



Press Release

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EU project WINTER provides insights into structural change for future coal phase-out regions

With the successful completion of its research phase, the EU-funded WINTER project has delivered significant results for regions that are turning away from coal mining. Scientists from the Research Centre for Post-Mining (FZN) at the Georg Agricola University of Applied Sciences were part of the project. They contributed to the success of the project by identifying regional governance structures in the three pilot regions of Western Macedonia, Konin and the Ruhr region and collating socio-economic aspects of structural change. They published their analyses and recommendations for action in the specially published Transition Management Handbook.

“WINTER is the first comprehensive introductory work for overarching regional management,” says project manager Julia Haske from the FZN. “This model looks at socio-economic as well as environmental changes. It integrates various local actors and structures into an overarching system. It thus provides the basis for the coordinated and effective implementation of structural change processes.”

Long-term tasks for authorities and governments:

WINTER shows how the withdrawal from coal mining affects the social and economic structures in the affected regions. The researchers have examined the changes to employment, education and the local economy and developed recommendations to minimise the negative effects and promote positive developments.

The research results emphasise the need for careful planning for the transformation of the landscape in former coal regions. At the same time, they used a media analysis to investigate which accompanying communication strategies lead to greater acceptance among the regional public.

Securing knowledge sustainably:

The WINTER project thus represents a pioneering model for other coal regions in Europe. The knowledge gained is not limited to the pilot regions, but can also be applied to other regions embarking on the path of structural change.

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Development of an innovative framework:

The insights gained have been published via a web platform <https://winter-project.eu/>. The Transition Management Handbook offers a practice-orientated guide for transition processes.

The WINTER project focussed on three specific regions: Western Macedonia in Greece, Konin in Poland and the Ruhr area in Germany. These regions offer different perspectives on the challenges and opportunities associated with the phase-out of coal mining.

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Picture: Scientists from the Post-Mining Research Centre at the Georg Agricola University of Applied Sciences provided important data on structural change in the Ruhr region as part of the EU WINTER project. Successful example: the Rungenberg spoil tip is now a local recreational area.