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The WISMUT Policy and Strategy for Remediation of the German Uranium Production Legacy Sites

For almost 30 years now the federally owned Wismut GmbH has been remediating the legacies of uranium mining and milling in the federal states of Saxony and Thuringia in East Germany. The German national policy for dealing with such legacies is laid down in laws, with the Wismut Act and the Federal Mining Act deserving special mention. In essence, the Federal Mining Act demands that the impact of mining legacies on public safety and on the environment has to be minimised, and that the land used has to be provided for re-use in compliance with local stakeholder interests. Based on the national policy Wismut GmbH has derived internal company principles for remediation and has manifested these in guidelines. Actually, the guidelines are stipulated in a mission statement (Leitbild). Based on these guidelines, strategies have been developed to materialize the companies' principles for remediation. Strategies were developed both for solving technical problems and for coping with socio-economic challenges.

The development of remediation concepts and remediation technologies, an effective licensing management, the development of a technical infrastructure, the implementation of an environmental monitoring system, and the development of technical databases have been and still are important elements of technically oriented strategies. The provision of financial resources, availability of tools for procurement, for planning and for controlling of the remediation, the socially acceptable reduction of manpower and the qualification of the remaining personnel for the demanding remediation tasks are to be assigned to the socio-economic strategies. After the devastation of large areas of land and the demolition of local infrastructures during the uranium mining period, the development of strategies for regaining the trust of the population and for stakeholder involvement have been a particular challenge.

The present paper shows by hand of case studies that the provision of an appropriate policy and subsequent strategies is indispensable to master complex environmental remediation projects as the WISMUT project is.

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