

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

# The Activation of Brownfields in the European Union: Creating New Opportunities through the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034

## About the policy paper

This policy paper was developed under the leadership of the Ruhr and its economic development agency, Business Metropole Ruhr. It brings together the perspective of thirteen European regions. 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.

Without more concrete and targeted instruments in the forthcoming MFF 2028-2034, 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 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: precise, practical solutions are needed to unlock the full potential of brownfields and turn them into a cornerstone of a climate-neutral, innovative and socially just Europe.

## The key demands

### Early-phase financing as a dedicated category

There is lack of funding for land acquisition, planning, demolition, soil remediation and site preparation. The next MFF must recognise this critical barrier for activation of brownfields and 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

While procedural complexity is very high, there are no appropriate institutional support structures. The next MFF must facilitate dedicated public development agencies. 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.

## Flexibilization of existing programmes

The next MFF must ensure that the different dimensions of brownfield activation (ecological, social and economic) are covered through its funding programmes. The programmes should be flexible by corresponding to the variety of brownfield sites in Europe.

## A dedicated instrument for land acquisition

Without the ability to acquire land, even well-prepared projects cannot move forward and strategic economic development in the regions is severely hindered. The next MFF must integrate land acquisition as a modular component across existing EU instruments. It should enable municipalities and regional actors to secure key parcels, in a form that avoids encouraging land speculation, particularly in cases where private ownership or high land prices would otherwise block transformation.

## Participating 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).

## About Business Metropole Ruhr

Business Metropole Ruhr (BMR), the economic development agency of the Ruhr, represents the economic interests of the region and ensures nationwide and international visibility of the diverse innovative economic activities. It coordinates a close exchange between all relevant players and partners – municipalities, the state and business. As a cooperation partner, BMR analyses land potential, develops utilization concepts and supports companies and investors in their search for locations.

### Link to the **policy paper**

[“The Activation of Brownfields in the European Union: Creating New Opportunities through the Multiannual Financial Framework 2028-2034”](#)