



# The European Social Fund 1994 - 1999 Success Stories in Germany

## Project title: **Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania Winter Academy**

**Promoter:** REDEG mbH (project management for the region of Neubrandenburg and Rügen island)

IHK Bildungszentrum Schwerin (project management for the regions of Schwerin, Wismar, Boltenhagen, Poel Island, Plau, Sternberg/Brüel)

**Beneficiaries:** Firms and employees in the tourism sector

**Description:** The vast majority of tourism firms located in Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania need no longer fear being compared with establishments in other German or European holiday centres on the question of facilities. On the contrary, many firms in the tourism sector have a high standard in this area, which creates good conditions for their economic development and competitiveness. However, the necessary growth can only occur when the staff working in these establishments make the most of these favourable conditions through high technical, methodological and social skills and a high degree of motivation. There are still considerable gaps in the skills of employees, which hamper the preservation of jobs and the competitiveness of firms. There applies not only to traditional skills but also to the new skills required by the fast development of this sector.

In order to fill these gaps, the training course for employees in tourism has been running, primarily during the winter months when there are few tourists, in the area covered by the IHK in Brandenburg since 1996, and on Rügen Island since 1998, under the management of the firm REDEG mbH. In supporting the measures, the Land of Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania hopes, above all, to prevent persons working in the tourism sector from becoming unemployed. At the same time, this approach improves the competitiveness of tourism establishments, which, given the increasingly similar level of facilities offered by establishments, is determined very largely by the level of qualifications of their staff. In the final analysis, the professionalism of staff will considerably influence whether tourists visit Mecklenburg–Western Pomerania, stay in tourism establishments and decide to come back.

The main aim of this preventive approach is to form a highly motivated and skilled core of staff in firms. In order to achieve the necessary effects on the labour market, those who wish to attend the Winter Academy must have a permanent employment relationship. This requirement prevents many of the people who work in the tourism sector from becoming unemployed, especially in the winter months.

The initially reserved reaction of entrepreneurs and sceptical opinion of employees have given way to a high degree of acceptance of the measure among all concerned. Almost all entrepreneurs, participants and heads of educational establishments who have played any role in labour market policy can no longer imagine life in this region without the Winter Academy. Entrepreneurs and workers, in particular, have seen in practice how it is possible to provide further training that meets needs and is well-scheduled and affordable, and how the training of staff really does improve competitiveness and preserve employment. The further training is provided exclusively by expert training institutions that have been selected in advance on the basis of invitations to tender.

It takes an enormous amount of time and resources to launch a measure of this kind and to adapt it on an ongoing basis so that it responds to new challenges and remains attractive for partners. Over the years, the role of the project management staff has increasingly changed from canvassing to acting as training advisers in firms, with whom entrepreneurs draw up, in confidence, concepts for the development of their staff.

**Main Results:** The measures are designed to bring the skills of workers in the tourism branch up to international standards and to meet the requirements of the developing tourism sector. They are organised in the low season in order to prevent seasonal unemployment.

REDEG

IHK-Bildungszentrum Schwerin

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