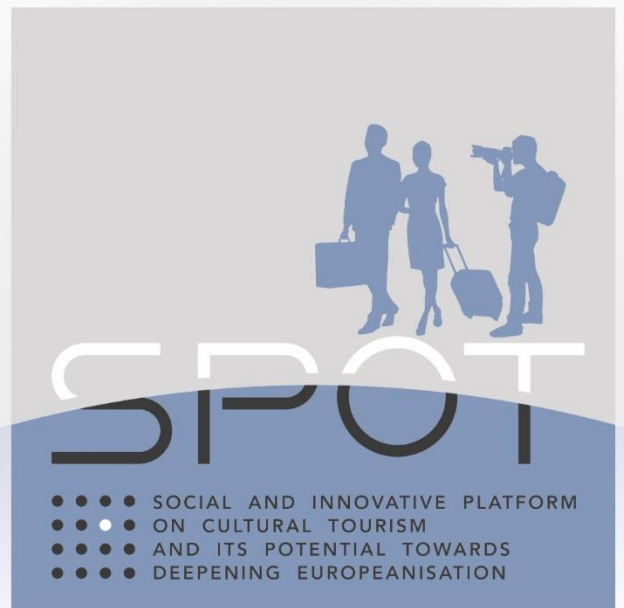


GERMANY

POLICY BRIEF

October 2022 | SPOT Policy Brief #11



[www.SPOTprojectH2020.eu](http://www.SPOTprojectH2020.eu)

# The development of soft tourism in the region Lieberose / Oberspreewald

For local policymakers

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## SPOT project and purpose

The EU-funded SPOT project aims to develop a new approach to understanding and addressing cultural tourism and promote the development of disadvantaged areas. It explores emerging forms of cultural tourism, identifying opportunities and developing strategies to allow locals to benefit from their precious cultural assets. SPOT engages academics and stakeholders in the development of policy proposals and generalises lessons learned through an Innovation Tool to assist policymakers and practitioners. Case studies from 15 countries are under examination in the period from 2020-2022. The project contributes to deepening the understanding of the specificities of European cultural regions.

## 1. Strengthening the region through tourism

The region faces challenges that require concerted action to overcome. There is a lack of suitable infrastructure for mobile network coverage, cycling and public transport. There is an unmet demand for gastronomy and a desire for a shared vision for future development.



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This project has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No. 870644

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**Soft tourism for sustainable regional development** may include a vision, which incorporates previous ideas from Leichhardt Land or the International Nature Exhibition.

### Soft tourism for sustainable regional development

The Federal Agency for Nature Conservation (BFN) classifies "soft tourism" under the topic of ecotourism. Soft tourism calls for a change in the underlying values of tourism compared to "hard" or mass tourism, which often has negative impacts on the environment and culture both within and outside Europe. Soft tourism entails the idea that tourism regions benefit from tourism in environmental, social, financial and cultural terms (<http://web01.bfn.cu.ennit.de/activities/tourism-and-sports/tourism/ecotourism/ecotourism-nature-tourism/?L=1>).

In Germany, there is a high demand for sustainable tourism, as the majority of holidaymakers choose their destination based on the possibility to experience nature, which, however, should not be destroyed in the process (<http://web01.bfn.cu.ennit.de/activities/tourism-and-sports/tourism/sustainable-tourism-offer/?L=1>).

The importance and popularity of sustainable and climate-neutral holiday offers are increasing. Germany generally offers many attractions that enable sustainable tourism activities. These include, for example, visiting vineyards, historic castles and especially destinations that can be reached car-free.

A number of initiatives and policy documents already exist for the development and support of tourism:

- Tourism as an economic factor in Germany: <https://www.bmwk.de/Editor/DE/Publications/Tourism/economic-factor-tourism-inGermany-long.html>
- The economic potential of water tourism in Germany: <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Tourismus/potenziale-des-wassertourismus-in-deutschland.html>
- Tourism Policy Report of the Federal Government: <https://www.bmwk.de/Redaktion/DE/Publikationen/Tourismus/tourismuspolitischer-bericht.html>
- Cultural Plan Lusatia: [https://www.kulturplan-lausitz.de/downloads/01\\_Kulturplan\\_Lausitz\\_Haupttext.pdf](https://www.kulturplan-lausitz.de/downloads/01_Kulturplan_Lausitz_Haupttext.pdf)
- ECOTRANS, a European network, combines ecology and economy, and advocates the establishment and promotion of environmentally friendly tourism in Europe: <https://www.globalnature.org/35668/Kooperationen/Mitgliedschaften/ECOTRANS/resindex.aspx>
- Forum 'anders reisen e.V.': Association for Sustainable Tourism - Committee on Tourism of the German Bundestag on 18 May 2022: [https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/895930/e2783f870e0637d43e37326c64d2752a/Stellungnahme\\_forum-anders-reisen-data.pdf](https://www.bundestag.de/resource/blob/895930/e2783f870e0637d43e37326c64d2752a/Stellungnahme_forum-anders-reisen-data.pdf)

The SPOT project team conducted a survey that was distributed among tourists and residents in 2020 which resulted in interesting insights about the case study area. We realized through the survey that the importance of the various cultural offerings is assessed somewhat differently by visitors and residents, which statistical tests confirm. The most important differences here are:

- Gastronomy and historical sites, but also cultural paths and trails are seen as important for the region, while locals rate their importance even higher,
- Town and village ensembles, as well as cultural heritage sites, are valuable for both groups, but here, the appreciation among tourists is somewhat higher,
- Festivals, art galleries, sports, music and dance events are definitely interesting for the inhabitants, but tend to be considered less important by tourists,
- Museums are more appreciated by residents than by visitors.

The majority of the inhabitants welcome tourism in the area and see the potential to also preserve local traditions and contribute to positive future development. We see this as positive and important in gaining support for tourism initiatives (including the SPOT project) as well as the committed policy for further tourism development.

Residents and visitors alike see the scenic attractions such as nature, silence, clean air, the clear starry sky as well as the forests, lakes and rivers as special assets of the region. Elements of high culture are still rare among the reasons for appreciation. Upgrading of the cultural offerings in the area should, therefore, start with the existing potentials, i.e. the attractions of scenery, and take into account that cultural development also does not violate natural values.

Cultural tourism could be improved via the future development of the "only desert in Germany". There is a possibility of developing a unique wilderness landscape here, of which there are hardly any examples in Germany. However, tourism development should take place in a way that is sensitive tourism –toward natural areas and their protection, without destroying these treasures. Which is plausible related to the expressed needs of tourists and the positive relationship between them and the inhabitants. The make up of the overnight accommodations in the area (family owned and operated holiday flats and campsites, rarely large hotels) offer the best conditions for protection of natural areas.

Identified weaknesses relate mainly to current infrastructural. For example, here is a lack of safe paths for cyclists and pedestrians as well as proper signposting of the already existing routes.



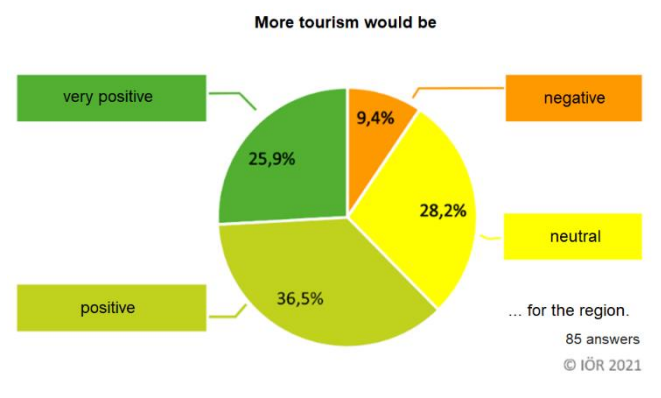
**Kulturtourismus im ländlichen Raum**  
 Ergebnisse einer Besucher- und Einwohnerbefragung  
 im Amtsbereich Lieberose / Oberspreewald (Brandenburg)  
 im Corona-Jahr 2020

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<https://doi.org/10.26084/ztqt-nv84>

**Survey results**

The brochure (shown here on the left, is only available in German) with the survey results can be read in full and downloaded from the following URL:  
<https://www.ssoar.info/ssoar/handle/document/74386#>



A clear trend during the Corona pandemic was the preference for taking holidays in one's own country versus long-distance travel. Many tourists discovered this area for the first time in 2020. Even after the end of the pandemic, stronger domestic tourism can be expected to continue, because the discoveries "wet the appetite for more" and increasing awareness of climate protection and perhaps awakened a thirst for adventure are likely to continue. It is recommended that the persons responsible within the case study areas further develop the urgently desired infrastructure and, above all, create more and improved gastronomy such as vegan, fresh, local, etc. dishes. Furthermore, the extension of opening hours should take place.

## 2. Tools for improving tourism

Within the SPOT project competition was launched for the best description of the region among the 15 partners. Below this text, you can see the **website** for the German competition entry. The new and funny illustrations are designed to encourage curiosity about the region and to increase the visibility of the region. The illustration of a man is intended to portray Ludwig Leichhardt, a German explorer that travelled to Australia for his research. The kangaroo is also related to Leichhardt the explorer. The pickle and jar of pickles represent a beloved product of the region. By asking „what does a kangaroo want with a pickle?“ We are attempting to capture the interest of tourists in the region and perhaps spark interest in getting to the bottom of this not-very-serious question. The purpose of the various illustrations is to provide a light and happy atmosphere and to put the potential tourist in a mindset of adventure.



Ideas for an international advertisement campaign connecting „outback“ (relation to the well-known Australia’s explorer Ludwig Leichhardt) with shortcomings that are taken as advantages in a funny way (desert, wilderness, no signal).



**Culture?**

– *Manifold.*

Special engineering, visual arts amazing architecture, unique traditions and events among others from Sorbian minority.



**Animals?**

– *Wild.*

Beavers shape the landscape, since the otters, Spreewald’s emblem animals, are hidden! But of course, the wolf is the king of terrestrial wilderness.



**Desert?**

– *Dry.*

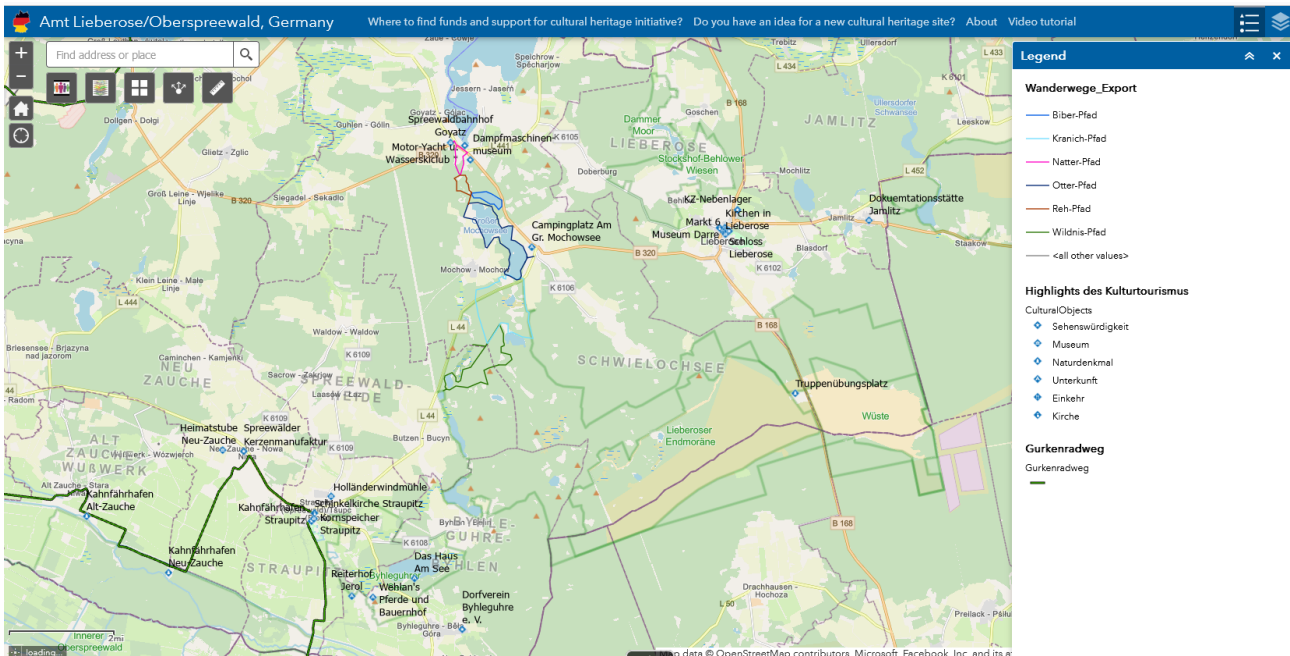
The Lieberoser Heide is too dry to become a dense forest once again. Special paths and a lookout hill allow one to experience the heathland.



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The "SPOT-IT" tool is an innovative web-map application, which will be available to all stakeholders, investors, government and municipal officials and the general public. The main objective of this tool is to provide decision support for the development of attractions and infrastructure in disadvantaged or remote areas to strengthen economic and social sustainability. The purpose of this application is to identify preferred areas for additional tourism development, but also to push for increased sustainability if excessive tourism has taken place in the past.



Screenshot: New SPOT-IT web application for the Lieberose/Oberspreewald administrative district

### 3. Conclusion and policy recommendations

The transportation infrastructure in the area, which is often criticised, is partly decided outside the region and can, therefore, only be influenced to a limited extent at the local level. The area is located far away from supra-regional traffic routes and highways, which has advantages in terms of noise or pollution but also leads to poor accessibility, especially for people who do not have a car. Associated advantages (silence, undisturbed nature, limited air and light pollution) should be used and advertised more; at the same time, it is important to decisively improve accessibility for all types of transport, but especially for sustainable (soft) transport, and to advocate for this at all political levels.

From state government to the EU, **green sustainable tourism** is **particularly promoted**. This results in opportunities for the development of infrastructure and sustainable transport solutions, such as local buses, rental bicycles or electric scooters, which should be purchased.

For the further development of tourism, it is important for the district to record the existing visions in an action plan that sets priorities in the medium term, i.e. for the next 2 to 3 years, on which the different actors can work together. This action plan must, of course, first be discussed and later continuously updated. This requires regular meetings of the most important actors from culture, sport, tourism, the municipalities and localities, associations and all interested service providers, which should take place at least every six months. For the organisation of these meetings, the implementation of the action plan and for the continued motivation of all those involved, a management team with representatives from the interest groups (culture, sport, tourism, monument protection, customs preservation, local and municipal councils, etc.) is needed.

A good starting point is to use the action plan to pursue the **development of sustainable communities and of soft tourism**. This would allow the supposed disadvantages of the area (little traffic, low radio coverage, low light pollution, silence, rare animals and plants, free development of natural processes) to be presented as advantages and, where desired, preserved. Such soft tourism offers are primarily aimed at older people, adventurers, and families with children as well as school classes.

We recommend developing special offers, not only to address the appropriate group of visitors but also to specifically extend the strong seasonal occupancy into the low season, these include:

1. school trips, youth dedication trips, class reunions, hiking group trips
2. bird watching and other wildlife observation (birdwatch tourism)
3. training camps, events and competitions for everyday athletes
4. offers and training for stargazing
5. retreats with water recreation, yoga, mindfulness or nutrition seminars and "digital detox".
6. gourmet offers such as slow food, wine tastings (outdoors) or similar.
7. offers of film and literary history such as a trail of legends or plot locations of famous series.

Of course, the essential **equipment and infrastructures have** to be created or (if they already exist somewhere) bundled for this: Catering and overnight accommodation for groups, sports offers and courses for beginners, sufficient rental equipment (boats, binoculars, yoga mats or sports equipment for rent, outdoor furniture). It is important to develop the necessary infrastructure in the long term; for sustainability and integration, these are public transport, footpaths and cycle paths with a smooth surface (asphalt instead of pavement or sand), picnic areas and protected storage facilities for own equipment; for young and modern target groups, these would be above all public WIFI hotspots, charging possibilities and good internet information offers about the events and operating times in the area. It is also important to ensure a suitable atmosphere, i.e. to recognise and avoid negative influences at an early stage while ensuring peaceful collaboration.

For successful positive development, harmony between residents and tourists is particularly important. As the district was praised several times in the survey for the good atmosphere and friendly behaviour of the locals, it is important to maintain this positive atmosphere. This requires coexistence and respect in all public debates and attention to the local opportunities of any tourist or cultural activity. It includes the involvement of residents, earning opportunities for local companies, tolerance and broad consultation for all activities.



# Project Identity

<b>Project name</b>	Social and innovative Platform on Cultural Tourism and its potential towards deepening Europeanisation (SPOT)
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<b>Duration</b>	36 months
<b>Funding Scheme</b>	H2020-SC6-TRANSFORMATIONS-2019
<b>Budget</b>	3 000 000 EUR
<b>Website and social networks</b>	<a href="http://www.SPOTprojectH2020.eu">www.SPOTprojectH2020.eu</a> fb: @SPOTprojectH2020 twitter: @H2020Spo
<b>For more information</b>	Contact – Dissemination team: spotprojecth2020@gmail.com

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*This project has received funding from the European Union's  
Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme  
under grant agreement No. 870644*

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