

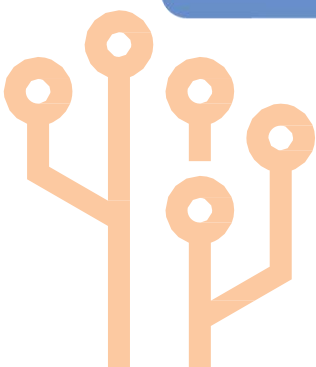


ENGINE

Education for Rural
Entrepreneurship
& Innovation



Rural Development Potential Map Münsterland Region



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1. Socio- economic profile of the region and its rural areas

1.1 Key informations about Socio-economic profile of the Münsterland and its rural areas

Münsterland, located in the northwest of North Rhine-Westphalia, comprises the city of Münster and the surrounding districts of Borken, Coesfeld, Steinfurt, and Warendorf. The region is characterized by a relatively young population, with an average age of 43.5 years, below the state average. Münster itself has the lowest average age (41.1 years) due to its large student population. The rural areas, particularly in Borken and Steinfurt, also have higher proportions of children and young adults, contributing to Münsterland's status as the youngest region in NRW.

Education levels in Münsterland vary. The percentage of students leaving school without a diploma is lower than the NRW average, while the share of high school graduates is slightly below the state level. However, Münster stands out with a significantly higher percentage of students achieving higher education qualifications. The region's economy is heavily influenced by vocational education and training, with 63.2% of the workforce holding vocational qualifications, exceeding the NRW average. Conversely, the proportion of workers with academic degrees is lower than in other regions, highlighting a strong focus on practical skill development.

Münsterland has the lowest unemployment rate in NRW at 4.5%, reflecting a robust labor market. The regional economy is dominated by small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), particularly in manufacturing, food processing, and construction. The manufacturing sector contributes 29.5% to the gross value added, which is higher than the state average. While Münster has a high GDP per capita (€57,000), the regional average (€38,600) is slightly below NRW's overall GDP per capita (€38,800).

The rural areas of Münsterland maintain a balanced economic structure, with agriculture and traditional industries playing a more significant role than in urban centers. Farming remains an essential sector, contributing 1.8% to the regional gross value added, significantly above the NRW average. The region is a leader in livestock farming and crop production, specializing in dairy, pork, and poultry farming, as well as cultivating cereals, maize, potatoes, and sugar beets. Many farms also engage in direct marketing and local food processing, contributing to Münsterland's strong regional identity. Tourism and cultural heritage also contribute to the rural economy. Münsterland's unique landscapes, cycling tourism, and equestrian activities attract visitors and support local businesses. Additionally, strategic cross-border cooperation with the Netherlands fosters economic and cultural exchanges.

Münsterland has emerged as a "future region," recognized for its economic dynamism and balanced growth. It ranks among the top regions for



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demographic stability and industrial expansion. Despite these strengths, research and development (R&D) investments remain relatively low, accounting for only 0.9% of the gross value added, below NRW's 1.4% average. To address this, the region is investing in digital transformation, renewable energy, and sustainable business practices. Innovative startups and established companies are working on AI-driven quality control, smart manufacturing, and sustainable materials. Green innovation is also a priority, with projects focusing on hydrogen energy, circular economies, and sustainable construction materials. The rural areas of Münsterland face several challenges, including demographic shifts and digital infrastructure gaps. While the region has seen steady population growth, projections indicate a slight decline in rural areas by 2050, contrasting with continued growth in Münster.

Conclusion:

Münsterland's rural areas are economically resilient, innovative, and sustainability-focused. With strong agriculture, manufacturing, and renewable energy sectors, they balance tradition with modern advancements. Investments in hydrogen, biogas, and digital infrastructure support long-term growth, while cultural heritage, agritourism, and community initiatives enhance regional attractiveness. Despite demographic shifts, the rural regions remain future-oriented, leveraging innovation and sustainability for continued development.

1.2 Resource Inventory of the Rural Areas in Münsterland

1. Natural Productive Assets (Soil, Water, Climate)

- Münsterland has a mix of high-quality and moderate soils, mainly used for agriculture. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- The region's soil supports the cultivation of cereals, maize, potatoes, and sugar beets as major crops. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Land consolidation programs optimize soil use for agriculture, conservation, and infrastructure. (Bezirksregierung Münster, 2019)
- 5.4% of agricultural land is in water protection zones, promoting sustainable farming. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Water-cooperation initiatives between farmers and local authorities help maintain sustainable land use. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Münsterland is adapting to climate change through renewable energy (wind, solar, hydrogen-based energy). (ARL, 2022; Bezirksregierung Münster, 2019; Kreisstadt Borken, 2022)



2. Agricultural and Forestry Resources (Fruits, Vegetables, Meat, Milk, Cereals, Wood, Cork, Wool, Leather, Biomass, Plant Extracts, Berries, Mushrooms, Herbs, Honey, Fish)

- Cereals, maize, potatoes, and sugar beets are major crops grown in Münsterland. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Dairy, beef, pork, and poultry are key livestock products in the region. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Farms also produce wool, honey, plant extracts, and biomass. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- The organic farming sector is small but has associations supporting ecological farming practices. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Münsterland is known for its park-like landscape, featuring a mix of fields, meadows, and forests. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- The region contains numerous nature reserves and conservation areas, supporting biodiversity and sustainable land use. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Biogas plants enhance resource efficiency and productivity in Münsterland's agriculture sector. (Bezirksregierung Münster, 2019)

3. Natural Heritage (Landscape, Waters and Vegetation, Natural Monuments, Reserves, National Parks, Biodiversity, Thermal Waters)

- Münsterland is known for its park-like landscape, characterized by a mix of fields, meadows, and forests. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- The landscape supports both agriculture and nature conservation, balancing human activity with environmental protection. (Bezirksregierung Münster, 2019)
- Münsterland has numerous nature reserves and protected areas, preserving native plant and animal species. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- The region includes a mix of agricultural and natural areas, supporting diverse flora and fauna. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- There are landscape conservation programs aimed at maintaining biodiversity and sustainable agriculture. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)



4. Tangible Cultural, Historical and Architectural Heritage (Museums, Open-Air Museums, Religious Sites, Houses, Castles, Mills, Engineering Structures)

- Münsterland has historic windmills and watermills, some of which are still in operation. (Bezirksregierung Münster, 2019)
- The region features engineering structures like old bridges, canals, and industrial heritage sites. (Bezirksregierung Münster, 2019)

5. Resources of Agriculture, Forestry and Other Typical Rural Activities (Local Processing, Handicraft, Buildings, Machinery, Livestock, Products of Local Processing and Handicrafts)

- Infrastructure: The region has well-developed agricultural infrastructure, including local food processing industries and cooperatives that optimize production, sales, and environmental management. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Livestock: Farms focus on animal husbandry, particularly cattle, pigs, and poultry. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Innovation: The region invests in modern agricultural technologies, including biogas plants that enhance resource efficiency and productivity. (Bezirksregierung Münster, 2019)

6. Human and Social Capital: Local, Traditional Knowledge and Skills

- Local Knowledge: Many farms participate in cooperatives to optimize production, sales, and environmental management, reflecting traditional knowledge and collaborative agricultural practices. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Traditional Skills: The region maintains a strong tradition of vocational education and training, with a high proportion of workers holding recognized vocational qualifications. (NRW Bank, 2022)
- Cultural Heritage: Rural Münsterland preserves local traditions through citizen-driven projects and programs supporting sustainability, mobility, and regional attractiveness. (Bezirksregierung Münster, 2019)

7. Social Networks

- Community Engagement: Rural development programs, such as LEADER and VITAL, encourage citizen participation in local projects, fostering strong social networks. (Bezirksregierung Münster, 2019)
- Cooperatives: Many farms participate in agricultural cooperatives to optimize production, sales, and environmental management, strengthening social and economic ties among farmers. (Landwirtschaftskammer Nordrhein-Westfalen, 2022)
- Workforce Networks: Münsterland has a strong vocational education system and a labor market characterized by high employment rates,



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creating professional networks that connect skilled workers and industries. (NRW Bank, 2022)

Conclusion:

Münsterland's rural areas are exceptionally resource-rich, offering a diverse mix. With its wide-ranging resources and innovation-driven mindset, Münsterland's rural areas are well-positioned for sustainable development, economic diversification, and future growth, making it one of the most dynamic rural regions in Germany. This creates numerous development potentials, which will be mapped and prioritized in the next step.

1.3 Rural Development Potentials Assessment, Prioritized List

1. Agribusiness

Resource: Agricultural & Forestry Resources

- High-quality soil & moderate climate → Supports food production & processing
- Strong livestock sector → Boosts crop cultivation & livestock farming
- Well-developed agricultural infrastructure → Enables advanced processing of agricultural inputs
- Regional culinary heritage → Encourages specialist food & organic food production

Potentials:

- Advanced Processing of Agricultural Inputs: Strengthen dairy, meat, and crop processing facilities with advanced cleaning, sorting, drying, and packaging technologies
- Food Sale & Distribution: Enhance direct farm-to-consumer platforms and farm cooperatives with e-commerce and food delivery services.
- Food Production & Processing: Expand existing livestock farming, dairy, and regional food production for functional food, dietary supplements, and gourmet food.
- Crop Cultivation & Livestock Farming: Leverage agricultural machinery, input suppliers, and local farms to support traditional and organic farming.
- Organic Food: Promote organic and low-carbon footprint food production, including plant-based protein and minimally processed food.
- Specialist food & organic food: Growth in functional foods, dietary-specific foods, and plant-based proteins.



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- Food sale & distribution: Expansion of e-commerce and direct sales platforms for local farmers.
- Advanced processing: Adoption of AI-driven sorting, drying, and packaging technologies to add value to raw materials.

2. Tourism & Recreation

Resource: Natural Heritage

- historical sites, cultural festivals, and culinary heritage → Boost cultural & heritage tourism
- Natural landscapes & biodiversity → Support recreation & adventure tourism
- Large agricultural sector → Growth in agritourism

Potentials:

- Recreation & Adventure Tourism: Utilization of Münsterland's forests, rivers, and cycling routes for hiking, birdwatching, and outdoor activities.
- Cultural & Heritage Tourism: Use of historic town centers, castles, and churches for heritage tourism, guided tours, and festival tourism.
- Agritourism: Leverage farmland and local dairy, meat, and crop production for farm stays, U-pick farms, and farm-to-table dining.
- Wellness Tourism: Utilize natural landscapes and green spaces for wellness retreats, spa tourism, and nature therapy experiences.
- Cultural & heritage tourism: Promoting historic sites, medieval churches, and local festivals.
- Recreation & adventure tourism: Expanding eco-tourism, hiking, and wellness tourism.
- Agritourism: Farm stays, U-pick farms, and farm-to-table dining attract visitors

3. Bio & Circular Economy

Resource: Agricultural & Forestry Resources

- Agriculture & forestry waste → Supports bio-based materials & recycling
- Existing textile & furniture industries → Utilize natural fibers for production
- Waste management initiatives → Enhance circular economy practices



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Potentials:

- **Natural Fibers & Bio-Based Materials:** Use of wool, plant extracts, and wood materials for sustainable textiles, eco-friendly packaging, and bio-based construction materials.
- **Health & Wellness Products:** Leverage plant-based extracts and herbs for natural nutraceuticals, pharmaceuticals, and cosmetics.
- **Circular Economy:** Utilize agricultural waste, forestry by-products, and biomass for waste management, bio-recycling, and sustainable energy production.

4. **Bio & Renewable Energy**

Resource: Bioenergy: Use livestock manure and plant waste to produce biogas and bioenergy for local farms and industries.

Potentials:

- **Solar & Wind Energy:** Utilize Münsterland's open rural landscapes and strong wind resources for wind farms and solar panel installations.
- **Hydropower & Geothermal Energy:** Explore small-scale hydropower projects in areas with suitable water flow.

5. **Education, Skills & Sport**

Resource: Human Capital

Potentials:

- **Heritage Education:** Use historical sites, museums, and castles to create courses on conservation, restoration, and interpretation.
- **Handicraft Education:** Leverage artisanal craftsmanship in textiles, woodworking, and metalworking for workshops and training programs.
- **Vocational Training:** Utilize agricultural and engineering institutions to train in farming, forestry, construction, and machinery maintenance.
- **Ecological Education:** Establish programs for biodiversity conservation, sustainable farming, and environmental stewardship.
- **Sport:** Use natural landscapes and cycling infrastructure for outdoor fitness programs, coaching, and equipment rental services.

6. **Cultural, Historical, Architectural & Natural Heritage Preservation**

Resource: Tangible Cultural Heritage

Potentials:

- **Cultural Heritage Preservation:** Promote traditional crafts (woodworking, tailoring, blacksmithing) and historic building restoration.



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- **Natural Heritage Preservation:** Protect Münsterland's national parks and conservation areas while promoting sustainable tourism and biodiversity initiatives.

7. **Health & Care Services**

Resource: Social Networks

Potentials:

- **Rehabilitation & Therapy:** Develop nature-based therapy and wellness centers utilizing Münsterland's green landscapes.
- **Health Centers:** Expand rural healthcare infrastructure with mobile clinics, dental care services, and remote healthcare.
- **Elderly Care:** Establish senior-friendly communities and specialized retirement centers, integrating local services and rural wellness programs.

8. **Universal Production & Services**

Resource: Manufacturing & Infrastructure

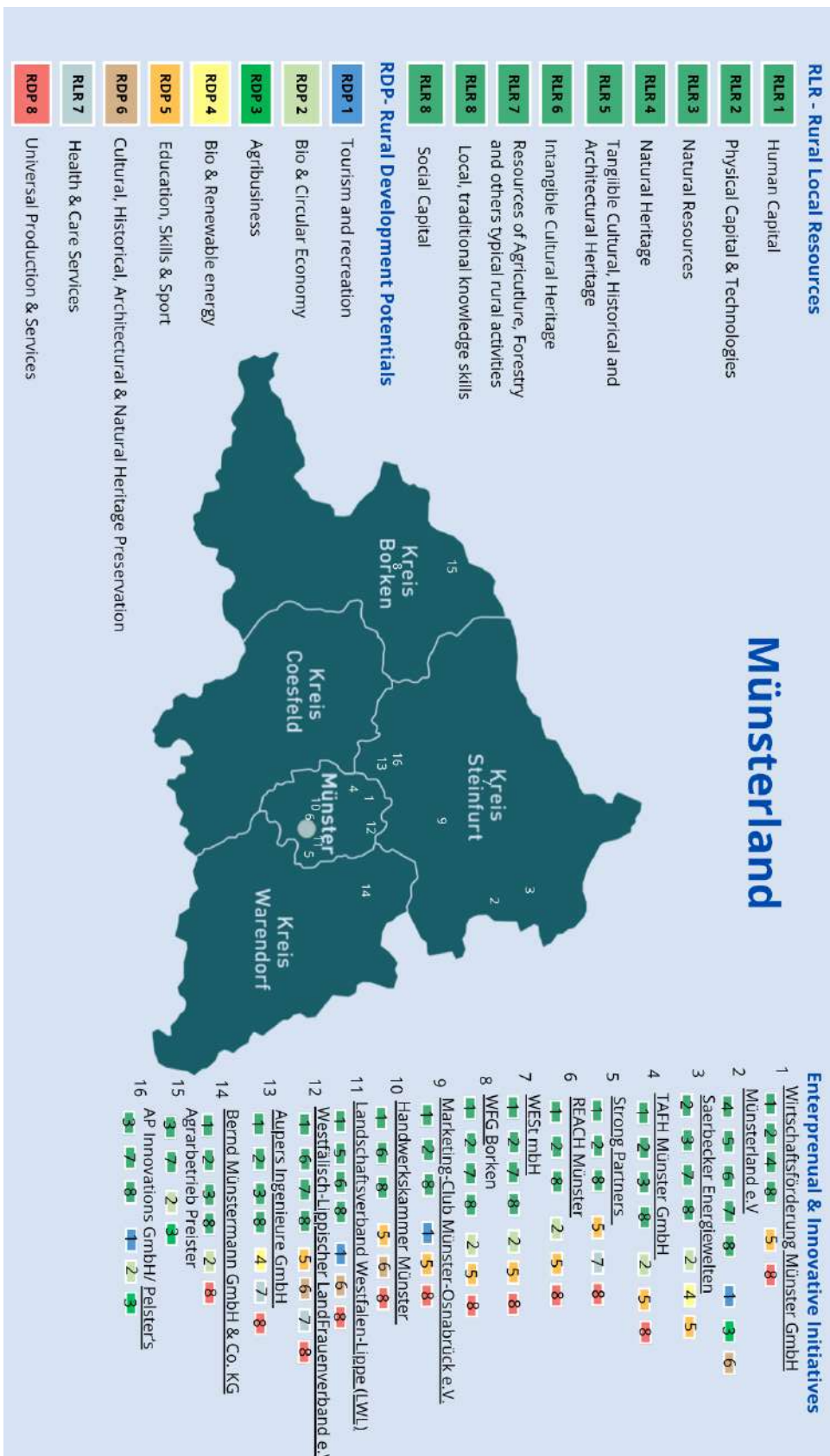
Potentials:

- **Manufacturing:** Expand local production industries, such as machinery, food packaging, textiles, and wood products.
- **Services:** Strengthen rural commerce, transport, accommodation, and IT services to support economic growth.
- **Resource-Based Businesses:** Utilize forestry products for carpentry, furniture making, and wood pellet production.
- **Digital-Savvy Enterprises:** Foster e-commerce, software development, online marketing, and remote work hubs to integrate rural areas into digital economies.



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2. Visualization of the development potential of rural areas in the region



3. Overview of E&I Initiatives in region's rural areas

Initiative 1: Wirtschaftsförderung Münster GmbH

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: *Wirtschaftsförderung Münster GmbH*

1.2. Location of the initiative: *Münster*

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: *Operates in close cooperation with the City of Münster and other regional stakeholders, combining public mandates with private-sector service orientation*

1.4. Initiative type: *Support institution / Economic development*

1.5. Scale of activity: *Large (Regional)*

1.6. Legal form: *Kommunale Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung (GmbH)*

1.7. Planned implementation period:
Long-Term

2. Description of initiative:

Wirtschaftsförderung Münster GmbH (WFM) is the official business development agency for the City of Münster. It acts as a central point of contact for entrepreneurs, investors, and companies looking to establish, expand, or innovate within the city and surrounding rural areas. WFM provides services in start-up support, commercial space development, investor consultation, and talent retention. It also facilitates cooperation between universities, businesses, and public institutions to strengthen the local economy and innovation system. The organization plays a key role in the ENGINE project as a knowledge partner on regional entrepreneurial potential and business infrastructure in Münsterland.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Human Capital: Supports workforce development, upskilling, and labor market retention*
- *Physical Capital & Technologies: Helps companies modernize their infrastructure*



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- *Social Capital: Connects stakeholders across business, government, and education*

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Regional economic development and location marketing
- Entrepreneurship and start-up ecosystem coordination
- Talent attraction and retention strategies
- Public-private partnership building
- Strategic business planning and investment consulting

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Start-ups and established businesses*
- *Research institutions and universities*
- *Chambers of commerce and trade associations*
- *Real estate and infrastructure developers*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Rising commercial property costs and limited availability*
- *Need for inclusive digital transformation*

8. Wirtschaftsförderung Münster GmbH – Best Practices in Fostering Entrepreneurship:

1. “Future in Work” Career Fair
2. Münster Masters E-Sports Event



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Initiative 2: Münsterland e.V

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: *Münsterland e.V*

1.2. Location of the initiative: *Greven*

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: *Cities and municipalities in Münsterland, also regional organisations in the fields of business, tourism and culture.*

1.4. Initiative type: *Regional development in the fields of business, culture, tourism, and employment in the Münsterland region.*

1.5. Scale of activity: *Large*

1.6. Legal form: *Registered association*

1.7. Planned implementation period: *Long-term*

2. Description of initiative:

As the regional management organisation, Münsterland e.V. assembles and develops the region's strengths in tourism, business, and culture. Its core responsibilities include regional marketing, building strategic partnerships, and coordinating funding programmes that support the region's structural development. These efforts help position Münsterland competitively in the race to attract skilled professionals, tourists, and investors.

Acting as a central hub, Münsterland e.V. collaborates with regional stakeholders to define forward-looking goals and concepts and to guide their implementation process.

Through its service Onboarding@Münsterland, the association provides dedicated support to both skilled professionals and businesses: it assists companies with employer branding and location marketing, while helping professionals settle in and establish long-term ties as well as strong roots within the region.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

With regard to the tourism sector:

- *Natural Heritage: Parkland with a high quality of life and numerous nature reserves, cycle path network.*
- *Tangible Cultural, Historical, and Architectural Heritage: Münsterland's distinctive castle and palace landscape, combined with its*



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renowned equestrian culture, enhances both tourism and the region's identity.

With regard to the economic sector:

- *Natural Heritage: An appealing location for living and working, especially for skilled professionals and the broader workforce.*
- *Physical Capital & Technologies: A diverse and visionary industrial base, focused on mechanical engineering, food production, logistics, healthcare, knowledge-driven services, innovative materials, and sustainable use of resources.*
- *Social Capital: A strong hub for higher education, with universities and universities of applied sciences located in Münster, Steinfurt, Bocholt, and Warendorf.*

With regard to the cultural sector:

- *Social Networks: Strong cultural networks, supported by regional cultural institutions and initiatives (e.g. Münsterland Festival, regional cultural policy frameworks).*
- *Tangible Cultural, Historical and Architectural Heritage: Vibrant cultural scene with festivals, concerts, theatre, and exhibitions; rich cultural, historical, and architectural heritage, featuring castles, palaces, historic town centres, and a diverse range of museums.*

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	x
Bio & circular economy	x
Bio & renewable energy	x
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	x
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	x
Health & care services	x
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Expertise in regional development and place marketing*
- *Competence in strategy and project development, particularly in areas such as talent acquisition and retention, innovation promotion, start-up support, and circular economy initiatives*
- *Skills in brand development and strategic marketing*
- *Proficiency in press and public relations, including the design and execution of regional communication strategies*
- *Ability to build, manage, and sustain regional networks*



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6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Regional and local economic development agencies*
- *Tourism marketing organisations at the city and municipal level*
- *Chambers of commerce and business associations*
- *The public employment agency and labour market institutions*
- *Universities and other higher education institutions*
- *Public sector representatives collaborating closely with regional decision-makers*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Ensuring affordable housing for skilled workers, both domestic and international
- Advancing a comprehensive digital transformation
- Expanding and strengthening the welcoming culture for international professionals

8. Münsterland e.V. – best practices to support companies and skilled workers in securing skilled labour

1. Service Onboarding@Münsterland www.muensterland.com/onboarding

A welcome service for skilled professionals, helping them settle in and stay – while supporting employers with employer branding and location promotion.

2. Joint event format by FH Münster and the North Westphalia Chamber of Industry and Commerce: “Meet & Match @ Münsterland – Connecting Companies and Students.”

This event offers national and international students the opportunity to get to know companies that are located within the region.

3. Cooperation project: ‘Company Welcome Guides’ workshop series - attracting and retaining international skilled workers www.muensterland.com/internationals and www.muensterland.com/welcome-internationals
4. Project “Sustainable Innovation Münsterland” <https://www.muensterland.com/sustainable-innovation-muensterland/>
5. Project “Circular Economy Region Münsterland” <https://www.muensterland.com/en/economy/service/projects/circular-economy/>



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Initiative 3: Saerbecker Energiewelten

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: *Förderverein Klimakommune Saerbeck e. V.*

1.2. Location of the initiative: *Saerbeck*

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: *Bioenergy Park Learning Site*

1.4. Initiative type: *Transformation initiative*

1.5. Scale of activity: *Large*

1.6. Legal form: *Registered association*

1.7. Planned implementation period: *Long-term*

2. Description of initiative:

The Saerbecker Energiewelten is an educational and outreach initiative located within the Bioenergiepark Saerbeck. It serves as a learning and experience center focused on renewable energy, climate protection, and sustainability. To educate and inspire people of all ages—especially students—about the energy transition, climate change, and sustainable living through hands-on experiences and guided learning.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Human and Social Capital: Farmers, engineers, and researchers contribute expertise in bioenergy and sustainable farming.*
- *Social Networks: Collaborations with cooperatives, municipalities, and research institutions.*

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	x
Bio & renewable energy	x
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	



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5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Renewable Energy Expertise: Technical knowledge of biogas, hydrogen, and smart grid integration.*
- *Policy and Regulatory Knowledge: Understanding energy policies, subsidies, and environmental regulations.*

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Entrepreneurs: Energy technology developers and biogas plant operators.*
- *Public Agencies and Regulatory Bodies: Municipalities and regional energy authorities supporting policy frameworks.*
- *Farmers, Food Producers, and Processors: Providing organic waste for biogas production.*
- *Cooperatives and Associations: Supporting shared infrastructure and circular economy principles.*
- *Representatives of Local and Regional Governments: Facilitating incentives, funding, and regulatory support.*
- *NGOs: Advocating for climate-friendly energy solutions and sustainability awareness.*
- *Representatives of Educational and Research Institutions: Conducting research on bioenergy innovations and providing training programs.*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Regulatory and Permitting Barriers: Complex approval processes for new energy infrastructure projects.*
- *Technical Limitations: Managing seasonal fluctuations in organic waste availability.*
- *Market Uncertainty: Dependence on fluctuating energy prices and government incentives.*
- *Stakeholder Coordination: Ensuring collaboration between farmers, industries, and regulatory bodies.*
- *Public Awareness and Acceptance: Educating local communities on the benefits and feasibility of bioenergy solutions.*



Initiative 4: TAFH Münster GmbH (Transfer Agency FH Münster)

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: TAFH Münster GmbH (Transfer Agency FH Münster)

1.2. Location of the initiative: Münster NRW

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: University-affiliated transfer and innovation agency

1.4. Initiative type: Knowledge and technology transfer

1.5. Scale of activity: Large (Regional)

1.6. Legal form: Limited liability company (GmbH), wholly owned by FH Münster University of Applied Sciences

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

TAFH Münster GmbH is the official transfer agency of FH Münster University of Applied Sciences. Its mission is to facilitate the exchange of knowledge and technology between academia and the business community. The agency supports innovation-driven projects by connecting researchers and students with companies, municipalities, and non-profits, particularly in the fields of sustainability, energy, digitalization, and regional development.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human Capital: Connects university researchers and students with local companies and communities
- Physical Capital & Technologies: Facilitates access to applied R&D infrastructure and innovation networks
- Social Capital: Builds trust and exchange between academic and non-academic actors
- Natural Resources: Supports sustainability-focused innovation projects.



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Knowledge transfer and innovation management
- Applied research coordination and project facilitation
- Stakeholder communication and partnership building
- Sustainable business model development
- Monitoring and evaluation of impact-driven collaborations

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *FH Münster (university departments and faculty)*
- *Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs)*
- *Municipalities and public sector partners*
- *Regional development agencies and clusters*
- *Start-ups and social enterprises*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Gaps in communication and trust between science and practice*
- *Difficulty aligning academic timelines with business needs*
- *Funding and administrative constraints for pilot projects*
- *Need for long-term support beyond initial matchmaking*



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Initiative 5: Fiege Logistik Holding Stiftung & Co. KG

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Fiege Logistik Holding Stiftung & Co. KG

1.2. Location of the initiative: *Headquarter: Greven*

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: *Large private logistics and supply chain enterprise*

1.4. Initiative type: *Business*

1.5. Scale of activity: *Large*

1.6. Legal form: Foundation & Co. KG

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

FIEGE Group is one of Europe's leading logistics providers, with headquarters in Greven. The company specializes in contract logistics, digital supply chain solutions, and sustainable logistics practices. In Münsterland, FIEGE plays a key role in strengthening rural production and distribution infrastructure by providing smart warehousing, transportation services, and e-commerce fulfillment. The firm also promotes green logistics, such as electric mobility and CO₂-reduction technologies, and supports local employment and vocational training.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Physical Capital & Technologies: Advanced warehouse infrastructure, transport fleets, and digital systems.
- Human Capital: Skilled workforce trained in logistics, automation, and IT.
- Natural Resources: Efficient land use and regional integration reduce emissions from long-haul transport.
- Social Capital: Cooperation with local industries, training institutions, and regional business networks.



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Logistics and supply chain management
- Automation and IT system integration
- Sustainable operations and green technologies
- Data analytics and process optimization
- Business continuity and strategic planning

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Regional manufacturers and agribusinesses using FIEGE's logistics services
- Vocational training centers and technical universities
- Local governments supporting infrastructure development
- Industry associations and regional chambers of commerce
- Environmental initiatives and tech partners

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Skilled Labor Shortage: Difficulty in attracting qualified personnel for logistics, IT, and technical roles in rural regions. Vocational training centers and technical universities
- Demographic Change: An aging population and the migration of young people to urban areas complicate long-term workforce planning
- Infrastructure Deficits: Limited transportation links or digital infrastructure (e.g., slow internet) can hinder logistics operations.
- Costs of Sustainable Technologies: Investments in e-mobility, photovoltaics, or CO₂ compensation are expensive and require long-term planning.



Initiative 6: Strong Partners

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Strong Partners

1.2. Location of the initiative: *Münster NRW*

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: *Offers tailored fitness and health programs for companies and associations*

1.4. Initiative type: *Health and fitness service provider*

1.5. Scale of activity: *Large (Regional)*

1.6. Legal form: *GmbH*

1.7. Planned implementation period: *Long term*

2. Description of initiative:

Strong Partners is a private health and fitness service provider based in Münster, dedicated to redefining strength through a holistic approach—physically, mentally, and socially. Their initiative focuses on promoting corporate health management (BGM) and community well-being through tailored fitness and wellness programs.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Human Capital: Human capital plays a central role, as the initiative draws on the expertise of local trainers, coaches, and health professionals who deliver personalized fitness and wellness program*
- *Social Capital: Builds strong support networks across sectors and institutions*
- *Physical Capital: Infrastructure such as sports clubs, community centers, and local businesses provides essential venues and networks for implementing health initiatives.*



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	x
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Network facilitation and community building*
- *Communication and leadership development*

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Regional business networks and chambers of commerce*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Cultural and structural barriers to work-life balance and visibility*
- *Need for sustainable, long-term support structures beyond project cycles*



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Initiative 7: REACH – EUREGIO Start-up Center

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: *REACH – EUREGIO Start-up Center*

1.2. Location of the initiative: *Münster*

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: Academic Stakeholders, Corporate Stakeholders, Public Sector Stakeholders, Innovation Ecosystem Stakeholders, Community Stakeholders

1.4. Initiative type: Academic start-up support center

1.5. Scale of activity: *Regional*

1.6. Legal form: Joint initiative of: University of Münster (WWU) and FH Münster (University of Applied Sciences)

1.7. Planned implementation period: *Long term*

2. Description of initiative:

REACH is a start-up center based in Münster, jointly run by the University of Münster and FH Münster. It supports students, researchers, and graduates in developing business ideas and launching start-ups. The center provides coaching, workshops, incubation programs, and access to a broad network of mentors, investors, and experts. It emphasizes technology-based innovation and cross-border collaboration within the EUREGIO region (Germany–Netherlands).

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Human Capital: Knowledge and entrepreneurial potential of students, academics, and local innovators*
- *Social Capital: Networks between academia, industry, and support institutions*
- *Educational Infrastructure: University research facilities and academic expertise*



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	x
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Innovation management and project development
- Business planning and go-to-market strategies
- Fundraising and investment readiness
- Networking and stakeholder engagement
- Tech awareness and market trend analysis

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- University of Münster
- FH Münster
- Local entrepreneurs and start-ups
- Innovation agencies and incubators
- Local and regional authorities
- Cross-border (NL-DE) cooperation partners

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Limited early-stage funding for start-ups
- Risk of low commercialization rates for academic research
- Difficulty balancing academic and business priorities
- Challenges with international market entry and scaling
- Maintaining long-term engagement from program participants



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Initiative 8: Wirtschaftsförderungs- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft Steinfurt mbH (WESt)

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Wirtschaftsförderungs- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft Steinfurt mbH (WESt)

1.2. Location of the initiative: Steinfurt

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: Local Businesses and Startups, Municipalities and the District of Steinfurt, Educational Institutions and Universities, Civil Society and Inclusion Initiatives, Technology and Innovation Partners

1.4. Initiative type: Regional Economic Development and Innovation Support Initiative

1.5. Scale of activity: Large/Regional

1.6. Legal form: Limited liability company (GmbH), publicly owned

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

The Wirtschaftsförderungs- und Entwicklungsgesellschaft Steinfurt mbH (WESt) is a regional economic development agency founded in 2000 and fully owned by the district of Steinfurt. Its mission is to create optimal conditions for businesses in the region by promoting innovation, entrepreneurship, digital transformation, and sustainable development.

WESt supports companies through:

- *Business development and startup services*
- *Digital infrastructure expansion (e.g., broadband rollout)*
- *STEM education and workforce development via the zdi-Zentrum Kreis Steinfurt*
- *Sustainability in logistics and commerce*
- *Inclusive employment through initiatives like Inklusion Münsterland*
- *Collaborative innovation projects such as the WiReSt resilience initiative with FH Münster*



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- *The initiative is characterized by strong cooperation with local governments, educational institutions, industry networks, and civil society to strengthen the economic and social fabric of the rural Münsterland region*

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- Human Capital: Fosters training, career development, and talent matching between schools, universities, and businesses
- Physical Capital & Technologies: Supports infrastructure development and digital modernization in rural communities
- Social Capital: Builds networks among local governments, businesses, education, and civil society
- Agricultural and Regional Resources: Engages with rural producers and service providers across Steinfurt

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	x
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Regional innovation and funding consultancy*
- *Project and network management*
- *Policy integration and stakeholder facilitation*
- *Digital transformation support for SMEs*
- *Strategic rural development planning*

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *SMEs and start-ups across Kreis Steinfurt*
- *Municipal administrations and rural communities*
- *Vocational training institutions and universities*
- *Industry associations and technology networks*
- *Regional labor market and employment agencies*



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7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Retaining skilled workers in rural areas
- Supporting business succession and generational change
- Bridging the digital divide across municipalities
- Ensuring equitable access to funding and services
- Managing transitions in agriculture and traditional industries

8. WEST mbH – Best Practices in Fostering Entrepreneurship:

1. Project “Economic Resilience in the District of Steinfurt (WiReSt) – WEST mbH”. Focus on “Supply Chains”

This project strengthens the economic resilience of the Steinfurt region by addressing vulnerabilities in supply chains and supporting local businesses in adapting to global challenges. <https://westmbh.de/wirest/>

2. LEADER Project “Shaping the Future through Entrepreneurship – WEST mbH”

Bringing entrepreneurship into schools, with a focus on sustainable and social business models. The project introduces students to entrepreneurial thinking and action, with particular emphasis on sustainability and social responsibility. <https://westmbh.de/zukunft-unternehmen/>

3. MINT Rallies “A Direct Hit for Everyone” – WEST mbH. Celebrating 10 years of MINT Rallies

The initiative aims to inspire the skilled workers of tomorrow to pursue a career or (dual) study path in STEM fields, while connecting young talents with regional companies. <https://westmbh.de/10-jahre-mint-rallye/>



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Initiative 9: Mühlenhof–Freilichtmuseum

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Mühlenhof–Freilichtmuseum

1.2. Location of the initiative: Münster

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: Non-Profit Association, Educational Institutions, Cultural and Scientific Partners, Civil Society and Volunteers, Private Donors and Sponsors

1.4. Initiative type: Cultural Heritage and Education Initiative

1.5. Scale of activity: Medium

1.6. Legal form: Registered Non-Profit Association (eingetragener Verein, e. V.)

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term / Permanent

2. Description of initiative:

The Mühlenhof Open-Air Museum is a cultural and educational institution dedicated to preserving and showcasing rural life in Westphalia from the 17th to the early 20th century. The museum features original farmhouses, windmills, workshops, and everyday rural objects. It offers exhibitions, craft demonstrations, educational programs, and cultural events. Mühlenhof contributes to preserving regional identity, transmitting intangible cultural knowledge, and boosting tourism in the Münsterland region.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Tangible Cultural, Historical & Architectural Heritage: Historic buildings, tools, and artifacts from rural Münsterland*
- *Intangible Cultural Resources: Traditional skills, rural crafts, oral histories*
- *Human & Social Capital: Volunteers, educators, and local cultural experts*
- *Natural Heritage: The museum is set in a park-like environment that reflects the rural landscape*



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	x
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	x
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Museum and cultural heritage management*
- *Public history and educational program design*
- *Traditional craft and construction skills*
- *Event planning and visitor engagement*
- *Fundraising and non-profit administration*

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Local municipalities and cultural offices*
- *Volunteers and local historians*
- *Tourism promotion agencies*
- *Educational institutions*
- *Heritage preservation organizations*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Dependence on public funding and donations*
- *Aging volunteer base*
- *Need to modernize visitor experience (e.g., digital tools)*
- *Competition from other leisure and cultural activities*
- *Preserving authenticity while ensuring financial sustainability*



Initiative 10: Wirtschaftsförderungsgesellschaft für den Kreis Borken mbH (WFG Borken)

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative:

Wirtschaftsförderungsgesellschaft für den Kreis Borken mbH (WFG Borken)

1.2. Location of the initiative: *Borken*

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: Local Governments and Municipalities, Small and Medium-Sized Enterprises (SMEs), Start-ups and Entrepreneurs, Educational and Research Institutions, Industry and Business Networks, Infrastructure and Technology Partners, Civil Society and Labor Market Actors

1.4. Initiative type: Regional Economic Development and Innovation Support Initiative

1.5. Scale of activity: Large/ Regional

1.6. Legal form: Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung (GmbH) (*Limited Liability Company*)

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

The WFG Borken is a municipally owned economic development agency that supports the sustainable growth of businesses and communities in the district of Borken. Founded in 1968 and expanded in 1975, it serves all 17 municipalities in the region. Its mission is to:

- Strengthen the regional economy
- Improve the labor market
- Promote innovation and digital transformation
- Support start-ups and business succession
- Enhance infrastructure and broadband access
- Secure and create jobs

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Human Capital:* Supports skilled labor retention, career programs, and educational-business partnerships
- *Physical Capital & Technologies:* Encourages infrastructure development and technology adoption in businesses



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- *Social Capital: Builds cooperation between municipalities, firms, education providers, and civil society*
- *Agricultural & Regional Resources: Engages with family businesses, farms, and local value chains in rural zones*

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	x
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Regional and municipal economic planning*
- *SME and start-up development consulting*
- *Innovation ecosystem building*
- *Skilled labor market strategy*
- *Climate and energy transition project facilitation*

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Local businesses, including small manufacturers and service providers*
- *Municipal authorities in Kreis Borken*
- *Chambers of commerce, schools, and vocational institutions*
- *Sustainability agencies and energy networks*
- *Start-ups, entrepreneurs, and research institutes*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Attracting and retaining young talent in rural communities*
- *Adapting business services to digital and low-carbon transitions*
- *Supporting SMEs with limited innovation capacity*
- *Limited public transportation affecting workforce mobility*



Initiative 11: Marketing Club Münster–Osnabrück e.V.

1. Initiative characteristics:

- 1.1. Name of the initiative:** Marketing Club Münster–Osnabrück e.V.
- 1.2. Location of the initiative:** Münster and Osnabrück region, including surrounding rural areas
- 1.3. Type of stakeholder involved:** Professional association / Knowledge network
- 1.4. Initiative type:** Professional Networking and Knowledge Exchange Initiative in Marketing
- 1.5. Scale of activity:** Large (Regional)
- 1.6. Legal form:** Registered non-profit association (eingetragener Verein – e.V.)
- 1.7. Planned implementation period:** Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

The Marketing-Club Münster–Osnabrück is a professional business network connecting marketing professionals, entrepreneurs, researchers, and students across Münsterland and the Osnabrück region. The club serves as a hub for knowledge exchange, innovation promotion, and regional cooperation. Through regular events, lectures, workshops, and networking formats, the initiative promotes best practices in business development, digital marketing, brand management, and entrepreneurship — including within rural and peri-urban contexts. Its activities indirectly support rural innovation by enhancing visibility, business identity, and competitiveness among SMEs and emerging businesses in the region.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Human Capital: Development of communication, branding, and innovation skills across business sectors*
- *Social Capital: Creation of networks among professionals, companies, and academic partners*
- *Digital Infrastructure: Facilitates access to digital tools and strategies in rural business environments*



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	x
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Strategic marketing and communications know-how
- Community building and network facilitation
- Digital tools for visibility, branding, and e-commerce
- Event organization and business education programming
- Cross-sector knowledge transfer and applied business research

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Local entrepreneurs and marketing professionals
- SMEs and regional product brands
- Universities and business schools in Münster and Osnabrück
- Chambers of commerce and economic promotion agencies
- Tourism organizations and place marketing initiatives

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Unequal access to professional marketing education in rural areas
- Limited awareness of the importance of brand and visibility among rural businesses
- Digital infrastructure gaps affecting outreach in smaller towns
- Fragmentation of local business communities across geographic borders
- Need for tailored strategies to support micro-enterprises and family-run firms



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Initiative 12: Handwerkskammer Münster

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Handwerkskammer Münster

1.2. Location of the initiative: Münster

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: Craft Enterprises and Guilds, Municipal and Regional Authorities, Industry and Research Partners, Apprentices, Trainees, and Skilled Workers

1.4. Initiative type: Regional Vocational Training, Economic Development, and Innovation Support Initiative

1.5. Scale of activity: Large

1.6. Legal form: Public Law Corporation

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term / Permanent

2. Description of initiative:

The Handwerkskammer Münster (Chamber of Crafts) represents and supports over 28,000 craft businesses in the Münsterland region. It plays a vital role in vocational education, apprenticeship coordination, business consulting, innovation promotion, and heritage preservation. The chamber helps maintain rural employment and craftsmanship by offering technical training, promoting entrepreneurship, and supporting the next generation of skilled workers in both traditional and modern trades.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Human Capital: Skilled artisans, apprentices, and vocational instructors*
- *Intangible Cultural Resources: Traditional crafts, artisanal knowledge, and rural heritage professions*
- *Physical Capital: Training workshops, equipment, and craft-specific infrastructure*
- *Social Capital: Networks of small and medium-sized enterprises, guilds, and mentoring structures*



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	x
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- Vocational training and curriculum development
- Business support and consultancy for SMEs
- Innovation in traditional crafts and digital transformation
- Heritage building restoration and preservation skills
- Policy knowledge in craft regulation and education

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- Apprentices and vocational students
- Local craft businesses and guilds
- Training centers and trade schools
- Municipal governments and chambers of commerce
- Cultural preservation groups

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- Declining interest in traditional crafts among youth
- Aging workforce and skills gaps in specific trades
- Regulatory complexity in construction and restoration
- Need to modernize training infrastructure
- Ensuring gender diversity and inclusion in craft sectors

8. Handwerkskammer Münster – Best Practices in Fostering Entrepreneurship:

Competence Center for Women and Work Münsterland

The Competence Center for Women and Work Münsterland, fully supported by the Münster Chamber of Skilled Crafts, is a strong, practice-oriented



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initiative that contributes directly to securing skilled labor in the region. It plays a key role in making women—and women's issues—more visible in the world of work.

A central goal is to promote women's employment as a means of achieving financial independence. The initiative also emphasizes the importance of creating supportive conditions that encourage higher workforce participation among women. Notably, these improved conditions benefit not only women, but also men and fathers seeking greater work-life balance.



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Initiative 13: Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe (LWL)

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe (LWL)

1.2. Location of the initiative: Münster

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: Member Municipalities and Districts, Public and Private Enterprises, Cultural and Scientific Institutions, Social and Health Service Providers, Civil Society and Foundations, State and Federal Government

1.4. Initiative type: Regional Public Development and Inclusion Initiative

1.5. Scale of activity: Large

1.6. Legal form: Public Law Corporation

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

The Landschaftsverband Westfalen-Lippe (LWL) is one of two municipal associations in North Rhine-Westphalia and plays a significant role in the socio-economic development of the Westphalia region. Within its broader cultural, health, and social mission, LWL's economic development efforts focus on regional resilience, sustainability, and cultural industries. Through its specialized departments and projects, LWL supports innovation in creative industries, strengthens the rural economy via cultural tourism and heritage, and helps promote economic accessibility in less urbanized regions. Its work includes project funding, policy advocacy, and interregional cooperation, directly benefiting rural areas such as those in Münsterland.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Tangible and Intangible Cultural Heritage:* Support for museums, historical sites, traditional crafts, and artistic networks
- *Social Capital:* Promotes cross-sector collaboration among institutions, businesses, and citizens
- *Human Capital:* Engages specialists and cultural professionals in economic revitalization and rural entrepreneurship
- *Natural Heritage (indirect):* Connects regional development to environmental preservation and cultural landscape use



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	x
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Cultural and regional development management*
- *Knowledge of EU, federal, and state-level funding instruments*
- *Innovation in the creative and cultural economy*
- *Stakeholder dialogue, governance, and inclusion strategies*
- *Evaluation and policy design for rural transformation*

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Museums, archives, and cultural institutions*
- *Municipal governments and cultural offices*
- *Creative entrepreneurs and tourism actors*
- *Educational and scientific institutions*
- *Citizens' associations and regional media*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Underfinancing of rural cultural infrastructure*
- *Uneven access to cultural participation and entrepreneurship*
- *Short-term project funding versus long-term impact needs*
- *Regional disparities in workforce retention and mobility*
- *Balancing heritage preservation with contemporary rural needs*



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Initiative 14: Westfälisch-Lippischer LandFrauenverband e.V

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Westfälisch-Lippischer LandFrauenverband e.V

1.2. Location of the initiative: Westphalia-Lippe region, headquartered in Münster (active throughout rural areas of North Rhine-Westphalia)

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: Rural Women and Families, Local and Regional Associations, Educational Institutions, Public Institutions and Municipalities, National and International Networks

1.4. Initiative type: Rural Women's Empowerment and Community Development Initiative

1.5. Scale of activity: Large (Regional)

1.6. Legal form: Registered non-profit association (e.V.)

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

The Westfälisch-Lippischer LandFrauenverband e.V. (WLLV) is a regional association representing rural women across Westphalia-Lippe, including the Münsterland region. It supports women's participation in social, political, and economic life, particularly in agriculture and rural communities. The WLL provides education, advocacy, and leadership training through workshops, policy engagement, and local networks. Its mission includes empowering women as active stakeholders in rural development and promoting equality, sustainability, and community resilience. In the ENGINE context, WLL offers vital insights into gender-sensitive approaches to entrepreneurship, social cohesion, and rural value creation.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Human Capital: Empowers women with training, leadership, and civic engagement opportunities*
- *Social Capital: Strong intergenerational networks, solidarity groups, and rural knowledge sharing*
- *Intangible Cultural Resources: Maintains and revitalizes rural traditions, crafts, and social roles*



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- *Agricultural Resources (indirect): Involvement in farm life, food processing, and land stewardship*

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	x
Agribusiness	x
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	x
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Gender-aware leadership and training program development*
- *Community organizing and volunteer management*
- *Public advocacy and communication skills*
- *Cultural heritage transmission and event coordination*
- *Networking and cooperation with rural institutions*

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Rural women, families, and communities*
- *Agricultural households and regional food networks*
- *Adult education providers and rural training centers*
- *Political and cultural institutions*
- *Local governments and equality offices*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Gender-based underrepresentation in rural decision-making*
- *Limited access to funding for grassroots-led women's initiatives*
- *Declining volunteerism and generational gaps in engagement*
- *Structural constraints on work-life balance and rural mobility*
- *Digital and political participation barriers for rural women*



Initiative 15: Aupers Ingenieure GmbH

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Aupers Ingenieure GmbH

1.2. Location of the initiative: Münster

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: Public Sector Clients, Private Sector Clients, Engineering and Construction Partners, Internal Stakeholders, Regulatory and Certification Bodies

1.4. Initiative type: Private Engineering and Technical Planning Initiative

1.5. Scale of activity: Regional to interregional

1.6. Legal form: Limited Liability Company (GmbH)

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

AUPERS INGENIEURE GmbH, founded in 2014 by Dipl.-Ing. (FH) Jens Aupers, is a private engineering and planning firm based in Münster. The company specializes in technical building equipment (TGA) and offers comprehensive planning and consulting services for public and private construction projects.

Their work focuses on:

- Energy-efficient and sustainable building systems
- HVAC, electrical, and sanitary engineering
- Fire protection and accessibility planning
- Project management and technical consulting

AUPERS INGENIEURE has contributed to major public infrastructure projects, including:

- The general renovation of the Verwaltungsgericht Münster in partnership with JBR Partner
- Planning for police headquarters, courts, kindergartens, and healthcare facilities



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The firm operates with a strong emphasis on technical precision, regulatory compliance, and interdisciplinary collaboration, making it a key player in regional infrastructure modernization.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Human Capital:* The firm employs engineers, technical system planners, and apprentices, contributing to regional workforce development and offering training opportunities in technical professions.
- *Physical Capital & Technologies:* AUPERS INGENIEURE applies advanced planning tools and building technologies to modernize public infrastructure such as police stations, courts, kindergartens, and healthcare facilities—often in non-urban areas.
- *Social Capital:* The company collaborates with public institutions, municipalities, and construction partners, relying on regional networks and interdisciplinary cooperation to deliver complex projects.
- *Regional Infrastructure and Public Institutions:* Many of its projects are located in rural or semi-rural municipalities, where it contributes to modernizing essential services and improving public accessibility and energy efficiency.

4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	x
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Technical Building Equipment (TGA) Expertise*
- *Project Planning and Cost Management*
- *Regulatory and Standards Compliance*
- *Interdisciplinary Collaboration and Communication*
- *Digital Planning Tools and Innovation*
- *Sustainability and Energy Efficiency Planning*



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6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Public Sector Institutions*
- *Architectural and Engineering Partners*
- *Construction and Facility Management Companies*
- *Educational and Training Institutions*
- *Local Communities and End Users*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Rising material and construction costs in rural infrastructure projects*
- *Regulatory complexity and delays in permitting processes*
- *Skills shortage in technical and engineering professions*
- *Climate adaptation requirements in rural planning*



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Initiative 16: Bernd Münstermann GmbH & Co. KG

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Bernd Münstermann GmbH & Co. KG

1.2. Location of the initiative: Telgte

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: *Private industrial manufacturer*

1.4. Initiative type: Sustainable Industrial Development & Technological Innovation

1.5. Scale of activity: Worldwide

1.6. Legal form: Gesellschaft mit beschränkter Haftung & Compagnie Kommanditgesellschaft (GmbH & Co. KG)

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

Bernd Münstermann GmbH & Co. KG is a leading manufacturer specializing in plant engineering for material handling, thermal processing, and air pollution control systems. The company provides customized industrial solutions for various sectors, including ceramics, foundry, building materials, and chemicals.

In Münsterland's rural context, Münstermann strengthens the industrial base by integrating sustainable technologies, automation systems, and energy-efficient processes into regional production networks. The company also contributes to training local talent through vocational programs and partnerships with educational institutions.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Physical Capital & Technologies: Advanced production and engineering facilities, machinery, and automation systems*
- *Human Capital: Skilled local workforce with expertise in engineering, production, and industrial technology*
- *Natural Resources (indirect): Focus on reducing emissions and resource consumption through cleaner production technologies.*
- *Social Capital: Strong collaborations with local suppliers, vocational schools, and industry associations*



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	x
Bio & renewable energy	x
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural & natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Process optimization and automation technology knowledge*
- *Environmental compliance and emissions control management*
- *Project management and international logistics skills*
- *Innovation in sustainable manufacturing*

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Regional suppliers of industrial components*
- *Municipalities promoting industrial development*
- *Chambers of commerce and industry associations*
- *Sustainability and environmental protection agencies*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Shortage of highly skilled technical workers*
- *Volatility of international industrial markets*
- *Regulatory challenges related to environmental standards*
- *Pressure to transition toward carbon-neutral manufacturing*

8. Bern Münstermann GmbH & Co. KG – Best Practices in Fostering Entrepreneurship:

Hoko.Lab

The Hoko.Lab, located at Münstermann and run as a joint initiative of the Higher Education Competence Center and the Economic Development Agency (gfw) of the Warendorf district, gives students the opportunity to get to know Münstermann early on as a potential employer.



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Through a rotating series of workshops, the lab offers hands-on experience with topics that often get little attention in everyday school life — such as virtual reality, coding, and entrepreneurship.



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Initiative 17: Agrarbetriebe Preister

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Agrarbetriebe Preister

1.2. Location of the initiative: Gronau

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: Agricultural Associations and Chambers, Environmental and Sustainability Agencies, Local Suppliers and Service Providers

1.4. Initiative type: Commercial Agricultural Enterprise

1.5. Scale of activity: *Private agricultural enterprise*

1.6. Legal form: Agricultural Enterprise

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

Agrarbetrieb Preister is a rural farming enterprise engaged in agricultural production in the Münsterland region. Its activities are centered around the use of local natural resources for crop cultivation, livestock farming, or mixed agricultural operations. The farm contributes to maintaining traditional agricultural landscapes and strengthening local food systems. It also engage in practices supporting sustainable agriculture, such as soil management, renewable energy use, or participation in local cooperative networks.

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Natural Resources: Land, soil, water, and climate suited for agricultural activities.*
- *Resources of Agriculture and Typical Rural Activities: Traditional farming techniques, rural knowledge, and agri-environmental services.*
- *Social Capital: Participation in rural networks, agricultural cooperatives, or regional marketing initiatives. (Please confirm if applicable.)*



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	x
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	x
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Agricultural production management and precision farming skills*
- *Sustainable land management and soil conservation knowledge*
- *Basic marketing, direct selling, and logistics skills*
- *Knowledge of agri-environmental policies and subsidy programs*

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Local cooperatives and marketing associations*
- *Financial institutions offering agricultural loans*
- *Local municipalities promoting rural development*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Regulatory burden and compliance with EU agricultural policies*
- *Aging farming population and succession challenges*
- *Need for digital transformation in rural farming*
- *Competition from industrialized agricultural production*



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Initiative 18: AP Innovations GmbH

1. Initiative characteristics:

1.1. Name of the initiative: Pelster's is a brand of AP Innovations GmbH

1.2. Location of the initiative: Altenberge

1.3. Type of stakeholder involved: Oat Suppliers, Product Development and Food Technologists, Packaging and Logistics Partners

1.4. Initiative type: Sustainable Food Innovation Venture for non-dairy products

1.5. Scale of activity: Medium

1.6. Legal form: Limited liability company (GmbH)

1.7. Planned implementation period: Long-term

2. Description of initiative:

Pelster's was created to offer a healthier, more sustainable alternative to conventional plant-based drinks. The founders, originally from finance and insurance backgrounds, were inspired during parenthood to rethink nutrition and sustainability. Their idea: a powdered oat drink that consumers can mix with water at home—eliminating the need to transport water and reducing packaging waste.

Pelster's aims to:

- *Promote natural, family-friendly nutrition*
- *Support regional agriculture*
- *Offer eco-conscious, convenient alternatives to mass-market plant-based drinks*

3. The main rural local resources that form the basis of the initiative:

- *Natural Resources: The rural setting supports low-impact agriculture and sourcing from regional farms.*
- *Agricultural and Rural Knowledge: The founders collaborate with or source from regional oat producers, benefiting from generational farming expertise.*
- *Social Capital: The founders are embedded in regional sustainability and startup networks.*



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4. The development potential(s) of rural areas that the initiative utilizes:

Development potentials:	
Tourism & recreation	
Bio & circular economy	
Bio & renewable energy	
Education, skills & sport	
Agribusiness	
Cultural, historical, architectural& natural heritage preservation	
Health & care services	
Universal production & services	x

5. Entrepreneurial and innovative knowledge, skills, and competencies required for the implementation of the initiative:

- *Understanding of food safety, shelf-life, and additive-free production*
- *Social media branding and storytelling for rural food products*
- *Managing inventory and fulfillment for direct-to-consumer sales*
- *Customer service and community engagement skills*
- *Risk-taking, adaptability, and vision to launch a new category of oat drinks*

6. Key rural stakeholders supporting the initiative:

- *Chambers of agriculture and food marketing associations*
- *Municipalities supporting local food initiatives*
- *Sustainability and Innovation Networks*
- *Local Consumers*
- *Regional Marketing and Retail Networks*
- *Local and Regional Government*

7. Socio-economic barriers and challenges related to the initiative:

- *Compliance with strict food safety and hygiene regulations*
- *Competing with well-established plant-based drink brands*
- *Navigating EU food safety laws, organic certifications, and labeling requirements*



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