

COAL HERITAGE

RFCS Accompanying Measure Project

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GERMANY

Public perception at a glance: Deliverable 2.4

by Hernan Flores, Tansel Dogan, Julia Haske

One of the core activities of the CoalHeritage project is understanding how stakeholders across Europe perceive coal heritage and its future. The Deliverable 2.4, developed by the Research Center of Post-Mining in Germany, presents the findings of a comprehensive online stakeholder survey that collected responses from 449 participants (Figure 1) across Germany, France, Greece, Poland, and Slovenia.



Figure 1. Number and distribution of respondents in each project country on the stakeholder awareness online survey.

The goal? To identify awareness levels, perceptions, and preferences for the transformation and preservation of former coal sites—and how willing people are to get involved.

Who participated?

Respondents included a broad mix of stakeholders:

- Academia & research institutions
- Local and national governments
- Mining and power companies
- Civil society and NGOs
- Business and financial actors
- Community members and residents

Most respondents were aged 41–60, highlighting a strong connection between middle-aged generations and regional heritage. However, younger stakeholders also showed a growing interest, especially in renewable energy and innovation.

Knowledge and awareness

- A majority of participants (especially in Poland and Slovenia) have a personal or family connection to coal mining.
- In France and Germany, academic knowledge and cultural familiarity played a stronger role.
- Yet, 22% of German respondents and 10% in France reported almost no connection to coal mining—pointing to changing generational awareness.

Despite the regional differences, museum-based heritage, landscape reuse, and cultural symbolism (like songs and parades) emerged as the most familiar elements of coal heritage across all countries.

What kind of future do public want?

When asked about the best uses for former mining sites, responses showed a clear and consistent trend:

- Parks, green spaces & eco-tourism – 6.55/10
- Industrial culture (museums, exhibitions, event centers) – 6.55/10
- Renewable energy installations – 6.35/10
- Education & research institutions – 6.23/10
- Nature conservation areas – 6.17/10

Lower-ranking options included commercial real estate, housing developments, and amusement parks, suggesting that the public does not prioritize private or intensive urban use of these sites.

Awareness of ongoing projects

Over 60% of respondents were aware of current coal transition projects, often learning about them through social media and local press. Projects like GreenJOBS, REECOL, Just Transition, and regional initiatives (e.g. IGA 2027 in Germany, PilotStrategy in Greece, or Faymoreau's tourist developments in France) were mentioned (Figure 2).

Transition Projects



Figure 2. Some of the mentioned transition projects in the stakeholder survey across participant EU regions.

Still, awareness is not constant especially among civil society, local businesses, and younger respondents, suggesting a need for better communication strategies.

Who should take responsibility?

When asked who should manage the future of coal heritage:

- Government and public institutions came out on top
- Local communities and residents ranked second
- A "mix of stakeholders" was the third most preferred option
- Mining companies and environmental NGOs followed closely

This reflects a clear desire for shared governance and inclusive partnerships—where decisions are not just top-down but also bottom-up.

Strong interest in getting involved

More than 80% of participants said they are interested or very interested in supporting coal heritage projects via:

- Participating in planning
- Promoting tourism
- Supporting environmental restoration

	#5	#4	#3	#2	#1
GERMANY	Environmental protection and sustainability	Social integration and community projects	Preservation of culture and history of the region	Education and training opportunities	Creation of new jobs
FRANCE	Education and training opportunities	Social integration and community projects	Preservation of culture and history of the region	Creation of new jobs	Environmental protection and sustainability
GREECE	Social integration and community projects	Environmental protection and sustainability	Education and training opportunities	Preservation of culture and history of the region	Creation of new jobs
POLAND	Social integration and community projects	Environmental protection and sustainability	Preservation of culture and history of the region	Creation of new jobs	Education and training opportunities
SLOVENIA	Social integration and community projects	Environmental protection and sustainability	Education and training opportunities	Preservation of culture and history of the region	Creation of new jobs

Higher interest

Figure 3. Matrix of most voted policies for each project country (Source: Deliverable 2.4 CoalHeritage Project)

- Advocating for policy

Policy priorities (ranked by stakeholders)

1. New job creation
2. Environmental protection & sustainability
3. Preservation of history and cultural identity
4. Education and training opportunities
5. Community and social integration

Interestingly, priorities shifted slightly across countries (Figure 3):

- France placed sustainability first
- Poland prioritized education
- Germany, Slovenia, and Greece aligned strongly on job creation and cultural preservation

Future visions for coal regions

When asked what industries or activities could bring value to post-mining areas, these sectors led the way:

- **Tourism and heritage conservation** – top choice in all countries
- **Renewable energy** – particularly in France, Germany, and Greece
- **Advanced manufacturing and tech** – strong in Germany and Poland
- **Environmental restoration** – emphasized in France and Germany
- **Sustainable agriculture** – mentioned mostly in France and Greece

This stakeholder analysis marks a milestone in the CoalHeritage project. It brings to light not only the diverse expectations across regions but also the shared commitment to a balanced transformation, one that respects heritage while looking to the future.

Stakeholder Workshop 2025 in Bochum

by Hernan Flores, Tansel Dogan, Julia Haske

On April 1st, 2025, the Research Center of Post-Mining hosted a stakeholder workshop at KoFabrik in Bochum, Germany, to explore local strategies and international perspectives for the preservation and transformation of former coal mine sites.

The workshop began with presentations from various local institutions (Figure 4), offering an overview of coal heritage scenarios, historical insights, and the interconnection between industrial legacies, nature conservation, and biodiversity in the Ruhr area.

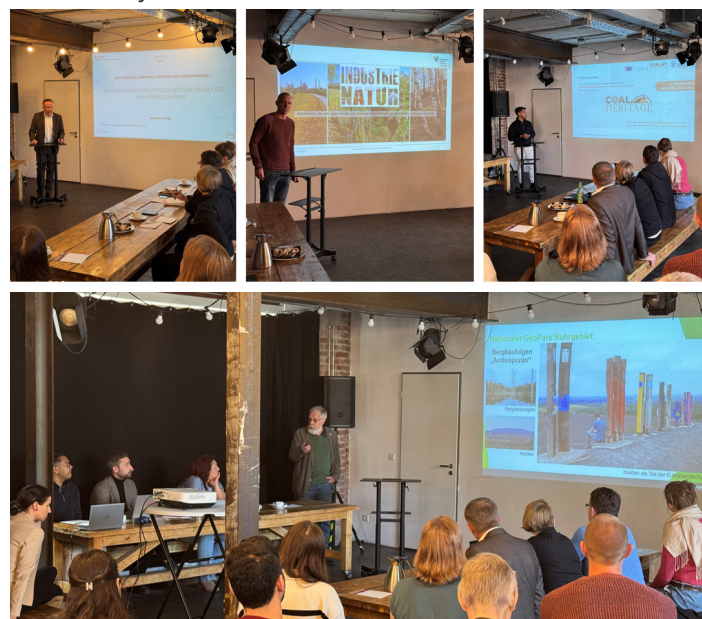


Figure 4. Presentation block during Stakeholder Workshop in Bochum, Germany.

Prof. Michael Prange, Vice President for Research, Development, and Transfer at the Georg Agricola University of Applied Sciences (THGA), opened the session with a talk on “Best Heritage Scenarios: Lessons from the Ruhrgebiet.”

He was followed by Michael Wachsmann, research associate at the Biological Station Western Ruhr Area (BSWR), who introduced the concept of industrial nature with his presentation on “Recording and Evaluating the Potential in the Ruhr Area,” providing insights into the biodiversity found in rehabilitated former mining landscapes.

Next, Dr. Volker Wrede (former Chairman of GeoPark Ruhrgebiet e.V.) gave a presentation titled “Visualizing the Natural Background of CoalHeritage: The Ruhr Area National GeoPark.” He explained the framework behind GeoParks in Germany, how they are designated, and highlighted the key geological attractions and preservation measures in the region’s natural parks.

After covering the diverse backgrounds of coal heritage transition in Germany, Hernan Flores from the Research Center of Post-Mining at the THGA, presented an overview of the CoalHeritage project, including its current progress and main findings to date. To conclude, the results of the stakeholder awareness survey and public perception analysis were shared with the participants. This included statistical results, key findings, and emerging trends, sparking a lively discussion among attendees.

For the group work session of the workshop, participants were invited to collaborate in small groups, bringing their own experiences and perspectives to the table. Each group focused on one of the following key topics listed in Figure 5.

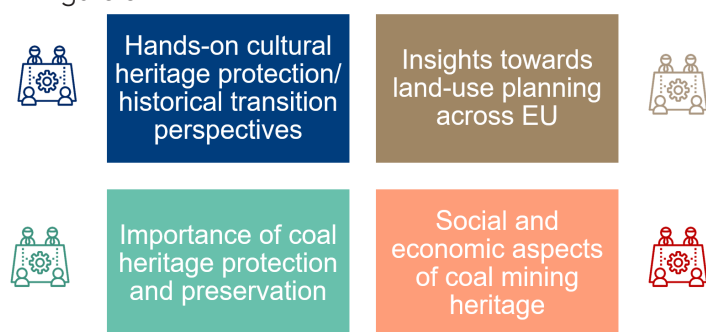


Figure 5. Topics for the breakout sessions during Stakeholder Workshop in Bochum, Germany.

These discussions (Figure 6) allowed participants to share regional knowledge, compare challenges, and identify opportunities for collaboration and policy development in post-mining transformation processes.



Figure 6. Open discussion, brainstorming and gathering of insights during the group table work during the Stakeholder Workshop in Bochum, Germany.

Key Takeaways from the Workshop Discussions

In the final session of the workshop, participants shared their reflections and formulated a set of important messages to guide future steps in coal heritage preservation and post-mining strategies across Europe. These include:

- **Ensure inclusive participation:** Future studies and planning processes should consider the involvement of diverse and heterogeneous communities.
- **Engage the younger generation early:** There is a strong need to inform and educate younger audiences about both mining and post-mining heritage, and to raise awareness of the importance of cultural heritage protection.
- **Focus on sustainability after mine closure:** Activities and projects initiated during transition phases should be designed with long-term sustainability in mind.
- **Recognize legislative diversity across the EU:** Differences in national legislation influence post-mining land use possibilities and should be accounted for in international cooperation.
- **Promote bottom-up planning:** Land use planning should follow a bottom-up approach, integrating local needs, experiences, and visions.
- **Secure post-2027 funding:** With the Just Transition Fund concluding in 2027, new financial instruments and funding programs will be essential to continue supporting post-coal strategies.

These insights will help shape the next steps of the CoalHeritage project and contribute to broader European discussions on sustainable heritage management and regional transformation.

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GREECE

CoalHeritage Regional Workshop in Greece

by Ioanna Badouna and George S. Maraslidis

A Major Event in Cultural Heritage Conservation!

The **CoalHeritage Regional Workshop** in Greece, on the **4th of April**, marked a pivotal moment in the preservation of Europe's industrial legacy. Held in Athens, the event brought together various stakeholders, including experts from academia/research, local and national media, environmental NGOs, local authorities, and the public to discuss the importance of coal mining heritage as a cultural asset (Figure 7). The hybrid format ensured national and regional participation, with attendees both in person and online, fostering a diverse dialogue on sustainable practices and community engagement. This gathering sets the stage for innovative solutions in heritage preservation, blending tradition with modern technologies.

Innovation at the Core of CoalHeritage Project

The event highlighted cutting-edge initiatives from all Work Packages, showcasing how digital platforms and interactive tools are transforming the way we explore and protect coal-related sites. **Dr. Nikolaos Koukoulas** kicked off the day with an overview of the project's objectives, emphasizing the need for accessible tools and educational programs to engage local communities. **Dr. Theodoros Zarogiannis** provided an overview of coal mining heritage in Europe, focusing on the Greek case (Figure 8). **Ms. Christina Karatrantou** introduced EVMJ, a pioneering platform that combines geospatial data and 3D models to bring history to life, engaging researchers and tourists alike (Figure 9). **Ms. Ioanna Badouna** presented the findings of a qualitative study conducted within the project, which focused on how coal mining heritage had been managed and preserved across Europe (Figure 10). Meanwhile, **Mr. George Maraslidis** shared how CoalHeritage is fostering inter-regional cooperation through dissemination activities and cultural events like the Industriada festival.

Artistic Inspiration and Community Dialogue

Beyond the technical discussions, the event featured two captivating projects: "L'éclairage revient" by creators/artists **Pantelis Kalogerakis, Michalis Kalogerakis and Panagiotis Andrianos** and "Terra Nera" by creators/artists **Shekin Naidi and Thenia Antoniadou**. The first documentary, filmed at the **Aliveri Power Plant**, intertwines poetry with personal narratives, offering a poignant reflection on industrial heritage. **Land(e)scapes project** was also presented which explored the environmental impact of mining through art and dance, reconnecting audiences with their roots while highlighting ecological transformations. The day concluded with an open floor discussion, where participants shared insights and plotted future collaborations. This meeting is a testament to the power of cultural initiatives in driving sustainable heritage preservation.



Figure 7. Held in Athens, the event brought together various stakeholders.



Figure 8. Dr. Theodoros Zarogiannis providing an overview of coal mining heritage in Europe.

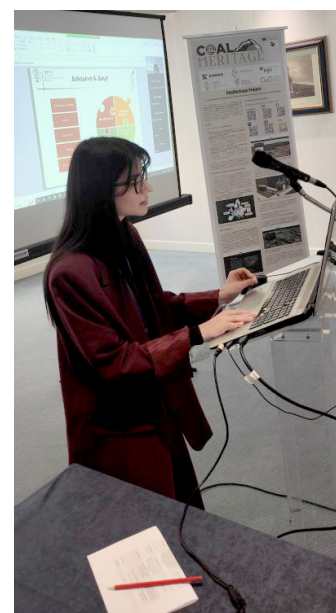


Figure 9. Ms. Christina Karatrantou introducing the EVMJ platform and the 3D models.



Figure 10. Ms. Badouna summarizing the findings of a qualitative study conducted within the project.

POLAND

International conference "European Steel and Coal Heritage"

by dr. Sylwia Jarosławska-Sobór

On April 10-11, 2025, the international conference "European Steel and Coal Heritage" was held in Katowice with a strong participation of Coal Heritage Polish partners: GIG-PIB and KOMAG. Key topics for discussion included the preservation and continued use of mining heritage as a vital means of documenting and presenting coal's central and historic role during the "Industrial Revolution." It aims to be a platform to specify topics crucial for the practical protection of fossil-fuel heritage, including coal. The outcome of the conference was the identification of goals and methods of protection, as well as pathways for implementation, thereby ensuring that the rich achievements of European technology and industry can be properly and meaningfully preserved and made accessible to future generations.

One of the discussion panels was attended by Sylwia Jarosławska-Sobór, Central Mining Institute-National Research Institute, presenting the Coal Heritage project as an important element in the process of preserving mining heritage.



Figure 11. Panel session during Katowice conference (photo: Kamil Szwedra)

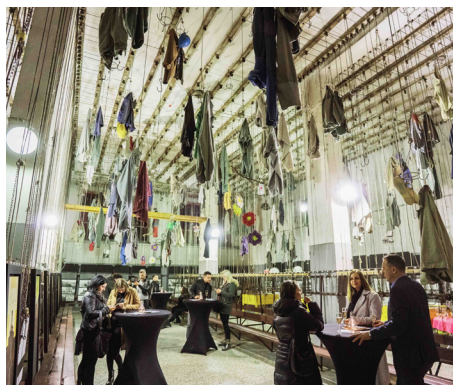
Conference has been organized by Polish Ministry of Culture and National Heritage, Polish National Heritage Institute, TICCIH Committee, Working Industrial and Mobile Heritage Platform [WIMH] and Foundation for the Protection of Industrial Heritage on Silesia. Honorary Patronage took the Polish presidency of the Council of the UE, Polish Ministry of Industry, Marshal of Silesia and Europa Nostra. TICCIH is The International Committee for the Conservation of Industrial Heritage. It is recognized by the International Council for the Protection of Monuments and Historic Sites (ICOMOS) as an appointed consultant on all matters related to the study and preservation of industrial heritage.

During the Conference the Katowice Declaration has been adopted. The Declaration advocates for preserving Europe's industrial heritage, especially coal and steel, by maintaining certain historical sites and fossil fuel-powered machines in working order for educational and cultural purposes, even as Europe moves toward sustainable energy. The signatories of the agreement decide to conduct further work aimed at achieving the set goals within the established international platform for Working Industrial and Mobile Heritage (WIMH).



Figure 12. Katowice conference with Komag and GIG-PIB participation (photo: Dariusz Michalak)

COAL
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