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THE NETWORK M•I•N•E•C

TM-I-N-E-C is an association of mining cities and regions of central and eastern Europe. It was founded within the framework of the EU project READY (2003-2006) with the aim of establishing a platform of communication for those municipalities facing the greatest challenges in the post-mining era. The network serves to exchange solutions and strategies on coping with the comprehensive local or regional crises associated with the decline of mining activities. The core of this transfer of knowledge is made up of the joint projects of the network partners.

The network has grown continuously since the first call for participation in November 2004 at the EUREGIA fair of regions in Leipzig. At present around 60 partners are listed in M-I-N-E-C. The network is also open to non-municipal partners, e.g. mining and remediation companies, planning offices, scientific institutions, NGOs.

Main Activities

- The network supports inter-communal cooperation and the exchange of experiences. It initiates joint activities and disseminates innovative solutions.
- The network provides information on programme funding and projects in planning, as well as the results of current or recent cross-border projects on post-mining development.
- The network gives support with applications for funding and functions as a partner pool.
- Finally the network represents the joint interests of participating mining cities and regions, primarily at European level.

Structure

The network is organised into an inner and outer circle of partners. The inner circle represents those partners who also contribute financially to the network. These partners determine membership of the steering committee. The outer circle includes the remaining M-I-N-E-C partners. They are integrated into the network via a bilateral flow of information. The steering committee defines the strategic orientation of the network and controls the work of the M-I-N-E-C secretariat.

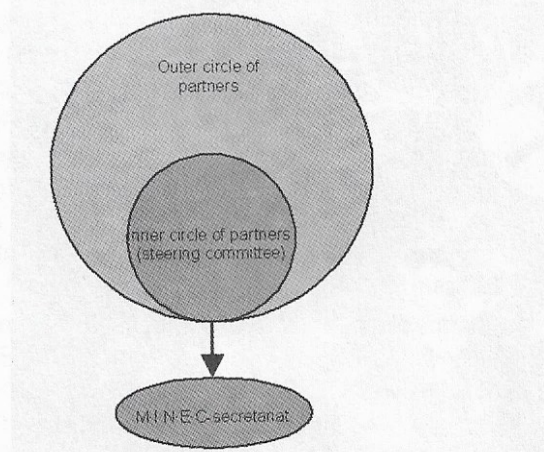


Fig. 1: Network structure M-I-N-E-C

The network founders

The founders of the network M-I-N-E-C are eleven mining municipalities from Germany and the Czech Republic. Prior to project READY they had already joined forces in the "Route of Mining". These partners are particularly committed to honouring the legacy of Georgius Agricola, the father of mining sciences. In the 16th century Agricola gathered information on the mining industry in Saxony and Bohemia which served as the basis for his famous series of twelve books on mining entitled "De re metallica libri".

From READY to M•I•N•E•C

The work of M-I-N-E-C is to be continued after the end of the project READY, which financed the network's creation. The aim is to gather together a group of committed partners in the inner circle who are willing to give financial support to the network. It is currently believed that co-financing funds will be available for the next few years.

First results

Joint declaration

On the 18th of May, 2006, the first M-I-N-E-C-declaration was officially adopted at the second scientific READY conference in Graz (Austria). It carries the title "The post-mining future of Mining Cities and Regions in Central and Eastern Europe" and contains both recommendations for action as well as background information for European and national bodies. This policy paper was sent to relevant European institutions and persons throughout the summer of 2006. The declaration is supported by the M-I-N-E-C partner network EURACOM, the association of mining regions in Europe. It has been translated into German and English and is included in this brochure (see appendix). Summarised versions are also available in Romanian, Slovak, and Czech.

Database M•I•N•E•C

A database was developed and made freely available on the internet (www.ready-network.org) as an information tool for the network partners. It contains the following data:

- information on partners, including contact data
- short descriptions of recent or current cross-border post-mining projects
- summaries of project results (feasibility and case studies, scientific papers).

The database is interactive and can be amended by the partners themselves using a password.

Newsletter

A digital newsletter was established to inform partners from time to time about developments in the network. It also serves as a platform for M•I•N•E•C partners to publish project-related information, e.g. when looking for partners for a joint project application.

Logo and Name

Logo:



Name: Central and Eastern European Network of Mining Cities and Regions
Mittel- und Osteuropäisches Netzwerk der Bergbaustädte und -regionen

Acronym: M•I•N•E•C

If you are interested in becoming M•I•N•E•C partner ...

... then read more about the network in the comprehensive M•I•N•E•C section on the READY homepage www.ready-network.org. There you will also find a PDF form where you can state your intention to participate in the network. The network's primary focus is on eastern and central European mining municipalities. However participation is also open to all other interested parties and is free of charge. If you want further information on the possibilities of active co-operation in the network please contact Mr. Debes at the READY project office in the town of Oelsnitz/Ore Mounts under +49-(0)-37296-38-48.



DECLARATION OF THE CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN NETWORK OF MINING CITIES AND REGIONS

in link with Association of European Mining Regions (EURACOM)

The Post-mining Future of Mining Cities and Regions in Central and Eastern Europe

Contact: M-I-N-E-C: City of Oelsnitz/Ore Mountains
Lead Partner of the INTERREG IIIB project READY
and present location of the M-I-N-E-C secretariat
Rathausplatz 1, 07396 Oelsnitz/Erzgeb., Germany

Declaration

Political and economic transformation in the Central and Eastern European countries was an essential precondition for the unification of Europe in peace, freedom and prosperity. However it has also resulted in unprecedented spatial disparities. Mining cities and regions in Central and Eastern Europe in particular are undergoing extensive structural change. These areas are suffering severe economic, ecological, and social problems due to an ongoing decline in mining activities.

To meet this challenge, 18 mining cities and regions together with other partners set up the INTERREG IIIB project "Rehabilitation and Development in Mining Regions" (READY). The aim was to conceive solutions and develop examples to determine how this threatening process, with its complex repercussions on the entire municipal and regional structure, can be actively influenced and directed. The experiences of the project READY have shown that a successful interaction of endogenous powers and external impulses offers the best chance to break through the downward-spiral of low investment, high unemployment and migration.

M-I-N-E-C, the Network of Central and Eastern European Mining Cities and Regions, was founded within the project READY to continue and extend this cooperation.

Taking regard to the legislative proposals of the European Commission for the reform of cohesion policy (2007-13 period) the partners of the network M-I-N-E-C, in link with the network EURACOM, have agreed and adopted this declaration at the second scientific READY conference held in Graz from 17th to 18th of May, 2006.

The signatories of this declaration urge the responsible bodies of the European Union and the respective nation states to support the difficult process of economic, social and ecological adaptation of mining cities and regions to the post-mining era through following proposed measures:

1. Greater attention needs to be given to Central and Eastern European mining cities and regions at all political levels and within the framework of international co-operation. The specific requirements of mining municipalities for support should be explicitly stated in the

eligibility criteria of European structural policy as well as in operational programmes at national level. The nation states are asked to introduce or strengthen relevant funding programmes, whether investing or non-investing.

Central fields of action of such funding programmes should be:

- rehabilitation of the massive environmental damages, as well as adaptation of infrastructures as a basic prerequisite for new economic development,
- encouragement and development of innovative industries, as well as using existing potentials to build up local economic cycles (e.g. production of renewable energy),
- development of creative social environments (networks of local actors, regional co-operation, private-public partnerships) as well as adaptation of educational structures to meet post-mining demands.

Cross-sector strategic concepts are indispensable when handling the complex tangle of problems associated with mining, and support must be given to establishing and implementing such concepts. One of the central results of the READY project is that remarkable synergetic effects are released when local and regional development strategies are integrated with local regeneration plans. Here the collaboration of spatial sciences and practical planning plays a key role.

2. The funding of trans-national co-operation between mining cities and regions has already brought significant benefits and should be continued. New ways of tackling post-mining problems can only be found and disseminated through an intense exchange of solutions and the linking of engaged people and institutions. A repetition of mistakes can then be avoided and development expenses reduced. It is essential that the transfer of knowledge between mining communities, which began within the framework of INTERREG IIC and was continued under INTERREG IIIB/C, will be maintained and extended in the funding period 2007-13, given the expected further decline of mining

activities in the new member states of Central and Eastern Europe. Necessary mediation functions can be assumed by the network M•I•N•E•C.

The cross-border transfer of knowledge on municipal and regional adaptation strategies at the end of the mining era is to be supplemented in future by the enhanced joint development of solutions for specific problems. Thus the European value-added of the trans-national co-operation can be further increased.

The primary objective of these recommendations should be to ensure that mining municipalities achieve equal starting positions in the general field of competition between cities and regions. This would constitute a large step towards spatially balanced development in Europe and help create sustainable growth and new jobs for redundant miners.

Graz, 18th of May, 2006

II

List of Signatories

III

Background

Situation

From the Middle Ages until the current day mining has been the motor driving wider economic development, helping to raise living standards in many European towns and regions. The exploitation of salt, ores, coal or oil deposits and other raw materials has frequently provided the foundation for the accumulation of wealth and political power.

In today's era of the information society, with fundamental shifts in energy policy and a global marketplace, the days of mass industrial mining are numbered. Not only are deposits becoming exhausted, but products from mining are being replaced by modern alternatives. In some areas profits are too low to ensure a healthy future on the world market. With the decline of mining affected cities and regions have lost their economic base and are either currently undergoing a fundamental structural shift or face such change in the near future.

Western Europe first saw this development at the end of the 1950s with the closure of coal pits. The industrial mining sector of the former socialist states of Central and Eastern Europe was similarly hit in the 1990s as part of a wide-ranging economic transformation.

Challenges

Conditions are generally unfavourable to transition. Centralised policy-making for raw materials and spatial planning in the former socialist states led to the formation

of large industrial complexes. These prevailing mono-structures in the mining regions of Central and Eastern Europe hinder current attempts at restructuring. The legacy at municipal level includes oversized residential units, unsuitable infrastructure and extensive environmental damage. This difficult situation is made worse by the compounding of structural change from declining mining activities with M•I•N•E•C Central and Eastern European Network of Mining Cities and Regions more general economic dislocations associated with the transformation of the socialist economies. Affected cities and regions have to carry the burden of a past for which they are not necessarily responsible. For a long period they contributed greatly to the economic well-being of the country, and now resulting negative costs are concentrated in such areas. In addition, sufficient state support is lacking at all levels to remedy the legacies from mining in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe.

The growth of alternative industries is a slow process and typically entails high unemployment, migration of labour and a drop in living standards. In connection with the environmental damage these factors produce a negative image which deters potential investors, worsening an already critical situation.

The collapse of the mining industry has a particularly severe impact in small and medium-sized municipalities. Previously existing local economic structures were marginalised by the dominance of mining, and in some cases completely destroyed.

The arrival of new workers and the large-scale construction of housing often radically transformed the traditional social and residential structures. Now, with mining in drastic decline the old self-supporting local structures are no longer in place. In addition to this historical legacy, mining communities are also usually disadvantaged by their small size and geographical location outside the main population centres. This means that they often can muster little political weight and are scarcely noticed on the public arena.

Most mining cities and regions either already belong to national problem areas or are in danger of doing so in the near future. The long-term consequences of this development are especially serious, i.e. the physical, social and demographic demise of communities.

There already exist first positive examples of rehabilitation of environmental damage, as for example with the state sponsored reclamation of lignite and uranium mines in Eastern Germany and the Czech Republic since 1990. However only in a very few cases has it proved possible to restructure industry and society in such a way as to prevent high unemployment and above-average rates of labour migration.

The project READY has shown that strategies implemented at local and regional level can successfully counter negative trends when communities are supported in their efforts at national and European level.

Opportunities

Despite the gloomy picture, mining areas do possess potentials for development which can be utilised for restructuring measures necessary at this critical juncture:

- Specially trained workers with particular social skills. Retraining and further education programmes could help prepare these people for new tasks. However this requires that economic structures be transformed at an early stage and not when mining industries are already in a terminal condition.
- A mass of expert knowledge has been acquired on the mining sector and the handling of its repercussions, e.g. in geo-technology and environmental rehabilitation, which can be drawn on for the future.
- Specific natural resources. Landscapes transformed by mining activities can be utilised in innovative ways. Thus warm pit waters and slag heaps can provide geothermic heat, while artificial hills from mining waste offer possibilities for use in wind farming or to create unique tourist attractions (e.g. ski facilities), etc.
- Mining as a basis for tourism. New landscapes are formed by mining processes and these can be further developed and redesigned as visitor attractions. The multifaceted mining legacy also offers opportunities for tourism, including the former pits themselves, the cultural life of the miners and the physical heritage of mining facilities and buildings.

Even in the cases where affected communities are already aware of these possibilities, practical implementation is almost always hindered by the limited financial and labour resources of smaller and medium-sized cities and regions. One conspicuous success story is provided by the READY project, initiated by 18 active mining municipalities. With the support of the INTERREG-IIIB programme of the European Union, studies and analyses were carried out on the concrete potentials of specific mining areas and the possibilities of realisation.

The conclusions of READY confirm that a combination of local initiative and European or national support is an effective way of countering the structural weaknesses from mining by utilising available potentials.

Part of the Solution: The Network M•I•N•E•C

At the first conference of the project READY held in Leipzig in November 2004 the project partners founded the Network of Central and Eastern European Mining Cities and Regions (M•I•N•E•C). This joint initiative aims to overcome the problems of structural transition, and the ever expanding network now includes about 50 partners. Concrete goals are:

- co-ordination of measures fostering collaboration between mining communities and ensuring an exchange of experience, facilitated by trans-national projects on the structural transitions associated with mining,
- advising responsible European and national bodies; providing mediation services.

Depending on the relevant EU project guidelines, M•I•N•E•C partners will be working in the near future to realise joint cross-border projects on demographic shifts in mining cities, on renewable energy in former mining facilities and on mining-related tourism (application for inclusion on the UNESCO list of World Heritage Sites). With this work the network M•I•N•E•C hopes to collect, develop and disseminate to a wide audience examples of successful strategies to tackle the troublesome mining legacy.

Building on the promising results of the INTERREGIIIB project READY, the network M•I•N•E•C aims to encourage continued national and European interest and commitment in helping mining communities overcome the complex problems of a dying mining industry. This will enable such mining cities and regions to make their own contribution to achieving the goals of the European Union: that is, cohesion, growth and employment.