



Co-financed by the European Regional Development Fund

Inspire Policy Making with Territorial Evidence

PRE-EVENT BRIEF

ESPON Roundtable: Regions and structural change in the light of just transition and decarbonation strategies

Virtual

11 June 2021, 9:20-13:00 (CEST)

Introduction



Regions in transition to a post-carbon Europe are facing an unprecedented structural change, compounded by the damage inflicted by the COVID-19 pandemic and population shrinkage. With a special focus on Polish coal regions and comparison with other transitioning regions in Europe, the workshop will revolve around the Just Transition Plans, being the common denominator for various policy and empirical situations.

In a context where industrial path dependencies and demographic decline are likely to moderate the impact of just transition instruments and public policies differently in different cities, functional areas, and regions, the workshop will focus on the design of effective public policies in particular, captured in robust Just Transition Plans.

ESPON projects have recently investigated several of these dimensions and delivered their findings and insights (ESCAPE - European Shrinking Rural Areas Challenges, Actions and Perspectives for Territorial Governance; SUPER - Sustainable Urbanization and land-use Practices in European Regions). But overcoming initial path-dependency requires decades of work and investment.

On the backdrop of the recent ESPON policy brief *Structural change in coal phase-out regions*, the roundtable will put a special focus on Polish coal regions and explore comparisons with other transitioning regions in Europe.

Objective and expected outcome

In Poland, six regions are preparing for a transition to a climate-neutral economy: Śląskie, Dolnośląskie, Wielkopolskie, Lubelskie, Łódzkie, and Małopolskie. These regions are indicated as the Just Transition Fund beneficiaries in the draft Partnership Agreement for 2021-2027.

The roundtable will discuss ESPON territorial evidence that seeks to explain the different potential of regions in transition to induce structural change, focusing particularly on knowledge and innovation, industry and entrepreneurship, and the phenomenon of complex shrinkage. The roundtable will concentrate on the Polish context, with the specific example of the Śląsk and Łódź Voivodeships in relation to the existing European strategies and instruments for a just transition.

The discussions during the workshop will include the following policy questions:

- **What are the common denominators between regions, to help defining the most meaningful application field of the Just Transition Funds? How does this denominator translate to the regions in question?**
- **What are the structural change potentials and new opportunities for diversification, in actions related to research and development (R&D) investments, productive investments, and business incubation in the Śląsk and Łódź Voivodeships?**
- **What kind of lessons and insights can deliver strategies from other regions in Europe?**

Structure and input

Divided into three parts, the roundtable will revolve around the Just Transition Plans, being the common denominator for various policy and empirical realities. We will discuss ESPON territorial evidence that seeks to explain the different potential of regions in transition to induce structural change, particularly focusing on knowledge and innovation, industry and entrepreneurship and the phenomenon of complex shrinkage.

After a presentation on strategies of implementation of the Green transformation in Poland, speakers will be invited to discuss European points of view on transitions, objectives, and solutions. This session will be followed by a presentation on the specific challenges in the Polish national context. Regional stakeholders will also share views on strategic interventions, at regional and local levels of implementation.

In the last session, views from abroad will help enlighten the conversation with other European experiences of transition towards of climate neutrality. The virtual roundtable will provide a unique opportunity to exchange experiences and discuss interventions needed to promote a just transition in coal phase-out regions.

Agenda

9:20 - 9:30

Welcome

Wiktor Szydarowski, Director of EGTC ESPON

9:30 - 9:40

Green transformation in Poland – implementation strategy

Daniel Baliński, Deputy director in Department of Strategy, Polish Ministry of Development Funds and Regional Policy

9:40 - 10:25

Session 1: Just Transition: strategies and instruments for regions

Moderated by **Sebastien Bourdin**, EM Normandy Business School

- Structural change in coal phase-out regions - **Vassilen Iotzov**, ESPON EGTC
- Just Transition Fund: the regulative framework - **Dr. Sander Happaerts**, Coordinator of the Just Transition Fund at the Directorate General REGIO of the European Commission
- Access to financial instruments under the Just Transition Mechanism - **Leonard Reinard**, Head of Regional Development Division at the European Investment Bank (tbc)

10:25 - 10:40

Q&A

10:40 - 10:50

Short break

10:50 - 11:35

Session 2: Just Transition plans: challenges for Polish regions

Moderated by **a representative of PwC**

- A just transition in the Polish context - **Dr. Adam Drobnik**, Director of the Institute for Ecology of Industrial Areas
- The case of Śląsk Voivodeship - **Dariusz Stankiewicz**, Head of the Regional Transformation Unit in Marshal's Office
- The case of Łódź Voivodeship - Representative of Marshal Office

11:35 - 11:50

Q&A

11:50 - 12:35

Session 3: Views from other transitioning regions in Europe on just transition plans and structural change

Moderated by **Renaud Le Goix**, UMS Riate

- Stara Zagora Just Transition Plan - **Dr. Romyana Grozeva**, Stara Zagora Industrial Zone, Bulgaria
- Structural change and just transition in the Hunedoara - **Adina Vintan**, Hunedoara County, Romania
- Czech strategy for economic restructuring of the Usti, Moravian-Silesian and Karlovy Vary regions - **Tomáš Burdych**, Moravian-Silesian and Karlovy Vary regions, Czech Republic

12:35 - 12:50

Q&A

12:50 - 13:00

Conclusions

Sebastien Bourdin, EM Normandy Business School

References

ESPON (2020a). Policy brief - Structural change in coal phase-out regions. Online: <https://www.espon.eu/structural-change>

ESPON (2020b). European Shrinking Rural Areas Challenges, Actions and Perspectives for Territorial Governance. Online: <https://www.espon.eu/escape>

ESPON (2020c). Sustainable Urbanization and land-use Practices in European Regions. Online: <https://www.espon.eu/super>



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ESPON 2020

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