



EU coal regions exchange programme

# Exchange between Asturias (ES) and Silesia (PL)

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

Application

**April 2022**  
Follow-up calls and kick-offs

Launch

**June – October 2022**  
Study visits

Implementation

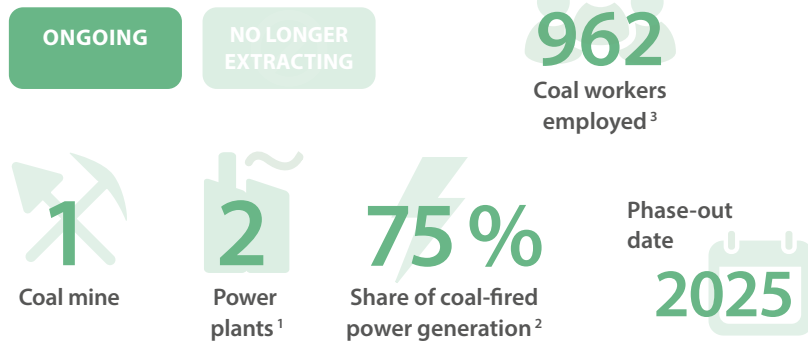
# Region profiles

## Towards a just transition away from coal+

The regions of Asturias and Silesia are at different stages in their Just Transition processes. In Silesia, coal extraction is still ongoing and is about to continue until 2049 with no fixed coal phase-out commitment (according to national coal phase-out plans). In Asturias, coal extraction ended in 2021. Today, there is only one remaining coal mine in the region.

### ASTURIAS (ES)

#### State of phasing out hard coal (anthracite)



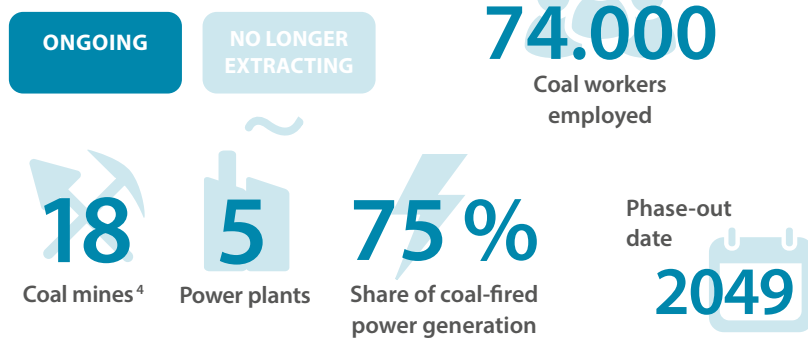
#### State of Just Energy Transition

Asturias' Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP) is based on Spain's Just Transition Strategy and a regional energy strategy until 2030. The region is currently discussing its TJTP with the European Commission. The TJTP's core evolves around the digital, green, and renewable development of Asturias, including three flagship projects:

- Green H2 and its value chain
- renewable energies and their value chain
- transformation towards a more sustainable, modernised, and resilient industry.

### SILESIA (PL)

#### State of phasing out hard coal (anthracite)



#### State of Just Energy Transition

In March 2022, Silesia established a Territorial Just Transition Plan (TJTP), which has not been approved to date. It is based on the national JTP and the region's strategy "Green Silesia for 2030". The main activities include the closures of mines and power-plants, investments in the local economy, as well as revitalisation projects. 15% of the planned investments in Just Transition programmes and projects are designed for reskilling and education.

<sup>1</sup> To be closed in 2023 and 2025 respectively  
<sup>2</sup> As of 2019

<sup>3</sup> As of 2021  
<sup>4</sup> 2 active mines in Bytom

## Main challenges

- Building lasting partnerships and engage all stakeholder groups and facilitate their participation in the transition process.
- Transforming the educational system in the long term to provide future generations with perspectives and attract them to stay in the region.
- Developing effective reskilling programmes for miners to transition to new activities.
- Identifying and implementing projects that have the potential to actually contribute to a just transition.
- Enabling the growth of companies and sectors most suitable for the region's socio-economic conditions, such as e.g. clean energy technologies..

# Focus topics



Transition governance and strategy

The participants of the exchange identified sufficiently and effectively engaging key stakeholder groups as one of the major challenges in planning for and implementing the Just Transition process. In a speed brainstorming exercise, they explored what tools work best for addressing private and public entities and including them in the social dialogue.

The pair also focused on sharing experiences with selecting and supporting the implementation of projects that can drive the just transition forward. A special emphasis was put on post-industrial site development and opportunities for both economic development as well as diversification.

## Study visit to Asturias, Spain

The delegations from Asturias and Silesia came together to share best practices and generate new ideas on how to overcome prevailing challenges, particularly concerning the lack of support for local economies and decreasing job perspectives for younger generations.

Key to a successful transition are **partnerships that allow all relevant stakeholder groups to take part in the transition**. Representatives from Asturias shared their experiences on collaborating with their Economic Development Agency (IDEPA) to support Asturian companies in generating new business activities via incubator networks and a business innovation centre. Participants highlighted the importance of bundling such activities and providing a “one-stop-shop” for businesses.

A **meeting with mayors of four mining municipalities located in Asturias** allowed the delegates from Silesia to engage in a lively discussion on common challenges but also success stories about developing former coal mining regions and municipalities. Examples included a co-working space created in a former mining site in Ibias to attract young residents interested in moving to rural areas due to the pandemic. Another example is the investment in infrastructure for the elderly such as a care centre for seniors in the municipality of Morcín.

The Silesian representatives presented **their successful post-industrial development projects**. Lighthouse projects include the industrial monuments route connecting 36 mining sites and other former industrial sites. A visit to a site of HUNOSA, Asturias’ only remaining mining company, introduced participants to geothermal projects as a method of developing post-mining areas.

### ASTURIAS (ES)

Status	Visiting region	Hosting region
<b>Main Actors</b>		Regional Ministry of Industry, Employment and Economic Development – Government of Asturias; Asturias Energy Foundation (FAEN); Economic Development Agency of the Principality of Asturias (IDEPA); Association of Coal Mining Mayors
<b>Shared insights</b>		Stakeholder engagement, forming partnerships, public funding schemes

### SILESIA (PL)

Status	Visiting region	Hosting region
<b>Main Actors</b>		City of Bytom; Association of mining communities (represented by Gieraltowice Commune); Marshal Office of the Silesian Voivodeship
<b>Shared insights</b>		Recultivation and revitalization from municipal, regional and societal perspectives

*The participants visiting HONUSA's site in Mieres.  
Photographer: Linda Beyschlag*



## Learnings

- ✓ While some regions are further along in the process of phasing out coal, they still face similar challenges in ensuring a Just Transition as regions that have only started or are in the middle of their coal phase-out.
- ✓ The key to getting all relevant government bodies and stakeholder groups involved is to start from a pragmatic standpoint and establish working relationships despite potential differences by focusing on the common challenges and solutions.
- ✓ Developing and implementing a TJTP requires long-term preparations, but dedicated people and patience are just as crucial.
- ✓ To ensure that local communities are taken along and for them not to lose faith in the process, it is important to show concrete and tangible results and impacts.

## Hands-on recommendations

- + Get everyone on board and ask all relevant government departments and stakeholder groups for their concrete input from the very start of Just Transition processes. This creates a sense of diversified ownership and responsibility.
- + Create and equip regional institutions or agencies to be able to serve as one-stop-shops that support stakeholders such as private companies in developing business opportunities which are in line with the Just Transition.
- + Encourage municipalities to cooperate in networks such as associations of mining communes. This can enable knowledge transfer, conserve capacities, especially in small municipalities, and strengthen the municipalities' position.
- + Identify and realise the potential of the specific circumstances in your region. Most mining regions face the challenge of an ageing population. This can be seen as an opportunity to invest in infrastructure for the elderly and projects such as care facilities and multi-generation.
- + Preserve the mining heritage that is shaping your region's society until today. By revitalising former mining sites and making them accessible to the public, you showcase that the transition process is possible, can have cost-effective, interesting and promising outcomes.



“It was very useful for us to discuss with our friends from Spain how they were building partnerships between municipalities, companies, and the regional authorities.”

**Michał Bieda**  
Deputy Mayor,  
City of Bytom, Poland



“The success of one region will mean a success for Europe. If one region can show that the transition is possible and is just, then everyone can follow suit.”

**María Belarmina Díaz Aguado**  
Director General of DG Energy,  
Mining and Repurposing, regional  
government of Asturias, Spain



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