



Just Transition Platform – Policy approach:

RYBNIK 360 – ADDRESSING THE JUST TRANSITION WITH INNOVATIVE AND SYSTEMIC SOLUTIONS

Poland, Silesian Voivodeship, Rybnik

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: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/just-transition-fund/just-transition-platform_en

Region:

Silesian Voivodeship, Rybnik

Sector:

Coal Mining

Financing conditions (co-financing rate):

80%

Sources of funding:**EU funding:**

EIT funding - Regional Innovation Scheme, via EIT Climate-KIC

National/Regional funding:

N/A

Duration:

1.3.2020 - 31.12.2021

Responsible Managing Authority/Agency:

EIT Climate-KIC

Summary

Located in the southern part of Poland, the transition city of Rybnik is situated in the historic Upper Silesian region. The city's history is linked to its legacy of mining, which has had a lasting impact on labour markets and shaped a nostalgic narrative in which the lingering smell of smog pervaded the streets.

In the context of the phase-out of coal and the associated mine closures, the municipality co-designed the Just Transformation Deep Demonstration approach with EIT Climate-KIC and in collaboration with other partners (detailed below). The aim was to accelerate the city's transformation towards climate neutrality together with its residents. Four key domains were identified that collectively set the growth path for Rybnik: shifts in the mining sector, entrepreneurship, quality of life indicators, and the pervasive smog issue.

The Rybnik360 project represents a sustained commitment to systemic innovation for a just transition across social, energy, and economic dimensions. Unlike designing a project with pre-determined activities, this initiative used an ongoing, adaptive process tailored to address local needs in the form of a "Deep Listening" approach. It revealed four main concerns (transition of the economy, the labour market, quality of life, and air quality). A system map of the current city system, then provided crucial entry points for interventions, summarised in a portfolio of actions (e.g., support to cultural centres and libraries, revitalisation in post-mining districts, entrepreneur network platform, and energy cooperatives).

Type of policy measure/activities:

The Just Transformation Deep Demonstrations program illustrated that the challenges experienced in regions undergoing intricate transformations require customised approaches that diverge from the standard. This involves applying a systems innovation model that covers various areas – across education, technological innovation, citizen engagement, policy, finance, and other areas of change. Beyond Rybnik, the JT Deep Demonstrations program is also applied to other countries, regions, cities industries, and value chains. In 2020, the JT Deep Demonstrations program was also applied in Debagoiena comarca in Spain and the Emilia Romagna region in Italy.

Rybnik360's Just Transformation Deep Demonstration process began with Deep Listening, emphasising the importance of engaging as many people as possible throughout the project in different phases, to fully understand the context and shape the responses. The project employed various methods, including interviews, ethnography, social event participation, and observation of everyday activities in Rybnik. It also involved netnography, accompanying miners in the coal mine, and desk research. It was crucial to understanding the interconnectedness of these actions, aiming to implement initiatives at various levels, including consultation with neighbouring municipalities. The flexible approach, characterised by adaptive learning during the implementation of experimental actions, has proven successful in meeting the dynamic requirements of the region.

Goals and approach:

Rybnik 2030 prioritised a just transition, focusing on clear goals: improved resident well-being, climate neutrality, and effective coal mine closure. The project aimed to initiate a systemic innovation process.

The approach involved dynamic stakeholder-engaged processes, continuously adapting initiatives for optimal effectiveness. First, "Deep Listening" in the form of initial interviews revealed the four domains: mining, entrepreneurship, quality of life, and air quality. This was then translated into a system map, which showed the entities and their connections, as well as the lack of connections. Innovative actions were summarised in a portfolio, addressing the gaps and needs. Four intervention categories comprised cross-sectoral actions, focused on:

- 1) Interventions for everyday life and civic and cultural participation (e.g., handing over agency to citizens).
- 2) Interventions for business and the labour market (e.g., innovative employment support and retraining programmes).
- 3) Interventions for post-mining Rybnik (e.g., boosting social resilience and perseverance).
- 4) Interventions for clean air (e.g., financial support for households giving up fossil fuels).

Those were subsequently brought to life in the implementation phase.

Important outputs, results or achievements:

Mobilisation of Actors: Successful engagement and collaboration among diverse stakeholders fostered a sense of shared responsibility.

System Map: Development of a comprehensive map of the current city system, highlighting all types of relations (financial, physical, legal, mental) between institutions, companies, and social groups in Rybnik and its surroundings.

Portfolio of Innovative Actions: The creation of a robust portfolio comprising 90 innovative actions, encompassing both investment and soft projects, provided a holistic approach.

Future Growth Strategy: Municipal development of the Future Growth Strategy Rybnik, aligned with the envisioned transformation.

Understanding Future Scenarios: Enhanced comprehension of potential future scenarios for Rybnik, aided informed decision-making.

Rybnik CityLab: The establishment of Rybnik CityLab, provided additional capacity and focussed on addressing key challenges, particularly the future landscape.

Capacity Building: Strengthening capacities through community engagement, systems thinking, collaboration and co-creation, policy innovation, and adaptive learning, ensuring a well-equipped and adaptive approach for the future.

Scalability¹ and transferability²:

The Just Transformation Deep Demonstrations programme took place in Rybnik, Poland, Emilia Romagna region, Italy, and the Debagoiena comarca, Spain. This approach aimed to address regions undergoing adaptation and mitigation to climate change, guided by proactive governing authorities seeking transformative change. The JT Deep Demonstrations programme has been successfully transferred and applied in a variety of regions, demonstrating its adaptability and effectiveness in tailoring approaches to diverse settings. Climate-KIC applied the JT Deep Demonstration projects to orchestrate system innovations. The methodology is transferrable, creating tailored projects based on the applied context.

In the context of the Rybnik360 project, collaboration with neighbouring municipalities was fundamental. Given the region's overarching post(mining) transition, the portfolio of 90 innovative actions, served as a point of connection. This portfolio facilitated a dynamic and active process where roles were assigned among entities such as incubators and accelerators. Communication was established regarding the sectors they aimed to attract, leading to the generation and assembly of partnerships and projects. The utilisation of funding from the Just Transition Fund (JTF) beyond the programme, further underscored the scalability of the approach, indicating its applicability in similar transition contexts.

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:

Success hinged on inclusive citizen engagement (through Deep Listening), establishing capacities, and clearly defined leadership in transformative initiatives.

Involvement: The innovative approach of dynamically engaging citizens facilitated a sense of ownership and involvement among the people. The Deep Listening of the wishes and aspirations of the Rybnik participants through a multitude of methods (e.g. interviews, observations, ethnography, participant observations, focus groups, etc.) guided the creation of the responses. By pinpointing the relations (financial, physical, legal, and mental) to the surrounding of Rybnik, the project fostered exchanges with neighbouring municipalities, proving crucial for initiating coordination and collaborative initiatives as the identified actions were implemented.

Capacities: The establishment of Rybnik CityLab, an innovation-centric team, became a cornerstone in the success story, offering insights into various future scenarios. Future Literacy approaches and the implementation of a Just Transition Pathway demonstrated the municipality's commitment to envisioning alternative pathways forward.

Ownership: Constructing a coherent narrative significantly influenced the collective perception of Rybnik's future among its residents. This was aided by assigning a city representative to the role of the guarantor of the future, responsible for inspiring and influencing change.

Key challenges:

Communicating Future Visions: Conveying a future that diverges from the present can be a challenge. However, the establishment of a strategic narrative and the provision of support for communication and promotion were instrumental in conveying the municipality's various future scenarios and the tools for realization to the residents. Additionally, the appointment of a transformation owner played a key role in aligning stakeholders and fostering participatory action.

Long-Term Implementation: The theoretical foundation laid the groundwork for the project's implementation, recognising it as a long-term process. Balancing the need for action with the necessity for ongoing conversations to uncover underlying issues presented a challenge that needed balancing. Moreover, throughout the project, the partners showed initiative in continuing the transformation beyond the programme duration, by mobilising additional funds.



Central framework conditions³:

Recognising the changing energy landscape and global competition, the Polish government is collaborating with trade unions to phase out coal mining.

The latest agreement outlines that CHP Chwałowice and Jankowice in Rybnik will be the last two mines to close, effectively marking the conclusion of the city's historical reliance on coal. This strategic decision reflects a commitment to navigating the challenges posed by the evolving energy sector.

This transition, expected to be completed by 2049, will require comprehensive strategies to mitigate the socio-economic impact on communities traditionally tied to mining. Rybnik's transformation involves addressing challenges such as smog, fostering modern businesses, and managing the gradual decline in coal-related employment to ensure citizen's well-being. Despite the historical importance of the mining sector, once a dominant socio-economic pillar, these decisive steps signal the end of an era, highlighting the city's commitment to adapt to a more sustainable and diversified future.

Outlook:

Rybnik's dynamic future is shaped by decisions on transition, attracting diverse investors, and fostering innovation. The city's trajectory, influenced by "hard factors" such as the pace of transitioning from mining, new investor profiles in industries, and renewables and strategies to combat smog embodies a positive and transformative journey.

Crucially, beyond these "hard factors," soft elements like imagination, courage, hope, and vision wield significant influence. The city's positive momentum relies on implementing an innovative portfolio, addressing residents' needs, and bridging identified gaps.

While existing strategic documents offer a foundation, further enhancing the future involves introducing a Future Literacy module in the educational system and fostering future-oriented thinking within NGOs.

Acknowledging the unknowns, active inclusion of residents in decision-making processes is key. The quality of life can be enhanced through infrastructure development, accessible leisure activities, community integration, mine-adjacent revitalisation, and equal opportunities for all districts, ensuring a vibrant cityscape.

Crucially, cultivating a prospect becomes pivotal for resilience, supported by open dialogue and initiatives for social revitalisation. Together, these elements craft a forward-looking, inclusive, and resilient Rybnik.

¹ 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.

Partners & contacts:

- EIT Climate-KIC
- Municipality of Rybnik,
- Swarmcheck
- SPIN-US
- MCM Institute
- 4 CF

Website / social media:

<https://www.climate-kic.org/in-detail/citizens-just-transformation-rybnik/>

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