



## **Baltic Urban Lab definition for brownfields & recommendations for improving national policy approaches on integrated brownfield redevelopment**

There is a high demand for redeveloping brownfield areas to make European cities grow in a more sustainable manner. However, the Central Baltic region does not have a long tradition of national policy approaches to brownfield redevelopment. The countries – Estonia, Finland, Latvia, and Sweden address brownfield redevelopment primarily through environmental policy and through local and regional policies on urban development and planning. Findings from the country overview<sup>1</sup> conducted in the Baltic Urban Lab project show that integrated national approaches combining environmental soil management with urban development are rare in the Central Baltic region. This may pose a challenge for brownfield redevelopment in the region, and there is a need for more integrated or holistic approaches to promote cooperation between experts responsible for soil remediation and urban design.

The fact that brownfields are often situated in attractive urban areas close to city centres and existing residential areas increases the range of actors with an interest in developing these areas. Public-private partnerships, involving cooperation between municipalities, landowners and developers can be particularly useful in brownfield regeneration projects, not least due to limitations in public finances. However, the issues of land ownership and the technical, geological, and financial difficulties of remediating contaminated land as well as questions about responsibility, remain some of the main challenges involved in brownfield redevelopment. In addition, there is a need to better involve citizens and other actors in the development of these areas to address issues of liveability, equality and cultural heritage.

### **Baltic Urban Lab Project Definition for Brownfield Sites**

There are no commonly agreed European definitions on what a brownfield is. Baltic Urban Lab has adapted the definition developed by several European brownfield projects, the last version originating from Cabernet Networks<sup>2</sup> work to reflect better today's challenges. Baltic Urban Lab has added to the Cabernet definitions some aspects related to integrated planning and partnerships.

#### **Urban brownfields are sites that:**

- *have been affected by the former/existing (often industrial) uses of the site and surrounding land*
- *are derelict, underused and/or could be redeveloped in ways that support local efforts towards sustainable urban development*
- *may have contamination problems*
- *often include historically valuable areas or architecture*
- *should be planned and developed following an integrated approach, based on partnerships between different stakeholders, including: the public sector, developers, land-owners, citizens and other concerned actors.*





All the Central Baltic countries share some unresolved challenges in finding the best means of promoting the remediation of contaminated land and redevelopment of brownfield areas. Based on these challenges, **the Baltic Urban Lab project has identified recommendations to national actors who wish to promote brownfield redevelopment in their countries. These recommendations call for a more coordinated national policy approach to brownfield development. This could come in the form of national brownfield development guidelines, within the broader perspective of urban development. Baltic Urban lab recommends:**

- It can be challenging to identify responsible actors for planning and funding the remediation of contaminated land areas. For this reason, guidance on roles and responsibilities of different actors (e.g. local authorities, landowners) in financing necessary remediation of contaminated land should be provided.
- National actors should promote and support cooperation between local actors with different responsibilities in urban development. For example, co-operation should be encouraged between departments responsible for mobility, environment, and building to ensure that potential development synergies are implemented.
- As a basis for national policy-making, countries should conduct coordinated inventories of potential brownfield sites, including assessments of the state of contamination. The inventories can result in priority of development of brownfield areas.
- Brownfield development should be guided by local and national goals and strategies on economic, ecological and social sustainable development. National funds to accelerate brownfield development and remediation process could be established to help trigger private investments.
- National guidance should support cities in identifying the cultural values related to the industrial history in brownfield areas, and to plan for a future that connects to local history.
- National actors should promote and support local actors in developing new forms of cooperation to secure sufficient funding for remediation activities. At the same time, it is important to ensure citizen participation as well as transparency and legitimacy of decision-making when working with urban brownfield development.
- National actors could function as mediators between the local public sector and landowners of brownfield areas, especially in cases where fragmented ownership structure is a barrier for revitalization

**Read more:**

- 1) [Planning Systems and Legislation for Brownfield Development in the Central Baltic Countries \(Baltic Urban Lab Working Paper #2\)](#)
- 2) [Sustainable Brownfield Regeneration Cabernet Network Report, 2006](#)  
[Redeveloping brownfields in the Central Baltic region \(Nordregio Policy Brief\)](#)  
[Public-Private-People partnerships in Urban Planning \(Baltic Urban Lab Working Paper #1\)](#)

