



Just Transition Platform – Project fiche:

REVIEWENDE

This document is part of a series presenting information and lessons learned on policy approaches at national, regional or local level supporting a just transition to a climate-neutral economy. The Just Transition Platform (JTP) assists EU Member States and regions to unlock the support in this transition. Visit the JTP website: Visit the JTP website: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/just-transition-fund/just-transition-platform_en

Member State:

Germany

Region:

N/A

Sector:

Coal, energy and regional restructuring

Total project budget (€):

10 million

Financing conditions (co-financing rate):

10 %

Sources of funding:

No EU funding

National funding:

German Structural Enhancement Act

Regional funding:

No regional funding

Duration:

48 months

Responsible Managing Authority/Agency:

German Ministry for Economic Affairs and Climate Action

Summary

The Revierwende project is the central contribution of the German trade union movement to ensure worker participation and the representation of their interests in the process of phasing out coal mining and coal-based energy production. It was created with the support of the Federal Ministry of Economics and began work in October 2021. The projects main goals are:

- strengthening employee participation in the structural development of the coalfields;
- providing an inclusive approach with outreach beyond trade unions and work councils and the core energy sector;
- providing knowledge transfer of good practices across the coal regions and beyond.

The project is cross-sectoral and inter-regional. The four main coal regions in Germany are involved in the project: Lusatian coalfield; Central German coalfield; the Rhenish coalfield; and the Saarland coalfield. The project supports the regions directly in the implementation of initiatives and programmes that aim at ensuring a future-oriented transition.

Type of activities:

There are two main working areas of the project: 1) providing knowledge transfer, networking, and public outreach, and 2) consulting, qualifying, and training.

In the first area, the project is organising events and publications on just transition, innovation topics and the sharing of good practices. Furthermore, local networks will be established, as well as innovation workshops, together with workers who are directly affected by the transition. Those activities and others are meant to establish knowledge transfer across regions and states. In the second area, the project aims at improving the skills of workers (especially of young workers at a local level), trade unionists, and work councils. Training and consulting are based on structural development, regional politics, and technical know-how. All activities are designed to maintain a strong focus on the DGB Decent Work Index and ensure that work is covered by collective bargaining agreements & co-determination.

Goals and approach:

The project aims at supporting the coal regions in Germany during their transition. The main character of the project is coined by a massive coordination and capacity increase in the regions that should answer the questions on how to ensure good working conditions, how to sensibly use funding for workers, and how to implement decisions processes in the regions.

Offices were founded in all regions (two in the Lusatian coalfield, two in the Central German coalfield and one each in the Rhenish coalfield and the Saarland) that should ensure the 'on the ground' knowledge and actively contribute and shape the transition. The project follows four main goals:

- strengthening employee participation in the structural development of the coalfields;
- providing an inclusive approach with outreach beyond trade unions and work councils and the core energy sector;
- providing knowledge transfer of good practices across the coal regions and beyond;
- creating multiplier effects through the empowerment of workers in the coal mining regions.

Important outputs, results or achievements:

The project began in October 2021 and is still establishing first results. It has already succeeded in expanding trade union outreach to other governmental, business, and societal organisations that are tasked with regional restructuring in the coal phase-out just transition process. It has also established inter-regional learning processes to allow for the transfer of experiences. The first activities showed that there is a large demand for coordination and exchange possibilities between and within the regions.

The project aims at creating the following expected outcomes. Firstly, it is meant to ensure the protection of employees who are being phased out of coal-based employment. Secondly, the project aspires to contribute to the collective bargaining agreement coverage and co-determination in new economic developments. Thirdly, the project strives to provide the ability to learn in real time between the participating regions.

Scalability¹ and transferability²:

In simultaneous, multiregional just transition processes, the ability to share experiences and learn in real time by adding a unified structure could be a key element in transferability. The ability of such a project structure to act as a 'force multiplier' is also central to the success of transferring the basics of this project.

However, the national and regional funding structures are decisive for a potential transferability. In Germany, there is a strong regional funding landscape that simplifies regional funding. In addition, structures to allow for inter-regional and intra-regional dialogue are essential. In general, transferability depends more on national and regional structures than on the sector that is in transition.

The project is currently working at a comparatively large scale, with national and multi-regional scope. It would also be possible to establish such a project at a higher level (e.g. EU level). However, at this level, vertical integration must then be ensured. A top-down approach as such is not possible but would need additional bottom-up support. At an EU level, the project would be of great benefit if trade unions, workers and citizens' representatives had a greater say.

¹ Scalability entails that a policy approach can be adapted to a bigger scale than just the local context.

² Transferability entails that a policy approach can be applicable to a similar setting and replicated.

Key success factors and lessons learnt:

As outlined above, the project is still at its outset. However, it is already becoming clear that creating the space and capacity for networking across multiple regions and actor levels will be a key positive takeaway. The project offers another level with which regions can cooperate that reaches into the political dimension. This also increases transparency as, previously, information was not always published at a regional level. The inclusion of several regions (and consequently different actors) is another advantage of the multiregional project.

The coordination of the networking activities is an attractive resource that the project can offer to a wide range of interested actors. This is because the coordination of these activities can typically take up a significant proportion of work capacity within the day-to-day business of actors and is often difficult to maintain over time.

Key challenges:

One challenge is related to the support of start-up activities in the regions: Start-up logistics are challenging if support structures from other CSOs, government or business are not available to kick off activities.

It remains to be seen if the current energy crisis will affect the structural change in Germany and consequently the Revirowende project. So far, the projects related to structural change remain ongoing and further projects are planned.

Tools or supporting economic diversification and reskilling/upskilling via projects:

- supporting vulnerable workers during the period of industrial transition;
- ensuring well targeted financing and investment;
- capitalising on unique regional strengths for innovation;
- supporting green skills and jobs through training and upskilling.

Central framework conditions³:

Central to the project are the four regions set out in the programme, which will experience a total phase-out of coal mining and power generation within the next 16 years (until 2038 at the latest), as required by the German coal phase-out legislation. In order to compensate for the loss of the industry, the government plans to support the structural change with EUR 40 billion.

The Lusatian region has already experienced an extensive structural change in the 1990s. For the phase out of coal, the lignite regions will have to adapt further. The Rhenish coalfield is the largest lignite region in Europe. With a large share of employment in open cast mines and power stations, the Rhenish region faces large transition processes. The Central German coalfield is facing similar transition processes and it is expected that it will be a part of a leading economic centre of Europe. The Saarland has a tradition in mining and the transformation is affecting in the region's coal mining and power plants but also, in particular, the steel sector.

As central employment and income sources, the loss of these industries essentially requires an almost total reimagining and restructuring of the economy in those regions. As such, within each region, a multi-sectoral approach is essential, since attempting to replace all potentially lost employment within just that sector is unlikely.

³ Framework conditions encompass the institutional, informational and socio-economic factors that determine a given environment (contextual information), e.g. market conditions, access to finance, tax regulation, infrastructure and support.

Outlook:

Now that the networking phase is finished, it is planned that the advisory network will be further expanded. The advisory phase is meant to better support the enterprise level as well as the regional employment levels. Part of the support will be conducted at a regional level, and another part at a national level. This is also meant to answer how to rate the future use of funding from the employees' point of view (since previous funds were not allocated meaningfully from the employees' point of view).

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