



BEST PRACTICE: WILDER KAISER, AUSTRIA

Key Challenge

Lack of qualified and skilled workers.



Type of Solution

Stakeholder participation and management; Promotional campaigns; Capacity building.

Case Classification

Type of Destination | Mountain

Territorial Level | < NUTS 3

Size of the Tourist Area | 134.4 km²

Population | 10,125 in 2023

Type of Tourism | Mountain; Rural; Sports.

Tourism Organisation | Public Destination Management Organisation (DMO), partnership of 4 municipalities.

Main Stakeholders Affected | Local residents; Accommodation providers; Restaurant and bars; Other tourism service providers (lift companies).

Additional Challenges Covered | Creating local added value through tourism; Growth-oriented mindset of destination stakeholders; Poor working conditions in the tourism industry; Lack of knowledge and skills of tourism stakeholders.

Context & Background

Tourism is the dominant economic sector in the Wilder Kaiser (52% of GDP and an even higher share of employment). Until 2019, there was a continuous strong increase in tourist numbers. In 2022/23, 423,334 tourist arrivals and 2,067,556 overnight stays were counted again, with these distributed relatively evenly between the summer season (54%) and the winter season (46%). Due to increasing tourist numbers and capacity limits, tourism officials at the Wilder Kaiser began looking for alternatives to growth strategies around eight years ago. These aimed to improve the quality of the offer and service to increase the added value in the region through higher-quality guest experiences without increasing the number of guests.

Key Challenge

The widespread shortage of skilled workers in the tourism industry challenges the quality offer of tourism products and services.



Implementation of Solutions: The Destination Management Organisation (DMO) focuses on creating an attractive working environment and promoting young talent, also incorporating the ideas of the destination working group “Attractive Working”, consisting of 10-15 hotels and catering companies.

SOLUTIONS

After an unsuccessful attempt with a recruiting coach (2019-2022) to support companies in recruiting staff, two strategic approaches were pursued and are now considered to be effective:

(1) Creating an attractive working environment, with the focus on employee retention rather than constantly having to hire new seasonal employees. The following measures are being taken to achieve this:

- The employee community *“Happy Working Family”* was founded to build a stable social network of employees by organising joint activities and offering discounts on leisure activities and transport with the *“Staff Card”*.
- A *training and continuing education programme* developed by the tourism association exclusively for employees in the Wilder Kaiser region to increase the qualifications and competence and open up attractive personal development opportunities.
- A *job platform* provides information about job opportunities in the region. When disagreements arose with the employer, many workers left the destination because they had little knowledge of alternative employment opportunities in the region.
- Management workshops for employers and manager to deal better with problems in employee management, such as communication problems.

(2) Promoting young talents to become tourism professionals in the region through information and education.

- The tourism association visits schools, teachers are invited to round tables, there is a strong presence at career fairs and at tourism college.
- During two *one-day onboarding and offboarding events* for interns who come to the region in the summer, the interns' expectations are adjusted to reality and social contacts are made, which makes the region more attractive as a future employer.
- The *“Talent Competition”* project retrains career changers for the tourism industry.

Replicability potential: Very high (requires cooperation and resources)

Cost & funding source: The budget for employee initiatives in the region is 120,000 euros including personnel costs.

Success Factors & Barriers

Success factors: A strong relationship with stakeholders, especially within the working group “Attractive working” where many sustainability ideas emerge; The willingness of employers to participate in different types of projects; Political will, which is crucial for funding; A full-time position focused primarily on this topic.

Barriers: The lack of communication by stakeholders about the positive results of some initiatives.

Results and Impacts

- Increasingly positive feedback from employees: Interns show high levels of satisfaction, German courses are very well received.
- 400 students visited the “Open day in tourism businesses” in Elmau, one of the municipalities of Wolder Kaiser region.
- Solutions are now also being implemented by other destinations (e.g., onboarding and offboarding).

Recommendations by the Destinations

- Transition to greater sustainability takes time.
- Employees working in the sustainability department should not be overloaded with overly ambitious plans.
- Before adopting sustainability strategies, it is recommended to obtain the commitment of companies in the destination.
- Creating a good direct communication channel with stakeholders helps with coordination.

Useful Links

[Soulful Working - Loving](#)

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