

## **Online dialogue with stakeholders on Just Transition and decarbonisation aspects of the European Green Deal (by European Commission - Directorate of Energy and Commission Representation in Bulgaria)**

Tuesday 10 May 2022 – 10:30-12:30

*43 participants took part in the dialogue, among them representatives of the authorities, including the chief of the cabinet of the Deputy PM responsible for climate change policies, energy companies, associations, NGOs, and trade unions.*

In the first part of the dialogue, the European Commission (represented by an expert from DG Energy, Unit C.1.) gave a broad overview of European Green Deal as a road map to a sustainable economy, underlying that its goal is to make sure no one is left behind. The participants received a detailed picture of the funds earmarked for Bulgaria from various programmes and instruments.

A special emphasis was placed on the Just Transition Mechanism, its geographical scope, and funding, as well as on the activities supported by the JTF and those that are not supported, like fossil fuels, nuclear energy, or companies in financial distress. The presentation made it clear that the Just Transition Fund (JTF) should be viewed as a part of a larger ecosystem promoting the energy and economic transition, which includes also the cohesion funds, InvestEU, NextGeneration Europe, and the EIB's Public Sector Loan Facility. All those instruments work in synergy and provide for a wide scope of possible policy actions. However, as the presentation underlined, it is important to follow a strict demarcation of funds to ensure complementarity, not duplication.

The Commission also outlined the upcoming steps in the process – finalising the national territorial plans by the national authorities, after consultations with the stakeholders, approval by the European Commission, payments from the JTF, and implementation of national plans. Answering a question from the participants, the Commission confirmed that the 2021 appropriations from the JTF would be lost if plans are not approved and appropriations are not allocated until the end of 2022

In the second part of the dialogue, representatives of the authorities outlined their plans to publish the territorial just transition plans. They underlined that the Commission could play a vital role as a bridge-building force in the communication between central authorities, stakeholders, syndicates, and local communities. The representative of the Ministry of Environment called for the need to change the narrative and openly address the consequences of global warming on both energy and the economy as a way to promote the European Green Deal.

In the third part of the dialogue, the stakeholders raised the following issues:

a) The need for thorough communication of the territorial plans. Many of them felt that the authorities have proceeded with the adoption of the National Recovery and Resilience Plan (NRRP) without a proper involvement of the stakeholders.

- b) Some stakeholders questioned the European Green Deal in the context of Russia's invasion of Ukraine and the current high energy prices, while others saw it as the right answer to the challenges in the energy sector.
- c) Some stakeholders required more information on the Modernisation fund. Bulgaria has not yet taken any advantage of it.
- d) Lack of a calendar and official information that can give in-depth insight into funding opportunities.
- e) Some stakeholders questioned the government's approach to the NRRP, claiming it doesn't contain a convincing plan on how to decrease emissions.
- f) Many stakeholders underlined the absence of a clear plan for retraining employees in the coal industry.
- h) Representatives of electro distribution companies underlined that without access to grants, they face difficulties generating funds to modernise the electricity grid. The alternative would be to raise prices, but it would hurt the consumers.

Overall, the event brought a lively discussion with many questions raised. The general conclusion is that stakeholders need more information, especially on the territorial plans, as well as good examples from the other Member States. Many participants thanked the European Commission for the organization of the energy dialogues and encouraged it to continue organising such events as it is a very good platform to exchange views.