



BEST PRACTICE: VEJLE, DENMARK



Key Challenge

Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders.

Type of Solution

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

Case Classification

Type of Destination | Coastal

Territorial Level | < NUTS 3

Size of the Tourist Area | 1,058.4 km²
(Municipality)

Population | 121,696 in 2024 (Municipality)

Type of Tourism | Ecotourism; City; Business; MICE; Gastronomy.

Tourism Organisation | Local Destination Management Organisation (DMO) is a department of the municipality; for MICE Public-Private Partnership.

Main Stakeholders Affected | Accommodation providers; Restaurants and bars; Other tourism service providers; Local businesses; Tourists.

Additional Challenges Covered | Changing consumer preferences towards more sustainability; Degradation and loss of biodiversity.

Context & Background

Vejle is centrally located on Vejle Fjord and is rich in industry, business, and the service sector. The development of new architecture, art and alternative urban spaces in the 1990s increased the attractiveness of the site. Tourism has grown in importance in recent years and around 825,445 overnights (33% international) were recorded in 2023. Tourism accounts for about 5% of GDP and 6.5% of employment.

Key Challenge

The growth of tourism, decline in biodiversity and the global need for a more sustainable future have revealed the need for sustainable development. The DMO has acknowledged this, but small tourism businesses in particular have neither the time nor the capacity to drive the transition to greater sustainability on their own.



Implementation of Solutions: Vejle has undertaken numerous measures to raise awareness and develop competences of sustainable tourism, to ultimately support small and medium-sized enterprises in their path towards greater sustainability.

SOLUTIONS

- To support tourism stakeholders in the green transition, in 2023, Visit Vejle produced a comprehensive [*Handbook to a Green Destination*](#), a guide for the introduction of green practices. It contains practical information on implementation and a checklist for companies to easily identify their areas for improvement.
- The DMO organises *workshops for tourism stakeholders*, where experts provide training on sustainability topics such as waste management, energy management, accessibility, social aspects, fundraising or sustainability communication. Special attention is also paid to promoting dialogue between stakeholders and between experts. In 2022 and 2023, Vejle has held more than 10 workshops.
- The DMO also offers free *1:1 consulting for tourism companies* provided by the DMO's own sustainability experts. The main goal is to give companies an overview of the status quo of their sustainability efforts and to create a work plan for the next steps for improvement. Various tools (information and contacts) are provided to companies.
- The [*VisitVejle network*](#), a tourism stakeholder network founded in 2010, offers its 150 participants an attractive platform for knowledge exchange in order to develop as a tourism business and to meet changing requirements and expectations of tourists and legislation.
- The [*Green Guide*](#) provides a map and information about green companies and initiatives and gives tourists tips and inspiration to make greener choices. This motivates companies to adopt green practices, also to be showcased on the list.

Replicability potential: Very high (requires strong will, leadership, and collaboration).

Cost & funding source: The handbook, workshops and green guide were created as part of a [*three-year sustainability project*](#) funded by the Municipality's Sustainability Fund. The total budget was 300,000 euros (including a project coordinator's salary) and the workshop costs were around 800 euros each.

Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: A close relationship with the stakeholders' network; Persistence and reminders for the workshop participation; Open mindset of many companies.

Barriers: Stakeholders resistance towards sustainability initiatives; Continuous contact with all stakeholders is very time-consuming.

Results and Impacts

- Improved relationships and collaboration between different stakeholders through the VisitVejle network with more than 150 members. The network's platform for knowledge exchange generates great learning effects in the tourism industry.
- Many companies that previously were not so keen on sustainability for fear of financial burdens became interested in the topic. In total, more than 30 companies took part in the workshops, some several times and some with multiple employees. On average, there were 8 participating companies and between 8 and 20 participants.
- High level of satisfaction among participants with the workshops (mostly rated 4 out of 5).
- Three attractions have been awarded the [Green Attraction certificate](#) and some companies have signed up for the [Hidden Disabilities](#) certificate after attending a workshop on invisible disabilities such as ADHD, autism, etc.

Recommendations by the Destinations

- Face-to-face meetings worked better than online meetings, also for the possibility of informal dialogues.
- A strict division of workshops by interest groups was less fruitful than bringing together different stakeholder groups.
- It is important to also always show the economic benefits for the companies.
- Workshops on social sustainability registered higher attendance than those on environmental topics, as the latter are often more technical and data-driven while social aspects are easier to communicate.

Useful Links

[Sustainable Tourism](#)

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