THE ACTIVATION OF BROWNFIELDS IN THE EUROPEAN UNION

CREATING NEW OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH THE MULTIANNUAL FINANCIAL FRAMEWORK 2028-2034

METROPOLE RUHR BUSINESS

Image © Luftbild-Service.com

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary 1

Policy Paper

Introduction 2

Market Situation and Relevance 3

Common Challenges of the Regions 4

Funding Instruments and Gaps in the MFF 2028–2034 6

Political Recommendations 8

Conclusion and Outlook 9

Regional Profiles 10

The Ruhr (Germany) 11

Asturias (Spain) 13

Brno Metropolitan Area (Czech Republic) 15

Catalonia (Spain) 18

Grand Est Region (France) 20

Metropolis GZM (Poland) 22

Moravian-Silesian Region (Czech Republic) 25

Savinja-Šalek Region (Slovenia) 27

Upper Austria (Austria) 29

Usti Region (Czech Republic) 32

Walloon Region (Belgium) 34

Western Macedonia (Greece) 36

Zasavje (Slovenia) 38

Executive Summary

This policy paper brings together the perspective of thirteen European regions—from metropolitan industrial belts to post-mining territories and highly industrialised hubs. Despite their diverse geographies and histories, they face the same reality: extensive brownfields and restricted sites remain idle, even though concrete project ideas and investor interest already exist. This collective voice underlines both the urgency of the challenge and the scale of the opportunity.

Brownfields are **strategic land reserves for Europe's future**. They provide precisely the space needed for renewable energy projects, innovative industries, affordable housing, and green infrastructure. Every hectare activated reduces pressure on greenfield land, supports the EU Soil Strategy 2030, and contributes directly to the European Green Deal. With the right instruments, brownfields can become engines of climate neutrality, competitiveness, and social cohesion.

The forthcoming **Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034** mobilises unprecedented resources and sets ambitious priorities. Yet, without more concrete and targeted instruments, brownfields risk remaining blind spots. This view is supported by the findings of the survey of the thirteen regions, carried out by the authors of this document:

- the lack of **early-phase financing** for demolition, remediation, and preparation,
- **administrative complexity** with fragmented responsibilities and lengthy procedures,
- and **systemic funding gaps**, particularly for **land acquisition**, preventing public authorities from securing strategic sites.

The regions therefore call for constructive adjustments within the MFF: a **dedicated window for early-phase funding**, the **integration of land acquisition, flexibilzation of existing programmes** into existing instruments (ERDF, JTF, InvestEU), and stronger **institutional capacity** through public development agencies.

The participating regions stress their readiness to share data, expertise, and practical experience, as well as to engage in structured dialogue with EU institutions. Their joint message is clear: Europe has both the vision and the resources to drive its green and industrial transition. What is needed now are **precise, practical solutions** to unlock the full potential of brownfields and turn them into a cornerstone of a climate-neutral, innovative, and socially just Europe.

Introduction

The activation of brownfields and restricted areas is one of the most underestimated yet decisive future tasks of the European Union. While political debates often emphasise energy, digitalisation, or industrial policy, the question of land availability—the very ground on which these transformations must occur—remains insufficiently addressed. Without accessible sites, even the most ambitious programmes of the Green Deal or the energy transition remain theoretical.

Brownfields—former industrial, mining or military sites now lying idle—exist across Europe on a vast scale, particularly in metropolitan and post-industrial regions where demand for new production, energy projects, housing, and green infrastructure is highest. These areas represent Europe's hidden reserves: tens of thousands of hectares that could simultaneously advance climate goals (such as prevention of soil sealing), competitiveness, and social cohesion.

This policy paper has been prepared under the participation of **thirteen European regions. The Ruhr (Germany, initiator), Asturias (Spain), Brno Metropolitan Area (Czech Republic), Catalonia (Spain), Grand Est Region (France), Metropolis GZM (Poland), Moravian-Silesian Region (Czech Republic), Savinja-Šalek Region (Slovenia), Upper Austria (Austria), Usti Region (Czech Republic), Walloon Region (Belgium), Western Macedonia (Greece),** and **Zasavje (Slovenia).** They all face the similar challenges: Each region possesses substantial sites blocked by industrial legacies, ownership issues, or insufficient financing.

The Ruhr illustrates both the scale of the challenge and the opportunity. It has documented 2,336 hectares of restricted areas and an additional 3,784 hectares of unused land—13.5% of its surveyed commercial total. Projects such as **"Phönix" in the City of Dortmund** show how successful activation can transform entire cityscapes, but only because early-stage risks were shouldered by funded public investments. Such flagship projects are based on reliable funding, particularly in structurally weak regions; Europe needs systemic solutions.

The purpose of this paper is therefore clear: to align the EU's funding architecture in the forthcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034 with the concrete needs of its regions to unlock land potential for strategic development. The challenge is not a lack of vision but the absence of appropriate instruments that could be applied in practice. Accordingly, this paper addresses the European institutions, Member States, and regional actors with specific recommendations to ensure that Europe's strategic goals can be implemented effectively on the ground.

In the first part, the policy paper focuses on the common challenges that regions are facing and shares recommendations regarding a better European policy for the activation of brownfields. The paper's clear messages are supported by the profiles of the thirteen participating regions in the second part of the document.

Market Situation & Relevance

The current market situation illustrates with stark clarity the magnitude of the challenge and the urgency for action. Across Europe, several tens of thousands of hectares of brownfields and restricted areas exist, with a significant proportion located in metropolitan regions. In Germany alone, several tens of thousands of hectares are documented, with major concentrations in the Ruhr, in the Rhineland lignite mining area, and in the old industrial cities of eastern Germany. Yet similar dimensions can be found in all Member States: for example, in the mining regions of Slovenia and Greece, in the former steel and coal centres of Poland, and in the post-industrial regions of Spain and the Czech Republic. In addition, Upper Austria represents a particularly important case, not as a mining region, but as a highly industrialised area where the reactivation of brownfields is closely linked to innovation capacity, industrial renewal, and sustainable economic transformation.

The relevance of these areas is not only economic but equally ecological and social. Brownfields represent central levers for the achievement of EU climate objectives: they provide the space needed for renewable energy projects, they reduce the pressure to seal new greenfield land, and they directly contribute to the goals of the **EU Soil Strategy 2030**, which calls for net zero land take. Every activation of a brownfield means that no new green area must be consumed. In this sense, brownfields are an integral component of any sustainable land-use policy.

From an economic perspective, brownfields are Europe's strategic land reserve. They offer room for new industries, for technology centres, for logistics and for services. In the Ruhr, for instance, the 3,784 hectares of unused land could potentially be utilised for green industries, hydrogen projects, or innovative urban developments. **Experience from regional development projects indicates that the large-scale activation of derelict land can generate substantial employment effects—often amounting to many thousands of jobs per 1,000 hectares—spanning not only construction and energy production, but also supply chains, research sectors, and social services.**

The social relevance of brownfields arises from their pivotal role in urban development. Many of these sites are located in the very heart of cities, where housing is scarce and where new neighbourhoods are urgently needed. The **Mark 51°7** project in Bochum in **the Ruhr** exemplifies this potential: a former industrial site has been transformed into a future-oriented industrial, technology and knowledge campus with thousands of new jobs. Similar opportunities exist in **Catalonia**, where industrial wastelands in Barcelona and Tarragona could be redeveloped into new residential and technology districts. In **Asturias**, post-industrial sites in the urban centres of Gijón and Avilés are key to fostering both social cohesion and economic revitalisation.

Yet despite this enormous potential, the vast majority of these sites remain unused. In **Zasavje,** entire landscapes of former mining areas are blocked because some actors do not assume responsibility for demolition and reclamation costs. In **Western Macedonia**, land ideally suited for large photovoltaic projects cannot be utilised because funding for dismantling the fossil infrastructure is lacking. In the **Brno Metropolitan Area**, permitting procedures and ownership structures prevent economic use. In the **Usti Region**, it is the combination of severe pollution and complicated ownership structures that deters investors.

The conclusion is unambiguous: **brownfields are the key resource for Europe's transformation, yet they remain locked**. Not because projects are missing—indeed, project ideas exist for almost every site—but because the institutional, financial, and administrative frameworks are insufficient to realise them. European policy is thus confronted with a fundamental question: does it intend to harness the strategic potential of these lands, or will it accept that central goals of the Green Deal and climate policy fail at the level of practical implementation?

Common Challenges of the Regions

Business Metropole Ruhr and its consulting partner M&P Climate conducted a survey among the thirteen participating regions with the goal of getting a realistic assessment of the significance of the activation of brownfields for regional development.

The regions differ in their geography, history, and economic structures. Some are characterised by post-mining landscapes, others by heavily urbanised industrial belts, and others by highly restricted land resources. Yet despite this diversity, the responses to our survey reveal three obstacles that recur with striking consistency. These challenges form a structural "red thread" in European brownfield policy: **the lack of early-phase financing, overwhelming bureaucratic complexity, and systemic funding gaps, especially for land acquisition by public institutions**.

Lack of Early-Phase Financing

Activating brownfields is invariably associated with high upfront costs. Before a single new building, renewable energy plant, or green space can be realised, expensive preparatory measures must be undertaken. These include soil remediation, demolition of derelict structures, stabilisation of unsafe sites, environmental impact assessments, and the preparation of master plans. All of these steps are risky, provide no immediate return on investment, and are frequently burdened with unpredictable costs. Unsurprisingly, no private investor is willing to shoulder these burdens alone.

Our survey findings confirm the scale of this challenge: **9 out of 13 regions** identified the absence of early-phase financing as the single most important barrier to activation. In practical terms, this means that projects with high strategic potential—whether for renewable energy, urban redevelopment, or industrial innovation—often stall before they even begin. Project ideas exist, investor interest is present, but the first steps cannot be financed.

This pattern underscores a structural weakness in current EU policy: early-phase costs fall into a grey zone, neither adequately supported by ERDF, JTF, LIFE, nor InvestEU. As a result, vast amounts of land with clear long-term potential remain frozen. Early-phase financing is therefore not a marginal issue, but the **Achilles' heel of European brownfield policy**.

Bureaucratic Complexity

The second widespread obstacle lies in the **bureaucratic and regulatory complexity** of brownfield activation. Almost all regions report that projects are slowed down or even blocked by administrative ambiguities, legal uncertainties, and fragmented permitting procedures.

Statistically, **8 out of 13 regions** stated that excessive bureaucracy and fragmented authority structures cause long delays. In some cases, procedures stretch over several years, leading to investor withdrawal and escalating costs. Regions with a high share of privately owned land are especially affected: unresolved property rights, protracted legal disputes, and the need to obtain permits from multiple agencies create a nearly insurmountable barrier.

This challenge is not only practical but also political. It sends a damaging signal to potential investors: while the EU formulates ambitious strategies, the implementation framework on the ground is not reliable. Without harmonisation and simplification of permitting and approval procedures, the Union's credibility in driving transformation is at risk.

Systemic Funding Gaps

The third central challenge is the presence of **systemic funding gaps**. While the EU has mobilised unprecedented financial resources under the Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034, the design of these instruments does not align with the specific needs of brownfield activation. Infrastructure projects are supported, but remediation is not. Fossil-dependent regions are eligible, but urban brownfields fall outside the scope.

Environmental restoration is funded, but projects that combine ecological and economic reuse are excluded. Mature investment-ready projects qualify, but the risky early stages do not.

Our survey shows that **virtually all of the 13 participating regions** highlight these gaps as a fundamental barrier. In fact, **a majority** reported that significant areas of land remain unused despite having concrete project concepts in place; depending on regional size, this ranges from several dozen hectares in smaller territories to several hundred or more in larger industrial regions. On average, each region estimates that substantial tracts of potentially valuable land cannot currently be activated due to these structural funding mismatches. These shortcomings are not accidental. They stem from a funding architecture that is designed around macroeconomic sectors and large-scale themes, but which fails to address the **micro-level realities** of activating individual brownfield sites—such as remediating a contaminated chemical plant or acquiring a strategically located but privately owned industrial parcel.

Funding Instruments and Gaps in the MFF 2028–2034

The forthcoming Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) 2028–2034 provides an unprecedented financial architecture of roughly €2 trillion, with priorities in cohesion, agriculture, research, energy, and security. Funds will be channelled through the new National and Regional Partnership Plans (NRPPs), aiming to streamline procedures and focus on results. On paper, Europe appears equipped for transformation; in practice, however, brownfields remain blind spots within this architecture.

The Broader EU Funding Landscape

The EU operates a wide range of instruments, from ERDF, JTF, LIFE, and InvestEU to Horizon Europe, the Cohesion Fund, and agricultural programmes. Yet only four—**ERDF, JTF, LIFE, and InvestEU**—are even partially relevant for brownfield activation. Even these fail to provide comprehensive coverage, leaving precisely the areas of greatest need unsupported.

ERDF	JTF	LIFE	InvestEU
The ERDF is the traditional tool for regional cohesion and infrastructure. It funds transport, innovation, and research but usually avoids high-risk early-stage measures such as demolition, remediation, and site preparation. As a result, projects often fail before they can even qualify for ERDF support.	The JTF was created to support regions in phasing out fossil fuels. While JTF is expected to expand, survey results show that **most urban brownfields remain excluded**. In practice, the instrument continues to concentrate on traditional fossil regions, leaving post-industrial urban areas outside its scope.	LIFE is the EU's flagship environmental programme. While it funds remediation and restoration, it excludes **economic redevelopment**, which is essential for brownfield activation. This leads to half-measures: land can be ecologically restored but not redeveloped into viable industrial, housing, or innovation districts.	InvestEU seeks to mobilise private investment for large, mature projects. **High-risk early phases are excluded**, and public authorities—often the only actors capable of taking responsibility for initial remediation—are rarely eligible.

Funding instruments in the MFF 2021-2027

The limitations outlined above, and illustrated in the accompanying overview, demonstrate that current EU instruments leave critical gaps in supporting the activation of brownfields. These gaps are not abstract—they become highly visible when examining concrete cases. One such example is the "Phönix" redevelopment in Dortmund. Once a contaminated steelworks site, it has been transformed into a thriving mixed-use urban quarter, integrating housing, business, and leisure. The project demonstrates the immense potential of brownfield activation: a derelict industrial site was turned into an international showcase of regeneration. Yet this success was only possible because funded public investments, notably by NRW.URBAN together with the City of Dortmund, were willing to assume substantial early-phase risks. Without their intervention, the project would have stalled, as no EU instrument could finance demolition, remediation, or early planning. **Phönix thus highlights both the transformative opportunity and the systemic gap**: while the long-term benefits are clear, current EU programmes fail to support the decisive first steps.

Structural Consequences

Survey results make the consequences clear:

- **A majority of regions report that substantial areas of land remain blocked— ranging from dozens of hectares in smaller territories to several hundred or more in larger industrial regions—despite available project concepts and clear investor interest.**
- **A majority highlight** that demolition and remediation costs make projects financially unfeasible in the early stages.
- **Several regions estimate** that at least 1,000 hectares per region remain frozen, awaiting instruments for land acquisition and preparatory work.

These findings underline a paradox. Europe mobilises vast sums in the new MFF, yet **brownfields systematically fall between the cracks of sectoral programmes**. The mismatch is structural: existing instruments are designed for macroeconomic sectors, but they fail to address the micro-level realities of activating contaminated, privately owned, or highly fragmented sites.

The conclusion is unambiguous: **targeted adjustment of EU instruments is essential**. Without it, Europe risks leaving one of its most strategic land resources idle, undermining the credibility of the Green Deal, the Soil Strategy, and the Just Transition agenda alike.

Political Recommendations

The collective analysis of the participating regions shows a consistent picture: the challenge lies not in a lack of ambition, but in the precise design of instruments and thus the accessibility of funding. Brownfields represent a cross-cutting issue—ecological, economic, social, and spatial at the same time—yet the sectoral logic of existing programmes makes it difficult to address them holistically.

The forthcoming MFF 2028–2034 is a decisive step forward. It mobilises unprecedented resources and already contains approaches that point in the right direction. However, the results of our regional survey and the joint perspective of the brownfield regions show that these approaches are not yet sufficiently anchored or specific when it comes to the practical requirements of activating brownfields. Building on what is already envisaged in the MFF, **clearer and more concrete solutions are needed to close the remaining gaps**.

Early-Phase Financing as a Dedicated Category

The first priority is the creation of **early-phase financing as a stand-alone funding window**. A large majority of regions identify the absence of financing for planning, demolition, soil remediation, and site preparation as the most critical barrier. The MFF recognises the importance of sustainability and transformation, however it does not yet provide a sufficiently concrete solution for these first steps. A European **Early-Phase Brownfield Facility** could combine the cohesion perspective of ERDF with the transformation logic of continuation of JTF, complemented by adjustments to InvestEU to allow public participation in early stages.

Institutional Strengthening through Public Agencies

Second, the survey results highlight the importance of **institutional support structures**. More than two-thirds of regions call for dedicated public development agencies to reduce procedural complexity. These could act as a public owner, buffer risks, coordinate permitting, resolve ownership issues, and act as intermediaries between municipalities, private owners, and EU institutions. The MFF rightly emphasises governance and partnership, but a stronger focus on specialised agencies would help turn these principles into practice.

Flexibilization of Existing Programmes

Third, **greater flexibility is required in the application of existing programmes**.

- Continuation of JTF should explicitly include urban and post-industrial areas, where many brownfields are located.
- ERDF should integrate early-phase measures into its eligible actions.
- InvestEU should open a new window for public-sector actors in early-stage projects.
- LIFE should support projects that combine ecological remediation with economic activation.

The MFF already acknowledges the importance of climate-neutral and sustainable development; the challenge is to ensure that these priorities are implemented in a way that also embraces the integrated nature of brownfield activation.

A Dedicated Instrument for Land Acquisition

Several regions underline that public-sector access to strategic sites is a decisive precondition for progress. Without the ability to acquire land, even well-prepared projects cannot move forward. Rather than establishing an additional stand-alone fund, land acquisition should be integrated as a modular component across existing EU instruments.

For example, the ERDF, continuation of JTF, or InvestEU could include targeted windows that enable municipalities and regional actors to secure key parcels, particularly in cases where private ownership or high land prices would otherwise block transformation. Such an approach would ensure that land acquisition coexists within the broader funding architectur- providing flexibility without adding dministrative complexity—while giving regions the practical means to unlock strategic sites for redevelopment.

Political Signal Value

Finally, these adjustments would not represent a departure from the MFF's direction, but rather a **reinforcement of its intent**. By explicitly addressing the challenges identified by the brownfield regions, the EU would demonstrate that it is committed to bridging the gap between strategy and implementation. This would send a strong political signal: that Europe is ready to share risks, to support transformation not only in declarations but also in practice, and to ensure that its unprecedented resources are used in the most effective way possible.

Conclusion and Outlook

Brownfields are not simply remnants of industrial decline; they are **decisive test cases for Europe's future transformation**. On these sites, it will become evident whether the European Green Deal can be realised, whether climate targets for 2030 and 2050 are achieved, whether social cohesion is strengthened, and whether Europe can maintain its competitiveness on the global stage.

The collective survey of **thirteen** regions reveals a clear structural pattern. In the **vast majority of cases**, large tracts of land remain blocked: early-phase financing is absent, remediation costs are prohibitive, and administrative complexity deters investors. On average, **over 1,000 hectares per region** are reported as unavailable for activation, despite concrete project ideas. This means that strategic land reserves, which could generate thousands of jobs, host renewable energy projects, and provide urgently needed housing, remain untapped. Instead of driving innovation and sustainability, many sites risk becoming long-term scars in the urban fabric.

The new MFF 2028–2034 rightly mobilises unprecedented resources and contains **initial approaches that point in the right direction**. However, the insights gathered from the brownfield regions demonstrate that these approaches are **not yet sufficiently concrete or firmly anchored**. Unless adapted, Europe risks leaving one of its most important levers for transformation underutilised.

The united regions therefore issue a **constructive but urgent appeal:**

- to fully **recognise brownfields and restricted areas as strategic assets** of the European transformation agenda,
- to undertake a **deeper analytical effort** within EU institutions in order to map needs and design precise solutions,
- and to ensure that the **identified gaps in early-phase financing, administrative support, as well as land acquisition and access are addressed clearly and effectively** in the implementation of the MFF.

The regions are not merely presenting demands; they express their **readiness for partnership**. They are prepared to contribute data, expertise, and practical experience, and to participate in **joint working groups and structured dialogues** with the European Commission, the Parliament, and the Council.

This is not only a question of technical refinement, but one of **political credibility and strategic opportunity**. Brownfields are visible, tangible places where citizens will measure whether Europe delivers on its promises. If action is taken, they can become **laboratories of a climate-neutral, innovative, and socially just Europe**. If not, their potential remains wasted—an outcome that Europe can no longer afford.

Insights from the Brussels Workshop – Strategic Additions to the Brownfield Agenda

A draft of the policy paper was discussed at the Brussels workshop "Activation of brownfields in Europe" on 1 October 2025. The event was joined by representatives from EU institutions, regions and other European stakeholders. The discussion revealed the participants' general agreement with the paper's orientation and main points. At the same time, participants identified several additional priorities. They called for stronger political communication to reframe brownfields as strategic assets of the green transition, and for simpler, better coordinated governance, potentially through a single point of contact at EU or national level. They also stressed the need to streamline funding procedures and explore alternative incentives such as tax-based measures. Finally, participants proposed the introduction of fast-track mechanisms within the MFF 2028–2034 to accelerate the implementation of high-impact brownfield projects across Europe.

Regional Profiles

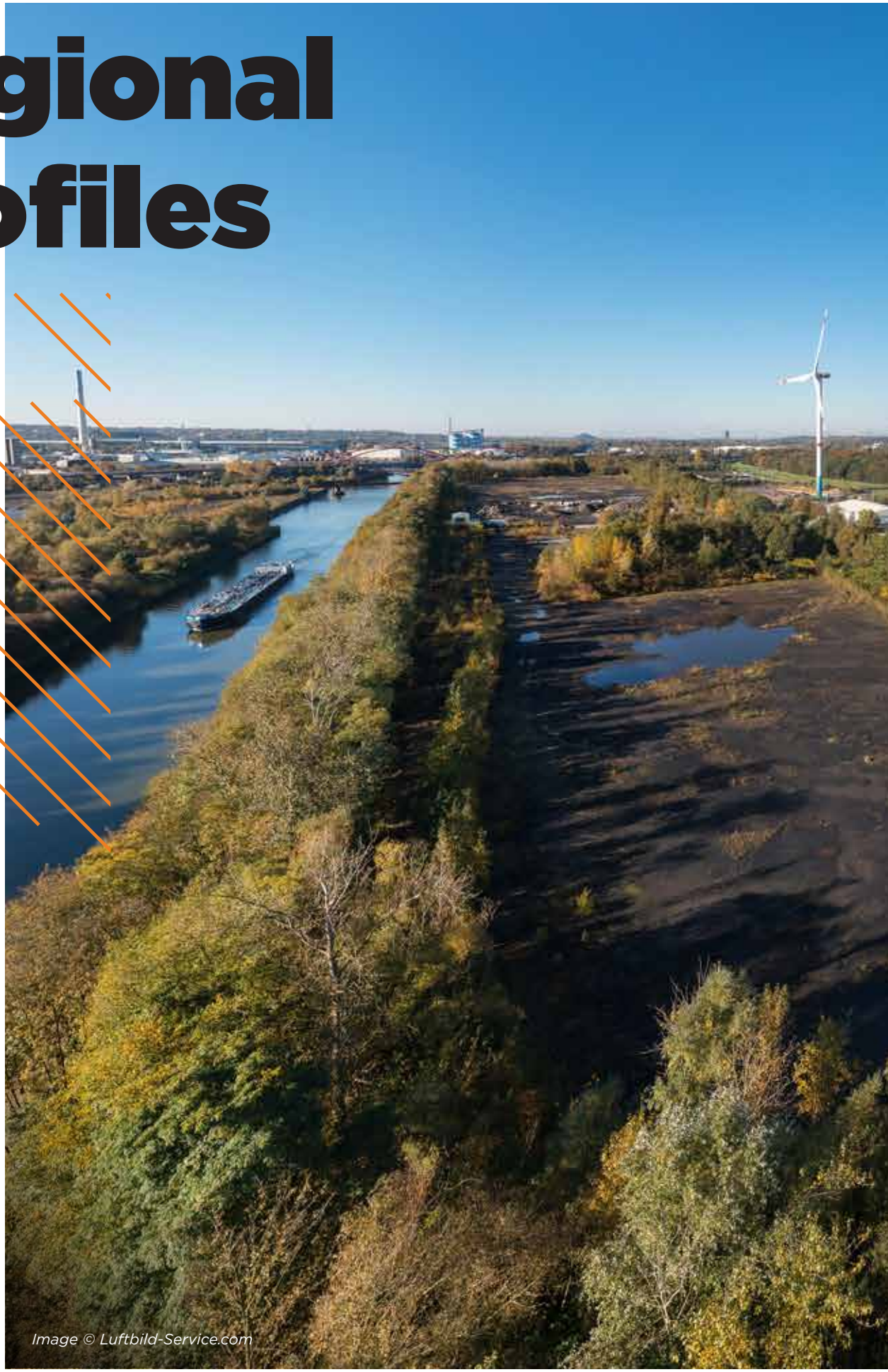


Image © Luftbild-Service.com

The Ruhr

About the region

The Ruhr is Germany's largest metropolitan area (53 municipalities). It is located in North Rhine-Westfalia in the west of Germany. Density: 1.163 people/sqm (2023, Statistikportal RVR). 5.1 million inhabitants. The cities and districts form a regional hub (Regionalverband Ruhr).

The most important economic sectors are industry and manufacturing, the services sector, logistics and transportation, healthcare and science and education.

Who represents the region in this paper?

Business Metropole Ruhr GmbH: We represent the economic interests of our region and ensure nationwide and international visibility of the diverse innovative economic activities. In addition, we coordinate a close exchange between all relevant players and partners - municipalities, the state, and business. In this way, we create a powerful network that successfully leads the region into the future and secures its competitiveness. As a cooperation partner, we analyze land potential, develop utilization concepts and support companies and investors in their search for locations. We also run extensive area monitoring for the region.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

Local authorities are dependent on the development of brownfield sites. Over 70% of potential sites are encumbered with restrictions on use, which prevent active land development. The restrictions include contaminated sites, excessively high external development costs, cost-driving bureaucracy and rigid ownership structures.

It is important to note that, as things stand today, subsidies for land development are only intended for the public sector under aid law. For this reason, purchase subsidies are an important lever for financially weak municipalities in the Ruhr. This is the sole option for initiating the strategic development of unprofitable land.

If we do not activate the areas with severe restrictions on use, the region might run out of marketable land in around two and a half to three years with regard to the current annual land use by commerce and industry. Despite the demand for space, there is no immediate return on investment for private developers for a significant number of the sites.

We are in contact with politicians at all levels and are discussing solutions together. Some local authorities have founded land development companies to address the issue.

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

Mark 51°7, Bochum

- industrial use
- industrial, technology and knowledge campus
- important lighthouse project; symbol of structural change, new jobs in industries of the future

Phönix West Dortmund

- Former use: Blast furnace and steelworks site of Hoesch AG.

- New use: High-quality technology and service location with a focus on microsystems technology, IT & research
- Locations: Including the Fraunhofer Institute for Software and Systems Engineering ISST, the TZDO (TechnologieZentrumDortmund) and several start-ups
- Funding: Support from ERDF, GRW and municipal funds. Special feature: Combination of listed industrial backdrop, modern architecture and leisure uses (e.g. skywalk, restaurants).

Graf Bismark, Gelsenkirchen

- Former use: Graf Bismarck colliery
- New use: Commercial and service location with a focus on small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs).
- Funding: Part of the IBA Emscher Park program (International Building Exhibition), supported by the state of NRW, EU funding (ERDF 7.1 million) and federal programs
- Special features: Integration into the Emscher conversion project, proximity to the Rhine-Herne Canal, sustainable site development with green axes and watercourses.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

Due to the high cost of brownfield reactivation, in most cases these can only be realized with funding. Many brownfields are contaminated, and soil remediation is complex and expensive. Old industrial sites are often not connected to modern infrastructure. The development costs have to be pre-financed before the investor gets involved. Municipalities need capacities for feasibility studies, expert opinions, participation procedures, etc. The pressure on land in the region is very high, so we need to find a timely solution to make new areas accessible for economic development in order to remain attractive as a business location. The reactivation of brownfield sites is a contribution to the circular economy and climate protection. Subsidies provide incentives to prioritize internal development over external development.
The bottleneck that needs to be overcome in The Ruhr is commonly public ownership, in order to enable substantial subsidisation. As the enabler of strategic economic development, funds are therefore required to purchase unprofitable land and transfer ownership to the public sector. This must be done on the basis of authorised, independent appraisal to prevent speculation.

Image © TURISMO ASTURIAS

Asturias

About the region

Asturias, located at the north of Spain, is an autonomous region of Spain with local government. Its area is 10 603,57 km^2 and the population 1,009,599 inhabitants (2024) with a density of 95.21 inhabitants/km^2.

One of the characteristics of Asturias' economic structure is the significant weight of the industrial sector in Gross Value Added, a percentage that reach 20.60% in 2023. Metallurgy and the manufacture of metal products is the industrial sector with the greatest weight within the regional economy, which had significant coal mining activity in the past.

It is important to note that a large part of the population of Asturias is concentrated in a central metropolitan area with several medium-sized cities where a large part of the population (approximately 80%) is concentrated. In this area, industrial and urban spaces coexist with rural areas, which is why the issue of brownfields and their recovery and development is a relevant challenge.

Who represents the region in this paper?

At regional level the Directorate General for European Affairs, Government of Asturias is in charge of monitoring and coordinating European initiatives, both linked with funding and institutional representation. Indeed, the participation of the region in the EU Committee of the Regions is managed by the Unit. In addition, and in order to guarantee the accurate involvement of the eventual stakeholders that may be contacted, a transversal representative is highly recommendable.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

In Asturias, soil pollution problems are primarily linked to historical activities such as metal mining (mainly mercury and copper) and mineral processing, as well as from heavy industry and energy production (e.g., coal-fired power plants), which have concentrated large industrial facilities—particularly metallurgical ones—within relatively small areas. An inventory of contaminated soils has been developed including the most important ones.

This great mining areas have experienced an economic and population decline that must be addressed. An important part of the project is the recovery of the vast areas where production has ceased, situated in central locations. It is important for these areas to have land available for the establishment of new productive activities.

For the time being, work has begun with temporary funds not adapted to the problem of brownfields.

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

A good example of a brownfield currently under development is Nitrastur, a former fertilizer factory abandoned in 1997 with a plot of land covering nearly 20 hectares. Its main owner (Iberdrola) has been gradually developing it with the help of experts from the University of Oviedo (INDUROT), specialized companies, and the collaboration of the Langreo City Council and the regional administration, a program of study, demolition, and decontamination that has already led to the recovery of 4 hectares (another 12 hectares in 2026) and the search for future uses. This is a private investment in an area of great importance for the future development of a municipality (Langreo) that is suffering significant demographic and economic decline due to the closure of mining and part of heavy industry.

New project with public funding in steelmaking area: A very recent project in an industrial area near the coast and the city of Avilés is the recovery of land that the steel industry used for decades to produce coke, a highly polluting industrial process that requires significant (state) investment to recover the area and develop green spaces and new industrial areas. See https://sepides.es/antiguas-baterias-de-cok

Regarding coal-mining areas, in recent years the public company HUNOSA has carried out various projects to recover areas previously used for mining infrastructure, waste dumps, or open-pit mining. In the case of former privately- owned mining companies and orphan mining sites (coal and Hg mining), transition funds and other European financing mechanisms are also being used to partially recover vast areas of open-pit mining.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

The Asturias region is facing major challenges in the revitalisation of brownfields and underused industrial and mining sites, particularly in the central metropolitan areas, as well as in former mining districts across the region's coal basin. Improved access to specific EU funding would allow greater eligibility for land acquisition – a critical first step often beyond the reach of municipalities – as well as for environmental cleanups, demolition, and the provision of technical infrastructure, which frequently exceed local and even regional financial capacities. These efforts are often slowed down by bureaucratic hurdles and the complexity of coordination between local, regional, and national administrations, which makes the implementation of integrated projects more difficult. It is therefore essential not only to expand funding opportunities but also to streamline governance mechanisms to enable effective collaboration. Enhanced EU support would greatly reinforce the region's capacity to address the dual challenge of urban regeneration and post-industrial transition, unlocking new opportunities for economic diversification, infrastructure renewal, and the delivery of modern public amenities across Asturias.

Image © Brnoregion

Brno Metropolitan Area

About the region

The Brno Metropolitan Area (BMA) is an organic functional unit comprising of the city of Brno and its natural hinterland. The territory is located in South Moravian Region, Czech Republic. The BMA is defined on the basis of intensive daily relations (job commuting, commuting to schools, migration flows and accessibility by individual car transport and mass transit). The territory of Brno Metropolitan Area encompasses 184 municipalities and covers an area of 1978 km^2. 732 thousand inhabitants live in the BMA, more than half of the population concentrates in the city of Brno. The average population density is 350 inhabitants per km^2. The Brno Metropolitan Area is a typical example of a monocentric metropolitan area– this area has a single-core, which is the city of Brno – the strongest centre of services, employment opportunities, education, etc. The BMA does not have any legal status or any formal powers and competences over the territorial area. It is established based on the delimitation by the Ministry for Regional Development for the purpose of the implementation of ITI instrument (Integrated Territorial Investments) and strategic planning on metropolitan level. The BMA is the region's hub of economic activity, innovation, industry and services. Within the knowledge economy, Brno is a centre of cybersecurity, electron microscopy, aerospace, game industry, IT.

Who represents the region in this paper?

The Brno Metropolitan Area is represented by the city of Brno. The governance of metropolitan area has a character of coordination of activities in the delimited metropolitan territory based on a voluntary partnership between the city of Brno, municipalities in its hinterland and other stakeholders involved in metropolitan cooperation. Metropolitan cooperation and the implementation of ITI is coordinated by the Steering Committee (SC) and executed by the Sub-Department of ITI management and metropolitan cooperation in the city of Brno.

The SC is responsible for a long-term strategic development and planning of BMA which is utilizing the European Cohesion policy through the ITI instrument, but also other forms of support, and at the same time reflects challenges and generates objectives, strategies and resources outside the scope of EUCP such as spatial and strategic planning, coordination of economic development. The development of the area is coordinated via the Integrated Development Strategy of the Brno Metropolitan Area 21+. The main tasks that are addressed include: Sustainable Mobility, Environmental and Climate Challenges, Public Services and education; Development coordination, leisure and cultural infrastructure.

In terms of development - Brno struggles with housing affordability and limited development areas, while surrounding municipalities face the effects of uncoordinated suburban sprawl. The strategy seeks to balance residential and

commercial development, reuse brownfields, and ensure the provision of services and transport links in expanding areas. A major barrier to effective development was the absence of a formal governance framework for metropolitan cooperation. The strategy aims to institutionalize cooperation between Brno and surrounding municipalities through new coordination bodies, shared planning, and financing mechanisms.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

Within the Brno Metropolitan Area, there are many barriers that hinder successful brownfield revitalization projects. However, it cannot be said that these barriers differ significantly from problems encountered at the national level. One common problem is uncertain property and institutional conditions. A large number of owners or persistent public ownership complicate project preparation. The valuation of individual plots and parcels is also often a barrier. In the current environment, the problem is that investors prefer to invest elsewhere rather than in brownfield regeneration. The development of commercial real estate on greenfield sites is usually a cheaper option than development in urbanized areas. Closely related to this issue is the status and timeliness of municipal spatial planning documentation. This affects both the correct identification of these sites and the determination of their future use. A certain problem in our environment is the absence of an institution (preferably governmental) that would be responsible for the management of brownfields. The Czech Republic's government agency, CzechInvest, maintains an overview and registry of brownfields, and while this provides an important foundation, there remains potential to further strengthen methodological support for local governments.

If a larger brownfield site is successfully revitalized, it is usually with the support of a major private investor. Municipalities tend to play the role of providing the land for revitalization in agreement with the investor. Strategies may vary; the land may be sold to the investor at a lower price in exchange for the construction of utility networks, etc.

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

Former military canteen -> Kadetka Park

The original army kitchen and canteen ceased to be used with the first wave of privatization in the early 1990s. For more than 30 years, the building stood empty, neglected, and used by squatters, homeless people, and drug addicts. In 2010, a large fire broke out on the first floor of the building, significantly damaging its structural integrity and making it even more dangerous to the surrounding area. In 2020, the city of Brno, in cooperation with the municipal district, decided to apply for a national grant provided by the Ministry of Regional Development from the "Support for Territorial Revitalization" program, and the city's application was successful. Nothing stood in the way of transforming the site into a public park, and Kadetka was finally converted into a public green space. In addition to the demolition of the

unused building, landscaping was carried out, including the creation of access to the park, dozens of trees and shrubs were planted, and new lawns and meadows were established. There is also park furniture in the form of benches, exercise equipment, and a barbecue. Part of the costs were covered by the grant, with the rest covered by the city of Brno and the Brno-střed district.

Teplárny Brno Heat Exchange Station -> Skála Community Center

The Teplárny Brno (heating plant) Heat Exchange Station in the Nový Lískovec district ceased to function in 2009, and the premises and surrounding area fell into disrepair. The original building was fenced off and the surrounding land was used as a construction waste dump. In the 1980s, the wider area around the building was prepared for further construction, which did not take place. Over time, it became a popular place for walks, as the rocky substrate provided good conditions for the growth of many species of plants and the creation of a natural garden. This natural area became known among locals as Skála (Rock). In 2015, the property was transferred between the municipality and Teplárny Brno. After the building was transferred to the ownership of the municipality, preparations for its reconstruction began. An architectural competition was organized for the revitalization of the building. The original floor plan of the heat exchange station was retained for the construction, and greenery became part of the building, on which green roofs were built. Construction took place from September 2019 to May 2021. Currently, the site is used for cultural events, meetings of local organizations, activities of interest groups, etc. A large part of the costs was financed from the "Green Roofs" grant program, with the remaining costs financed from public funds.

Vojtova Transport Center -> New Residential Development in Vojtova

Another example of revitalization financed by public funds (the municipality, or rather the Housing Development Fund) is the housing on Vojtova Street, which was built on the site of a former transport centre. Within two years, two apartment buildings with 116 apartments were built here, which serve mainly as starter apartments and apartments with nursing services, 14 of which are barrier-free. This was a response to the increasingly difficult situation on the housing market. Demand for housing in Brno has long exceeded supply, real estate prices are rising rapidly, and apartment prices are becoming unaffordable for ordinary families. This was due not only to lengthy construction proceedings, but also to the outdated master plan until recently. Construction began in 2018, with the city of Brno investing approximately CZK 0.5 billion in the project. This makes it one of the city's largest development projects in the last years. The two apartment buildings also include a café, a branch of the Jiří Mahen Library, and a publicly accessible park with a playground and fitness park for children and adults.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

The Brno Metropolitan Area faces significant challenges in the revitalisation of brownfields and underused areas, particularly in its regional centres like Ivančice, Bučovice, or Vyškov but also in the inner circle of the city of Brno.

Better funding opportunities from the EU would allow: funding eligibility for land acquisition, which is currently limited and often prevents municipalities from taking the first necessary step in transforming neglected sites as well as funding eligibility for environmental cleanups, demolition and technical infrastructure provision – often unaffordable for local governments. The necessity is to also enable coordination of funds for integrated land development projects to allow comprehensive regeneration and creation of multi-purpose integrated projects.

Improved EU funding would significantly enhance the metropolitan area´s ability to realise its strategic economic potential. It would enable infrastructure and amenity upgrades in new development zones.

Image © Generalitat de Catalunya

Catalonia

About the region

Catalonia is an autonomous region in northeastern Spain, with Barcelona as its capital. It has a special administrative status under the Spanish Constitution and its own government, the Generalitat de Catalunya. The region covers an area of approximately 32,000 km^2 and has a population of around 7.7 million, resulting in a density of about 240 inhabitants per km^2. Catalonia is one of Spain's most economically dynamic regions. Its key industries include manufacturing (especially automotive and chemicals), services (particularly tourism and finance), agri-food, and emerging sectors such as biotechnology and renewable energy.

Who represents the region in this paper?

The region is represented by the Department of Territory, Housing and Ecological Transition and the Department of Business and Labour of the Government of Catalonia. These institutions are responsible for land use planning, infrastructure, environmental policies, economic development, and industrial strategy. In area development, they coordinate spatial planning, promote sustainable growth, and support strategic industrial zones.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

Catalonia faces several challenges regarding brownfields and areas with activation barriers. Many former industrial sites require environmental remediation, while others suffer from fragmented ownership, outdated infrastructure, or lack of connectivity. These barriers hinder the region's strategic economic development by limiting the availability of land for new industrial, technological, or energy-related projects. To address this, the Government of Catalonia—through the Department of Territory, Housing and Ecological Transition and the Department of Business and Labour—is promoting integrated strategies that include land rehabilitation, regulatory simplification, and public-private partnerships. Spatial planning tools are being used to identify priority areas for redevelopment, and incentives are offered to attract investment in strategic sectors. Special attention is given to aligning redevelopment efforts with sustainability goals and the circular economy, ensuring that revitalized areas contribute to long-term regional competitiveness.

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

Catalonia has implemented several successful brownfield redevelopment projects using public funding to boost economic development.

- Can Batlló (Barcelona): Originally a textile and industrial complex, it has been transformed into a mixed-use space with cultural, social, and entrepreneurial activities. Public investment enabled environmental remediation and infrastructure upgrades, attracting private initiatives and fostering local employment.
- La Sèquia Major (Reus): A former industrial zone now redeveloped into a business park focused on innovation and green technologies. Public funding supported land rehabilitation and connectivity improvements, encouraging private investment in sustainable industries.
- Parc de l'Alba (Cerdanyola del Vallès): Previously a mining and industrial area, it now hosts the Synchrotron ALBA and a high-tech business hub. The redevelop-ment was led by INCASÒL with EU and regional funding, combining environmental restoration with strategic economic planning. These projects illustrate how coordinated public action can overcome activation barriers and generate long-term regional value.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

Better funding opportunities from the European Union are essential to activate brownfields and overcome structural barriers in Catalonia. Many sites require costly environmental remediation, infrastructure upgrades, and planning coordination. Enhanced EU support would accelerate redevelopment, attract private investment, and unlock strategic land for industrial, technological, and energy projects. This would strengthen regional competitiveness, support the green transition, and foster inclusive economic growth.

Image © Jean-Luc STADLER

Grand Est Region

About the region

Location: Northeastern France, bordering Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, and Switzerland.

Administrative status: One of France's 18 administrative regions, governed by a Regional Council; created in 2016 by merging Alsace, Champagne-Ardenne, and Lorraine

Area: About 57 400 km^2 (one of the largest regions in France)

Population: Around 5.5 million

Density: Around 95 inhabitants/km^2, slightly below the national average

Key economic sectors: Industry (automotive, metallurgy, energy), Health and Bioeconomy as strategic sectors of excellence; agri-food, chemicals, logistics, and tourism. It is the third largest industrial region in France, after Île-de-France and Auvergne-Rhône-Alpes, in terms of GDP and employment.

Who represents the region in this paper?

- The Grand Est Regional Council (elected governing body of the region)
- It is responsible for regional economic development, vocational training, transportation infrastructure, education (high schools), environmental policies and support for innovation and research. It manages regional budgets and implements policies to promote sustainable growth and social cohesion.
- It plans and supports territorial development strategies, including urban planning, infrastructure projects, land management, and economic zoning. It coordinates investments to enhance regional attractiveness, supports rural and urban renewal, and fosters economic and environmental sustainability across the territory.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

RGE faces a twofold challenge. The national "Zero Net Artificialisation" (ZAN) target limits new land take, yet fiscal incentives remain insufficient, while regions must set and manage local reduction targets. At the same time, brownfield regeneration demands major investment, but local budgets are under strain. Large industrial sites from the region's past involve very high decontamination and reconversion costs, slowing their return to productive use.

This directly impacts the economic land strategy, which prioritises strategic sites for development and mobilises funding for their revival. Excessive remediation costs can stall high-potential projects, especially large plots suited to industry or logistics. The scarcity of ready-to-build, well-situated land delays business creation, hinders industrial transformation, and weakens competitiveness.

To respond, RGE combines national tools like the Fonds Vert with its own brownfield policy, allocating over 12 million euros annually to remediation for economic, public, and housing uses. It coordinates closely with EPFGE, ADEME (National government agency), and funders, and is creating with EPFGE and Banque des Territoires (CDC) a long-term land-holding vehicle to secure and prepare strategic reserves in line with ZAN and long-term economic ambitions.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

The Grand Est region sees a strong need for exchanges between European countries to compare legal, financial, and technical frameworks, aiming to innovate in line with major challenges: climate change, environmental protection, soil quality, long-term land control, and European industrial reshoring. Rural or less attractive areas face specific difficulties, as complex PPP models like those in Reichstett or Esch-sur-Alzette cannot be replicated. Around 9,000 ha of brownfields could potentially be redeveloped; since 2020, RGE has allocated over 67 million euros, alongside State, ADEME, and EU funds, but these resources remain insufficient given the massive investments required to acquire and decontaminate land, especially in light of land-use efficiency and soil preservation objectives.

Image © Radosław Kaźmierczak

Metropolis GZM

About the region

Metropolis GZM is an association of 41 municipalities and communes in the Province (województwo) Silesia, Poland, including:

- 13 municipalities with a „powiat" (~county/district) status
- 13 municipalities with a "city" status
- 15 rural communes

Legal basis: The Act of March 9, 2017 on the Metropolitan Union in the Silesian Voivodeship.
Registered office: Katowice
Area: 2554 km²
Population:

- number of people: 2.113 million
- population density: 879 people/km²

The most important economic sectors in the GZM:

- Transport and logistics (including water, air, land (road, rail) - taking advantage of the region's convenient location and developed infrastructure)
- Manufacturing (mainly automotive industry)
- Energy (including green technologies, energy transition)
- Modern medicine (medical and health services)- New technologies and IT (rapidly growing sector, supported by and technology parks)
- Business services and modern business services (BPO/SSC)- Start-ups and creative industries

Smart specialisations of the region:
development of information and communication technologies, modern medicine, energy, green economy and emerging industries.

Who represents the region in this paper?

In the policy paper GZM is represented by its Metropolitan Office. GZM main tasks are:

- Shaping spatial order
- Social and economic development
- Planning, coordinating and integrating public transport
- Organisation of metropolitan passenger transport
- Cooperation in determining the national routes and provincial roads in the area of GZM
- Promotion of the metropolitan association and its area
- Climate protection and climate change adaptation activities

The first two tasks are strictly combined with the area development.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

GZM faces the challenge of a large number of post-industrial and degraded sites that require costly revitalisation, often burdened by legal, environmental and ownership barriers. These sites are diverse (whether post-mining or related to other industries, but also post-rail sites), which makes it difficult to identify ready- made solutions for their reuse.

The unregulated legal status of the land also hinders their revitalisation. Many sites are also fraught with environmental problems and a number of land reclamation measures are required before they can be reused, which also comes at a high cost. The processes involved in the reclamation of sites take many years and this factor can also be seen as an obstacle to their reuse.

Many sites have a high historical and architectural value, but the costs of their adaptation and difficulties in cooperating with the conservation officer often exceed the financial possibilities of investors.

This situation limits the availability of attractive investment areas and slows down the economic development of the region and negatively affects its competitiveness.

From the perspective of local government units, it is a challenge that municipalities often allocate brownfield sites and facilities for cultural purposes. While this is socially valuable, it generates high maintenance costs in the long term and limits their economic potential. Multi-stakeholder cooperation (including private actors) is key in this regard. Openness to their needs and cooperation (fostering public-private partnerships) is one way to make use of brownfield sites.

EU funds for brownfield revitalisation are important to us because: reclamation is too expensive and time-consuming, and owners, even public ones, are unable to bear this cost on their own. Without EU funds, brownfields will remain a BARRIER to development, when they could be an asset/opportunity, often integrating many functions, including city-building ones.

At the regional level, the Strategy for the Development of the Silesian Voivodeship 2030. Green Silesia or the Regional Innovation Strategy of the Silesian Voivodeship (RSI) are being implemented, which assume support for the processes of reclamation and adaptation of degraded areas. The Silesian Voivodeship is one of the main beneficiaries of the Just Transition Fund. The funds are earmarked for, among others, revitalisation and development of post-mining and post-industrial areas, creation of new jobs outside the coal sector, supporting investment in renewable energy sources (RES), innovation and entrepreneurship.

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

„Katowice" coal mine located in the centre of Katowice, operating from 1823 to 1999. New buildings constructed there 2014-2015 (International Congress Centre, new seat of the Polish National Radio Symphony Orchestra and new Silesian Museum as well as Sport and Entertainment Arena „Spodek" created in the 1970s) create now „Katowice Zone of Culture" – the biggest „cultural zone" in Poland. Total investment: approx. EUR 250 million. It has also contributed to the attractiveness of neighbouring plots. A new large housing development is currently being built opposite it, financed by a private entity.

"Katowice Gaming and Technology HUB". Objective: Revitalising and adapting the buildings of the former „Wieczorek" coal mine in Katowice - Nikiszowiec for new needs. The creation of the Gaming and Technology HUB will set the direction for the further development of Katowice in the field of modern technology. It is to be a common space for: technology companies, game developers or producers as well as e-sports community organising games, tournaments and broadcasts.

Adaptation of a historic power station building of the former "Saturn" coal-mine in Czeladź for the purposes of the Contemporary Art Gallery

(2012-2013). The works included adapting the building to modern functional, safety and sanitary standards, while retaining the industrial character of the building. Rooms that were inaccessible in the past were adapted for exhibitions, warehouses, art workshops, a multimedia room, tourist information and facilities. The building has been adapted to meet the needs of people with disabilities. For the investment, the city obtained non-refundable funding from the Regional Operational Programme of the Silesian Voivodeship to the amount of PLN 10,247,634.00. An example of the successful revitalisation of a post-industrial building in a medium-sized city (approx. 31,000 inhabitants).

Ruda Track - Development of Green Spaces in the City of Ruda Śląska. The project consisted in the creation and renewal of urban greenery and the revitalisation of post-industrial areas and the creation of infrastructure for making urban greenery accessible. The project was complemented by the creation of places for recreation and sport with the use of small architecture elements. As part of the overall project, tasks were carried out in several locations, in two districts of the city of Ruda Śląska, which were connected by a newly constructed walking and cycling path, and in the district of Orzegów around the "Burloch Arena" sports facility. The main objective of the project was to improve the quality of the environment and nature in the city by revitalising degraded areas and making the revitalised areas available to residents. Implementation: 2018-2023 The total cost of the construction of the Rudzki Tract, together with the previously completed sections, ultimately amounted to more than PLN 19 million. For this project, the city obtained more than PLN 8 million from the Operational Programme Infrastructure and Environment 2014-2020.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

Thanks to EU funding, it is possible to activate post-industrial areas, as a result of which our region can transform its historical industrial assets into new competitive advantages, increase its investment and touristic attractiveness, restore areas to social and economic use, develop the creative sector, improve the quality of life and environment, increase the residents' sustainable mobility and reduce transport emissions (cycle paths being built on the disused old railway lines). Areas with a low level of economic activity can be included in a coherent development plan for the entire metropolitan area, which promotes the equalisation of social and economic opportunities between the GZM municipalities, more efficient use of urban space, investment and mobility dispersal outside the central areas of the cities.

Investments implemented with the EU support generate multiplier effects, i.e.:

- employment increase during the implementation phase as well as in related sectors
- increased value of the investment areas
- creation of a new spatial and social identity of the degraded areas.
- in the longer term, EU funding enables a shift from an industrial model to one based on knowledge, innovation and sustainability.


Image © Pano

Moravian-Silesian Region

About the region

- Northeastern part of the Czech Republic, bordering Poland and Slovakia
- One of the 14 self-governing regions (NUTS 3) of the Czech Republic
- Approximately 5,427 km^2
- Around 1.17 million (as of 2024)
- Approximately 216 inhabitants per km^2
- Heavy industry and manufacturing (especially metallurgy, machinery, and automotive)

Energy production, Information technology and digital services (growing sector)

Advanced technologies and innovation (linked to university and research centres)

Tourism and services (due to natural areas like the Beskydy Mountains and industrial heritage)

Who represents the region in this paper?

The region is represented by MSID, the regional development agency of the Moravian-Silesian Region. MSID supports development through cooperation with municipalities and investors, initiates projects, prepares sites for redevelopment, and focuses on the transformation of brownfields. It manages a brownfield database, organizes workshops and conferences, and connects key stakeholders.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

The region faces several challenges, including difficulties municipalities have in selecting suitable project partners, securing funding for different project phases, and resolving complex ownership issues that prevent site development. There is also a pressing need to maintain and expand the project team focused on brownfield regeneration.

Many brownfield sites are not prepared for investment due to limited capacity, know-how, and financial resources at the municipal level. Without upfront support, cities struggle to prepare sites in advance, which limits the region's ability to attract major investors and slows economic transformation.

The region is implementing a strategic approach to post-mining landscape transformation and supports municipalities through targeted grant programmes. These tools aim to make site preparation and project development more feasible and coordinated.

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

Dolní oblast Vítkovice – Former ironworks complex in Ostrava, now transformed into a cultural, educational and innovation hub. The site includes museums, concert halls, event venues and learning centres. Supported by a mix of public and private funding, it is a symbol of industrial heritage reuse and a driver of tourism and regional identity.

Karolina – Previously a coking plant near Ostrava's city centre, the site was fully remediated and redeveloped into a modern urban district called Nová Karolina. It includes residential buildings, a large shopping centre, offices and public spaces. The project significantly revitalised the city core and attracted major private investment.

POHO Park Gabriela (Karviná) – A former coal mine being transformed into a multifunctional visitor and community centre. The project includes reconstruction of industrial buildings, an info centre, workshop and event space, and recreational zones. It is mostly financed from the EU Just Transition Fund and aims to support local economy through tourism, education and green transformation.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

Better EU funding opportunities would significantly support the activation of brownfields and other neglected areas by enabling more efficient site preparation, stabilising expert teams, and increasing the number of redevelopment projects. Such funding would accelerate the transformation of strategic locations, improve the region's competitiveness, and attract investment. It would also foster entrepreneurship and innovation, helping to unlock the economic potential of underused sites and contribute to the sustainable development of the Moravian-Silesian Region.

Image © Aleksander Kavčnik

Savinja-Šalek Region

About the region

Nestled in the northeastern part of Slovenia, the Savinja–Šalek region is a dynamic and diverse area that blends industrial heritage, agricultural richness, and alpine beauty. As part of the broader Savinja Statistical Region, it plays a pivotal role in the country's economic and environmental landscape, especially in the context of Slovenia's energy transition. It comprises of 2 valleys, the Šaleška Valley and the upper Savinjska Valley, which in total consist of 10 municipalities. It covers approx. 705 km^2 of land and inhabits more than 60.000 people.

Historically, the region's economy has revolved around lignite mining and electricity generation, particularly through the Velenje Coal Mine and the Termoelektrarna Šoštanj (TEŠ) power plant. Today a strong presence is also shown in household appliances production, timber, plastic and metal processing etc.

The region faces environmental challenges from decades of mining, including land degradation. However, it is also a leader in environmental investment and community engagement. Social cohesion is strong, with a shared identity rooted in industrial heritage.

Who represents the region in this paper?

RA-SAŠA represents a development and connecting body in the region. It works directly with regional municipal authorities, companies, other development agencies, nongovernmental organizations and other stakeholders that are willing to contribute towards the local and regional development. It sets developmental priorities, looks for potential points of improvements, motivates all actors to solve problems together and direct them towards the realization of set goals. It is also responsible for actively running support infrastructure and services for the promotion of entrepreneurship and the promotion of entrepreneurial culture through ongoing support to people who are looking to start their own business, specialized business consulting and relevant practical workshops.

RA-SAŠA is participating in the Platform for Coal Regions in Transition. The Savinjsko-šaleška (SAŠA) has been recognized by the European Commission as a pilot region within the Platform on Coal Regions in Transition initiative and is therefore a recipient of a technical assistance for implementation of Just Transition in the Savinja-Šalek Region. In supports the process of transition and restructuring of the region and mitigating the consequences of coal phase-out.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

Since coal is still being excavated, land is still heavily affected by degradation causing sinking of the land and consequently reducing agricultural land around one of the three artificial lakes, formed by coal extraction. Since this issue is covered by the Polluter Pays Principle and the land will be brought to the "zero ground" (mining buildings and other objects removed etc.), the challenge feared to be faced with in the future is further development of the areas (=building communal infrastructure).

Without communal and transport infrastructure land will not be interesting for new investors and at the same time investments for land

ownership and infrastructure for municipalities will be a much too heavy burden to handle. The majority of land is owner by Coalmine and municipalities are finding the way how to secure the land so it is not sold to real estate speculators (within the restructuring law for the region).

Regarding the existing power plant, which is not closing but searching for new energy sources, there are old objects needed to be removed so new technologies could be implemented. The costs are high (15 mio EUR) and there is lack of interest for investing in this area.

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

The Šoštanj and Velenje Lakes

Three lakes were formed as a consequence of coal excavation. In the 80s thermal powerplant TEŠ expanded its capacity significantly, with Block 4 (1972) and Block 5 (1976) pushing production to 725 MW. Coal extraction intensified, with annual output doubling to over 5 million tons by 1985. This led to severe land subsidence, water pollution, and air contamination. Entire villages disappeared due to mining-related ground collapse. New lakes formed in subsidence zones, and parts of Velenje were threatened. The devastation of the landscape and loss of communities became catalysts for environmental awareness and eventual policy change. Through environmental remediation programs in the 1990s and 2000s Velenje became a model for post-industrial ecological recovery.

Škale Lake is the smallest but most ecologically rich. Surrounded by swamps, forests, and meadows, it hosts 120 bird species, including 29 endangered ones. The area is protected under the Landscape Park Škale, making it a hotspot for bird watching and biodiversity. The Družmirje Lake in Šoštanj is the deepest lake in Slovenia, still expanding due to ongoing excavation but rich in lake aquatic animals. The Velenje Lake is Slovenia's largest lake with a surface area of 1.4 km^2 and a volume of 30.5 million m^3. Velenje Lake has become a tourism summer hotspot, drawing visitors with its diverse range of activities, from a public beach, electrical boat rides, standup paddeling, sailing centre, camping facilities, horse riding and hiking trails, fishing and panoramic views to a large festival location reaching over 120.000 visitors per year.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

The scale of transformation of such an area, spanning in decades of environmental rehabilitation, infrastructure development, and EU-backed green transition planning—suggests multi-million euro investments across different segments, such as land stabilization and ash embankments, water quality improvement, recreational and other tourist infrastructure, ecological conservation. Usually funding is eligible for each sector separately without flexibility in combining sources and measures. Such investments are also a grave "liquidity burden" for the municipality since one investment can equal a large portion of the annual budget of a municipality.

Upper Austria

About the region

Upper Austria is a region in the heart of Austria and one of nine federal states in Austria. Its administrative headquarters are in Linz.

Area: appr. 11.980 km²

Population: appr. 1.54 million inhabitants

Density: appr. 125 inhabitants per km²

Most important economic sectors/ industries: vehicles and automotive components, machinery, plant engineering and environmental technology, metal production and processing, plastics, chemicals, food.

Who represents the region in this paper?

Business Upper Austria is the location agency of Upper Austria. On behalf of the state of Upper Austria, it offers support in the following areas: customized solutions for investment and innovation projects, support for national and international companies investing in the region, assistance in finding, training and retaining employees, funding for innovation and innovation strategies, establishment of networks and development of cross-company cooperation projects.

Business Upper Austria provides comprehensive management and support for the development, revitalization and marketing of commercial space in Upper Austria and promotes joint land development projects within municipalities (eg INKOBA) - with the aim of creating optimal conditions for businesses and sustainably strengthening the regional economy.

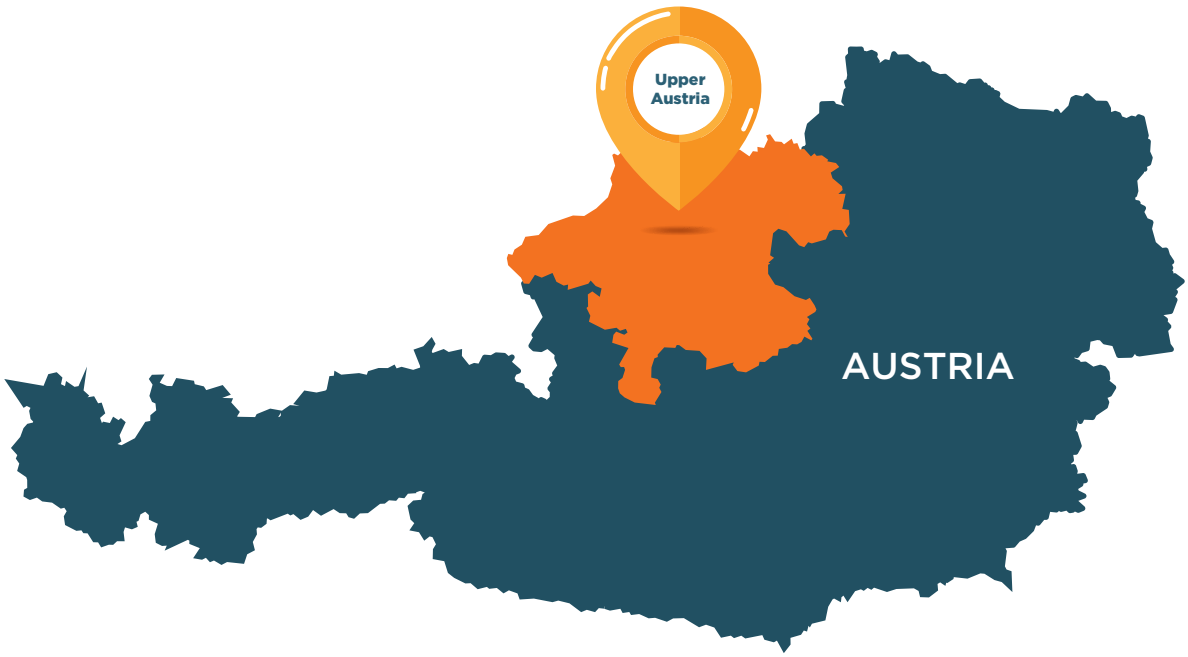
Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

Upper Austria faces several challenges in reactivating brownfields:

- High investment and redevelopment costs
- Contaminated sites, demolition, and development costs are often uneconomical for private investors or municipalities.
- Legal and property rights hurdles
- lack of interest on the part of the owner
- Planning deficits at the municipal level, lack of ideas or concepts
- Many municipalities have neither the expertise nor the human resources to strategically develop brownfield sites.
- Lack of incentives for reactivation

The challenges described above lead to several structural disadvantages for Upper Austria's economic development:

- Available commercial space is becoming scarce, especially in economically strong areas
- Growth “within existing buildings” is being blocked, even though it would make sense from an environmental and economic perspective.
- The location's attractiveness for new businesses is declining because there is little developed or quickly usable space available.



Upper Austria (supported by Business Upper Austria) is pursuing several strategic approaches to solve the problem:

- Inter-municipal location development (INKOBA): Promotion of joint business parks by several municipalities, enables shared investment costs, greater professionalization, and better land use
- Location service by Business Upper Austria: Support in identifying, utilizing, and marketing land. Advising municipalities on zoning, and investor outreach
- Supporting brownfield project development (advice on fundings, connecting with experts for revitalization, cooperation with state agencies, spatial planning)
- Sustainability-oriented land use strategy (#upperREGION 2030): greater emphasis on internal development over external development
- Raising awareness of brownfields through e.g. events (Brachentag "Land in Sicht") and excursions
- Annual award ceremony for outstanding projects in sustainable location development (#upperREGION Award)

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

Tabakfabrik, Linz: Following the closure of cigarette production, the Linz tobacco factory is now a creative campus, start-up centre, IT hotspot, important educational location, brewery, sought-after event location, and, last but not least, an international best-practice example of the successful transformation of an industrial wasteland in the middle of Linz.

Graumann district, Traun: Between 2019 and 2023, a modern, car-free urban district was developed on the Graumann site, the site of the former Friedrich Graumann textile factory. Today, the Graumann district combines renovated old buildings with new constructions and offers around 17,200 m^2 of net usable space for residential, commercial, and restaurant use. The car-free park forms the green heart of the district.

Dragoner district, Wels: The listed Dragonerhöfe buildings—once barracks for the Wels dragoons—have been transformed into a showcase property for living and working. In addition to around 300 apartments and around 30 commercial premises, social facilities such as a kindergarten with a nursery and supervised living groups for people with dementia are integrated. The former Dragoon Barracks are a defining element of the historic building stock in Wels.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

Better EU funding instruments or a brownfield-specific fund could help to reactivate brownfield sites in an economically and ecologically sensible manner. In concrete terms, this would mean:

- Financial relief for municipalities in land recycling
- Support for feasibility studies and preliminary planning
- Promotion of innovative reuse concepts (e.g., green industrial parks, mixed-use neighbourhoods)
- Incentives for private investors through risk minimization

Upper Austria is one of Austria's strongest economic regions, with a high export share, a strong industrial core (e.g., mechanical engineering, automotive supply, environmental technology), and growing demand for:

- Attractive, available business locations
- Sustainable location development
- Land efficiency and climate protection

Improved EU subsidies for land activation would contribute directly to strategic regional development by:

- Enabling growth in existing areas without sealing new green spaces
- creating attractive locations for future-oriented industries (e.g., green tech, digitalization, life sciences)
- contributing to climate goals by reactivating sealed areas

Image © Ústecký kraj

Usti Region

About the region

Northwest part of the Czech Republic, border region with Germany
Status: Region (Territorial self-governing unit)
Area: 5 339 km^2
Population: 808 356 (2025)
Density: 151,4 residents per km^2
Key economic sectors: heavy industry, chemical industry, automotive, energy, coal mining

Who represents the region in this paper?

Ústí Region - Regional Authority of the Usti Region
According to Czech legislation, the Region is responsible for developing its own area, providing public services, ensuring regional public transportation, regional road infrastructure (maintenance, construction), secondary education, health care (operation of medical facilities), social services, state administration in environmental protection area (EIA), Territorial Development Principles of the Ústí Region.

Tasks regarding area development:

- to create spatial planning studies
- creation and implementation of the Development Strategy of the Ústí Region
- subsidy programmes for area development
- providing expert services through professional agencies established a financed by the Region (such as energy management, data services, project planning, architecture, territorial planning for development of post-coal mining area, business and innovation).

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

Challenges:

- economic transformation due to the decline of coal mining industry, new opportunities in innovative economic area, to settlement companies at brownfield sites, preparing technical infrastructure for the settlement of companies (for instance by reusing brownfield sites)
- to stop population declining, to attract young people to the region
- to raise business activities, innovative companies

Negative impacts:

- large environmental burdens
- limited attractiveness to investors; barriers to using the area for economic, tourism and recreational purposes
- limited attractiveness for young, educated people to stay in the region or move there
- GPD per capita below EU average

Regional development strategies:

- Development Strategy of the Ústi Region 2021 - 2027 (new strategy is being prepared)
- Regional Innovation Strategy of the Usti Region (RIS3)
- Territorial Just Transition Plan of the Ústí Region
- Regional Hydrogen Strategy of the Ústí Region

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

Triangle Zone

- former military airport contaminated with fuel, oil and other chemicals
- transformed into an industrial zone
- state and regional funding

Lake Most

- former open pit mine transformed into recreational area
- municipal and state funding

Radovesice Coal Spoil Heap

- former coal spoil heap - landscape rehabilitation and conversion into a recreational area serving nearby municipalities
- provides habitat for several protected plant and animal species

Green Mine

- JTF strategic project (in progress)
- transforming a coal mine into a mixed-use area: business zone, renewable energy projects (hydrogen, floating solar power plant), renatured landscape

Repre Most

- integrated projects with combination of funding (in progress)
- complex revitalization of representation house in the city centre with combined use

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

EU support can significantly contribute to brownfield regeneration in the following ways:

- reduce costs of brownfield redevelopment compared to currently preferred greenfield construction
- support the reuse of existing abandoned sites
- motivate brownfield owners to prepare studies and redevelopment projects
- create new space for regional, industrial, commercial, or residential development, generating new job opportunities and attracting workforce to the region
- increase the number of brownfields transformed into productive uses such as businesses or housing improving the overall quality of life in Usti Region

Image © IGRETEC

Walloon Region

About the region

The Regional Policy Declaration 2024–2029 (RPD) of the Walloon Government places the redevelopment of industrial brownfields at the heart of its reindustrialisation and sustainable economic development strategy. It affirms that Wallonia must be a territory attractive for economic investment while limiting land artificialisation.

Among the quantified objectives are:

- Deploy 1,500 hectares of land for economic purposes during the legislature in order to support the creation of industrial jobs.
- Promote the redevelopment of strategic brownfields through public-private partnerships and a plan for the activation of new economic activity parks.
- Optimise already artificialised spaces to meet the objectives of zero net land take (ZAN) by 2050, in connection with European requirements.
- Create a strategic reserve of land ready to host economic activities.

The RPD also provides for the setting up of a Brownfield Task Force, responsible for identifying the actions to be undertaken, the obstacles to be lifted, and the financing to be mobilised to accelerate redevelopments.

Who represents the region in this paper?

Wallonie Entreprendre acts on mandate of the Walloon Government: it is not the institution that selects the sites to be redeveloped, but indeed the Government which identifies the so-called “strategic” brownfields and entrusts their redevelopment to WE.

We act as operational coordinator, in close connection with local actors, intermunicipal bodies, public services, land operators, and private stakeholders. The objective is to guarantee the coherence of operations, from the initial remediation to the marketing of the new activity sites, within the shortest possible timeframe.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

Wallonia faces a heavy industrial legacy with numerous polluted sites, of all sizes, presenting complex problems, often with very poor accessibility. These brownfields are difficult to redevelop. The main obstacles include the complexity of operations (pollution, geotechnics, equipment costs), weak return on investment, pressure on public budgets, and the lack of clarity on the eligibility of certain expenses for European funds.

WE is implementing an integrated strategy for the nearly 500 hectares over which it holds land control: negotiations, acquisition, joint

programming of remediation, equipment and redevelopment, mobilising the polluter where possible, and early involvement of private partners through adapted arrangements. This approach aims to accelerate the creation of attractive economic sites, in line with ZAN, the Green Deal, and the European industrial strategy.

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

- **Gastronomia:** On an urban brownfield of 1.4 ha, the City of Seraing structured a redevelopment project later carried by a private operator.

  This public programming, supported by ERIGES, enabled the mobilisation of €9.3 million in ERDF funds, which acted as a determining lever for a private investment of €45 million. The project combines housing (93 units), a food market, shops, offices and event spaces, in the heart of the city centre.
- **BASF Feluy brownfield:** Economic activity park in the course of development by M2M PPP (Blue Site (DEME-WANTY) and IDEA).
- **Ougrée Coking Plant:** Brownfield acquired by SORECO PPP Wallonie Entreprendre-DEME, with a balanced distribution of risks in the operation between the partners. Remediation entrusted to DEME.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

Brownfield redevelopment is a long, complex, and risky process, which mobilises many actors and unfolds in progressive sequences (negotiations, acquisition, remediation, equipment, development, marketing ...). European financing must become more agile, enabling the support of key stages without requiring immediate total requalification, otherwise the most complex and strategic projects cannot be proposed for such financing with the level of ambition they deserve.
It is essential that public-private partnerships be fully eligible. This requires a pragmatic analysis and application of state aid rules, adapted to revitalisation issues. It is necessary that the project companies carrying these redevelopments be able to generate a reasonable profit in view of the risks they bear, because without economic viability, it will be impossible to attract private actors, who are indispensable for the success of these operations.


Image © PPC Group

Western Macedonia

About the region

Western Macedonia is the only land-locked region within Greece, covering an area of 9,451 km^2, located in NW Greece and having country borders with Albania and North Macedonia. Administratively is one out of 13 Greek Regions, considered as second level self-governed body (municipalities are considered as first level), financed by the Greek State and governed according to public laws. Its population of 254,595 inhabitants (2021) constitutes around 2.4% of the national total, with a density of 26.9 inhabitants per km^2. Whether in mining, agriculture, forestry or fishing, Region's economy was predominantly dependent on natural resource extraction. Agriculture, forestry and fishing alone make up the largest employment segment, at 21% of the region's total. In 2020, the production of electricity from region's lignite plants was reduced by 30% compared to 2011. The transition process for lignite mining & electricity generation foresees that all lignite plants will be withdrawn by 2028.

Who represents the region in this paper?

Western Macedonia is represented by ANKO, a development organisation governed by public law with shareholders the Regional Authority, the Regional Development Fund & the Regional Union of Municipalities. The company's aim is the promotion, support and contribution to integrated regional development through study, promotion, administration, monitoring and evaluation of development programmes and projects in collaboration and complement action with local authorities, the state and the private sector.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

Lignite-fired activity for the production of electric power in W. Macedonia created monoculture in the production system of the Region and limited positive spillover effects, leading the rest of the economy to be unable to absorb excess labour at this stage and to create sufficient jobs in the future. A comprehensive land restoration and repurposing program for the mining lands will need to closely align, interact, and integrate with spatial planning processes having a much wider scope than post-mining lands alone, as access to land presents a key capital investment opportunity. A Special Spatial Plan, that is under development by PPC, is considered to be the overarching planning instrument tool which allows for the streamlining of key environment and social permitting steps, along with investment projects. Also the national Just Transition Development Programme 2021-2027 with a total budget of 1,63bn €, co-financed by the Just Transition Fund and implemented under the Cohesion Policy, focuses on the transformation of local economies, on the support of investments leading to economic diversification & modernization, and on direct support and employment promotion measures for human resources affected by the transition. Specifically, for Repurposing of land uses – Circular Economy foresees regeneration & re-use of degraded land and facilities, green infra- structure and technical land repurposing works, strengthening circular economy.

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

There is no existing good practice for redevelopment of post lignite mines yet. Public Power Corporation (PPC), former state electricity company, announced on April 3rd 2025 5.75bn euro investments in green energy and technology transformation of W. Macedonia. The investment plan foresees the construction of a new 300MW Mega Data Center at the Agios Dimitrios power plant, the development of photovoltaic park in former mining sites offering a combined capacity of 2,130MW, energy storage projects involving pumped hydro storage of 560MW with the use of paired reservoirs at different elevations as natural energy storage systems and transition of currently Ptolemaida 5 power plant into a 350MW open-cycle natural gas unit. This last intervention will upgrade the unit to a 500MW combined-cycle gas turbine. Finally, around 400m € will be invested in Land Restoration and Decommissioning of buildings, facilities and equipment related to lignite-based power production that can no longer be repurposed. Historically, PPC held nearly 20,000 ha of land in the area and approximately 8,000 of that are now being gradually returned fully restored to the Greek State. It is estimated that the investment plan will generate up to 20,000 jobs during construction and an additional up to 2,000 new jobs during operation, while the photovoltaic parks will meet the energy needs of approximately 715,000 home and business. The profile of the funding schemes has not been announced.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

The main public funding opportunities for restoration and repurposing of brownfields in W. Macedonia come from the Just Transition Fund and The National Recovery and Resilience Plan 'Greece 2.0'. In both Programmes the activation of brownfields is a small financial percen- tage, same as in the case of PPC investment plan (400m € out of 5.75bn €). Moreover, these projects are long-term, related with plans and terms of use of land (such as Special Spatial Plans), that need time to be finalized. That means that the need of a permanent and focused policy and financial instrument related with the climate change and the National Energy and Climate Plans (NECP) of the EU member states, that are under the approval of the European Commission, such other national and regional policies and programmes, is more than necessary. And this should be financed and implemented at regional level.

Image © Simon Rak

Zasavje

About the region

Zasavje Region is a statistical region in central Slovenia, located along the Sava River. Administratively, it includes four municipalities: Zagorje ob Savi, Trbovlje, Hrastnik and Litija. The region covers an area of approximately 264 km^2. It has around 60,000 inhabitants, with a population density of about 155 people per km^2. Historically known for coal mining and heavy industry, Zasavje is undergoing economic restructuring away from coal. Key sectors today include manufacturing (electro, metal, chemicals, glass), IT, energy production, and growing services and tourism, with efforts to develop a greener, more diversified economy.

Who represents the region in this paper?

Zasavje Regional Development Agency supports sustainable growth in Zasavje by coordinating regional projects, preparing development programs, and fostering local cooperation. It plays a key role in area development through strategic planning and investment promotion. Critically, it co-manages the Just Transition process, helping the region move from coal dependence to a green, diversified economy while ensuring fair and inclusive development.

Brownfields and other areas with activation barriers in the region: current challenges

Zasavje has one of the largest shares of degraded areas relative to its total surface in Slovenia, mainly due to its mining and heavy-industry past. These brownfields present major challenges: environmental contamination, unstable terrain, and lack of infrastructure make them unattractive for investors, limiting new business development and job creation. This hampers the region's strategic economic goals by slowing diversification, driving outmigration, and reducing competitiveness.

However, Zasavje also sees these areas as a key opportunity. By repurposing brownfields into modern business zones, the region aims to attract companies, create jobs, and support a green, innovative economy. Strategies include mapping and documenting brownfield sites, investing in site cleanup and infrastructure, and securing EU Just Transition funding. Projects like the construction of Rudnik Hrastnik, Kisovec and Lakonca business zones exemplify this approach, turning degraded land into new economic hubs that support Zasavje's just and sustainable transition.

Area redevelopment in the region: examples of good practices

In Zasavje, several brownfield sites are being revitalised through the Just Transition Fund (JTF) to support the shift from coal to a sustainable economy.

- **Lakonca site (Trbovlje) -** A former open-pit coal mine, now being equipped with utility infrastructure through JTF. Spanning 22 ha across three plateaus, it is being repurposed into a business zone for clean and circular economy activities. The site is strategically important for attracting sustainable private investments.
- **Kisovec II Business Site (Zagorje ob Savi) -** A former mining area transformed into a fully functional business zone. The newly developed site is already fully occupied by a local company that built a new industrial plant. This showcases the region's readiness to provide quality infrastructure and support economic growth.
- **Business Zone Rudnik Hrastnik -** A former mining and urban area now being redeveloped into a business zone with JTF support. The site will be equipped with modern utility infrastructure and a new business incubator to support SMEs and startups.

These projects demonstrate how Zasavje is turning post-industrial land into engines of green growth, using public funding to unlock private investment and accelerate regional economic development.

Relevance of better European funding for the region's development

Better EU funding is vital for Zasavje, a former coal region facing many degraded areas and brownfields with complex activation barriers. These sites are often the most suitable for new development due to their location near existing infrastructure, but they require significant investment to become usable.

Zasavje urgently needs new areas for sustainable business and quality living. Better funding would accelerate the transformation of brownfields into zones for green industry, circular economy, and innovation, attracting private investment and creating quality jobs.

With stronger and more flexible EU support, the region could better align redevelopment with strategic goals like climate neutrality, economic diversification, and digitalisation. Without it, valuable land may remain idle and regional potential underused.

Improved EU funding is essential for unlocking Zasavje's development and ensuring a just and future-ready transition.

Publisher:

METROPOLE RUHR BUSINESS

Business Metropole Ruhr GmbH
Kronprinzenstr. 30
45128 Essen
www.business.ruhr

Jörg Kemna
CEO Management Board

Benjamin Legrand
Press Spokesman (V.i.S.d.P.)

Project:

Dmitri Domanski
Project Manager Structural
Policy & Investor Services

T +49 201 632488 40
M +49 151 62956890
E domanski@business.ruhr

Lukas Kasperidus
Project Manager Structural
Policy & Investor Services

T +49 201 632488 41
M +49 1573 8846744
E kasperidus@business.ruhr

Consultancy & Design:

M&P Climate GmbH
Sarah Kasap
Senior Climate Manager
Sanktjohanserstraße 45
83707 Bad Wiessee