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Press Release

Instrat Policy Paper: Will the Market Force Mines to Close Early? Experts Identify Regions in Need of Special Support

Warsaw, 22.07.2026 r. Poland is currently the only European Union country still mining hard coal, yet both market trends and EU climate policy point to an accelerating pace of decarbonization. The rapid decline in coal demand will likely force mining to end earlier than the timeline set out in the Social Agreement for Hard Coal Mining.

A new report from the Instrat Foundation shows that the coal phase-out will have widely varying consequences for different regions of the country. The publication analyzes the coal phase-out processes in Poland, Germany, and Czechia, alongside an assessment of socio-economic disparities among Poland's coal-mining counties. This report was prepared within the framework of the RAISING project: Raising Awareness of Small Local Communities in the Coal Mining Transition Process.

Production down 75%

Coal production in Poland, Czechia, and Germany has fallen by roughly 75% over the past three decades. Despite this, the three countries remain the EU's largest coal producers and consumers. Each has also taken a different path away from coal: Czechia plans to end lignite mining by 2033, and Germany by 2038. Poland still maintains a hard coal phase-out timeline extending to 2049 - though according to Instrat's experts, it urgently needs updating.

66 counties, 5 clusters - each with different needs and challenges

Regions tied to coal mining and coal-based power generation vary widely in labor market conditions, entrepreneurship, and development potential. The report examines 66 Polish coal counties in detail, using cluster analysis to identify five distinct socio-economic resilience profiles. This resulted in five clusters, each given its own name, such as: Stable mining and energy counties with a "beyond coal" potential, Peripheral and rural belts, Average, mostly post-coal counties sustained by women, Big cities with mining ties, and the Mining core. The analysis found that coal regions are far from uniform:

- Upper Silesia shows the best conditions for adaptation, thanks to strong economic diversification and robust labor markets.
- Counties such as Jastrzębie-Zdrój and Łęczna form the so-called "mining core," marked by extreme dependence on mining, making them the most vulnerable to the shocks of transition.
- The "peripheral and rural belts" — counties bordering mining centers — often post the weakest economic performance and require targeted support from just transition funds.

"Our study reveals major differences in the needs and challenges tied to the coal phase-out at the local level in Poland. It also points to an uneven distribution of the benefits coal has historically brought. In some areas, wealthy counties with a strong industrial base sit right next to much poorer rural counties. That means support

- to be effective - must be tailored and aimed at closing these gaps" comments Iwona Bojadżijewa of the Instrat Foundation.

Updated transition plans are needed

The report identifies the varied challenges facing local labor markets, pointing to the need for economic diversification and better-targeted EU funding. It also includes recommendations for a just transition, aimed at easing the negative effects of the fossil fuel phase-out in the counties most dependent on it. The authors stress the need to direct public funding first and foremost to the regions and counties most reliant on coal, and to expand worker retraining programs and local economic diversification.

About the RAISING project

The report "Decarbonization in Poland and Neighboring Countries: A Review of the Current State of Hard Coal and Lignite Mining and an Analysis of Socio-Economic Disparities Among Poland's Coal Counties" was developed as part of the RAISING project ("Raising awareness of small local communities in the process of coal mining transition"), funded by the Research Fund for Coal and Steel.

The RAISING project aims to raise awareness among small local communities and support them through the mining transition process.

The project is led by the Central Mining Institute – National Research Institute (GIG-PIB), with partners including the Instrat Foundation, Germany's DMT-THGA (DMT-Gesellschaft für Lehre und Bildung mbH), and VSB - Technical University of Ostrava (Czechia).

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About Instrat

Instrat Foundation is an independent think tank providing public policy advice, with a particular focus on energy, climate, and sustainable development.

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The full report, in both Polish and English, is available for download on the Raisig project website: https://raising.gig.eu/publications