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Phasing out away from coal - reinventing European regions

A study commissioned by the Greens/EFA

Objective of the study

The EU can and should play a role in facilitating transformational change away from coal mining (especially lignite) and in particular in mitigating social and economic hardship that may occur in the course of these transitions. A thorough understanding of the utilisation of existing policy instruments and their relation to coal mining is a prerequisite for designing effective policy instruments that help regions to adjust to imminent changes, and to drive the transformation in a socially and economically just way.

To this end this study outlines specific transformation challenges in key European coal and lignite mining regions, namely of Aragon in Spain, Lusatia in Germany, Silesia in Poland and Western Macedonia in Greece. The study provides a brief summary of the regions' socio-economic structure, including the role of coal mining therein.

The core of the study is an assessment of how existing European structural instruments, specifically the European Structural and Investment Funds (the ESI Funds) are utilized in the region.

Content of the study

The study starts out with a brief overview on the European Structural and Investment Funds (the ESI Funds) including objectives, rules and allocation processes as well as monitoring requirements. Chapter two is dedicated to outlining our analytic design. Chapter three forms the core of this study. For the four cases presented here, we each give a brief overview over the main socio-economic factors, the role of coal in each region, and an analysis of the us of structural funding in the respective region. Chapter four synthesises our case study results to present some aggregate challenges and findings on the principal uses of EU structural funding resources. Chapter five concludes the study with some recommendations for future reforms of European structural funding vis-à-vis the coming coal phase-out challenges.

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