Press Release Stuttgart, August 5, 2022

Exzellenzinitiative Nachhaltige Reiseziele Advances Climate Action: Pilot Process for Greenhouse Gas Accounting

The tourism industry is under increasing pressure to reduce emissions. However, there is currently no standardized framework for greenhouse gas accounting in destinations. A pilot group of ten destination management organizations (DMOs), operating under the umbrella of the Exzellenzinitiative Nachhaltige Reiseziele, has joined forces to carry out a pioneering greenhouse gas accounting process for tourism in their destinations. The aim is to embark on a long-term path toward climate neutrality and establish an individual, data-based foundation for climate action measures.

At the international level, particularly since the last UN Climate Conference in Glasgow, focused efforts and concrete declarations have been made to strengthen climate action in tourism and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050. Germany's Climate Action Plan 2050 also defines climate targets, while the latest strategy paper on the further development of the National Tourism Strategy identifies climate action in tourism as a clear operational objective.

As part of the network activities of the Exzellenzinitiative Nachhaltige Reiseziele , which in 2022 focuses on the topic "Tourism and Climate Change," a pilot group has formed to take concrete steps toward climate neutrality. The first step is accounting: only by identifying and presenting emissions caused by tourism can a reliable basis for climate action measures be established.

The challenge is that although there are already approaches to emissions accounting in tourism, there are still major gaps regarding a robust accounting framework for data collection at destination level, and no universally accepted standardized methodology currently exists. Another challenge is the often insufficient availability of data.

Under the coordination of the Exzellenzinitiative Nachhaltige Reiseziele office, hosted by TourCert gGmbH, and together with the creative agency and sustainability consultancy reCET UG (haftungsbeschränkt), the pilot group will implement an accounting approach by autumn 2022 that has already been tested in destinations such as Valencia, Barcelona, and the Wadden Sea Region.This so-called "bottom-up" method captures emissions generated through the use of tourism services within the destination (demand-based accounting). The aim of the pilot process is to establish a baseline assessment of greenhouse gas emissions using a practical tool and to identify the availability of data across different destination types.

"With this method, which has already been tested several times, tourism-related emissions can be mapped specifically for each destination and concrete courses of action for destination management can be identified. This assessment therefore also creates a basis for tourism's path toward climate neutrality," emphasizes Martin Balas, sustainability consultant and Managing Director of reCET.

The findings will subsequently be shared throughout the entire network of the Exzellenzinitiative Nachhaltige Reiseziele and will form the basis for a climate accounting standard at destination level, which is considered essential for effective climate action management.

“There is an urgent need for action in tourism. We are therefore very pleased to advance an approach to climate accounting together with the participating destinations and initiate a pilot process that will also encourage other destinations to follow this example,” confirms Cilia Mayer, Coordinator of the Exzellenzinitiative Nachhaltige Reiseziele .

The pilot process is jointly financed by the participating destinations themselves and additionally supported financially by the Excellence Initiative office at TourCert gGmbH and reCET.

The participating destinations include six partners of the Exzellenzinitiative Nachhaltige Reiseziele as well as four additional destinations acquired through regional partners in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and Schleswig-Holstein:

- Ostseefjord Schlei GmbH
- Saarpfalz-Touristik
- Tourismus GmbH Nördlicher Schwarzwald
- Tourismus Zentrale Saarland GmbH
- Tourismus-Agentur Lübecker Bucht AöR
- Tourismusverband Fischland-Darß-Zingst e.V.
- Tourismusverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern e.V.
- Tourismusverband Rügen e.V.
- Tourismusverband Vorpommern e.V.
- Wissenschaftsstadt Darmstadt Marketing GmbH

Image and text materials related to this press release are available online.

About the Exzellenzinitiative Nachhaltige Reiseziele

The Exzellenzinitiative Nachhaltige Reiseziele is a partnership platform for sustainability-oriented destinations within German tourism. The initiative aims to combine expertise and ideas, foster exchange on sustainability topics at eye level, and collaboratively develop excellent practical solutions.Partners of the initiative connect to tackle challenges together, exchange best practices and lessons learned, and advance joint projects that promote and expand the implementation of sustainability in German tourism. Institutionally, the initiative’s office is hosted by TourCert gGmbH.

About reCET

reCET is a newly established creative agency and sustainability consultancy founded by Martin Balas and Nadine da Cruz Oliveira, focusing on tourism and culture. reCET empowers people and organizations to implement future-oriented solutions and creates creative spaces for development processes.

The consultancy primarily supports companies, organizations, and public institutions in implementing sustainability management systems, diversity structures, and strategic processes.

Martin Balas is regarded as a specialist in sustainable tourism, sustainability standards, certifications, and sustainable destination development in Germany and Europe. He has implemented more than 50 sustainability projects across all stakeholder levels, from local to international, and has been researching sustainability in tourism for several years at University for Sustainable Development of Eberswalde.

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