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## THE READY PROJECT – A JOINT INITIATIVE

The main impulse for the project entitled “Rehabilitation and Development in Mining Regions” (READY for short) was the difficult situation in which small and medium-sized towns find themselves when the often dominant mining industry goes into decline or even ceases activity entirely. In addition to the resulting high unemployment, affected towns are generally confronted with accumulated environmental damage, large brownfields and abandoned buildings, oversized and specialised infrastructures as well as deformed urban structures. These have a highly negative impact on the town’s image.

In the knowledge that many towns and regions all over central and eastern Europe are affected by such problems, and taking inspiration from a previous project of this kind, the former mining town of Oelsnitz/Ore Mountains took the decision to initiate project READY. A consortium of 22 partners was formed with the support of the Leibniz Institute of Ecological and Regional Development (Dresden). Members included 18 partner towns and regions with the local mining sector in various degrees of health, as well as one state ministry, two scientific institutions and one commercial organisation. All in all six countries were represented: Austria, the Czech Republic, Germany, Italy, Romania and Slovakia. The project started in December 2003 after being awarded funding by the European Union INTERREG IIIC programme for the CADSES area, with project termination in November 2006. The achievements over READY’s lifetime of three years are summed up in the current brochure. This introduction presents the goals and structure of the project.

Project READY aimed to strengthen the competitiveness of mining cities and regions in central and eastern Europe by improving their ecological, social and economic conditions. The main objectives in support of this aim were: providing incentives for structural change in former mining cities and regions by introducing new perspectives for development, initiating a new form of trans-national co-operation by establishing a high-performance network, increasing political awareness of disadvantaged mining cities and regions by coordinated actions,

improving knowledge of how to connect rehabilitation and development in an innovative way and fostering greater awareness of the role of local actors in the rehabilitation process.

READY was structured into five areas of activity, with implementation organised in work packages (Fig. 1). Firstly, to provide a sound basis for the exchange of experiences, two to four practical measures connected to the process of rehabilitation and development were realised in each participating town and region. These included the creation of integrated development concepts and feasibility studies as well as the implementation of small-scale investments. No less than six international workshops were held in four countries in order to ensure an intensive international transfer of experience. At each

workshop the stage of implementation reached on local actions was discussed and various strategies and problems analysed. Additional inputs came from a number of external experts. While the workshops allowed the transfer of knowledge and skills within the project’s lifetime, Project READY also prepared the groundwork for a more sustainable exchange of experience within an international network. This led to the foundation of the “Central and Eastern European Network of Mining Cities and Regions” (M•I•N•E•C for short) also serving as a common platform for lobbying. The fourth area of activity in READY was support for the implementation of local actions through coaching by scientific consultants. This work also included the preparation and moderation of meetings. Simultaneously the scientists monitored the ongoing process in order to be able to determine the factors leading to the success or failure of rehabilitation and development measures. The results could then be disseminated to the scientific community and all interested actors in central and eastern Europe. Finally, strong project management was needed in view of the large number of partners, the complexity of the task and the diversity of activities. Thus a project office was set up in Oelsnitz/Ore Mountains.

To coordinate all activities it was necessary to create a steering system encompassing the following partners and institutions:

