

## **– Görlitz Declaration –**

Final document of the 41 coal-mining regions in the EU  
on the occasion of the second Annual Political Meeting of the platform for coal-mining regions in transition on 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019 in Görlitz with recommendations to the new European Commission

The mining, conversion into electricity and refining of coal has been a guarantee for growth, prosperity and employment in the European Union (EU) for decades and contributes significantly to the security of supply of its more than 500 million inhabitants. Coal is currently mined in 41 regions in 12 EU Member States. Throughout Europe, 185,000 people are employed in coal production and a further 52,000 in coal-fired power generation.

The planned reduction of coal production and generation of electricity from coal, with the aim of achieving a climate-neutral, secure energy supply, will foreseeably cause striking changes in the economic structure, have an impact on the employment situation in the affected regions, and lead to the reorganisation of existing value chains.

With the targets set in 2015 in the UN Climate Protection Agreement of Paris, the European Union, the Member States and, in particular, the coal-mining regions face the challenge of shaping the path to a low-emission and more diversified economic structure in an economically successful, ecologically sustainable and, above all, socially acceptable manner. However, Europe's energy supply, and particularly its electricity supply, must be secured in the long term and be largely climate-neutral and internationally competitive.

The Platform for Coal-mining Regions in Transition (EU Coal Platform), established in Strasbourg on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2017 at the initiative of the European Commission, makes an important contribution to promoting the exchange of knowledge and experience among the 41 coal-mining regions in Europe in the process of this structural change, to expanding networks and, last but not least, to improving access to EU technical assistance and financing instruments. Since the establishment of this platform, the Directorates-General for Energy and Regional Policy and Urban Development of the European Commission in particular have been actively involved in bringing together a wide range of stakeholders at various levels and significantly increasing the European added value for the regions. By creating the EU Coal Platform, an appropriate forum has been created for continuously developing a common vision for a fair transition from coal to a value-creating, modern, competitive and low-emission economy up to the year 2050, in line with the EU's common climate targets, while establishing new forms of energy production and storage. The internationally acknowledged platform also promotes interregional cooperation within the EU.

The coal-mining regions of Europe welcome the announcements made by the newly elected President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen, as part of her Agenda for Europe 2019-2024 to ensure a fair transition for all and to not abandon anyone in the regions affected by structural change.

**Against this background, the 41 coal-mining regions from 12 EU Member States note the following points:**

- In order to meet the targets set by the UN Climate Protection Agreement, the coal regions are jointly formulating phase-out plans, which must not lead to a situation in which a coal industry that has grown over decades, is deep in added value, rich in tradition and creates identity, with its downstream value chains, is liquidated within a few years and the people in the affected regions lose their basis of existence. Rather, it is essential to transform these processes into a climate-neutral and internationally outstanding industrial value creation within appropriate time frames and by actively involving the affected actors. The coal-mining

regions see the desired transition to a low-carbon and recycling-orientated economy and the associated processes of structural change as a common task of European importance.

- Successful climate protection as a model for the world can only succeed with the people affected. The phasing out of coal production and electricity generation from coal in Europe must therefore go hand in hand with a fair and socially acceptable transition to new low-emission forms of energy production and the development of new economic sectors.
- This transition requires a long-term secure framework for investment and should include measures in different areas, including infrastructure development, science and research, the promotion and development of an innovative corporate landscape and the development of skilled manpower potentials, culture and tourism.
- The success of the transition to a low-carbon economy in Europe will depend significantly on an extensive mobilisation of private and public investment, an effective resource management and an integrated, interconnected and reliably functioning European internal energy market that delivers sustainable, secure and competitive energy. The right of Member States to decide on their own energy mix is to be fully respected.
- The significant contribution of the coal industry to CO<sub>2</sub> reduction as a result of a politically motivated, premature phase-out of coal production and electricity generation from coal must be recognised. The losses in employment, added value and purchasing power resulting from the premature phase-out of coal must be adequately compensated by appropriate mechanisms and new perspectives opened up for employees, businesses and regions.
- The application of clean coal technologies and the material use of coal may also contribute to the successful transformation of the energy sector in Europe and should therefore continue to be aided by the EU. Clean coal technologies show ways to use coal for energy without emitting carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. These technologies thus make an active contribution to climate protection that can also be applied globally.

**Based on the aforementioned points, the 41 coal-mining regions of Europe have the following expectations of the new European Commission, which is to actively support structural development in the affected regions by taking appropriate measures:**

1. In order to maintain the competitiveness of Europe's coal-mining regions in times of progressive globalisation and to successfully manage the development process towards a low-carbon and diversified economic structure, adequate additional funding for investment in infrastructure adaptation, research, development, technology and innovation is needed in the next EU Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) for the period 2021-2027. The options for the allocation of funds will also have to address the societal, socio-economic and environmental impacts of structural change in the European coal-mining regions. These additional funds must not reduce the existing MFF approaches for the Structural Funds.
2. Sufficient scope given to aid is highly relevant both to the allocation of national funds for phasing out coal and to the allocation of European funds, such as the European Structural and Investment Funds. Adapting the regulatory framework of the EU aid regime to concrete regional needs can therefore make a decisive contribution to significantly increasing the attractiveness of the location, the investment climate and growth dynamics in Europe's coal-mining regions and to creating a significantly improved environment for research, development, innovation and investment.
3. An "IPCEI coal regions" is a suitable framework for adapting economic development measures to the needs of coal-mining regions in the context of structural change. An "IPCEI coal regions" can make an important contribution to creating an attractive environment for the establishment of large businesses, to accelerating the conversion of the energy system and at the same time to preserving the character of the respective energy region. In

addition, energy-intensive businesses could be effectively decarbonised without endangering their competitiveness. At the same time, new economic sectors are emerging that can offer local employees concrete prospects for the future.

4. Furthermore, for successful structural change in the regions and the development of new economic sectors, the regions require support in the training and recruitment of qualified specialists. This demands the expansion of existing or new curricula for education, training and exchange throughout Europe and the strengthening of dual vocational training as part of the European innovation system.
5. Moreover, and in detail, the coal-mining regions refer to the position paper "Socio-economic structural change in Europe's coal-mining regions" by commentator Mark Speich, adopted by the European Committee of the Regions at its 136<sup>th</sup> plenary session from 7<sup>th</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> October 2019 in Brussels.

Görlitz, 25<sup>th</sup> November 2019