WHITE PAPER · REGIONAL HIGHER-EDUCATION POLICY

One labour market, two systems, four institutions

Eight recommendations for regional higher-education policy in the Czech and German part of the Euroregion Neisse — how funding, legal and coordination instruments beyond any single institution can help four universities retain academic talent in the region.

● SAXONY · DE — LIBEREC · CZ ●

ERNILAC — Euroregion Neisse International Labour Market for Academics · Interreg Sachsen–Tschechien / Česko–Sasko 2021–2027 · from the ERNILAC final report

107	70	4	8
study programmes analysed	employer responses 37 DE · 33 CZ	institutions one labour market	policy recommendations

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The window is open now

The Euroregion Neisse has a narrow, time-limited opportunity to convert its four universities into a retained engine of academic talent — at exactly the moment when a historic structural transformation is bringing new research and technology anchors to the region. Yet its defining challenge is the out-migration of young, qualified people, alongside persistent skilled-labour shortages.

Two independent analyses of the ERNILAC project — a cross-border survey of **70 employers** and a supply-side study of **107 study programmes** offered by higher education institutions in the Czech and German part of the ERN — converge on the same priorities. Employers most miss transversal and self-management competencies; at the same time, these are the competencies least visible in the programme descriptions on offer. AI and data skills and language and intercultural competence follow. Meanwhile, whether graduates stay does not depend solely on what higher education institutions currently offer within their study programmes, but also on other factors such as housing, transport, childcare, careers and regional image — factors that lie with policy, not with institutions.

The region functions as one academic labour market but is governed as two national systems containing four differently-run institutions of the Czech and German part of the ERN. Coordinating them — to avoid duplication, enable joint and double-degree study programmes and connect the new research anchors to local graduates — is a task that only policy actors, acting together across the border of the Czech and German part of the ERN, can carry.

This document sets out **eight policy recommendations**. Their cornerstone is **the establishment of a permanent cross-border governance structure for higher education on the Czech and German sides of the ERN** — supported by funding and a bilateral framework — through which regional stakeholders and the Euroregion will coordinate their activities in a targeted manner, rather than haphazardly according to current needs.

Who this paper is for

These recommendations address the regional actors who set the funding, legal and coordination framework within which the region's four institutions of the Czech and German part of the ERN operate — what only policy makers can enable, fund or coordinate.

The findings of the ERNILAC project's primary research are published in two complementary sets of recommendations. The first set is addressed to the management of the four universities on the Czech and German sides of the ERN — that is, matters on which the universities can decide for themselves. This document presents the second set, which focuses on regional policy: the framework conditions, incentives

and cross-border structures that determine whether institutional measures can actually be implemented, and the tools (student retention, infrastructure, capacity management, cross-border administration) that lie beyond the control of individual institutions.

It is addressed, in the first instance, to:

- **On the German side, the Free State of Saxony** — in particular the Saxon State Ministry for Science, Culture and Tourism (SMWK), the higher-education authority for the Hochschule Zittau/Görlitz, the Duale Hochschule Sachsen and, through TU Dresden, IHI Zittau, which steers them through the Saxon Higher Education Act, capacity decisions and target agreements.
- **On the Czech side, the Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) and the Liberec Region** — the authorities cooperating with the Technical University of Liberec.
- **Spanning the border, the Czech and German part of the ERN**, the Interreg Sachsen–Tschechien programme, and the bodies governing the Lusatian structural transformation — which hold the cross-border coordination and structural-funding levers.
- **Regional economic and labour-market actors** — chambers of commerce, employment institutions and development agencies — whose cooperation is needed for work-integrated learning, retention and innovation.

One feature of this governance landscape shapes everything that follows. Three of the region's four institutions sit under a single Saxon ministry, while the fourth sits under the Czech system; the region's academic labour market, however, is one. Cross-border higher-education policy is therefore inherently a multi-actor coordination task — and several of the recommendations below are concerned precisely with ensuring that this coordination and cooperation are carried out.

The recommendations at a glance

P1

Incentivise the competency shift

Use funding and target agreements to reward competency-based curriculum reform, work-integrated learning and AI and data literacy.

P2

Scale work-integrated learning as infrastructure

Fund and broker dual study and cross-border placements as a regional talent pipeline.

P3

Coordinate capacity and specialisation

Steer complementary specialisation and capacity across the four institutions of the Czech and German part of the ERN through joint planning.

P4

Anchor talent through framework conditions

Address housing, transport, childcare, dual careers and regional attractiveness to retain graduates.

P5

Integrate higher education into structural transformation

Make higher education and talent a formal pillar of the region's structural-change strategy.

P6

Enable cross-border integration

Remove the governance, legal and funding barriers to joint provision and mobility.

P7

Build innovation and transfer capacity

Fund regional innovation, incubation and transfer so graduates can found companies and stay.

P8

Sustain shared monitoring

Institutionalise a joint, comparable data and monitoring system beyond the project.

01 Why regional higher-education policy matters here

The following three features of the region make higher-education policy an unusually consequential lever — and each points beyond what individual institutions can achieve alone.

Retention of inhabitants within the Czech and German part of the ERN

The Euroregion's core challenge — the out-migration of young, qualified people, particularly pronounced among well-educated young women on the German side, alongside persistent skilled-labour shortages — is only partly about what higher education institutions offer within their study programmes. Whether graduates stay after their graduation is also influenced by other factors, such as housing, transport, childcare, career opportunities, salaries and the region's image, most of which lie in the hands of regional policy, municipalities and employers rather than the higher education institutions.

> Graduate retention is a shared policy objective, not merely an educational one.

A time-limited structural-transformation window

Lusatia's planned coal exit by 2038, backed by substantial structural funding, is bringing a concentration of high-skill research and technology anchors to the region — the German Centre for Astrophysics (DZA) and the Center for Advanced Systems Understanding (CASUS) in Görlitz, the German Aerospace Center's (DLR) institute in Zittau, and the Siemens Innovation Campus. This is a rare chance to build a knowledge region around the existing universities. But the talent to staff these anchors must be grown and retained locally as well as recruited from outside, and that requires deliberate policy investment in higher-education capacity, pipelines and attractiveness while the funding window is open.

Cross-border fragmentation calls for coordination

The region functions as one academic labour market but is governed as two national systems containing four differently-governed institutions with different funding logics, legal frameworks and quality-assurance regimes. Coordinating them — to avoid duplication, enable joint provision and pool scarce specialist capacity — is a governance task that sits above any single institution and can only be carried by policy actors acting together across the Czech and German border of the ERN. The opportunity is to align policy instruments with both the structural-transformation strategy and the cross-border labour market.

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02 Primary and secondary data base

The following recommendations are based on two complementary primary research studies carried out within the ERNILAC project.

1 · A **cross-border employer survey** in its final form gathered 70 valid responses — 37 German, 33 Czech (49 complete and 21 partial).

2 · An **analysis of the 107 degree programmes** offered across four institutions within the Czech and German part of the ERN enabled a comparison of the competences explicitly visible in programme descriptions and graduate profiles with ERNILAC's 36-competency framework, a complementary future-oriented competency layer, and employer demand. They are complemented by the regional context: demographic decline and graduate out-migration, the Lusatian structural transformation with its new research anchors, and the four institutions' complementary profiles.

Two caveats apply. The survey sample is small and self-selected, so the recommendations are framed as evidence-informed directions. Employer demand is only one input to policy — academic freedom, disciplinary breadth, students' aspirations and the region's long-term development remain central considerations.

> What gives the shared conclusions weight is that two independent analyses — of demand and of supply — converge on the same priorities.

KEY FINDINGS WITH IMPLICATIONS FOR REGIONAL POLICY

- **The two analyses converge.** Employers most miss the very competencies that are least visible in programme descriptions: transversal and self-management competencies, AI and data skills, and language and intercultural competence. Policy can incentivise the shift without prescribing curricula **(P1)**.
- **An experience gap meets a strong dual-study asset.** Graduates lack practical experience, yet the region already has an effective work-integrated model at DHSN Bautzen. Policy can scale and broker it as infrastructure and within other educational institutions in the form of double study programmes — this is already in operation through collaboration between TUL and IHI Zittau, and between TUL and HSZG **(P2)**. However, the Czech higher education sector is not yet fully prepared for this system; nevertheless, universities are increasingly offering vocational degree programmes at bachelor's level.
- **Overlaps and distinct clusters call for steering.** Some fields — notably business and management — are offered by several institutions, and curriculum needs differ sharply between programme types **(P3)**.
- **Retention depends on non-educational enablers.** Housing, transport, childcare, dual careers, regional image and pay drive whether graduates stay — all policy levers **(P4)**.
- **The new research anchors need local pipelines.** Without deliberate links, the anchors may import talent while local graduates leave **(P5)**.
- **Cross-border provision needs enabling frameworks.** Joint degrees, mobility and mutual recognition require legal and funding frameworks only policy can create **(P6)**.
- **Steering requires sustained, shared data (P8)** — and the innovation capacity that turns graduates into local founders **(P7)**.

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03 The eight recommendations for regional policy-makers

Each recommendation sets out the evidence, the headline, concrete actions, the cross-border dimension, what it enables and who owns it.

P1 Incentivise the competency shift through funding and target agreements

EVIDENCE

Both primary analyses — the employer and labour-market survey and the study-programme analysis — converge on the same under-served competencies. Employers rate transversal and self-management skills as most important, yet regard graduates from higher education institutions on both the Czech and German sides of the ERN as least developed in exactly these areas. The analysis of study programmes shows that general professional competencies are dominant, while future-oriented transversal, AI/data and environmental competencies are comparatively little visible in the programme descriptions. Closing this gap is the highest-leverage change identified — but institutions reform faster when the framework rewards it.

Use higher-education funding instruments and target agreements to reward — not mandate — competency-based curriculum reform, work-integrated learning and AI and data literacy. Resource and incentivise the shift while respecting institutional autonomy over curricula.

CONCRETE ACTIONS

- **Build competency- and employability-oriented objectives into target agreements** (the Saxon Hochschulverträge / Zielvereinbarungen with HSZG, DHSN and IHI/TU Dresden, and analogous arrangements on the Czech side), with light indicators rather than prescriptive rules.
- **Establish a curriculum-innovation fund** — ideally cross-border — for competency-based redesign, AI and data-literacy modules, and jointly badged micro-credentials, targeted using the supply-side cluster typology **(P3)**.
- **Fund teaching-development and quality-assurance capacity** so that reform is deliverable and not merely mandated.

> **CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION**
>
> A jointly funded innovation fund and a mutually recognised competency framework would let both sides reward the same shift and share the cost of developing materials and other necessary funding, rather than each investing separately.

ENABLES	Institutional delivery of **transversal competencies** and **digital and AI literacy** at scale.
OWNERSHIP	SMWK (DE side); MŠMT and the Liberec Region (CZ side), through existing steering instruments; a cross-border fund adds the Interreg programme. Much can begin in the near term via the next round of target agreements.

P2 Scale work-integrated learning and the talent pipeline as regional infrastructure

EVIDENCE

Practical-experience gaps are among the most-cited recruitment challenges, and internships are the most valued form of graduate preparation. The region already has a strong asset: the practice-integrated dual model of DHSN Bautzen, with roughly 255 practice partners — about half in the Bautzen and Görlitz districts — and very high placement rates. Other cooperation is already underway within the Czech and German parts of the ERN on double-degree programmes between TUL and IHI Zittau, and between TUL and HSZG. At the same time, the emerging research anchors will need a steady flow of qualified graduates.

Treat dual study and cross-border work-integrated learning as regional infrastructure to be funded and brokered, rather than left to individual institutions and firms. The talent pipeline is a regional public good.

CONCRETE ACTIONS

- **Fund additional dual-study places and cooperative formats** at DHSN Bautzen and, where suitable, the other institutions, and incentivise firms — especially SMEs — to host students through co-financing and simplified administration.
- **Fund a shared cross-border employer-and-placement platform** operated with chambers of commerce and employment institutions, lowering the cost of matching students to hosts on both sides.
- **Incorporate support for talent and its retention in the region as an explicit component of the workforce strategy** within the framework of structural change, so that new research centres recruit and train staff locally **(P5)**.
- **Facilitate cross-border placements** through mobility grants and clarity on insurance and legal status.

> **CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION**
>
> A single platform serving both sides, plus mobility and legal facilitation, would turn cross-border internships into a routine part of study rather than an administrative obstacle course.

ENABLES	Work-integrated learning at scale; feeds portfolio alignment and graduate retention.
OWNERSHIP	Jointly by the ministries, chambers, employment institutions and structural-change bodies; a medium-term build, with the shared platform achievable sooner.

P3 Steer capacity and complementary specialisation through coordinated planning

EVIDENCE

The study-programme analysis of the Czech and German part of the ERN shows real overlaps — business and management is offered at three of the four institutions, and engineering is provided on the German side by HSZG and Bautzen alongside TUL's technical faculties — and it groups the 107 programmes into five clusters with distinct development needs. Demand, meanwhile, concentrates in engineering, data and energy-related fields aligned with the region's new anchors. Coordinating capacity across four institutions in two educational systems is beyond any single institution or ministry.

Use development planning and capacity funding to encourage complementary specialisation across the four institutions and to align capacity with regional demand and the research anchors. This coordination role is one only policy can play — especially across the border, where no single ministry governs all four.

CONCRETE ACTIONS

- **Convene a standing cross-border higher-education coordination forum** (SMWK, MŠMT, the Liberec Region, the four institutions and the Euroregion) to agree a map of complementary specialisations — building on the region's existing Academic Coordination Centre (ACC), active since 1991 across all four institutions, rather than starting from scratch.
- **Align capacity and appointment funding** with demand in engineering, data and computational science, and energy and industrial-process engineering.
- **Fund joint and double degrees** and jointly financed niche specialisms that no single institution could sustain and offer alone.
- **Adopt the supply-side cluster typology** as a shared decision-support tool for targeting curriculum-development funding where each programme type needs it most.

> **CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION**
>
> The coordination forum is itself the central cross-border mechanism; joint funding lines for shared provision give it teeth.

ENABLES	Portfolio alignment and complementary specialisation, and cross-border cooperation.
OWNERSHIP	The two ministries and the Liberec Region with the Euroregion; a medium- to long-term agenda whose keystone — the standing forum — can be established in the near term.

P4 Anchor academic talent through retention-oriented framework conditions

EVIDENCE

Graduate out-migration is the region's defining problem, and employers point to non-salary factors as decisive for retention. The regional measures they most want are a better regional image (their single most-selected measure), transport and infrastructure, and stronger university–business cooperation, with housing, family support and innovation funding also named. Salary is the most-cited recruitment challenge, yet is not among the measures used to retain graduates within the Czech and German part of the ERN — it matters more for attracting than for keeping them. Görlitz's 'trial-living' scheme for incoming researchers shows such conditions are already being addressed and can be scaled.

Make graduate retention an explicit regional-policy objective and address the non-educational enablers of staying. Universities can connect students to the region, but housing, mobility, childcare and attractiveness are policy levers.

CONCRETE ACTIONS

- **Invest in housing, transport, childcare and dual-career services** for students and young professionals — scaling trial-living schemes and using structural funds where possible.
- **Run regional talent-marketing and employer-branding jointly with employers and the research anchors** — building on the existing Hi!Lusatia network, which already unites the region's universities and research anchors to position Lusatia as an attractive location for skilled workers.
- **Introduce 'study-and-stay' incentives** such as regional scholarships or retention grants and support for graduate start-ups **(P7)**.
- **Coordinate with municipalities and employers** so that students build local roots before graduation.

> **CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION**
>
> Marketing the Euroregion as a single place to study, work and live — and supporting talent circulation across the border — enlarges the opportunities that keep graduates within the region as a whole, rather than pitting the two sides against each other.

ENABLES	The institutions to act as effective regional anchors for retention.
OWNERSHIP	The regions and municipalities with the structural-change bodies and employers; a medium-term agenda with several near-term, low-cost measures.

P5 Integrate higher education into the structural-transformation strategy

EVIDENCE

The region is acquiring a concentration of research and technology anchors — the DZA and CASUS in Görlitz, the DLR institute in Zittau, and the Siemens Innovation Campus — funded through the structural transformation. Their fields (astrophysics and data, computational and systems science, low-carbon energy and process engineering, advanced technology) map directly onto the demand signals and the region's institutional strengths. The risk is that the anchors recruit talent from elsewhere while local graduates continue to leave.

Make higher education and talent development a formal pillar of the Lusatian structural-change strategy, and connect the new research anchors with the regional institutions and their graduates. The structural funds should build a self-sustaining regional talent ecosystem, not only research facilities.

CONCRETE ACTIONS

- **Fund joint or cooperative professorships and shared laboratories** linking the DZA, CASUS and the DLR institute with HSZG, IHI and — across the border — TUL.
- **Build on existing anchor networks.** Support Hi!Lusatia — the Görlitz-based network already connecting HSZG, IHI Zittau and the region's research anchors — as a ready platform for joint appointments, talent pipelines and regional marketing.
- **Fund doctoral and early-career pipelines** feeding the anchors, including regional graduate schools, so that local graduates progress into anchor and spin-off roles.
- **Use structural funds** for higher-education infrastructure and specialist capacity in data and computational science and in energy and process engineering.
- **Support technology transfer and spin-offs** around the anchors, linking them to the entrepreneurship agenda **(P7)**.

> **CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION**
>
> Including TUL and the Czech side in the anchor-cooperation and transfer networks makes the emerging cluster a genuinely cross-border one and widens the talent pool it can draw on and retain.

ENABLES	Turns the anchors into a reason for graduates to stay — connecting digital and AI skills, portfolio, entrepreneurship and retention.
OWNERSHIP	Structural-transformation governance with SMWK and federal research funders and the institutions; a medium- to long-term agenda tied to the structural-funding timeline.

P6 Enable cross-border integration: governance, legal and funding frameworks

EVIDENCE

The region is one labour market governed as two systems with four differently-run higher education institutions. Working models of integration already exist: the double-degree master between IHI Zittau and TU Liberec, and double-degree cooperation between TUL and HSZG. The IHI–TUL master shows how cross-border study can work in practice, delivered across a shared cross-border campus with both a Czech and a German degree and English-taught courses in Liberec. But scaling such provision runs into

differences in accreditation, recognition, student financing and quality assurance that individual institutions cannot resolve.

Remove the governance, legal and funding barriers to cross-border provision and put a durable coordination structure in place. Only policy, acting bilaterally, can create the frameworks that let joint provision and mobility become routine.

CONCRETE ACTIONS

- **Agree a bilateral framework** (SMWK–MŠMT, with the Liberec Region) for joint and double degrees, mutual recognition and joint quality assurance.
- **Enable cross-border enrolment, student financing and mobility** with portable funding and clarity on insurance and legal status.
- **Establish a permanent cross-border higher-education coordination body,** building on the Euroregion, the Interreg programme and the existing Academic Coordination Centre (ACC), closely linked to the forum in **P3**.
- **Sustain and expand cross-border funding** for higher-education cooperation and joint language and intercultural provision, including through future Interreg calls.

> ### CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION
>
> This recommendation is intrinsically cross-border: it is the enabling layer beneath most of the others, and its absence is the main reason cross-border cooperation has depended on individual initiative rather than durable structure.

ENABLES Cross-border language provision and cooperation; underpins coordinated capacity planning **(P3)**.

OWNERSHIP The two ministries and the Liberec Region with the Euroregion and Interreg authorities; a medium- to long-term agenda, though the framework agreement and coordination body can be pursued in the near term.

P7 Build regional innovation, entrepreneurship and transfer capacity

EVIDENCE

Employers regard entrepreneurial and business competencies as particularly weakly developed, and they are barely visible in the programme descriptions, and employers explicitly want more regional innovation funding. In a region rebuilding its economic base, graduate ventures are also a retention tool: locally founded companies create the academic jobs that keep talent in the Euroregion, and the emerging Görlitz technology cluster offers a natural home for them. In the Czech part of the ERN, Lipo.ink (the Liberec Business Incubator) has been set up to support entrepreneurship and start-ups, while at TUL this role is

fulfilled by TUC TUL and the Student Business Club, which organises the Start-up TUL competition every year.

Build the regional innovation, incubation and transfer infrastructure that gives graduates a reason and the means to found companies and stay. Entrepreneurship is both a competency agenda and a retention strategy.

CONCRETE ACTIONS

- **Provide regional innovation and seed funding and cross-border incubation,** linking the institutions, the research anchors, the Siemens campus and the chambers.
- **Fund transfer offices and student- and graduate-venture support** at the institutions.
- **Simplify cross-border business formation and access to funding** so ventures can serve the whole Euroregion from the outset.

> **CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION**
>
> Shared incubation and funding instruments on both sides give student ventures a larger market and talent pool and reinforce the Euroregion as a single innovation space.

ENABLES	The regional infrastructure and funding behind entrepreneurial and business competencies.
OWNERSHIP	Regional development bodies and chambers with the structural-change funds and the institutions; a medium-term build.

P8 Sustain a shared cross-border evidence and monitoring system

EVIDENCE

Aligning higher-education policy with the convergent priorities — and reviewing those priorities as the situation evolves — requires continuing, comparable intelligence about labour-market demand, graduate numbers and the programme portfolio across the border. Sustaining institutional monitoring as a shared system is a policy task.

Institutionalise and fund a joint, comparable data and monitoring system spanning labour-market demand, graduate tracking and the programme portfolio, sustaining ERNILAC's instruments beyond the project's lifetime.

CONCRETE ACTIONS

- **Fund a standing monitoring function** combining periodic employer surveys, graduate tracking and portfolio mapping, with indicators harmonised across the two national systems.
- **Feed the results into policy and practice** — into higher-education planning (P3), the structural-change strategy (P5) and institutional decisions.
- **Make anonymised data available** to institutions, employers and the public, so the evidence base is shared rather than siloed.

> CROSS-BORDER DIMENSION
>
> Harmonised indicators and a joint dashboard are what make the data comparable across the border and useful for cross-border steering.

ENABLES Sustains the monitoring behind portfolio alignment and cross-border cooperation.

OWNERSHIP The Euroregion and the Interreg programme with the ministries and the institutions; achievable in the near to medium term and well suited to joint funding.

04 Implementation roadmap and governance

The recommendations differ in effort and speed of payoff. The keystone is a standing cross-border higher-education coordination structure (P3, P6): once in place, it makes the others easier to agree and fund.

QUICK WINS
0–12 months

- Add competency- and employability-oriented objectives to the next round of target agreements (P1).
- Establish the standing cross-border coordination forum (P3, P6).
- Fund a shared cross-border employer-and-placement platform (P2, P8).
- Scale existing retention measures such as trial-living and launch joint talent-marketing (P4).

MEDIUM TERM
1–3 years

- Launch a cross-border curriculum-innovation fund and joint micro-credentials **(P1, P3)**.
- Fund additional dual-study places and cross-border placements **(P2)**.
- Agree the bilateral framework for joint degrees, recognition and quality assurance **(P6)**.
- Fund innovation, incubation and transfer capacity, and a standing monitoring function **(P7, P8)**.

STRUCTURAL
3–5 years

- Align capacity and complementary specialisation across the four institutions **(P3)**.
- Embed higher education as a pillar of the structural-change strategy, with joint professorships, pipelines and infrastructure **(P5)**.
- Consolidate housing, transport, childcare and attractiveness investments for retention **(P4)**.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION	IMPACT	EFFORT	HORIZON
P1 · Incentivise the competency shift	High	Medium	Short–Med
P2 · Work-integrated learning & talent pipeline	High	Med–High	Med
P3 · Coordinated capacity & specialisation	High	High	Med–Long
P4 · Retention framework conditions	High	High	Med
P5 · HE in structural transformation	High	High	Med–Long
P6 · Cross-border frameworks	High	Medium	Med–Long
P7 · Innovation and transfer	Medium	Medium	Med
P8 · Shared monitoring	Medium	Low–Med	Short–Med

Table 1 · Indicative prioritisation of the policy recommendations (qualitative judgements to support planning).

POLICY ACTOR	LEADS ON
Free State of Saxony (SMWK)	P1, P3, P5 (DE side); oversees HSZG, DHSN, IHI/TU Dresden
Czech Ministry of Education (MŠMT) & Liberec Region	P1, P3, P6 (CZ side); oversee TUL
Lusatian structural-transformation funding bodies	P2, P4, P5, P7
Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa & Interreg programme	P3, P6, P8 (cross-border coordination & funding)
Chambers of commerce & employment institutions	P2, P7
Municipalities & regional development agencies	P4, P7
The four institutions (delivery partners)	Implement all, per the companion institutional recommendations

Table 2 · Indicative mapping of policy recommendations to lead regional actors.

05 Coherence with the institutional recommendations

The policy recommendations set out in this document are closely linked to the recommendations addressed to university management on both the Czech and German sides of the Nisa Euroregion. While the institutional recommendations outline measures that the universities themselves can adopt, the policy recommendations set out the conditions that regional policy must create, particularly in the areas of funding, coordination and systemic support. The successful implementation of the proposed changes therefore requires cooperation from both sides: the development of study programmes cannot proceed without adequate financial and institutional support, while policy measures cannot yield results without the active involvement of the universities.

POLICY RECOMMENDATION	PRIMARILY ENABLES (INSTITUTIONAL ACTION)
P1 · Incentivise the competency shift	Transversal competencies · digital & AI literacy
P2 · Work-integrated learning & talent pipeline	Work-integrated learning (feeds portfolio & retention)
P3 · Coordinated capacity & specialisation	Portfolio alignment · cross-border cooperation
P4 · Retention framework conditions	Institutions as regional anchors for retention
P5 · HE in structural transformation	Digital/AI · portfolio · entrepreneurship · retention
P6 · Cross-border frameworks	Cross-border language & cooperation
P7 · Innovation and transfer	Entrepreneurial & business competencies
P8 · Shared monitoring	Portfolio & cross-border monitoring

Table 3 · How the policy recommendations (P1–P8) enable the parallel institutional recommendations.

A shared monitoring system **(P8)** should track both sets of recommendations together, so that policy and institutions can see whether the joint agenda is closing the competency gap, expanding work-integrated learning, retaining graduates and deepening cross-border cooperation.

06 Concluding remarks

The Czech-German part of the Nisa Euroregion has a unique, albeit time-limited, opportunity to strengthen cooperation between four higher education institutions and to create an environment that will, in the long term, attract, develop and retain qualified graduates. This opportunity arises at a time when the region's structural transformation is fostering the emergence of new research and technological activities. Regional policy can support this process through eight interlinked measures: funding innovation in study programmes **(P1)**, developing practice-oriented education **(P2)**, coordinating the range of study programmes offered by individual higher education institutions **(P3)**, creating conditions to retain graduates in the region **(P4)**, integrating higher education into regional development strategies **(P5)**, removing barriers to cross-border cooperation **(P6)**, supporting innovation and the creation of skilled jobs **(P7)** and systematically sharing the data required for decision-making **(P8)**.

THE KEYSTONE

With three of the four institutions under one Saxon ministry and the Technical University of Liberec under the Czech education system, the single most consequential policy act is to **build a standing cross-border governance structure** — backed by funding and a bilateral framework — through which the ministries, the region and the Euroregion coordinate deliberately rather than case by case. Aligning higher-education policy with the structural-transformation strategy, and acting jointly across the border, is the decisive move.

Primary and secondary sources

The recommendations draw on the two ERNILAC workstreams — the employer survey in its final form (final cleaned dataset, n = 70; 37 DE / 33 CZ), superseding the earlier preliminary results (16 July 2025; n = 55), and the supply-side study-programme analysis (report of 31 January 2026; 107 programmes) — together with the project workshop materials of 21 January 2026 and publicly available sources on the region's institutions, its demographic situation and the Lusatian structural transformation (including the DZA, CASUS, the DLR institute in Zittau and the Siemens Innovation Campus). This paper additionally refers to:

- Saxon State Ministry for Science, Culture and Tourism (SMWK) — higher-education authority for the Free State of Saxony, responsible for HSZG, the Duale Hochschule Sachsen and, via TU Dresden, IHI Zittau; steering through the Saxon Higher Education Act and target agreements (smwk.sachsen.de).
- Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports (MŠMT) and the Liberec Region — the authorities responsible for the Technical University of Liberec (msmt.gov.cz; kraj-lbc.cz).
- Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa and the Interreg Sachsen–Tschechien / Česko–Sasko 2021–2027 programme (sn-cz2027.eu).
- Academic Coordination Centre (ACC) in the Euroregion Neisse — cross-border academic network founded 1991; members include TU Liberec, HSZG, IHI Zittau and the Duale Hochschule Sachsen (acc-ern.tul.cz).
- Hi!Lusatia e.V. — Görlitz-based regional network for science, research and education (founded 2023), uniting HSZG, IHI Zittau and regional research anchors to position Lusatia as an attractive location for skilled workers (hi-lusatia.de).
- Bodies governing the Lusatian structural transformation and regional development.

Governance responsibilities and agency names can change; verify against current sources before publication. Figures for the research anchors are projections. The survey results rest on a small, self-selected sample and are exploratory and directional, not representative.

Abbreviations

ACC — Academic Coordination Centre / Akademisches Koordinierungszentrum (Euroregion Neisse)

AI — Artificial intelligence

CASUS — Center for Advanced Systems Understanding (Görlitz)

DHSN — Duale Hochschule Sachsen

DLR — Deutsches Zentrum für Luft- und Raumfahrt (German Aerospace Center)

DZA — Deutsches Zentrum für Astrophysik (German Centre for Astrophysics)

ERN — Euroregion Neisse

ERNILAC — Euroregion Neisse International Labour Market for Academics

HEI — Higher education institution

HSZG — Hochschule Zittau/Görlitz

IHI — Internationales Hochschulinstitut Zittau

MŠMT — Czech Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports

NISA — Neisse–Nisa–Nysa Euroregion

P1–P8 — Policy recommendations 1 to 8 (this paper)

SME — Small and medium-sized enterprise

SMWK — Sächsisches Staatsministerium für Wissenschaft, Kultur und Tourismus

TU Dresden — Technische Universität Dresden

TUL — Technical University of Liberec

WIL — Work-integrated learning

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