



Summary report

Just Transition Platform Conference

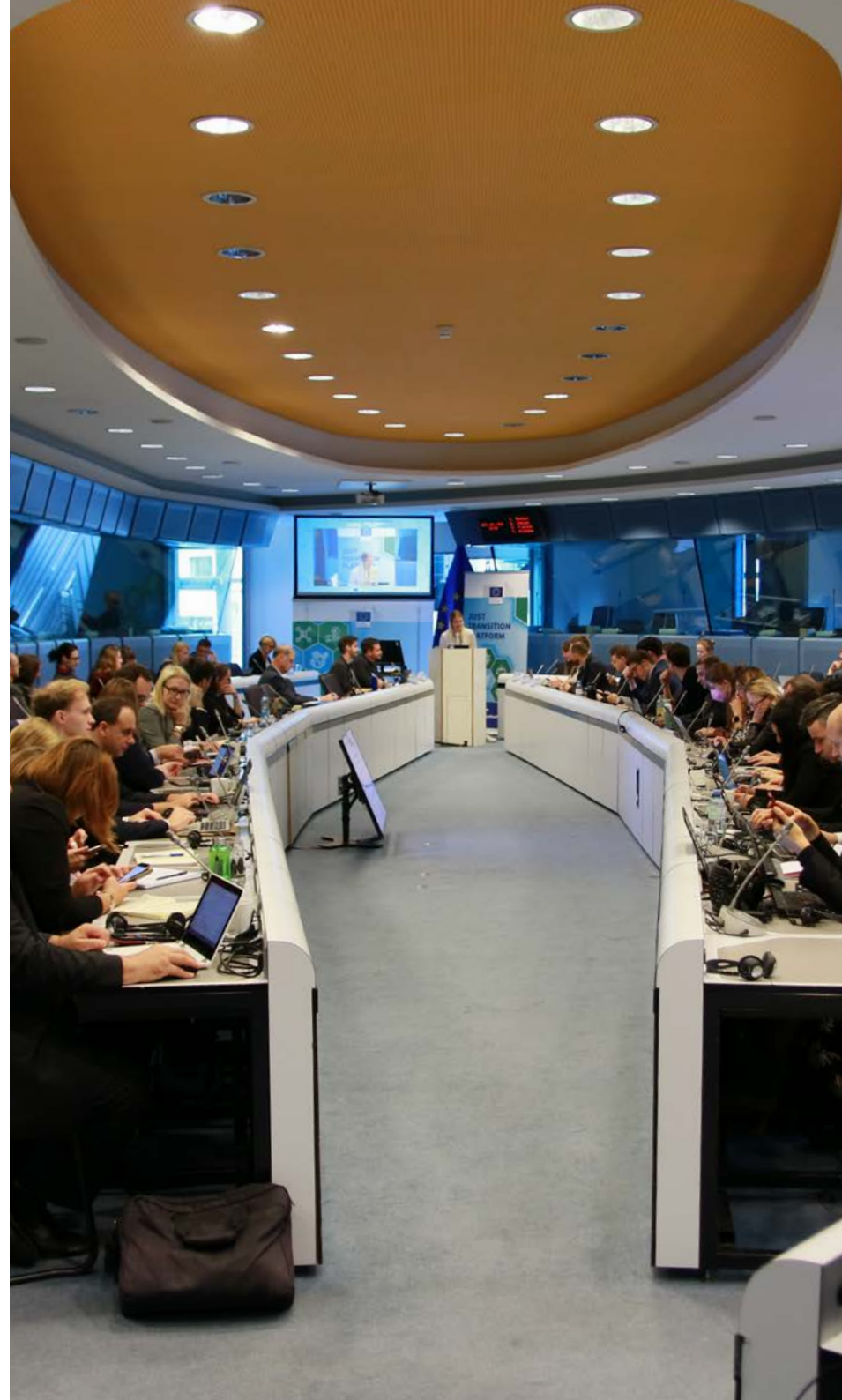
Summary of the Coal Regions in Transition sessions and highlights from the three-day event.

This October, the coal+ region community came together in Brussels for the 6th Just Transition Platform Conference (JTP Conference), co-organised by DG REGIO and DG ENER. This conference came at a unique moment for stakeholders from coal, peat, oil shale and carbon-intensive regions across the EU, when the Just Transition Fund programming moves from planning to a phase of concrete implementation.

Throughout the three-day event, discussions spanned a number of specific topics and solutions including energy poverty, the path to climate neutrality, and the role of region-to-region exchange.

This slide deck summarises the main takeaways from the Coal Regions in Transition sessions at the event. For a full report click the link below.

➔ [Just Transition Platform Conference report](#)

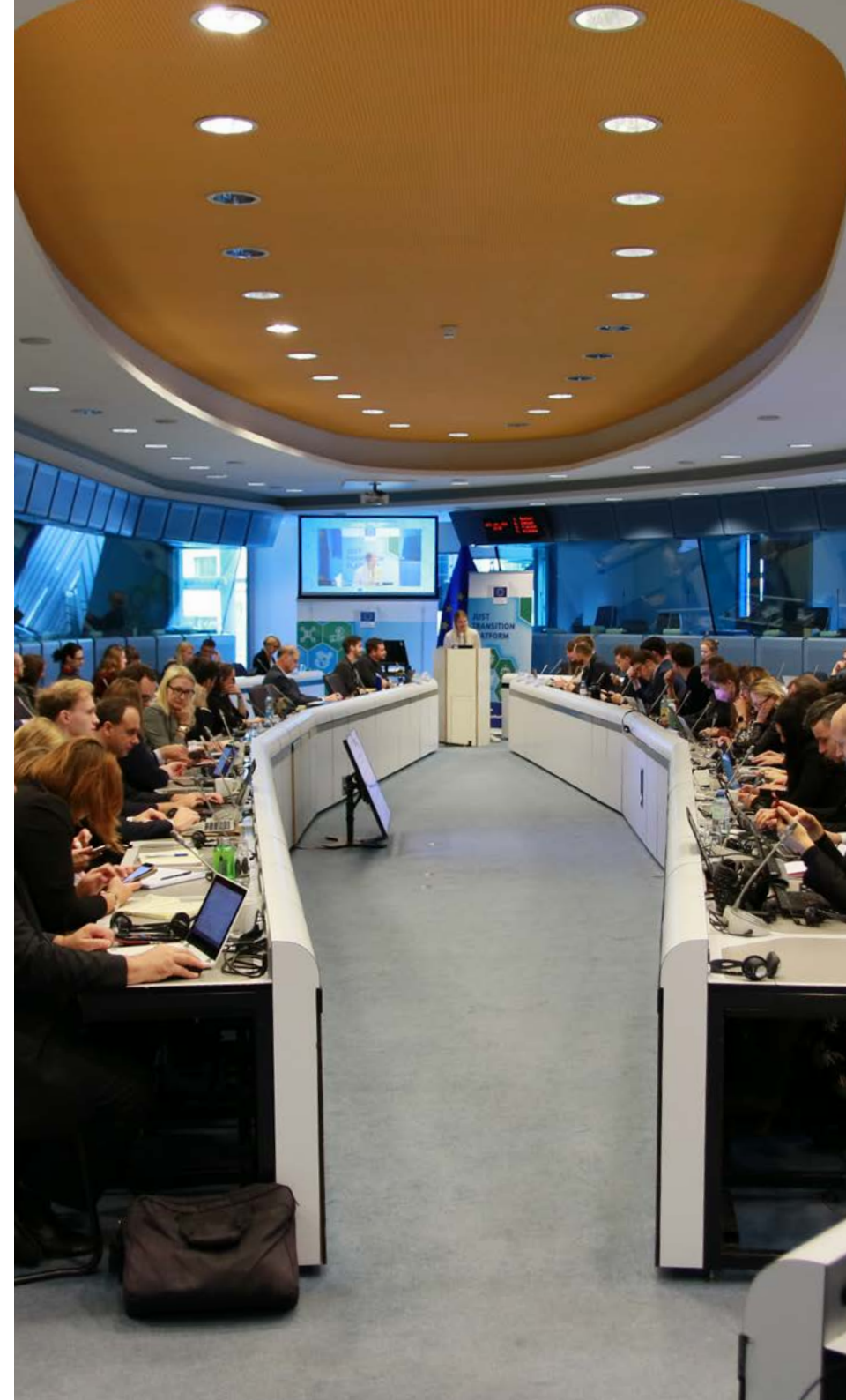


DAY 1: THE LAY OF THE LAND

The first day examined the current state of affairs, including keynote speeches from Commissioners Ferreira and Simson that touched on the unprecedented challenges faced by coal regions in light of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the ongoing energy crisis, as well as the European funds and mechanisms available to support just transition even in light of these challenges. Inputs from representatives from coal regions, researchers and local politicians rounded out the picture.

A selection of initiatives and programmes – such as exchange and technical assistance opportunities – that are available to support regions in transition were presented, alongside their proven impacts.

Finally, day one highlighted some of the technological opportunities in district heating, energy storage, and solar-thermal heat that are available to help coal+ regions transition to clean energy regions.





If anyone is left behind
in the process of energy
transition, then we have
missed the point.

Kadri Simson
EU Commissioner for Energy



DAY 1

Opening Session: Accelerating just transition in times of crisis

Commissioner Ferreira highlighted that there are 100 billion EUR available to support just transition, and that local and bottom-up ideas will be crucial to make sure that support translates to a successful transition.

Commissioner Simson highlighted that, even in light of the crises we face, no EU Member State has cancelled their phase-out commitments. This reinforces that renewables remain the best solution for Europe.

Panellists pointed to the reality of just transition for the most vulnerable communities and how this group is growing. This brought the conversation to the topic of energy poverty, and the triad challenges of energy prices, climate crisis, and security of supply. The best approach, according to the panel, is to avoid one-size-fits-all solutions, and rather to work with locals to develop regionally-specific plans. Furthermore, the social and employment implications of transition cannot be underestimated.

➔ Session recording

**MODERATOR**

Sasha Twining, BBC Global

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

Elisa Ferreira, Commissioner of Cohesion and Reforms

Kadri Simson, Commissioner for Energy

ADDITIONAL PANEILLISTS

Susana Solís Pérez, MEP, Renew Europe Group

Rainer Robra, Minister of State for Europe, and Culture and Head of the State Chancellery of Saxony-Anhalt

Luc Triangle, General Secretary of IndustriALL

Chris Foulds, Associate Professor at Global Sustainability Institute, Anglia Ruskin University

DAY 1

Updates from the Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition

Facilitators and beneficiaries of four technical assistance programmes for coal+ regions – namely: exchangeEU, TARGET, World Bank Support for Poland, and START – spoke about these various support schemes, their open calls, and their proven impacts.

The exchangeEU programme implements exchanges among coal+ regions. A representative spoke to its impacts in the region of Northern Hungary, and speakers advertised a second call for participating regions, which closed on 7 November 2022.

TARGET is a joint EIB and DG ENER instrument on transition project preparation and development. SUAS Group (CZ) shared how it helped them prepare technical documents and identify possible funding sources for their clean energy project.

The World Bank Support Programme in Lower Silesia provided support focused on economic diversification, helping the region create an economic diversification strategy to generate new jobs and bring in investors.

START technical assistance provides tailored support over a 6- to 10-month period across a number of topics, for regions in various stages of transition. A new call to receive START is open until 16 December.

➔ [Session recording](#)

**MODERATOR**

Adela Tesarova, DG ENER

SPEAKERS

Emma Krause, Guidehouse (exchangeEU)

Zsuzsa Piskóti-Kovács, Hungarian Coal Commission Secretariat (exchangeEU)

Sarunas Bruzge, EIB (TARGET)

Jiří Štěrbá, SUAS Group (TARGET)

Magdalena Chawuła, World Bank Group (World Bank Support for Poland)

Grzegorz Macko, Lower Silesian Voivodeship (World Bank Support for Poland)

Robert Pollock, CRIT Secretariat (START)

DAY 1

Innovative clean energy technologies for coal regions

Felicia Aminoff, a representative from BloombergNEF, set the stage by presenting her findings from modelling different energy technologies. Modelling shows the uncertainty of new technologies, whose competitiveness and cost-effectiveness depends on local regulations and topography.

Next, three clean energy technology projects for coal regions were presented, covering district heating, energy storage, and solar-thermal heat.

A geothermal district heating process was applied in two dismantled coal mines in Asturias (ES). By deploying geothermal for centralised district heating, the project enhanced efficiency, space availability, and cost-effectiveness.

In another example, mine shafts are being used to store energy using gravity. The technology allows for a more long-lasting storage when compared to alternatives like batteries available today.

Finally, a solar thermal district heating system was presented, which was able to not only provide a green energy solution, but also enabled the temporary shutdown of a biomass boiler for maintenance to improve its efficiency in turn.

➔ [Session recording](#)

**MODERATOR**

Timon Wehnert, CRIT Secretariat

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Felicia Aminoff, BloombergNEF

ADDITIONAL SPEAKERS

Noel Canto, Hunosa, District Heating Barredo Colliery

Charlie Blair, Gravitricity, Energy Storage Gravitricity

Nicolas Graveline, Newheat, Solar Thermal Heat



You cannot impose anything top-down. You have to listen to the community. We have to listen to you, learn from you, and listen to your expectations.

Elisa Ferreira

Commissioner for Cohesion and Reforms,
European Commission



DAY 2: LOOKING LOCAL

Several sessions on day two of the Just Transition Platform conference looked to the local level.

First, a session on energy poverty showcased both the mounting challenge of energy poverty, and the ways that local governments, leaders, and grassroots groups can (and are) facing this challenge.

Then, the event turned to climate-neutral cities, diving into the European Commission's so-called 'Cities Mission', and hearing from three cities that are currently jumping from coal+ cities to climate-neutral cities.





Through the exchange with Zasavje (SI) and Moravia-Silesia (CZ), we realised that coal regions are quite different, but our challenges are the same in so many ways.

Dr. Zsuzsa Piskóti-Kovács

Head of Coal Commission Secretariat

Coal Commission Secretariat, Eszterházy Károly Catholic University



DAY 2

Tackling energy poverty in times of crisis

The session opened with an overview of EU policy responses to energy poverty, which span renovation, funding, informational tools for consumers, and more. These address three major pillars of energy poverty: (1) energy efficiency; (2) the energy crisis; and (3) low incomes. Mr. Ailio made clear that energy poverty must be part of all climate mitigation and adaptation agendas.

Panelists explored the roles of local authorities, multi-level coordination, grassroots actors, and energy cooperatives in addressing energy poverty. The discussion highlighted, for example, that when national and local policies are not aligned, EU funding can fill critical gaps for municipalities.

Panelists showcased one democratic solution to help address energy poverty: energy communities and cooperatives. While the merits of these communities – which are not exclusively profit-driven and for which energy producers (the community) have clear incentives to keep prices low – were made clear, discussion among the panelist also made it apparent that national policies must be more supportive in order to increase their impact. This discussion further highlighted the need for more supportive regulatory environments for Power Purchase Agreements.

Energy communities were contrasted with the status-quo, in which centralised energy companies are making enormous and growing profit margins, even in the face of energy poverty. The session closed with Mr. Ailio sharing EC proposals to combat this discrepancy between energy prices for consumers and profits for companies.

➔ [Session recording](#)

**MODERATOR**

Carlo Della Libera, CRIT Secretariat

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Eero Ailio, DG ENER Advisor

PANELLISTS

Jeppe Jensen, Energy Poverty Advisory Hub

Piotr Masłowski, Deputy Mayor of Rybnik (PL)

Martha Myers, Campaign Consultant on Energy Poverty

Josh Roberts, REScoop Project

DAY 2

Climate-neutral cities and JTP conference closing

A keynote address introduced the EU Mission on Climate-neutral and Smart Cities, also known as the Cities Mission. The Mission brings together cities of different sizes and contexts, all of whom are committed to being climate-neutral by 2030.

This was complemented by an introduction to the “Climate City Contracts” model used by Mission cities to bring climate-neutrality to fruition.

Experiences were then shared from three cities that are all part of the Cities Mission, and are all either coal+ towns (Velenje (SL) and Kozani (EL)), or in coal+ regions (Umeå (SE)). Umeå’s experience shed light on the importance of developing everything collaboratively; people in Velenje feel supported by the EC to make the jump from coal to climate-neutral; and Kozani is moving from being a lignite hub to an innovation hub.

The discussion pointed to the fact that, given the massive job and cultural losses that mining regions potentially face, transitioning to climate-neutrality is a necessity! Cities’ very survival depends on creating sustainable, diverse, long-lasting new economies. The conversation also pointed to the immense potential of city-to-city cooperation – both within and beyond the region in which the city is located.

➔ [Session recording](#)

**MODERATOR**

Carsten Rothballer, ICLEI Europe

KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Patrick Child, Deputy Director General, DG ENER

PANELLISTS

Janet Ågren, Deputy Mayor of Umeå (SE)

Iztok Mori, Head of Municipality Administration, Municipality of Velenje (SI)

Lazaros Maloutas, Mayor of Kozani (GR)

CLOSING SPEAKER

Balbina Gluza-Czyczerska, Just Transition Platform Coordinator, DG REGIO



We need to be visionary because we are trying to achieve a complete, holistic, systemic change.

Miłosława Stępień

Just Transition Campaign Coordinator
CEE Bankwatch Network



CLOSING OBSERVATIONS

As pointed out by closing speaker Balbina Gluza-Czyczerska, Just Transition Platform Coordinator at DG REGIO, the conference as a whole showcased the huge amount of passion and engagement from the coal+ community.

Europe is entering the implementation phase of the Just Transition Fund, and the current energy crisis should not distract stakeholders from pushing forward a just transition.

