



JTP GROUNDWORK

# Supporting JTF regions in their just transitions to climate-neutrality

Lessons learned from the implementation of technical assistances delivered in 2023

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*Regional and  
Urban Policy*

## Disclaimer

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# Lessons learned from JTP GROUNDWORK - Technical assistance to regions eligible for the Just Transition Fund implementing their just transition

This report outlines the results of six technical assistances delivered in 2023 by highlighting the outcomes and deliverables, the impacts and the lessons learned for each supported region. The first section provides the background of the programme and introduces the six benefitting regions. The following sections present a one-page summary of the results per technical assistance.

## Introduction

The Just Transition Platform (JTP) aims to support all stakeholders in JTF regions benefitting from the Just Transition Fund (JTF) in the EU in their transition towards climate neutrality, sustainably and inclusively. The platform supports regions, communities, workers and other stakeholders from coal and carbon-intensive regions to mitigate the social-economic consequences of the transition process, and implement a swift and timely transition away from fossil fuels while leaving no one behind.

In 2023 as part of the services provided under the JTP, the European Commission launched JTP GROUNDWORK – a new technical assistance programme offering JTF regions tailored capacity-building and advisory support in implementing their Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs).

During the first round of JTP GROUNDWORK in 2023, technical assistance was provided to the following six beneficiaries:



### Vidzeme & Latgale, Latvia

Strategy development for the restoration of former peat extraction sites



### Västerbotten, Sweden

Attracting workers for the green economy



### Łódzkie, Poland

Design of a comprehensive SME support scheme



### Sokolov, Czech Republic

Project development and stakeholder engagement to co-create a regional vision of the future



### Hunedoara, Gorj & Dolj, Romania

Capacity-building for local stakeholders to stimulate investments into the green economy



### Médio Tejo, Portugal

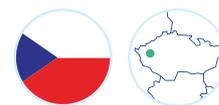
Targeted stakeholder engagement and capacity building for sustainable industries



Table 1 Overview of support delivered in the first wave of JTP GROUNDWORK

Beneficiary region	Focus	Key support activities
<b>1. Sokolov, Czech Republic</b>	Project development and stakeholder engagement to co-create a regional vision of the future	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developed a portfolio of good practices and just transition solutions (e.g., business/job development) for Sokolov.</li> <li>Identified key strengths of the region.</li> <li>Organised and facilitation of a large event, spanning two days of presentations, discussions, and roundtables focused on stakeholder engagement and its role in practical just transition measures, bringing together stakeholders, practitioners and experts from the local to national levels, as well as international speakers providing a broader European just transition context.</li> <li>Developed a stakeholder engagement strategy for the region.</li> </ul>
<b>2. Vidzeme &amp; Latgale, Latvia</b>	Strategy development for the restoration of former peat extraction sites	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewed literature, tools, methods and strategies for peat site assessment and evaluation.</li> <li>Developed an assessment framework that supports the evaluation and analysis of peat sites. The assessment framework describes the evaluation process in 5 steps, the required analysis and the data needed for each step of the process and includes content and structure for a climate analysis, a ecosystems service analysis and socio-economic analysis.</li> <li>Implemented an international conference with international experts focusing on methodologies measuring and determining peat sites and best practices for peatland restoration and remediation. Presented current Latvian projects related to development and restoration of peat sites.</li> <li>Implemented a roundtable discussion on the methods to assess peat sites with the view to validating the assessment framework developed as part of the TA.</li> </ul>
<b>3. Łódzkie, Poland</b>	Design of a comprehensive SME support scheme	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mapped relevant SME support measures available in the region and developed 3 case studies highlighting Polish and international best practices.</li> <li>Facilitated workshop and stakeholder engagement to inform the design of a support scheme for SMEs.</li> <li>Organised an international event in Łódź, focused on sharing best practices for developing SME support schemes under the JTF.</li> <li>Facilitated a study visit on Eastern Wielkopolska's outplacement scheme.</li> <li>Developed a draft SME support scheme for Łódzkie.</li> </ul>
<b>4. Médio Tejo, Portugal</b>	Targeted stakeholder engagement and capacity building for sustainable industries	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engaged stakeholders and mobilized regional JTF implementors and potential SME and industry investors.</li> <li>Facilitated three workshops centred around engaging key public and private stakeholders, and explored investment opportunities, skill development needs and just transition monitoring in Médio Tejo.</li> <li>Implemented a large event with participants from local, regional, and national level, as well as EU experts exploring economic diversification and investment opportunities in Médio Tejo. Event was the first time all three Portuguese just transition regions to exchange on their TJTP implementation so far.</li> <li>Prepared promotional material to promote investment opportunities for Médio Tejo under the JTF. Materials include a short video, flyer on project calls translated into English and Portuguese, and a regional asset map translated into English, Portuguese, Spanish, French and German.</li> </ul>
<b>5. Hunedoara, Gorj &amp; Dolj, Romania (together known as the "Jiu Conurbation")</b>	Capacity-building for local stakeholders to stimulate investments into the green economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reviewed existing literature on regional development of the region and Romania as a whole.</li> <li>Designed and implemented focus groups with over 100 participants from the public sector, private sector, NGOs in all three counties to understand perceptions of challenges for doing business, implementing projects, obtaining financing and how to improve the region to attract investment and people.</li> <li>Produced a report summarizing the literature review and outcomes from focus groups covering the region's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges.</li> <li>Implemented a large conference to present results, share information on EU funding opportunities and practical steps needed to develop relevant project and project teams.</li> <li>Identified two potential JTF projects for the region, which were further developed by two working groups with expert assistance.</li> </ul>
<b>6. Västerbotten, Sweden</b>	Attracting workers for the green economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conducted an initial analysis of regional labour market needs and the need for collaboration with matching foreign regions.</li> <li>Produced a concise report presenting the methodology for the selection of EU regions. Used the methodology to narrow selection down to three regions.</li> <li>Compiled case study examples including the experience and learnings of other similar initiatives.</li> <li>Implemented a workshop with 25 regional stakeholders to validate and discuss approaches for selecting foreign regions to collaborate with.</li> <li>Prepared playbook material and identified entry points in selected foreign regions. Made initial contacts to foreign regions and presented outcomes at a regional conference.</li> </ul>

# Project development and stakeholder engagement to co-create a regional vision of the future



## Sokolov, Czech Republic

### Key outcomes and deliverables achieved

1. Comprehensive stakeholder mapping and facilitation of three workshops on stakeholder engagement for municipal representatives and key decision-makers.
2. A portfolio of good practices and just transition solutions from other JTF regions on key aspects and learnings for how to effectively facilitate a just transition at the local level.
3. Development of a Just Transition Engagement Strategy for Sokolov.

### Impact summary

1. Enhanced the knowledge of municipal representatives through i) project identification and development, ii) stakeholder engagement, and iii) importance of stakeholder engagement
2. Stimulated the formation of a common vision for the region's future development and understanding the transition as a re-branding opportunity for the region.
3. Strengthened Sokolov ability to engage with local and international stakeholders.
4. Supported key stakeholders to prepare, design and implement JTF projects.

### Lessons learned

1. Inclusive stakeholder engagement that goes beyond the existing structures is important for the region to effectively implement a just transition.
2. Post-industrial sites offer an opportunity to create a new regional identity. While many such sites exist in Sokolov, the ownership structure often pose a barrier to repurposing.
3. The engagement has shown the importance of establishing a common vision for the region to effectively rebrand and develop.



Attendees of the JTP GROUNDWORK event "Sokolov Inspires" held on 18th and 19th October 2023. (Photo taken by Aleš Bedlík, Sokolov)

*"With the help of JTP GROUNDWORK technical assistance, our people built trust that there is great potentials in the Sokolov region, and that the conditions in the region can be changed for the better."*

*Petr Kubis, Mayor of the City of Sokolov*

# Strategy development for the restoration of former peat extraction sites



## Vidzeme & Latgale, Latvia

### Key outcomes and deliverables achieved

1. A guidebook and an Excel model for regional stakeholders and project developers on peatland assessment methodology, illustrating each step of the process and data needs.
2. Training and knowledge sharing on assessment methods and capacity needed for peatland assessment and evaluation through two regional workshops and a conference on good practices in peatland restoration.
3. A list of action points (administrative, legal, capacities, and potential bottlenecks) to guide the further work and processes to eventually use just transition to restore peatlands.

*“The JTP GROUNDWORK expertise in organizing events played a crucial role in facilitating engagement and knowledge dissemination. Well-organized workshops and conferences served as platforms for sharing insights, exchanging ideas, and fostering collaboration among stakeholders. These events accelerated the learning process and created a collaborative environment conducive to effective project implementation.”*

Francesco Romagnoli and Agris Kamenders from the RTU (Riga Technical University)

### Impact summary

1. Increased capacity of regional stakeholders to prepare project applications for the Just Transition Fund aiming at peat site developments.
2. Enhanced awareness and knowledge of regional stakeholders on the importance of (historical) peatlands in climate mitigation strategies.
3. Established new networks amongst stakeholders engaged in peatland management and restorations, including practitioners in municipalities in two regions, private sector, and academia, national authorities as well as local experts on peat sites. A specific link has been made between regional and local actors and Riga Technical University.

### Lessons learned

1. There is a large need to train regional and local stakeholders on the importance of peatlands for climate adaptation and mitigation, and biodiversity. This specialized knowledge and expertise usually rests only with national level stakeholders and academic experts.
2. Much of the existing data for peatland assessment is outdated. There is a need for further data collection and assessment to determine emission factors and degradation level as a basis for future JTF projects.
3. Peatlands in Latvia often have multiple owners and multiple uses. A coordinated spatial and territorial regional planning approach will be needed to regenerate peatlands effectively.



Pilot peat site for potential assessment in Stružani, Latvia. (Photo taken by Gabriel Franca, JTP GROUNDWORK)

# Design of a comprehensive SME support scheme



## Łódzkie, Poland

### Key outcomes and deliverables achieved

1. JTP GROUNDWORK delivered a mapping of over 100 support schemes for SMEs that are relevant for the region, as well as case studies on Polish and international examples of effective support for new and established enterprises.
2. Assessment of the needs of regional entrepreneurs. JTP GROUNDWORK supported the regional public authority to engage in a stakeholder consultation process with potential beneficiaries when designing a support scheme.
3. Design of an inclusive support scheme for SMEs, which will serve as the basis for a call for proposals for SME operators in early 2024, to contribute to opportunities for decent work for all.

### Impact summary

1. JTP GROUNDWORK's innovative workshops and conference in Łódź led to enhanced dialogue between entrepreneurs in the region, institutions that support businesses, and public authorities.
2. The project has increased the visibility of the region – the expert exchange in Łódź was the first large-scale event focused on the just transition in the region.
3. JTP GROUNDWORK has introduced the region to new tools and methods to effectively implement projects – the focus on co-creation through the technical assistance was a key learning, and the public authorities are replicating the approach in other projects.
4. Through the design of the SME support scheme ready for launch in early 2024, JTP GROUNDWORK helped the region to progress towards the vision of a diversified economy offering high quality jobs.

### Lessons learned

1. Entrepreneurs have varying needs, and these differ between new and established enterprises. The design of the SME support scheme can cater to these different needs through separate tracks for different types of organisations.
2. Regions often face similar hurdles when designing SME support schemes. A forum to exchange on the technical details is useful to promote information and idea sharing.
3. Many support measures exist in the region, but there is no overarching information point for entrepreneurs. This can be considered as a next step for the region to develop its SME ecosystem.

*“Many forms of support are designed at the institutional level and officials focus on documents and regulations, and don't remember that support should be designed for final recipients. Participating in JTP GROUNDWORK allowed us to develop an inclusive approach and understand how important communication, consultation, and being open to their needs and ideas is.”*

Joanna Niewola, Marshal Office of the Łódzkie Voivodship



Visual recording of a session during the JTP GROUNDWORK conference on SME support schemes in Łódź by Dorota Kostowska, Webinar24.pl

# Targeted stakeholder engagement and capacity building to develop sustainable industrial opportunities



## Médio Tejo, Portugal

### Key outcomes and deliverables achieved

- The main outcome of JTP GROUNDWORK support was the production of marketing tools, translated into five languages, to promote the region to a diversity of investors:
  - Development of a regional asset map, showcasing Médio Tejo's diverse assets;
  - Promotional video, highlighting the opportunity of the just transition process;
  - One-page flyer highlighting opportunities for investor under fall 2023 project calls. Translated into English and Portuguese.
- Mapped concrete JTF project ideas and industry development roadmaps in three focus industries: circular economy in the agrifood sector, hydrogen value chain, biomass and forest valorisation.
- Outlined next steps and approaches for developing a monitoring and evaluation mechanism for the region's just transition process.

*“The JTP GROUNDWORK initiative confirmed for us that the just transition is a process that should be planned in a framework of critical discussion with a variety of relevant stakeholders to assure the representation of different standpoints and to further guarantee the acceptance and recognition of the just transition as a common mission for the territory.”*

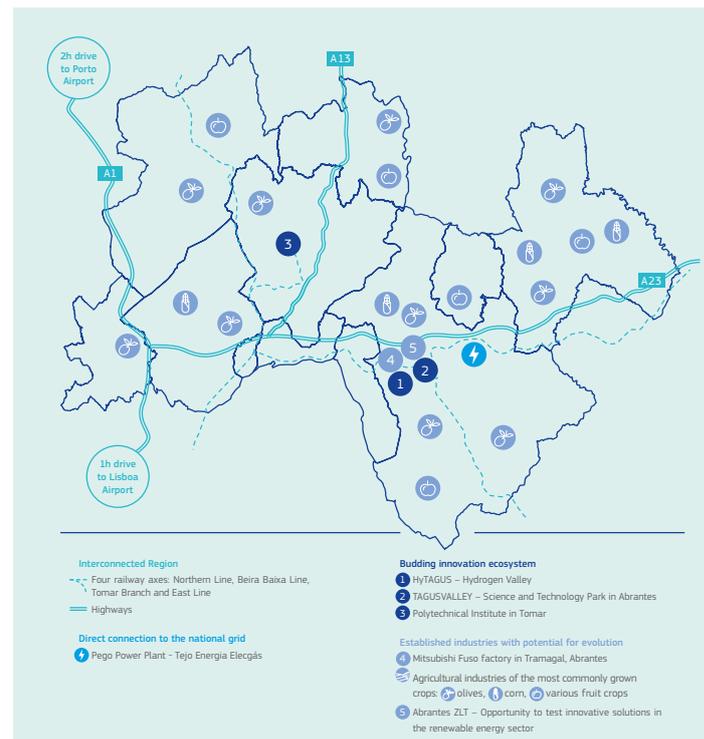
Jorge Brandão, Member of the Management Board of Centro Regional Programme 2021-2027

### Impact summary

- Improved engagement and exchange between just transition stakeholders, particularly between SMEs, large companies, municipalities, and interface bodies.
- Increased awareness of the local, regional and national entrepreneurs about investing opportunities in the region.
- Defined three key focus industries for sustainable economic development, creating a shared narrative of future industry foci for the region.
- Trained key stakeholders on how to measure the impact of the just transition and TJTP implementation.

### Lessons learned

- The availability of funds is necessary and important but not sufficient for the actual implementation of the just transition process. Médio Tejo must build internal capacity and agency in addition to effectively leverage the available funding and implement the just transition.
- Médio Tejo needs to create a shared understanding of the future amongst key stakeholders linked to regional assets, and develop local and regional capacities in-line with the shared version.
- Ensure flexibility is built into the implementation process to respond to unanticipated needs or political developments.



Visualization of regional asset map of Médio Tejo region produced during JTP GROUNDWORK technical assistance

# Capacity-building for local stakeholders to stimulate investment for the green transition



## Hunedoara, Gorj & Dolj, Romania

### Key outcomes and deliverables achieved

1. Determined and highlighted unexploited economic opportunities in the region.
2. Co-identified key projects for JTF funding and implementation and engaged a wide range of stakeholders including over 100 focus group attendees across three counties; three workshops (one in each county) on project development, financing, regional needs – 150 in-person attendees and 100 online.
3. Completed analysis and summary of existing literature on economic development and challenges.

*“Through JTP GROUNDWORK technical assistance we want to promote more just transition opportunities and to help the private sector and the young entrepreneurs to obtain project funds and to develop the region through their development.”*

Adina Vițan, Jiu Valley Society

### Impact summary

1. Enhanced communication between key stakeholders, enabling future productive collaboration.
2. Increased knowledge of EU funding opportunities for just transition projects.
3. Increased project development and (eventually) requests for financing with a broader array of stakeholders engaged (both stakeholder type and geographically). Two selected projects showcase a better alignment with the region’s development needs.

### Lessons learned

1. Communicating success stories and a clear, concise approach to project development and financing access can effectively engage local communities.
2. Bringing people together from different backgrounds and geographies can help stimulate project ideas and generate teams for projects that can boost community and economic development.
3. Unlocking regional opportunities requires coordination and collaboration between stakeholder groups such as private sector and training/education bodies to ensure better alignment of the available education and trainings with the region’s needs.



Art installation at discussed Petrița Mine (Photo taken by Simon Davies, JTP GROUNDWORK)

# Attracting workers for growing green economy investments



## Västerbotten, Sweden

### Key outcomes and deliverables achieved

1. Developed a methodology for how to identify prospective workforce-supplying regions within the EU, including an excel database with indicators and weighted criteria to support the screening process.
2. Identified three foreign regions for potential collaboration and labour exchange.
3. A playbook compiling (1) outreach material that can be used to approach potential partner regions, (2) identification of different communication channels to implement outreach approach, and (3) a report outlining the issues and challenges that need to be addressed by the region.

### Impact summary

1. Increased awareness of regional authorities of the opportunities and potential pitfalls of different approaches for attracting workers to the region.
2. Fostered understanding of a strategy and specific measures to attract workers to the region from across the EU.
3. Established connections between the Västerbotten managing authority and at least one region to further discuss potential modes of cooperation.

### Lessons learned

1. Attractiveness of Region Västerbotten to foreign regions involves multiple factors and conditions (housing, schools, reception facilities, language, recognised qualifications) which all need to be tailored to the specific needs of the foreign regions.
2. The green transition in northern Sweden is a process that will take several years and is not accomplished by any single labour market activity but will only succeed through the continued contributions from many different stakeholders.
3. It is important to leverage existing network to identify the correct entry point when reaching out to foreign regions. Communication must be fine-tuned when pursuing institutional cooperation, with a focus on potential, tangible cooperation benefits.

*“The principal added value of the technical assistance has been the structured approach it offered. It highlighted the numerous opportunities we have but also the significant challenges associated with sourcing competent personnel. This technical assistance gave us the methodologies to identify the specific competencies we require and how to address these challenges in a structured and innovative manner.”*

Annica Mäkitalo, Region Västerbotten



Workshop with stakeholders on the content of the playbook for approaching partner regions (Photo taken by Gabriel Franca, JTP GROUNDWORK)

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**Endnote:** All statements in this report are based on the results of the technical assistance provided in 2023 under JTP GROUNDWORK. Any information and views contained in the present document do not reflect the official opinion of the European Commission. Reuse is authorised provided the source is acknowledged.