

### Engaging Youth in the just transition process

## exchangeEU: Insights from Youth representatives during a study visit implemented in Western Macedonia (Greece)

From April 19-20, Youth representatives from Western Macedonia, Greece, Moravia-Silesia, Czech Republic, and Ida Virumaa, Estonia gathered in Florina, Greece to discuss effective strategies for engaging young people in the just transition process and the role they play in project implementation and skills development. The transition to a low-carbon economy required the active engagement and support of local communities, with young people playing a crucial role as it directly impacted their future.

#### Results in a nutshell

#### Embrace digital platforms and gamification and create an inclusive system:

The study visit highlighted the importance of using digital platforms and gamification as a means to effectively engage young people in the just transition. Online tools, communication platforms and gamified experiences provided accessible and interactive platforms for young people to contribute, share their concerns and actively participate in shaping the transition. To enhance young people's participation in the just transition, decision-makers need to address their specific needs and aspirations. This includes improving representation in decision-making processes, providing mentorship, co-working spaces, and opportunities for engagement in mainstream media, and empowering young people to contribute their perspectives. By promoting inclusivity, we create pathways for active participation in shaping the policies and initiatives that shape their future.

# Equipping young people for the modern workforce and understanding and addressing the needs of young people:

Investment in study programmes, re-skilling opportunities and cultural exchanges was identified as critical to equipping young people with the skills needed for the modern workforce. Supporting local talent development and encouraging professionals to stay in their home countries stimulated local economic growth and prosperity. Policymakers and community leaders need to proactively engage with young people to understand their specific needs and concerns. In coal regions, for example, air pollution and job opportunities are pressing issues for young people. By involving young people in decision-making processes, we can identify and address these concerns effectively. This representation ensures that the just transition takes into account the aspirations and well-being of young people, leading to more inclusive and sustainable outcomes.

#### Creating a supportive environment for growth - the challenges and the way forward

To prevent brain drain and build a sustainable future, participants highlighted the importance of creating an environment that supports young people's growth and well-being. This includes providing access to resources, social opportunities and support networks. By promoting entrepreneurship, establishing mentoring programmes and investing in local businesses and energy communities.

Recognising the challenges ahead, it was acknowledged that the existing system is not adequately designed to meet the needs of young people and could potentially exclude and alienate them from the just transition. Efforts must be made to ensure that governance structures become more participatory and allow for active involvement in decision-making processes. Investment in local businesses, energy communities and skills development were seen as crucial to creating a thriving ecosystem to support the transition.