



**European Committee
of the Regions**

**Third meeting of the Just Transition Platform
CoR Multi-Level Dialogue on Just Transition
28 April 2021**

Summary and conclusions

1. The CoR multi-level dialogue on just transition within the Just Transition Platform

Aims and objectives of the dialogue

The Multi-Level Dialogue on Just Transition was held during the third meeting of the Just Transition Platform¹ as a joint undertaking between the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and the European Committee of the Regions. The idea behind the event was to create and maintain dialogue on a Just Transition² between all levels of governance, from the international to the local level.

Around 240 unique viewers joined the event via the Just Transition Platform website and the direct link via Interactio. At the moment of writing, an additional 320 viewers have seen the YouTube livestream and recording.

Juan ESPADAS CEJAS (ES/PES), Chair of the CoR Working Group on the "Green Deal Going Local" and Mayor of Seville, opened the discussion and moderated the event until 11 a.m. Mr Espadas briefly presented the work of the European Committee of the Regions on the Green Deal and underlined the role of inclusiveness in a Just Transition.

Attendees:

Moderator: Juan ESPADAS CEJAS, CoR (ES/PES), Mayor of Seville, Spain

- Dorothee ALLAIN-DUPREE, Head of Unit, Decentralisation, Public Investment and Subnational Finance, Centre for Entrepreneurship, SMEs, Regions and Cities, Regional Development and Multi-Level Governance Division, OECD
- Peter BALIK, Director-General for Innovation, Strategic investments and Analyses, Ministry of Investments, Regional Development and Digitalisation, Republic of Slovakia
- Jan OLBRYCHT MEP (PL/EPP), European Parliament rapporteur on the MFF 2021-2027³

¹ https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/just-transition-mechanism/just-transition-platform_en

² https://ec.europa.eu/info/strategy/priorities-2019-2024/european-green-deal/actions-being-taken-eu/just-transition-mechanism_en

³ https://www.europarl.europa.eu/doceo/document/A-9-2020-0260_EN.html

- Normunds POPENS, Deputy Director-General, DG REGIO, European Commission
- Jakub CHEŁSTOWSKI, CoR (PL/ECR), Regional President of Silesia
- Florin-Tiberiu IACOB-RIDZI (RO/RenewE), Mayor of Petrosani, Romania
- Anna HETMAN, Mayor of Jastrzebie-Zdroj, Poland, Forum of Mayors on Just Transition, represented by Agnieszka Pabich, Director of Strategy, Development and Investor Service
- Peter WEHRHEIM, Head of Unit "Food Systems and Bioeconomy" at the European Commission, DG Research and Innovation
- Javier VILA FERRERO, CoR (ES/PES), Legislative Assembly of Asturias, Spain
- Klaus FREYTAG, Special representative of Land Brandenburg for Lusatia, Germany
- Giovanni de SANTI, Director for Sustainable Resources, JRC, European Commission, represented by Giampiero Genovese, Head of Unit for Economics of Agriculture
- Michał BIEDA, Deputy Mayor of Bytom, Poland, Forum of Mayors on Just Transition
- Caroline DWANE STANLEY, CoR (IE/Greens), Laois County Council
- Vojko OBERSNEL, CoR (HR/PES), Mayor of Rijeka, CoR Rapporteur on the Just Transition Fund (JTF)⁴
- Jácint HORVÁTH, CoR (HU/PES), Nagykanizsa, CoR Rapporteur on the Bioeconomy⁵

2. Summary of the first CoR multi-level dialogue on just transition

2.1. Discussion on territorial just transition plans

The first of the two sessions in the event was devoted to the territorial just transition plans. Opening the discussion, Dorothee ALLAIN-DUPREE (OECD) touched upon the importance of multi-level governance, the territorial dimension of the carbon neutral transition, the role of and challenges for subnational authorities in the Just Transition (link to the presentations given or publications on the matter).

Peter BALIK, representing Slovakia, shared details about the drafting of the national just transition plan and the Slovak model for a just transition, which included additional technical assistance for projects. Mr Balik presented the national priorities and milestones achieved so far, as well as Slovakia's roadmap for project identification and implementation:



⁴ <https://webapi2016.COR.europa.eu/v1/documents/cor-2020-00418-00-02-ac-tra-en.docx/content>

⁵ <https://webapi2016.COR.europa.eu/v1/documents/cor-2018-06433-00-00-ac-tra-en.docx/content>

Jan OLBRYCHT (PL/EPP), Member of the European Parliament and rapporteur on the EU's multiannual financial framework, presented his remarks in the context of the European Green Deal and the EU budget in general, recommending that a Just Transition be treated as a part of the bigger picture of achieving the goals of the Green Deal. He underlined the important distinction to be drawn between extraction and use of coal. For the transition to be just, the transformation under the JTF should focus first on coal production regions; he added that the preparation of territorial just transition plans would test whether there was the political will to implement multi-level governance in practice.

Normunds POPENS, Deputy Director-General of DG REGIO, highlighted the importance of involving all levels of governance in the design and implementation of the Just Transition Fund, which should not be seen as a kind of "top-up" to cohesion funding. The main commitment remains to phase out coal and reduce CO₂ emissions in such a way as to allow local communities in the specific coal regions a just transition.

Jakub CHEŁSTOWSKI (PL/ECR), President of the Polish region of Silesia and CoR member, said that the transition should be carried out in a way that was the least painful for the public and he presented various regional initiatives and programmes. He called for close cooperation between businesses, the general public, local authorities and government.

Florin-Tiberiu IACOB-RIDZI, Mayor of Petrosani, Romania, presented the work being carried out in the Romanian coal valley in his area, and repeated a view shared by all the panellists, namely that the transition to a climate-neutral economy had to be fair in all respects.

Agnieszka PABICH, on behalf of the Mayor of Jastrzębie-Zdrój, Poland, emphasised how important it was to create good job opportunities in regions in transition, as previous jobs in coal mining were still held in high regard.

2.2. The possible role of bio-based industries as part of just transition strategies

The second session of the event built upon the first session, looking into the thematic orientation of the territorial just transition plans with an emphasis on bio-based industries. The idea for this workshop came from the CoR's involvement in the European Bioeconomy Forum and its discussions on better linking the bioeconomy strategy of the EU with efforts by the regions to prepare the territorial just transition plans.

Peter WEHRHEIM, HoU at the European Commission's DG Research and Innovation, presented the potential of the bioeconomy in the context of the Green Deal, also presenting the EU's strategy and action plan.

Bioeconomy in Europe

-  Agriculture
-  Forestry
-  Fishing and aquaculture
-  Manufacture of food and beverages and other agro-manufacturing
-  Manufacture of bio-based textiles
-  Manufacture of wood products and furniture
-  Manufacture of paper
-  Manufacture of bio-based chemicals, pharmaceuticals, plastics and rubber (excluding biofuels)
-  Manufacture of liquid biofuels
-  Production of bioelectricity

Turnover - EUR 2.2 trillion



Jobs - 17.5 million people



Javier VILA FERRERO, CoR member from the Spanish region of Asturias, emphasised the fact that the EU's bioeconomy strategy needed to reach the ground level in the regions, stressing the need to ensure more consistency between the various financing programmes and to maintain the geographical scope of the JTF. He also shared experiences from ongoing just transition initiatives in Asturias.

Klaus FREYTAG, Special representative of the Prime Minister for Lusatia, spoke about the challenges and the prospects for the coal region and the importance of a bottom-up approach for defining the thematic priorities of the territorial just transition plans. Mr Freytag shared a very detailed account of JTF deployment in Lusatia, presenting the mission statement for the region, implementation at local level and the prospects for the future. Mr Freytag specifically underlined the need for cross-border cooperation in the coal region of Lusatia, spreading across Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic in order to be able to address the economic and social dimensions of structural change.

Giampiero GENOVESE, Head of Unit from the European Commission's Joint Research Centre, gave a presentation on the potential of biorefineries for regions in transition. Biorefineries were well suited to support the transition to carbon neutrality and sustainability as they had qualities matching the needs also of coal regions and the targeted impact of the JTF: replacing fossil fuels, creating growth and jobs up- and downstream in rural areas, and creating products with smaller environmental footprints.

Michał BIEDA, Deputy Mayor of Bytom, from the Polish Forum of Mayors on Just Transition, presented past and present challenges and presented the revitalisation programme that was currently being implemented.

Caroline DWANE STANLEY, CoR member from the Midlands region in Ireland, shared with the audience the work being done on the territorial just transition plan and the Midlands' ambition to lead by example and become a green region after the closure of the peat extraction plant, based on a bioeconomy and low-carbon businesses.

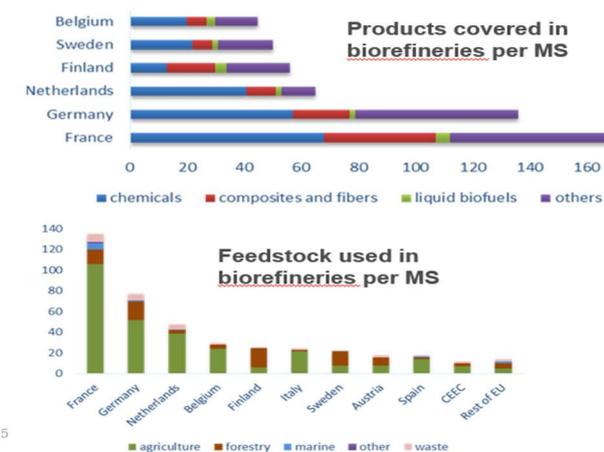
In his concluding remarks, the CoR rapporteur on the JTF, Mr OBERSNEL, gave an overview of the work accomplished so far, and the CoR Rapporteur on Bioeconomy, Mr HORVATH, underlined the potential for bio-based industries and the bioeconomy for just transition and invited cities and regions to be creative and innovative, to diversify their efforts and to work towards a true grassroots' approach.

3. Conclusions

The following conclusions were drawn at the end of the meeting:

- Involvement of local and regional authorities is crucial for achieving the EU's targets for carbon neutrality and greenhouse reduction; territorial just transition plans and related projects must be carried out with coordination between all levels of governance
- The focus of the JTF should continue to be on the coal, lignite, peat and oil shale regions and not as additional cohesion funding for all regions; the JTF has to be viewed in the context of the Green Deal and all EU investment spending
- The emphasis in the transition away from coal should continue to be placed on the transition being a just one for the public and communities, especially in the context of programming and project implementation; Transition to carbon neutrality still poses significant challenges for local and regional authorities

Biorefineries – a regional call



- Complementarity with other funds is a very important element for implementation of the JTF to achieve its targets; it remains an instrument for the complementary funding of coal regions in transition
- In the context of the Green Deal, bio-based industries offer viable possibilities for complementing territorial just transition strategies; a more integrated approach to different EU policies and programmes for transition regions is needed to create more synergies between JTF funding and other EU Instruments such as Horizon
- Panellists asked for more flexibility and more aid intensity, bringing the process closer to the regions.

Further comments and suggestions for future multi-level dialogues can be sent to the COTER secretariat (coter@cor.europa.eu, dimo.stoyanov@cor.europa.eu).

4. Resources and further reading

4.1. Presentations and meeting recordings (EN version only):

<https://jtp.app.swapcard.com/event/just-transition-platform-meeting/planning/UGxhbm5pbmdfMzk5ODY4>

4.2. Briefings and studies:

The Just Transition Fund – EPRS Briefing:

[http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/646180/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)646180_EN.pdf](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/646180/EPRS_BRI(2020)646180_EN.pdf)
 PERNILLA JOURDE, Agnieszka WIDUTO

The public sector loan facility under the Just Transition Mechanism – EPRS Briefing:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/659428/EPRS_BRI\(2020\)659428_EN.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/RegData/etudes/BRIE/2020/659428/EPRS_BRI(2020)659428_EN.pdf),
 Sidonia MAZUR, Christiaan VAN LIEROP

The Socio-Ecological Transformation of the European Economy – Trade Union Perspectives

Lukas HOCHSCHEIDT, Susanne WIXFORTH and Jan Philipp ROHDE, FRIEDRICH-EBERT-STIFTUNG: <http://library.fes.de/pdf-files/id/ipa/17719.pdf>

From coal to low carbon – CEPS Publication

Irina KUSTOVA, Christian EGENHOFER, Jorge NÚÑEZ FERRER, Julian POPOV
<https://www.ceps.eu/ceps-publications/from-coal-to-low-carbon/>

Chemical and material driven biorefineries in the EU and beyond - Database and dashboard visualisation; EC, 2021; <https://op.europa.eu/en/publication-detail/-/publication/58ed13ee-ac82-11eb-9767-01aa75ed71a1/language-en>