

Opportunities For West programme allocates 100th project

Rotterdam – Jeanette Baljeu, executive councillor of the municipality of Rotterdam, has signed the decision for the 100th project within the European funding programme Opportunities For West. With this milestone, 56% of the available funds have been allocated and the overall programme is well on course. Opportunities For West is a collaboration of the four largest cities in the Netherlands and the four provinces of the Randstad, the main Dutch conurbation. Supported by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), these partners have set out 'to bring the Randstad back into the top-five of economic regions in Europe.'

Contribution

To achieve this objective, companies and organizations can propose projects that advance knowledge, innovations and entrepreneurship within the area. Or that make the cities and regions more attractive for living, working and recreation. In those cases, the ERDF can cover a large part of the costs. Often up to about 40%.

The 100th project

The 100th project, the Bioprocess Pilot Facility in Delft, is a nice example of a project from the innovation category. Scaling up from laboratory to industrial scale presents a bottleneck when it comes to converting biobased residues such as agricultural waste into raw materials for building materials, chemical and pharmaceutical products and biofuels. For this reason, various public authorities, knowledge institutions and industry have planned a mutual investment of more than 100 million Euros in a pilot facility in Delft. Here, companies and knowledge institutions from all over the world can test whether their ideas can be scaled up. This is necessary to achieve a biobased economy based on the use of biomass instead of finite resources that cause pollution. The Delft pilot facility is the first of its kind in the world. Both its scale and its open nature make it unique. It makes the Netherlands – in particular the South Wing of the Randstad western conurbation – a pioneer in the development of the biobased economy. According to the Dutch minister of Economic Affairs, Maria van der Hoeven, the Bioprocess Pilot Facility (BPF) illustrates once more the importance of focussing on highly promising clusters and on intensive collaborations in the West region of the Netherlands. "Together with Europe, provinces and cities, knowledge institutions and companies, the government supports the BPF. A project that's unique in the world, to which I, as minister of Economic Affairs contribute over 8 million euro. In short, an important step towards a more sustainable biobased economy."

Duration

Opportunities For West runs until 2016. The ERDF contribution is 310 million euro while other public authorities, companies and organizations add a further 460 million euro, so that a total amount of 770 million euro is available for this duration. Of the total amount, over 56% has been made available to 100 projects.

Role of Rotterdam

Rotterdam has a remarkable role in this collaboration. The city is not just one of the eight partners, Rotterdam is the management authority and responsible for the overall programme.

Note for the press:

For more information about Opportunities For West: Ruud van Raak – (+31)(0)10-489 3736 or (+31)(0)6-20 33 4876

For more information about the Bioprocess Pilot Facility: Marti von Stein, (+31)(0)15-278 9852

www.kansenvoorwest.nl (in Dutch) and www.be-basic.org/proeffaciliteit.html (in English)