



Priority 5. Inclusive society

Specific Objective 4.6 - **Enhancing the role of culture and sustainable tourism in economic development, social inclusion and social innovation**

NB: This factsheet presents **a summary** of Specific Objective (SO) 4.6 of the Interreg North-West Europe Programme (NWE IP). The comprehensive description of SO 4.6, which contains detailed explanations and further examples, **should be consulted for a full understanding of the SO in Chapter 2.1 of the NWE IP.**

Territorial challenges and opportunities

Despite the disproportionate impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on culture and tourism in the North-West Europe (NWE) region, there are opportunities for these vital sectors to improve economic development, social inclusion, and social innovation. Analysis has shown that rural and more remote areas can reduce pressure on areas with higher tourism density, while focusing on competitive advantages such as natural assets. Local tourism is conducive to sustainable approaches offering longer seasonality, more socially inclusive target groups, eco-friendlier approaches, sustainable access and mobility modes, holistic networking and upskilling of local interdependent professionals whilst helping to create jobs and stem depopulation. Similarly, innovative transnational cultural projects, stimulating social cohesion and inclusion as well as support for the creative industries can contribute to greater empowerment and regeneration in deprived areas across the NWE Programme area.

Objectives

Within this Specific Objective, the Programme aims to support projects that:

- Increase sustainable and territorially balanced tourism in the NWE, whilst considering the green and digital transformation.
- Improve social inclusion and social innovation, including better access to and involvement in tourism and culture sectors for vulnerable people.
- Improve access to and sustainable management of natural and cultural heritage assets.

Target groups

- **Local/regional/national authorities, EGTCs, governmental agencies, public equivalent organisations** (including agencies or para-public organisations) with responsibilities related to tourism and culture (e.g., tourism and cultural agencies, destination management organisations, etc.).
- **Universities, public research centres, private research units, schools, higher education, training centres** are innovation drivers, providing scientific insight

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and evidence to regional challenges and further encourage and develop tourism and culture in the NWE region.

- **SMEs and business support organisations** are a driving force of the economy in the NWE Programme area. They can increase the competitiveness of the NWE area in the tourism and culture sectors and drive behavioural change at business and industry level.
- **Sectoral associations, NGOs, lobby organisations, citizens groups** can act as multipliers to their networks. They can promote educational initiatives to make citizens more engaged in supporting the transition to better touristic and cultural services and tools.

Activities

Projects should implement a combination of activities, such as:

- **Elaboration and implementation of joint strategies and action plans**, for example, place-based strategies to support the development of tools and skills for the promotion of cultural heritage, branding or tourism marketing, as well as development of risk management and response approaches.
- **Pilot actions for testing tools and/or solutions**, for example jointly demonstrating and implementing scalable and replicable solutions, services, and technologies in a real environment for the promotion of natural and cultural heritage or tourism assets (e.g., innovative IT-based solutions).
- **Capacity building and awareness raising activities**, for example focusing on public awareness and acceptance campaigns on the benefits and adoption of more sustainable tourism and cultural practices; or training schemes to support workers in the tourism and cultural sectors.

Results

The **combination of these activities** may lead to results such as:

- Tourism is more sustainable and territorially balanced, for example, by reconciling stakeholder interests and cooperation networks, and by empowering target groups to benefit from hidden, unknown assets, improved skills, and networking.
- Greater social inclusion and social innovation, for example by enabling better access to and involvement in tourism and culture sectors for vulnerable people (e.g., elderly, disabled, unemployed, single parents, young people not in employment, education or training, people living in deprived areas, migrants, refugees, etc.).
- Natural and cultural heritage assets are improved, for example, through renovated or better preserved and more accessible natural and cultural heritage sites.

Outputs and results of projects must contribute to the NWE Programme indicator framework (see the NWE IP).