

BEST PRACTICE: LOWER SAXONY, GERMANY



Key Challenge

Adaption to climate change.

Type of Solution

Adoption of a tourism strategy and monitoring framework; Stakeholder participation and management; Capacity building; Research and Innovation.

Case Classification

Type of Destination | Mixed

Territorial Level | NUTS 1

Size of the Tourist Area | 47,618 km²

Population | 8,161,981 in 2023

Type of Tourism | Ecotourism; Coastal, maritime and inland water; Cultural; City; Business; MICE.

DMO | 100% subsidiary of the federal state of Lower Saxony.

Main Stakeholders Affected | Local authorities/ government; All tourism service providers; Research and Development (R&D) organisations.

Additional Challenges Covered | Climate protection and climate change mitigation; Resilience building and crisis management; Lack of awareness of sustainability and resilience among destination stakeholders; Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders; Measurement and monitoring of sustainable tourism.

Context & Background

Lower Saxony is a federal state in the northwest of Germany, which includes both maritime and hilly areas. Tourism is one of has a crucial role for the Lower Saxony economy, accounting for the 4.5% of the state's GDP, and providing about 8% of all jobs. In total, there were about 45.7 million overnight stays (15 million arrivals) in 2023, of which about one third was domestic and one third was from neighbouring countries. Tourism is highly seasonal (especially during summer) with hotspots on coastal, rural, and hilly areas.

Key Challenge

Lower Saxony is affected by the consequences of rising temperatures because of climate change (e.g. rising sea levels, extreme weather events). However, climate change remains an abstract topic for the population and companies are hesitant to implement climate mitigation and adaptation measures.



Implementation of Solutions: Lower Saxony was the first federal state in Germany to implement a project focusing on the effects of climate change on tourism. The project was carried out by the DMO and the federal government, with the participation of Lower Saxony destinations.

SOLUTIONS

The project "[*Tackling climate change - adaptation strategies for tourism in Lower Saxony*](#)" was implemented from January 2021 to July 2022, benefitting from the technical support of four German research institutions (Adelphi, DWIF, Fresh Thoughts, NIT), and went through the following phases:

- *Compilation of a technical knowledge base* for future climatic changes and their impacts on tourism in Lower Saxony's travel regions. A vulnerability analysis and climate risk analysis identified where relevant risks exist for specific travel regions, as well as potential opportunities stemming from climatic changes (e.g., increasing service quality and guest satisfaction through implementation of climate-related measures).
- *Identification of action areas and measures* for minimising risks and making the most out of opportunities was carried out with broad stakeholder involvement (15 online and face-to-face events, advisory board meetings, online survey). [*Region-specific documents and practice-oriented tools*](#) were developed to help travel regions advance their adaptation to climate change competently. The results are clearly summarised on the website, featuring the "Adaptation Compass" (a guide with three action areas that leads through the process), the "Ideas Exchange" (highlighting successfully implemented measures), and the "Navigation Aid" (providing information on funding opportunities).
- After completing the status quo analysis and developing the tools, *climate change workshops* were set up to guide destinations on how to start based on their needs (e.g. funding applications, network events on specific topics, integration of climate adaptation in the tourism concept). In addition, the state of Lower Saxony launched a funding scheme, and the first funding applications have already been received, such as for a drinking water project and specific tourism offers such as the [*"Nordsee Reisepass"*](#) (a stamps booklet).

Replicability potential: High (other federal states are already following this model).

Cost & funding source: The project was funded by the state of Lower Saxony.



Success Factors & Barriers Regarding the Implementation

Success factors: Scientific foundation; Intensive and sustainable communication with relevant stakeholders right from the start; Constant exchange and feedback with stakeholder groups.

Barriers: Initial scepticism towards the project; Limited time and human resources of stakeholders, especially in DMOs; The size and diversity of the federal state with diverse needs in the tourism industry; The calibration of the different time horizons of climate modelling (2035, 2050, 2100) to tourism planning, which has different planning horizons.

Results and Impacts

- Tourism stakeholders now have action areas and can use practical instruments.
- Creation of regional networks involving non-tourism stakeholders.
- Sustainability and climate are core themes in Lower Saxony's tourism strategy, with all 15 travel regions in Lower Saxony actively participating.
- The website created as part of the project, offering information and tools for climate change adaptation, received highly positive feedback from workshop and project participants for its clear structuring of this complex topic.
- Increased cooperation between tourism experts and climate agencies; the DMO recently became a member of the Lower Saxony Climate Competence Network.

Takeaways

- While carrying out a project, it is better to focus on practical offers such as workshops or events. In fact, learning from each other is recognised as highly beneficial for destinations.
- Climate adaptation measures must be adapted to the structures and needs of the companies and the different DMO levels (regional, local).
- Every climate adaptation measure also leads to increases regarding the service quality.
- Investing human and financial resources is essential for DMOs in order to actively shape climate change adaptation and implement measures. Financing models and further cooperations need further discussions.
- Best practice communication is essential - "telling good stories"!

Useful Links

- [Climate Change and Tourism](#) | [Tourismusnetzwerk Niedersachsen](#)

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