



EU coal regions exchange programme

Exchange between Leipzig (DE) and Karlovy Vary (CZ)

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 two Central European regions. One of them, Leipzig, is quite advanced in its transition towards a just and low-carbon future, and the other, Karlovy Vary, is beginning its Just Transition process. Leipzig wants to phase-out coal by 2038 at the latest, in line with the German coal phase-out plan. Karlovy Vary plans to gradually exit coal in the next 10 years.

LEIPZIG (DE)

State of phasing out brown coal (lignite)

ONGOING

NO LONGER EXTRACTING

10.012
Coal workers employed*5

5
Coal mines*1,2

4
Power plants*3

44,6%
Share of coal-fired power generation**4

Phase-out date
2030/2038***

State of Just Energy Transition

Saxony is one of the three federal states over which the Lusatian and Central German lignite mining areas extend. As part of the project „Innovation Region Central Germany“, Saxony is developing strategies and projects for structural change. The state has recently (2022) adopted new plans for the Just Transition Fund, focusing on the promotion of projects for SMEs and research funding.

Leipzig is the fastest growing city in Germany. It has been very active in ensuring its social and economic development. Consequently, the economy is already broadly positioned, with the main clusters being the automotive, health and biotechnology industries.

KARLOVY VARY (CZ)

State of phasing out brown coal (lignite)

ONGOING

NO LONGER EXTRACTING

2.000
Coal workers employed7

1
Coal mine6,7

1
Power plant6

97%
Share of coal-fired power generation7

Phase-out date
2033

State of Just Energy Transition

The Karlovy Vary region is one of three regions in the Czech Republic to receive funding from the Just Transition Fund, which will issue first project calls starting at the end of 2022. Funds will be used to support the transition of businesses to low-carbon operations, the development of new renewable energy sources, provide jobs for workers leaving the coal industry, improve public services and restore landscapes affected by mining. Karlovy Vary is a tourism and industry region, striving to balance the needs of these two sectors, while transitioning to new energy sources and economic development opportunities.

* The numbers include the combined numbers of the extracting mines, the operating plants, and the employed workers in the Lusatian and the Central German mining areas.

** The number refers to the amount of coal fired generation in the state of Saxony.

*** The city of Leipzig wants to phase-out coal already by 2030 at the latest (it is one of the 100 smart and climate neutral cities across Europe). The phase-out in the surrounding central German lignite district is to be finalised by 2038 at the latest.

Main challenges

- Increasing unemployment rates in affected regions call for massive job and re-skilling programmes.
- Growing migration of young people from mining to urban areas makes rural development and community revitalisation projects increasingly important.
- Just Transition projects require private investments in mining regions, which is currently lacking in Karlovy Vary and was previously lacking in Leipzig.

Focus topics



Economic diversification and regional development

Representatives of start-up incubators explored how to support innovative new companies and enable the proliferation of an innovation economy. They shared experiences on how to set up effective start-up incubators as well as leverage public and academic resources to support innovation programs. Both regions also emphasized the opportunity former mining sites can provide for supporting new industries, particularly tourism. They visited several re-naturalised open-cast mining areas as well as industrial zones.



Transition governance and strategy

Creating local networks and infrastructure to leverage renewable energy and energy efficiency technologies is a key topic in both regions. The participants visited a local municipal utility. They discussed how to build local networks to support participating companies to reduce energy demand and CO₂ emissions.

Study visit to Leipzig, Germany – agenda and on-site highlights

The city of Leipzig, Germany welcomed the region of Karlovy Vary, Czech Republic for a two-day exchange visit.

Participants addressed the need for new economic development strategies to address de-population and support the growth of new industries. Site visits were underpinned by discussions with best-practice examples on the ground. Participants visited local start-up incubators which have focused on supporting new, innovative companies that stay in the region once they are established.

Another topic discussed during the exchange was approaches for revitalising former open cast mines and industrial zones. Participants visited several former mining sites that have since been redeveloped into public and private lakes and tourist areas. They reflected on the regional coordination efforts, planning processes, and redevelopment framework's necessary to build consensus for these projects. The delegations also visited a former industrial area known as the Plagwitz district, which has since been revitalised with a focus on addressing de-population and making Leipzig an attractive place to live. Given the importance of retaining and attracting innovative companies and talent to the region, participants highlighted the importance of both citizen engagement in planning processes, as well as an emphasis on making green spaces and local infrastructure that supports citizens well-being and quality of life (bike lanes, urban recreation areas, etc.).

LEIPZIG (DE)

Status	Visiting region	Hosting region
Main Actors	Municipality of Leipzig, Metropolregion Mitteldeutschland Management GmbH (regional association)	
Shared insights	Economic development strategies, regional and urban planning and development, regional climate protection strategies	

KARLOVY VARY (CZ)

Status	Visiting region	Hosting region
Main Actors		Karlovy Vary Chamber of Commerce, Karlovy Vary regional authority, SUAS coal mining company
Shared insights	Attracting private investment, building up tourism, communicating with the local public, coal mine re-development	

Visit of the Plagwitz district as an example of successful urban renewal in Leipzig. Photo taken by: Linda Beyschlag



Learnings

- ✓ To build a strong base for the Just Energy Transition process, effective collaboration between public authorities (local, regional, and national), businesses, educational institutions and civil society organisations need to start with co-creating a vision for the future and end with the implementation of complex projects.
- ✓ Leveraging existing history and heritage of the region will help to attract new industries and businesses to the region.
- ✓ Developing an innovation economy mandates a well-developed incubator infrastructure, from physical spaces to funding and mentoring programs, to ensure businesses take root and succeed.
- ✓ Climate protection projects must go hand in hand with projects focused on enhancing energy efficiency to ensure all energy produced from renewable projects is used as efficiently and effectively as possible.

Hands-on recommendations

- + Ensure citizens affected by coal phase-out and regional redevelopment are a part of the planning and decision process to assure them that their needs are being addressed.
- + When creating a transformation strategy, focus on setting priorities in line with a vision. Further, ensure continuity in actions and projects undertaken as part of the Just Transition process.
- + Seek opportunities to preserve former mining sites to support the development of other industries, for example tourism.
- + Leverage existing academic and public funding to support the development of innovation economies and attract investment.



“It was great to get inspiration from around the corner and so close to our region. I’m looking forward to further inspiring each other going forward.”

Simon Barczy
Head of Karlovy vary Innovation Committee, Karlovy Vary region, Czech Republic



“We have very similar challenges. It’s very informative to see how neighbouring regions are addressing similar problems at different stages of the transition.”

Julia Mayer
Metropolregion Mitteldeutschland Management GmbH, Leipzig, Germany

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3 LEAG (2022): Geschäftsfeld Kraftwerke. Online: <https://www.leag.de/de/geschaeftsfelder/kraftwerke/>.
4 Freistaat Sachsen (2022): Energiebilanz 2019 für Sachsen. Online: https://www.statistik.sachsen.de/download/presse-2022/mi_statistik-sachsen_049-2022_energiebilanz-2019.pdf.

5 Statistik der Kohlenwirtschaft e.V. (2019): Datenübersichten zu Steinkohle und Braunkohle im Überblick. Braunkohle im Überblick (online).
6 Climate Action Network Europe (2022): Coal Plant Database. Online: <https://beyond-coal.eu/database/>.
7 EU (2020): Regional Profile. Karlovy Vary. Online: https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-07/karlovy_vary_regional_profile_-_start_technical_assistance_0.pdf.



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