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THE ROAD TO A JUST TRANSITION

A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF TERRITORIAL JUST TRANSITION PLANS

ABSTRACT

This policy brief analyses the Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs) of seven countries, with the aim of understanding the envisioned just transition in these regions. The brief scrutinises and evaluates the economic, environmental and social aspects of the plans to map the kind of justice to be expected from their implementation. It finds that the TJTPs primarily direct funding towards economic policies, with the aim of supporting SMEs and large corporations to decarbonise and generate or maintain employment opportunities in the regions. There are lesser investments in environmental policies, mainly focused on the decontamination of polluted land, and social policies, such as elderly and childcare.

The TJTPs can be grouped into three categories. The first group has a relatively balanced approach in dividing investments among economic, social and environmental policies. The second group focuses mostly on economic policies and decarbonising large corporations and SMEs. The last group mostly focuses on environmental policies.

The envisioned justice in the TJTPs is primarily directed towards employment opportunities; this poses the risk of benefitting people and organisations that already receive support from the European Commission. A different kind of justice, one focused on improving social conditions, could be better positioned to help those who are typically left behind.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Goal of the policy brief

The European Green Deal (EGD) aims to achieve climate neutrality in Europe by 2050.[1] This requires a massive change in the way industries function, energy is produced and resources are used. The EC aims to supply more clean, affordable energy; decarbonise industries; retrofit buildings; increase energy efficiency; reduce pollution to zero; preserve and restore biodiversity; reform the agricultural sector; and accelerate the shift to sustainable mobility. This should amount to a reduction of greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by at least 55% by 2030 compared to 1990 levels, decoupling economic growth from resources and *leaving no person and no place behind*.[2] The last goal is meant to ensure that the transition towards a low-carbon economy happens in a fair way. Therefore, in the period between 2021 and 2027, €55 billion will be mobilised to invest in regions that are most affected by the transition.[3]

The EC has created the Just Transition Fund (JTF) to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the EGD.[4] The JTF is set up to address the social, employment, economic and environmental impacts of the EGD.[5] In total, €19.32 billion is reserved for the fund in the EU's 2021-2027 budget. The JTF supports sustainable investments in SMEs, research and innovation activities, renewable energy and efficiency, mobility, retrofitting, rehabilitation of brownfield sites, retraining of workers and jobseekers, education and social care, and inclusion. Financing of the decommissioning or construction of nuclear power plants, tobacco products, investments in fossil fuels and companies in difficulty are excluded. If member states do not commit to achieving climate neutrality by 2050, only 50% of the national allocation will be made available. Moreover, if member states decrease GHG emissions quicker, they will receive additional allocations under the green reward mechanism.[6] National allocations from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund Plus (ESF+) can complement funding from the JTF. Spending from the EU budget must always be supplemented by national co-financing, according to European regulations.[7]

To receive funding through the JTF, regions have to design Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs). The TJTPs describe which kind of policy targets the regions have to achieve a just transition. Member states have selected 40+ regions that will be most affected by policies linked to the EGD. Those regions can develop TJTPs to describe how they want to achieve a just transition. The TJTPs first identify the economic, employment, social and territorial impacts of the transition. Next, the plans describe the development needs of the regions, objectives and the consistency with other relevant plans. Furthermore, the envisioned projects that can be funded through the JTF need to be described. Finally, TJTPs describe the governance mechanisms that steer the just transition in the regions, and the monitoring and evaluation processes should be outlined.

In this policy brief, the TJTPs of seven countries are analysed and compared. The goal is to understand what kind of just transition is envisioned in the regions through the use of the JTF. Therefore, we scrutinise all the economic, environmental and social aspects of the TJTPs and evaluate what kind of justice is envisioned in the plans. When the transition is meant to structurally change social inequalities, the TJTPs can be seen as transformative. The regions that will be studied are located in Austria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany, Greece and

Sweden. These regions are selected because their TJTPs were approved by the EC at the time this research was conducted. Moreover, they present a mix between Northern, Eastern and Southern European countries. A limitation of this explorative study is that it only focuses on TJTPs. The EC employs more funds to support the regions that are studied. However, the TJTPs are the central documents that describe the envisioned future for these regions.

2. Transitions, transformations and justice

The EC aims to become climate neutral by 2050, and aims to do this in a just way, without leaving people behind. This raises an interesting question: to what extent will the EGD achieve both its goals to decarbonise and prevent increases (or even achieve decreases) in social inequalities? Moreover, what does the EC mean by a "just transition"? In this section, the academic debate on transitions, transformations and their links to justice is described.

In the academic literature, the word transition is mainly used to describe gradual yet fundamental social, technological and economic changes in societies.[8] The word transformation is often used to describe a more radical political change within societies.[9] The goal of making the member states of the EU climate neutral by 2050 can be analysed as an economic and environmental transition. The goal of achieving this through the principle of leaving no one behind and a just transition can be seen as a societal and political transformation. It is important to note that transitions and transformations are not mutually exclusive. Both perspectives help to understand societal change, but place an emphasis on what kind of change is taking place.[10]

2.1 Transitions

Research on transitions can be divided up into approaches that focus on socio-technological transitions and socio-ecological transitions.[11] Socio-technological transition research is often focused on climate mitigation, or the goal of decreasing GHG emissions. This approach is focused on technological innovations that need to be implemented through various systems and scales.[12] Experts set the goals, which need to be implemented through various governance networks. For example, TJTPs could focus on incentivising citizens to install heat pumps or investing in green hydrogen to prevent industry closure. These types of TJTPs envision mostly a socio-technological transition.

The socio-ecological transition approach mostly focuses on addressing the expected and present impacts of climate change.[13] This type of research analysis system is based on their ecological and social features, in order to prescribe strategic interventions to improve the resilience of the system.[14] These studies highlight that changes in niche parts of the system can lead to a growing resilience in the governing system and spill over to the rest of society.[15] Thus, through targeted policy interventions, a snowball effect can lead to a more widespread transition. To illustrate, TJTPs could focus on improving the qualifications of the workforce or provide incentives for SMEs to innovate. These types of TJTPs envision a more socio-ecological transition.

2.2 Transformations

Research on transformations can be divided into capacity-building and structural approaches.[16] The capacity-building approach focuses on improving the capacities of individuals and communities to deal with climate change.[17] The goal is to find a balance between human

development and justice within planetary boundaries.[18] This approach argues that, through empowerment, institutional change can be achieved. For example, TJTPs can provide grants for marginalised communities to start a business or invest in energy communities. In this way, people or communities are empowered to improve their position within society. These types of TJTPs envision a transformation through capacity building.

Structural approaches to transformations are focused on the underlying political and economic conditions that produce social inequalities.[19] So, instead of a focus on accommodating change, this approach argues for a fundamental break with the past systems.[20] According to this literature, the current climate problems are produced through the current political and economic system.[21] Therefore, the current political and economic system is ill-equipped to deal with climate change. Through a fundamental change of politics, climate policies can be enacted that redistribute wealth and emancipate marginalised communities.[22] To illustrate, the energy sector can be nationalised or heavy investments in the social and healthcare can be enacted. These types of TJTPs envision a transformation through structural change.

	Socio-technological transition	Socio-ecological transition	Transformation through capacity building	Transformation through structural change
Main problem	GHG emissions	Lack of adaptability to new circumstances	Communities are left behind	Economic and political structure
Main solution	Technological innovation	Adapting social, economic and political systems	Build capacities of communities	Reform economic and political systems

2.3 Justice

The difference between transitions and transformations is the difference between social, technological and economic change and a radical political transformation. To understand whether these changes are just, four aspects of climate justice are used. Each aspect is linked to the mentioned transitions and transformation typologies. What kinds of aspects of climate justice are most pronounced are described for each mentioned transition and transformation. The first aspect of climate justice is intergenerational justice. Intergenerational justice is the goal to protect future generations from harm and to keep the world liveable in the future.[23] The socio-technological and socio-ecological transitions and transformations through capacity building and structural change aim to keep the world liveable for future generations. The pathways to achieve this are different, but the goal is the same.

The second aspect of climate justice is procedural justice. To achieve procedural justice, there should be meaningful participation in decision-making processes and access to information. Moreover, there should be legal options to achieve redress.[24] An important difference between the socio-technological transition and the socio-ecological transition is the importance of procedural justice in the socio-ecological approach. Participation and stakeholder engagement is important for the socio-ecological approach to make communities more resilient and adaptive. Moreover, participatory processes help to ensure an effective implementation of policies. For the socio-technological transition, democratic and participatory procedures can also be useful, to implement policies or technologies. The role of these processes is thus highly instrumental and less focused on justice.

The third aspect of climate justice is recognition justice. Recognition justice focuses on marginalised communities that face cultural and legal injustices.[25] Recognition justice is an important element of both transformation pathways. For the transformation of the capacity-building pathway, targeted efforts to increase the capabilities of marginalised communities are important. Central to the transformation through structural change approach is addressing cultural, social and political inequalities. Thus, in contrast with democratic and participatory practices promoted by the socio-ecological transition, there is an emphasis on unequal access to decision-making processes for different social groups.

Finally, the last aspect of climate justice is distributive justice. Distributive justice concerns the distribution of goods, services and problems through society. Who is benefiting from and who is losing out on climate-related policies?[26] This aspect of climate justice is especially important to the transformation through structural change approach. Distributive justice aims to fundamentally redistribute wealth, which can only be achieved through structural change. This is in contrast to transformation through capacity building, where there is an aim to strengthen the position of marginalised communities without fundamentally changing the political and economic structure of society.

2.4 Just transitions and just transformations

To sum up, based on the academic literature, there is a nuanced difference between transitions and transformations. Transitions change technological, economic and ecological systems, but don't address underlying social or political structures. Transformations address underlying social and political structures and aim for institutional change. Moreover, climate justice has four aspects: intergenerational; procedural; recognition; and distributive justice. Combining the literature on transitions and transformations and the literature on climate justice provides an analytical framework to analyse TJTPs. Intergenerational justice aspects are included in all the types of transitions and transformations. The goal to keep the world liveable for future generations is central to all pathways. Procedural justice is less important for the socio-technological transition, but important for all other types of transitions and transformations. For both the transformation pathways, recognition justice is important. Recognising and addressing problems of social and cultural marginalisation is taken into account in both approaches. The transformation pathway through structural change is the only approach that emphasises the importance of distributive justice.

3. Methods

In this policy brief, a content analysis is performed on TJTPs from seven countries. The goal is to have a good mix of Northwestern, Southern and Eastern European countries. Therefore, three Northwestern European countries (Austria, Germany and Sweden), two Southern European countries (Cyprus and Greece) and two Eastern European countries (Estonia and the Czech Republic) are selected.[27] These seven countries are also chosen because their TJTPs had been approved when the analysis of this policy brief started (between August and November 2022). All countries have produced one document that includes plans for the regions within those countries, except for Greece, which has three separate plans, and Germany, which has five separate plans. Thus, in total, 13 documents are analysed. All the plans have been translated into English by using Google translate.

Altas.ti is used to code and analyse the plans. Atlas.ti is analytical software that supports the analysis of documents. The plans are analysed based on mentioned barriers and solutions and the way the TJTP relates to other policies. Moreover, the plans are analysed based on which economic, environmental and social policies they aim to implement. Economic policies are policies directly aimed at the private sector or improving employment conditions. Employment policies are put under the umbrella of economic policies because they mostly benefit private companies or private individuals. Economic policies are, for example, investments in SMEs, retraining or upskilling the workforce, and investments in large businesses. Environmental policies are targeted at improving the environment, for example, increasing the output of renewable energy production or decontaminating brownfield sites. Social policies are aimed at improving the communal and public conditions of the regions. They are available for large groups of people. They include investments in social and healthcare systems, education other than retraining or upskilling, and investments in public research organisations.

The Cohesion Data open data platform[28] is used to investigate the amount of money that is coupled to particular policies. The next step is to calculate the percentage of the total budget each policy receives. Where possible, the policy brief also highlights other European and national funds that are used to achieve the goals of the just transition.

A major limitation of this exploration of TJTPs is that it focuses only on TJTPs. Investments in the regions are also made through other European funds, such as the ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Fund (CF). The TJTPs can, for example, direct most funding towards investments in economic policies, while the ESF is used for social policies. Moreover, in the partnership agreements between countries and the EC, there can be additional agreements about climate objectives.

4. Results

In this part, the results of the analysis are presented. The TJTPs of Austria, Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia, Greece and Sweden are analysed. At the end of this section, a table summarises the findings.

4.1 Austria

Regions	Sectors targeted	Estimated job losses	Estimated new jobs	GHG emission reduction	Phase out of fossil fuels	% renewable energy in 2030
Regions in Carinthia, lower Austria, upper Austria, Styria	Metal, paper, chemical, pharmaceutical, cement, raw materials	**Not mentioned in TJTP**	**Not mentioned in TJTP**	Sectors outside emission trading: −36%; sectors with emission trading: −43% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels	Coal is mostly phased out	46-50%

Austria's TJTP is aligned with other Austrian policies, such as the Integrated National Energy and Climate Plan, that are in line with the EU-wide goals of reducing carbon emissions.[29] Austria has a Green Industrial Policy project, to foster the conversion of carbon-intensive industries. The targets of the Green Industrial Policy project are lower than national and European goals for the reduction of GHG, so the goals will be tightened in the future.

The regions in Austria are chosen because they have the highest output of GHG emissions and a high number of people are working in carbon-intensive industries.[30] The TJTP describes that the city of Linz fits this description as well, but is excluded because it is economically strong. The regions cover 29% of the GHG emission from the economy. The barriers mentioned in the TJTP are stricter legal rules for GHG emissions, rising energy costs and the risk that industries will relocate. To prevent this, the carbon-intensive industries in the area – paper and printing, chemical, pharmaceutical, metal processing and mineral raw materials processing – have to decarbonise. This means that energy efficiency has to be improved, resource use reduced, processes need to be electrified and new technologies need to be developed. The Austrian TJTP mentions the potential of hydrogen and carbon capture to achieve these goals.[31] In total, there are 71,000 people working in the carbon-intensive industries in the Austrian regions; there are no forecasts on the possible job losses in the sector mentioned in the TJTP.

The TJTP of Austria allocates 88% of its budget to economic strategies.[32] The main bulk of the budget (43%) is planned to be invested in SMEs. Those SMEs will receive funding when they support the goals of the EGD. Additionally, 20% of the budget is reserved for the creation of a regional start-up ecosystem, which should help with diversifying the economy. Also, 25% of the budget is aimed at research into technical solutions for decarbonising industries and businesses in the region.[33] The plan mentions that the qualifications and skills of workers in the region need to be improved. Therefore, special programs are designed for both current employees and unemployed people to improve their qualifications. In these programs, special attention is being paid to youth and women. Budget for this will come from national programs and the ESF+.

There is no budget for environmental strategies, such as investments in renewable energy resources. Those targets seem to be mainly

addressed in national plans and policies. The goal is to reduce GHG emissions in sectors outside emission trading by 36% and sectors with emission trading by 43% in 2030 compared to levels in 2005.

Lastly, 12% of the budget is reserved for investments in public research.[34] Those investments are designated for fixed assets linked to research and innovation activities. The TJTP also describes the need for targeted vocational training, career counselling and orientation, and opportunities in the region. This will be financed through ESF+ funding.

4.2 Cyprus

Region	Sectors targeted	Estimated job losses	Estimated new jobs	GHG emission reduction	Phase out of fossil fuels	% renewable energy in 2030
Cyprus	Energy, tourism, agriculture, construction, shipping, health, environment, ICT	**Not mentioned in TJTP**	**Not mentioned in TJTP**	24% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels	**Not mentioned in TJTP**	32%

Cyprus has a National Energy and Climate Plan that sets the island on course to have 32% renewable energy sources by 2030.[35] Moreover, Cyprus aims to reduce GHG emission by 24% in 2030 compared to 2005 levels. Around 50% of those emissions are from the transport sector. The TJTP mentions that Cyprus is a small economy, mainly based on services, and vulnerable in the global economy. Currently, the country has a severe energy and food crisis, related to the war in Ukraine.

The TJTP of Cyprus is a framework that uses funding from the ERDP, ESF, CF and the JTF.[36] In terms of economic strategies, Cyprus will designate 14% of the budget received from the JTF to modernise labour market services and set up special programs for women, youth and vulnerable people.[37] Funding from the ERDF will be used to strengthen Cypriot SMEs, especially through financing. The goal is to diversify the economy. Moreover, funds from the ERDF will be used to increase research and development. Currently, Cyprus is, according to the European Innovation Scoreboard, a moderate innovator; the goal is to move towards the strong innovator category. Investments in the health and digital sectors have priority.

In terms of environmental strategies, Cyprus aims to reduce GHG emissions by 24% and use 32% renewable energy sources in 2030.[38] Around 10% of the budget will be invested in renewable energy, mostly solar energy. The bulk of the funds from the JTF – 77% – will be designated to increase energy efficiency and retrofit buildings.

No funds are reserved for social strategies in the TJTP of Cyprus. But Cyprus will use other cohesion funds to reduce poverty, improve social inclusion and care for people with disabilities. Moreover, Cyprus wants to support people that provide informal care. Next,

Cyprus aims to improve vocational training, stimulate lifelong learning, and increase research and development activities of public research organisations. The participation of Cypriot organisations in European research partnerships is an important goal. To achieve these goals, funds from the ESF+ and ERDF will be used.

4.3 Czech Republic

Regions	Sectors targeted	Estimated job losses	Estimated new jobs	GHG emission reduction	Phase out of fossil fuels	Renewable energy in 2030
Karlovy Vary, Ústi, Moravia-Silesia	Energy, metal, engineering, chemical, transport, creative sector	36,000 (2025)*	2,757**	30% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels; 80% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels	Coal phase out by 2033	Increase PV by 1,893 MWp; wind by 600 MWe; biomass by 40 MVe; hydroelectric by 21 MWE in 2030

* In (coal) mining and processing jobs.

** Based on envisioned projects with job estimates; not all projects have job estimates.

The Czech Republic has national plans focused on the climate transition, which will increase the output of renewable energy by 2030 and phase out coal in 2033.[39] Public investments regarding coal phase out will be done according the principle of the polluter pays. Various European and national programs will be used to make an investment of €4.2 billion in decarbonisation policies.

The Czech regions are chosen because they experience a high number of people that are at risk of poverty, high dependence (of employment) on carbon-intensive industries, high levels of unemployment, an ageing population, high levels of air pollution and have poor infrastructure.[40]

Potential barriers mentioned in the TJTP are related to potential job losses, the energy transition, land revitalisation and education. Most jobs in the regions are in the automobile, mining, metal, engineering and construction sectors, all sectors that need to decarbonise. This goal leads to an estimated 36,000 people losing their jobs. Next, the energy transition requires large-scale investments in infrastructure. Energy production needs to be decentralised and based on renewable energy sources. The potential of hydrogen is mentioned in the TJTP. Moreover, coal phase out requires a massive revitalisation of land. Lastly, according the TJTP, there is insufficient support for children of parents with low education levels, limited opportunities for digital education, insufficient IT competence or a lack of IT equipment.[41]

The TJTP of the Czech Republic designated 32% of its budget for economic strategies.[42] The bulk (18%) of this is going into SME investments. The goal is to develop new business and diversify the economy. The Czech Republic is also planning to create various business incubators, but these will be funded through other means. Next, 4% of the budget is reserved to increase the qualifications of the workforce and

retraining programs. Finally, large businesses receive investments to support their innovative potential (7%) and for investments in new technologies and knowledge transfers (3%).

In terms of environmental strategies, the Czech regions have to decrease GHG emissions by 30% in 2030 compared to 2005 levels; coal phase out is planned for 2033.[43] In total, 32% of the budget is designated for environmental strategies. The regions will strongly increase their renewable energy output by investing in solar, wind, biomass and hydroelectric energy production. Of this allocation, in total, 5% will be reserved for investments in renewable energy sources. Moreover, 7% is designated for investments in energy systems, storage and energy communities. Lastly, 20% is aimed at revitalising brownfield sites.

Finally, 29% of the total budget is designated for investments in social goals.[44] The largest part is aimed at investments in public research (20%). Moreover, 8% will be invested in the modernisation of primary and secondary education. This is an important goal, because the regions have an ageing population. To prevent young people from leaving the areas, and attract young people, investments in education, healthcare and social services are needed. Lastly, 1% is aimed at projects that bolster social cohesion. The remaining 7% of the total budget is labelled as "other".

4.4 Estonia

Regions	Sectors targeted	Estimated job losses	Estimated new jobs	GHG emission reduction	Phase out of fossil fuels	% renewable energy in 2030
Ida-Virumaa	Peat, chemical, plastics, metal products, equipment, textiles and mineral resources, ICT, healthcare, social work, creative economy (film)	3,700 (2030)	6,335	In sectors: 13% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels; all GHG emissions: reduced by 80% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels	Oil shale: by 2035; all: by 2040	42%

Estonia has several plans that steer climate policies. The document "Estonian National Energy and Climate Plan" outlines the goal to reduce GHG emissions in specific sectors by 13% by 2030 compared to 2005 levels accompanied by a total reduction of 80% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels.[45] The share of renewable energy must be at least 42% in 2030.

The area that is selected as Estonia's Just Transition territory is the Ida-Virumaa region.[46] The area is responsible for more than 50% of all Estonian GHG output. The unemployment rate is higher than the Estonian average; there is also an employment gap between Estonian-speaking people and non-Estonian-speaking people and a gender wage gap of 27.9% (which is the largest in Estonia).

The region depends on peat and oil shale for its energy production, and both need to be phased out. This will have consequences on unemployment, with an estimated loss of 3,700 jobs. The Estonian TJTP mentions the ageing population, health and social care issues, and lack of job opportunities as the biggest barriers to achieve a just transition. Young people are leaving the region, while the proportion of woman and young people in the workforce is already low. The area has difficulty with attracting skilled health and social care workers, while there is an increase in people depending on health and social services. Next, the region is majority Russian speaking, while most highly skilled, specialised people speak Estonian. It is therefore hard to attract highly skilled, specialised people to the region.[47]

The Estonian TJTP designates 69% of its budget for economic strategies.[48] The bulk of this amount is reserved for investments in the area of research and development, 31% for SMEs and 22% for large businesses. These investments should help to develop new technologies, do applied research and hire research workers. Next, 10% is reserved for other investments in SMEs. The goal is to develop new businesses and diversify the economy. To achieve this goal, an ecosystem of entrepreneurs, start-ups, creative industries and ICT needs to be created. Around 5% of the funds that Estonia uses from the JTF is designated for this goal. Two incubators will be created, one focused on industries and businesses and one on the creative sector. The mining and industrial landscapes in the area could be an opportunity for the film industry. An important economic goal is the (re)training of the workforce. Most of the funding will come from Estonian national funds. Approximately 49% of the entire workforce needs to be (re)trained to achieve the proposed transition. Next, 1% of the budget is reserved for temporary support for people that lose their jobs in SMEs and find a new job. The goal is to compensate for six months to one year of expected lower income.

In terms of environmental strategies, the main goals are to increase the energy efficiency of buildings (7%) and decontaminate polluted land (2%).[49] The regions also need to uncouple district heating from shale gas to biofuel. This effort will not be funded through the JTF.

The social strategies of the Estonian TJTP will be complemented by other European funds, such as the ESF+. Funding from the ESF+ is focused on long-term health and social care services, while funding from the JTF will be used to attract highly skilled, specialised people to the region. Therefore, 7% of the budget is directed to investments in public research. Next, 6% of the budget is reserved to improve education in the region. A steering group will be created to steer the educational needs in the area between local companies, educational institutions and other partners. The goal is to ensure that curricula correspond to the needs of the region and support the transition towards a low-carbon economy. Finally, investments will be made in childcare (2%) and the development of social and health services (1%).[50] Investments in childcare lead to improved participation of women in the labour force. Next, a grant will be created to attract new health and social care workers to the area. Lastly, the Estonian TJTP stresses the importance of building local support, because people will be the drivers of the transition. Therefore, grassroots initiatives will be supported; however, there is no specific budget designated for the support of these initiatives.

Lastly, 7% of the total budget is categorised as “other”.

4.5 Germany

Regions	Sectors targeted	Estimated job losses	Estimated new jobs	GHG emission reduction	Phase out of fossil fuels	% renewable energy in 2030
Nördliches Ruhrgebiet, Rheinisches Revier, Uckermark, Mitteldeutsches Revier Sachsen, Sachsen-Anhalt, Lausitz Brandenburg & Sachsen, Chemitz	Energy, transport, petroleum, chemical, health, food, paper, textiles, agriculture, metal, high tech, ICT, tourism, media, creative, metal, mining, construction, machinery, plastics	At least 31,445 (in mining industry)	**Not mentioned in TJTP**	65%	Coal phase out by 2038	30%

Germany has increased its targets on becoming climate neutral significantly. The Climate Protection Act of 2019 was updated in 2021, and aimed for a reduction of 65% GHG emissions by 2030 instead of 55%.[51] Moreover, Germany has an integrated National Energy and Climate Plan and a Climate Pact.[52] Next, the TJTP describes that legally coal should be phased out by 2038.

There are six main just transition regions in Germany.[53] These regions are chosen because they have a high dependence on electricity from fossil fuels, the refinement of fossil fuels and mining activities. In some of those regions, the transition towards a low-carbon economy will be achieved before 2030, whilst others need more time. At least 31,335 jobs will be lost in the mining industry.

The TJTPs of Germany direct 45% of its budget towards economic policies.[54] One of the goals is to diversify the economy with a focus on a low-carbon economy. The region of Saxony also explicitly aims to focus on the health industry. In total, 9% of the budget will be directly invested in SMEs and 15% will be invested in incubators. Next, 5% of the budget is reserved for research and innovation activities of SMEs. Next to SMEs, large corporations receive 10% of the budget to make investments in energy efficiency and climate neutrality. Moreover, large corporations receive 6% of the budget for research and innovation activities.

In terms of environmental policies, the TJTPs direct money towards investments in the renewable energy infrastructure (3%); increasing energy efficiency (3%); and investments in decontamination, flood and heat measures, and biodiversity (7%).[55] The mentioned renewable energy sources are solar, thermal, biomass and wind energy. Next, hydrogen is mentioned as a solution for the decarbonisation of carbon-intensive industries.

Lastly, 26% of the budget is designated for social policies.[56] The majority of those investments are in upgrading broadband internet. The German regions hope that the combination of broadband internet with co-working spaces

will make remote work easier. This will prevent against people leaving the regions to find job opportunities in other regions. Next, 9% of the budget is directed at vocational training and education in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. Moreover, an allocation of the budget is reserved for developing education programs on participation and climate neutrality.

Lastly, 16% of the total budget is labelled as "other".

4.6 Greece

Regions	Sectors targeted	Estimated job losses	Estimated new jobs	GHG emission reduction	Phase out of fossil fuels	Renewable energy in 2030
Western Macedonia, Megapolis, Aegean Islands & Crete	Energy, R&D, circular economy, agriculture, health, tourism, creative sector, construction, metal, machinery, rubber, plastics, ICT	14,341 (2029)	14,805	95% by 2050 compared to 1990 levels	All lignite mines closed by 2023, except for one; total phase out by 2029	Islands should be able to export clean energy

Greek national plans focus on reducing GHG emissions by 95% in 2050 compared to 1990 levels and increasing the output of renewable energy. Moreover, the National Strategy for Biodiversity aims to ensure the protection of ecosystems and more efficient use of resources in agriculture and tourism.

The Greek regions – Megalopolis, Western Macedonia and the Aegean Islands – are strongly dependent on the mining sector, have high unemployment rates and an ageing population.[57] The transition towards a low-carbon economy will result in approximately 14,341 people losing their jobs by 2029. Barriers towards achieving the transition are the low education levels of the workforce, high energy costs and a lack of new employment opportunities. In particular, jobs in the mining sector have high wages, which will be hard to replace.

The Greek TJTP chooses to allocate 64% of the budget towards economic strategies.[58] SMEs will receive the majority of these funds: 18% will be invested directly in SMEs; 6% in the creation of innovation zones; and 3% in research and innovation activities of SMEs. Additionally, 18% of the budget will be spend on employment support for people at risk of job loss. Special programs will be set up to increase the participation of women and youth in the labour force. Also, 19% of the budget will be aimed at large businesses, mainly to help them in the energy transition and diversification.

In terms of environmental strategies, the Greek plans are focused on transforming the islands

into exporting sites for wind-powered energy and decontaminating brownfield sites.[59] To make the Aegean Islands into an exporting region of clean energy, large investments are needed. Therefore, 7% will be invested in renewable energy sources and 6% in building smart energy systems, storage capabilities and energy communities. Next, 3% will be invested in increasing energy efficiency. Lastly, 5% will be aimed at decontaminating brownfield sites, investments in waste management and sustainable mobility.

Finally, 5% of the total budget will be directed at social strategies.[60] Most of the budget (3%) will be reserved for investments in public research organisations. Next, 2% will be invested in improving vocational training. The Greek regions will also stimulate small-scale interventions, aimed at improving the quality of life.

Lastly, 9% of the total budget is categorised as "other" and 1% as "other types of ICT infrastructure". The "other types of ICT infrastructure" does not clarify the identities of the public or private beneficiaries.

4.7 Sweden

Regions	Sectors targeted	Estimated job losses	Estimated new jobs	GHG emission reduction	Phase out of fossil fuels	% renewable energy in 2040
Upper Norrland, Småland, West Sweden	Metal, mineral, chemical	12,812	51,000*	Negative emission in 2045 compared to 1990 levels; in 2030: 63% inside, 70% outside trading emission system	2040	100%

* No new jobs created, but there is an approximate need for 51,000 extra people in the current industries by 2030.

Sweden's national goals are more ambitious than mandatory European goals.[61] GHG emissions should be decreased by 63% within sectors with emission trade, and by 70% in those without emission trading by 2030. In 2045, there should be negative emissions compared to 1990 levels, and by 2040, all the fossil fuels should be phased out.

The TJTP regions in Sweden are chosen because they have a high concentration of carbon-intensive industries.[62] Those industries are producing and processing metal, minerals, cement and chemicals. The greatest barrier to achieve a just transition, according to the TJTP, is finding technical solutions to decarbonise industries and produce enough clean energy to meet the high energy demands of industry. When industries decarbonise, they become less competitive. Research into the circular economy, raw materials, biochar and hydrogen is therefore needed. When the industries close, 12,812 jobs will be lost. However, Sweden hopes that they can decarbonise the industries, and they will not need to close. Currently, there

is a problem with recruitment; 51,000 jobs will need to be filled in the regions.

Almost all the funding from the JTF is designated to economic strategies, namely, 94%.[63] The funding will be directed mostly at finding technical solutions for the industrial transition (83%). Those investments include clean energy technology, energy storage, fuel reduction processes, carbon capture techniques and the circular economy for better utilisation of resources. In particular, green hydrogen could play an important role in meeting the high energy needs of the industries in the region. Also, 11% is reserved for skill enhancements of the workforce in the metal industry. Lastly, there will be a focus on attracting youth to the regions and increasing gender equality.

A small amount (6%) of the budget will be invested in environmental strategies, namely, smart energy systems and storage. No JTF funds will be used for social strategies.

4.8 Comparison

			Austria	Cyprus	Czech Republic	Estonia	Germany	Greece	Sweden
Economic policies	Employment			14%	(see below)	1%		18%	
	Retraining/ upskilling				4%				11%
	SMEs	SME investments	43%		18%	10%	9%	18%	
		Incubator	20%		–	5%**	15%	6%	
		R&D&I				31%	5%	3%	83%
	Other businesses	investments			7%		10%	19%	
		R&D&I	25%*		3%	22%	6%		
Total			88%	14%*****	32%	69%	45%	64%	94%

			Austria	Cyprus	Czech Republic	Estonia	Germany	Greece	Sweden
Environ-mental policies	Energy	% renewable energy share (RES)							
		Investment in RES		10%	5%	–		7%	–
		RES mentioned							
		Infrastructure RES			7%		3%	6%	6%
		Energy efficiency and retrofitting		77%		7%	3%	3%	
	Land development, readjustment, waste, mobility and climate adaptation				20%	2%***	7%	5%	
Total			0%	87%*****	32%	9%	13%	21%	6%
Social policies	Social issues				1%	1%			
	Child and elderly care					2%		–	
	R&D&I public sector		12%	E	20%	7%	17%	3%	
	Education (not retraining/ upskilling)				8%	6%	9%	2%	
	Small-scale interventions								
Total			12%	0%	29%	16%	26%	5%	0%
Other					7%	23%	16%	10%****	

* Research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises, research centres and universities focusing on the low-carbon economy, resilience and adaptation to climate change + Research and innovation processes, technology transfer and cooperation between enterprises focusing on a circular economy.
** This is the amount designated for "support to entities that provide services contributing to the low-carbon economy and to resilience to climate change, including awareness-raising measures", intervention field number 046.
*** This is the amount designated to "rehabilitation of industrial sites and contaminated land", intervention field number 073.
**** 1% is the amount designated to "ICT: other types of ICT infrastructure (including large-scale computer resources/ equipment, data centres, sensors and other wireless equipment)", intervention field number 036.
***** 14% and 87% adds up to 101%; this is due to rounding of the numbers.

When the seven TJTPs are compared based on how much budget is allocated to particular policies, a distinction between three groups can be made.

The first group makes a more or less balanced choice. The Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany and Greece split their budget between economic, environmental and social policies. The Czech Republic makes the most balanced choice, with almost one third of the budget allocated to each type of policy, whereas Estonia, Germany and Greece invest the majority – between 45 and 60% – in economic policies. All four countries invest in SMEs to diversify their economies, create incubators and increase the qualifications of the workforce. Moreover, they invest in a wide variety of renewable energy sources, such as solar, wind (sustainable), biomass and hydrogen. Next, there are investments in the education sector. The Czech Republic invests in primary and secondary education, while Estonia, Germany and Greece mostly invest in vocational training. There are also differences: Estonia invests heavily in research and innovation activities (60% of the budget) compared to the Czech Republic (23% of the budget) and Greece (5% of the budget). Germany invests heavily in broadband internet (17%). Next, the Czech Republic invests more in decontamination of brownfield sites and sustainable mobility (20% of the budget) compared to Estonia (2%) and Greece (5%). However, all these countries seem to aim to prepare their citizens to be more resilient to deal with the transition towards a low-carbon society. They encourage them to become entrepreneurial and aim to increase the innovation potential of the regions. Moreover, these countries target a broad mix of economic sectors – from economic sectors that are already strongly present in the region, such as agricultural, chemical and mining sectors, to sectors that are mentioned as growth areas, such as the creative sector, ICT and tourism.

The second group mainly chooses to invest in economic policies, especially those directed at decarbonising carbon-intensive industries. Austria reserves 88% of the budget for economic policies and Sweden 94%. Although both Austria and Sweden opt to mainly invest in economic strategies, they make different choices. Austria invests in SMEs, with the goal of diversifying the economies of the regions (63% of the budget). In their TJTP, they write that they will use other funds to decarbonise carbon-intensive industries. Mentioned technologies include carbon capture and storage. Sweden invests the majority of the budget (83%) in finding technical solutions for the metal, chemical and mineral processing industries in the regions. These TJTPs mostly target carbon-intensive industries and do not mention specific economic sectors that they want to develop.

The last group only includes one country: Cyprus. Cyprus invests the bulk of its budget (87%) in environmental strategies. The budget is mainly direct towards increasing energy efficiency and retrofitting buildings. Although only 14% of the budget is directed towards economic policies and no budget from the JTF is reserved for social policies, the TJTP describes extensively how they will use other funds to implement those policies. The sectors that are targeted include sectors that already have a strong presence in the region, such as construction and shipping, and sectors that need to be developed, such as energy and tourism.

Thus, the plans of the Czech Republic, Estonia, Germany and Greece mainly seem to focus on increasing the adaptability of the regions by investing in SMEs and education. Moreover, a wide variety of renewable energy sources will be

used to increase to output of clean energy. The TJPT of Cyprus mainly focuses on increasing energy efficiency, but the TJTP describes how other funds will be used to invest in economic and social policies. This means that those five TJTPs mainly envision a socio-ecological transition, with priority given to increasing the adaptability of citizens. This means that mostly the intergenerational and procedural aspects of climate justice are addressed, while the recognition and distributive aspects of climate justice are mostly ignored. It should be mentioned that the procedural justice aspect is mostly addressed by stimulating community initiatives and small-scale interventions. Often it is not an integral part of the plan. To a lesser degree, the TJTPs envision a transformation through capacity building, mainly by investing in improving education for disadvantaged people and energy communities. These policies are aimed at building the capacity of the those that are left behind in the regions. Therefore, they address the recognition aspect of climate justice. The plans of Austria and Sweden mainly invest in decarbonising their industry and business sectors. Investments are made in technological solutions. These TJTPs mainly envision a socio-technological transition. Here, only the intragenerational aspect of climate justice is addressed.

	Socio-technological transition	Socio-ecological transition	Transformation through capacity building	Transformation through structural change
Austria	X			
Cyprus		X	x	
Czech Republic		X	x	
Estonia		X	x	
Greece		X	x	
Sweden	X			

To sum up: the Czech Republic, Germany, Greece and Estonia seem to aim to make their regions more entrepreneurial and innovative; Austria and Sweden focus on decarbonising their industry and business sectors; and Cyprus chooses to focus on energy efficiency. Of course, this is not the full picture of the transition pathways these regions have. The TJTPs describe what other kinds of European, national and regional plans support the just transition. Cyprus depends on other funds to make investments in SMEs; improve the participation of women, youth and vulnerable people in the labour market; and expand social and healthcare. Germany, Sweden and Austria also use national funding to invest in decarbonisation. Moreover, investments in new technologies can be very expensive, whereas investments in (re)training programs have relatively low costs. The amount of funding directed towards the policies does not necessarily say something about the impact of the policies.

When regions want to adhere to the principle of leave no one behind, there should be a shift from transition strategies towards transformation strategies. This would require turning the current logic of investing in the economy to create social security upside down by investing in social security to strengthen the

economy. More investments in childcare and elderly care would diminish the mostly female labour market responsible for taking care of children and the elderly. More investments in public R&D&I would prevent SMEs and large corporations from monopolising new technologies through patents. Next, the TJTPs claim to work with the principle of the polluter pays. However, large corporations receive money to decarbonise their activities and the EC invests in the decontamination of land – land polluted by large corporations. Transformative environmental policies would require investments in energy communities to decentralised the energy production system. The retrofitting of housing – including social housing and rented housing – would save people money. Moreover, investment in public transport would increase the mobility of (vulnerable) people, increasing their chances of finding new jobs. Lastly, in order to leave no one behind, investments in SMEs and large corporations should benefit vulnerable people. This could be achieved by implementing quotas for hiring people. Moreover, there is a risk that the funds from the JTF will end up with the usual suspects, who already know how to apply for these funds. Strategies need to be developed to support SMEs that have never applied for European funding before.

5. Conclusion

In this policy brief, seven TJPTs were analysed. The plans are analysed based on the economic, environmental and social policies they aim to implement and the budget that is allocated for each area.

This analysis focuses on TJTPs, which are not the only policy tools that are used to achieve a just transition. However, the JTF is the main tool that the EC is using to achieve a just transition. Based on this preliminary and explorative study, a just transition seems to be mainly aimed at preserving jobs in industries and businesses by decarbonising them or making citizens more resilient. Moreover, most social policies are directed to support economic goals. Investments in education should be based on the needs of businesses and industries. Investments in social and healthcare are made to attract better educated and young people to the regions. This raises the question of what kind of policies are envisioned for the already unemployed and marginalised. The TJTPs from Cyprus, the Czech Republic, Estonia and Sweden have special programs to increase the labour participation of women, youth and vulnerable people. However, most plans seem to lack specific targets to increase the number of female- and minority-owned SMEs focused on special research and innovation activities for marginalised communities. Moreover, this raises another question: how can the well-being of the people living in these regions be improved? By preserving jobs and transforming businesses and industries? This would reproduce old economic structures. Would those businesses and industries be able to compete in the global economy? Or can well-being be improved by directly investing in social policies? This could lead to new innovations and the development of unexpected economic sectors.

This study is an explorative study of TJTPs, with limitations that are important to consider. The amount of funding is not equal to the impact of policies; moreover, these regions also receive funding from the ERDF, ESF+ and CF. Also, only the TJTPs are analysed and not the partnership agreements between member states and the EU or national or regional plans. Thus, they represent only a part of the transition envisioned in the regions.

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