

Industrial heritage in the process of transition of the city of Rybnik into a sustainable, aesthetics and inclusive urban area

Marek Gołosz, Director of Ignacy Historic Mine in Rybnik

Rybnik is a medium-sized city located in the Upper Silesian Coal Basin, Poland. Its first industrial facilities related to mining and metal smelting were built as early as at the end of the eighteenth century. Due to the industrial revolution, Rybnik - a medieval trade settlement - became a significant urban agglomeration, which was even later called the Rybnik Coal-Mining District (unlike distinguished from the Upper Silesian Coal-Mining District around the city of Katowice). The area developed throughout the entire period of the People's Republic of Poland, whose government focused on developing heavy industry from 1945 to 1989. Today, the city is committed to its 230-year coal mining heritage that began in 1792 with the Hoym mine foundation (later Ignacy mine). Although the first stage of deindustrialization in the 1990s saw the closure of the oldest mines in the area, the younger ones from the twentieth century have still been working. Nowadays, Rybnik is not waiting for the inevitable end of its hard coal mining and strives for implementing the ideas of the European Green Deal to transform the city into a modern and resource-efficient living area.

The aim of my paper at the ERIH Annual Conference 2023 is to present local policies pursued by the Rybnik authorities in order to build more sustainable and inclusive urban spaces by reusing its industrial heritage. The adaptation of the Ignacy Historic Mine for culture, tourism, leisure and social integration may be an interesting case study for the participants, especially that the restoration project was located in one of the most impoverished districts of the city, Niewiadom. Today, it is a key engine in the regeneration of the post-mining neighborhood within the bounds of the three core values of the New European Bauhaus – sustainability, inclusion and aesthetics.