

BEST PRACTICE



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Loos in Transition

Loos-en-Gohelle, France – 7 000 inhabitants

Building renovation – Solar –transition city

Loos-en-Gohelle is a small town located in the North of France. The city, just like its surrounding area, was deeply affected by coal mining industries, active from the 1850s until their closure in the 1980s. Thanks to a strong political support from its mayors, Loos-en-Gohelle has chosen to take the road towards renewable energy sources, ensuring strong citizen involvement in the cities' future.



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Project in a Nutshell

The actions taken encompassed all sectors, from building renovation, to tourism, green technology and renewable energy generation.

All new initiatives were (and still are) carried out with the dual objective of breaking with the existing development model and taking a "small steps" approach. This has led to the development of eco-construction (for social housing and municipal buildings) and, more broadly, new approaches to urban planning and the environment (water infiltration on the plot, greenbelt, differentiated management of green spaces, etc.). Initially carried out "on an ad hoc basis", these actions have gradually developed a coherent framework. As they have grown, they have created bridges between the various fields of intervention, thereby introducing a real transversal approach to the management of the municipality.

Impact & Next steps

This strategy produces results that go beyond the usual development indicators of a territory. Academics and journalists report that a new type of local ecosystem is beginning to take shape. Its many experiments, combined with its strong desire to share the results through an innovative policy for the interpretation of the territory, have granted this city the status of "Pilot City for sustainable development". Also, the twin mining heaps known as 11 and 19 are a testimony of Loos-en-Gohelle's mining past. For the past 20 years, the city's administrations have been striving to make it a showcase of the city's future, thus symbolizing its transition to renewable energy. Registered as a UNESCO World Heritage site since 2012, base 11 and 19 has been converted into a cultural and sustainable development centre.



Replicability: Challenges & Success Factors

Change is driven by practice and concrete actions: Loos-en-Gohelle operated as a "laboratory", creating space to experiment. Thanks to this approach, the city, now a hub of collective intelligence, is showing the right path. Many challenges had to be confronted, but the biggest one has been totally re-inventing itself as a community, upgrading the old identity while involving all local stakeholders in the process. Indeed, after more than a century of coal-mining industry running their lives, citizens had to rediscover their capacity to drive actions and personal initiatives.

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