

### **Best practice 38: The Eichsfeld regional strategy, Germany**

**Scale:** Regional

**Stage of tourism development:** Growing

**Main objective:** Regional development

Categories of effects:

#### **Effects on urban governance**

- Cultural tourism strategy
- Sustainable partnerships
- Destination management
- Networks of cities

#### **Effects on quality of life**

- Urban economies
- Social life, local values and traditions

The region of Eichsfeld, once divided by the border between East and West Germany, is a catholic enclave located in a predominantly Lutheran province. Until 1989, this specific political and geographical context helped maintaining traditional rural economy and culture in the area, outside general trends of intensification and industrialization which swept through most other parts of Germany. After re-unification however, the potash mines and textile factory closed, and the agricultural production association collapsed, unemployment rising to 26%. 16 local authorities in the region gathered in a consortium aimed at developing a coordinated tourism strategy for the region based on the German concept of "Heimat" ("Home"). The main objective of the HVE Eichsfeld Touristik, a dedicated organisation set up in 1991, has been to tackle serious economic decline with limited resources, avoid competition with more high profile destination, build on Eichsfeld distinct local identity and promote intra-regional cooperation despite practical constraints of working across administrative boundaries. Many successful initiatives have been launched in the field of religious, nature, history and cultural tourism development in the region, with promotion of local processions and festivals, collaborative marketing of local products, valorisation of the border location, and creation of a nature centre to attract environmental and educational tourism. A cultural landscape route is currently being developed, including cycling facilities, a central reservation system and the opening of further "heimat" museums. From a tourism demand perspective, these projects have been successful in creating a good environment for further stages of tourism development. The initiative has been analysed as a case study in the EC Tourism Unit report on natural and cultural heritage to develop sustainable tourism in 2002.

**Source:** EC, DG Enterprise, Tourism Unit, 2002. "Using natural and cultural heritage to develop sustainable tourism".

**Link:**

<http://europa.eu.int/comm/enterprise/services/tourism/studies/ecosystems/heritage.htm>