



EU coal regions exchange programme

Exchange between Zasavje (SI), Moravia-Silesia (CZ), Northern Hungary (HU)

exchangeEU

About the exchangeEU programme

exchangeEU is the exchange programme for coal, lignite, peat, and oil shale (coal+) regions in transition in the European Union (EU). The programme is part of the Coal Regions in Transition (CRiT) initiative and implemented by the European Commission.

Recognising the need for accelerating a just and low-carbon energy transition in Europe, exchangeEU facilitates cooperation and peer-to-peer learning amongst EU coal+ regions to foster the implementation of Just Energy Transition strategies. The key objective is to support EU coal+ regions to decarbonise their energy systems while protecting workers and communities through economic diversification and technological innovation.

During the programme, participating regions share experiences and work together on overcoming current challenges they face in their Just Transition processes. As such, exchangeEU opens the way for building a broad network of practitioners.



18 coal+ regions in transition have been selected to participate



The matching process resulted in **8 exchanges**, including 4 pairs of regions and 4 triangles of regions



The participating regions represent a total of **12 EU Member States**: Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, and Spain

Exchange cornerstones

November – December 2021
Call for applications and virtual pre-matchmaking sessions

Promotion

February – March 2022
Evaluation, selection and matchmaking

Assessment

May – July 2022
Co-creating the agenda and organisation

Scheduling

July – October 2022
Evaluation and reflections on lessons learnt

Follow-up

January 2022
Submission of individual or joint applications

April 2022
Follow-up calls and kick-offs

June – October 2022
Study visits

Application

Launch

Implementation

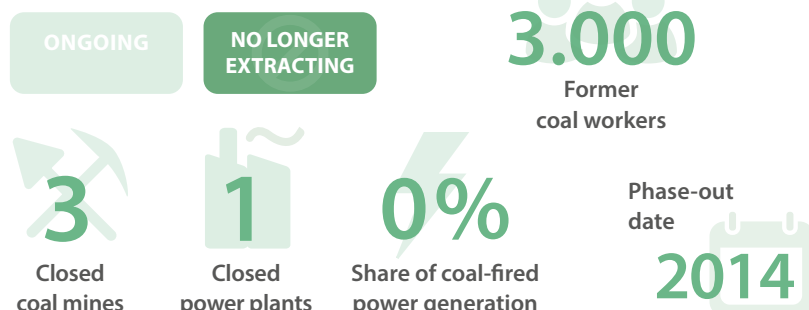
Region profiles

Towards a just transition away from coal+

This match consists of three Eastern European regions facing different stages in their Just Energy Transition: Zasavje already managed to phase-out coal. In Northern Hungary, lignite is still being extracted. Moravia-Silesia continues to extract hard coal.

ZASAVJE (SI)

State of phasing out hard coal (anthracite)*

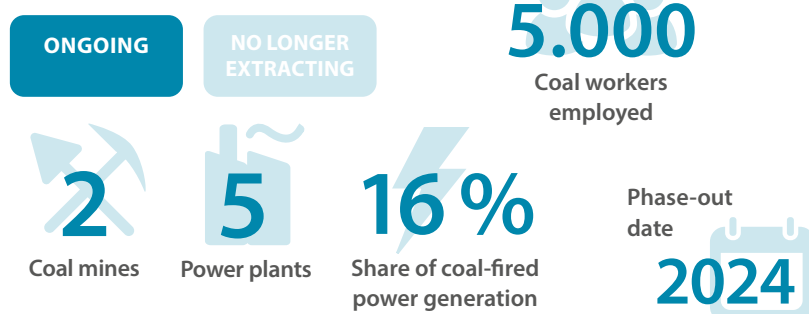


State of Just Energy Transition

The Zasavje Regional Development Agency is currently coordinating its Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP) with the European Commission. First state tenders and the start of projects will soon be announced. The TJTP harmonises with the Slovenian National Energy and Climate Plan and other relevant development documents and strategies.

MORAVIA-SILESIA (CZ)

State of phasing out hard coal (anthracite)*

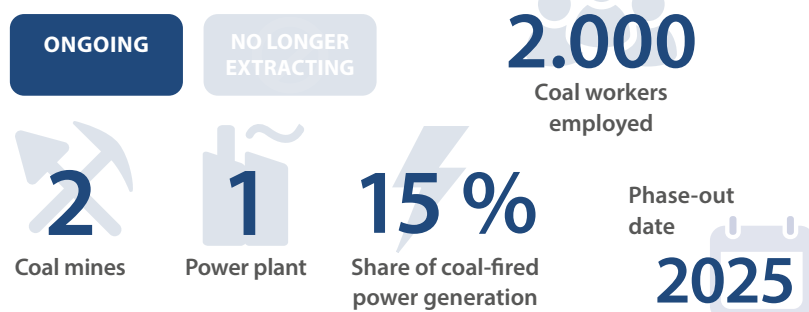


State of Just Energy Transition

Thirteen strategic and multiple smaller projects are ready for funding from the European Just Transition Fund (JTF). The Moravian Silesian Investment and Development Agency (MSID) is drafting feasibility studies, one for a strategic project and two for strategic brownfields. All three feasibility studies will be completed and the projects will be available for funding in fall 2022.

NORTHERN HUNGARY (HU)

State of phasing out brown coal (lignite)*



State of Just Energy Transition

The TJTPs of Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén and Heves Counties involve six intervention measures based on the regions' needs. Focus topics are re- and upskilling of workers, green economic diversification, innovative energy storage solutions, residential energy, green mobilization, and sustainable land use.

* All information provided by the representatives of the regions

Main challenges

- To support companies in employing former coal workers, and increase their added values, especially regarding local small and medium-sized enterprises
- To reduce energy poverty and coal dependency
- To expand local infrastructure and foster cultural activities in former coal towns and villages
- To convince citizens of taking part in the transition, including young people and civil society

Focus topics



Transition governance and strategy

Operationalising Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTP) and engaging stakeholders in the process were the main common challenges identified in this exchange. The delegates explored how to make TJTPs more effective and strengthen participatory processes on the ground, e.g., by fostering community engagement and public private partnerships.



Infrastructure and site sustainability

A central part of the exchange was the question on how to deal with mining sites in post-extraction scenarios. The delegates shared valuable insights on repurposing post-mining areas, e.g., by converting them into recreational areas or developing new business zones. Ideas for deploying renewable energies on former mining sites were also exchanged.

Study visit in Zasavje, Slovenia – agenda and on-site highlights

On the 1st and 2nd of June 2022, delegates from Northern Hungary (HU) and Moravia-Silesia (CZ) visited Zasavje (SI) to share experiences on just transition processes. The first day focused on sharing technical expertise and hands-on experiences related to two main challenges in Just Energy Transitions: operationalizing the TJTP and stakeholder engagement. A first workshop aimed at gathering ideas and good practices for reducing bureaucracy, supporting large companies and decarbonising local public transport for each participating region. During a second group activity, participants identified stakeholders who seem most difficult to engage with and brainstormed about better ways to integrate those in the Just Transition process.

Throughout the exchange, the participants visited multiple Just Energy Transition projects in Zasavje: a re-naturalized former mining area; Slovenia’s largest solar farm with an installed capacity of 3 MW; the high-tech company Dewesoft and the nearby business start-up incubator Katapult - the most successful one in the whole country; the Virtual Mining Museum, focused on the area’s mining history with a multimedia approach; and the municipality of Hrastnik with its energy community programme, particularly oriented towards benefitting lower-income residents.

Experts discussing Slovene and Czech experiences to help overcome Hungarian challenges.



Photos by George Stiff, ICLEI Europe

Delegates visiting the re-vitalised area of Ruardi, a former coal mine and now a popular recreation area.

ZASAVJE (SI)

Status	Visiting region	Hosting region
		Zasavje Regional Development Agency; Municipalities of Zagorje ob Savi, Trbovlje and Hrastnik; Zasavje Chamber of Commerce; 4.Dritl Virtual Mining Museum; Dewesoft hardware company; Katapult start-up incubator
Main Actors		
Shared insights		Building of solar power plants; economic diversification

MORAVIA SILESIA (CZ)

Status	Visiting region	Hosting region
		Moravian-Silesian Invest and Development (MSID) agency
Main Actors		
Shared insights		Repurposing of mines

NORTHERN HUNGARY (HU)

Status	Visiting region	Hosting region
		Hungarian Coal Commission Secretariat; Heves County Chamber of Commerce and Industry; Visonta municipality; Hungarian national Ministry for Innovation and Technology.
Main Actors		
Shared insights		Mobility in former coal regions



Learnings

- ✓ A strong and detailed needs assessment at the beginning of any Just Energy Transition process can be a crucial planning component that should not be neglected.
- ✓ Start-up ecosystems, ideally fostered by business incubators and/or strong and innovative tech firms, can contribute significantly to economic diversification and should be actively included in Just Transition efforts.
- ✓ Mining constitutes a significant part of local heritage. Preserving this heritage through e.g. museums, festivals and exhibitions fosters a more differentiated view on Just Transition and can contribute to its acceptance.
- ✓ Challenges across different EU coal+ regions are surprisingly similar. Exchange formats and programmes can help avoid repeating the same mistakes and allow benefits from mutual learning.

Hands-on recommendations

- + Foster and build upon inter-regional connections for knowledge sharing and mutual learning.
- + Actively manage Just Transition processes from start to finish including a transparent allocation of responsibilities and a clear timeline.
- + Organise key stakeholders within the region and build coalitions of the willing.
- + Closing mines as part of a Just Transition process requires clear plans for supporting previously employed miners (e.g. through re-skilling) to avoid higher unemployment rates.
- + Just Transition should be implemented incorporating meaningful public participation.



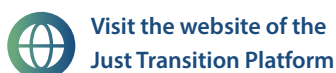
“Through exchangeEU the participants will be able to connect with like-minded people from other coal regions and thus broaden their horizons.”

Martin Šikovec, Zasavje Regional Development Agency, Slovenia



“It was nice to meet people from other coal regions who are thinking the same way and similarly enthusiastic about the topic like me.”

Dr. Zsuzsa Piskóti-Kovács, Coal Commission Secretariat, Hungary



exchangeEU is part of the [Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition \(CRiT\)](#)