

Planning for social justice in Territorial Just Transition Plans in central and eastern Europe

September 2023 update – part II



CEE Bankwatch Network

This briefing is the eighth in our series of briefings on the just transition process in central and eastern Europe.

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Introduction

This briefing’s main objective is to provide an analysis of how the Territorial Just Transition Plans for seven countries (the Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia) approach social issues related to the impacts of the transition on women, youth and various other vulnerable groups.

The first section of this briefing will provide a short overview of the Just Transition Mechanism. The next section will discuss how social issues are approached in relevant legislation, primarily in the Just Transition Fund Regulation. Section three will conduct an overview of how the problems of the identified additional social groups we consider relevant to the just transition process have or have not been addressed in different countries’ Territorial Just Transition Plans. Finally, we will end with a summary of the current situation and our recommendations for addressing the identified issues.

Section 1: the Just Transition Mechanism

The Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) is a regional development programme announced by the European Commission in January 2020. Its purpose is to provide targeted support to regions in the European Union expected to be disproportionately negatively affected by the transition to a carbon neutral economy in the context of the European Green Deal.

The mechanism rests on three separate pillars. The first is the Just Transition Fund (JTF), the second is a dedicated just transition scheme under the InvestEU programme, and the third is the Public Sector Loan Facility (PSLF) financed with EU grants and loans from the European Investment Bank (EIB).¹ Overall, the Just Transition Mechanism provides targeted support to mobilise around EUR 55 billion in private and public investments.²

To be eligible for funding under the Just Transition Mechanism, EU Member States had to negotiate Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs) for the regions identified as likely to suffer negative socio-economic consequences because of the transition to carbon neutrality. This process lasted from the announcement of the mechanism in early 2020 until 31 December 2022. Of the eight countries covered by Bankwatch (Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania and Slovakia), seven have had their Territorial Just Transition Plans successfully approved.³ Only Bulgaria continues to work on its plans, owing primarily to ongoing political instability and the lack of a permanent government in the country.



¹ For more information on the second and third pillars, please refer to our separate briefing [“The second and third pillars of the Just Transition Mechanism”](#), published in March 2023.

² European Commission, [The Just Transition Mechanism: making sure no one is left behind](#), European Commission, accessed 9 March 2023.

³ European Commission, [Just Transition Platform](#), European Commission, accessed 9 March 2023.

All countries that have had their Territorial Just Transition Plans approved are now in the implementation phase. This means that various stakeholders from the regions are able to apply for funding under all three mechanisms and that project pipelines are being developed.

Section 2: social issues in the Just Transition Fund Regulation

Legal and social framework

The main legal documents forming the basis of the EU just transition process are the Just Transition Fund Regulation⁴ and the Common Provisions Regulation.⁵ The 2021 Staff Working Document on Territorial Just Transition Plans⁶ also provides certain important clarifications. These guidelines lay down the outline for what should be contained within the plans, but the countries and regions took various approaches in highlighting the most important needs to be addressed over the coming years.

In the European Union, the just transition process has become widely linked to the slogan ‘leaving no one behind’. However, looking at how the Just Transition Fund is structured, it is evident that this funding was focused on specific priorities linked to the major impacts of phasing out fossil fuels and carbon-intensive industries. According to the information provided by the European Commission on the Just Transition Fund, these are primarily related to supporting **‘the economic diversification and reconversion of the territories concerned’**, i.e. the up- and reskilling of workers, investments in small and medium-sized enterprises, the creation of new firms, research and innovation, environmental rehabilitation, clean energy, job-search assistance, and the transformation of existing carbon-intensive installations.⁷

Thus, in terms of social aims, the Just Transition Fund Regulation and related process place a primary focus on providing support to the workforce in the regions that will be most heavily impacted by the transition, i.e. employees of the mining, energy and carbon-intensive industry sectors that will be phased out. This is emphasised by setting specific targets for funding focused on the upskilling and reskilling of workers and jobseekers, job-search assistance and their active inclusion in the labour market.⁸ The economic diversification aims are also closely linked to the concept of providing new jobs for those losing theirs and supporting the particular region as it loses a large part of its economic infrastructure as a result of the industry phase out. This should come as no surprise as, in fact, the Just Transition Fund was created primarily in answer to concerns raised by trade unions linked to the impacted industries.

⁴ European Parliament, Council of the European Union, [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund](#), *EUR-Lex*, 30 June 2021.

⁵ European Parliament, Council of the European Union, [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1060 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 laying down common provisions on the European Regional Development Fund, the European Social Fund Plus, the Cohesion Fund, the Just Transition Fund and the European Maritime, Fisheries and Aquaculture Fund and financial rules for those and for the Asylum, Migration and Integration Fund, the Internal Security Fund and the Instrument for Financial Support for Border Management and Visa Policy](#), *EUR-Lex*, 30 June 2021.

⁶ European Commission, [Commission Staff Working Document on the Territorial Just Transition Plans](#), *European Commission*, 23 September 2021.

⁷ European Commission, [The Just Transition Fund. About the Fund](#), *European Commission*, accessed 22 July 2023.

⁸ European Parliament, Council of the European Union, [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund](#), Article 8, pt. 2 (k)-(m).

Almost as an afterthought, the Just Transition Fund Regulation also mentions as potential funding aims ‘other activities in the areas of education and social inclusion, including, where duly justified, investments in infrastructure for the purposes of training centres, and child- and elderly-care facilities as indicated in territorial just transition plans’.⁹ Thus, despite the European Commission’s frequent referral to youth, gender and other ‘vulnerable’ groups when speaking of just transition and its general narrative of inclusivity, the regulation itself does not fully reflect this in Article 8, which lays out the scope of support. This, of course, has also impacted how the particular Territorial Just Transition Plans in the regions were written, where the money will go and – ultimately – how the plans will be implemented.

It should at this point be noted that general activities focused on economic diversification (such as supporting small and medium-sized enterprises, the creation of new firms and start-ups, etc.), research and innovation or up- and re-skilling can potentially also be used to provide support for young people, women and other vulnerable groups in the area, which is also undeniably a focus within the just transition process.

In addition, it is worth mentioning that most of the jobs that will be lost in the regions are male-dominated (linked to the mining, energy and carbon-intensive industries), and in most of the regions, the employees in these sectors are older. The industries have been in decline for years, attracting fewer younger workers over the last decade. This workforce is also historically among the best-paid social groups in the regions; thus, their vulnerability is linked primarily to their current situation of being at risk of losing their jobs and not to historical economic disadvantages.

It should be emphasised that the Just Transition Fund Regulation does not completely avoid mentioning additional social issues, such as the impacts of the just transition on demographics, women or various other vulnerable groups in the particular regions, but, as already mentioned, activities aimed at alleviating their situation within the transition are not directly listed in Article 8 regarding the fund’s scope of support.

Approach to impacts on other social groups

In terms of the **issues faced by young people** in transitioning regions, the Just Transition Fund Regulation does not mention them directly, but some focus on the impacts on this group can be inferred from the requirement to include in the Territorial Just Transition Plans (Article 11) a description of the demographic issues (e.g. depopulation, migration, ageing demographic structures) faced by just transition regions.

In turn, point 7 of the European Commission’s Staff Working Document on Territorial Just Transition Plans published in 2021 specifically highlights the impact of the just transition on youth:

*The transition may have wider demographic impacts when, as a result of the decline of certain sectors, a region becomes a less attractive place to live and work. Young people can be especially affected, not only because they face above average levels of unemployment but also because they are more inclined to migrate out of the region.*¹⁰

⁹ European Parliament, Council of the European Union, [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund](#), Art. 8, pt. 2 (o).

¹⁰ European Commission, [Commission Staff Working Document on the Territorial Just Transition Plans](#), 6.

Thus, there is a direct recommendation in the Staff Working Document regarding the importance of actively involving young people in the governance of the Just Transition Fund:

It is essential for young people to be actively involved in the JTF's governance. A futureproof economy cannot be built without involving those who will live in and shape the future. The JTF is about inventing a new economic and social future for these areas, and young people must play an active role in this.¹¹

Therefore, due to the fact that demographic problems have been widespread in coal-mining regions for years, and that transitioning from carbon-intensive industries will obviously further impact the regions, most Territorial Just Transition Plans mention that this will potentially lead to further depopulation and young people's migration away from the regions. However, as we will show, almost no regions in the countries we analyse have decided to tackle this issue directly through just transition funding.

In turn, **on the role of women in just transition**, the Just Transition Fund Regulation mentions them directly and states:

To address the specific situation and role of women in the transition to the climate-neutral economy, gender equality should be promoted. Women's labour market participation and entrepreneurship, as well as equal pay, play an important role in ensuring equal opportunities.¹²

Therefore, it seems obvious that the Territorial Just Transition Plans should also include some mention of a gender-related strategy, providing support to women impacted by the transition, but in practice this is very rarely the case.

To highlight how important gender issues and a gender-related strategy for just transition is, last year Bankwatch Romania prepared a report¹³ that highlights the main challenges faced by women in the Jiu Valley region, located in southwestern Transylvania, Romania. The Jiu Valley experienced the decline of its coal industry in the 1990s, which had widespread impacts on all sectors of society. However, the report delves deeper into the very personal stories of women, who felt neglected and isolated during the collapse of the local industry, very often experiencing feelings of worthlessness and loneliness. The report underlines their daily struggles connected to insufficient social services, poor finances, limited access to kindergartens and nurseries, health problems, and dependence on others. These structural obstacles are further translated into barriers to accessing decent jobs and improving social mobility. The impacts of industrial transition rarely only impact those directly losing their jobs but have wider implications for other members of their families and beyond.

Other social groups mentioned as those that should have been taken into account are those **adversely affected by the transition**, which could be identified based on an analysis of the specific situation in the region. Examples of such groups could be regionally prominent ethnic or linguistic minorities (such as the Roma communities in some just transition regions in Romania or Russian speakers in Ida Viru county in Estonia) or the elderly inhabitants of just transition regions, adversely experiencing the effects of the

¹¹ European Commission, [Commission Staff Working Document on the Territorial Just Transition Plans](#), 21.

¹² European Parliament, Council of the European Union, [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund](#), 15.

¹³ Mădălina Muscă & Elena Trifan, [Women's participation in the just transition process](#), Bankwatch Romania, August 2022.

current energy crisis, resulting frequently in energy poverty. Thus, a strategy regarding support provided to other vulnerable or marginalised groups affected by the changes should have been prepared, as the Just Transition Fund Regulation states that ‘the JTF should also pay special attention to vulnerable groups that suffer disproportionately from the adverse effects of the transition’.¹⁴ However, it should be noted that the relevant EU documents we have been looking at in this chapter do not actually provide any additional information about what specific groups this might include.

It would seem obvious that in attempting to achieve the objective stated in Article 2 of the Just Transition Fund Regulation of ‘enabling regions and people to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the transition towards the Union’s 2030 targets for energy and climate and a climate-neutral economy of the Union by 2050, based on the Paris Agreement’, the analysis of the issues faced by such regions would include also an overview of the social issues already faced by the regions that will be exacerbated by the transition. These could include mention of the problems faced by existing local language or ethnic minorities, those experiencing energy poverty, ageing populations, people with disabilities or providing care, or any other relevant groups in the regions.

Therefore, due to the necessity of ‘leaving no one behind’ and involving all groups that will be impacted by the transition, this briefing will analyse whether the final plans provide any strategies for the provision of support to other social groups, specifically those we have identified as vulnerable to the effects of the transition away from fossil fuels in the just transition regions.

The data used to conduct the analysis below has been provided by CEE Bankwatch Network national campaigners from the seven countries, who have been deeply involved in negotiating and commenting on the Territorial Just Transition Plans since the Just Transition Fund Regulation entered into force in June 2021.

Section 3: analysis of the approach to other social groups in the Territorial Just Transition Plans

Czech Republic

There are three just transition coal regions in the Czech Republic: Ústecký, Moravskoslezský and Karlovarský. The three regions are covered by one joint Territorial Just Transition Plan, which was approved by the European Commission on 26 September 2022. The Czech Republic is to receive around EUR 1.7 billion. Of this funding, 46 per cent will be allocated to Moravskoslezský, 39 per cent to Ústecký and 15 per cent to Karlovarský.

The Czech Territorial Just Transition Plan generally does not provide strategies for supporting young people and women in the transition or for the inclusion of any other vulnerable groups in the transition process, such as those impacted by energy poverty, ethnic minorities, people experiencing long-term unemployment. The only such mention refers to an activity aimed at providing outplacement projects for vulnerable groups on the labour market.

¹⁴ European Parliament, Council of the European Union, [Regulation \(EU\) 2021/1056 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 24 June 2021 establishing the Just Transition Fund](#), 15.

Estonia

Oil-shale rich Ida-Virumaa in the north-eastern part of the country is the only just transition region in Estonia. The final draft of its Territorial Just Transition Plan was submitted to the European Commission in mid-June 2022. The European Commission approved the plan on the 4 October 2022. Estonia is to receive around EUR 354 million from the Just Transition Fund and the country is determined to keep up with the ambitious pace. Notably, the first investment – support for the magnet factory – has already been made.

There are no specific references to youth in Estonia's Territorial Just Transition Plan, but the working relationship of the Estonian Ministry of Finance and young people in the Ida-Viru region has generally been very good. Following the youth climate assembly in Ida-Virumaa in autumn 2021, the young representatives were invited to join the just transition steering committee. The plan mentions gender as an issue to be addressed but provides no specific steps or pathways to do so. There is also no explicit strategy for the inclusion of any other impacted vulnerable groups in the plan. As Ida-Viru has a Russian-speaking population majority, it would seem relevant for the plan to include a strategy for tackling transition impacts for this specific social group, but there is no such aspect included, aside from just transition-related communication that will target the Russian-speaking population.

Hungary

Hungary has prepared three Territorial Just Transition Plans covering three regions: Baranya, Heves and Borsod-Abaúj-Zemplén (BAZ). The plans were developed as an annex to the Hungarian Environment and Energy Efficiency Plus operational programme (EEOP Plus) and were approved in December 2022. The planned allocation from the Just Transition Fund is a lump sum of EUR 250.6 million for all three regions and EUR 10.4 million for technical assistance.

There is no mention of youth migration or of a systematic strategy for supporting young people in the Territorial Just Transition Plans, but there is a programme point in each of the three plans mentioning 'green awareness-raising and mentoring programmes'. These will support various activities, including creating a network of advisors, counselling, development and the implementation of complex life-skills programmes with the 'broad involvement of young people'.

None of the three Territorial Just Transition Plans include strategies for tackling the impacts of the transition on women.

There is also no mention in the Territorial Just Transition Plans of any strategy to include vulnerable groups in the transition process (e.g. Roma, youth, elderly people, disabled people, women, etc.) However, all three plans make specific references to energy-poor households. Key features of the strategy to combat energy poverty include: the creation of energy communities; building energy upgrades that contribute to greenhouse gas reduction; the purchase and installation of local energy distribution systems for heating purposes based on renewable energy communities and associated heating systems and solar panel systems; the installation of smart meters; and the purchase and installation of associated storage, structural and supporting elements.

Similar to the situation in other countries, the Territorial Just Transition Plans lack credible and holistic strategies for addressing concerns pertaining to youth, women and vulnerable groups. The Hungarian

Territorial Just Transition Plans do address specific challenges related to energy-poor households, but the proposed measures are not up to the needed scale.

Latvia

Latvia has four just transition regions with a focus on peat: Latgale, Vidzeme, Zemgale and Kurzeme. Together, these territories cover most of the country, except for Pierīga and Riga. However, only one Territorial Just Transition Plan has been prepared for all four regions, as they share a very similar economic situation. Latvia's Territorial Just Transition Plan was approved along with the EU funds operational programme for 2021 to 2027 at the end of November 2022. Latvia will receive EUR 191.6 million in total from the Just Transition Fund.

In terms of the inclusion of youth, under the programme 'Upskilling of employees and support for obtaining qualifications', there is mention of providing support for labour force training in accordance with a relevant company's request. There is also a reference to placing emphasis on youth who are at risk of unemployment or have been unemployed for a longer period of time. In the descriptive part of the Territorial Just Transition Plan, the existing problems young people face are not mentioned. Young people are, however, mentioned in the context of involving them in regional working groups and monitoring committees. Nonetheless, no clear strategy for tackling youth-specific issues related to the transition is provided.

There are also no specific references to a gender-related strategy. The only mention of women specifically is in a note under the program results, noting that the reached audience or target groups must be specified by gender (male, female, non-binary). Gender-related issues experienced by transitioning regions are not described anywhere.

The only mention of vulnerable groups is in the context of support for upskilling and reskilling measures, whereby it is stated that 'the direct target group of skills development, improvement and retraining measures are employees affected by economic restructuring, including from vulnerable groups of society'. There are no specific strategies aimed at including various other impacted vulnerable groups in the just transition process.

Poland

Poland originally began drafting Territorial Just Transition Plans for seven subregions: Eastern Wielkopolska, Upper Silesia, Lubelskie, Bełchatów in the Łódzkie voivodeship, Western Małopolska, and separately for both Zgorzelec and Wałbrzych as part of Lower Silesia. Ultimately, only five plans were formally submitted to the European Commission (Eastern Wielkopolska, Upper Silesia, Łódzkie, Wałbrzych in Lower Silesia, and Western Małopolska). Lubelskie and Zgorzelec were discarded from the process earlier in the preceding informal dialogue due to concerns over the unspecified transition plans for the two regions, with regards, for example, to the lack of significant CO₂ reductions declared by 2030 and the distant closing dates of the Bogdanka and Turów mines. The Western Małopolska plan was also not approved as a result of its incompatibility with the Just Transition Fund Regulation (e.g. the lack of description of a transition process that would impact the region). However, it is going to receive some support from the Just Transition Fund due to the shadow effects of the Upper Silesian transition process (on workers living in a part of Małopolska). Additionally, the plan for the Łódzkie region has been approved with what is referred to as a 'rendez-vous clause' – an updated and more ambitious version of the document must be delivered by January 2024 and will include a more detailed timetable of the transformation by 2026 and 2028.

The Polish Territorial Just Transition Plans for the regions differ greatly from each other and were written with varying levels of public participation. Their quality is also very divergent.

The funds allocated for the regions are as follows: EUR 2,128 million for Upper Silesia (including some allocation for Western Małopolska), EUR 581.5 million for Wałbrzych (in Lower Silesia), EUR 415 for Eastern Wielkopolska and EUR 370 million for the Bełchatów region (in the Łódzkie voivodeship).

In terms of approaches to issues faced by youth, the Silesian Territorial Just Transition Plan does not mention challenges unique to youth at all. The Wałbrzych plan mentions the importance of reducing youth unemployment but lacks any real youth strategy. The plan for Eastern Wielkopolska identifies youth emigration as one of the main threats to the future prosperity of the region. It lists one activity aimed at combatting the trend, which is supporting school youth entrepreneurial skills development, including social entrepreneurship. Like Wałbrzych, the Eastern Wielkopolska plan does not provide any comprehensive youth strategy. In the plan for the Łódzkie region, we can find youth depopulation as a challenge faced by the region; however, the plan lacks a strategy on how to deal with this problem.

There are no comprehensive gender strategies in any of the Polish Territorial Just Transition Plans. However, the Eastern Wielkopolska document identifies the gap between male and female employment in both the energy sector and the region, as well as acknowledging that the transition makes women more vulnerable and prone to unemployment and exclusion. Additionally, the plan for the Łódzkie region mentions that 88 per cent of the employees working in the mines and power plant are male, in most cases as the only breadwinner in the family. The authors of the plan are aware that unemployment among women will rise if there is no appropriate response from the job market. Competence training programmes will be offered to this target group.

Although the Silesian Territorial Just Transition Plan does not contain a strategy for including marginalised groups, the Wałbrzych plan provides a number of such actions, such as:

- Support services for people socially excluded or at risk of experiencing social exclusion and their families as an effect of the impacts of just transition.
- Preventing exclusion from the labour market of persons providing care for dependent persons by developing services for the needs of persons with disabilities and the elderly.
- Support for education infrastructure to counteract social exclusion.
- Development of supported, sheltered and respite housing infrastructure (with the possibility of supporting social services).
- Development of deinstitutionalised forms of care for dependent people.

The Eastern Wielkopolska plan also fails to provide a comprehensive strategy for including marginalised groups and lacks specific details about which additional groups might be impacted by the transition, but it mentions counteracting the exclusion of women in the labour market through increasing access for children to nurseries and kindergartens. It also mentions generally supporting groups that might be negatively affected by the transition. The Łódzkie Territorial Just Transition Plan does not include a strategy for including any types of marginalised groups.

Romania

There are six Territorial Just Transition Plans in Romania for six regions: Hunedoara, Gorj, Dolj, Galați, Prahova and Mureș. Out of the six, Gorj and Hunedoara are coal regions, and the remaining four have been designated as carbon intensive. The Just Transition Fund allocation for the regions is as follows: ca. EUR 196.7 million for Hunedoara, ca. EUR 200 million for Gorj, ca. EUR 153 million for Dolj, ca. EUR 144 million for Galați, ca. EUR 103 million for Prahova and ca. 103 EUR million for Mureș. The below answers refer primarily to the two coal regions Bankwatch Romania works on, Hunedoara and Gorj, with some references to aspects that are replicated in all the plans. Our upcoming publication on Just Transition Fund allocation (autumn 2023) will look at the situation in all six regions.

There are no comprehensive strategies for youth involvement in either of the discussed Romanian Territorial Just Transition Plans.

There is also no comprehensive gender strategy included in the plans, but several important measures with a gender dimension are present, including:

- Promoting female entrepreneurship and equality of pay.
- A communication campaign adapted to different social categories.
- Play spaces and supervision of children to facilitate women's access to vocational training and reintegration into the workforce.
- Targeted allocations to ensure that selected projects work towards ensuring gender equality.
- Active labour market policies aimed at upskilling and reskilling the workforce, including women, parents from mono-parental families, youth, ethnic minorities and other vulnerable groups.

Complementary social assistance measures aimed at supporting the most vulnerable, such as the operationalisation of the minimum inclusion income and the development of social infrastructure, are mentioned. There is no comprehensive strategy for including any other vulnerable groups in the process. In this context, it is worth noting that although the Territorial Just Transition Plans point out ethnic minorities as a target group for activities, there is no mention of special measures aimed at alleviating the impacts on the relatively large Roma minority living in these regions.

Slovakia

Slovakia has prepared one Territorial Just Transition Plan covering three just transition regions: Upper Nitra, Kosický and Banskobystrický. The first is designated as a coal region, the remaining two as carbon intensive. The Slovak plan was approved on 25 November 2022. The allocation for Slovakia is as follows: ca. 226 million for Upper Nitra, ca. 158.5 million for Kosický and ca. 56.4 million for the Banskobystrický region.

There is no comprehensive youth strategy in the plan. However, it mentions one specific measure for creating a financial scheme to support youth organisations and young people under the age of 29 (Measure 3.2). It plans to provide support for young people in the process of transformation and involves activities related to participatory projects introduced by informal groups, initiatives consisting of young people or youth organisations. Demographic risks are mentioned several times in the plan. Two of the three transformed regions face challenges associated with an ageing population. It is mentioned that supporting

start-ups and new enterprises and activities in the field of research and innovation might partially reverse the negative migration trend and population aging. The Slovak Territorial Just Transition Plan generally also does not provide strategies with a focus on gender-related issues or for the inclusion of other vulnerable groups in the transition process.

Section 3: summary and recommendations

This briefing has sought to investigate the inclusion of youth, women and other vulnerable groups in the Territorial Just Transition Plans. In fact, **most of the analysed plans fail to provide comprehensive strategies for including women, youth and any other potentially vulnerable groups in the process, and the majority also fail to provide fitting measures to address specific challenges faced by these groups.** This does not comply with the intentions indirectly indicated in the Just Transition Fund Regulation and more explicitly in the Staff Working Document on the Territorial Just Transition Plans.

While some plans do include mention of the issues faced by the groups we have indicated, comprehensive strategies to tackle the problems are generally missing. If relevant planned activities have been included, they are generally of lower importance in the plans, with lower fund allocations, and they do not allow for addressing the problems in a comprehensive or meaningful way.

To live up to the intention of the just transition process, youth and women's organisations must be involved in the governance of the Just Transition Fund throughout the 2021 to 2027 funding period. This would include the preparation, implementation and evaluation phases. As for the preparation phase, Bankwatch and Generation Climate Europe's briefings on the state of youth engagement in the planning of the Just Transition Mechanism found a high degree of divergence in the degree to which youth were actively involved. While some countries served as best practices and involved youth representatives early and in a meaningful way, others failed to do so at all.¹⁵

Preliminary findings suggest that the same pattern is being repeated in the implementation phase. From the seven countries covered by Bankwatch, only Romania and Wielkopolska in Poland have groups representing both women and youth in the relevant just transition monitoring committee. Estonia, Hungary and Latvia seem to have organisations representing women's interests, but not youth organisations. The Czech Republic has a youth organisation represented, but no women's groups.¹⁶

The Territorial Just Transition Plans generally lack more in-depth identification of the additional social problems faced by such regions, related to the impacts of the just transition on groups that are already vulnerable to difficult economic circumstances, such as existing regional minorities, the elderly, those experiencing the impacts of energy poverty, or people with disabilities.

However, in terms of all the groups mentioned here, it should be noted that some of the plans do include some references or solutions that could be applied more broadly in the future.

¹⁵ See Lorenzo Manca and Jens Hunsbeth Schreuder, [The state of youth engagement in the implementation of the EU Just Transition Mechanism \(2\): October 2022](#), *Just Transition*, October 2022 and Lorenzo Manca and Jens Hunsbeth Schreuder, [The state of youth engagement in the implementation of the EU Just Transition Mechanism \(1\): May 2022](#), *Just Transition*, May 2022.

¹⁶ This will be discussed in more detail in an upcoming Bankwatch publication on monitoring committees in central and eastern Europe.

- While Estonia does not include references in its plan to relevant strategies for addressing their issues, the authorities have **a good working relationship with youth groups** and include them in their work on the process.
- Hungary’s **‘green awareness-raising and mentoring programmes’ dedicated to youth groups** are definitely noteworthy and should be replicated more broadly.
- Similarly, **the comprehensive approach to energy poverty** in the Hungarian Territorial Just Transition Plans should be seen as something that should be more widely included in just transition processes throughout the European Union, especially in light of the current energy crisis.
- In most Polish just transition regions, **the risk of youth migration** has been noted, though it is a shame that none of them have developed a comprehensive strategy for tackling the issue. In this context, Eastern Wielkopolska’s plan to **support school youth entrepreneurial skills development**, including social entrepreneurship, is noteworthy.
- The plans for Poland’s Eastern Wielkopolska and Łódzkie regions at least **note the existing gender-related employment disparities in coal regions**.
- Among those we analysed, the Polish plan for Wałbrzych is the only one that conducts a **more in-depth analysis and plans to provide support for other identified vulnerable groups** (the elderly, those at risk of exclusion and those providing care for dependent persons), and this approach should be more broadly replicated in other regions.
- The two Territorial Just Transition Plans analysed for Romania are the only ones that **provide some measures that have a gender dimension**. However, it will only be possible to assess their effectiveness through close monitoring of the implementation phase in light of their impact on alleviating the impacts on women.
- The Romanian plans also refer to **complementary social assistance measures aimed at supporting the most vulnerable**, such as the operationalisation of the minimum inclusion income and the development of social infrastructure.
- The Slovak plan notes the demographic risks of the transition process, and while not providing a more in-depth strategy for dealing with this issue, it does include **a measure to provide support for young people** involving activities related to participatory projects.

Final recommendations

- Good solutions already present in some of the existing Territorial Just Transition Plans should be given more focus in discussions of the just transition process so that they can be replicated in other regions during future funding horizons or through the use of other funding sources in the current one.
- All regions should develop more in-depth social analyses and strategies for tackling the additional social impacts of the just transition process.

- The gender aspect should be more clearly included in the just transition process, from the planning phase to implementation; with a real opportunity for women to influence decisions. This should also encompass programmes that incentivise women’s entrepreneurship, as well as the development of social infrastructure for: childcare, after-school, elderly care, victims of domestic violence, young mothers, etc. At the same time, gender should be taken into account intersectionally, as most of these recommendations would also benefit other vulnerable groups.
- Analysis of the particular region’s demographic risks should be a staple element of all Territorial Just Transition Plans, with specific plans for introducing measures to address the problems faced by young people, as well as youth engagement activities in the sections defining the governance of stakeholder engagement for the implementation and monitoring phases. A precise share of the implementation phase projects should be dedicated to youth entrepreneurship, youth engagement activities in the just transition, and education projects in schools and tertiary education. Existing support mechanisms for state authorities, such as the Just Transition Platform and the Technical Support Instrument, should be used to promote the implementation of the *Toolkit for the participation of youth in the Just Transition Fund*.¹⁷
- Most regions of Europe have analyses of the specific groups that are more vulnerable to the impacts of any drastic economic and social changes. This data should be taken advantage of in the development of plans for addressing the impacts of just transition by noting which groups of society will be hit the hardest by such changes and how these effects can be alleviated.
- Funds for tackling the identified issues in these regions should in the near future be allocated from other potential sources, such as the Social Climate Fund, European Social Fund, etc.
- The funding from the Social Climate Fund should be based on a strategic plan and thus apply the same logic as the Just Transition Fund. To tackle the social dimension properly, the Social Climate Plans must be based on up-to-date quality data and analyses. It is also recommended to incorporate lessons learned from preparing the Territorial Just Transition Plans so as to avoid past mistakes, such as low participation or omitting relevant stakeholders within the process.
- In future revisions of the Just Transition Fund Regulation and funding approach, more focus should be paid to the additional social implications of the transition process, impacting groups other than the workforce losing their jobs.

¹⁷ European Commission, [Youth for a just transition – A toolkit for youth participation in the just transition fund](#), European Commission, 12 July 2022.

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