

## Future oriented agencies from two lignite regions met in Jülich, the heart of the Rheinisch Region in Germany

### **“Our future is the product of the transformation process”**

The Zukunftsagentur of the Rheinisch region hosted a delegation from Konin, Eastern Wielkopolska on April 19-20 to exchange best practices on transition governance and economic diversification, with a focus on youth perspectives. Find a short review below:

#### *Transition Governance – moving towards implementation and common vision*

During the exchange, the regions focused on common challenges and potential solutions. They emphasized the need for a new regional identity to engage society in the transformation process and attract young people. The importance of enterprises recognizing and benefiting from the transformation was also highlighted. The participants discussed various narratives around the Just Transition and explored the role of the creative and advertising sectors in communicating the vision to the public. Preserving cultural sites and railway infrastructure was recognized as important, although financing presented difficulties.

The exchange revealed that a sole focus on new energy sources is insufficient for creating a compelling vision for a region with a high quality of life. The participants considered ideas such as 'Innovation Valley,' 'Knowledge Region,' and 'Agriculture Valley' to address this. A visit to the lignite mine and reclamation lands provided further insights into the physical challenges of the transition. Here, the former village of Morschenich, now called "The Place of the Future" is not going to be further deployed for mining and instead will serve as a demonstration ground for innovative agriculture and sustainable construction projects.

#### *Economic diversification with focus on youth*

During the exchange, both the Rheinisch Region and Eastern Wielkopolska placed a strong emphasis on engaging the younger generation in the just transition process and making the former lignite regions more appealing to them. In the Rheinisch Region, there is a dedicated focus on youth engagement, aiming to activate young people and ensure their voices are heard. Similarly, in Eastern Wielkopolska, the involvement of youth in the transition process is robust, with strong participation from youth organizations such as the Youth Council of Konin and the Young Locals Association. However, Eastern Wielkopolska faces challenges in attracting new sectors of the economy to the region.

The invited youth representatives took the lead in diverse sessions, sharing their perspectives on regional development, their expectations, and best practices for youth engagement.