

Lower Saxony (Niedersachsen) International Offices

The Challenge:

Promoting and supporting international business is a high priority for the economy of the Niedersachsen Federal State in Germany, but doing business in another country can be particularly challenging. Finding the right advice and more importantly the right contacts in your target international market can be very difficult for companies.

The solution:

In recent years state offices and partnerships have been set up around the world to provide help to Niedersachsen (Lower Saxony) companies with exporting. Whilst this type of representation is not uncommon for different countries, the Lower Saxony approach shows that even federal states or regions can have an effective international presence. Lower Saxony has **representatives** in China, the USA and Iran in addition to **offices** in Russia, Poland, South Africa, Turkey and one office for the Scandinavian countries of Denmark, Sweden and Norway. Another is responsible for Cuba and the Caribbean. Many of these overseas posts offer sector-specific information so they can be the best point of contact for businesses in those markets.

These overseas posts offer the following to companies:

- General Information about the target country;
- Advice & guidance concerning the current political / economic situation;
- Facilitation of business and political contacts;
- Help in finding the right business partners.

These international posts allow the state of Niedersachsen to support its regional businesses with its own international network of business centres and support partners. Each year there are two events in Lower-Saxony when the representatives for the different countries come and present about the current situation in the market. After these there is time for pre-booked individual meetings between companies and the representatives.



Resources:

The international representatives are commercial organisations that receive financial support from the federal state of Lower-Saxony for basic services to companies. However, bespoke projects for certain companies are provided as a chargeable service with the fee and scope of the services negotiated between the two parties.

Measuring Success:

Evidence of success is reported back by the representatives at the annual events in Lower-Saxony as well as being featured on the websites of the different representations. Success is measured in terms of new business won (export orders, contracts secured, offices established internationally, collaborations etc.) by Niedersachsen companies in international markets.

Challenges Faced:

Firstly, the world is a big place and there are always parts of the world (regions or countries) that are of interest for companies but it is not possible to have a Lower Saxony representation everywhere so only a small number of targeted international representations are in place.

Secondly, something confusing for companies is the relationship between the international representations and foreign chambers of commerce, Enterprise Europe Network and other sectoral organisations that at the first glance might offer similar services. So, making it clear for companies and helping them to find the right organisation for their particular projects is a challenge that needs to be overcome.

Transferability:

If a European region has identified foreign markets that are of special interest for local SMEs or places with strategic opportunities for certain types of services or products, then it would be worth establishing a representation there. It is very beneficial to provide a range of services abroad as if the company was accessing them at home. Not only does such a service demonstrate that a region is responding directly to the needs of the local economy but that it is able to make meaningful links with a foreign market.

In Lower Saxony, the representatives agree to work for the federal state and support local businesses. They know that they are not only abroad to provide 'on the spot' advice but they remain very connected to the home market by presenting regularly in Lower Saxony and giving 1-2-1 advice for free. This means that companies don't have to invest in a lot of time out of the office initially and therefore companies are very likely to take advantage of the service offer.

Find out more: <https://www.invest-in-niedersachsen.com/en>