentials of Donegal's SMEs,
3. Bespoke internationalisation program for Donegal's SMEs,
4. Improved co-ordination of regional support system.

Even though this Action Plan aims at long-term and sustainable improvement of the support system for regional SMEs in terms of internationalisation, the first focus are the next two calendar years 2019 and 2020, equally to the end of phase 2 of the EIS project.

The following diagrams sets the actions of this Action Plan in relationship to the existing, complementary activities in the timeline of the next two calendar years 2019 and 2020:

Current Support System for SME internationalisation

Employment Survey
(national survey with
regional aspects)
Dec. 2018

National Enterprise Week
(regionally organised)
March 2019

Enterprise Ireland programs
of internationalisation support
(including Export Assistance)
measure continuing

SMEs interested in
internationalisation

SMEs with potentials
(suitable) and identified
needs

Supported SMEs
in Donegal

Increased export from
Donegal's economy

Action Plan Donegal

Improved coordination of
regional support system
Jan. 2019 – Dec. 2020

Awareness Raising
Workshops in Donegal
January - September 2019
Oct. – Dec. 2019: midterm Eval.

Screening of internationalisation
potentials of Donegal's SMEs
April – Sept 2019
Oct. – Dec. 2019: midterm Eval.

Bespoke internationalisation program for
Donegal's SMEs (complementary to
national support)
Sept. 2019 – Sept. 2020
Oct. – Dec. 2020: midterm Eval.

Figure 1: Timeline of the action implementation of Donegal's Action Plan and the relationship to the current support system for SME internationalisation

2.1 The link of Donegal's Action Plan with the GlobaleIS Tool.

Donegal County Council and the Local Enterprise office acknowledges the GlobaleIS Tool developed during the first two years of the EIS project in a joint learning process of the EIS partner regions. For more information about the GlobaleIS Tool please refer to the GlobaleIS Concept Paper.

Donegal County Council will follow the integrated and structured approach of the GlobaleIS Tool as a guideline in improving its regional support system for SME internationalisation.

The improved co-ordination of a regional support system will ensure that the internationalisation support at regional level will follow the 4-step approach of the GlobaleIS Tool. Furthermore, an updated mapping of public services and services provided by agencies such as the Irish Exporters Association will increase

transparency of the offered services among regional SMEs and among the regional stakeholders. This co-ordination action (Action 1) is part of the outer shell of the GlobaleIS Tool as are the awareness raising workshops of Action 2 informing the TGARGET GROUP of SMEs about internationalisation opportunities.

Carrying out a Diagnostic of Current Capability with application of the GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic guideline (Action 3) is addressing step 1 "Think".

The bespoke Internationalisation Programme for Donegal's SMEs (Action 4) is addressing the steps "Decide", "Plan" and "Go!". The programme will have within it mentoring and an export trip which will enable the participating firms take their first steps into new international markets or joint-ventures.

The following diagram demonstrates the links of Donegal's actions with the GlobaleIS Tool:

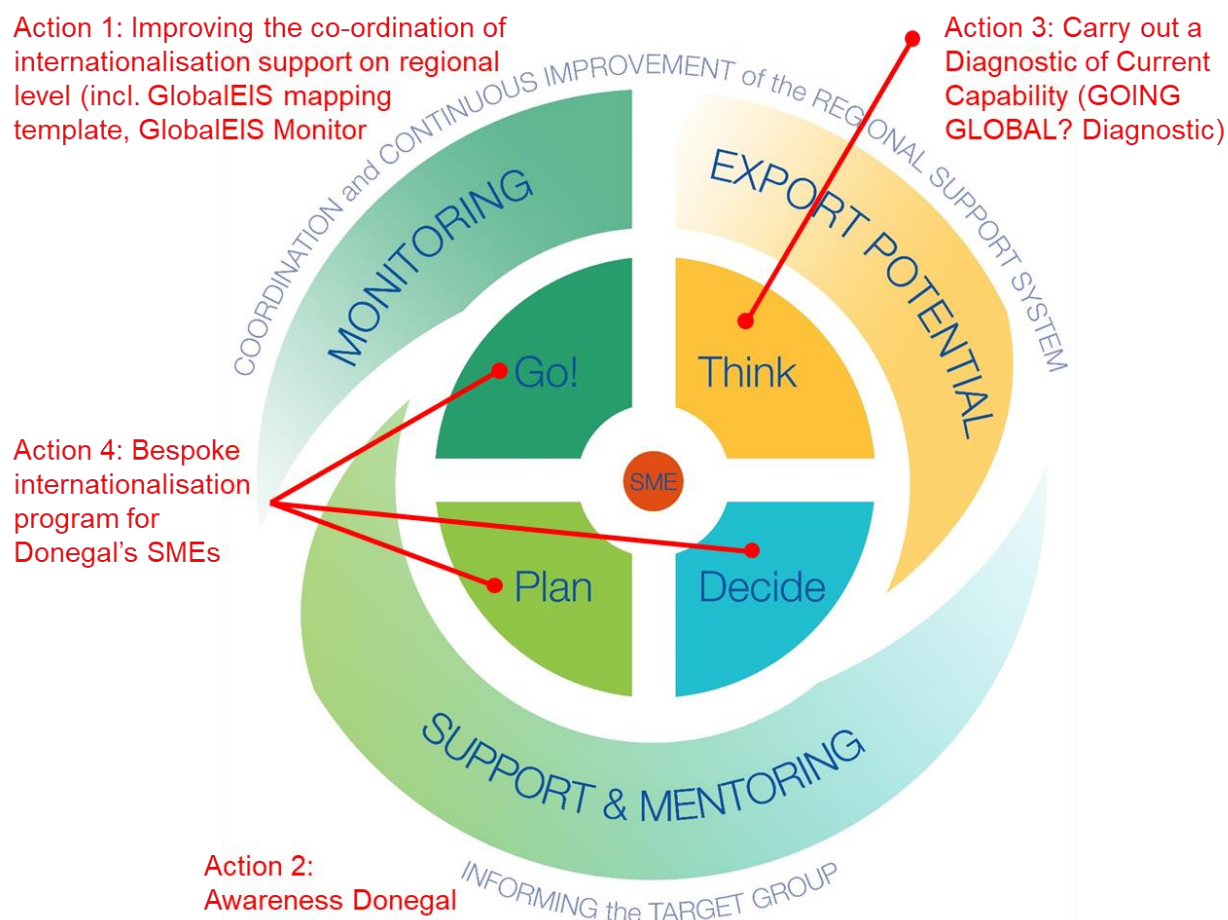


Figure 2: Donegal's Actions – Bricks of the GlobaleIS Tool

3. Action 1: Improving the co-ordination of internationalisation support on regional level.

3.1 Background.

A key weakness identified in the Peer Review of our addressed policy instrument (at ILW2 in Aarhus in June 2017) in relation to the promotion and the delivery of the measure in Donegal was the lack of a co-ordinated or integrated approach, both for the measure and for the range of supports to SMEs. A number of key insights from both staff exchanges and ILWs have played a role in how we plan to facilitate the internationalisation of SMEs in our region going forward. Namely the format and structure of the Growth Wheel Good Practice and other tools utilised by Central Denmark, this highlighted the need for a standardised and structured approach across support agencies as they assess the readiness of SMEs to export. During the Staff Exchanges in Alentejo in July 2018 and in Letterkenny/Donegal in September 2018 we have worked in conjunction with our partners in Alentejo, Koprivnica and Hampshire to develop a service mapping tool which will be used as part of a programme assessment which we will run with our regional partners, thus encouraging a more transparent discussion between regional partners as they support companies with the potential to internationalise.

Therefore a key priority to ensure the maximum benefit at local level from any action/s is the development of an agreed a framework (or methodology) for co-ordination.

3.2 Objective.

The objective of this action is:

- to improve the communication and collaboration among the regional stakeholders and BSOs,
- to improve the levels of co-ordination of the measure and other programmes in support of exporting and internationalisation at regional level,
- to increase the transparency of the offered services for regional SMEs and regional stakeholders,
- to maximise the available resources to achieve the best outcomes for engaging firms.

3.3 Target group.

For the co-ordination of internationalisation services at regional level all those regional stakeholders belonging to the target groups, which have contacts with SMEs, as well as national organisations providing support services for Donegal's SMEs are the target group for this action. The most relevant stakeholders for this action are Local Enterprise Office Donegal, Enterprise Ireland, Udaras na Gaeltachta, Letterkenny Institute of Technology and the Irish Exporters Association.

3.4 Content.

The most relevant stakeholders have agreed to develop a new co-ordination model of internationalisation services provided for Donegal's SMEs and other services interlinked with this support.

The following services/related events are under co-ordination:

- Employment Survey, part for Donegal A Current tool used by Donegal to assess the current status of clients, creates a bank of data to assess development of companies taking part in the newly developed programme.
- National Enterprise Week, Donegal's event Dedicated Export workshop to be held as part of week of events targeting SMEs in our region. Some are run in conjunction with the agencies we will work with to implement the EIS programme.
- Enterprise Ireland programs of internationalisation support (including Export Assistance),
- Awareness Raising Workshops in Donegal (upcoming, see action 2) new initiative resulting from EIS learnings to create awareness about potential to export and what's required. Entry point for potential companies taking part in the programme.
- Screening of the internationalisation potential of Donegal's SMEs (upcoming, see action 3) this will involve the application of a new assessment tool to assess readiness to internationalise and suitability for additional supports through the programme.
- Bespoke internationalisation program for Donegal's SMEs (upcoming, see action 4), key output of the EIS engagement is the development of a tailored programme to facilitate internationalisation of SMEs in our region in association with key partners.
- Internationalisation services offered by members of the Irish Exporter Association.

The responsible organisations agreed on to

- Hold quarterly (after 2 years - half annually) co-ordination meetings;
- Carry out a mapping of the internationalisation services offered for Donegal's SMES (see next sub-chapter);
- Signpost SMEs with interest in internationalisation to the most relevant service provider(s);
- Avoid competition among each other;
- Share information about signposted/supported SMEs among each;
- Participate in joint monitoring and impact evaluation of the internationalisation support for Donegal's SME with a joint approach (see respective sub-chapter) with review at appropriate times;

- Identify gaps in the internationalisation support for Donegal's SMEs and close them by creating new tailored services.

3.4.1 Mapping of offered services for Donegal's SMEs.

The following services, offered for Donegal's SMEs, will be mapped:

- public on regional level,
- public on national level,
- offered by members of Irish Exporter organisation.

For the mapping, the GlobaleIS mapping template as part of the EIS Joint Action will be used and will be adapted if necessary. The following information will be collected for each individual internationalisation support service:

- title of the service;
- WHO is the provider of the service?
 - Organisation,
 - Address (in case of branch offices also more addresses)
(location of provider is important in case of large and rural geographic areas),
 - Contact person and contact details,
 - Web link to more detailed information;
- WHAT is the service about?
short textual description with key words,
no categorization of service;
- Link to single steps of the GlobaleIS Tool:
 - Shaping and Informing the target group,
 - Screening of internationalization potentials of SMEs,
 - Support and Mentoring SMEs in FOCUS
 - WHAT,
 - WHERE,
 - HOW,
 - Support and Mentoring SMEs in TIMING,
 - Mentoring and monitoring SMEs in GO INTERNATIONAL.

For the GlobaleIS mapping template we refer also to the EIS Joint Action paper (see separate EIS document), chapter 3 "Template for mapping the service portfolio of the regional support system (GlobalEIS Mapping Template)".

All involved partners will use the completed overview for signposting SMEs to the most appropriate service provider(s).

The completed overview will help to:

- Increase transparency of international support services for Donegal's SMES
 - From the perspective of regional SMEs: identify where the most relevant services for clients are?
 - From the perspective of the BSOs and stakeholders: Do they have sufficient knowledge about all offered services so that they are able to
 - Signpost a SME to the most relevant service provider,
 - Avoid unnecessary duplication of single services,
 - Avoid competition with other public services;
- Highlight clearly the core competencies and responsibilities of single service providers,
- Allow a consistent presentation of the available services for Donegal's SMEs with web links to more detailed information,
- Identify gaps in the internationalisation support for Donegal's SMEs.

The mapping will be a more detailed breakdown of already existing overview "Guide to Business Supports in Donegal" with the particular focus on internationalisation.

3.4.2 Monitoring and Impact Evaluation.

As part of the improved co-ordination mechanisms the involved partners from Donegal agreed to apply a common set of indicators for monitoring the implementation of the actions of this Action Plan. This action part is directly interlinked with the GlobaleIS Monitor (part of the EIS Joint Action), the application of a standardised set of monitoring and evaluation indicators.

For the GlobaleIS Monitor we refer also to the EIS Joint Action paper, chapter 4 "Standardised indicator set for monitoring and evaluating the system of SME internationalisation support (GlobaleIS Monitor)".

The set of proposed indicators of the Joint Action is the following:

1. Satisfaction of intermediaries with communication/collaboration/co-ordination among each other.

To measure the increase, an initial value has to be defined based on existing survey results or by integration of a respective question in an upcoming survey: for Donegal 220 stakeholders/BSOs will be considered and a respective survey will be carried out at the beginning of 2019 followed by additional surveys at the end of 2019 and the end of 2020.

2. The number of SMEs participating in/attending single services.

For the actions of Donegal's Action Plan:

- a. # of SMEs participating in awareness workshops.
 - b. # of SMEs participating in the GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic.
 - c. # of SMEs participating in the bespoke internationalisation programme.
3. Increased awareness of regional SMEs about internationalisation opportunities
To measure the increase, an initial value has to be defined based on existing survey results or by integration of a respective question in an upcoming survey: for Donegal the national employment survey and the national enterprise survey week will be used.
4. Satisfaction of regional SMEs with transparency of offered support services for internationalisation
To measure the increase an initial value has to be defined based on existing survey results or by integration of a respective question in an upcoming survey: for Donegal the national employment survey and the national enterprise survey week will be used.
5. # of new potential target markets identified (as part of new rough export ideas developed),
6. # of Export Plans elaborated by beneficiaries of internationalisation support,
7. # of new markets entered by beneficiaries of internationalisation support,
8. # of created jobs by beneficiaries of internationalisation support,
9. Increased export value [€] of the beneficiaries of internationalisation support,
10. Profitability trend of beneficiaries of internationalisation support,
11. # of new products developed in relation to the internationalisation activities of beneficiaries of internationalisation support.
12. Donegal's self-defined performance indicator for the addressed policy instrument within the EIS project:
% of SMEs benefitting from the instrument will have increased their export turnover due to improved policy instrument by year end 2020:
target figure 7%

Each indicator is linked to one or more steps or to the outer shell of the GlobaleIS Tool:

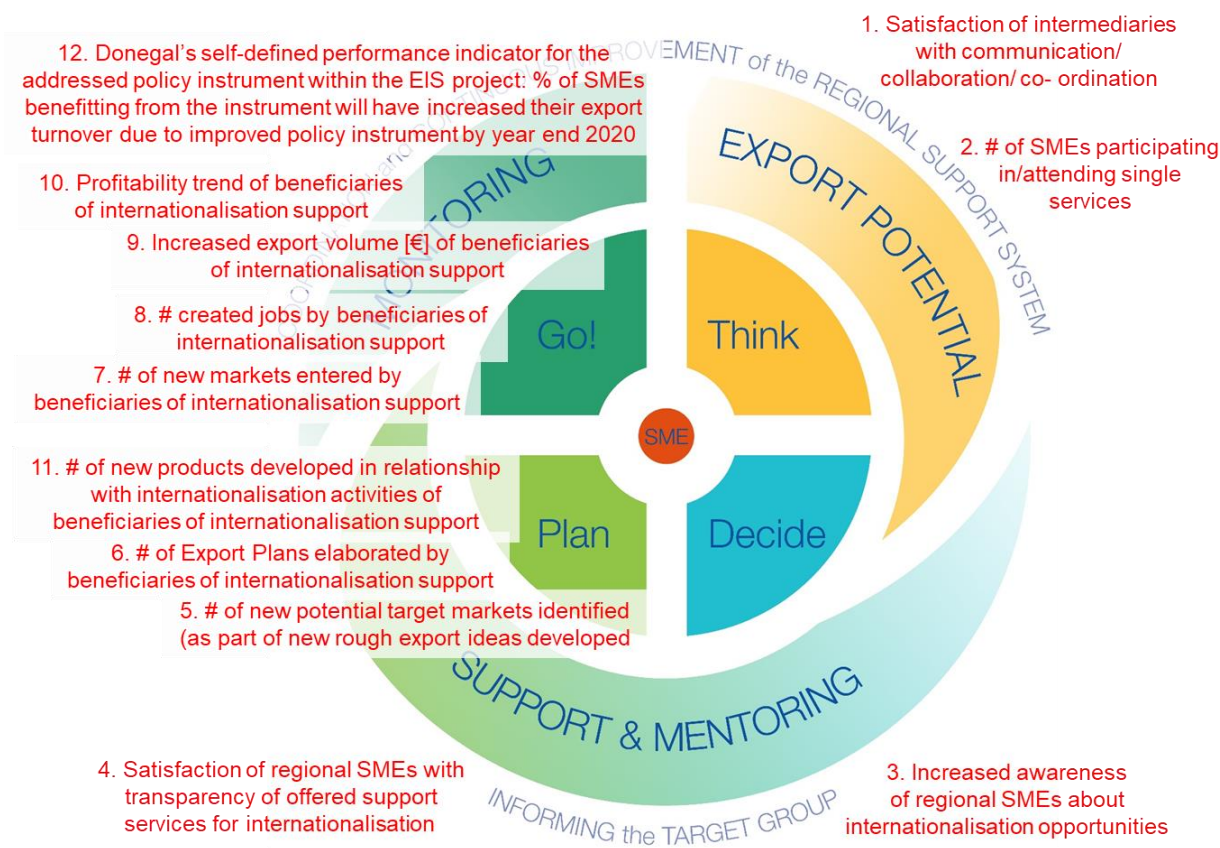


Figure 3: Monitoring and impact evaluation: linking the indicators with the GlobaleIS Tool

The following overview shows, which indicators will be applied for which action implemented:

Action	Action 1: Improving the co- ordination of internationali sation support on regional level	Action 2: Aware ness Works hops	Action 3: Carry out a Diagnostic of Current Capability	Action 4. Develop and Deliver Bespoke Internationalis ation Programme.
Indicator				
1. Satisfaction of intermediaries with communication/collaboration/co-ordination among each other	X			
2. # of SMEs participating in/attending – specify individual service		X	X	X
3. Increased awareness of regional SMEs about internationalisation opportunities		X	X	
4. Satisfaction of regional SMEs with transparency of offered support services for internationalisation	X	X	X	X
5. # of new potential target markets identified (as part of new rough export ideas developed)			X	X
6. # of Export Plans elaborated by beneficiaries of internationalisation support				X
7. # of new markets entered by beneficiaries of internationalisation support				X

Action	Action 1: Improving the co- ordination of internationali- sation support on regional level	Action 2: Aware- ness Works hops	Action 3: Carry out a Diagnostic of Current Capability	Action 4. Develop and Deliver Bespoke Internationalis- ation Programme.
Indicator				
8. # created jobs by beneficiaries of internationalisation support				X
9. Increased export volume [€] of beneficiaries of internationalisation support				X
10. Profitability trend of beneficiaries of internationalisation support				X
11. # of new products developed in relationship with internationalisation activities of beneficiaries of internationalisation support				X
12. Donegal's self-defined performance indicator for the addressed policy instrument within the EIS project: % of SMEs benefitting from the instrument will have increased their export turnover due to improved policy instrument by year end 2020: target figure 7%				X

3.5 Partners/Players involved.

Local Enterprise Office Donegal, Enterprise Ireland, Udaras na Gaeltachta, Letterkenny Institute of Technology and Irish Exporters Association.

3.6 Timeframe.

1 st Co-ordination meeting	January 2019
Following co-ordination meetings	April, July, October 2019, January, April, July, October 2020
Survey about Satisfaction of intermediaries with communication/ collaboration/co-ordination among each other	Beginning 2019 End of 2019 End of 2020
Mapping of services	January – June 2019
Setting up co-ordination model/concept (incl. monitoring system and Joint Database for beneficiaries of services as agreed with stakeholders)	January – June 2019
Adoption of co-ordination concept/model (incl. monitoring system, Joint Database) and signing of agreement with stakeholders	June 2019
Implementation of Joint Database for beneficiaries of services	July – September 2019
Review Meeting for 1 st year of improved co-ordination	January 2020.
Review Meeting for 2 nd year of improved co-ordination	January 2021

3.7 Costs.

Costs will relate to the arrangement and hosting of meetings only. Work will be done by Local Enterprise Office staff.

Anticipated cost of

- Meetings: €800 / year
- Service mapping: €600
- Monitoring approach: €800
- Joint database: €1,000
- Other: admin support €1,000

3.8 Funding Sources.

Funding will come from the Local Enterprise Office Donegal. This funding will be provided from the Local Enterprise Office core budget provided by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, which is co-funded from the EU under the Regional Operational Programme, the addressed policy instrument.

3.9 Impact expected.

The adoption of an agreed framework for co-ordination and maximising of resources will result in:

Measured with GlobaleIS monitor indicators:

- 1) Satisfaction of intermediaries with communication/ collaboration/coordination among each other,
- 4) Satisfaction of regional SMEs with transparency of offered support services for internationalisation

Other monitoring indicators (not explicitly being part of the GlobaleIS Monitor, but with some links):

- Better knowledge of SME needs in terms of external internationalisation support,
- Increased knowledge about
 - intended target markets of Donegal's SMEs (link with GlobaleIS indicator 7),
 - perceived quality of offered services by the beneficiaries (linked with numerous GlobaleIS indicators),
 - impact of the services on the beneficiaries (linked with numerous GlobaleIS indicators),

- internationalisation performance of beneficiaries (linked with numerous GlobaleIS indicators),
- Improved services to business (linked with numerous GlobaleIS indicators),
- Greater integration of the suite of services available to firms (linked with numerous GlobaleIS indicators),
- Less competition among services providers (linked with numerous GlobaleIS indicators),
- Enhanced capability within engaging firms (linked with numerous GlobaleIS indicators),
- More intensive SMEs' internationalisation activities with impact on export volume, competitiveness and new jobs (linked with GlobaleIS indicators 7), 8), 9), 10), 11).

4. Action 2: Awareness Workshops.

4.1 Background.

The Peer Review identified that there was limited promotion of the Enterprise Ireland support services to Donegal's SMEs – tended to be aimed at Enterprise Ireland clients only from a national perspective. A key opportunity was identified to increase the awareness of these and other supports so as to increase the levels of engagement from the SME sector in Donegal. The necessity to continue to create awareness and encourage a sense of global ambition was a common thread during discussions with our partners during numerous interregional learning events, in particular during the Peer Reviews for almost all addressed policy instruments (parts of ILWs 2, 3 and 4), our Staff Exchange in Hampshire (July 2018), the session on the development of the GlobalEIS Tool (in particular ILWs 5 and 6) and exchange on Good Practices, most notably from our partners in Central Denmark (Good Practices "Screening of growth potential CDR" and "Export mentor program") and Alentejo (Good Practice "Voucher Opportunities of Internationalization").

4.2 Objective.

To raise the awareness among local SMEs of the need to identify new alternative international opportunities and to raise their awareness of the range of supports available to them from Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Office and other public and private agencies.

4.3 Target group.

SMEs in Donegal with a potential/need/desire to develop new international trade.

4.4 Content.

Deliver a series (4) of three hour information workshops, delivered in conjunction with Enterprise Ireland, highlighting the potential opportunities in international markets, the challenges of Brexit and the range of supports available to them from Enterprise Ireland, the Local Enterprise Office and others.

The focus and content of the workshops will be defined according to the results of the latest survey of the national Employment Survey and ongoing engagement with local business. As the final results will be available only at the beginning of 2019, the topics of the awareness workshops can be completed only at the beginning of next year.

4.5 Partner/ Players involved.

Local Enterprise Office Donegal, Enterprise Ireland and Udaras na Gaeltachta and SMEs with ambition to start exporting.

4.6 Timeframe.

Awareness Workshops to take place January 2019 to September 2019 after topics and location for each workshop are agreed on. From October till December 2019 a midterm evaluation will be carried out and a decision about continuation of the awareness workshops taken.

Agree timeframe of workshops with local stakeholders	January - February 2019
Running the pilot awareness workshops in cooperation with involved partners. Topics and locations will be selected on demand.	February – September 2019
Analysis and midterm evaluation of pilot workshops with decision about continuation of the awareness workshops, in case of positive decision improvement of the awareness workshop concept based on the evaluation results	October – December 2019
Continuation with awareness workshops (in case of positive midterm evaluation)	January – December 2020

4.7 Costs.

€4,000 to deliver 4 workshops.

4.8 Fund Sources.

Potential funding to be sourced from Local Enterprise Office Donegal. This funding will be provided from the Local Enterprise Office core budget provided by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, which is co-funded from the EU under the Regional Operational Programme, the addressed policy instrument.

4.9 Impact Expected.

Increased awareness among SMEs of both the opportunities for internationalisation and the supports to assist them to do so with at least 60 firms attending the workshops.

The respective GlobaleIS Monitor indicators are:

- 2) # of SMEs participating in/attending single services: 60 firms
- 3) Increased awareness of regional SMEs about internationalisation opportunities

4) Satisfaction of regional SMEs with transparency of offered support services for internationalisation

5. Action 3: Carry out a Diagnostic of Current Capability.

5.1 The Background.

A key challenge and limiting factor identified in our Peer Review – like in most of the Peer Reviews, and in some of the Good Practices within the EIS project - was the limited capability of many SMEs and their management to manage the processes and challenges associated with taking their businesses into new export markets or engaging in international trade. Most SME have very limited resources such as market and technical knowledge, staff skills, time, money and management time. During in-depth presentation and discussion of the Good Practice “Network of Local Export Brokers – part of Pomerania Export Broker system of supporting exporters” from Pomorskie at the Speed Date session on Good Practices in April 2018 (part of ILW 5) we were convinced that the face-to-face contact and personal assistance of (potential) exporters is a crucial success factors. Thus we decided that a Diagnostic of Current Capability in form of a face-to-face interview with potential exporters in Donegal will be a powerful instrument to raise the awareness of regional SMEs for the importance of internationalisation and to motive them to go international.

In addition, it is an urgent matter to get a complete overview of the competencies and potential of the SMEs as future beneficiaries of the public support system in internationalisation. A number of partners agreed to work collaboratively to develop a framework which would allow agencies to test the readiness of companies to internationalise, and also highlight development gaps of the companies to allow agencies to develop support plans or to direct companies to relevant supports. Taking insight from our partners in Central Denmark and reviewing other diagnostics tools available in each of our regions, a new framework was developed and will be branded as Going Global, which is now part of our EIS Joint Action.

Therefore Donegal and other partners have jointly developed in the Staff Exchanges in Alentejo in July 2018, Staff Exchange in Donegal in September 2018) and follow-up activities the GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic template, being part of the EIS JOINT ACTION.

5.2 Objective.

To screen the capability and ambitions of local firms to engage in internationalisation will enable the public support agencies:

- to learn more about the internationalisation competencies and potential of individual SMEs and the whole group of assessed SMEs, which will allow for the development of needs oriented support services for regional SMEs,

- to make an evidence based decision whether the screened SME should get public support at all,
- to select those offered support services, which are the most relevant ones for the screened SMEs,
- to bring together SMEs with similar export ideas for further support services.

5.3 Target group.

Local SMEs capable or desirous of growth through internationalisation.

In order to identify current levels of knowledge, skills and ambition a diagnostic of single SMEs will be done by individual face-to-face interviews with the entrepreneurs. In a first step a cohort of at least 20 firms will be identified in consultation with regional stakeholders and based on results of the annual Employment Surveys and other local engagement. These companies will be contacted to undertake the diagnosis within the first year of EIS phase 2 as a kind of pilot action /feasibility check.

5.4 Content.

The diagnosis starts from a broad perspective of the SME and will then focus on internationalisation issues in a second step. As a guideline the GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic template of the EIS JOINT ACTION will be applied which was jointly developed between some EIS partners.

The use of the diagnostic diagnosis in Donegal will be done in the form of face-to-face interviews by an appointed third party engaged by the Local Enterprise Office Donegal.

The diagnostic information will be used as input for the development of a bespoke programme and analysed SMEs will be signposted to the most relevant service providers according the identified needs for external support of their internationalisation activities.

For the estimation of the SME's internationalisation potential the scoring approach of the GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic will be used.

For the GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic and the scoring metric we refer to the EIS Joint Action paper, chapter 2 "GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic".

5.5 Partners/ Players involved.

Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland and Udaras na Gaeltachta, and SMEs with capability or ambition to start exporting.

5.6 Timeframe.

Integration of GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic into current local support system (based on discussions with local stakeholders).	Jan. –March 2019
Identification of sample of 29pprox.. 20 SMEs for GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic in co-ordination with regional stakeholders	Jan. – March 2019
Face-to face interviews with selected SMES	April – Sept. 2019
Analysis and midterm evaluation of pilot results	Oct. – Dec. 2019
Decision about continuation with assessment tools, In case of YES: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • further development of assessment tool according to experiences during pilot action • roll-out of assessment • ensuring respective funding of assessment activities 	Oct. – Dec 2019
Mainstream of GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic in co-ordination with regional stakeholders	From Jan. 2020 on

5.7 Costs.

Costs to carry out assessments €12,000.

5.8 Funding sources

Funding will come from the Local Enterprise Office Donegal. This funding will be provided from the Local Enterprise Office core budget provided by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, which is co-funded from the EU under the Regional Operational Programme, the addressed policy instrument.

5.9 Impact expected.

Partner agencies will have a better understanding of the export capacity of SMEs in the region and the challenges they face.

Increased likelihood that the supported and coached SMEs – according to the initial GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic of Current Capability – will actually export for the first time/increase their export activities.

The respective GlobaleIS Monitor indicators are:

- 2) # of SMEs participating in/attending Diagnostic interviews: 20,
- 3) Increased awareness of regional SMEs about internationalisation opportunities,
- 4) Satisfaction of regional SMEs with transparency of offered support services for internationalisation,
- 5) # of new potential target markets identified (as part of new rough export ideas developed).

6. Action 4: Develop and Deliver Bespoke Internationalisation Programme.

6.1 Background.

Currently, as the Peer Review in Donegal identified, there is only one nationally available programme to support firms internationalise and this is for Enterprise Ireland clients only. Thus Donegal's companies, in particular small and micro firms, have very limited opportunity to avail of supports that would assist them raise their ambition, increase their capabilities or assist them identify new export/international opportunities. Donegal presented details of national programmes currently available to the EIS partners during the own Peer Review in June 2017 in Aarhus (part of ILW 2) and through this discussion it was noted that the ability to deliver a regional programme, which was more geared for SMEs in more a broader base of sectors was required, given the limited access they had to national programmes which offered limited places in key sectors. The insights gained from others experience of engaging with businesses, highlighted the importance of tailoring to meet regional needs. This is something that can be done better regionally as opposed to the national offering.

It is necessary then to develop a Bespoke Internationalisation Programme to assist these local firms develop their capabilities and skills, based on learning from other integrated and comprehensive Good Practices like the Export Broker System in Pomorskie or the Export Mentor Program in Central Denmark.

6.2 Objective.

The objectives of this action are:

- to deliver a bespoke programme, based on assessed local needs and identified best practices from within EIS,
- to increase the capability of local firms engaging in internationalisation,
- to identify new potential target markets for programme beneficiaries,
- new Export Plans elaborated by programme beneficiaries,
- new foreign markets entered by programme beneficiaries,
- increased export value [€] of programme beneficiaries,
- to create new jobs by programme beneficiaries,
- to improve and to develop new products by programme beneficiaries as a consequence of the Bespoke Internationalisation Programme

6.3 Target group.

Donegal's SMEs with ambitions to grow outside of Ireland.

6.4 Content.

The Bespoke internationalisation Programme will be complementary to the national internationalisation support offered by Enterprise Ireland. It is a toolbox which will be comprised of all the existing services of the Local Enterprise Office Donegal and the other enterprise support agencies, covering the areas of business advice, enterprise promotion, mentoring & training and financial support. Also private services of consultants being member of the Irish Exporter Association will be integrated into the Bespoke Internationalisation Programme.

The absolute novelty is the focus on SMEs' internationalisation activities, which has to date had no specific and explicit focus within Donegal's enterprise support system. Furthermore, through the systematic collection of SMEs' needs in internationalisation support and of their current potential/competency gaps (by awareness workshops and GOING GLOBAL? Diagnostic) the Bespoke Internationalisation Programme will be able to provide individual, tailor-made service bundles for individual SMEs. Furthermore, gaps in the support services will be more easily identified and will be more readily closed through establishing respective new services in co-ordination with all involved players and directly interlinked with action 1 – the improved co-ordination of the regional support system in Donegal.

To deliver this action the Local Enterprise Office will follow the nationally agreed procurement procedures to secure a delivery agent based on an agreed tender and its own internal processes for managing the programme delivery. The specific elements of the action will consist of:

- The preparation of a tender document for the skills development programme
- Tender the programme.
- Carry out tender assessments and award the tender.
- Manage the delivery of the skills development programme with at least 15 participating firms.
- Organise market entry visits for participating firms.
- Carry out evaluation of the programme and record outputs.
- Co-ordinate the Bespoke Internationalisation Programme with involved regional players and the Export Assistance programme of Enterprise Ireland.

6.5 Partners/ Players Involved.

Local Enterprise Office, Enterprise Ireland and Udaras na Gaeltachta, Irish Exporters Association and Programme Delivery agent.

6.6 Timeframe.

Drafting of tender document	Jan. - Feb 2019
Tender Requests sought	March – May 2019
Tender assessment	June 2019
Appointment of agent	July 2019
Programme recruitment	July – August 2019
Programme Delivery	Sept. 2019 – Sept. 2020
Market Entry Visits	Jan. – Sept. 2020
Programme Review and midterm evaluation, Further improvement of program concept based on evaluation results	Oct. – Dec. 2020
Continuation with improved Bespoke Internationalisation Programme in Donegal, Chance of roll-out to other Irish counties	From January 2021 on

6.7 Costs.

Anticipated costs of the Programme are €60,000, including market visits.

6.8 Funding Sources.

The programme will be funded by the Local Enterprise Office and local stakeholders. The Local Enterprise Office budget will be provided by the Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation, which is co-funded from the EU under the Regional Operational Programme, the addressed policy instrument.

If the outcomes and evaluation are positive it is likely that the programme would be financially supported to continue and could be shared as an approach for national local delivery through the LEO network.

6.9 Impact Expected.

The anticipated impacts of this action are:

Respective GlobalEIS Monitor indicators:

- 2) # of SMEs participating in Bespoke Internationalisation Programme: 15;
- 5) # of new potential target markets identified (as part of new rough export ideas developed) (to identify new potential target markets for programme beneficiaries);
- 6) # of Export Plans elaborated by beneficiaries of internationalisation support: 15 new Export Plans elaborated by programme beneficiaries, interlinked with additional indicators:
 - To improve the capability among a minimum of 15 firms to engage in internationalisation;
- 7) # of new markets entered by beneficiaries of internationalisation support interlinked with additional indicators:
 - at least 40% of the participating firms to have begun trading internationally by the end of the programme,
 - increase in the number of firms entering export markets or engaging in international trade;
- 8) # created jobs by beneficiaries of internationalisation support: create 10+ new jobs by programme beneficiaries
- 9) Increased export value [€] of beneficiaries of internationalisation support, interlinked with additional indicators:
 - Self-defined performance indicator: % of SMEs benefitting from the instrument will have increased their export turnover due to improved policy instrument by year end 2020: 7%,
 - Increase in exports by a minimum of 15% in participating firms;
- 10) Trend of profitability of beneficiaries of internationalisation support;
- 11) # of new products developed in relationship with internationalisation activities of beneficiaries of internationalisation support (to improve and to develop new products by programme beneficiaries as a consequence of participating on the Bespoke Internationalisation Programme).

If these outcomes are achieved it is anticipated that the programme will be supported to be continued and possibly extended to other Irish counties.

7.2 Costs.

Action No	Action title	link with addressed policy instrument	influenced amount of Structural Funds for 2019-2020	influenced amount of other Funds for 2019-2020
1	Improving the co-ordination of internationalisation support on regional level	yes	5.000 €	
2	Awareness Workshops	yes	4.000 €	
3	Carry out a Diagnostic of Current Capability	yes	12.000 €	
4	Develop and Deliver Bespoke Internationalisation Programme	yes	60.000 €	
	TOTAL	YES	81.000 €	- €

8. Signature

Date: December 2018

Signature: Michael Tunney

Stamp of the organisation (if available):