



Factsheet:
***Cooperative Training Program at Coal
Sites, North Rhine-Westphalia,
Germany***

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Description

1. **Location:** North Rhine-Westphalia, Germany
2. **Type of action:** Training Program
3. **Actors:** Company, government
4. **Financing conditions:** Co-financing scheme from state, local budget and NGOs
5. **Fund(s):** EU Fund: European Social Fund (ESF)

Considering the recommendations of the European Union Council, in 2014 Germany started a national reform program focused on the strong link between education performance and the socioeconomic background and the need for additional measures to combat long-term unemployment.

To this aim, the "Operational Program for the implementation of the European Social Fund in North Rhine-Westphalia in the funding phase 2014 – 2020" is supporting a Cooperative Training Program at Coal Sites. Through the Cooperative Training Program at Coal Sites and the Compulsory Lifelong Learning Unit (ULL), the ESF is making an additional contribution to the EU Sustainable Development Goals. Within the scope of the ULL "Energy and Resource Efficiency" courses, resource-saving work is taught.

According to the Sustainable Development – one of the cross-sectoral principles of this customised ESF for North Rhine-Westphalia land, shifting towards a resource-efficient economy and nature-friendly and environmentally compatible growth in line with the Europe 2020 strategy, will also serve to preserve the human well-being of people in North Rhine-Westphalia in the long term.

In North Rhine-Westphalia land, in the west of Germany, is located the Ruhr one of the large German coal field, so called Rhenish mining district (North Rhine-Westphalia, NRW)¹. The history of lignite mining in the Rhenish mining district dates back to the 19th century and today, the three remaining opencast mines belongs to RWE Generation SE Company (Rheinisch-Westfälisches Elektrizitätswerk AG). RWE supplies and operates 4 lignite-fired power plants at Neurath, Niederaußem, Weisweiler, and Frimmersdorf.

The Cooperative Training Program at Coal Sites promotes transition from carbon-intensive mining industry. Thus, through this co-financing scheme (ESF, governmental and non-governmental funds, and local budget) the reduction of the training capacities in the Rhenish mining district will be compensated.

In our area of interest – NRW, GIB (Gesellschaft für innovative Beschäftigungsförderung mbH) – a state-owned company is focusing its work on supporting the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia in achieving its objectives of promoting employment and combating unemployment. GIB is supporting the cooperative training between training providers and small and medium-sized enterprises, young people are to be given an external training. The aim is for the apprentices to be taken on in the second year of training in an additional company training relationship.

In order to deploy its training programs funded by ESF in NRW, GIB was cooperating with one of the 16th Regional agencies, subordinated to the Labour Ministry, which supports the implementation at local level of the state labour policy.

The state program "Cooperative Training at Coal Sites" has been carried out by the state of North Rhine-Westphalia in the Ruhr area since 2008. The aim is to first include young people who have not found a training place in the program of an out-of-school training, in order to then impart them as soon as possible in an in-company training.

The Provincial Government supports the training of young people in the mining regions of the country with the "Cooperative Training Program for Coal Sites". At the same time, it was

¹ <https://www.cleanenergywire.org/factsheets/germanys-three-lignite-mining-regions>

intended to structurally win over more businesses in the coal catchment areas, to give vocational prospects to young people in the region and to secure the next generation of skilled workers.

Achievements

The cooperative education between educational institutions and small and medium-sized enterprises enables young people to undergo extra-occupational training. The aim was for the trainees to be taken on an apprenticeship in the second year of training.

Thus, through a program expansion in 2016, a further 80 places were set up in Bochum, Herne and Gelsenkirchen. The NRW state government provided around 500,000 euros per year of training, the program being co-financed by the European Social Fund (ESF).

Since September 2016, up to 20 young people have been starting out-of-school training here each year and are being prepared for in-company training. The program was implemented in the four cities by local educational institutions that work closely with local companies and the Employment Agency.

With the coal transition process the training capacities were cut off, and many young people in the Ruhr area were competing for the remaining training places. Through this Program the RAG Foundation facilitate the entry into a successful working life for those young people who have often found employment in the mining industry.

RAG-Stiftung, a German foundation that specialises in funding and managing all perpetual obligations that derive from ending hard-coal mining in Germany and additionally promotes projects in the areas of education, science and culture to the extent that this is related to German hard-coal mining, co-finances the Cooperative Training Program in the Ruhr Area. Traditionally, the hard-coal mining industry has been one of the biggest training institutions for young people in the area. With reducing and in December 2018 finally ending hard-coal mining in Germany, those training places were lost. In order to fill this void, RAG-Stiftung co-finances the Training Program since 2008 with an overall amount of around 9 Million Euro until 2018.

The co-financing ensures the instalment of additional training places that are especially suitable for people with multiple placement obstacles. Every additional training place is supported by RAG-Stiftung with a monthly amount of 400 Euro per place over the total course of the apprenticeship, usually up to three years. Furthermore, every trainee is supported by a social education worker to ensure his or her successful training.

The governmental stakeholders consider that completion of a dual education is a key to social participation, offering a high level of protection against unemployment.

The participants of the program learned professionally relevant content, combining practical aspects with theoretical ones. The curriculum was dealing with educational gaps as well as the promotion of communicative and social skills. Participants could receive training in a variety of occupations, including automotive mechatronics, animal care, carpentry, chemist, plant mechanic, hairdresser, warehouseman, office management and traders.

Since 2008 a number of more than 750 young trainees underwent the programme co-financed by RAG-Stiftung with a majority of them being hired by local business afterwards or during the programme. The programme by RAG-Stiftung operates in more than ten cities in the Ruhr area and thereby focusses especially on less attentive areas.

In 2013 together RAG-Stiftung started its involvement, as shareholder and premium partner, in the JOBLINGE² initiative in order to make a visible and sustainable contribution to the fight against youth unemployment. To this aim the business environment, the state and private individuals are working together to support young people identify real job opportunities; get training or a job, thus sustainably integrating them in the labour market and society. In a

² <https://www.joblinge.de/english>

specialty six-month program, developed by the non-profit organisation JOBLINGE gAG Ruhr, the participants learn what profession suits them, what their strengths are and how they apply properly. JOBLINGE's well-conceived training programme has proven very effective over the years, and the initiative has helped more than 70 per cent of participants find a job. This means that most of the programme's participants successfully enter the regular job market.



Figure 1: Traineeship support to young people: ex-jobbing now an apprentice cook; Marienhaus gGmbH in Essen, 2014

(source: RAG-Stiftung – Annual Report 2014)



Figure 2: Youth career help; JOBLINGE gAG Ruhr in Essen, 2014

(source: RAG-Stiftung – Annual Report 2014)

In future, the foundation will also support the further development of institutions that used to be regularly funded by RAG AG and whose survival would be at stake with the cessation of coal mining. Among them are the German Mining Museum (which also conducts research), the private Georg Agricola University of Applied Sciences in Bochum, and the miners' choirs and orchestras.

Challenges

The Frimmersdorf plant was transferred into the security stand-by reserve in 2017. The 4.4 GW power plant at Neurath (Germany's largest) alone emitted 31.3 million tonnes of CO₂ in 2016³. The plants at Niederaußem (3.6 GW capacity) and Weisweiler (1.9 GW) emitted 43 million tonnes of CO₂ in 2016⁴.

Coal mining and the related industry has shaped the landscape (e.g. 1,200 ha forest⁵ that has largely fallen victim to the expanding lignite mine) in North Rhine-Westphalia for over 100 years. Some 50 villages or parts of villages had to be evacuated to make room for the expanding lignite mines.

But in the same time, the Rhenish mining district's GDP amounted to 79,303 million euros⁶ in 2015. The potential social impact after coal phasing out will affect a total of 8,961 people⁵ working in the Rhenish district's lignite mines and power plants, and 14,338 jobs which are directly or indirectly induced by the brown coal sector.

So, the main challenges are:

- identifying the alternative energy source (for heat and electricity) covering 10 GW, currently installed on lignite that will be phase out;
- economic development and diversification of Rhenish coal region in transition;
- encouraging and supporting the entrepreneurial initiatives, by the local / regional public authorities;
- adopting fiscal instruments/mechanisms for attracting investors in the region and thus ensuring the labour force demand;
- pro-active attitude of young people and their desire to reorient professionally to other jobs available in the region; and their willingness not to migrate;
- customising the training curriculum according to the labour force qualification required on the local market;
- encouraging local businesses and training facilities to offer training places
- securing the financing sources.

Enabling conditions

In order to replicate this success story in other coal regions in transition, it is necessary to ensure the continuity of the financing program for the next programming period 2021-2027, with customization on the areas of interest in Germany - a model which might be paste over to other countries. Shortly, RAG-Stiftung has extended its co-financing to the programme starting in 2019 with up to two million Euro in total.

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³ www.bund-nrw.de

⁴ www.agora-energiewende.de

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