

UrbanLinks 2 Landscape

Situation Report: Silesia Park

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Introduction – Silesian Voivodeship

The Silesian Voivodeship is a region located in the southern part of Poland, in the basin of the upper stream of three largest Polish rivers: The Vistula River, the Odra River and the Warta River. The area is characterised by diverse relief. The capital city of the voivodeship is Katowice. The Silesian Voivodeship is rich in natural resources (among others, bituminous coal and deposits of lead and zinc), based on which the country's largest industrial region was created, playing a decisive role in the national economy as the basis for the national fuel-energy balance. The area of the Silesian Voivodeship covers 12,333 km², which constitutes almost 4% of the country's total area (14th place in the country). The administrative structure of the voivodeship is comprised of 167 municipalities grouped in 36 powiats. The Silesian Voivodeship is characterised of specific settlement pattern when compared with the rest of the country. There are 1,369 localities in the Silesian Voivodeship, including 71 cities that create a network of density of 58 cities/10,000 km². The density is twice the national average. The main elements of the settlement system of the Silesian Voivodeship are: Upper Silesian Metropolis (of European interest), three city agglomerations: Bielska, Częstochowska and Rybnicka (of national interest) and local development centres. In the Silesian Voivodeship, 12 cities (16.9% of the cities in total) exceed 100 thousand residents and concentrate in total 2,128,500 people which constitutes 59.2% of the voivodeship urban population. The region is adjacent to 4 voivodeships and, on the south, it borders with the Moravian-Silesian Region in the Czech Republic and Žilina Region in the Republic of Slovakia. Within the range of 600 km from Katowice, there is eight European capital cities: Berlin, Bratislava, Budapest, Prague, Warsaw, Vienna, Zagreb, and Ljubljana.

Silesia Park in Chorzów – the largest municipal public park in Poland – a commercial law company in which 100% of shares has the Self-Government of the Silesian Voivodeship.

As a partner for the UL2L project, the Silesia Park refers to the regional policy of development created and implemented by the Marshal of the Voivodeships and local governments.

The Region's development policy is based mainly on four dimensions of sustainable development: environmental, social, economic and infrastructural.

Taking into account the specificity of the UL2L project and its thematic scope, the Silesia Park focuses particularly on issues concerning the environment, nature, revitalisation of post-industrial areas and wastelands, and development and creation of public green spaces directly neighbouring with compact urban settings.

1. Regional policy – “*Development Strategy for Silesian Voivodeship “Śląskie 2020+”*”

One of the key documents outlining the strategy and directions of sustainable development of the Silesian Voivodeship is the *Development Strategy for Silesian Voivodeship “ŚLĄSKIE 2020”* adopted by Silesian Regional Assembly with the resolution of 17 February 2010. By the resolution of the Regional Assembly of 1 July 2013, the document was updated and

currently functions under the name of ***Development Strategy of the Silesian Voivodeship "Śląskie 2020+"***. The strategy specifies region development planning as one of the key tasks assigned by law to the Marshal and self-government of the voivodeship. The main challenges for the authors and executors of the Strategy include, among others, revitalisation of post-industrial areas, creating support mechanisms for revitalisation activities, including PPP, revitalisation of invested and green areas and inclusion of the activities into a consistent agglomeration system.

Main directions for actions:

1. Revitalisation of areas and buildings, including post-industrial and degraded ones in order to transform them into areas/buildings of social and economic functions and ensuring their accessibility.
2. Improvement of quality and attractiveness of public spaces, particularly of city centres and district centres as well as reception spaces.
3. Creating and revitalisation of cultivated green areas and recreation areas.
4. Restoring the position or giving new functions to monuments and symbolic locations in the life of local communities.
5. Ensuring the lawfulness of land development through effective protection of property and social interests.
6. Revitalisation of housing estates, including old districts.
7. Supporting the creation of attractive housing areas in cities and preventing suburbanisation processes.
8. Support of activities improving the quality of spatial planning at the regional and local level, including integration activities.

Environmental dimension – facts and challenges

Resources and environmental impact

Degradation of land

A high level of commercial utilisation of resources of the Voivodeship and a long-term activity of industries strongly influencing the environment and space result in the Silesian Voivodeship ranked third in the country in 2011 in terms of the total amount of land requiring reclamation, including 3,175 ha among the areas of devastated land (7th place in the country) and 1,206 ha of the area of degraded land.

In 2011, 275 ha was reclaimed (1st place in the country), including for agricultural purposes – 68 ha and for forestry purposes – 72 ha, and 42 ha was developed (3rd place in the country), including 21ha for agricultural purposes and 3 ha for forestry purposes.

A significant area of degraded land within the Silesian Voivodeship requires undertaking multidirectional activities in order to restore the original functions of the area or creating conditions for implementation of new ones. However, the scale of activities required in this scope and often not regulated ownership issues of this type of land forms a major problem, which substantially prevents from or limits conducting revitalisation activities by local government authorities.

Valuable natural areas

The Silesian Voivodeship covers one of the most attractive natural areas of the southern Poland. Moreover, accumulation of urban infrastructure and concentration of population contributed to feel the need to have contact with greenery and "go back to nature."

Therefore, along with the development of cities, their so-called nature system is developed, represented by urban green areas, described in the spatial planning as green infrastructure.

In the Silesian Voivodeship, similarly as in the rest of Poland, there are two dominant forms of usable land: agricultural land (51.8%) and forests (32.4%).

In 2011, the area of forests in the Silesian Voivodeship (392,088.8 ha) constituted 4.29% of the total country forest area, which gives the region thirteenth place in Poland. In 2011, the proportion of woodland areas in the Silesian Voivodeship was 31.8% and was higher than the national level amounting to 29.2%, which gives the voivodeship 5th place.

The most represented form of nature conservation in the Silesian Voivodeship are natural monuments. In 2011, there were 1,521 of them (11th place in the country). The natural monuments are most frequently found in the central subregion (753), then in the southern subregion (432); they occur the least frequently in the western subregion (172) and the northern subregion (164). In Poland, there are 36,318 natural monuments reported.

64 nature reserves have been established in the Silesian Voivodeship. There are eight landscape parks with the total area (including buffer zones) of 379,403.7 ha.

The European Commission approved on the area of the Silesian Voivodeship 41 Nature 2000 areas, including 5 bird special protection areas and 36 areas of Community interest which based on the Regulation of the Minister of Environment are special areas of conservation of natural habitats. Their total surface area is 117 thousand ha, including 62.4 thousand ha of bird special protection areas and 91.5 thousand ha of special areas of conservation of natural habitats.

The Nature 2000 network serves for conservation of plant and animal species of European interest which were specified in the Regulation of the Minister of Environment of 13 April 2010 on natural habitats and species being the subject of interest of the Community, as well as criteria for selecting areas eligible for recognition or designation as Nature 2000 areas.

Valuable natural areas are special natural areas characteristic for lowland, upland and mountain areas, as well as piedmont basins which require protection on a regional scale.

In the Silesian Voivodeship, depending on the value of a given area, the degree of nature conservation as well as types of activities which are needed to be undertaken in order to preserve their value, there are sites of various ranks of nature protection, that is: nature reserves, landscape parks, protected landscape areas, Nature 2000 areas, landscape-nature complexes, ecologic land, documentation sites. However, in order for the existing system of protected areas to ensure the full representativeness of the valuable natural areas, it requires systematic verification and complementation. Caring for the natural resources requires creating an integrated system of protection and management of natural resources on the basis of a comprehensive assessment and its integration with spatial planning in order to avoid spatial and natural conflicts. It is necessary to prevent a strong human impact on the environment of valuable natural areas.

It is particularly important in relation to the fact that this type of areas is recognised as attractive places to live and these are often areas of intensive development of tourism. With regard to the areas, it is crucial to maintain balance of activity aimed at protection in order not to negatively impact the area. There should be activities conducted that are aimed at prevention of space fragmentation and creating solutions favouring the protection of natural resources, particularly by creating wild-life corridors enabling migration of fauna and flora.

Areas requiring revitalisation.

Areas requiring revitalisation are the areas on which there are degraded, devastated land and sites, including mainly post-industrial ones affected by problems related to environment degradation and escalation of negative social occurrences.

The significance of the issues of transformation of post-industrial areas results from the scale of their occurrence and their locations. The majority of the urban areas of the Silesian Voivodeship consists of industrial areas or is adjacent to them. Such areas occur mainly in potentially valuable places such as city centres, near main traffic routes, and areas of natural and landscape value. It is related to the fact that housing estates developed around industrial plants, and with their closing, such areas remained within city-centre districts.

The environmental degradation in the Silesian Voivodeship is related, in particular, to the industrial use of land, including primarily by coal mining. Moreover, the degraded and devastated land cover also, in its spatial sense, slag heaps, landslides and former military training areas. The social aspect of the degraded areas should also be pointed out. The fall of the traditional industrial branches and lack of restructuring processes related to it and locating investments on new areas results in outflow of population, district depopulation and destruction of the housing tissue. The consequence of low entrepreneurship and weak dynamics of workplaces within the areas is spatial segregation of residents and creation of poverty districts and social exclusion. The main challenges for the areas will consist in restoration of their social and economic functions.

2. Regional Policy – “Kierunek Śląskie 3.0”. [“Direction: Śląskie 3.0”]

Another strategic document concerning the development, modernisation or development of land and public green spaces in the Silesian Voivodeship is “Kierunek Śląskie 3.0”. A point of reference for the program are the regional projects.

One of the thematic areas of the program is revitalisation of urban areas and post-industrial areas. Moreover, the document concerns the issues related to designing activities for preservation and development of tangible urban and architectural heritage and promoting new activity at *brownfield*-type areas that use the regional post-industrial richness in an innovative way. The urban and architectural and industrial heritage is treated as an asset positively distinguishing the region provided that it will serve for preparing attractive investment conditions and offers changing the identity and purpose of the spaces. Revitalisation of urban and post-industrial areas opens new spheres of life and economic activity within the dimension of re-industrialisation and new service specialisations. As a consequence, it should lead to re-composition of urban structures and the economic fabric of the most urbanised spaces of the voivodeship.

Good practices in the Silesian Voivodeship – selection

1. “Żabie Doły” nature reserve – Bytom

The “Żabie Doły” landscape-nature complex covers the area of numerous water reservoirs and flotation slag heaps surrounding wasteland, wet meadows, and small tree clumps. At the beginning of the 1980s, this area was already recognised as ornithologically valuable land. On this area, activities aimed at preservation of biodiversity were performed, including cleaning the shoreline of water reservoirs with the addition of waterside greenery constituting wetland bird habitats as well as arranging the land along with removing local deposits and planting new trees and bushes. After conducting the renovation activities, the land became an important part of recreation surrounded by nature, particularly for the residents living near the area.

The “Żabie Doły” landscape-nature complex is one of the most unique places in the region. Arranging the tourist traffic in Żabie Doły consisted also of works aimed at protection the biodiversity of this place. Observation has been facilitated for nature lovers thanks to the installation of six hides for bird observation and six educational platforms. Educational paths were also created. In order not to distort the natural landscape with concrete paving stones, the path surface was made of a special mineral and resin substance. Terrain steps were also installed which make it easier for walkers to have access to paths located on inactive railway embankments.

Thanks to the new infrastructure, it is possible to have a closer contact with nature and to present its beauty to children and pupils. Żabie Doły is a nature reserve with the status of an ornithologically valuable land. There are approximately 129 species of birds, including 76 breeding species.

An interesting and useful innovation on the area are new ponds for amphibian breeding, as well as nesting boxes for small birds and bats, and floating islets for water birds nesting. The stand was organised within the reserve area, sick trees were removed, and new, higher-grade species were planted instead.

Elements of landscape architecture were installed, among others, benches, trash bins. The completion of works within the area of Żabie Doły was possible thanks to the EU funding as part of the Regional Operational Program of the Silesian Voivodeship 2014–2020.

2. Revitalisation of slag heap – Ruda Śląska

The slag heap at ul. 1 Maja is one of four zinc works spoil dumps in Ruda Śląska. It is practically at the city centre and covers the area of 6.5 ha. It is a remnant of zinc works Liebe-Hoffnung operating in this region from the first half of the 19th century until 1925. In the area of the zinc works spoil dumps in the city centre, a recreational public space will be created. Securing the ground against harmful influence of metals present inside the slag heap will be possible thanks to the application of a Phyto stabilization technology. Then, greening will be conducted. Walking paths, alpine slide, playground, barbeque areas and viewpoints will ensure the possibility to use various forms of relaxation and recreation. The completion of the investment is planned for April 2019.

The slag heap has been greened with specially selected species of grass – red fescue and perennial ryegrass. These types of grass have Phyto stabilising properties, which will reduce the costs and facilitate maintenance of the new recreational space.

The prepared slag heap will be the safe place of recreation and rest located at the city centre and a tourist destination. The viewpoint, grass pitch, walking paths, industrial playground, alpine slide or BMX courses – to name only some of the attractions which soon will change the face of the slag heap.

The investment is implemented as part of the LUMAT project financed with INTERREG Central Europe program. Apart from this project, Ruda Śląska authorities are applying for further funding of revitalisation of zinc works spoil dumps located in the city.

The slag heaps in Ruda Śląska cover the area of 3.5 km², that is almost 5% of the city area. Last year, all areas of this type were documented, and 35 of such locations were marked on a map. For each of the locations, a site record was prepared which contains information on the ownership, land purpose, surface area of a particular slag heap, origin of the waste, type of material deposited, and, in some cases, the amount of the deposits.