

## Project partners

These 19 partner institutions from seven North Sea Region countries are working together towards digitally enabled and transformed SMEs in rural areas of the North Sea Region:

- **Intercommunal Leiedal** | Belgium
- **Designregio Kortrijk** | Belgium
- **atene KOM** | Germany
- **Collective municipality of Hüttener Berge** | Germany
- **University of Groningen** | The Netherlands
- **Province of Drenthe** | The Netherlands
- **Vejle municipality** | Denmark
- **Aalborg University** | Denmark
- **Alexanderson Institute** | Sweden
- **University of Stavanger** | Norway
- **University of South-Eastern Norway** | Norway
- **Vinje municipality** | Norway
- **Cluster on Industrial Asset Management** | Norway
- **Oldambt municipality** | The Netherlands
- **Värmland County Administrative Board** | Sweden
- **Torsby municipality** | Sweden
- **Compare** | Sweden
- **University of Lincoln** | United Kingdom
- **Lincolnshire Country Council** | United Kingdom

## Get in touch

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COM<sup>3</sup>  
European Regional Development Fund



Building  
competencies for  
competitive companies



provincie Drenthe



compare

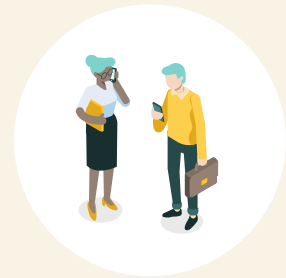


## Towards digitally enabled and transformed SMEs in rural areas

A large share of businesses in rural areas of the North Sea Region are small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs). To stay competitive, rural SMEs need to constantly improve their digital readiness.

Public authorities and business support organisations have an important mediatory role in this process. But often, they don't have the right tools and competencies to support rural SMEs on this digitalization journey.

### What the digital transformation means...



#### ...for rural SMEs:

- Lack of knowledge and awareness about digital needs and potentials
- Difficulties in keeping up with rapidly developing technologies
- Challenges in scaling up and accessing new markets



#### ...for local and regional public authorities and business support organisations:

- Lack of tools and competencies to support rural SMEs on their digitalization journey

## Empowering local and regional innovation facilitators

COM<sup>3</sup> partners empower local and regional public authorities in their role as innovation facilitators and enablers. This helps them to create a dynamic environment in which rural SMEs can make the most of digital opportunities.

COM<sup>3</sup> activities encompass the following areas:



- Acquiring an **in-depth understanding of the local and regional challenges and needs** through surveys and design thinking workshops,
- Developing a unique **support model** in the form of **guiding measures**, training and coaching solutions,
- Building a **rural business digitalisation community** by bringing together stakeholders virtually and in events.

## Creating tech-branded and tech-enabled rural areas

Nine pilot regions in all North Sea Region countries show the way and test the solutions developed by COM<sup>3</sup> partners in real use cases:

- **South-West Flanders** | Belgium
- **Hüttener Berge** | Germany
- **Oldambt** | The Netherlands
- **Drenthe** | The Netherlands
- **Vejle** | Denmark
- **Värmland** | Sweden
- **Lincolnshire** | UK
- **Rogaland** | Norway
- **Vinje** | Norway

Read more about the COM<sup>3</sup> regional pilots

