

Clean Energy, Restored Lands: The Path Forward for Coal Regions

A joint event by the European Commission's Research Fund for Coal and Steel
and Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition

Working agenda

This document is a draft agenda for a joint event co-organised by the Research Executive Agency, which manages the [Research Fund for Coal and Steel](#) (RFCS), the European Association for Coal and Lignite, and the European Commission's [Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition](#) (CRiT). The event will take place on 29 – 30 September 2026 in Bochum at the [German Mining Museum](#) and the [Technische Hochschule Georg Agricola](#) student centre, in person and online. Interpretation will be available in English and German.

29 September 2026 – Day 1 at the German Mining Museum

Focus on **research & innovation projects**. Master of Ceremony: Tobias Häusler (WDR TV & radio).

Timing	Session description
08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 10:00	Welcome ceremony and keynotes This session will include opening speeches from high-level speakers: • Prof. Sunhild Kleingärtner, Director, German Mining Museum • Bärbel Bergerhoff-Wodopia, Member of the Board, RAG-Stiftung • Prof. Alicja Krzemień, President, EURACOAL • <i>Further speakers to be announced</i>
10:00 – 10:45	Coffee break
10:45 – 12:45	Session 1 – RFCS projects on energy production and energy storage This session will explore how former coal mines and power plant sites can become strategic assets for Europe's future energy system through the presentation of three RFCS projects, followed by a panel discussion and a Q&A. Speakers: • Dr.-Ing. Thomas Kempka, Head of Working Group Coupled Processes in Hydrosystems, GFZ Helmholtz Centre for Geosciences • Dr.-Ing. Jochen Ströhle, Deputy Head of the Department of Energy Systems and Technology, Technical University of Darmstadt • Dr. Jerzy Jagoda, Design and Research Specialist, KOMAG Institute of Mining Technology, and Dr. Dariusz Jasiulek, Head of Projects and Implementation Department, ENNECOR Sp. z o.o. / Coordinator of SCoLINE, KTKM Sp. z o.o.

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Bochum, Germany

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Panellists:

- **Thomas Brandenburg**, Managing Director, LEAG Clean Power GmbH
- **Dr. Oliver Then**, Managing Director, vgbe energy e.V.
- *Further speakers to be announced*

Moderation by: European Commission DG Energy

12:45 – 14:00

Networking lunch

14:00 – 16:00

Session 2 – Challenges linked to site restoration and risk management in the coal and lignite regions

This session will look at how the application of R&I results can help in the restoration of post-mining landscapes safely and sustainably in line with Europe's environmental and circular-economy goals. The format will be keynotes, a presentation of three RFCS projects, followed by a panel discussion and a Q&A.

Keynotes:

- **Dr. Christian Eling**, Head of Mine Planning, RWE Power
- **Veronica Manfredi**, Director for Zero Pollution, Water Resilience and Green Urban Transition, DG ENV, European Commission

Speakers:

- **Dr. Julia Haske**, Head of Land Use & Transition, Research Center of Post-Mining, Technische Hochschule Georg Agricola (DMT-THGA)
- **Dr. Barbara Rogosz**, Director, Poltegor Institute
- **Krasimira Ilieva**, Head of Project Management Unit, Investment Department, Mini Maritsa Iztok EAD

Panellists:

- **Garrelt Duin**, Director, Regional Ruhr Association RVR
- **Dr. Alexey Alekseenko**, Head of the Resource Nexus Laboratory for Post-Mining Inclusive Transition (REPOINT), United Nations University, Dresden
- **Joachim Löchte**, Technical Director, RAG AG
- **Dr. Christian Eling**, Head of Mine Planning, RWE Power AG
- *Further speakers to be announced*

Moderation by: **Dr. Sebastiano Fumero**, Head of Unit for Future Low Emission Industries at the European Research Executive Agency

16:00 – 16:30

Future opportunities, conclusions and closing remarks

This closing session will present the RFCS Annual and Big-Ticket Calls 2026-2027 and other future opportunities that will be offered by RFCS.

Speakers:

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- **Dr. Sebastiano Fumero**, Head of Unit for Future Low Emission Industries at the European Research Executive Agency
- **Carsten Schierenbeck**, Head of Unit for Industrial Transformation at European Commission DG Research & Innovation

Moderation by: **Brian Ricketts**, Secretary-General, EURACOAL

16:30 – 18:00

Networking drinks



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30 September 2026 – Day 2 at Technische Hochschule Georg Agricola student centre

Focus on **policy & implementation**. Master of Ceremony: **Carsten Rothballer** (Head of Sustainable Energy Systems, ICLEI Europe).

Timing	Session description
08:30 – 09:00	Registration
09:00 – 09:30	Opening session This scene-setting session will include a presentation of EU energy policy and its relevance for coal regions. Through a fireside chat, the importance of synergies between research and policy, as well as approaches on how to bridge the gap between innovation policy and commercialisation, will be highlighted. Speakers: • <i>Speaker to be announced</i>, DG ENER, European Commission • Anna Brussa, Deep Development Teams Orchestrator, EIT Climate-KIC Post Coal Future Lab • <i>Speaker to be announced</i>, DG RTD, European Commission
09:30 – 10:50	Panel 1 – Renewable energy and energy storage at former coal sites: lessons for policy and process Building on the first day's good practices, this session will showcase concrete examples from CRiT regions where former coal infrastructure is already in use or is planned to be used for clean energy production and storage. Technological and policy approaches will be discussed through an interactive panel. Speakers: • Elke Mugova, Post-Mining-Exploitation, Fraunhofer IEG • Vécsi György, Chief Executive Officer, MVM Matra • Luca Manzella, Vice President of Business Development and Sales EMEA, Energy Vault • Daniel Dietze, Expert for Energy Storage and Flexibility, NRW.Energy4Climate • Pouyan Maleki, Senior Consultant, Ecorys Moderation by: Timon Wehnert , Co-head of Research Unit International Energy Transition, Wuppertal Institute
10:50 – 11:20	Networking coffee break
11:20 – 12:40	Panel 2 – Mine restoration in practice: examples and lessons learned from coal+ regions Building on the first day's good practices, this session will include a presentation of CRiT-supported regions where mines have been successfully rehabilitated, highlighting practical approaches and lessons learned. Ongoing and planned projects will also be

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discussed in a panel discussion with particular attention given to challenges around nature restoration, risk management and the recovery and reuse of materials.

Speakers:

- **Frank Dudda**, Mayor, Municipality of Herne
- **Beate Zimmerman**, Director, Research Institute for Post-Mining Landscapes (FIB)
- **Karel Tichy**, Project Manager, Economic and Social Council of the Ústí Region and **Jana Falterová Zudová**, City Councillor for Grants, Most City Council
- *Further speakers to be announced*

Moderation by: *moderator to be announced*

12:40 – 13:00

Closing session

This session will summarise the key messages and connect research with policy implementation. Finally, the new activities under the CRiT will be presented to the audience. Speakers:

- *Speaker to be announced* DG ENER, European Commission
- *Speaker to be announced* REA, European Commission

13:00 – 14:30

Networking lunch and division into groups for site visits

14:30 – 17:00

Site visits – three options

- **Landscape Park Hoheward at Ewald Colliery in Herten**

This site visit will take participants to the [Hoheward landscape park](#), a slag heap rising 51 meters above sea level and constructed from 180 million tons of mining waste. The peak of the landscape park provides an unobstructed panoramic view from the plateaus of the Ruhr mining area which has been transformed into an extraordinary recreational and cultural landscape known for astronomical observations, the 'Dragon bridge' and ring promenade.

- **Zollverein mine and cokery (UNESCO world heritage site) + BRYCK Innovation Hub, Essen**

This site visit will take participants to the [Zollverein coal mine and coking plant](#), a landmark of the Ruhr Valley. Formerly known as the world's largest coal mine, this site has, in the meantime, turned into a symbol of industrial transformation and an attractive hub for culture, leisure, education, and business. The 100-hectare site hosts unique industrial architecture, as well as the Ruhr Museum with permanent exhibitions, guided tours and several cultural events throughout the year. During the summer, visitors can use the ice skating rink, while the "factory" pool opens its gates in summer. The tour will also include a presentation of the start-up and innovation hub [BRYCK](#) (launched by the RAG-Stiftung) which aims to attract tech start-ups and to establish an ecosystem of sustainable industries.

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- **Garzweiler open pit lignite mine¹**

During the visit, participants will get a first-hand impression of coal mining at scale by visiting the lignite mine that supplies the nearby 950-MW thermal power plant at Niederaußem. Visitors will be introduced to the efforts made by RWE to restore land as well as other post-mining activities in line with their green transition strategy. This includes plans for the restoration of Garzweiler, by developing a lake on the former mining site. Visitors will also be shown the 2.2-metre diameter pipelines to be soon used to pump water from the River Rhine.

¹ This site visit will take circa 5 hours with an estimated departure at 13:15 and participants will not return to Bochum after the visit. Participants will be transferred to Cologne.