

Just Transition of Silesia

Challenges from
the civil society
perspective
– analysis and
recommendations



**Polska
Zielona
Sieć**

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The Alliance of Associations “Polish Green Network” is a non-profit organisation grouping more than a dozen environmental organisations operating in Poland’s largest cities. Our goal is to support social and economic development consistent with the requirements of environmental and climate protection, social justice and respect for human rights. We build civil society support for the concept of sustainable development, devise mechanisms of civil society control of public funds spending, carry out projects in the field of low-carbon transition and support environmentally friendly development of countries of the Global South.

The main fields of our activity include development of community energy, energy transition and just transition of coal mining regions, the fight against energy poverty as well as improvement of energy efficiency and air quality, and protection of water resources and biodiversity.

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Summary

Upper Silesia is not a typical coal region and its transition involves a special set of challenges. Even though the vast majority of Polish coal is mined in Silesia, mining is a minor element of the economic landscape of this dynamically developing region. **The local mining sector has been shrinking for years. However, to date no coherent, well-thought and participatory plan for phasing out coal, specifying the date of the end of its extraction, has been devised.** The initiatives launched so far have merely involved provisional, not always justified decisions to close specific mines. This stands in contrast with the idea of just transition, the starting points for which should include a specific deadline and a rational plan for phasing out coal. In the context of a just transition of Silesia, a major challenge concerns solving the region's social problems such as: depopulation, an ageing population, the lack of skilled workers and a low share of working population in the population as a whole. Other important challenges concern improving the residents' quality of life, including access to health care, education and mobility, alongside an improvement of the state of the environment damaged by mining activity, and air quality in particular.

The issue of Silesia's just transition was first introduced to public debate by regional civil society organisations. **According to civil society representatives, coal phase-out is unavoidable,** and the most important aspects of a just transition should concern protecting climate and the environment, taking the opinions and interests of local communities into account and offering support to workers who lose their jobs and helping them to retrain. Civil society organisations are opposed to the plans to open new mines in Silesia. Trade unions are also actively participating in the debate on just transition. Their priority is to ensure economic security to workers employed in the mining sector. In their opinion, this security will likely be threatened, should a coal phase-out take place. Civil society organisations argue that with good planning, the conflict between an ambitious climate policy and social security of workers is avoidable.

The region's transition is also a focus of attention of the regional government and the central government. Both the central government and the regional government are involved in the works of the EU Platform for Coal Regions in Transition (the so-called Coal Platform). The government's vision of the region's development envisages the creation of an innovative industrial

sector, an increase in the share of working population in the population as a whole and an improvement of workers' qualifications, development of transportation infrastructure and an improvement of the state of the environment. At the same time, however, the government wants Silesia to continue providing most of the country's energy and safeguard Poland's energy security, which would necessitate new investments in the mining industry and the opening of new mines, in defiance of the protests by local residents.

On the other hand, **in the regional government's vision coal is not a key determinant of the region's future development.** So much is clear from the regional strategic documents in which emphasis is placed on development of an innovative economy and on a comprehensive improvement of the residents' quality of life. However, transition-supporting measures taken to date have largely omitted the aspect of investing in people (this is also true for activities carried out as part of the Coal Platform). Moreover, the debates on the shape and direction of transition have failed to sufficiently take the voice of civil society organisations and local communities into account.

The deeds and public statements by government representatives indicate that for the government, the notion of just transition is tantamount to putting off any coal phase-out for as long as possible. Meanwhile, experience gained by Poland and other countries shows that the risk of negative social consequences is associated not so much with phasing out coal, as with doing so in a chaotic, unplanned and unprepared manner.

A gradual elimination of Silesian coal from the energy sector is unavoidable in the context of accelerating changes in the global energy sector and the present direction of the EU's energy and climate policy. This is why the plans to maintain the significant role for coal in the Polish power industry are highly likely to fail, which in turn exposes Silesia to threats associated with a sudden and unprepared decline of the mining sector.

One of the most important determinants of just transition's success is the availability of funds to finance the necessary investments. In this context, the ongoing planning of spending from the future EU budget, which will be one of the main sources of transition's funding, is of extreme importance.

Recommendations

- The divergent visions of the region's development, as presented by the national government, the regional government and the civil society, should be a starting point for an inclusive public debate on a transition plan, its timeframe, schedule and solutions for the workers.
- Silesia needs to devise a clear vision of its just transition that would reflect the needs and expectations of all the groups concerned. This vision should be binding upon future decision-makers.
- There is an urgent need to set the deadline for phasing out coal and to prepare an estimation of the costs of a socially just transition. It is also necessary to identify specific sources of transition funding and the methods of spending these funds, especially in the context of the future EU budgetary expenditure planning.
- An information and awareness-raising media campaign is needed to explain the concept and course of a just transition to the public at large.

CHALLENGES TO SILESIA'S JUST TRANSITION

- ▶ Despite the fact that most Polish coal is mined in Silesia, mining is a minor element of the economic landscape of this dynamically developing region.
- ▶ The mining sector has been shrinking for years. However, to date no coherent, well-thought and participatory plan for phasing out coal has been devised and only provisional decisions have been made.
- ▶ In its plans, the government wants Silesia to maintain its status as a region providing most of the country's energy and safeguarding Poland's energy security. This stands in contrast with the idea of just transition, the starting points for which should include a specific deadline and a rational plan for phasing out coal.
- ▶ Silesia's just transition should also include efforts to solve the region's social problems such as depopulation, an ageing population, the lack of skilled workers and a low share of working population in the population as a whole, combined with a relatively low unemployment rate. Other issues include an improvement of local residents' quality of life, including access to health care, education and mobility, alongside an improvement in the state of the environment, air quality in particular.

Upper Silesia is different from Poland's other mining regions. Despite its difficult experience of the 1990's transformation and a decline in its importance on the industrial map of Poland and Europe, it is a dynamically developing region. **Over the last two decades, the Silesian economy has become much more diver-**

sified. There has been a permanent decline in the volume of mined coal and a decrease in the number of individuals employed in the mining sector, as a result of which other sectors of the economy had to develop. Despite these changes, Silesia remains Poland's most industrialised region. It hosts the headquarters of the country's three largest mining companies grouping a total of 27 mines (which in 2007–2015 together held a 82% share in the national total coal mining volume).¹ The region's assets include a stable and big share of industry in the structure of its economy, advanced information and communication technology businesses, ongoing development of the energy sector, medical services, the automotive sector, environmental protection and innovative technology sectors. The local innovative business service sector is dynamically developing as well. With its numerous research and development institutions, Silesia is also a major science and research centre, which confirms its great potential for innovation.

Experts argue that the region is on the right track to catch up with the level of development of affluent industrial regions in Western Europe in the near future. However, for this to be possible, a just socio-economic transition is necessary, which requires consistent and coherent efforts and determination to rise to numerous challenges. **So far, Silesia has not gone through any just transition.** Although some parts of the region have managed to alleviate the social consequences of transformation, this was mainly possible due to the favourable economic situation, low unemployment rate and presence of still-open mines to which miners could move from the ones that were closed down. **No plan has ever been devised jointly by various actors to help the workers and the local communities to stay informed about the current situation and to feel in control of the course of events.** Usually, the decision to close a mine was made behind closed doors and communicated to the miners from one day to the next.

¹ *Programme for Silesia*, Ministry of Development, 2017, p. 7, https://archiwum.miiir.gov.pl/media/65008/Program_dla_Slaska.pdf [accessed on 31.05.2019].

Silesia's most important problems include the outflow of people from the region, heavy air pollution, vast areas of degraded and unused post-industrial sites, and slower pace of economic development compared with other regions.

The challenges Silesia is facing can be divided into three main categories: economic, energy-related and social. In the context of this report, we are mainly interested in the energy-related and social aspects. **Production of energy in Silesia is expected to guarantee the security of energy supplies across the country. According to announcements by the Ministry of Energy and to the government's Programme for Silesia, in the coming decades energy generation is expected to continue to rely on burning hard coal. This calls into question the implementation of the basic principle of just transition, according to which a coal phaseout date should be set.** Moreover, it is not consistent with the assumptions of the regional development programmes which emphasise the need to develop other sectors of the economy and a modern power industry.

For just transition to succeed, experts also point to the 'human factor' which is frequently overlooked in debates on economic and power industry innovations. In this context, **the biggest challenges seem to concern the demand for workers with relevant vocational qualifications, an ageing population and the outflow of people from the region, low quality of life, and too low involvement of non-governmental organisations in social dialogue on the transition.**

Although Silesia has a low unemployment rate,² the labour market situation varies considerably between different parts of the region, which is a major problem particularly evident in cities such as Bytom, Piekary Śląskie, Sosnowiec and Świętochłowice. The level of development also varies between different municipalities, with mining districts, which used to be or continue to be economically dependent on the mining sector, occupying the bottom rung. The poorly developed transportation infrastructure is a major barrier to the residents' mobility and hinders efforts to level out the developmental differences. **The region has a shortage of individuals with relevant vocational qualifications adjusted to the current and future demand.**

On the one hand, the problem concerns a shortage of workers, which is partly offset by economic immigration from Eastern Europe. On the other hand, however, the vocational training and retraining opportunities offered to workers are insufficient. A 2016 survey commissioned by the regional government showed that the biggest shortages of skilled workers were recorded in the following sectors: industrial processing, construction, transportation and warehousing, information and communication, hotel and catering industry, health care and welfare, wholesale and retail trade, car repair sector.³ It is expected that in the coming years similar shortages will be recorded in the following sectors: generation and supply of electricity, gas, steam, hot water and air for air conditioning systems, supply of water, sewage and waste management, land reclamation.⁴ Both the above-mentioned survey and the Occupational Barometer survey conducted by the Regional Employment Office indicate that there is a shortage of vocational professionals and specialists. It is also worth noting **that Silesia's share of working population in the total population is one of the lowest in Poland, in particular among men aged 50 and older, i.e. the group which includes the recipients of retirement benefits dedicated to the mining sector.** This phenomenon emerged post-1990 and is particularly evident in regions which initially had a large share of individuals employed in the mining sector and which failed to sufficiently develop alternative sectors of the economy. Experts argue that the low share of working population in the total population casts a shadow on Silesia's future – it may slow down the dynamics of the region's economic development and its competitiveness, unless it is offset, for example by immigration from outside the region.⁵

Improvement of the residents' quality of life is one of the most important challenges for Silesia. According to the Social Progress Index compiled by the European Commission in 2016, Silesia was ranked 250th (Poland's lowest) out of the 272 regions surveyed. The following categories were assessed: access to medical care, health and wellbeing, personal safety, environmental quality, access to knowledge, communication and education, level of trust in public institutions, observance of civil rights. When it comes to environmental pollution, and air pollution in particular, Silesia was last on

2 In March 2019, the unemployment rate stood at 4.4%. Quoted after: *Biuletyn statystyczny województwa śląskiego I kwartał 2019 r.*, <https://katowice.stat.gov.pl/opracowania-biezace/komunikaty-i-biuletyny/inne-opracowania/biuletyn-statystyczny-województwa-slaskiego-i-ktwartal-2019-r-3,35.html> [accessed on 30.05.2019].

3 *Prognoza potrzeb rynku pracy województwa śląskiego w kontekście branż i zawodów, w których do roku 2022 wystąpi deficyt wykwalifikowanych pracowników i dla których niezbędne będzie tworzenie CKZIU*, https://rpo.slaskie.pl/czytaj/oceny_i_analizy [accessed on 30.05.2019].

4 *Ibidem*.

5 *Od restrukturyzacji do trwałego rozwoju. Przypadek Górnego Śląska*, Maciej Bukowski, Aleksander Śniegocki, Zofia Wetmańska, WWF Poland Foundation and WiseEuropa Institute, 2018, p. 11, <http://wise-europa.eu/2018/11/29/od-restrukturyzacji-do-trwalego-rozwoju-przypadek-gornego-slaska/> [accessed on 30.05.2019].



Imielin, photo by Jakub Szafrński

the list.⁶ **Extremely bad air quality is mainly related to low-stack emission**, i.e. pollution generated by household heating stoves and local coal burning boilers, as well as vehicle exhaust fumes. In 2018, the World Health Organisation announced that 36 out of Europe's 50 cities most polluted by toxic particulate matter (PM_{2.5}) were located in Poland, including 13 in Silesia. Cities with the highest pollution levels included Żywiec, Rybnik, Pszczyna, Godów and Wodzisław Śląski.⁷

Poor air quality and the generally poor state of the environment discourage prospective new residents from settling in Silesia. **A decline in the number of residents has been recorded for over a decade now.** The processes of depopulation, or the outflow of residents from the region, and an ageing population, constitute another key challenge. According to forecasts by Statistics Poland (GUS), in Silesia the share of individuals of working age (15-64 years) will decrease to 62% by 2030. This will be particularly evident in the mining municipalities, where according to estimates, the population

will shrink by 8.5%. In non-mining municipalities, on the other hand, just as in other regions of Poland, local populations are expected to shrink by an estimated 2.7%. Experts warn that the biggest decrease in the number of residents will be recorded in the Katowice and Sosnowiec subregions, which are feeling the impacts of the restructuring of the hard coal mining sector. The number of residents will remain unchanged in areas which will not have undergone a transition, such as the Tychy and Bielsko-Biała subregions.⁸ Creating attractive jobs outside of the mining sector and improving the local residents' quality of life could help to reverse this trend and make Silesia a place the younger generations will want to live and work in.

The most important challenges faced by Silesia are the same as the most important challenges of just transition. All of them should be taken into account in the vision of transition that is currently taking shape and should be given priority both in the planning phase and during the implementation of regional and national strategies.

⁶ European Social Progress Index, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/information/maps/social_progress [accessed on 30.05.2019].

⁷ *Five things we learned from the world's biggest air pollution database*, <https://unearthed.greenpeace.org/2018/05/02/air-pollution-cities-worst-global-data-world-health-organisation/> [accessed on 30.05.2019].

⁸ *Od restrukturyzacji do trwałego rozwoju...*, op. cit., p. 28-35.

II. PERSPECTIVE OF THE CIVIL SOCIETY

- ▶ Silesian regional civil society organisations were the first to introduce the topic of just transition to the public debate.
- ▶ Civil society organisations are against the plans to open new mines in Silesia.
- ▶ Trade unions also actively participating in the debate on just transition.
- ▶ According to civil society representatives, the most important aspects of just transition include climate and environmental protection, taking the residents' opinions and the interests of local communities into account, and support and retraining opportunities for workers losing their jobs.
- ▶ Civil society is of the opinion that coal phase-out is unavoidable.

Actions carried out by civil society

The BoMiasto association and civil initiatives

The conference titled “Katowice 2050. Sprawiedliwa transformacja” organised in March 2018 in Katowice by the BoMiasto association and the Polish Green Network was one of the first initiatives launched by civil society to promote the notion of just transition in Silesia.⁹ This event can be seen as the start of public debate on whether such transition in Silesia is possible. Experts from the Polish Green Network, the Institute for Structural Research, the Energy Forum, the Regional Analysis and Strategic Planning Centre at Silesia’s Marshal’s Office and the mayor of Wodzisław Śląski jointly debated about the possible consequences of the present form of industrial transition and about the best method for planning the process of a complete

coal phase-out so that it is socially just. They also tried to answer certain important questions, for example whether opening new mines is in the interest of local communities and whether phasing out coal is a threat, a necessity or an opportunity for Silesia. In addition, the conference provided an opportunity to encourage members of local governments to become more interested in the issue of just transition.

From the civil society’s perspective, the Social Climate Summit held in Katowice to accompany the Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (COP24) organised in December 2018 was another important event in the context of just transition. It covered a series of various public events held outside of COP24’s extraterritorial area, during which city activists, non-governmental organisations and residents of Silesia presented their points of view. The Green Ideas Laboratory workshop resulted in the preparation of a social manifesto titled “Green future for Silesia”, in which local citizens demand a change in Poland’s energy system and a “*new coherent energy policy based on extensive social dialogue between citizens, experts, scientists, activists as well as local and regional authorities*”.¹⁰ The debate on just transition held during the Social Summit was conducted in a broader context of climate change and international efforts to stop the climate crisis. It was attended by experts from the Central Mining Institute, the Euro-Centrum Science and Technology Park in Katowice and climate speakers associated with The Climate Reality Project.

“ In the Science and Technology Park, we have been dealing with the issue of just transition for some time now but we did it from an engineering and technological point of view. Some time ago, I noticed that we were overlooking the social context, the sociological context, the psychological context and the environmental protection aspect. Due to this very technocratic approach

⁹ *Sprawiedliwa transformacja. Katowice 2050*, <http://bomiasto.pl/sprawiedliwa-transformacja-katowice-2050/> [accessed on 20.05.2019].

¹⁰ The “Green future for Silesia” manifesto, <http://bomiasto.pl/manifest-zielona-przyszlosc-slaska/> [accessed on 30.05.2019].

to the problem we were losing sight of these elements. The series of debates we are holding made me think that we need a multifaceted perspective. At present, we are organising meetings, writing manifestoes and at the same time we are forming a group of experts in different fields". Patryk Białas, president of the BoMiasto association, director of the Innovation and Competence Centre at the Euro-Centrum Science and Technology Park in Katowice, Katowice city councillor

At the beginning of 2019, the BoMiasto association inaugurated the Silesian Climate Movement, for which just transition is one of its priorities. The Movement is composed of several thematic sub-groups which are involved in various forms of educational, awareness-raising and advocacy activities.¹¹

// *We intend to build a climate movement in Silesia for which just transition will be one of its priorities. Since the Climate Summit, we have cooperated with around fifty individuals, we hold regular meetings and debate about what we can do and what type of actions we should launch. This is a grassroots democratic initiative. We established nine working groups and at present are shaping our identity. I believe that within a couple of months we will be ready to trigger a grassroots change and put pressure on politicians to implement these changes".* Patryk Białas, president of the BoMiasto association, director of the Innovation and Competence Centre at the Euro-Centrum Science and Technology Park in Katowice, Katowice city councillor

Involvement of civil movements and organisations from Imielin

The issue of just transition has also been raised by residents of Imielin, who object to the plans to mine hard coal from the new Imielin-North field. Having received support from the Polish Green Network in 2018, representatives of the Zielony Imielin association took part in two working meetings of the EU Platform for Coal Regions in Transition held in Brussels. During the first meeting, they presented the mine's contribution to environmental degradation and its impact on the town's residential areas, and expressed their

concerns and objections regarding mining projects that are not supported by the local community. During the other Platform meeting, they delivered a speech as part of a panel dedicated to local communities' participation in the transition processes in mining regions. As part of civil society's involvement in transition, the activists from Imielin carried out activities during the COP24 conference in Katowice. Due to the fact that foreign journalists and reporters dealing with the issue of Silesia's transition had visited Imielin ahead of the COP24 and that the town also hosted the international Climate Pilgrimage, the issue of just transition got good coverage in Polish and international media.

Trade unions

Just transition is an issue which trade unions have been dealing with since the 1990s. Their long-standing involvement in this field, as well as support offered by civil society organisations and the private sector, has resulted in this concept becoming one of the major objectives of the Paris Agreement. According to the International Trade Union Confederation, *"more than a decade long advocacy [on the part of trade unions – author's note] during negotiations regarding climate and the environment resulted in social aspects being recognised as an integral part of policy making and of planning and implementation of climate activities"*.¹² Just transition is defined more broadly in the globally binding guidelines published by the International Labour Organisation (ILO). Trade unions have coined the term and defined the objectives of just transition on the basis of experience gained by regions that had gone through industrial transitions. The trade union's goal was to devise methods for relieving workers of the costs of these changes.

In Silesia, the "KADRA" Trade Union Federation, a member of industriAll – European Trade Union and industriAll Global Union, is particularly active in this field. Its membership of international structures enables it to take part in processes connected with the issue of just transition. Alongside its foreign partners, "KADRA" was actively involved in promoting the concept on the occasion of the climate negotiations held in Katowice in 2018. During a conference organised for trade unions, Dorota Gardias, president of the Trade Unions Forum,¹³ spoke about the significance of just transition and decent work:

11 Silesian Climate Movement, <https://www.facebook.com/slaskiruchklimatyczny/> (accessed on 30.05.2019).

12 *Sprawiedliwa transformacja – w którym miejscu jesteśmy i jakie będą kolejne kroki? Przewodnik po strategiach krajowych i międzynarodowym zarządzaniu klimatem*, International Federation of Trade Unions, 2017, p. 6, https://www.ituc-csi.org/IMG/pdf/ituc_climate_justice_frontline_briefing_2017_polish.pdf (accessed on 30.05.2019).

13 The "KADRA" Trade Union Federation is a signatory to the Trade Unions Forum.

*“In connection with the efforts to counteract climate change, it is our wish for transition to be just and to bring benefits to all workers. Therefore, we need simple tools and easily applicable solutions based on the principle of cooperation, especially with trade unions, taking the national realities, good will and trust into account”.*¹⁴

Analyses and reports

From civil society's perspective, analyses and reports commissioned or compiled by experts from international organisations grouping trade unions, international organisations such as the International Labour Organisation, economic think tanks, non-governmental and scientific organisations have been another important contribution to introducing the issue of Silesia's just transition to public debate. Those publications present the transition from many points of view, taking into account the environmental (including climate policies in particular), infrastructural, technological and social aspects, and forecasts (prospects and development visions). In the context of Silesia, the following publications deserve special attention:

- ▶ *Górnictwo - węglowa przyszłość czy sprawiedliwa transformacja?* (Climate Coalition)¹⁵ – the authors present challenges faced by the hard coal mining sector and by Silesia as a whole as well as chances for carrying out a low-carbon transition that would be socially just and favourable from the economic point of view;
- ▶ *Od restrukturyzacji do trwałego rozwoju. Przypadek Górnego Śląska* (the WWF Poland Foundation and the WiseEuropa Institute)¹⁶ – the report discusses how Upper Silesia could become a model example of just transition of a mining region into a modern industrial and service-oriented region;
- ▶ *Sprawiedliwa transformacja węglowa w regionie śląskim* (Institute for Structural Research)¹⁷ – the authors show how future changes on the job market, associated with the low-carbon transition, can be facilitated.

The vision of just transition

So far, in Silesia very few organisations and civil movements have had the opportunity to become acquainted with the concept of just transition. The topic is new and as such needs to be more extensively promoted across the region. Local civil society groups are getting support in these efforts from organisations such as the Polish Green Network and the WWF Poland Foundation, which focus mostly on working with decision-makers and following the political process in Poland and the European Union. Below we present the opinions of those organisations and movements operating in Silesia which work on just transition, including the BoMiasto association, the Silesian Climate Movement, local communities from Imielin and Mysłowice and the “KADRA” Trade Union Federation.

Civil movements, non-governmental organisations and trade unions emphasise different aspects of just transition, although they generally agree as to the meaning of this concept.

Civil society focuses its attention on the following issues in particular:

- ▶ protecting climate and the natural environment,
- ▶ taking opinions and interests of local communities into account,
- ▶ offering support to workers who lose their jobs and helping them to retrain.

Protecting climate and the natural environment

The BoMiasto association and the Silesian Climate Movement strongly emphasise that coal phase-out is unavoidable. In this context, the need to considerably and immediately curb greenhouse gas emissions from the power industry and the industrial sector is of particular importance. According to Patryk Białas, president of the BoMiasto association, *“just transition undoubtedly is an important element of climate policy, no matter if this policy is global, national or local”*. In his view, Silesia should move towards renewable and decentralised energy sources:

“Increasingly frequently, just transition is being reduced to closing mines. Meanwhile, the problem does not relate to mines alone, it is a problem of a generally outdated power

¹⁴ COP24 w Katowicach – związki zawodowe i otwarcie konferencji, “KADRA” TUF, <http://www.kadra.org.pl/cop24-w-katowicach-zwiazki-zawodowe-i-otwarcie-konferencji/> (accessed on 30.05.2019).

¹⁵ *Górnictwo - węglowa przyszłość czy sprawiedliwa transformacja?*, dr Michał Wilczyński and Bartłomiej Derski, Climate Coalition, 2017.

¹⁶ *Od restrukturyzacji do trwałego rozwoju...*, op. cit.

¹⁷ *Sprawiedliwa transformacja węglowa w regionie śląskim. Implikacje dla rynku pracy*, Daniel Kiewra, Aleksander Szpor, Jan Witajewski-Baltvilks, Institute for Structural Research, 2019, http://ibs.org.pl/app/uploads/2019/05/IBS_Research_Report_02_2019.pdf (accessed on 30.05.2019).

system – it is outdated in terms of technology because it is based on coal, as well as in terms of its management model and degree of centralisation. Here in Poland, several big coal-fired units are being built, whereas in line with global trends the power industry should be based on renewable sources of energy. This is one thing, the other is that this industry should be based on decentralised sources. These days, it is much safer for the system to be decentralised, that is based on decentralised micro-sources that generate energy at the local level. Moreover, this model is more just”.

Although the “Green future for Silesia” manifesto published in December 2018 and written by the region’s residents interested in the problem is an informal document, it presents an important voice of civil society calling for actions to protect the climate. It strongly advocates the creation of a new energy system – one without fossil fuels, energy poverty and environmental degradation, one that can be achieved through a just transition. The point of view presented in it combines the environment’s interest with people’s interest, which is important in the narrative promoting the transition.

According to the authors of the manifesto, a coherent energy policy should be based on:

- ▶ an extensive social dialogue between citizens, experts, scientists, academics, activists and members of local and regional government,
- ▶ community energy,
- ▶ reduction of energy poverty and creation of a system to support individuals affected by it,
- ▶ energy efficiency,
- ▶ support for the development of modern renewable energy generation technologies,
- ▶ combatting low-stack emission.

The “Green future for Silesia” manifesto

We, the people of Silesia, are aware of our common responsibility for climate change as well as the need for action at the local and regional level. We do not have time, that is why we are making this appeal:

We, the citizens of Silesia demand clean air, clean water, clean energy and more green spaces in our cities. We want a just energy, social, environmental and economic transition without fossil fuels, energy poverty and environmental degradation.

Silesia plays an important role in the history of Poland and Europe as one of the places where the industrial revolution was created. It’s high time for another revolution, which will take place here: this time it should be a climate revolution.

We need a change in the energy system in Poland and we demand a new, coherent climate and energy policy based on broad social participation of citizens, experts, scientists, activists and local government officials.

In the interests of our common home – planet Earth, we demand:

- ▶ community energy as a foundation for energy transition in Poland and a shift away from fossil fuels towards energy based on renewable and decentralised sources,
- ▶ blue sky over Silesia – preparation of a long-term heating plan and decrease in air pollution,
- ▶ responsible climate policy – a stable system of taxes and good local law,
- ▶ development of a social support system to protect the population against energy poverty,
- ▶ development and implementation of a climate education concept: starting from an early age, based on principles of active civil involvement, sustainable development, human and animal rights, and climate protection,
- ▶ implementation of mechanisms to limit the import of high-emission cars,
- ▶ creation of an efficient public transport network using zero emission vehicles and offering free of charge public transport,
- ▶ full thermal modernisation of buildings and improvement of energy efficiency in industry and the services sector,
- ▶ “zero waste policy” – more recycling and responsible waste disposal,
- ▶ support for cheaper, modern and green energy technologies.¹⁸

The “KADRA” Trade Union Federation also considers climate protection as an issue of great importance, which is in line with the global trend in the trade unions’ narrative. Polish trade union federations (Solidarność, OPZZ, Trade Unions Forum) as well have for years cooperated in the field of climate policy; in 2018 they established the Inter-

¹⁸ The “Green future for Silesia” manifesto, *op. cit.*

Trade Union Committee for Climate Policy. They view the reduction of greenhouse gas emissions and energy transition as important issues but at the same time they stress the need to take account of the limitations resulting from the unique nature of Poland's economy, the socio-economic potential and observance of employees' rights.

Taking opinions and interests of local communities into account

There can be no just transition if investment projects are implemented which are not approved by the local community. In Silesia, such situations occurred in Imielin and Mysłowice, leading to protests by local residents. The protest of the local community in Imielin got a lot of publicity in Polish and foreign media in December 2018, when the world's attention was focused on Katowice and the COP24 climate conference. This was when many international observers became interested in the Imielin problem. The presence of representatives of the organisation from Imielin at COP24's accompanying events helped to publicise their protests and actions against the plans to expand the mine.

“The Akcja Ratujmy Imielin association was launched in 2017. In October, a meeting between the town's mayor and the residents was held, dedicated to the issue of projected extraction of coal from the Imielin-North field. It also included a presentation of potential threats. Together with our neighbours we attended the meeting, when we were on our way back home we knew that something had to be done to make people aware of the threats posed by this project. It was after this meeting that we launched this initiative to mobilise the city hall to take specific actions to review and assess the environmental report, to analyse the threats and try to start a dialogue with the mining company. We met with representatives of associations such as Zielony Imielin and Granice Natury at the mayor's office. The initial objective was to simply support each other. Obviously, at the very beginning this wasn't easy, but we quickly reached a consensus and started to cooperate”. Grażyna Marzec, the Akcja Ratujmy Imielin association

In Imielin, local organisations have been protesting against the plans to mine coal from the Imielin-North field since 2017. These plans had been devised by the Piast-Ziemowit mine which belongs to the Polish Mining Group (PGG). People are protesting because of the risks of damage from mining activity, posed by the planned mining of coal on several shallow seams

using the cheapest aggressive method involving a “roof cave-in” at a depth of 180 meters. According to experts' opinions, this will cause terrain to deform severely and subside by 6 meters, which will create risk of damage to residential buildings. Aside from the risk of damage to houses, mining generates the risk of damage to bodies of water as well as road, waterworks and gas pipelines infrastructure which was not built with special protections against damage from mining. An assessment of potential profits on the one hand and of the social and environmental costs on the other strongly suggests that this investment should be abandoned. At present, Imielin's residents and local government are taking part in the procedure to issue an environmental decision for the initiative, conducted by the General Directorate for Environmental Protection in Warsaw in the wake of the decision issued by the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection in Katowice which was unfavourable for the local community. In their opinion, which is also supported by experts, the environmental report presented by the investor is incomplete and omits many important impacts. Unfortunately, the opinion of the local community has repeatedly been disregarded by the Polish Mining Group whose representatives refused to meet with local residents to discuss the issue of the mine's expansion. In the investment process, the investor has also failed to take the opinion of the local government into account; in June 2017 it merely notified the local authorities of its plan to expand the mine.

“Over a year and a half that has passed since civil society launched its activities, the Imielin issue has become well-known among people dealing with energy, mining and environmental protection as an example of civil disobedience, social consolidation and a symbol of Upper Silesia's energy transition”. Alicja Zdziechiewicz, the Zielony Imielin association

“According to scientists, Poland's potentially profitable coal fields are sufficient to cover 15–20 years' demand at best. We are facing an unavoidable coal phase-out. We need to prepare for it, devise a plan, a strategy, the process should be well organised and carried out as smoothly as possible. To me, people are the most important element of this process”. Tomasz Lamik, former Imielin city councillor, member of the Nasz Imielin association

The situation in Mysłowice is similar. There, too, there have been no consultations or contact between the investor and the civil society, and the administrative proceedings have been the only opportunity for both sides

to meet. In this case, Tauron Wydobycie SA Zakład Górniczy Sobieski plans to expand a hard coal mine situated under the Kosztowy and Dzieńkowice quarters, which border Imielin to the south. The investor intends to access these coal fields through an existing mine in Jaworzno and plans to mine coal using the “cave-in” method, just as in the case of the Imielin-North field.¹⁹ Despite the fact that the company’s plans do not envisage carrying out works under residential buildings, local residents are worried that the impacts of mining in three coal fields may become accumulated and fear the consequences of past mining in this area (which ended in the late 1920s) because residential areas are not protected against damage from mining activity.

“We learned from environmental reports how the investor views the damage expected to happen here. We have to remember that the investor’s forecasts are moderate. Reports suggest that subsidence of ground level, ground caving in, minor floodings, changes to water flows, shocks etc. may happen. We were horrified by this because - if this is what the report says - there is a lot to be worried about. We found out that scattered terrain deformations are the most dangerous as they appear suddenly and there is no way to protect the buildings against them. We are afraid of the combined impact caused by the operation of this and other mines, which together exploit three coal fields. At the present stage, we intend to hold a meeting with the investor company (ZG Sobieski – author’s note) which is reluctant to talk to us. We want to find out more about the details of the problem, we demand a realistic assessment and want to present our expectations, we want to know where the preparatory work is being currently carried out, if it has been launched already”. Natalia Głombek, the Nasza Ziemia association, Mysłowice

The residents of Mysłowice are particularly worried about the plans to mine coal from fields such as Brzezinka 1 (Tauron Wydobycie SA ZG Sobieski) and Imielin-North (Polish Mining Group). The environmental report specifies what types of damage from mining activity may happen in the region – they include ground caving in, subsidence of ground level, minor floodings, changes to water flows and shocks. Neither Tauron nor the Polish Mining Group was ready to confront these forecasts during a meeting with local residents. The Nasza Ziemia association appealed against the environmental decision issued by the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection (RDOŚ) for the exploitation of

the Brzezinka 1 coal field, first to the General Directorate for Environmental Protection and later to the Provincial Administrative Court, however to no avail. At present, the case is being analysed by the Supreme Administrative Court and the ruling is expected at the end of 2019. At the same time, the Sobieski mine is carrying out advanced preparatory work preceding the coal mining stage. The Association has also requested the Regional Directorate for Environmental Protection to conduct an open court administrative trial, however, again to no avail. The administrative proceedings have been going on for several years, during which time civil society representatives have also pointed to example to inaccurate wildlife inventories and the investment’s incompatibility with the local zoning plan. However, these complaints were repeatedly disregarded. According to Tomasz Wrona from the Nasza Ziemia association, the environmental reports omitted many aspects, were inaccurate and were only corrected when the investor received comments from the association and other stakeholders.

The cases of Imielin and Mysłowice show that **ordinary citizens are frequently helpless and left to their own devices in their fight for decent living standards and protection of the environment.** Their demands are not taken into account by administrative bodies and state-controlled companies operating in the region. It seems that the government’s plans contained in the “Programme for the hard coal mining sector in Poland” stand in contrast with the will of local communities and that confrontation is more common than dialogue and fair compromise.

“I believe that the decline of the coal era is looming on the horizon. The current situation cannot continue due to climate concerns. The process of phasing out coal will likely accelerate across the EU. We should be aware of its long-term consequences (climate change – author’s note) and of the fact that the future of our region does not depend on coal. I’m afraid that transition may proceed in the wrong direction. I’m afraid that it may involve the restructuring of former mining sites and possibly distribution of funds to people who will be forced to give up their mining sector jobs. What we need is a bold decision to phase out coal. Meanwhile, the Ziemowit mine reassures the public that once it reaches the Imielin-North fields, the mine’s operation will be prolonged until 2068. I’m worried that the funds earmarked for transition might be wasted. Transition is tantamount to phasing out coal, it should be just, economically justified, social and energy-oriented. The process of phasing

¹⁹ Mysłowice: Mieszkańcy Dzieńkowic i Kosztów nie chcą kopalni, Dziennik Zachodni, 12.07.2017, <https://dziennikzachodni.pl/myslowice-mieszkancy-dzienkowic-i-kosztow-nie-chca-kopalni/ar/12260896> (accessed on 30.05.2019).



Rail tracks on the Imielin-Chetm Śląski route deformed by damage from mining activity, photo by Przemysław Zdziechiewicz (November 2018)

out coal is going to be extremely difficult, social protests will take place and the technology-related costs will be high. We need to have a clear-cut goal to be attained in the future, however, it should not involve a simple message that mines will immediately be closed. This should be a long-term process that takes time, is well-thought-out and wise, it cannot be based on coal because coal is becoming a thing of the past rather than future". Natalia Głombek, the Nasza Ziemia association, Mysłowice

Support to workers who lose their jobs

Trade unions believe that **the most important aspect of any transition is that changes should not be introduced at the cost of employees**, as usually it is the employees who do not view the process of closing mines and other workplaces as just. Grzegorz Trefon from the "KADRA" Trade Union Federation recalls the negative experience of the post-1989 transformation which involved closing down numerous workplaces in one location. This triggered serious problems such as structural unemployment and many regions have failed to cope with the changes. This is why trade unions propose that *"support mechanisms should be created for these regions in transition involving methods to stimulate*

the development of new economic activity that would be beneficial to employees who should move to new workplaces". It is necessary to **create new jobs and offer sufficient social protection** in various forms agreed in detail by way of negotiations conducted in individual workplaces. Experience shows that at present the most effective forms of support that minimise the costs of changes include relocation of a dismissed employee to another workplace with a similar profile and – in case of employees nearing retirement – offering them a protection scheme enabling them to continue their employment with their new employer until they retire. Members of the "KADRA" Trade Union Federation take active part in negotiations between employees on the one side and employers and the government on the other, look for different methods of support using the available legal options. The strategy for managing the process of change is another important issue for "KADRA". What is meant here is change management at the level of the specific region and the specific sector of the economy, enabling a smooth rather than chaotic transition and a gradual relocation of employees to other workplaces. In practice, not everyone may be offered a new job, which is why the issue of social protection is often raised to minimise the consequences of these changes. On the other hand, trade unions expect the central government and local governments to offer

retraining opportunities to dismissed workers, possibly even in the same sector of the economy, because new jobs frequently require new skills.

“ *In order to ensure a just transition, involvement of trade unions as well as other social partners, and employers in particular, is necessary. We, as trade unions, would expect some support in conducting this dialogue. We would like new jobs to be created where we could find employment, we would like the existing employment level in industrial sectors to be protected. We also expect the authorities to offer specific training opportunities to employees to enable them to learn new skills when they are forced to change their job, even in the same sector, because a new job requires new skills. It is also important to observe the basic industrial safety rules and human rights in this process. We would like the government to promote such actions targeted at employees that would enable them to find decent employment, which is necessary for just transition to happen”.* Grzegorz Trefon, the “KADRA” Trade Union Federation

Aside from “Kadra”, other trade unions such as OPZZ and Solidarność, and their relations with other stakeholders, play an important role as well. Usually, the government promises trade unions that mines would be maintained at any cost. This means that trade unions are not offered a realistic scenario for phasing out mines, what they get are merely short-term announcements that the status quo would be maintained, for example during the Social Dialogue Council meetings. As a consequence, mines are closed suddenly, without prior notice and without sufficient preparations. This prevents the trade unions from making plans and acting, and, as a consequence, deprives them of agency. If the mining sector trade unions received a clear signal from the government that coal mining would soon end due to its rising economic, environmental and social costs, they could take active part in planning a transition to a non-fossil fuel economy and become co-authors of just transition. This was the approach adopted by trade unions in Western European countries – they intended to secure a future of mining sector workers and support them in finding new jobs in new sectors, and at the same time supported climate-oriented actions (such as climate strikes).²⁰ This approach was discussed by Andrzej Chwiluk, former head of the Trade Union of Miners in Poland, at the conference “Climate Crisis

and the Role of the Faith-based Communities for Climate Justice” organised by Franciscans International in December 2018 during COP24 in Katowice.

In the year preceding the COP24 climate summit, it became clear that various Polish trade unions had widely different view on the issue of transition. In September 2018, the biggest trade union federations including Solidarność, OPZZ and the Trade Unions Forum, alongside the German Trade Union Confederation (DGB), signed a joint declaration on just transition. It contained provisions stating that actions for climate and decent work are not mutually exclusive and that there is no work on a dead planet. The declaration also cited current research results according to which there is no alternative to carbon neutrality if life on planet Earth is to be sustained. In the declaration, trade union federations express their support for the implementation of the Paris Agreement.²¹ However, the declaration had been preceded by other documents prepared by the same group of Polish trade union federations as part of the “Social PRE_COP24” initiative. These documents questioned the purposefulness of climate action and even the very scientific consensus regarding anthropogenic causes of climate change.

“ *People who used to work in mines have an important story to tell. In 2010, I led a protest that gathered 40,000 people against the plan to close down some of the mines. Today I want to do something regarding climate change because I know how important this threat is! I had to protest because the government is not taking care of communities such as ours. What is absent is fair dialogue. We all – Poles, environmentalists, the government, miners – as if speak different languages. We, miners, are practical people. We see that funds earmarked for renewable energy sources will not be used to protect jobs of people like us. Let’s be frank, this will not happen without fair leadership. Just transition is the only way forward”.* Andrzej Chwiluk, head of the Trade Union of Miners in Poland, Hard Coal Mine “Makoszowy”, Zabrze.

This shows how difficult it is for non-governmental organisations and trade unions to find the common ground which is necessary for just transition to be effectively carried out. At this point, such a big divergence of views is making the dialogue and the process of formulating joint demands increasingly difficult.

²⁰ Niemcy protestują. Kryzys klimatyczny w tle, Forbes Polska, 30.06.2019, <https://www.forbes.pl/gospodarka/protesty-w-niemczech-przeciwko-brakowi-planu-w-transformacji-gospodarczej/ttncl28> (accessed on 30.06.2019).

²¹ Full text of the declaration: https://www.solidarnosc.org.pl/ksgie/attachments/article/0/2018-09-19%20Erkl%C3%A4rung%20Dt.-Pl.%20Gewerkschaftsforum_scan-1.pdf (accessed on 30.05.2019).

III PERSPECTIVE OF THE LOCAL AND REGIONAL GOVERNMENTS

- ▶ Both the central government and the Silesian regional government are involved in the works of the EU Platform for Coal Regions in Transition.
- ▶ The national government's vision of Silesia's development foresees the creation of innovative industries, increasing the level of professional activity and enhancing employees' qualifications, developing transport infrastructure and improving the condition of the environment. However, at the same time it envisages that Silesia should continue to provide most of Poland's energy, i.e. that new mines should be built, and investments should be made in the mining sector.
- ▶ In the local and regional governments' vision coal does not play a fundamental role in the region's future development. Instead, regional strategic documents emphasise fostering an innovative economy and multidimensional improvement of the residents' quality of life.

Public administration activities

The Polish government and the Silesian regional government became involved in the EU's Coal Regions in Transition initiative (the so-called Coal Platform) at the very beginning of this project. At the Platform's first meeting, held in October 2017, three pilot regions in transition were designated, including Upper Silesia. During the meeting, the parties discussed potential financing mechanisms offered by the European Union, which could support the transition at the national level. By the end of 2017, the region officially became the Platform's member. Silesia's Marshal's Office showed great interest in the subject and in February 2018 it

organised a special meeting of the Platform in Katowice, attended by representatives of local and regional government, the European Commission, the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Science and Higher Education, the Ministry of Investment and Development, the European Investment Bank, the Katowice Special Economic Zone. Civil society was represented by the President of the Board of the Silesia and Dąbrowa Regional Branch of the NSZZ Solidarność trade union.²² The meeting's aim was to determine the region's developmental profile and identify the most important transition priorities and ways to achieve them.

In March 2019, Silesia's regional executive appointed a special Regional Team for the Mining Regions Initiative. The Team is chaired by Silesia's marshal, Jakub Chelstowski, and its members include representatives of Katowicka Specjalna Strefa Ekonomiczna SA (the Katowice Special Economic Zone), the Central Mining Institute, the Upper Silesia and the Dąbrowa Metropolis, including representatives of the cities of Katowice, Rybnik, Jastrzębie-Zdrój and the village of Marklowice. An invitation to cooperate in the Team was also extended to the Ministry of Energy, the Ministry of Investment and Development, Silesia's governor and representatives of coal mining companies, among others. In July 2019, representatives of non-governmental organisations joined the Team, including the Polish Green Network, WWF Poland and the Institute for Structural Research. The Team's priority has been to work on incorporating new projects into the transition plans, to deepen international cooperation within the Platform and to lobby for appropriate funding.

Throughout 2018, the Polish side worked on project proposals for the region that would be eligible for funding under the Coal Platform, and negotiations with the European Commission were held at the Platform's subsequent working meetings in Brussels. Since 2017, the Marshal's Office and the Central Mining Institute

²² *Tworzą profil województwa śląskiego*, Silesian regional government, <https://slaskie.pl/content/tworza-profil-wojewodztwa-slaskiego> (accessed on 20.05.2019).

have been coordinating the selection of projects. Some of the proposed projects are covered by the national government's Programme for Silesia, and the works are carried out with the participation of the Sejm's Committee for the European Union and other bodies. The projects fall into three main categories: the restructuring of mining regions, research and development activities in the field of clean coal technologies,²³ and development of investment areas at closed-down mines. At the beginning of March 2019, the media reported that according to the Ministry of Energy, the European Commission had by then accepted 6 out of the 19 projects that had been submitted. It was also announced that the projects could be implemented by local and regional governments, universities, research institutions and business entities. The projects approved by the Commission included proposals concerning the launch of a publicly available information platform entitled "Post-industrial and degraded areas" (OPI-TPP), the fight against low-stack emissions from multi-family municipal buildings, the launch of the Info-SMOG-MED information and education platform, creation of a regional platform for stimulating business activity, modernisation of the Silesia Park in Chorzów and implementation of the anti-smog project entitled "Silesia under the blue sky".²⁴ The Regional Team for the Mining Regions Initiative, supported by the Ministry of Energy, has been tasked with collecting further project proposals from local governments.

The following events addressing the issue of transition in the context of Silesia's involvement in the Platform for Coal Regions in Transition are worth mentioning.²⁵:

- The Platform meeting organised by the European Commission and the Silesian Marshal's Office at the end of November 2018, just before the launch of the United Nations Climate Change Conference (COP24) in Katowice.²⁶
- Adoption of the "Declaration of Solidarity and Just Transition" by heads of state and government at

COP24. The Declaration was prepared by the Polish Presidency and signed by 46 countries. It calls for support for the development of a low-carbon economy while ensuring society's approval for it, including through the creation of new jobs.²⁷

- The debate held during the away session of the Sejm's Extraordinary Subcommittee on Energy Policy of the European Union in Zabrze in May 2019, chaired by MP Izabela Kloc. The discussion focused on the future of mines and degraded mining areas, and the possibility of financing projects under the Coal Platform.
- The debate titled "Silesia 2030 – vision and development goals" held in April 2019 in connection with the pending update of the region's development strategy, organised by Silesia's Marshal's Office. During the debate, the then Deputy Minister of Energy, Grzegorz Tobiszowski presented the objectives of the Coal Platform alongside the projects that had by then been approved by the European Commission.²⁸
- Discussion on "The European Union's post-mining regions: economic, energy and social transition – opportunities and challenges" held in May 2019 as part of the European Economic Congress (EEC) in Katowice. The discussion focused on Silesia was attended by Silesia's marshal Jakub Chęstowski, Deputy Minister of Energy Grzegorz Tobiszowski and Silesian Governor Jarosław Węgrzyn.²⁹

Programme for Silesia and the government's vision of the region's development

In their statements, representatives of the central and the regional government emphasise that the creation of the Platform for Coal Regions in Transition and the planned Just Energy Transition Fund are a great opportunity to obtain additional funding to support the transition processes that are already ongoing in Silesia. The

²³ It is worth emphasising here that there is no such thing as "clean" coal or "clean" coal burning. This will not be possible even in distant future. At present, the cleanest of coal-fired power plants still do pollute the environment and require continued extraction of coal with all its negative consequences. New coal burning technologies will not eliminate CO₂ emissions, they can only reduce them. The definition of clean coal has been extended to include carbon capture and storage (CCS). However, experts argue that CCS is unreliable, expensive and does not eliminate sufficient amounts of CO₂.

²⁴ *Powstał zespół dla inicjatywy regionów górniczych*, TVP Katowice, 29.03.2019, <https://katowice.tvp.pl/41956038/powstal-zespol-dla-inicjatywy-regionow-gorniczych> (accessed on 20.05.2019).

²⁵ What is meant here are events that took place until the end of May 2019.

²⁶ *Platforma wsparcia regionów górniczych*, Silesian regional government, <https://slaskie.pl/content/platforma-wsparcia-regionow-gorniczych> (accessed on 20.05.2019).

²⁷ *Declaration of Solidarity and Just Transition*, COP24 Katowice 2018, <https://cop24.gov.pl/pl/prezydencja/inicjatywy/deklaracja-just-transition/> (accessed on 20.05.2019).

²⁸ *Kierunek rozwoju - Śląskie 2030+*, Silesian regional government, <https://slaskie.pl/content/kierunek-rozwoju---slaskie-2030> (accessed on 30.05.2019).

²⁹ *Transformacja regionów pogórnich*, Silesian regional government, <https://slaskie.pl/content/transformacja-regionow-pogornich> (accessed on 30.05.2019).

current vision of the region's transition is largely based on the government's *Programme for Silesia*. In 2017, the document stated that:

"for an effective implementation of the Programme for Silesia to be possible, it will be important to integrate the activities and specific instruments, including those available at the European level. The European Commission's initiative (Platform for Coal Regions in Transition – author's note) is an additional opportunity to support mining regions in their structural transformation".³⁰

The launch of this initiative by the Commission was at that time considered a key development from the point of view of the *Programme for Silesia*. Some of the projects submitted to the Coal Platform in 2018 had been prepared and are co-financed under the *Programme*.

The *Programme for Silesia* was adopted in December 2017, which coincided with the establishment of the Coal Platform by the European Commission. The *Programme* is part of the government's "Strategy for responsible development" (SOR), adopted by the Council of Ministers in February 2017. In the SOR, Silesia is recognised as one of the most important regions requiring intervention from the national level due to its adaptation and restructuring challenges. The *Programme's* objectives and actions, for their part, are to a large extent based on development projects included in the 2016 "Agreement for an Integrated Development Policy for Silesia" which was prepared by the Regional Council for Social Dialogue in Katowice.³¹ The *Programme's* financing scheme, worth more than PLN 55 billion, uses both national and EU funds, including national operational programmes financed from the 2014-2020 Cohesion Policy. The *Programme* is managed at the central and local level, and institutions responsible for its implementation, apart from the ministries, include the National Centre for Research and Development, the Polish Development Fund, the Katowice Special Economic Zone, the Polish Investment and Trade Agency, the Regional Fund for Environmental Protection and Water Management, PKP Polish Railways and energy companies. The first stage of the *Programme's* implementation will run until 2020 and will be followed by introduction of additional instruments intended, for example, to foster improved adaptation of national operational programmes in the fields of investment promotion and innovation. In the light of its stated objectives, the *Programme for Silesia*

is not merely a development programme, because it does not contain all the elements typical of such documents. Instead, it combines the features of a strategic and operational document in order to more effectively implement the objectives of projects targeted at Silesia as "solutions offered at the national level" and to coordinate the national and European sources of funding.

The aim of the strategy contained in the *Programme* is to bring about a change in Silesia's economic profile in the long term and to gradually replace sectors such as mining and metallurgy with new, technologically advanced economic undertakings. According to the document, the most important challenge for Silesia's development policy, apart from its metropolitanisation, involves:

"the promotion of the Upper Silesia-Dąbrowa Metropolis as a major metropolitan area in Poland and Europe (...) attaching fundamental importance to the development of specialised high-end services which in the future will determine its nature and accelerate the pace of its development".³²

The programme for Silesia has the following objectives:³³

- ▶ boosting the level of innovation in the region's industrial sector and stepping up investments (to foster more innovation in the power industry, reduce the emission of pollutants generated by the power industry, increase the share of energy from renewable energy sources (RES), increase energy efficiency and the sector's potential for an intensive development of the prosumer energy sector, develop the electromobility sector);
- ▶ boosting professional activity in the region and improving workers' qualifications (to promote skills and qualifications needed in Industry 4.0, and finance initiatives and innovations by self-organised civil groups in post-industrial districts at risk of social exclusion);
- ▶ improving the quality of the natural environment (fostering an improvement of air quality through elimination of low-stack emissions, optimal management of the natural environment and development of electromobility and energy efficiency; reclamation and revitalisation of post-mining areas);
- ▶ developing and modernising transportation infrastructure (including the establishment and development of the Silesian Agglomeration Railway);

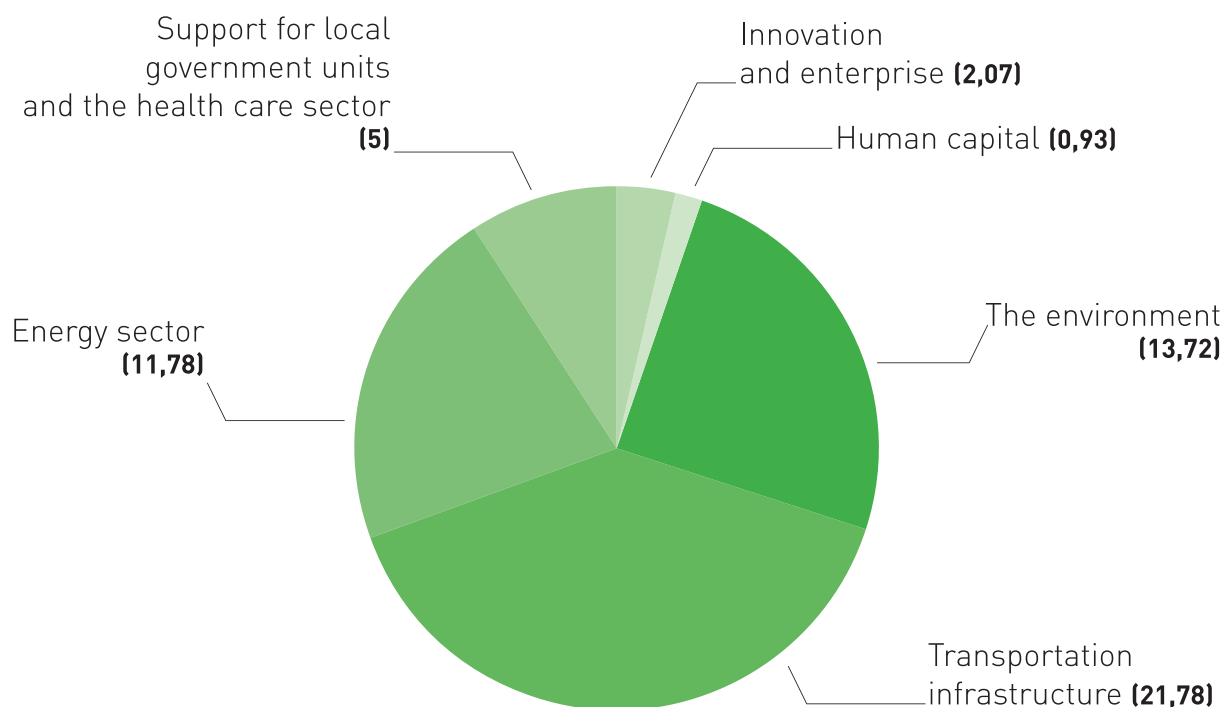
³⁰ *Programme for Silesia*, op. cit., p. 14.

³¹ Porozumienie na rzecz zintegrowanej polityki rozwoju Województwa Śląskiego, Regional Council for Social Dialogue, <https://dialog.slaskie.pl/content/porozumienie-na-rzecz-zintegrowanej-polityki-rozwoju-wojewodztwa-slaskiego> (accessed on 31.05.2019).

³² *Programme for Silesia*, op. cit., p. 59.

³³ *Programme for Silesia*, op. cit., p. 12.

Allocation of funds under the Programme for Silesia (in billions PLN)



Allocation of funds under the Programme for Silesia, quoted after: *Programme for Silesia*, Ministry of Development, 2017

- ▶ using Silesia's potential to ensure Poland's energy security, and developing innovations in the power industry (including the Intelligent Mine pilot project, production of smokeless fuels, production of hydrogen through coal gasification, modern processing of coal tar, opening of new energy coal and coking coal mines, creating underground pumped-storage power stations and photovoltaic farms in degraded areas, production of heat and electricity using gas from the gasification of coal waste, municipal and industrial waste and sewage sludge);
- ▶ improving the development potential of Silesia's cities (including a package of solutions for medium-sized cities, such as additional funding opportunities for projects in the field of e.g. energy efficiency, professional activation, climate change); urban revitalisation programmes; actions fostering social cohesion in post-industrial and degraded areas, e.g. reduction of inequalities, provision of equal opportunities, counteracting marginalisation and discrimination).

In the context of energy transition, it is important to stress that **the Programme for Silesia makes little reference to the transition to technologies based on renewable energy sources.** The Programme's objective no. 5, which involves using Silesia's potential to ensure Poland's energy security and foster innovations in the power industry, **focuses primarily on improving the situation in the hard coal mining sector.** The document reads:

"in the next few decades the state's energy mix will be based on coal, and extraction of its own fuel will allow the state to maintain a high degree of energy independence, stability of electricity supplies and competitiveness of its economy as a whole"³⁴.

Unfortunately, this fails to take into account the directions of the European Union's climate and energy policy, the fact that coal fields are becoming depleted and the profitability of coal mining is falling. Placing such a strong emphasis on coal in the *Programme for Silesia* is partly due to the fact that the projects included in it are partly taken from the government's "Programme

³⁴ *Programme for Silesia*, op. cit., p. 57.

for the hard coal mining sector in Poland” adopted by the Council of Ministers in January 2018. The most important objectives of the “Programme for the hard coal mining sector”, which have also been listed in the *Programme for Silesia*, include:

- implementation of solutions to make Polish coal competitive with the coal imported from other countries;
- support for the development of new coal enrichment methods to produce environmentally friendly fuel, support for high-performance hard coal-based energy generation technologies, development of environmentally-friendly and innovative coal burning installations;
- support for coal companies seeking investment funding in the form of sureties and/or guarantees securing investment loans granted, for example, by Bank Gospodarstwa Krajowego and the State Treasury;
- efforts by the government, entrepreneurs and civil society to change the direction of climate policy, including action at the European Union level aimed at changing the provisions of the European climate policy and the climate package with regard to the use of coal.³⁵

It is evident that the government is striving to create conditions conducive to the development of an efficient and modern hard coal mining sector. The aim is to “ensure a high level of Poland’s energy independence and support the competitiveness of the national economy”.³⁶ Those conducive conditions should include a favourable legal environment, also in the context of the EU climate policy, which is frequently mentioned as something that needs to be changed so as to allow the continued use of coal. Moreover, in the *Programme for Silesia* the Ministry of Energy announces its plans to open new coking coal and energy coal mines. At the European Economic Congress held in May 2019, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Energy Grzegorz Tobiszowski confirmed that Silesia is expected to be an industrial region with a modern edge, ready for a transition once stability is achieved in the hard coal mining sector as a result of activities carried out by the Polish Mining Group (PGG) and other actors.³⁷

The vision of transition that emanates from the *Programme for Silesia* is strongly focused on the imple-

mentation of projects specifically oriented towards the development of infrastructure and technology, with little attention to social capital. This is also evident in the structure of funds allocated for each objective. Most of the planned budget is earmarked for the development of transportation infrastructure (around 40%), projects related to the improvement of air quality and rehabilitation of degraded land (around 25%), the energy sector (around 21%). Although placing a strong emphasis on development of electromobility and railways and eliminating low-stack emissions are valuable initiatives contributing to an improvement in the quality of life of the region’s residents, **it is worrying that funds earmarked for human capital development account for a mere around 1.7% of the total sum.**

Regional development strategies

At present, Silesia’s regional government is working on another update of the Development Strategy for Silesia known as *Śląskie 2020+*. This document had been adopted by the Silesian Regional Assembly in 2010 and was updated two years later. It is a plan that defines the vision of Silesia’s development, the objectives and the main ways of achieving them by 2020, taking the local context into account. The work on its 2013 update involved a wide range of stakeholders, including representatives of local government units, economic, scientific and professional circles and non-governmental organisations. The Strategy is supplemented by an important document adopted in 2017, i.e. *Kierunek Śląskie 3.0. The programme for Silesia’s internal development until 2030* which is to serve as a permanent mechanism for shaping Silesia’s development policy based in a participatory way. It is worth noting that *Kierunek Śląskie 3.0* is the result of a dialogue on development prospects and was inspired by the visions presented by both the regional authorities and representatives of grassroots initiatives established by economic, scientific and business circles as well as civil society.

The local and regional government’s vision of Silesia’s development is firmly rooted in the socio-economic challenges and addresses the changing regional, European and global context. It addresses those challenges in order to increase the level of cohesion and balance the region’s development processes, to boost its competitive advantage in pursuing European standards and to strengthen the synergies

³⁵ *Programme for Silesia*, op. cit., p. 46.

³⁶ *Program dla sektora górnictwa węgla kamiennego w Polsce*, Ministry of Energy, <https://www.gov.pl/web/energia/program-dla-sektora-gornictwa-wegla-kamiennego-w-polsce> [accessed on 31.05.2019].

³⁷ *Kierunek Rozwoju – Śląskie 2030+*, op. cit.

between initiatives carried out by various entities. All of this contributes to building an image for the region which in the 2020+ perspective aspires to become:

"a region of sustainable and solid development, offering its residents favourable living conditions based on access to high-quality public services, with a modern and technologically advanced economy, which is an important partner in Europe's development process based on diverse territorial potentials and synergies between its partners"³⁸.

The vision of Silesia's development contained in the Śląskie 2020+ strategy is built around four priority areas.³⁹

→ A modern economy

In this field, development is to be based on innovation, creativity, knowledge, invention and implementation of innovative solutions, support for enterprise, building on the region's industrial heritage and traditions which are to be modernised, and assistance in transition.

→ Development opportunities for residents

This includes ensuring a high quality of life through universal access to basic health care and welfare services at the regional level, development of civil society, development of competences and better education for different age groups, intended to enable the implementation of modern services and products.

→ Public space

This concerns environmental protection and regeneration, reduction of environmental risks related to climate change, revitalisation of degraded areas, ensuring residents' environmental security through development of pro-environmental services and technologies, effective resolution of spatial conflicts, integration of public transportation.

→ Social relations

Social relations are to be built on the principles of cooperation and partnership between public entities, business organisations and residents, as well as interregional and international partnership.

The *Kierunek Śląskie 3.0* programme, for its part, emphasises one overarching goal of the region's development, which is to boost the local population's quality of life. It paints a Silesia that becomes one of the regions that shape Poland's civilisational development. Development is to be focused on a technology-based, creative economy and the metropolitanisation of the region based on its human capital, i.e. professional knowledge and competences of its residents, smart infrastructure systems, urban-architectural heritage and its cultural richness. It is also worth noting that the document recognises international business and foreign investments as external determinants of the region's development, with special emphasis placed on building a strong Silesian economy and enterprise based on its own capital.

Detailed objectives of the *Kierunek Śląskie 3.0* programme:

- ▶ High level of specialisation of domestic enterprises, with particular emphasis placed on micro- and small-sized companies capable of transforming into a strong and industrially diversified medium-sized enterprise sector.
- ▶ Economic recovery zones and revived social fabric in cities, including post-industrial cities with areas affected in the past by business closures.
- ▶ The region's increased internal integration, facilitated by improved infrastructure and transportation services, green infrastructure and energy sector.
- ▶ The region's job market based on creative education at all levels as well as social innovations resulting from a dialogue between the public, private and civil sectors.
- ▶ Attractive public, business and residential spaces, including the development of a network of smart and creative quarters in the cities of the metropolitanised Upper Silesia Agglomeration and its functional area.
- ▶ Culture as a foundation for the region's development, based on high level of activity, openness and cooperation.⁴⁰

38 *Strategia rozwoju województwa śląskiego: Śląskie 2020+*, Silesian regional government, 2013, p. 66, https://slaskie.pl/content/13729212-02_2013-07-04 (accessed on 30.05.2019).

39 Within the four priority areas, the following specific objectives have been identified: A.1 Innovative and creative enterprises and products of the region; A.2 Open and attractive labour market; A.3 Competitive regional economy based on flexibility and specialisation of companies and network structures; A.4 Local and social enterprise using local markets and potentials; B.1 Improvement of the region's residents' health; B.2 Development of competences, skills and increase in the level of activity of residents; B.3 Social harmony and high capital of trust, convenient living conditions for the residents; C.1. Sustainable use of natural resources; C.2. Integrated development of centres at various levels; C.3. High level of spatial order and effective use of space; D.1. Cooperation with local partners; D.2. Attractive image of Silesia; D.3. The region in international and national infrastructure networks.

Both strategic documents suggest that **the regional government does not view coal as a determinant of the region's future and sees other sectors of the economy as the driving force of the region's development.** In many aspects, this seems to contradict the “coal-centred” plans devised by the central government. *The Kierunek Śląskie 3.0* programme describes power generation based on renewable energy sources as “the basis for high energy efficiency of the region's economic and settlement-related structures”,⁴¹ which will also enable rapid development of low-carbon transportation. As regards the *Śląskie 2020+* strategy, its operational objective “Sustainable use of natural resources” lists support for the development of renewable energy as one of its main lines of action.⁴²

“The issue of revitalisation of post-mining areas in the context of transition is very important to us because it allows us to employ many of our competences in this process. Revitalisation has a broader context. What we are interested in is not only to simply turn these post-mining areas green, because this is what reclamation involves, nor do we strive for remediation or technical removal of pollution – what we want is revitalisation in the social aspect as well. The area as such is analysed, but so is its role in the system. The analysis we are carrying out, one that focuses on this internal potential and on the environment, is very important for future investors”.
Jan Bondaruk, Central Mining Institute

In the regional development visions, emphasis is placed on the region's social potential and the need to foster it, especially in the context of education and improving the residents' qualifications, supporting enterprise and increasing their civic participation. **Development is supposed to serve people and to contribute to an improvement of the quality of their life and health, as well as to foster the protection and regeneration of the natural environment.** Development of cooperation and communication between sectors, creation of public-private partnerships and building mutual trust between the public, private and civil sectors are among the most important tools used for this purpose. This cooperation is intended to cover a wide range of partnerships between various stakeholders such as local governments, central admin-

istration, micro-, small- and medium-sized companies, non-governmental organisations, universities, local advocacy groups, culture and tourism institutions, health care institutions and social economy entities.

The proposed pillars of regional strategies can be assessed as highly favourable to Silesia's just transition. They seem to adequately address the present socio-economic challenges, respond to the needs of the residents, and take into account the state of the natural environment and Silesia's development potential. Moreover, they represent an ambitious vision of development as seen from the European and global perspective. The region's involvement in the Coal Platform is certainly likely to support this vision's implementation. The main ideas of how Silesia could use the funds offered under the Platform include the following:

- ▶ development of modern industries, including electromobility (e.g. zero-emission public transportation), smart grids, RES (e.g. on the premises of closed mines), energy storage;
- ▶ restructuring of post-mining areas (including social revitalisation);
- ▶ fighting smog.

“The Regional Team for the Mining Regions Initiative is evolving. We are capable of working out good, constructive projects, mature and realistic ones, devised in synergy with various actors, with the support from the Marshal's Office, in order to carry out this transition in a just manner. The post-mining areas have an amazing potential. They were created in the past with specific economic functions in mind and now we need to create a space for them to alter these functions, however, in such a way as to maintain their economic significance. [...] We will come up with a number of solutions to encourage local governments of municipalities that host those areas and the companies which own them to create mechanisms enabling the use of the available funds to jointly create a new business sector based on synergy between different actors or space for new businesses. We definitely want to take part in this transition, because it is an opportunity for degraded regions. Jakub Chęstowski, Silesia's marshal⁴³

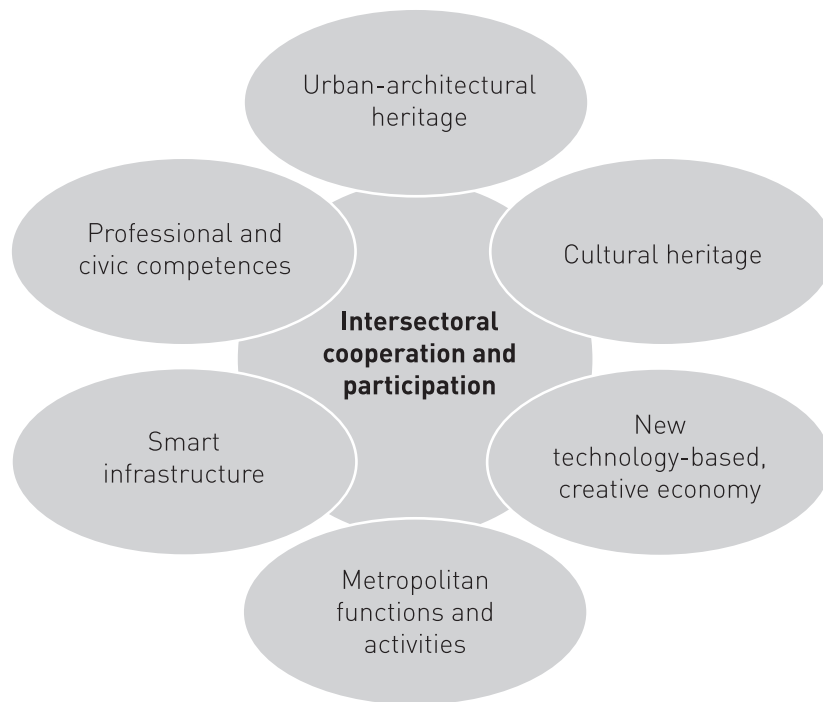
40 “Kierunek Śląskie 3.0. Programme for internal development of Silesia until 2030”, Region of Silesia, 2017, p. 13, <https://archiwum-bip.slaskie.pl/dokumenty/2017/02/02/1486034614.pdf> (accessed on 30.05.2019). The Programme has six thematic areas: Entrepreneurial activity and innovations for the new economy; Revitalisation of the region; Friendly infrastructure, friendly transportation, friendly energy; Professional competences, civic activity and social innovations; Metropolitanisation of the Upper Silesian Agglomeration in cooperation with other Silesian agglomerations; Diversity and cultural richness”.

41 *Ibidem*, p. 10.

42 *Development Strategy for Silesia...*, op. cit., p. 94.

43 EEC 2019: the EU's mining regions – economic, energy and social transition, XI European Economic Congress, Katowice 2019, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M5bvQRBX1C4> (accessed on 31.05.2019).

Silesia's internal development model



Quoted after: Kierunek Śląskie 3.0. Programme for Silesia's internal development until 2030, Silesia region, 2017.

IV. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ▶ The government's actions and public statements offered so far indicate that under the term 'just transition' the governmental side understands a transition that is postponed for as long as possible.
- ▶ Meanwhile, the risk of adverse social consequences is associated not so much with phasing out coal, as with doing so in a chaotic, poorly planned and poorly prepared manner. Experience gained by other mining regions show that the success of a just transition depends on a well-thought-out plan specifying the ultimate deadline for phasing out coal.
- ▶ The plans to maintain a significant role for coal in the Polish power industry are inconsistent with the EU's policy and therefore carry a major risk of failure, which for Silesia may be tantamount to a sudden, poorly planned and chaotic coal phase-out process.
- ▶ Trade unions worry that a coal phase-out may have a negative impact on the job market, while civil society organisations claim that, provided that planning is good, conflicts between an ambitious climate policy and workers' social security are avoidable.
- ▶ The aspect of investing in people has largely been overlooked in the activities associated with just transition carried out to date.
- ▶ The voice of civil society organisations has not been taken into account in the debates on the shape and directions of the transition.
- ▶ For just transition to succeed, funds need to be available for the necessary investments. At present, planning is underway regarding expenditures from the EU's future budget, which will be one of the transition's main sources of funding. All entities involved in the process of just transition should take part in the debate on the future EU funds spending.

Conclusions from the progress on just transition made to date

The Polish government views Silesia's transition as a long-term, very costly project spread out over several decades and involving a transformation of post-mining areas into investment areas, one that will require devising a new quality of services and a new profile of jobs. According to official declarations, the transition will involve the power industry, but also the economy as a whole and the society. This means that it should bring benefits for local residents and create a model of economic development that reduces social costs to a minimum. According to decision makers, factors that could mitigate those costs include a cautious process of phasing out coal. The Polish Green Network is of the opinion that what is socially risky is not a coal phase-out process as such, but a process that is chaotic, poorly planned and poorly prepared.

For transition to be socially just, one needs to have a good plan. Experience gained by other European mining regions shows that the first step towards devising such a plan should involve setting a deadline for ultimately phasing out coal. Another step should involve engaging all sides affected by the transition in the planning process. In Silesia, these two elements are absent.

→ No prospects for phasing out coal

In the national energy strategy and other government planning documents currently being drafted, Poland has no plans to phase out coal. Moreover, in defiance of economic trends and its international climate commitments, it is going to maintain its coal use close to the current level for at least two more decades. In the light of those documents, any discussion on planning the coal phase out process would be pointless.

The government's *Programme for Silesia* fails to mention the need to phase out coal and omits the significance of climate policy in the context of reducing greenhouse

gas emissions. The *Programme*'s objective no. 5 mainly focuses on the improvement of the situation in the hard coal mining sector, which is considered to be of key importance for the Polish energy mix, for maintaining Poland's energy independence and the competitiveness of its economy for the next several decades. The Ministry of Energy has announced numerous investments in technologies that use coal to generate energy, alongside plans to open new coking coal and energy coal mines.

Among its other objectives, the *Programme* also mentions encouraging efforts by the government, entrepreneurs and the civil society to foster a change in the EU's climate policy.⁴⁴ This is astonishing as high-level strategic and programme documents such as the draft Energy Policy to 2040 or the National Energy and Climate Plan do not question the EU's energy policy (even if they envisage that Poland will make the smallest possible contribution to it). In addition, in their official statements government representatives never suggest that Poland's political goal is to foster a change in the EU's energy and climate policy aimed at creating more opportunities to use coal in energy generation. This EU policy objectives to 2030 were set and approved by Poland in 2018, and at present no political process is underway in the EU to propose a downward revision of those goals. A debate is ongoing in the EU as to whether achieving carbon neutrality (i.e. reducing the emissions to net zero) by 2050 should be its long-term goal, as this would have to be tantamount to ending the utilisation of coal for energy generation in the 2030s at the latest. Despite its initial resistance, Poland has expressed readiness to approve this goal on certain conditions.⁴⁵

It seems that the government's coal promoting plans are incoherent and, as such, highly likely to fail. The EU's energy and climate policy is not going to become any more coal-friendly because it focuses on creating favourable conditions for the development of a zero-emission, socially inclusive and decentralised renewable energy sector and promotes energy efficiency; and it also provides generous funding mechanisms to cover the related expenses. Poland participates in the EU's emissions trading system in which the rising prices of emission permits will make energy generation from coal increasingly less profitable (at the same time they will provide the state budget with billions of euros that could be spent on the

energy transition). The cost of energy generation from renewable sources continues to fall and at present those sources are an economically attractive option even without subsidies, which is likely to result in continued elimination of coal-based energy from the market. As regards the mining industry, since easily accessible, good quality coal fields are becoming depleted, coal extracted in the Silesian mines will become increasingly less competitive than cheaper imported coal. Should the problem of rising mining costs be solved by way of investing in automation, many mining jobs will anyway disappear in spite of the attempts to stick to coal as the main source of energy.

All this does not change the fact that the prospect of "phasing out coal" triggers fears in many people who are associated with the mining industry in Silesia. This is understandable considering that around 82,000 people continue to be employed in this industry.⁴⁶ Representatives of the "KADRA" Trade Union Federation and the Central Mining Institute (GIG) are aware of the problem of shrinking coal fields and recognise the fact that climate change is real and its consequences should be alleviated by investing in adaptation processes and low-carbon technology, and by encouraging companies to adapt to these changes. They also see that the transition process has already started. On the other hand, they do not support the idea of a rapid coal phase-out because coal continues to account for the biggest share of Poland's energy mix and, in their opinion, continues to be of strategic importance for the Polish economy. According to Grzegorz Trefon from the "KADRA" Trade Union Federation, this fact makes Poland stand out among other Western states. He argues that for this reason, just transition cannot be discussed solely in terms of "phasing out coal". The energy transition process is likely to last for several decades because the economy is not capable of reacting to changes immediately. "KADRA" is of the opinion that if coal is here to stay for many years to come, the process of just transition needs to bridge the "innovation gap in the mining industry", i.e. to provide relevant machines, foster automation of the mining process, offer training opportunities. The Central Mining Institute and other institutions are currently working on such solutions.

Without a doubt, phasing out coal is also tantamount to changes in the job market. According to non-governmental organisations, the main challenge stems from

⁴⁴ *Programme for Silesia*, op. cit., p. 46.

⁴⁵ Dąbrowski: *Polska może zgodzić się na neutralność klimatyczną. Koszty transformacji to 900 mld euro*, BiznesAlert, <https://biznesalert.pl/polska-neutralnosc-klimatyczna-2050-koszt-transformacji-900-mld-euro-rekompensaty-transformacja-energetyczna-energetyka/> (accessed on 30.06.2019).

⁴⁶ In spite of the decrease in the volume of mined coal, the level of employment in the mining sector has risen again since 2017 – in February 2019 it reached 82,300 individuals. This is connected, among other things, with the increasingly difficult accessibility of coal fields and low level of automation. See *Wydobycie węgla w Polsce w 2018 w dół, zatrudnienie w górę*, Bartłomiej Derski, <https://wysokienapiecie.pl/18649-wydobycie-węgla-w-polsce-mln-ton-zatrudnienie/> (accessed on 30.05.2019).

the narrative surrounding the transition: they argue that the core of the problem is that the general public does not understand the fact that the conflict between the climate policy and creating new jobs is avoidable. The Polish understanding of just transition, as promoted by the government and the trade unions, is restricted to preserving the jobs in the mining sector and slowing down the coal phase out process. According to Patryk Białas from the BoMiasto association, a properly implemented transition is likely to generate new jobs because it will enable “*people from the mining industry to safely move to new sectors of the economy*”. Białas argues that at present, miners have sufficient skills to be able to find jobs, for example in the energy efficiency sector, the thermal modernisation sector or the renewable energy sector. Marek Wystryk, municipal councillor of Rydułtowy and president of the Moje Miasto association, is of a different opinion. He claims that the transition process should be evolutionary in nature rather than revolutionary because otherwise it may “kill” the mining industry, which would have a negative impact on a large portion of the society. He says that respect for the region’s mining tradition and working culture is important. He also argues that it should be assumed that the transition process does not require a complete abandonment of mining because coal continues to be among Poland’s major natural assets. In this context, efforts are needed to ensure a properly skilled workforce for the sector, including the most sought-after specialists. Finally, miners may be unwilling to move to other sectors because they are used to earning high wages which the other sectors may not be able to offer.

→ Eliminating the differences

Different parts of Silesia have very diverse economic growth and unemployment rates. For the civil society it is important to eliminate those differences and take the situation of small mining municipalities into account, because in the past whenever a mine was closed there, entire communities lost their livelihoods, which led to their decline. Experience shows that transition may have very negative consequences, if it is carried out too hastily, without a plan, if it merely involves closing of mines without offering retraining and support to their workers. This is true for both the mining industry and other sectors of the economy.

The structure of the budgets of municipalities which earn major tax income from mining activities in their

territory poses another challenge. It also creates divisions within the local community as regards the transition process understood as phasing out coal. Frequently, local and regional governments are against the plans to close specific industrial plants, especially if those are the town’s largest employers. Aside from the loss of jobs, the costs of the transition are another fear factor. However, in big cities and municipalities whose economy is more diverse, the local community tends to be much more favourably inclined towards a gradual but certain coal phase-out. Finally, in Silesia there are locations such as Imielin, where efforts to sustain the local mining business are met with resistance from the local community which views it as a major threat.

→ Missing investments in people

The vision of transition as spelt out in the *Programme for Silesia* strongly focuses on the development of infrastructure and technology. The funds earmarked for the development of human capital account for a mere 1.7% of the total budget. It is evident then that the decision makers view the transition as a technocratic process rather than one which involves investing in people’s skills and competences or retraining of mining and power sector workers.

Regional strategies devote much more attention to those issues. In the medium-term regional strategy of Silesia titled *Kierunek Śląskie 3.0*, occupational competences, civil activity and social innovations are the main objectives in one of the six thematic areas (while the region’s cultural heritage and diversity is a separate thematic area).⁴⁷ In the *Śląskie 2020+* Development Strategy for Silesia, which currently is being updated, issues such as education, development of residents’ competences and their participation in culture are important elements of one of the four priority areas devoted to development opportunities for Silesia’s residents.⁴⁸ **However, so far this has not been reflected in the work in the Coal Platform forum where the Polish side has failed to propose any projects dealing, for example, with occupational retraining of miners who leave the mining sector.** This aspect will require additional attention because avoiding a surge in unemployment and preventing miners from disappearing from the job market and becoming marginalised are among the most important challenges in the process of just transition. As regards those issues, the situation in Silesia is relatively good since the unemploy-

⁴⁷ *Kierunek Śląskie 3.0...*, op. cit., p. 6.

⁴⁸ *Strategia rozwoju województwa śląskiego...*, op. cit., p. 85.

ment rate is low and demand for workforce in other sectors of the economy is high. **The only challenge involves equipping the miners who leave the mining sector with new qualifications adjusted to job market demand and ensuring decent working conditions and remuneration in their new jobs.**

→ Civil society's voice not taken into account

At present, there is no clear cooperation and collaboration with civil society organisations. The *Programme for Silesia* was consulted only with representatives of trade unions (NSZZ "Solidarność", the All-Poland Alliance of Trade Unions (OPZZ), the Trade Unions Forum), employer organisations (Employers of Poland, Polish Confederation Lewiatan, Polish Craft Association, the Business Centre Club Employer Association), the central government and local governments, however, without the participation of non-governmental organisations. Although their recommendations included a suggestion to launch cooperation with as many stakeholders as possible, including civil society organisations, representatives of the NGO sector had not been invited to take part in framing the Programme's objectives. Moreover, by including the plans to open new mines in the *Programme*, the government ignored the active resistance of local communities, local governments and civil society groups in locations where these new mines would potentially be created, such as Imielin, Mysłowice and Rybnik.⁴⁹

The situation of residents of Imielin and Mysłowice shows that their protests and concerns regarding the launch of new coal fields are not taken into account by the investors, in this case the Polish Mining Group and Tauron Wydobycie SA ZG Sobieski. The absence of any consultations or contact between the investors and the civil society, and the fact that the two sides get an opportunity to meet only during administrative proceedings, are unacceptable because they challenge the justness of the transition process.

Silesia's local and regional authorities are more ready to cooperate with the civil society in devising development plans. The *Kierunek Śląskie 3.0* programme has been written in a participatory process which engaged

the civil society represented by the region's residents, local business, local and regional government officials and civil society organisations.⁵⁰ During the debate titled "The European Union's post-mining regions: economic, energy and social transition – opportunities and challenges" held on 14 May 2019 as part of the European Economic Congress (EEC) in Katowice, Silesia's Marshal and chairman of the Regional Team for the Mining Regions Initiative Jakub Chetstowski used the term 'just transition' in the context of looking for a synergy between various stakeholders in preparing "constructive and mature projects". The marshal's declaration is all the more important because it was one of very few statements by decision makers to mention the need to seek synergies also in contacts with social partners.

It should be noted that during this debate the Marshal invited representatives of the Polish Green Network and the WWF Poland Foundation to join the Team, which is a positive signal confirming the regional government's willingness to cooperate with as many stakeholders as possible. It is likely that this will boost the transparency of the project selection process under the Coal Platform. It may also facilitate the Team's opening up to proposals submitted by local governments and the civil society. So far, projects have been submitted by Spółka Restrukturyzacji Kopalń, Jastrzębska Spółka Węglowa and other mining sector companies, as well as the Katowice Special Economic Zone and Silesia's regional government and other entities.

→ Uncertain funding

The regional debate held in April 2019 in Katowice provided an opportunity to find out more about the objectives of the EU's cohesion policy in the 2021–2027 financial perspective, which were presented by Christopher Todd, Director at the European Commission's Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy. Todd stressed that **the updated regional strategies and plans of future spending from EU funds should comply with the EU's budgetary priorities for 2021–2027**.⁵¹ In the context of energy transition, policy objective 2 of the future Cohesion Policy is the most important one. It aims at a more environmentally-friendly and a carbon-free Europe which should implement the Paris

49 Radni Rybnika jednogłośnie przeciw budowie kopalni Paruszwiec. Co mówili mieszkańcy i przedsiębiorcy?, Aleksander Król, Dziennik Zachodni, 24.05.2019, <https://dziennikzachodni.pl/radni-rybnika-jednoglosnie-przeciw-budowie-kopalni-paruszwiec-co-mowili-mieszkancy-i-przedsiębiorcy-zdjecia/ar/c3-14153249> [accessed on 30.05.2019].

50 *Kierunek Śląskie 3.0*..., op. cit., p. 3.

51 *Kierunek rozwoju - Śląskie 2030+*, Silesian regional government, <https://slaskie.pl/content/kierunek-rozwoju---slaskie-2030> [accessed on 30.05.2019].

Agreement and invest in energy transition, energy saving measures, RES and fighting climate change.⁵² Budgetary negotiations are still underway, however, it is certain that **EU member states will be obliged to spend at least a quarter of the future EU budget on actions to protect climate, such as investments in energy saving solutions, development of renewable energy sources and a just transition of mining areas.** This is a great opportunity for Silesia and other Polish coal regions to have access to major funds for financing the necessary investments and transition activities. However, those funds will be granted on the condition that good spending plans are in place, including in particular a regional development strategy which currently is being updated, and that relevant provisions are included in the future Partnership Agreement⁵³ and the National Energy and Climate Plan at the national level. EU funds will be allocated to projects envisaged in those documents.

Meanwhile, **draft government documents specifying priority spending areas do not directly mention any just transition.** Regional strategies do mention certain significant elements of transition, such as an improvement of the state of the natural environment, the availability of public services and the quality of life, however, they do not cover any system-wide changes in the power industry, including in the hard coal mining sector. Similarly, in the light of the draft Partnership Agreement, which will set the directions and priorities of EU funds spending in the new financial perspective and which has recently been unveiled by the government, just transition is not a priority. Similarly, just transition has not been listed as one of the Modernisation Fund's proposed objectives (the Fund's money comes from proceeds from the sale of emission permits; according to the EU legislators it was intended as one of the main sources of funding of transition in coal-dependent regions and sectors).⁵⁴

In the public debate, the Coal Platform and the proposed Just Transition Fund are frequently mentioned as sources of funding of transition initiatives. However, it should be remembered that the Platform does not

and most likely will not have its own budget – it merely is a mechanism to facilitate the preparation of projects and help raise funds for them from other sources. The Just Transition Fund, if it is created, will be worth a mere EUR 4.8 billion to be distributed to the EU's all 41 coal regions. It should also be remembered that the funds allocated to it will be shifted from other instruments such as the Cohesion Fund and the European Regional Development Fund. These two funds themselves could be the source of just transition funding, should national political decision makers wish so. The same is true about the Modernisation Fund and the remaining portion of income earned on the sale of emission permits. The government is currently deciding on how those funds should be spent, and is doing so without a broader public debate, even though this concerns billions of euros.⁵⁵

Silesia and other coal regions should demand that such a debate is conducted and take active part in the discussion currently being launched on how Poland should spend the billions of euros it is to receive from the new budget and from the sale of emission permits. In line with the objectives set by EU legislators, a major portion of those funds should be spent on a transition of the power industry into a zero-emission industry and on helping the coal regions to avoid the negative consequences of this process. For this to be possible, a realistic plan for a transition of the Polish power industry as a whole is necessary, alongside a plan for phasing out coal and plans of a just transition of specific regions. It is also necessary to launch a broad democratic debate to analyse the divergences between the plans devised by the government, which intends to maintain the current coal situation in Silesia, and the aspirations of specific regions which, just as Silesia, see their future development opportunities in other sectors of the economy. At the same time, those regions are struggling with the environmental costs generated by the mining industry, which curb their development ambitions. To be implemented, these two visions will require major investments and will compete for funds from the same source.

52 *New Cohesion Policy*, European Commission, https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/pl/2021_2027/ (accessed on 30.05.2019). The remaining priority areas in the EU's budget for 2021-27 involve a Europe:

- 1) which is smarter – through innovation, digitisation, economic transformation and support to small and medium-sized businesses;
- 2) greener and carbon-free – implementing the Paris Agreement and investing in energy transition, renewables and the fight against climate change;
- 3) more connected – with strategic transport and digital networks;
- 4) more social – delivering on the European Pillar of Social Rights and supporting quality employment, education, skills, social inclusion and equal access to healthcare;
- 5) closer to citizens – by supporting locally-led development strategies and sustainable urban development across the EU.

53 The Ministry of Development presented its draft assumptions in July 2019, <https://www.funduszeuropejskie.gov.pl/strony/umowa-partnerstwa-na-lata-2021-2027-zalozenia/> (accessed on 31.07.2019).

54 *Rząd dzieli unijne pieniądze na transformację energetyczną*, Rafał Zasuń, <https://wysokienapiecie.pl/20479-rzad-dzieli-unijne-pieniadze-na-transformacje-energetyczna/> (accessed on 30.06.2019).

55 *See Będą miliardy na inwestycje w czyste powietrze i niskoemisyjną energetykę. O ile nie trafią gdzie indziej...*, Ireneusz Chojnacki, <https://www.wnp.pl/energetyka/beda-miliardy-na-inwestycje-w-czyste-powietrze-i-niskoemisyjna-energetyke-o-ile-nie-trafia-gdzie-indziej,350702.html> (accessed on 09.08.2019).

Recommendations

Silesia is facing numerous social and economic challenges which will determine the course of the region's transition for the next several decades. The public debate offers very little information on this subject, which makes the process of devising transition plans untransparent. As a consequence, it is difficult to comment on anything other than the official information contained in programmes and strategies for the region.

The conviction that a transition that happens rapidly, over a short time and without a proper plan and preparations is likely to result in serious adverse social consequences is the common element of transition-related fears expressed by various social groups. Representatives of these groups have divergent views on how this transition should proceed, they point to different aspects and different risks. These varied viewpoints, alongside strategic visions of development devised at the national and regional level, should serve as the starting point for a broad public debate on Silesia's energy transition, its timeframe, schedule and solutions to be offered to workers.

The fact that Silesia's Marshal has established his Regional Team for the Mining Regions Initiative and invited various stakeholders, including representatives of the Polish Green Network, to take part in its work, is a positive example of actions fostering transparency and inclusiveness of the transition process. However, this is not enough to make this process fully inclusive. At the international level, the conceptual framework of just transition is well-developed, however, for this framework to be used in national and regional documents, will and vision are necessary. Equally important is the adoption of good laws to support the interests of both entrepreneurs and employees, as well as the civil society. What is also necessary is an open debate on the distribution of EU funds, which are the main potential source of funding to finance a just transition.

Gradual elimination of Silesian coal from the power industry is unavoidable in the context of global megatrends, rapid changes in the world's energy system and the current direction of the EU's energy and climate policy. From the perspective of the miners, Silesia's residents and the region's economy, the biggest threat comes from a poorly planned and poorly prepared transition carried out over a too short period of time, exposed to the impact of market forces and deprived of adequate financial support.

The debate on the transition plan should take into account a number of aspects because a just transition cannot be limited to phasing out coal or replacing coal mining and coal-based power generation with other types of economic activity. It also involves changes to the job market, which should be implemented as smoothly as possible, and efforts to improve the quality of life in the region, and should be carried out as a bottom-up initiative, with the participation of various stakeholders and according to democratic standards so that it takes into account the interests and expectations of all affected groups in a fair manner.

Silesia needs to devise a clear vision of its just transition. In this context, an open discussion on the various visions of transition is important. This is why we propose to establish a "Silesian transition round table". This discussion formula should include representatives of the central government, the regional government, local governments, civil society organisations, trade unions and local communities – in particular mining municipalities and municipalities which are to host new mining projects. A joint transition vision and strategy devised in such a way should be binding on future decision makers.

" *I think it's high time that we established a Silesian transition round table. Just transition should be Silesia's raison d'état, which means that regardless of who is holding power, we all agree that we need to foster our region's transition. To be able to change this region, we need to act in a just manner, have respect for humans, the local community and the natural environment, the way Germany did during its energy transition process known as Energiewende".* Patryk Białas, president of the BoMiasto association, director of the Innovation and Competence Centre at the Euro-Centrum Science and Technology Park in Katowice, Katowice city councillor.

The plan of Silesia's just transition should clearly specify the following:

- ▶ the deadline for phasing out coal and its interim stages;
- ▶ an analysis of the social challenges this will pose;
- ▶ a set of tools to eliminate or minimise the negative economic and social consequences and to foster a new better development path.

There is an urgent need to identify funds from which transition could be financed. The establishment of the EU Platform for Coal Regions in Transition and the planned Just Transition Fund are insufficient to fund the

transition process as a whole. The Polish Green Network proposes that public funds earmarked for this purpose should mainly be used to finance actions carried out by local governments, civil society organisations and local communities. Government projects funded from those sources should in particular focus on supporting workers who lose their jobs, providing high-quality education, protection of the natural environment and prevention of energy poverty and other social problems associated with the development inequalities in Silesia.

An information and awareness-raising campaign in the local media is also necessary to explain to the public

what a just transition involves. It is also important to make civil society organisations and movements more interested and more engaged. Frequently, the popular understanding of just transition is tantamount to mine closures, whereas the public should be made aware that the purpose is to transform the economic system as a whole, including the power industry, from a centralised coal-based system into a low-carbon decentralised economy based on energy efficiency and renewable sources of energy, as well as other types of economic activity that respect the environment and the climate.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- ➔ Gradual elimination of Silesian coal from the power industry is unavoidable in the context of global mega-trends, rapid changes in the world's energy system and the current direction of the EU's energy and climate policy.
- ➔ The biggest threat to the miners, residents and the economy of Silesia comes from a poorly planned and poorly prepared transition.
- ➔ The different viewpoints expressed in public debate, and the strategic visions of development devised at the national and regional level, should serve as the starting point for a broad public debate on Silesia's energy transition plan, its timeframe, schedule and solutions to be offered to workers.
- ➔ Silesia needs to devise a clear vision of its just transition that would reflect the needs and expectations of all the affected groups. This vision should be binding on the future decision makers.
- ➔ There is an urgent need to set a coal phase out date and to identify funds from which the transition could be financed.
- ➔ An information and awareness-raising media campaign is necessary to explain to the public what just transition involves and how it will proceed.



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