



Marianne Düsterhöft – Bäderverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern e.V. (Spa Association of Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania), Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania/Germany

Title of presentation: Step by step towards the first officially designated curative and therapeutic forest

Abstract: Bäderverband Mecklenburg-Vorpommern e.V. has initiated three projects serving as phases for the indication-based development of curative or therapeutic forests in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania and their marketing. Based on scientific research, the aim is to tap into the natural, health-related potential of woodland. This would give government-approved spas and resorts in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania the chance to expand their health tourism portfolios, as well as giving local rehab clinics, health-focused hotels and therapy practices the additional opportunity to make use of the natural health-related properties of woodland as part of the treatments they offer. In the 2018 Index of German Values, the environment jumped from fourth place in 2016 to first, while health moved down a place from first to second. This is a clear sign of growing awareness of health and the environment.

Ten key steps involved in creating curative or therapeutic forests have been identified in the five years since the projects were initiated.

Specialists from the forestry, medicine, landscape design and tourism sectors compiled joint definitions and quality criteria that formed the basis for Europe's first officially designated curative and therapeutic forest. At the first international Gesundheitspotenzial Wald conference, held in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Germany in 2017, it became clear that woodland use for health-related purposes is a major international topic that needs to be pursued further. As a result, clinical trials and international knowledge exchange will be extremely important in future.