

LUSATIA

2050

DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY

A brief presentation of the guide to the
region's future

WHY DOES LUSATIA NEED A DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY?

Lusatia includes the independent city of Cottbus/Chóśebuz and the districts of Bautzen and Görlitz in Saxony as well as Spree-Neisse/Sprjewja-Nysa, Oberspreewald-Lausitz, Elbe-Elster and Dahme-Spreewald in Brandenburg. In the past few decades the mining of lignite was one of the central economic pillars in the region, securing jobs, taxes, income and creating identity. The departure from lignite-based power generation will involve a major process of change for Lusatia, with a unique effect on the economy, science, cultural landscape and quality of life. We need a smart approach for the future development of this region that doesn't end at national borders and which involved parties are happy to use as a guide. To this end, the "Lusatia 2050 Development Strategy" was drawn up in the course of the "Zukunftswerkstatt Lausitz" project. It forms the coordinated framework for the design of a sustainable and livable Lusatia and is an important basis for structural development. It is only with such a regional future guide that aid from the federal government and the European Union will be approved. This transnational strategy can be seen as a guide for district and urban development concepts as well as for inter-municipal projects.

What does the development strategy include?

The strategy is divided into seven future fields. These build on the areas of activity jointly determined by the state governments of Saxony and Brandenburg. Topic-specific starting points in each future field are described, from which the relevant goals and action categories are derived. Additional background information, data, facts and explanations are provided by the attached studies and reports.

Future Field 1: Infrastructure and Public Services

Attractive Cities and Villages

A crucial problem area is demographic change and the resulting reduction in cultural, leisure and educational offers and the increasing property vacancy. Attractive cities and villages should encourage more young people and families to settle and to stay. It is also becoming increasingly important that companies provide attractive locations where employees feel comfortable.

Transport Infrastructure and Mobility

In addition to better internal development, Lusatia needs good connections to neighboring metropolises as well as to the trans-European transport networks. Related to this is the design of transport infrastructure and mobility concepts that enable good networking of relevant anchor cities, do not cut off villages, meet the needs of contemporary commercial traffic and are also progressive and environmental and climate-friendly.

Sustainable Public Services

Public services are the basis for a good daily life in Lusatia: health care, childcare and education, housing, emergency services, supply and disposal (energy, water, sewage, waste), as well as shopping opportunities for every day goods. The basic provision of German citizens should serve as a benchmark, particularly with a view to the aspired equal living conditions

in Germany.

Digitalization

Digitalization plays a key role in the successful transformation process in Lusatia. With its help, the differences between anchor cities and rural areas can be reduced enormously, if not eliminated. Digitalization is a cross-sectional task for work in many areas, e.g. in administration, business, tourism and research. A comprehensive and functioning broadband supply is a prerequisite.

Opencast Mining Areas, Infrastructure and Buildings in the Energy Industry

After the phase out of lignite-based power generation, numerous areas of the former energy industry remain that need to be re-cultivated and reused. This also applies to the industrial heritage of the entire Lusatian region, which in doing so, can build on its own successful experience. New designs that have already been implemented give a positive and promising outlook on where Lusatia can develop.

Future Field 2: Innovation, Research and Science

Research, Experimental Spaces and Energy

Lusatia is a region in which the European history of culture and civilization becomes visible, where technical, economic, intellectual, cultural and social developments are intertwined. With its location, the region has always been a hub of European developments and the Sorbian element makes Lusatia a special place where different languages and cultures come together. It is precisely this kind of diversity that results in innovation.

Future Field 3: Economic Development and Growth

The Economy and Entrepreneurship

With the withdrawal from lignite-based electricity generation, Lusatia has lost a core of its economic identity. The Lausitz Energy group of companies (LEAG) alone has around 8,000 employees and generates annual sales of around 1.3 billion euros. Additionally, there are service providers who are dependent on lignite. The challenge lies in successfully transforming companies along the supply chain into new business areas.

Land, Forestry and Fishing Supply Chains

The agriculture, forestry and fishing sectors make an important contribution to the sustainable protection of public goods such as biodiversity, water, soil and air. Structural change offers the opportunity to build and strengthen regional supply chains and to make a positive contribution to economic development

Future Field 4: Development of Skilled Workers

This field deals with the acquisition, development and retention of skilled workers. It is heavily dependent on the demographic development and the question of whether sufficiently well-trained specialists are consistently available on site. Accordingly, in the future it will also be a matter of training and further educating specialists in the region so that companies can find qualified employees in new economic areas.

Future Field 5: Marketing, Culture, Art and Tourism

Art, culture and tourism play an important role in the structural development of Lusatia, creating an internal identity as well as an external image. They are driving forces and tools of integration. Coordinated marketing activities from these areas can make a significant contribution to strengthening the location.

Future Field 6: European Model Region

As a region in the middle of Europe, Lusatia is characterized by close and interdisciplinary cooperation with its Polish and Czech neighbors. This will have to be intensified in the future, because structural change does not stop at borders. There needs to be an intensive coordination between the actors responsible for regional development from all three countries, which should lead to joint projects that can be implemented in concrete terms.

Future Field 7: Participation

Society and Cohesion

Lusatia, which is made up of sub-regions, has a rich cultural heritage and a distinctive civic culture. Volunteering and political participation can have a reinforcing effect. Entry points can also offer experiences with cultural and linguistic diversity, for example through the proximity to our Polish and Czech neighbors as well as through the influences of the Sorbs/Wends.

Administration and Politics as Facilitators and Supporters

Structural change is associated with complex challenges for administrations and requires, in particular, highly qualified and highly motivated employees. Other important parameters include future investments, planning and land use, inter-municipal cooperation, public accessibility and participation as well as the financial resources of the municipalities.

How was the strategy document created?

The development strategy was not written in an ivory tower, but arose “from the bottom up”, in an extensive mission statement and participation process that took around three years to complete. At the information booths alone, there were discussions with around 3,000 citizens. Numerous events, workshops, dialogue forums and the formats were held in parallel. Twenty-five specialist studies and reports were produced with broad participation from the Lusatians. This extensive collection of material as well as existing regional models, concepts and position papers were condensed into the “Lusatia 2050 Development Strategy”.

The project team had many partners at its side for this work. There was close support and regular coordination with fourteen members of a steering committee made up of representatives from the participating states of Brandenburg and Saxony, the districts of Bautzen, Dahme-Spreewald, Elbe-Elster, Görlitz, Oberspreewald Lausitz, Spree-Neiße/Sprjewja-Nyssa, the urban district Cottbus/Chóšebuz and other partners. The drafting of the development strategy itself was innovative: almost fifty authors from all over Lusatia wrote the strategy digitally on a voluntary basis between May and September 2020. Their designs were also subjected to a multi-stage vote by around 100 regional members of parliament, district administrators, mayors and representatives of institutions. This has made it possible

to present an authentic development strategy – by Lusatia, for Lusatia.

How were special target groups involved?

There were, for example, special offers for the young generation. Between August 2019 and April 2020, around 120 young people developed ideas for the future of Lusatia in the “Zukunftsbus” workshops. The German Children and Youth Foundation’s #Mission2038 project also offered workshops on structural change, regional image and engagement – unfortunately only digitally due to the Corona virus. The insight from this process is that the young target group has a strong will to change and shape things, which should be taken advantage of. The „Innovation through Tradition” project of the Fraunhofer Institut für Arbeitsorganisation, with over seventy participants, was an opportunity for needs, visions and concrete approaches for shaping structural change from the perspective of Sorbs/Wends to be developed. A third focus of our target group work was on strengthening civil society. That’s why the Zukunftswerkstatt Lausitz participated as a partner in the establishment of the Bürgerregion Lausitz, which was founded in Hoyerswerda in September as a civic transformation network.

Where can I find the development strategy?

The “Lusatia 2050 Development Strategy” is available online at www.zw-lausitz.de. The document will also be translated into Upper Sorbian and Lower Sorbian.

What will happen to the strategy document now?

The development of the “Lusatia 2050 Development Strategy” was only the first step. Now it’s time to implement the goals with the help of concrete projects. If successful, Lusatia will become a model region in Europe for successful structural change. The development strategy is a framework for the development and implementation of concrete future projects with funds from structural funding, among other things and a unique opportunity for Lusatia to shape the future from within. In this respect, the strategy presented is not a conclusion, but a prelude. The “Lusatia 2050 Development Strategy” is a snapshot, to be updated in light of the process of structural development change.

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