



SEE DESIGN

Sharing Experience
on Design Support
for SMEs

Case Study of Good Design Support Practice

This case study is a snapshot of activities taking place during the lifespan of the SEEdesign project from 2005 to 2007. For updated information please contact the organisations directly.

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**PROJECT PART-FINANCED
BY THE EUROPEAN UNION**

The Netherlands

Design Pressure Cooker Plus

Province of Limburg

Design Pressure Cooker Plus aimed to bring SMEs and industrial designers together so that they could experience the ‘surplus value’ of each. The initiative came out of the realisation that SMEs are still not used to cooperating with designers and so not taking full advantage of the innovation potential that they can provide.

The programme, which ran from November 2005 to January 2007 was set up by Syntens, the innovation centre of the Ministry of Economic Affairs in the Province of Limburg, The Netherlands and was initiated when Syntens innovation advisors noticed the lack of cooperation between SMEs and designers. It brokered relationships between 15 SMEs from various sectors and 15 industrial designers which resulted in 15 new products. The total budget of 250,000 euros was provided by national government, local government and Syntens (18% each) SMEs (38%) and designers (8%).

The costs were split as follows:

10%	Recruitment of SME's and designers 10%
27%	Preparation activities
21%	Kick-off
30%	After care
5%	PR and prints
8%	Project management

The companies and designers involved were selected by the Syntens advisor from his database and were paired according to his sense of who would work best with who. All the SMEs and designers met together at a facilitated opening meeting guided by Syntens. The 15 projects were generated at this meeting. After this they worked together in pairs on their chosen design project for a number of weeks before meeting again at a follow-up meeting.

The overall aim was to create a situation in which both would learn from each other and create together a new product for their markets.

New products included:

- Sun lounge
- Turn-over machinery for wooden window-frames
- Stairs for elderly people
- Roof for mobile scooters
- Synthetic scaffolding / staging
- 'Facelifts' for security masks
- Climate control system for agri-business

One of the key factors for the success of the programme was the financial assistance which enabled the SMEs and designers to overcome this barrier to working together. Future funding is not secured and this is an issue for the programme, and means that there is no follow-up with the participants. The local government, Syntens and the Association of Designers in Limburg are now brainstorming about future possibilities. A new project or programme could involve the first group of 15 pairs but their goal is to involve as many companies and designers as possible.

Within Syntens the project was managed by Pieter Hovens and the programme was based on a methodology already tested out by Syntens in Noord-Brabant, a neighbouring province of Limburg.