

Best Practice 32: Regeneration of the Völklingen steelworks site, Germany

Scale: Urban

Stage of tourism development: Beginning

Main objective: Urban development

Categories of effects:

Effects on urban governance

- Cultural tourism strategy
- Destination management

Effects on quality of life

- Built heritage diversity
- Cultural practices and representations
- Urban economies

Völklingen is an old industrial town located in the Saarland region. From the end of the 19th Century until the early 1980s, the urban economy relied heavily on steelworks. Large parts of the city were only accessible by iron and steel smelters. For this reason, the locals traditionally referred to Völklingen as the "Forbidden City". The crisis in the coal and steel industry seriously hit the town. When the blast furnaces were closed in 1986, all that remained was 60 hectares of industrial wasteland comprising blast-furnaces, coke ovens, plants for extracting cement, crushing slag, buildings housing blowing engines and other machinery. The first practical step towards regeneration was to redevelop the former slag-crushing plant as a trading estate. Three factory buildings were converted into a trade and technology centre to attract new, innovative businesses and thus create new jobs in competitive sectors such as computing, technical design or advertising. The blowing-engine plant has been preserved, and is now considered a town landmark. The plant currently provides outstanding acoustics for musical performances and a unique atmosphere for a wide variety of cultural events. Once completed, the redevelopment will comprise a multi-purpose cultural and conference centre with two permanent stages. However, the site's focal point continues to be the blast furnace plant. In 1994, UNESCO's World Heritage Committee adopted a resolution adding the plant to mankind's world cultural heritage. Although the blast furnace plant was a bit of a 'secret tip' as a tourist attraction for the first few years after the designation, 1996 alone saw 70 000 visitors turning up. There are now guided tours and information stands, explanatory notices and protected walkways. The steelworks' museum area is due to be further extended. By combining culture, historic-monument conservation and business, Völklingen's old steelworks will be successfully transformed into a pulsating focal point of the town's new district and a hallmark of the town. The project has been designated as a "success story" in the European Inforegio database.

Source: EU, 2005. Inforegio Success Stories Database. Profiles of projects in Europe. Accessible from:

http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/projects/stories/index_en.cfm

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