



ACTION PLAN

Hamburg Metropolitan Region



- Version: 5 January 2021 -

Action plan STAR Cities – Project Partner Hamburg

Part I – General information

Project Star Cities

Partner organisation: Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg, Senate Chancellery

Other partner organisations involved (if relevant): Hamburg Metropolitan Region

Country: Germany

NUTS2 region: Hamburg

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Part II – Policy context

The Action Plan aims to impact:

- Investment for Growth and Jobs programme
- European Territorial Cooperation programme
- Other regional development policy instrument

Name of the policy instrument addressed:

"Strategic Framework for Action" of Hamburg Metropolitan Region with its instrument "Tourism Development Concept"

In the application for the INTERREG Europe project Star Cities, Hamburg originally planned to address the policy instrument "Position paper of the Senate «Strengthening Tourism – Supporting Sustainability»" (Doc. No. 20/10483) from 2014, an official request of Hamburg Parliament for a concept to promote sustainable tourism in Hamburg. This policy instrument can no longer be influenced since it is a parliamentary committee report from a past legislative period. It was the Senate's answer to a parliamentary request of one of the political groups of Hamburg parliament and was complied with during the following legislative period, the result being a sustainability strategy for Hamburg Tourism. This sustainability strategy sets guidelines for the introduction of sustainable offers, the definition of sustainability standards and the management and distribution of tourism flows. However: This policy instrument does not address the River Elbe and is limited to the territory of the Free and Hanseatic City of Hamburg.

The thematic scope of STAR Cities is sustainable river tourism development – and the exchange among the project partners has confirmed that this needs to be done **across administrative borders**.

In Northern Germany, the Elbe is 270 kilometres long, 60 kilometres run through Hamburg. One very prominent example for a touristic offers spanning over administrative boundaries is the Elbe Cycle Route, one of Germany's most popular long-distance cycle routes, which leads from Saxonia through Hamburg and on to the North Sea. In addition, ferries and excursion boats frequently use the Elbe to cross the city's boundaries, as do hikers and day trippers along its shores.

For this reason, the project partner Hamburg decided to **expand the regional scope** beyond its borders into **Hamburg Metropolitan Region (HMR)** and consequently transferred the project management within its administration to the Office of Hamburg Metropolitan Region in the Ministry for Economy and Innovation. HMR has a long history of organising and funding projects along the Elbe, such as the above-mentioned "Elbe Cycle Route" (section North), the "Maritime Landscape Lower Elbe" (from Hamburg to the North Sea) and "Kurs Elbe – from Hamburg to Wittenberge" to the east of Hamburg. The City of Hamburg is a partner and substantial co-funder in all of these projects.

In order to be able to cover a larger region, it is also necessary to address a different policy instrument than the one originally listed in the application (or its successor).

Suggestion for new policy instrument:

The “**Strategic Framework of Action**” of Hamburg Metropolitan Region (2017 – 2022) sets the outlines for the development of strategies, approaches to action and cooperation projects and serves as strategic **guideline for HMR’s federal funds** (which fund infrastructure and strategic projects in HMR with yearly up to 2.7 million Euros). One of its **strategic goals** is to strengthen tourism in a number of fields of actions. The River Elbe, however, is not explicitly listed as a field for joint action, neither is sustainable tourism.

Currently, HMR is working on an **update** of its Strategic Framework of Action. As one instrument of its new **future agenda** (“Zukunftsagenda”), a **Tourism Development Concept (TDC)** is currently being developed. Its objectives are to define priorities and requirements for **further touristic cooperation** and operationalize those into (fundable) project approaches. At the same time, it aims at concrete recommendations for action in the areas of "tourism infrastructure", "tourism offer" and "tourism marketing". This Tourism Development Concept is expected to be finished by the beginning of 2023 and then to be officially adopted by HMR’s Regional Council, its highest political decision-making body, which is composed of representatives from administrations and elected politicians.

The actions described below are to address the “Strategic Framework of Action” via its “Tourism Development Concept” as the **new policy instrument**. The results of the TDC will define the strategic objectives for the tourism sector in the update of the Strategic Framework of HMR in from 2023 onwards.

Part III – Details of the actions envisaged

Background:

The River Elbe in HMR is touristically **relatively well developed**. A good infrastructure of ports, sport boat marinas, ferries, piers and boat trips provides many ways to move on and across the Elbe and its tributaries. Along the river banks, there is the **Elbe Cycle Route** and further local cycle routes connecting the hinterland to the river. Smaller and greater towns and cities as well as touristic infrastructure, accommodation, restaurants and cafés can be found in great variety. A biannual festival promotes the **industrial heritage** along the Elbe. As a result, HMR was able to **provide many good practices** for the partners in the Interregional Learning Sessions and also showcase some **cooperation projects** which it was able to initiate along the river.

However, as the regional assessment showed, there is **no joint strategy** for the Elbe section within Hamburg Metropolitan Region. This is due to the fact that - despite the diversified existing offer - the touristic landscape along the Elbe is **highly fragmented**: There are 11 destination management organisations (DMO), each of which assigns a different importance to its riverside area. There is **no joint strategy** to which the neighbouring federal states or destinations commit themselves for the Elbe within Hamburg Metropolitan Region. The effect is that tourism along the river is **not being developed jointly** or in a coordinated way. Too often, **offers end at administrative borders**. Accordingly, a **sustainable approach** to river tourism is lacking. One of the central lessons from STAR Cities is that the development of sustainable tourism along a river can only work as cross-border cooperation.

Action 1: River tourism strategy « Elbe « (Implementing a river tourism strategy into the Tourism Development Concept of Hamburg Metropolitan Region)

The exchange with the STAR Cities partners showed that the river is not positioned strategically in any partners’ governance model. If it is integrated into local tourism strategies at all, it is rarely ever prioritised. STAR Cities showed that all partners share the same problem: There are **neither joint development nor marketing strategies** for rivers as a whole, and rivers are rarely developed and positioned as **brands**. Touristic offers too often end at district or dmo borders.

As stated above, all this applies also to the Elbe in HMR (exceptions being the Elbe Cycle Route or regional project approaches such as Kurs Elbe course or Maritime Landscape Untere Elbe). The current development of a regional “Tourism Development Concept” is a chance to change this and **put the Elbe “on the map” for further joint strategic development**.

Policy relevance:

The policy instrument addressed by the action plan, the “Strategic framework for Hamburg Metropolitan Region”, seeks to guide Hamburg Metropolitan Region to greater cohesion, climate protection and strengthening of urban and rural connections. Relevant for the action plan is the section “**Liveable-Attractive-Regional**”. Here, under the heading “Hamburg Metropolitan Region strengthens tourism” the framework formulates the aim to jointly identify and market “the potentials of the Hamburg Metropolitan Region for day tourism and national as well as international guests”. It is followed by a list of four fields of action; the Elbe River is not yet among the topics listed which indicates that its potential is not yet sufficiently recognised by HMR. The experience during the learning process of STAR Cities has shown the great **potential of river tourism**, especially following the **covid-pandemic**. Therefore, the integration of the Elbe is seen as a necessary prerequisite for the joint development of this potential in the future.

The Tourism Development Concept, which is currently being developed, is a chance to use the expertise of an external consultant in order to try and integrate the Elbe into HMR’s strategic touristic agenda. After its formal adoption by our regional council, key aspects of the TDC can be expected to be integrated into the Strategic Framework of HMR and thus be the **basis for further cooperation and funding** of tourism projects.

Learnings from the project:

The interregional learning session about the topic “**Governance and Cooperation**” was of particular interest to us in this context, since it included two good practices which we found very inspiring:

One example to learn from in the context of cross-boarder cooperation is the good practice “**Joint action plan implemented by Marne river DMOs**” where four DMO joined forces to further develop, enhance and promote the tourist offer on and along the river Marne. This sort of cooperation exceeds the ones existing in HMR with projects like “Kurs Elbe” (which now focus primarily on marketing) in that it is a strategic cooperation aimed at the development of the touristic offer based on a joint, annual work plan. Within the framework of the action plan, it should be examined how **cooperation between DMOs along the Elbe could be further expanded** beyond marketing, for example in the direction of joint infrastructure or product development. As the good practice from Val de Marne showed, it is possible to establish and organise boat cruises together, and/or work on the quality of the touristic product, for example the valorisation of cycle routes (see also action 3). These possibilities should be examined and - if found feasible – be integrated into the strategic plan in order to enable future funding for such projects by HMR.

Inspiration on how a **joint strategy and branding** of a river can help to improve the touristic product was presented in the good practice **Vltava river in Bohemia/Czech Republic**. Here, a destination network joined forces in order to develop sustainable river tourism along the river Vltava (Moldova). Along the Vltava, a **joint strategy** has been adopted and allows DMOs and tourism stakeholders, such as local companies, entrepreneurs, and the public sector, to develop offers along **functional scenarios** provided by the strategy. The river is introduced to visitors as a single, attractive tourist destination. In the course of the action plan, the potential of such an approach for the Elbe should be examined.

Both good practices are published in the good practice guide and the policy learning platform.

Based on these **two examples** and the ensuing discussions with **project partners** and **stakeholders**, we have come to the conclusion that we need a **more strategic approach** for sustainable river tourism development along the Elbe in HMR to better meet our objectives. To achieve this, we strive to implement the **Elbe as a central touristic product** that needs to be developed and marketed jointly, into our upcoming **Tourism Development Concept** (TDC). The new TDC offers an opportunity to integrate various experiences from STAR Cities into a future strategy for Hamburg Metropolitan Regions’ Elbe region. It provides for the **development of “pilot projects”** based on **good practices** from successful river destinations which are being managed and marketed across administrative borders (as in the **Marne** example) and which have joint river tourism development and marketing strategies (such as **Vltava**). Within the framework of the development of the new TDC, our action aims to develop ideas for **pilot projects along the Elbe** building on either existing infrastructure – such as the Elbe Cycle Route (see action 3) - or new facets of sustainable tourism development such as mobility.

The exchange with partners during STAR Cities made us aware of the lack of sustainable tourism offers and infrastructures along the Elbe. One important aspect identified in this context is **sustainable mobility**: Improving accessibility via public transport or the smart integration of soft mobility options (hiking and biking, slow tourism activities such as bird watching, etc.). It can be expected that the upcoming Tourism Development Concept will further highlight this assessment and contain recommendations for action in this field.

Another aim of the action is to learn from aspects from the various other good practices presented in STAR Cities' learning sessions, e.g. on digitalisation (as showcased in the good practice "**Watermuseum Venice**", see **action 2**) or distribution, as in the good practice of Val-de-Marne's joint booking platform "Explore Paris".

Players involved:

The development of the Tourism Development Concept involves all **federal and district destination management organisations** in HMR (and accordingly, along the Elbe), **chambers of commerce** and other relevant stakeholders. Since the TDC also aims at infrastructure development, **local administrative bodies** will be involved. The action is headed by HMR's official **working group on tourism**, the operational implementation is carried out by an external tourism consultant. **Stakeholders** are to be involved via workshops and other participation formats. The office of HMR will be involved into the project, as will the relevant **ministries** of the federal states.

We have applied for a **staff exchange** with Val de Marne in order to learn more about their approach and the possibilities to transfer it or aspects of it to our region. We are especially interested in the **joint action plan implemented by Marne river DMOs**:

Through this partnership agreement signed in 2019, Val-de-Marne Tourism Board and 3 other DMOs can develop common activities:

- Boat cruises program during the summer with cost sharing
- Support to water sport clubs to develop tourism activities
- Organisation of events
- Marketing and communication actions

Through this staff exchange we would like to learn more about this joint strategy: how it is devised, financed and how its realization is organized between the participating partners in order to better understand it and better assess the possibilities for transferability. One of our tourism officers (from the Kurs Elbe project) is expected to join this exchange in order to further increase his capacity and also to pass on the good practice into his region. The staff exchange would be implemented through online meetings between HMR team and stakeholders on one side and Marne river team and stakeholders on the other side. Because both study visits planned in Hamburg and Val-de-Marne were cancelled during the project phase 1, we would also organise a 2-3 days of study visit in Val-de-Marne to see on the ground the implementation of Marne river strategy and meet stakeholders.

The experience from the staff exchange will be discussed within the process of the Tourism Development Concept as a possible role model for further increase cooperation between DMOs along the Elbe and possibly other regions in HMR.

Costs, Funding & Timeframe:

The action will take place within the framework of the "**Zukunftsagenda**" (future agenda) of HMR, the Tourism Development Concept will receive a 100% funding from HMR's regional funds (federal states' joint funds). The **costs** are € 210.000 plus tax.

The work on the TDC has started in August 2021 and the final Concept is expected to be available at the beginning of 2023. **Interim results** (SWOT analysis and first recommendations) can be expected in early spring 2022. Building on the SWOT, a process to define **joint goals and strategies** for the cooperation in HMR is expected to produce results by summer 2022. This phase would be the perfect timeframe for the planned **staff exchange**. In the second half of 2022, recommendations for action and implementation management from the consultant will round up the process which will be completed by a final report by the end of the year.

At the end of the whole process, the new TDC will be approved by our **Regional Council** (expected in early 2023) and in consequence its key recommendations will become part of the update of HMR's strategic framework in 2023. The **implementation of first projects** will start in 2023.

The timeframe of the whole process is parallel to STAR Cities phase 2 and therefore ideal:

- August 2021-March 2022 : SWOT analysis and first recommendations
- April 2022-June 2022 : Definition of joint goals and strategies > Staff exchange with Val-de-Marne, including online meetings and 2-3 days of study visits
- July 2022-December 2022 : Recommendations for action and implementation management
- January 2023 : Final report

Action 2: Digital Industrial Heritage Museum (Approved Pilot Action)

HMR has established a **biannual industrial heritage festival** which has taken place for the 6th time in September 2021. For two days every other year, around 120 objects of industrial heritage, such as historical ships, wharfs, ports, locks, waterworks, water-technology and museums open their doors to the public. Many of those objects are not generally accessible, almost all of them are being run by volunteer networks.

Whereas the festival only takes place every other year, many objects may be visited individually all year round. The wish to **promote the industrial heritage** as a **permanent attraction** has led to four individual local routes in the metropolitan area, two of which are located on the Elbe (Lauenburg, Geesthacht).

A **permanent collection of industrial heritage** exists on the website of HMR, but this is technically very basic and does not allow potential guests to use it as a practical, multimedia guide.

With the **pilot action**, we want to establish an additional digital and **multi-medial access** to our industrial heritage which will be an **addition** both during the festival but also – and this is the main focus of the action - in between festivals in order to secure **more constant visitors** to the sites.

We want to **establish a digital offer** (interactive, mobile website) with thematic clusters and local routes, enriched by audio and/or video material, following the **good practice “Water Museum of Venice” as presented during the Interregional Learning Session about Marketing**. The **main goal of the pilot action** is to foster the visibility and accessibility of the industrial heritage along the Elbe and hinterlands for more sustainable tourism in a modern, digital way.

Policy relevance:

The Pilot Action will strengthen the visibility of attractive destinations and allow them to reach a broader target audience by using digital means, completing existing marketing instruments and policies. Doing so, the Pilot Action **tests the water** for further projects and investments by providing reliable results and thus, paving the way for widespread adoption of further attractive touristic destinations. It is therefore suitable to contribute to the objectives of the Strategic Framework as stated above.

Evaluation:

In order to prove durability and ensure long lasting success, **evaluation methods** will be embedded into the Pilot Action. Using the digital figures and the responses of the stakeholders, will enable us to create an accurate and comparable figure of demand and potential risks. Furthermore, **feedback mechanisms** will be created in order to allow for easier and more thorough analysis of the Pilot Action, delivering clear and conceivable data.

The action will be evaluated in the process of the Tourism Development Concept as a practice for cultural marketing. The evaluation can be expected to confirm the **potential of the exemplary topic “industrial heritage”** and its digital marketing for the region in its conclusion report at the end of the process. This will lead to an implementation of the action into our tourism development concept as worthy of further development (and funding) and pave the way for the **widespread implementation of other topics** into the digital future of the Hamburg Metropolitan Tourism Plan.

Players involved:

The pilot action will involve the owners of the objects of industrial heritage, many of which are small volunteer networks of locals or individual owners. It will provide them with a platform for their digital content and connect objects to thematic and/or local routes, thus granting the objects more visibility and thereby more attention and visitors throughout the year.

It will also involve local DMO by providing a platform for their routes and offers “off the beaten track”, attracting new target groups and de-centralising tourism flows.

Funding & Timeframe:

The pilot action is funded by INTERREG Europe (85%). Budget: 43.400 Euros.

The action is envisaged as a pilot action during project phase 2 of STAR Cities, from September 2021 to November 2022:

September 2021 – November 2021: Preparation phase

- Exchange with GP Water Museum of Venice and other projects

- Meeting with geoportal of Hamburg Metropolitan Region (most likely basis for digital maps): research of technical possibilities

December 2021 – May 2022 : Concept phase

- Meeting with stakeholders from the existing routes (online or physical, depending on covid-pandemic), such as dmo and selected objects
- Further research (external expertise and own) : further possible routes (with external expertise), existing digital material about industrial heritage objects, involvement of stakeholders who took part in festival (inventarisation).
- First concept for digital presentation (with input / exchange with key stakeholders)
- Establish framework of digital offer
- Preparation to publish first routes online (existing local routes)
- Presentation of feasibility study in (online) workshop with stakeholders from the regions and dmo
- Tenders for digital/technical expertise and support
- Stakeholder-involvement on digital content

June – November 2022 : Test launch of “digital museum”

- Inclusion of existing digital material
- Inclusion of existing website
- First new digital material
- Evaluation of process and way forward by external expert of tourism development concept
- Dissemination / marketing via: The website of Hamburg Metropolitan Regions ; Press release ; social media (the industrial heritage and the touristic channels on Facebook and Instagram (with ranges of up to 200.000 persons/months (cumulated)) ; local “ralley” to involve potential users ; production of thematic podcast in the podcast series of Hamburg Metropolitan Region “Einfachmalraus”.

Action 3: “Elbe Cycle Route North 2.0”

The **Elbe Cycle Route** runs through two European countries - the Czech Republic and Germany. Due to the length of the cycle path there are four offices responsible for the uniform brand identity and for the coordination among each other, one in the Czech Republic, and three along the river in Germany. Together, they do the overall marketing for the trail (brochure, website, app, etc.) This unified external image is one reason why the Elbe Cycle Route has been voted the most popular long-distance cycle route in Germany for 14 years in a row.

One of the three German offices manages the stretch of the trail in HMR. This office is a collaboration of all DMO along the Elbe in HMR, it is financed by them and a steering board coordinates its activities. One joint goal is to improve the infrastructure along the bike path and attract more cyclists not only along the river but also to the hinterland. This cross-boarder cooperation between 9 DMO from 4 different federal states has been a success for almost 20 years. The **Elbe Cycle Route North** is the **“backbone” of tourism along the Elbe**, it is the only joint product which spans the whole area.

After 20 years, the infrastructure, product design and marketing of the Elbe Cycle Route North are in need of a make-over in order to be able to better cater to the needs of today’s cycle tourists. Especially the digital marketing, but also product design, hinterland access and / or sustainable mobility options need to be improved and / or developed.

In this context, it is the aim to explore the possibilities of establishing a **new “lead project”** within the framework of HMR “Elbe Cycle Route 2.0” (working title) within the next 1,5 years. Lead projects can get an 80% funding from HMR’s regional funds.

Policy relevance:

The Elbe Cycle Route is the **only joint project** which spans the whole River Elbe in HMR. It is also the **backbone** of most touristic activities along the Elbe and connects the Elbe in HMR to regions beyond its borders. In order to be able to fulfil its central role in the future, it is necessary to undertake new efforts to make the path sustainable and fit for the future. This project would strengthen the aim to develop and market “the

potentials of the Hamburg Metropolitan Region for day tourism and national as well as international guests” as stated in the Strategic Framework.

Players involved:

The Elbe Cycle Route North Coordination office and its Coordinating Board (partners along the Elbe (mainly dmo), tourism offices, service providers.

The coordination office will be responsible to identify needs for action for the cycle route and suggest and discuss these with the coordinating board. It will thus serve as thematic expert for a first evaluation of the existing infrastructure and needs for its improvement.

The members of the board will have to jointly decide on the implementation of new measures and infrastructures and be willing to make a co-financing contribution in order to apply for funding. They will have to commit to the projects goals and contribute to their achievement. One of the stakeholders will also have to act as “lead partner” for the project.

Timeframe and funding:

The implementation of a new lead project in HMR usually takes between 1 and 2 years. If it is possible to establish a lead project of HMR, an 80% funding by HMR’s funds is possible. 20% will have to be funded by local stakeholders (DMO, districts/municipalities).

First ideas will be developed with stakeholders in the end of 2021 and will be further discussed in the project’s advisory board in spring 2022. By this time, the work on the TDC and in particular the results of the initial assessment (SWOT analysis) can be expected to show first recommendations for actions in the fields of cycle tourism and/or the Elbe river. These will be integrated into further discussions on a possible project.

Following the meeting of the advisory board in spring 2022, the project idea will be further expanded (until the end of 2022, appr.) and a project design will be developed (possibly including an umbrella project and possibly also regionally limited sub-projects). In the beginning of 2023, the project budget will be drawn up and the funding by the partners and MRH will be determined.

After this, in spring 2023, the application for funding could be submitted to HMR’s regional funds, the funding could then be decided by the steering committee before the summer break in 2023.

Costs:

As yet unclear, depending on the tasks. A typical lead project costs around € 800.000 for three years and can be funded by HMR’s regional funds by up to 80%.

Date: 19 November 2021 / 05 January 2022

Signature: Tanja Blätter

Stamp of the organisation (if available): _____