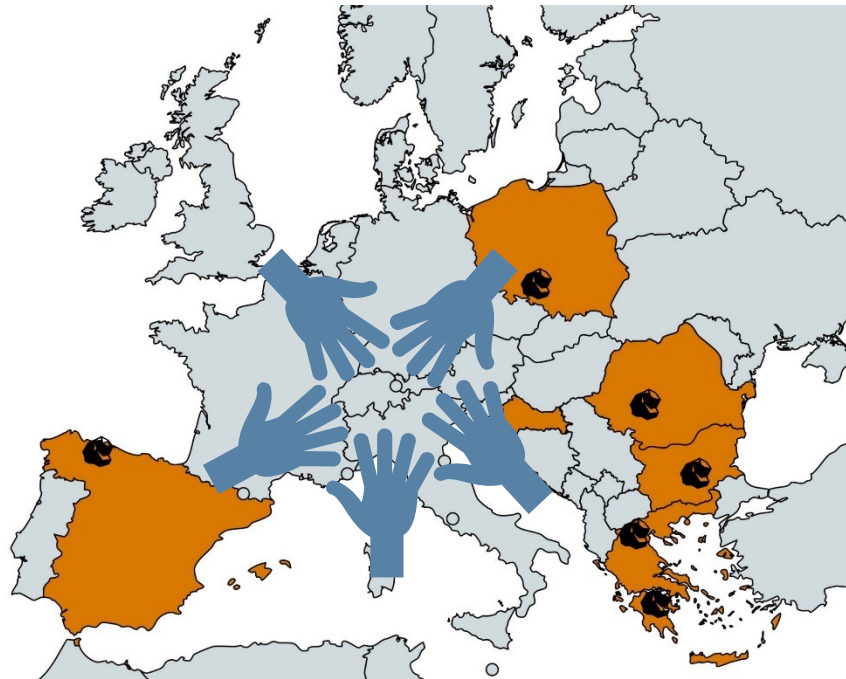




JUSTEM REGION TO REGION LEARNING WORKSHOP

WORKSHOP SUMMARY



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April 2023

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BACKGROUND

Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTP) are critical to facilitate sustainable and socially accepted transitions from coal. Member States develop or have developed plans (almost all have been approved by the EC) and will implement them. However, plans that do not take local needs into account threaten to increase inequalities as thousands of European citizens still rely on coal to survive. That is starting point for the EU Life project Just Transitions and EMpowerment against energy poverty (JUSTEM).

JUSTEM aims to build regional capacity about just transitions and involve citizens in the development and/or implementation of the regions' energy and climate plans to adapt those plans to their needs.

OBJECTIVE OF THE WORKSHOP

On 25 April, JUSTEM held its first cross-regional learning workshop. Around 50 stakeholders from different European coal regions attended the event.

The workshop had the aim to bring together different experts from the national level and the European Union to reflect and enable a mutual learning about ways to effectively involve citizens in the development of territorial just transition plans (TJTP).

Figure 1 shows the agenda of the day. The workshop was divided into three parts: an introduction to JUSTEM, the presentation of preliminary results from the JUSTEM analysis of the TJTP, and a panel discussion with European and national just transition experts.

OPENING AND INTRODUCTION TO JUSTEM

Diana Süsser from the Institute for European Energy and Climate Policy (IEECP) welcomed the workshop participants and explained the main objectives of the workshop. Anna Mazur from the Polish Energy Conservation Agency (KAPE) presented the JUSTEM project and its main objectives. For more information about JUSTEM and our monthly blog articles, please visit [here](#).

Following the presentations, a live survey was conducted among all participants. As shown in **Figure 2**, participants associated different aspects with just transitions, from the process itself to the solutions that need to be implemented. Most participants agreed that citizens were not sufficiently involved in the development of the TJTP (**Figure 3**).



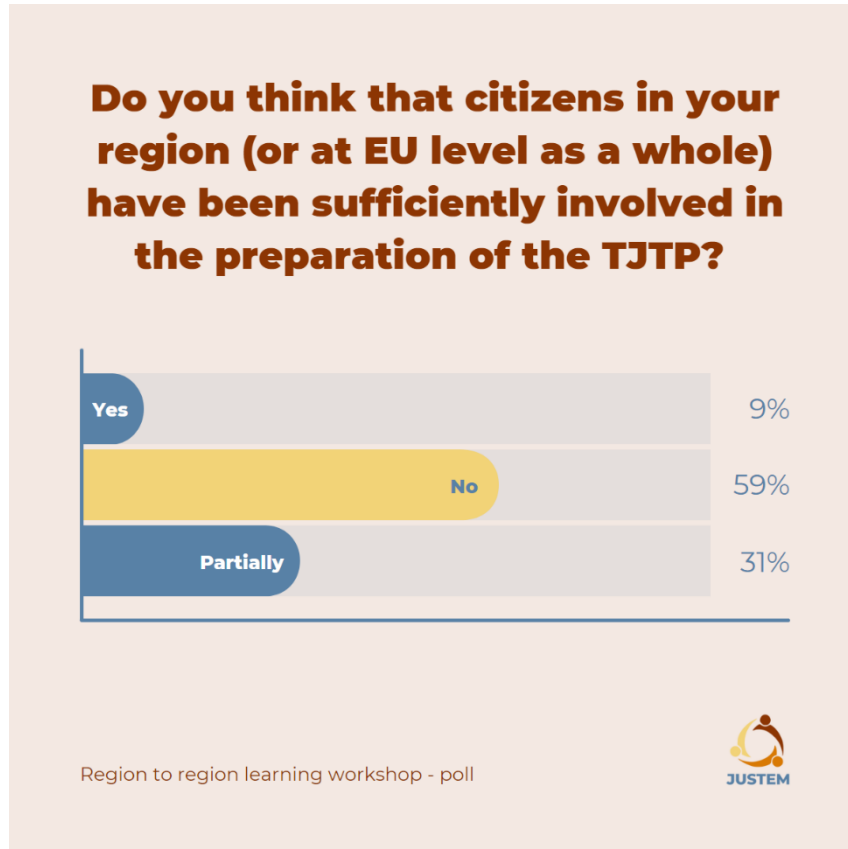


Figure 3: Results from the live poll on the engagement of citizens in the development of TJTPs.

PRELIMINARY FINDINGS FROM THE JUSTEM PROJECT

Angel Nikolaev from the Baltic Sea Energy Research Centre (BSERC) presented the analysis of the territorial transition plans of six European coal regions: Stara Zagora (Bulgaria), Jiu Valley (Romania), Silesian Voivodeship (Poland), Western Macedonia (Greece), Istria (Croatia), Asturias (Spain), which was carried out in the framework of the JUSTEM project.

One of the main findings was that in all countries, stakeholder consultations took place as part of the preparation of the TJTPs and other relevant plans, but citizens were not really involved. In each country, the authorities responsible for the plans are clearly defined. As far as the content of the plans is concerned, most of them are aligned with the objectives of the just transition, especially as far as increasing energy efficiency in buildings and industry is concerned. All plans include measures for the energy transition, but many plans lack targets for a specific year. All countries plan to develop RES-E; Bulgaria and Greece - energy from hydrogen; Bulgaria and Poland - new large NPPs; Bulgaria - production of batteries. Among transition impacts, mainly





unemployment and energy poverty are mentioned, but usually only generally without clear measures how to tackle negative impacts.

Most of the projects in the plans are eligible for JTF support. Many projects rely on other sources of funding. Some plans address the needs of vulnerable groups and gender issues, e.g. programmes for energy renovation of houses of the energy-poor population and retraining measures for vulnerable groups.

The countries studied are planning to phase out coal - between 2028 (Greece) and 2040 (Poland) - and most countries have specific plans for the rehabilitation of coal mines.

PANEL DISCUSSION

Afterwards Diana Süsler moderated a panel discussion among the eight discussants (see Figure 4).

Discussants



Anna Sobczak

DG ENER, Just Transitions and EU
Florence School of Regulation



Patricia Bosich

AURORA - Department for preparation
and implementation of programs and
projects, Istria, Croatia



Myriam Boveda

DG REGIO, Unit G1 "Smart and
Sustainable Growth"



Alexandru Kelemen

Associates for Integrated Territorial
Development Valea Jiului, Romania



Romyana Grozeva

Stara Zagora Regional Economic
Development Agency, Bulgaria



Maria Belarmina Diaz Aguado

Energy, Mining and Reactivation of the
Government of the Principality of
Asturias, Spain



Dariusz Stankiewicz

Marshal Office of the Silesian
Voivodeship, Poland



Anastasios Sidiropoulos

ANKO Western Macedonia S.A. -
Organization for Local Development,
Secretary General of CluBE's Board,
Greece

Figure 4: Discussants of the workshop.

The discussion started with the European Union (EU) perspective.

Anna Sobczak (DG ENER, Just Transitions and EU Florence School of Regulation), highlighted the essence of just transition in the EU context. She referred to the three key elements of the definition cited in the Paris Agreement: justice; inclusiveness in terms of partnership, dialogue and engagement; and creating opportunities for decent work to ensure that no one is left behind.



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She stressed the importance of aligning the regional transition with national energy and climate goals. In particular, she stressed that regional stakeholders should participate in the update of the NECP.

Myriam Boveda (DG REGIO, Unit G1 "Smart and Sustainable Growth") explained where EU countries stand in the preparation and adoption of Territorial Just Transition (TJTP) plans and the specific priority areas covered by funding.

She showed the participants two slides summarising the state of adoption of TJTPs and the priority areas supported (see Figures 5 and 6). Myriam Boveda emphasised that the priority is now the implementation of the plans.

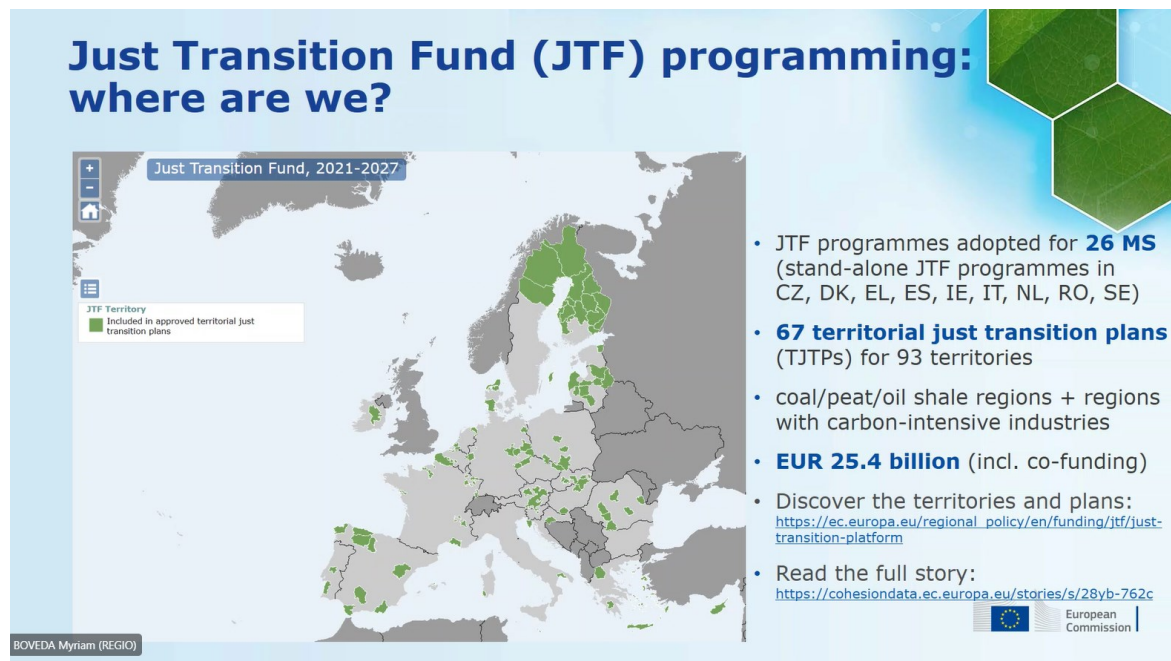


Figure 5: Overview of the JTF programme.



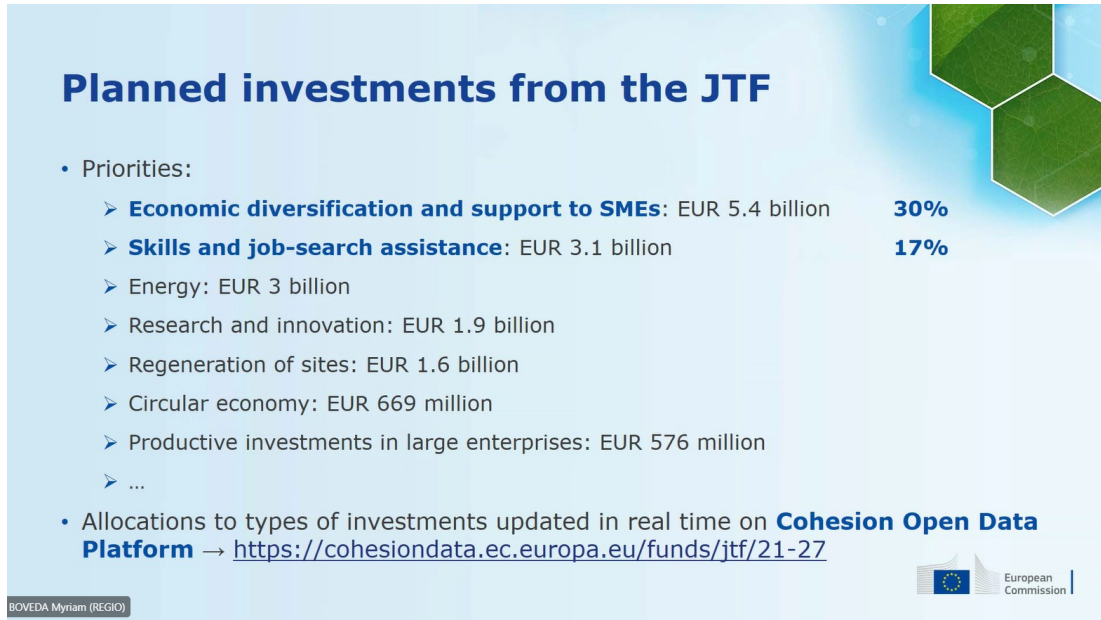


Figure 6: Planned investments from the JTF..

Afterwards, Rumyana Grozeva, Patrica Bosich, Maria Belarmina Diaz Aguado, Dariusz Stankiewicz and Anastasios Sidiropoulos shared their perspectives, experiences and good practices in a discussion.

Discussants



Anna Sobczak

DG ENER, Just Transitions and EU
Florence School of Regulation



Patricia Bosich

AURORA - Department for preparation
and implementation of programs and
projects, Istria, Croatia



Myriam Boveda

DG REGIO, Unit G1 "Smart and
Sustainable Growth"



Alexandru Kelemen

Associates for Integrated Territorial
Development Valea Jiului, Romania



Rumyana Grozeva

Stara Zagora Regional Economic
Development Agency, Bulgaria



Maria Belarmina Diaz Aguado

Energy, Mining and Reactivation of the
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Four key common challenges in just transition processes were identified in the discussion.



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KEY CHALLENGES

1) Just transition communication

All discussants stressed the need to change the way of communicating about the reasons and impacts of the transition. Negative communication that focuses on problems such as job losses and costs for local businesses leads to negative thinking among citizens in coal-mining regions. More emphasis should be placed on gaining people's trust and communicating the benefits of the transition and the new opportunities for citizens and their children.

There is a need to communicate the transition in simple, easy-to-understand language. The use of technical jargon makes it very difficult to involve citizens in decision-making.

New visions for regions should be developed together with citizens and communicated in a positive and attractive way.

2) Levels of governance

Another obstacle to the smooth implementation of the just transition process is often the centralised approach to its management. In some cases, regional authorities were invited to participate in the preparation of a TJTP quite late or not at all. This in turn meant that element of citizen involvement was often ignored. Citizens in these regions often did not have the opportunity to voice their needs and concerns about significant changes in their region.

Participants consistently pointed to the need to decentralise the management of the process to meet the definition of a just transition in terms of 'inclusion' and 'justice'. Plans cannot be divorced from the real needs and expectations of regional citizens.

Moreover, centralised decision-making risks bypassing important regional stakeholders, not just local citizens. In some coal mining regions, communication between the central and regional levels has also been a problem, often leading to confusion about the division of tasks and the extent of involvement of local actors.

This underlined the importance of regional and local decision-making powers to ensure that transition processes are embedded in broader socio-economic and energy policy transformations.

Some countries received external support for the plan development. For example, the [World Bank](#) and the European Commission provided dedicated advisory support to Greece and Poland to prepare the TJTPs.





3) Stakeholder engagement

To ensure that the plans are tailored to the needs of all people in the coal regions, the consultation process must be universal and include the voices of those who will be directly affected by the energy transition.

In the different regions, citizens were involved to varying degrees and in different forms. Often it was through public consultations and social dialogue. An excellent example is the Silesia region in Poland, where three series of consultations were held with 2,000 participants.

Unfortunately, in most regions the preparation of the plan took place during the COVID 19 pandemic and the process was partly conducted online, which was a major challenge for the regions.

The participants emphasised the importance to engage different actors, also “smaller players” such as citizens and small and medium size companies in the TJTP implementation phase. People must be empowered and entrepreneurial spirits used.

4) Long-lasting transition process

Transitions are a challenge of the times and there will be winners and losers. Depending on their age, citizens have different needs, expectations and desires for change.

Some participants stressed the importance of focusing on the future. However, visions for the future are often lacking. Therefore, it is important to develop common visions and goals for a greener future and to involve citizens in this process.





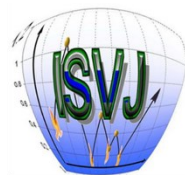
ACKNOWLEDGMENT

We would like to thank all speakers and participants for dedicating their time and providing us important insights during the workshop.

ABOUT JUSTEM

Making the European Union climate-neutral is a huge undertaking, especially for those regions still dependent on the coal industry. Regional energy transition plans that do not take local needs into account threaten to increase inequalities as thousands of European citizens still rely on coal to survive. The JUSTEM project helps regional authorities develop just transition plans and reduce local energy poverty by involving the population in the transition to a greener future. The overall objective of JUSTEM is to build regional capacity and involve citizens in the development or implementation of the regions' energy and climate plans in order to adapt them to their needs. JUSTEM intends to facilitate policy development, especially just transition planning, by increasing the uptake of sustainable energy solutions.

PROJECT PARTNERS



CONTACT

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