

PRESS RELEASE
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Integrative transformation of mining sites

Experts from several European countries presented their speeches at a public conference in Chodov on October 12, 2011. They introduced miscellaneous approaches of regional development of former mining regions.

The moment of termination of mining in the region of Sokolov is approaching; therefore it is necessary to be appropriately prepared for it. Such was the message sent by the **international symposium** dealing with the topic of integrative transformations of mining localities, held in the town of Chodov on October 12. Over 100 people from 7 different countries took part in this event. Speakers presented the visions of the future of mining regions and they touched the issue of possible future ways of the region of Sokolov and other European mining regions, after mining is terminated. One of the options, according to experts, would be to use the potential the regions themselves have due to mining. Optimistic chances should also be seen in the improvement of inhabitants' education as well as in the support of sustainable projects that stand a chance of success.

The international conference was organized within the **ReSource** project, which represents an initiative of central European regions (from the Czech Republic, Germany, Austria, Slovenia and Hungary), characteristic with small and average-size towns, where mining industry has recently been terminated or where it has been losing strength.

As far as experts are concerned, **mining termination** will bring massive changes and problems to **the region of Sokolov**. It will be impossible to solve such problems and changes within a period of a few years. „Moreover, a new shape of the countryside has already started to develop. The results of this process will only be visible in more than ten years. What is essential is to know in advance, which direction the region will take economically, what sort of production and services will prevail here. How to create thousands of new job positions after the miners have been released. How to keep young and educated people in the region. How to change the bad image of the region that prevails in the eyes of most Czech citizens, how to make them visit the region and spend their leisure time here“ stated Jitka Sudorova, ReSource project manager on the Czech side. „There are still more questions than answers, which was one of the motives for the region of Sokolov to enter international ReSource project“, she added. Jaromir Musil, Regional department of development chief, openly admitted that Sokolov represents a significant problem that the Regional office needs to deal with. „What I see as an important step is the revitalization of the education centre in Sokolov. This is hoe we can help the district most“, Musil pointed out.

„Simply put, we are looking for ways of using the **post-mining potentials** economically or for the purposes of tourism. A number of experts from particular European countries lectured about this at the symposium. Interesting ideas for the region of Sokolov were presented, as well as other examples from foreign countries which had to face the same or similar problems of the consequences of mining. From these foreign experiences we learnt how to attract visitors and how to bring finance in, “said Patrik Pizinger, deputy of the mayor of Chodov. As Jitka Sudorova claims, the conference proved the fact, that Sokolov is not alone in the problem and that there are chances of inspiration from abroad.

Approaches of new countryside planning were presented here, from the side of German, Austrian, Slovenian, Belgian and also Czech partners. Within the ReSource project work group Integrative approaches 4 **masterplans** have been created, dealing with the utilization of the post-mining territories. All 4 of these masterplans were presented at the symposium: they are A urban study for the mining region of Sokolov (mines George and Friendship), masterplan for the mine Welzow – South in German Lusatia, masterplan for German mining region Wismut in the Aue area and last but not least the mining region of Slovenian Zasavje. Competitions of architecture were also presented here, showing the change of mining brownfields and homesteads. Attractive contribution was that of the Belgian partner, showing the transformation of Limburg region, as well as that of the ambitious project of the city of Ostrava to become the European city of culture.

Representing the company of **Sokolovska uhelna, a.s.**, technical director Jiri Pöpperl outlined the future of the region from the point of view of the mining company. „In case there is an investor who brings a reasonable, economically viable project, we are open to support such matter. This may be certain utilization of the territories, rent of the machinery or support in construction of industrial zones. Things depend on a concrete discussion, “Pöpperl stated. According to the mining company, termination is about to come between the years 2035 – 2037. „We may see this as something that is approaching slowly in small steps. However in two years, these steps will become bigger and in five years they will turn into huge leaps. Therefore it is essential for us to be ready with solutions in time, “Ivan Stefan, Microregion Sokolov-East chairman, pointed out.

„At the end of the conference we were planning to go in the footsteps of the Großbräsch conference, where a document of principles of post-mining regions development was signed, in the form of a charter elaborated by a ReSource project partner IBA Fürst-Pückler-Land. We prepared a **declaration** of future development of the Sokolov region, “Jitka Sudorova said. This document, however, will have to be thoroughly discussed by all the signatories, before it is signed and officially approved.

„This has been so far the biggest international conference held here. It has been a great honour for us“, Pizinger mentioned.

To see more information and pictures feel free to contact Jitka Sudorova, ReSource project manager representing Microregion Sokolov-East

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