



Lusatia, 17 May 2024

For Europe's First Net Zero Valley in Lusatia

Dear Commissioner Breton,

In a joint declaration, we, the representatives of the municipal family in the Lausitzrunde alliance and the Lusatian economy, welcome the EU's adoption of the Net Zero Industry Act. As a framework for the European Green Deal, it enables the Member States to implement rapid approval procedures and special general conditions for the development of zero-emission technologies. Particularly favourable structural and financial conditions are to be created in so-called 'Net Zero Valleys'.

Lusatia is ideally suited to be such a 'green valley' of opportunities. Among the 41 coal and energy regions in Europe, Lusatia has a special responsibility – for it is here that the transition from a fossil-fuelled region to a green energy and technology region is happening with great dynamism and a unique financial commitment from the German federal states, the Federal Government and the EU. A responsibility that Lusatia can fulfil all the better as Europe's first Net Zero Valley.

We therefore sounded out the associated opportunities in Brussels at an early stage. Brandenburg's Member of the European Parliament Dr Christian Ehler, the rapporteur responsible for the Act, emphasised the region's commitment: "It is impressive how Lusatia is proactively setting out on this path. The municipalities of the Lausitzrunde have sent a strong signal directly to Brussels. The business community entered into talks just as early and completed the region's strategic alliance for a Net Zero Valley in Lusatia with a joint commitment at the BDEW Congress in Cottbus. This dynamism and scope is unique."

With this comprehensive commitment to Net Zero Valley Lusatia, we are combining new instruments for securing the right skilled labour, such as the special promotion of vocational and educational skills for zero-emission technologies. A Net Zero Academy in Lusatia can reinforce and pool existing and planned potential in 'renewable' jobs and their environment. At the same time, this creates effects for image and inward migration. Education, in particular school education, should be addressed from an early stage with a comprehensive concept to develop skills in the application of AI. It would also be logical to prepare administrative and planning processes in Lusatia for fast and uncomplicated procedures as well as economic and social change. The model digitalisation of processes in administrations, chambers of commerce as well as businesses with the help of AI can prepare Lusatia for this in good time and overcome bottlenecks and deficits that are already noticeable today.

Overall, this can create a variety of synergy effects and general conditions for accelerating processes in municipal administration, for regional businesses and for the population - which ultimately also boosts democratic cooperation and creates acceptance for the transformation in structural change.

To retain and attract skilled labour, the signatories actively promote a welcoming culture and respectful interaction within the organisation. Only then will future-orientated and secure jobs in Lusatia be maintained in the long term and new ones created. Both the local authorities and the business community have jointly declared their desire for a model status for Lusatia. The conditions have now been created in various areas of technology and expertise. The EU is now providing the relevant framework. Together with social partners, science, the federal states and the Federal Government, we want to transform Lusatia into a model region in Europe for climate protection, growth and structural change with renewed vigour and pride: Europe's first Net Zero Valley.

Here, we are building on the commitment of the States of Brandenburg and Saxony at their joint cabinet meeting on 30 April 2024 to our application for a Net Zero Valley Lusatia and also on the positive vote for our joint positioning by Vice Chancellor and Federal Minister for Economic Affairs Robert Habeck at the BDEW Congress in Cottbus on 27 February 2024. We will continue to chart our course proactively, vigorously and in close cooperation. To this end, we have decided on the strategic approach and methodology of a writing workshop involving stakeholders from the municipal family, the economy, science and the social partners – thereby agreeing

on a broadly conceived participation process from within the region. We have underpinned this process with a timeline. We are pooling the region's expertise in a plan that will enable the federal states, the Federal Government and the EU to establish Europe's first Net Zero Valley.

Dear Mr Breton, with this exemplary grassroots process, we want to support Europe's industrial transformation project and at the same time ask for your support for our Lusatian approach and a joint determination supported by all levels of politics.



The Methodology (Grassroots Process)

- Establishment of a writing workshop in joint moderation by stakeholders from the municipal family (Lausitzrunde) and the business community
- Scientific support from a consortium consisting of BTU Cottbus-Senftenberg, TU Dresden, Zittau-Görlitz University of Applied Sciences and actors involved in concomitant structural change research
- Workshop process in strategic focus groups, each with a jointly appointed spokesperson:
 - Fundamentals Net Zero Valley Lusatia
 - Structures (Stakeholders and Settings) & Strategy
 - Technologies
 - Net Zero Academy
 - Digitalisation (municipalities/administrative process, chambers, businesses)
- Communication & feedback
- Identifying further subject areas
- Principle of constructive discourse and a decision-making culture that prioritises the positive vote of all participants
- Regular (virtual) themed workshops
- Final conference with adoption of the regional strategy for a Net Zero Valley Lusatia
- Documentation and transparency: Provision of a blueprint for a transparent participation process for other regions in Europe to develop a Net Zero Valley from within the region

Timeline

