

5. Structural Support Action for Coal and Carbon Intensive Regions

November 2018

The Paris Agreement recognises that countries around the world are in different states of preparedness for the energy transition. At European level, the European Commission pays particular attention to the impact of climate change and climate action in different regions of our continent. **The EU's fight against climate change must be done in a way that no region is left behind and all regions of Europe win in the transition** to a sustainable future for Europe's industries and infrastructure. Some regions are more dependent than others on carbon-intensive industries or on coal mining. Others are currently better connected to energy infrastructure or transport networks.

In the context of the EU's Cohesion Policy, EU Member States and regions have developed over 120 smart specialisation strategies for the 2014-2020 period, with more than €40 billion allocated to regions through the European Regional Development Fund (more than €65 billion including national co-financing). Currently there are 26 interregional smart specialisation partnerships created, gathered in three platforms on industrial modernisation, energy and agri-food. Some of them are most relevant for the energy transition, like bioenergy, marine renewable energy, sustainable construction, smart grids, solar energy and batteries. About 100 regions from most of the Member States as well as from EU neighbouring countries are participating in these partnerships.

► What will the European Commission do next?

The European Commission is launching two new dedicated initiatives to address the climate and industrial challenges faced by these regions:

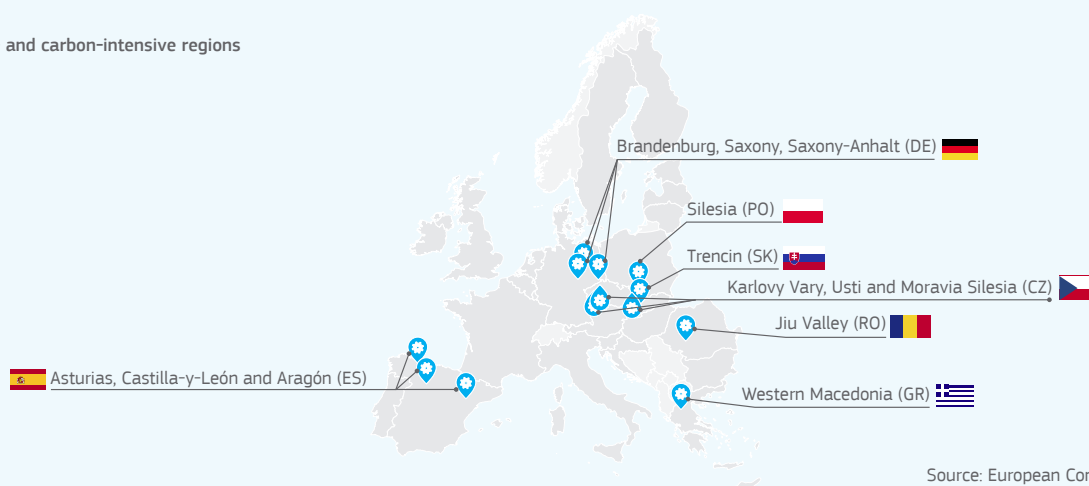
Coal and carbon-intensive regions:

The European Commission supports coal and carbon-intensive regions in transition with a view to ensuring a 'just transition', in which no region and no EU citizen is left behind.

In **2017**, the European Commission launched a series of Country Teams to support pilot coal regions in their transition efforts. A dedicated Platform for Coal Regions in Transition was established in December 2017 to facilitate the exchange of best practices and to discuss strategies and projects with a potential to kick-start the transition process. Since its inception, the Platform has met every quarter, bringing together almost 300 representatives from regional authorities, governments, businesses and civil society organisations.

Today the Coal Regions in Transition Initiative delivers tailor-made assistance to 13 pilot regions in 7 Member States:

● Coal- and carbon-intensive regions



Source: European Commission

Coal regions in Greece and Slovakia benefit from technical assistance delivered by the European Commission Structural Reform Support Service to develop long-term transition strategies. In Poland, Czechia and Germany coal regions benefit from Commission guidance to develop and finance identified priority projects with the use of existing EU funds.

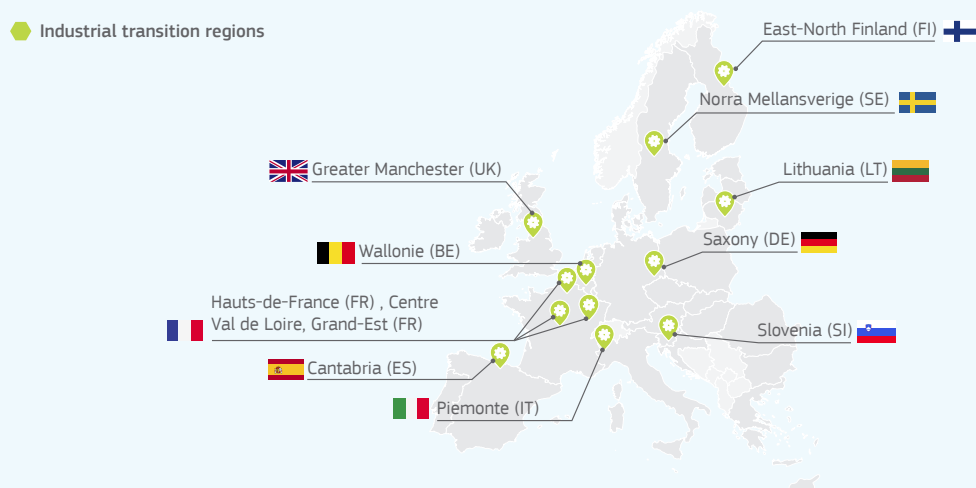
In the region of Silesia, which is the EU's largest coal region, and the host of COP24, 120 million euros were ring-fenced under the Regional Operational Programme to provide support to projects in the area of urban infrastructure, clean air and to prepare former mining sites for investments.

A dedicated Secretariat for the Coal Regions in Transition Initiative will be established in early 2019 and will provide toolkits, guidelines as well as technical assistance to all coal and carbon-intensive regions across the EU for the development and implementation of their transition strategies and related projects.

Industrial transition regions:

To support EU regions in managing the transition to a more sustainable low carbon economy, the European Commission offers region-specific support for boosting innovation under the pilot action for regions in industrial transition.

As a result of the assessment of the applications received, 12 test regions were selected:



Source: European Commission

These regions are working in partnership with teams of European Commission experts to boost their innovation capacity, remove investment barriers, equip workers with the right skills and prepare for industrial and societal change, on the basis of their smart specialisation strategies. The pilot seeks to find new ways to help these regions harness globalisation by decarbonisation, innovation, digitisation, and developing people's skills, in particular those regions which have experienced significant employment loss in coal, steel or other energy intensive industries.



Vice-President Valdis Dombrovskis at the 1st meeting of the High Level Expert Group on Sustainable Finance

