

***Factsheet:***  
***From mining to dream vacation***  
***"Lusatian Lake District", Germany***

SEPTEMBER 2019

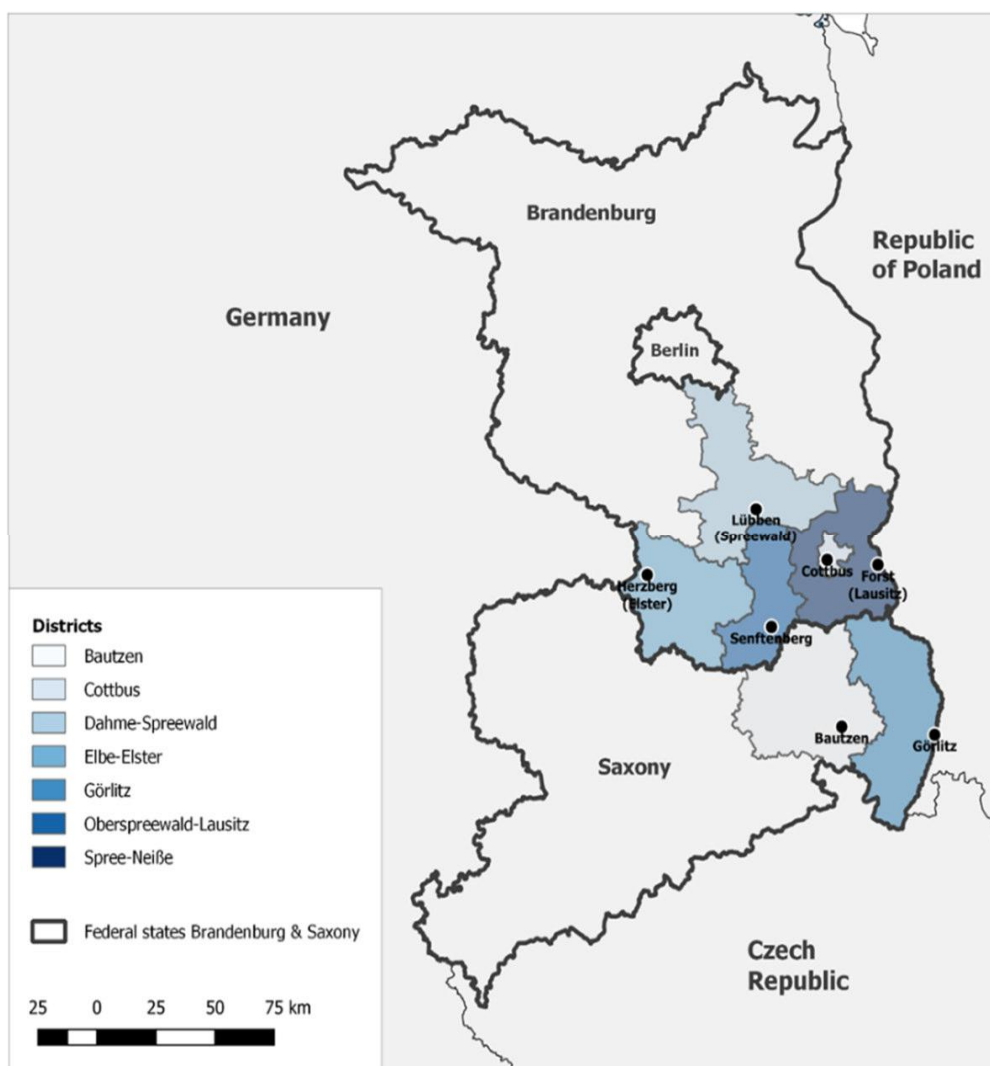


## Description

Germany was the largest coal producer in the world until 1975, with more than 140,000 employees, and Lusatia is a historic mining region. This taking into account that the first lignite mine in the area has been known since 1844, along with the lighter factories that compacted the lignite for use in metallurgy and other related industries. (Peter Mellgard, The Guardian, September 10, 2014).

Mining, in addition to its beneficial effects, has degraded the environment by polluting air, soil and water on a massive scale. At the time of Germany's reunification (1990), the problem of phasing out lignite mining was also raised, which visibly affected/destroyed the landscape of the Lusatia region.

Geographically and administratively, the peculiarity of Lusatia is that it is located in North-East Germany and covers an area of 11,582 km<sup>2</sup> within the limits of two federal states (Brandenburg and Saxony) and is approx. 100 km from Berlin and Dresden respectively (Figure 1).



**Figure 1: DE: Administrative structure of the Economic Region Lusatia within the Federal States of Brandenburg and Saxony - regional counties with the municipal city Cottbus**

(source: FIB, BSERC, 2019, p.55)

In total, the lignite industry in the Lausitz mining area achieved a gross added value of slightly more than €1.2 billion in 2016 according to the calculations of the RWI economic research institute, i.e. around 4.3% of the total added value in the region. The lignite

company the Lausitz Energie Bergbau AG (LEAG) itself states that it creates an annual added value of about €1.4 billion in the Lausitz mining area (BMW, 2019, p.74).

In addition to the roughly 8,000 direct employees of LEAG in the mining and energy industry, it is reasonably estimated that there are about 500 other companies with approx. 16,000 employees which are directly or indirectly dependent on the lignite and energy industry as service providers and suppliers (with different degrees of dependence and different regional locations within and outside the mining area). In this connection it is also important that various other large industrial employers in the region have been faced with great difficulties in the last few years. The highly qualified personnel from the lignite sector are therefore a valuable resource for the future structural development (BMW, 2019, p.74).

Almost all the mines in southern Lusatia were closed. There was a pressing question: what to do with the deep, expansive open pits that mark the area and other messy remains from decades of rampant lignite mining? And how to repair the environment? It was a puzzle, but also an opportunity (Peter Mellgard, The Guardian, September, 10, 2014).

### 1. Location: Lusatia Region, Germany

### 2. Type of action: Conversion of a mining sites into a lakes for tourism

3. **Actors:** National government, the federal states of Brandenburg and Saxony, the local communities and administrative districts, employers, unions and civil society organisations
4. **Fund(s):** With the support of joint subsidies of €7.3 million from the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy, the Free State of Saxony and the federal state of Brandenburg, guiding principles are currently being developed in the Lausitz.<sup>1</sup> In addition, there is a further and quite considerable support of landscape restoration and engineering of 1.23 billion EUR up to the year 2022.<sup>2</sup>

After the 1970s, some of the old pits left by the mining process were transformed into a lake district. The first was Lake Senftenberg, still one of the largest lakes in the region. Further lakes have already been established, and plans for over twenty more large lakes have been drawn up. Lakes that have already been created include:

- in the north: the Gräbendorfer See, Altdöberner See and Bergheiner See;
- in the centre: Lake Senftenberg, Ilsensee, Sedlitzer See, Partwitzer See, Geierswalder See, Neuwieser See, Blunowsee, Sabroter See, Bergener See and Spreetaler See;
- in the south: the Bernsteinsee, Scheibensee, Dreiweibener See, Speicherbecken Lohse II, Silbersee/Morkasee, Knappensee and Graureihersee.

These are not the only artificial lakes that have been and will be created in eastern Germany. Around the city of Leipzig, a new lake district is starting to develop, and there are other examples, such as the Bärwalder See and Berzdorfer See near the city of Görlitz in Upper Lusatia. Moreover, these lakes have beautified the landscape, changed the lives of people, and by their large number (about 3000) we can metaphorically name Lusatia „a Finland of Germany”.

Green Venice's so-called Spreewald situated about 100 kilometers south of Berlin, is really an extraordinary natural experience of a Brandenburg's holiday destination. Since 1991 the

<sup>1</sup>Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (BMW), Commission on Growth, Structural Change and Employment – Final Report, January 2019, Berlin, [https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/commission-on-growthstructural-change-and-employment.pdf?\\_\\_blob=publicationFile&v=3](https://www.bmwi.de/Redaktion/EN/Publikationen/commission-on-growthstructural-change-and-employment.pdf?__blob=publicationFile&v=3), p.76

<sup>2</sup>BSERC, Report on the current role of coal mining and related policies in the TRACER target regions, Smart strategies for the transition in coal intensive regions - Project No: 836819, September 2019, p.71

Spreewald has gained UNESCO's recognition as a biosphere reserve, and has thus become part of the worldwide net of extensively defined nature reserves. Rare species of flora and fauna does find its habitat here.

The Lausitz mining area offers excellent basic resources to enable it to remain a strong energy region even under changing energy policy conditions.

In addition, the range of tourist facilities can be systematically supplemented by facilities offering health and wellness programs. Tourism is a recent addition (Görlitz, Lausitz lakes). And there are promising initiatives in the service sector, especially in logistics and mobility.

Changes in industrial production allow tourists to understand the current changes in the landscape of the old-industrial regions as well as in regional and urban development.



**Figure 2: Section of the chain of lakes**

(source: LMBV - Peter Radke, Public Domain,

<https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=32715656>)



**Figure 3: An aerial view of Zwenkaulake in Zwenkau, Germany. Flooding old mines have created huge network of lakes in Lusatia. Photograph: Jan Woitas/EPA**

(source: P. Mellgard, 2014)

## Achievements

The most important achievements include:

- To solve it, the government set up the Lausitz and Middle Germany Mining Administrative Company (LMBV), in 1994. "Our duty is to rehabilitate all the former state-owned mining areas from the German Democratic Republic period," said Jörg Schlenstedt, an engineer at LMBV. "The mines were closed down but their legacy was not finalised. Recultivation, rehabilitation, transformation. That's our job."
- These achievements are well promoted on international and domestic specialized portals and sites (booking.com, Seen.de, HotelsamSee.com) and on social media. They are intended to provide important, complete and up-to-date tourist information on all lakes in Germany and Europe. It also provides information on what type of tourism can be practiced (leisure tourism, cultural tourism, sports tourism, and field trips, etc.), to whom it is addressed/who can be the ideal clients (by age, by marital status, hobbies, etc.) and the services offered (accommodation from camping to boarding house to the hotel of the higher category, restaurant, sports facilities and equipment, relaxation, spaces arranged for conferences, concerts and other artistic events) and useful safety tips and protection. A special place also rightly occupies the landscapes, fauna or flora and the advantages of such a vacation or just a stay of one or two days a few kilometers from home.

## Challenges

- Continuation of works;
- Creation of junction channels to increase mobility;
- Visitors' management;
- Change of mentality - that in the East there can be no sea and acceptance of new tourist areas („Inkacee May 23, 2019 Hmmm, "German Sea"? Yes, I think you really have to go North).<sup>3</sup>

## Enabling conditions

The most important enabling conditions are:

- Neutralization and water management;
- Providing the necessary funds;
- Ecological and planning conditions often changed rapidly and dramatically, leading to the fact that the provisions in the development plan were no longer feasible.

## References and further links

BSERC, Report on the current role of coal mining and related policies in the TRACER target regions, Smart strategies for the transition in coal intensive regions - Project No: 836819, September 2019

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<sup>3</sup>Comment at article 7 Ideen für Sommerferien in Deutschland am Wasser | blickgewinkelt (7 ideas for summer holidays in Germany on the water | blickgewinkelt), available <https://blickgewinkelt.de/7-ideen-sommerferien-in-deutschland-am-wasser/>

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