

Handbook for Transition Communication

Contact: secretariat@coalregions.eu

Author: Adrienne Kotler

Contributors: Helen Franzen, Aleksandra Jasinka, Aleksander Szpor, with invaluable contributions from the Region Transition Unit team, Regional Development and Transition Department, Marshal's Office of the Silesian Voivodeship

February 2024

EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Directorate-General for Energy

Directorate B – ENER.B1. – Consumers, Local Initiatives, Just Transition

Unit B.1 - Consumers, Local Initiatives, Just Transition

EC-ENER-JUST-TRANSITION@ec.europa.eu

European Commission

B-1049 Brussels

PDF ISBN: 978-92-68-18250-5 doi: 10.2833/32082 MJ-05-24-512-EN-N

Manuscript completed in February 2024

1st edition

This document should not be considered as representative of the European Commission's official position.

Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2024

© European Union, 2024



The reuse policy of European Commission documents is implemented by Commission Decision 2011/833/EU of 12 December 2011 on the reuse of Commission documents (OJ L 330, 14.12.2011, p. 39). Unless otherwise noted, the reuse of this document is authorised under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International (CC BY 4.0) licence (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). This means that reuse is allowed provided appropriate credit is given and any changes are indicated. The European Commission shall not be liable for any consequence stemming from the reuse.

For any use or reproduction of elements that are not owned by the European Union, permission may need to be sought directly from the respective rightholders. The European Union does not own the copyright in relation to the following elements:

Page 1: Mariusz Cieszewski (CC BY-NC 2.0)

Page 7, 23, 26: Adrienne Kotler

Table of contents

Background	4
Why transition communication?	4
Background: just transition in Silesia	4
Approach to Just Transition Communication in Silesia	6
Guiding principles	6
Communications objectives for the Marshal's Office	6
Achieving these objectives	6
Framework to Create a Communications Strategy	7
Introduction, communications objectives, and approach	7
Target audiences	9
Communications activities	11
4. Planning, resources, monitoring, and evaluation	18
Tips for Effective Transition Communication	22
Best Practices	24
Best practice: awareness-raising among children	24
Best practice: seeking project proposals from community members	24
Best practice: connecting the government and community members	25
Best practice: establishing a culture of direct democracy	25
Learning from past mistakes: coordination among stakeholders	26
Best practice: continuous communication	26

Disclaimer

The document does not represent the views of the European Commission nor can the Commission be held responsible for any use which may be made of the information contained herein.

Background

Through the three-year process of developing Silesia's *Territorial Just Transition Plan* with diverse regional stakeholders, the Marshal's Office of the Silesian Voivodeship identified the need to strengthen its just transition communication and dissemination. This is a common challenge faced by many coal, peat, lignite, and oil shale regions ("coal+ regions"). Namely: many entities such as trade unions, NGOs, municipalities, and researchers are engaged in regional just transition activities, projects, and decisions; however, general inhabitants have little awareness of their region's just transition work.

This Handbook aims to help the Marshal's Office to further develop its just transition communication, and better equip its partner organisations with the information and tools needed for them to communicate just transition updates to (and from) the wider public. It has, however, been written to be relevant and applicable for diverse just transition stakeholders and coal+ regions. As such, any coal+ region looking to strengthen just transition communication can derive benefits from its contents.

How other regions can use this document

The third chapter of this Handbook, "Framework to Create a Communications Strategy", lays out the structure of a communications strategy, alongside guiding questions to help any region to fill in this structure to create a communications strategy of your own. Furthermore, chapter five, "Best Practices", draws on the expertise held by the community of European coal+ regions to inspire all regions seeking to improve their transition communication.

Why transition communication?

Effective communication enhances transparency, connects just transition processes to people's daily lives, and thereby builds trust in the transition process. Transitions will only be truly just if all impacted community members are aware of, and able to weigh-in on, its many facets. Communities must be aware of the vast structural changes required to transition away from coal – what will change, why, and how this will impact them. Otherwise, the transition risks alienating people, sowing dissent, or 'leaving people behind'. That is where effective transition communication comes in.

Effective transition communication makes key information and milestones clear and easily accessible for all, and ensures consistency in the information provided. Community members must be able to understand what 'just transition' means, and why it is needed. Furthermore, while information dissemination from authorities to

communities is a crucial component of transition communication, there must also be effective mechanisms that facilitate communication from community members to the policy-setting and regulating authority.

Background: just transition in Silesia

Silesia, located in southern Poland, is largest coal mining region in Europe, with about 63,000 employees directly working in the coal sector.¹ It is characterised by hard coal harvested through underground mining.

Silesia is the most populated and urbanised region in Poland, with the heaviest mining sub-regions located near to the region's capital city of Katowice. While mining continues to play an important role in the regional economy, its gradual decline is apparent throughout Silesia. Since the 1990s, mines have been modernised to improve productivity, the least productive mines have closed, and the region has accelerated its just transition plans. At its peak in 1979, Silesia mined 201 Mt of coal, and directly employed 367,000 people. Today, the amount of coal produced has almost quartered compared to that peak number, and the number of people directly employed in the sector is down fivefold.

Just transition in Silesia is spearheaded by the Marshal's Office for the Silesian Voivodeship, headquartered in Katowice. Transition is guided by the region's *Green Silesia* strategy and *Territorial Just Transition Plan*.

A Regional Council for the Just Transition of the Silesian Voivodeship (Regional Council), formerly the Regional Team for Just Transition of the Silesian Voivodeship, was established in April 2023 to ensure that all relevant stakeholders have an avenue to shape transition. The Regional Council members represent municipalities, the central government, the regional government, trade unions, local business and commerce, science and research, non-governmental organisations, and cultural heritage. The Regional Council has an advisory and coordinating role in the transition, and monitors the efficient and effective implementation of the EU's Just Transition Fund in Silesia.

In addition, the Regional Observatory of the Transition Process (ROPT)² project brought together the Marshal's Office, the Central Mining Institute – National Research Institute, the Mining Chamber of Industry and Commerce, and the Miners' Trade Union in Poland to conduct work across three modules: research, participation, and implementation. The ROPT supports and improves management of the region's socio-economic transition process.

1. This introduction to Silesia is drawn primarily from work conducted by the Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition and the Marshal's Office for the Silesian Voivodeship in 2020; [Regional Profile](#) and [Transformation Options Framework](#). Additional details and statistics were directly provided by the Marshal's Office in November 2023.
2. This acronym is based on the Polish "*Regionalne obserwatorium procesu transformacji*".



FIGURE 1: SIMPLIFIED VISUALISATION OF THE TRANSFORMATION OPTIONS FRAMEWORK

Source: [Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition](#)

In 2022, the Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition and the Marshal's Office released a '[Transformation Options Framework](#)', which provides guidance on how to identify and consider options for transformation of brownfield sites in the context of just transition. Given just how many stakeholders are relevant to, and impacted by, just transition processes, most of this guidance document was dedicated to *stakeholder engagement and consultation*.

There are many ways to understand the relatedness and distinctions between stakeholder engagement and communication. Both require two-way exchange between decision-makers and other actors, but to various degrees. Stakeholder engagement puts more emphasis on getting inputs from stakeholders to decision-makers; however, this is only possible if transparent communications has established trust and a well-informed public. By contrast, communication emphasises disseminating information from decision-makers to the public; however, effective communications must also make it easy for groups to share their inputs with decision-makers.

Since the Marshal's Office and the Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition have already developed an easy-to-use and detailed framework for engaging stakeholders, and given that the Regional Council and ROPT provide strong bases for stakeholder engagement, this Handbook focuses on *communication*. Nonetheless, it refers to ways that communications can make two-way exchange easier and stronger, and provides tips for opening-up channels of communication from actors to decision-makers.

These must be understood in the context of the channels that Silesia currently has at its disposal. The Marshal's Office has a dedicated just transition website (<https://transformacja.slaskie.pl/>), which serves as the main platform for the public to access transition information. It includes information about the [TJTP](#), [Regional Council](#), and [ROPT](#), among other things. This is complemented by the official website of the region (<http://slaskie.pl>) and by the website for the regional operational (funding) programme "*European Funds for Silesia 2021-2027*" (<http://funduszeu.slaskie.pl/>).

Approach to Just Transition Communication in Silesia

The just transition is a long and complex process that involves changes not only in a region's economy, but also in its very identity. This makes communication about its progress challenging, but also crucially important. To be effective, all communication must stem from guiding principles, and work to achieve core objectives set by the region.

Guiding principles

During a fact-finding mission to Silesia in April 2023, representatives from the Marshal's Office and from the Secretariat of the Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition met with the: Central Mining Institute – National Research Institute; City of Jastrzębie-Zdrój; City of Katowice; City of Rydułtowy; City of Rybnik; CRIS – Civil Initiatives Development Centre; Jastrzębska Spółka Węglowa S.A.; Katowickie Inwestycje S.A.; Municipal Council of Czerwonka-Leszczyny; Mining Chamber of Trade and Industry; Polish Green Network; Trade Union of Miners; and the Union of Municipalities and Districts of the Western Subregion of Silesia.

Through conversations, consensus emerged that transition communication in Silesia must be guided by the following core principles:

- honesty,
- being concrete and specific,
- demonstrating effects/impacts,
- meaningfully including both short- and long-term outlooks.

Communications objectives for the Marshal's Office

Guided by the above principles, the Marshal's Office aims to:

- make it easy and common for the public to be aware of Silesia's just transition progress and projects;
- strengthen the lines of communication that connect the wider public to the Marshal's Office; and to
- equip key partners to be able to act as multipliers, disseminating transition updates to their wider publics.

Achieving these objectives

The aforementioned objectives will be accomplished by:

- 1. Assessing the situation** – an evaluation of who is currently working on transition communication (organisations), which channels are being used, what is and is not working for regional stakeholders, what stakeholders would like to see instead, and what should thus change, why, and for whom.
 - This has begun within the framework of START technical assistance; with START support, the Marshal's Office conducted a communications needs assessment survey and a review of their just transition website, which is the region's main transition communication channel.
- 2. Creating a transition communication strategy** – [Framework to Create a Communications Strategy](#) of this handbook provides a framework that can be used to create a communications strategy. The Marshal's Office plans to make use of this framework to create a strategy for transition communication in Silesia, which will, among other things, include key messages that transition stakeholders can use to discuss Silesia's transition, and to respond to frequently asked questions.
- 3. Equipping multipliers** – as demonstrated by the Regional Council and ROPT, the Marshal's Office has strong relationships with several crucial transition partners, including trade unions, municipalities, regional chambers, NGOs, and more. Through trainings, guidance, briefings, key messages, and tools, the region hopes to equip these organisations and other key players (e.g., local government associations) to be able to act as ambassadors and multipliers, sharing transition updates to and from their wider communities.
- 4. Monitoring and evaluating progress** – these efforts will have to be monitored closely, so that the Marshal's Office and its partners can assess what should be continued, stopped, or started. Monitoring and evaluation should also celebrate successes and recognise progress to energise and inspire. Some mechanisms that can be used to conduct this monitoring and evaluation are outlined in [Framework to Create a Communications Strategy](#).

The Marshal's Office will take responsibility for creating, monitoring, and acting as guardians of the region's overarching just transition communications strategy, maintaining a bird's-eye perspective of just transition updates, and offering multipliers and the public a place to ask questions. After all, communication on a personal and direct level – including messaging regarding how transition will impact people personally, and why they should be invested in just transition – will be crucial to reach overall communications goals.

Framework to Create a Communications Strategy

As described above, a core step that is needed to achieve transition communication goals is crafting a communications strategy. The process of creating such a strategy assembles key information, including about target audiences and their needs. A good communications strategy then makes it easy for the implementing organisation (in this case, the Marshal's Office) and their partners (e.g., the Regional Council members) to execute effective communication campaigns and dissemination activities. It provides, for example, key messages that are ready to be copied, pasted, and shared widely, and identifies channels that can be used to effectively share these messages.

The following framework is not, in and of itself, a communications strategy. Rather, it poses questions and provides a guiding template, which any organisation can use to craft their own communications strategy. As such, it can not only be applied by the Marshal's Office in Silesia, but can also be shared with their partners and with other regions to support them in creating strategies of their own.

The framework is divided into several sections, each of which represents one component of a communications strategy. Each section provides some information about why this component is important, how to gather key information, and a template that can be filled in.

This framework groups the main components of a communications strategy into four main sections:

1. Introduction, communications objectives, and approach
2. Target audiences
3. Communications activities
4. Planning, resources, monitoring and evaluation

Introduction, communications objectives, and approach

Communications strategies must be guided and driven by clear overarching objectives, and an agreed upon approach to reach those objectives. These objectives should be defined in collaborative ways, to ensure that they accurately capture the needs and interests of all partners who will be disseminating information, and of all key audiences that information must reach.

An example of this process is laid out in the first two chapters of this document – namely, a fact-finding mission brought together an external perspective (the START team), the main implementing organisation (the Marshal's Office), and several important partners who together discussed communicating Silesia's just transition until consensus developed regarding the overarching principles that should guide all transition communication.

This section is often also complemented by background information regarding the team that will be implementing the strategy. This background should include basic definitions of commonly used terms (e.g. 'just transition'), context about the organisational players (e.g. the Marshal's Office, ROPT, Regional Council, etc.), and may also feature information about the roles that different staff/departments will fulfil in implementing the strategy – also this final point about staff roles may be better placed in the strategy's section on "Planning, resources, and evaluation".



TABLE 1: TEMPLATE TO CREATE THE “INTRODUCTION, COMMUNICATIONS OBJECTIVES, AND APPROACH” SECTION OF A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY. THE LEFT COLUMN CONTAINS QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR THINKING; THE RIGHT COLUMN CONTAINS EXAMPLES TO GUIDE YOUR THINKING WITH SILESIA IN MIND.

<p>Context</p> <p><i>What geographic area does this strategy focus on? What basic facts do people have to know to understand transition communication in this context (e.g., phase out timelines, key players)? Which organisation is writing this strategy? Which organisation(s) will implement it?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>A transition communications strategy for Silesia should briefly overview: the status of just transition (max. 1 page); the key organisations and players (max. 1 page); and the different Marshal's Office departments working on just transition (1 paragraph). See Background in this document for inspiration.</p> <p>In addition, this section should present a simple table that outlines the organisation's current communications Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats (i.e., a SWOT analysis).</p>
<p>Objectives</p> <p><i>What is the goal of this strategy? If implemented perfectly, what would it accomplish?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>See the three objectives outlined in Approach to Just Transition Communication in Silesia, above.</p>
<p>Approach</p> <p><i>Broadly: what guiding principles will shape your communications? Specifically: what are the overarching points that you will follow (i.e., your 'approach') to reach those? And, given your resources, expertise, partners, describe the general steps you will follow to creating communication outputs.</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>Refer to the guiding principles and approach sub-sections in Approach to Just Transition Communication in Silesia for inspiration.</p> <p>In response to the final guiding question – the steps to create communication outputs – consider how you will get information and translate that into outputs. For example, imagine Silesia got funding from the Just Transition Mechanism to implement a project. This news could be shared in a number of formats: (1) a long-form, official announcement, (2) a more approachable format, such as a video interview with a member of the Marshal's Office staff announcing that this project was funded, and (3) a short output like a social media post sharing the announcement.</p>

Example of a 'Communications Objectives and Approach' section

For example, the Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition's own communications strategy defines the overarching **objectives** to: amplify regions' voices; and facilitate the transfer of knowledge from the EU to regions, and amongst regions. It defines **two main steps** to be followed to achieve those objectives (accompanied by detailed explanations and sub-steps): *reaching audiences* by supporting the development of knowledge products to ensure they are accessible and disseminating these via newsletters, social media, multipliers, etc.; and *sharing voices of regions* through recorded video interviews, events, short web articles, and quotes shared on social media. The **content creation model** for the Initiative involves first producing long-form 'pillar content' (e.g., a toolkit, event session, etc.), then translating it first into a more digestible format (e.g., news article, shorter edited video recording), and second into a teaser suitable for social media (e.g., key quote, 1-minute clip).

Target audiences

Different people, organisations, and bodies have different ways of communicating, knowledge about the topic, and use different channels. Communication is, therefore, most effective when it is tailored to a target audience's profile.

A first step to creating communication outputs must be defining exactly which audiences should be targeted specifically. Once those audiences are identified, you can think about which channels they use, what background knowledge they have already, and use that information to make decisions about key messages and techniques to reach them.

In defining target audiences, ask yourself who you most want to see your outputs. If you share an update, resource, news, or announcement, who would you most

want to receive that update? In answering this question, consider both who is crucial to successful just transition, and whether those groups are best reached by you. For example, individual miners are at the heart of transition! However, they probably have much stronger day-to-day relationships with their union leaders, municipal representatives, and community associations than with the Marshal's Office. As such, even though it is essential that they receive news about just transition in Silesia, they may not be a primary target audience for the Marshal's Office. Groups that either might be better reached by other stakeholders (e.g., miners), or are 'good to reach' but perhaps not as essential to successful transition in Silesia (e.g., other EU coal+ regions) are classified as secondary and tertiary target audiences, respectively.

Additional context on target groups in Silesia and how to reach them

Transition stakeholders in the Silesian Voivodeship include, in particular: residents of 64 mining communes/municipalities, representatives of local governments, miners, owners and employees of mining-related companies, self-governed groups of employers and chambers of commerce, universities and research institutions, business environment institutions, industry trade unions, and local non-governmental organisations.

The most important target group, which transition communication should primarily consider, is the group that will experience its negative socio-economic consequences to the greatest extent, i.e. inhabitants of mining communes/municipalities, especially employees of hard coal mines and companies dependent on the mining sector.

This group can be further distinguished based on their varying degrees of knowledge about the energy transition process in the region. This knowledge will impact the language and messaging used to convey information about the transition process (e.g. current situation, current challenges, planned activities, types of support offered). It is necessary to use differentiated messaging (see [Table 3: Template to create the "key messages" section of a communications strategy](#)), taking into account the characteristics of specific target groups (age, level of education, place of residence, information needs) and how they encounter information (social media, website, e-mail, information and promotion campaign, workshops, etc. – see [Table 4: Template to create the "communication channels" section of a communications strategy](#)).

Overall, communication should make it clear that the energy transition process is a planned and well-thought-out process based on a long-term strategy, which aims to bring about specific, measurable benefits to the inhabitants of the province, such as improving quality of life in the region. This message should be developed in such a way that it reaches the unconvinced, responding to pre-conceived ideas resulting from previous negative experiences related to the restructuring of the mining industry in the Silesian Voivodeship (e.g., in the 1990s).

Messaging must also respond to anxieties related to change and job loss, and alleviate fears about the future. To do so, messaging must be reliable (true, honest, based on facts), consistent (contradictory messages should be avoided), and should capture recipients' attention (arouses interest). Communication activities, based on reliable and complete information, can frame the transformation processes as rife with opportunities for the economy and the inhabitants of the province, and can indicate the need to take appropriate measures to limit potential adverse phenomena.

Moreover, in the Silesian Voivodeship, where the mining industry plays a key role, it is important to address young people, especially as they make decisions regarding their education in light of a legacy of inheriting a profession in mining from generation to generation (grandfather-father-son).

TABLE 2: TEMPLATE TO CREATE THE “TARGET AUDIENCES” SECTION OF A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY. THE LEFT COLUMN CONTAINS QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR THINKING; THE RIGHT COLUMN CONTAINS EXAMPLES WITH SILESIA IN MIND.

<p>Primary target audience</p> <p><i>If you could only reach one group, who would you want this to be, and why? Think about specifically the information that you can share – some groups that are central to just transition may not be best reached by you. What specifically do you have to say? Who needs to hear that information?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>The Marshal's Office in Silesia has good relationships with regional stakeholders via the Regional Council, the ROPT, and thanks to long stakeholder engagement processes developed and refined over the years. On the other hand, it is not in as close daily contact with the general public (when compared, for example, to municipalities or community associations). As such, it would likely make most sense for the Marshal's Office's primary target audience to be potential multiplier organisations, including municipalities, trade union representatives, NGOs, academic institutions, etc.</p>
<p>Secondary target audience</p> <p><i>What other groups would be great to reach? Think about people more indirectly connected to you or to the transition process, who would benefit from hearing your updates.</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>The Marshal's Office's secondary target audience may be groups like miners and entrepreneurs in Silesia. While trade union representatives, chambers of commerce, and community associations may have more direct lines of contact with these groups, the Marshal's Office still represents them, and should work to reach them.</p>
<p>Tertiary target audience</p> <p><i>Which groups would you consider to be good to reach, even if not essential? Consider broadening your geography or scope to answer this question.</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>Silesia is well-connected to other EU regions and to the European Commission's just transition efforts. It may not be essential (for successful transition) that these groups receive regular communications updates from Silesia, but it would certainly be an added benefit for the region, and for European coal+ regions writ large. As such, these could be suitable tertiary target audiences.</p>

Example of a 'Target Audiences' section

The Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition's own communications strategy defines primary and secondary target audiences. The primary audience is made up of transition *implementers* (public authorities, regional economic bodies, energy utilities, coal mining companies, trade unions, etc.), and *direct influencers* (trade unions, NGOs, energy consultancies, European institutions, research institutions, etc.). The secondary audience is made up of those that are not directly engaged in the Initiative, but are *affected* by transition (entrepreneurs in coal+ regions, local residents in coal+ regions, etc.), or have another reason why they may be *interested* in Initiative updates (media outlets in coal+ regions, general public outside of coal+ regions). Finally, our tertiary audience includes *just transition stakeholders outside of the EU*, with whom we share information and compare experiences from the EU and from countries and regions globally.

Communications activities

Once you have target audiences identified, it is time to plan the communications activities you will use to reach these audiences. This includes planning the key messages you want to communicate to your target audiences, and the activities you can pursue to share those messages with each audience. Attention must also be paid to how the public is able to reach you.

In this section of your communications strategy, you should outline key messages that distil your core points and messages. These messages and their wording should be reviewed thoroughly (including by partners) so that they are ready to be shared widely, and to be directly copied and used in both your and your partners' communication outputs. This is an opportunity for stakeholder engagement and co-creating key messages alongside partners.

The key messages should consider how to best reach your target audiences. Consider the benefits and impacts of just transition on each audience, and tailor your key messages to their specific needs and interests.

It is crucial to develop key messages with your core principles in mind (in the case of Silesia, these principles were described above as: honesty, being concrete and specific, demonstrating impacts, and addressing both the short- and long-term). While it is important to also acknowledge the real challenges of transition, positivity can be powerful in developing key messages. Consider the benefits that different target audiences may derive from just transition, such as public health improvements and more diverse economic opportunities.

TABLE 3: TEMPLATE TO CREATE THE “KEY MESSAGES” SECTION OF A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY. THE LEFT COLUMN CONTAINS QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR THINKING; THE RIGHT COLUMN CONTAINS EXAMPLES WITH SILESIA IN MIND.

<p>Overarching points</p> <p><i>Consider your primary target audience. What are three overarching points that you want them to hear?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>To reach their communication objectives, Silesia may want their three overarching points to include: (1) Silesia is actively designing and implementing just transition projects; (2) the Marshal's Office leads these efforts; (3) Key partners work with the Marshal's Office</p>
<p>Key messages</p> <p><i>Consider your guiding principles (e.g. honesty, being concrete and specific, demonstrating impacts). For each of your overarching points, write 1-3 sentences that communicate this overarching point, while centring your guiding principles.</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>Each of the three proposed ‘overarching points’ can be translated into sentences that are ready to be copied and used widely.</p> <p>The first point, for example, can lead to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Silesia will not just survive the energy transition, but will thrive in its wake by seizing opportunities to diversify the regional economy.</i> • <i>Different parts of Silesia have unique expertise that are being developed to bring new jobs.</i> • <i>Silesia uses external funding and support to put in place projects that ensure that energy transition is just.</i> <p>The second to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>If you have questions about Silesia's just transition, start by checking the Marshal's Office website and channels.</i> • <i>Let's work together – community members and the Marshal's Office – to ensure Silesia's transition is just for all.</i> <p>The third to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Through Regional Council and ROPT, just transition decisions are made in consultation with trade unions, NGOs, municipalities, and researchers.</i>
<p>Message validation</p> <p><i>Consider your secondary and tertiary target audiences. Are there any key messages you want to add for them? Share your draft widely with partners, stakeholders, external reviewers to ask them to review, edit and validate your key messages. Get them to consider: ‘can I directly copy these messages and use them in my work? If not, what has to change to make them useable?’</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>Silesia could convene a workshop for ROPT and Regional Council members, during which a facilitated discussion helps refine the key messages so that they are ready for any multiplier organisation to pick-up and use.</p>

Example of a 'Key Messages' section

The following are key messages outlined by the Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition, and used in the Initiative's outputs.

Ensuring coal+ regions thrive	The goal is not that coal+ regions only survive the energy transition, but that they benefit from new opportunities that it brings.
	The Initiative facilitates networking amongst regions and nurtures the exchange of best practices and contacts to foster a community of regions with relationships that can aid their transition journeys.
Unique regional transitions	Not all communities will be affected equally by energy transition. EU coal+ regions need unique support and resources to be able to face the disproportionate challenges that transition poses.
	Not all regions are the same: they have different needs, strengths, and face unique challenges in the context of energy transition. This means that regional transitions must be locally tailored.
	The Initiative develops tailored tools and products specific to each region, which inspire and inform processes in all areas.
Engaging all stakeholders	Transition demands working closely with a wide range of stakeholders, including utilities, the coal sector, and trade unions. Local communities, NGOs, workers, and trade unions are key just transition actors.
	Energy transition involves a range of areas, such as employment, reskilling, air quality, environmental rehabilitation, economic diversification, and technology. Voices from all these sectors need to be part of transition discussions.

Organisations must use a mix of communication channels to then get these messages out. In this case, a 'channel' means the place you are sharing your messages; 'channels' can, for example, include your organisational website, different social media channels (Twitter, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.), newsletters, traditional press, workshops, town hall meetings, and video feeds.

Consider using a mix of broader and more targeted channels. Broader communications activities could include general awareness-raising campaigns, and messages shared using traditional media, advertising, or social media. More targeted communication includes connecting face-to-face with smaller stakeholder groups – a process that is key to communicating effectively and building trust in the transition process. This must be done in close cooperation with key stakeholders, partners, and multipliers, many of whom can take broader key messages, and help translate those into face-to-face interactions with impacted communities.

It will be important to use a mix of different communications channels, considering which ones are best to reach your target audiences. For example, some audiences may follow local news outlets and social media feeds, while others may turn to European outlets to get their updates. A needs assessment survey, like the one that the Marshal's Office conducted in mid-2023, can help you determine which channels to prioritise to reach different audience groups.

Keep in mind that different types of content work best on different channels. For example, social media is ideal for short statements paired with an image or video. On the other hand, local news outlets are great places to share longer interviews or opinion pieces.

Some examples of what this mix of communication outputs could include are:

- Traditional media – Regular press articles/releases throughout the year on different themes and topics, linking back to a central just transition website.
- Social Media – Social media posts that follow the theme of articles/press releases. Social media posts to include pictures and videos to increase engagement.
- Paid social media advertising – most social media outlets allow you to pay to sponsor posts so that they reach a larger or more specific demographic; this is often an affordable and worthwhile option.
- Videos – Short videos are very popular and useable across channels (e.g., website, social media, to open in-person events). A video summary that communicates the overall vision for regional transition can be embedded on a website homepage and used widely.
- Informational posters/billboards – traditional form of advertising that can be put up nearby or at sites of transformation.
- Biannual workshops – for multiplier organisations with key comms messages and tools.

TABLE 4: TEMPLATE TO CREATE THE “COMMUNICATION CHANNELS” SECTION OF A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY. THE LEFT COLUMN CONTAINS QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR THINKING; THE RIGHT COLUMN CONTAINS EXAMPLES WITH SILESIA IN MIND.

<p>Broad channels: digital</p> <p><i>What online channels do your target audiences use, through which you could share broad messages? What forms of content suit that channel well?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>The needs assessment that Silesia conducted showed that their secondary target audience is present on social media (Facebook) and uses local internet portals, while their primary audience prefers to use the Marshal's Office website.</p> <p>Social media is best served by short messages, complemented by engaging images or video clips, regular posting, and a well-thought through schedule (Facebook can accommodate daily posts). Local portals are good places to place digital advertisements (e.g., to promote upcoming workshops), and one-paragraph summaries. The Marshal's Office's own website can be used for longer articles, and as a hub that uses approachable language to clearly lay out transition updates.</p>
<p>Broad channels: physical</p> <p><i>What physical, printed outputs would your target audiences use and respond to, through which you could share broad messages? What forms of content suit that channel well?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>Billboards can be put up near sights that are undergoing transformation (e.g., the Historic Ignacy Mine, Katowicki HUB in Nikiszowiec, etc.) to make it visible that just transition projects are ongoing (always with a QR-code that links to the transformation website).</p>
<p>Targeted channels: digital</p> <p><i>What online channels do your target audiences use, through which you could directly communicate with them? What forms of content suit that channel well?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>The needs assessment that Silesia conducted showed that their primary target audience is interested in receiving direct emails with updates, as well as attending online meetings, workshops, seminars.</p>
<p>Targeted channels: physical</p> <p><i>What physical channels would your target audiences use and respond to, through which you can directly communicate with them? What forms of content suit that channel well?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>The needs assessment that Silesia conducted showed that their primary target audience is interested in joining seminars, study visits, workshops, and receiving specialised just transition communication consulting.</p>

Example of a ‘Communication Channels’ section

The Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition's own communications strategy identifies channels, and content that will be featured on each. This includes:

- Website: Overview of the Initiative and its activities, more detailed landing pages for events, database of knowledge products, etc.
- Social media: Short posts with images to announce the release of knowledge products, promote events, share short versions of new videos (under 2-minutes), live event coverage, quotes, etc.
- Newsletter: Inviting headlines and short (1-2 sentence blurbs) link to longer articles that highlight key outputs, events, knowledge from sister initiatives, and feature interviews with (and spotlights on) coal+ regions.
- Press: Articles written for the CRiT newsletter can be shared with media partners for further uptake; amplify coal+ voices by pitching representatives as media interviewees.
- Videos: Long-form interviews to highlight voices of coal+ regions, short clips with key quotes for social media, promotional video that introduces the Initiative as a whole, recorded event sessions.

It is also important to note here what channels are available *for the public to communicate with you*. Two-way communication is crucial to a successful transition, which leaves no one behind, and which all impacted parties feel ownership over. [Other coal regions advise](#) considering the following:

- *It must be easy for the public to reach you directly.* For example:
 - You can set-up a central email address that people can contact specifically with questions and suggestions related to the just transition, which is actively monitored and advertised clearly on your website;
 - You can set-up regular office hours (e.g. once per month), when members of the Marshal's Office (or the equivalent body) commit to being available for people to drop-in and ask questions;
 - Your website can clearly define which staff work on what projects, so that it is easy for people to know to whom they can direct their questions.
- *People should be able to predict and plan when they will reach you.* In other words:
 - Meetings should be organised repeatedly and on a regular basis (e.g. every two months) so that local people are better able to arrange their schedules and attend. As they attend multiple meetings, people will begin to get to know the presenters and representatives of the region, establishing a relationship that opens the door for better two-way communication.
- *It must be clear how you will use and apply their inputs.* For example:
 - You can cultivate opportunities for decisions to be shaped directly by local inputs, and can open consultation rounds by explicitly outlining what decisions are already 'set in stone', and which are still open for discussion.

For additional guidance on strengthening relationships with stakeholders and the public, consult the aforementioned [Transformation Options Framework](#).

For your communication to be clear, it is crucial that not only are your messages consistent (see section: Key Messages), but so too is your visual identity. By using a consistent logo, font, colour scheme, and writing tone across all your communication activities, you ensure that all official outputs are easily recognisable as yours. This builds trust, and improves transparency and clarity.

In this section of the communications strategy, work with a professional designer to define your visual identity. When possible, explain your rationale – in other words, explain if you have chosen specific colours, fonts, or imagery to convey a specific message. Then, create "branding guidelines" (a professional designer can also support in this) that explains how to use the visual identity.

TABLE 5: TEMPLATE TO CREATE THE “VISUAL IDENTITY” SECTION OF A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY. THE LEFT COLUMN CONTAINS QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR THINKING; THE RIGHT COLUMN CONTAINS EXAMPLES WITH SILESIA IN MIND.

<p>Assessing the situation</p> <p><i>What logos, colours, fonts, and style are currently used to communicate transition updates? Are these consistent? If someone were to see a report or article, would they be able to quickly assess based on the visual identity that it is an official output from your team?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>ROPT, the Silesia Voivodeship, and the Regional Transition all have different logos, which use different colours and fonts. These should, of course, not all be identical. But, if they all use the same colours and fonts, then it will be easier to quickly recognise when a just transition update is coming from an official source.</p>
<p>Creating a visual identity</p> <p><i>What main colours (2-3) can be used to distinguish your work? What complementary (1-2) colours can be used when needed? What do you want to convey with your logo, and what versions do you need (e.g. horizontal, square, Polish, English, etc.)? What font do you use across your work?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>Work with a professional designer to shape your visual identity, including key colours, several logo types, and font choice. Collect all this information in a common document or folder that is accessible by all your staff and partners.</p>
<p>Branding guidelines</p> <p><i>What rules do your staff have to follow to make sure that they are sticking to your visual identity? Who is allowed to use your logo, and when should it be used? What language conventions should staff follow (e.g. regional dialects, spelling, formal or informal tone)?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>All communications outputs (reports, webpages, videos, billboards) should include your logo, use your key font, and use your main colours. Your logo should only be used on outputs from your organisation. All staff should follow a unified set of writing conventions.</p>

Example of a ‘Visual Identity’ section

The Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition’s branding guidelines explain that the Initiative uses the general European Commission font, so that it is visually clear that this is a European Commission Initiative. It has two primary colours: the European Commission blue, as well as a complementary orange. Writing uses UK English spelling, no jargon, but assumes basic level of knowledge about transition in Europe. All outputs feature the European Commission logo.

Finally, all this information can be used to create a suite of promotional material that can be brought to events, shared with partners, and made available on your website. This material should not be technical, dense, or too detailed. Rather, it can serve as an entry point for audiences that clarifies overarching messages and facts.

This material can, for example, include:

- A general PowerPoint-type presentation that presents the overall mission and vision for just transition in Silesia, key just transition messages, a transition timeline, examples of transition projects in the region, and opportunities for different groups.
- Leaflets or flyers that share the same information that is in the presentation, but in the form of a flyer. To fit this other format, information may have to be presented slightly differently (e.g., with paragraphs instead of bullet points, with fewer images, etc.)
- A video and an e-book that can be shared widely that introduces Silesia’s key just transition messages.

TABLE 6: TEMPLATE TO CREATE THE “PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS” SECTION OF A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY. THE LEFT COLUMN CONTAINS QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR THINKING; THE RIGHT COLUMN CONTAINS EXAMPLES WITH SILESIA IN MIND.

<p>Promotional material options</p> <p><i>What physical and digital formats would my target audience use? Are these varied enough that they are suitable for diverse audiences and situations?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>A PowerPoint-type presentation, flyer (available in print and digitally), and a video can all be used to present the same information, but will reach different key groups.</p>
<p>Tailoring messaging</p> <p><i>How should material be presented differently in the different promotion documents?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>A PowerPoint-type presentation should use short, bullet points, and as little text as possible. It can make use of tables or graphs, and plenty of images. A flyer is generally shorter, uses full (but simple!) sentences, and may not be as well-suited to tables and graphs. Videos do best if they include footage of actual people. For example, the key information can be shared via an interview with a regional official.</p>

4. Planning, resources, monitoring, and evaluation

Your communications strategy will only be effective if it is properly monitored, and backed by adequate financial and human resources.

The first step to monitoring the strategy is establishing quantitative key performance indicators (i.e. KPIs). These will have to be updated iteratively as your communications channels mature, and you gain a better sense of ambitious, but realistic targets.

First, go through all other sections of the communications strategy to gather a comprehensive list of what you will deliver. For now, the list can be only a list, such as:

- **Digital:** website, Facebook, videos, email newsletters, online meetings
- **In-person:** billboards, in-person workshops, attending external events
- **Other:** press articles, media campaigns

Next, gather the data you already have, spanning both data about your outputs (e.g., number of Facebook posts per month, number of newsletter emails sent per year, number of in-person workshops hosted per year, etc.), as well as engagement with your outputs (e.g., average number of website visitors per month, average number of ‘engagements’ on Facebook per month, current number of newsletter subscribers, average number of stakeholders who attend a transition workshop per year, etc.).

Now, based on the data you currently have and your aspirations to grow your audience, set quantitative goals for each item (digital, in-person, other) listed above. Where relevant, set both an output goal (e.g., number of videos you will produce in the next year) and an engagement goal (e.g., average number of views per video). These targets should be measured and assessed annually. It is often helpful to keep a spreadsheet where staff can track activity and engagement throughout the year to reduce the workload at the end of the year.

TABLE 7: TEMPLATE TO CREATE THE “KPIs” SECTION OF A COMMUNICATIONS STRATEGY. THE LEFT COLUMN CONTAINS QUESTIONS TO GUIDE YOUR THINKING; THE RIGHT COLUMN CONTAINS EXAMPLES WITH SILESIA IN MIND.

<p>Upcoming communications work</p> <p><i>If you look ahead to the next year, what will communications work will Silesia do online? What about in-person? Is there other communications work that you foresee (or hope to execute) that doesn't neatly fit into one of those categories?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>The Marshal's Office in Silesia may make use of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Digital: Facebook, website, blog, videos, email newsletters, online meetings • In-person: organising a conference, workshop, seminar; attending an external conference, workshop, seminar to present just transition topics; producing flyers, billboards; • Other: press releases, media articles, media campaigns
<p>Setting goals for upcoming work</p> <p><i>What data already exists that can kind your goals? How many people do you currently reach? Based on your staff capacity, how much can you produce of each communications output?</i></p>	<p>For example:</p> <p>Exact KPIs are hard to set without consulting existing data on reach and outputs. However, the Marshal's Office in Silesia may choose to set goals for (and measure):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facebook followers, number of posts, average engagement per month • Average website visitors per month • Number of videos produced per year, average views per video • Number of newsletters sent per year, number of subscribers, average number of 'opens' • Number of online workshops organised, total number of participants in an online workshop per year • Number of in-person workshops or trainings held per year, number of attendees per year • Number of articles printed in local media per year

Example of a 'KPIs' table

Type of activity	Communications activity	Output goal	Engagement goal(s)
Digital	Social media (Facebook)	# posts per month	# followers # engagements per month
	Website	--	average visitors per month
	Videos	# produced per year	average views per video
In-person	Workshops (organised)	# people engaged via workshops per year	total number of in-person workshop participants per year
	External events (attended)	# people reached at external events per year (at which Silesia's transition was explicitly presented)	number of people potentially reached per year at external events
	Billboards	# information billboards designed and installed per year	--
Other	Media articles	# articles in local media that pick-up just transition news shared by the Marshal's Office	--

Now that you have an outlook regarding what you will deliver in the upcoming year, it is important to map these activities in a timeline and/or Gantt chart. Map out what you will do when, such as when you plan to publish each of the videos you will create, when you will host each online event, when your re-vamped website will go live, etc.

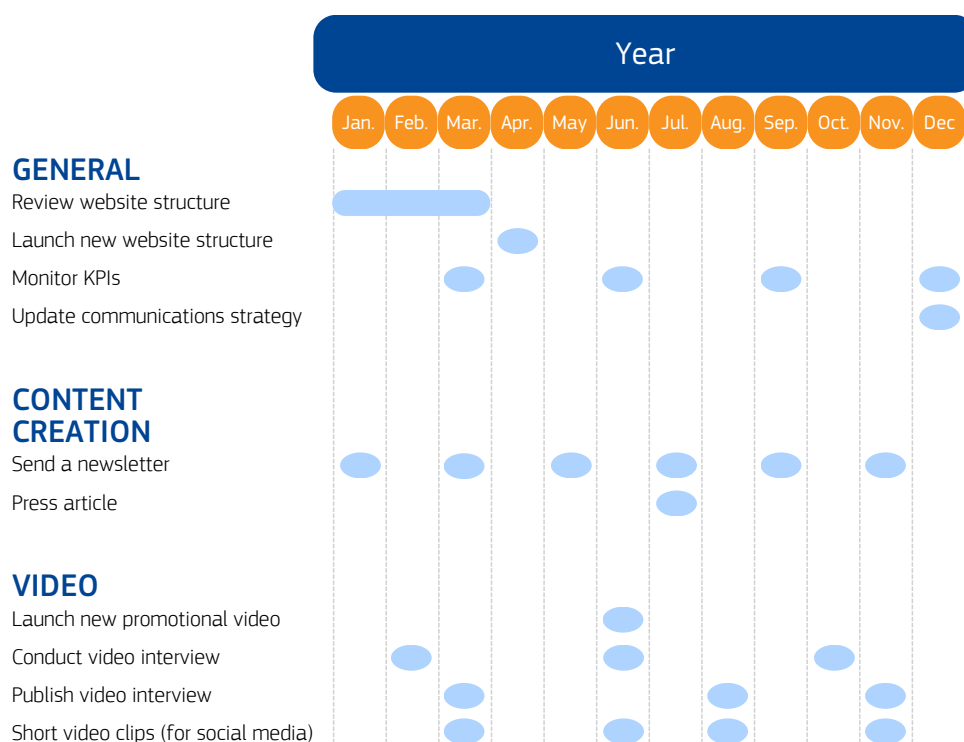


FIGURE 2: EXAMPLE GANTT CHART, LOOSELY INSPIRED BY A SIMPLIFIED VERSION OF THE GANTT CHART USED BY THE INITIATIVE FOR COAL REGIONS IN TRANSITION'S COMMUNICATIONS TEAM

Executing this work will require adequate human and financial resources. In this section of the communications strategy, map out the different communications roles, and how these roles will be shared within the Marshal's Office (and with external contributors, where applicable). In the Initiative for Coal Regions in Transition's case, for example, the communications strategy states that one expert works on developing content and narratives (messaging, writing, proofreading, strategising), while another focuses on visuals and layout (graphic design, video production, branding). The Marshal's Office will, in particular, have to clearly outline how the transition team and communications team will work together, divide roles, and generate content. This is also a section in which you can list communications points of contact in Silesian municipalities, or peer coal+ regions.

It is important to ensure that someone is assigned the role of overseeing all communications across just transition in Silesia, who can be approached with questions regarding key messages, activities, branding, etc.

Consult the Marshal's Office budget and consider whether there will be a separate dedicated budget for communications work, or whether it will be embedded as part of existing activities and budgets.

Finally, your communications strategy should close with a series of Annexes with more detailed guidance and information, as needed. Annexes could include, for example:

- *Editorial guidelines* with basic guidelines to help staff write content, such as the tone and language conventions you use across your communications
- *Editing guidelines* that explain why editing writing is so important, and how to edit your own posts, as well as peers' content
- *Social media best practices*
- *Media best practices* that go into interacting with press
- *Style Guide* that fleshes out your visual identity section in more detail

Tips for Effective Transition Communication

Once an organisation has laid out its objectives and created a comprehensive strategy to reach those, day-to-day communication and dissemination must begin. Organisations should ideally hire qualified communications professionals both to write a communications strategy, and to do the daily work of strategy implementation and monitoring. A set of overarching tips can help to guide this work.

The tips that follow come from a variety of sources. Unless otherwise specified, they are based on the START team's professional experience; in other cases, the tips come from a "[Communication Playbook](#)" published by the European Union's Climate-neutral and Smart Cities Mission and the associated NetZeroCities project.

Implementing a communications strategy requires tasks including establishing channels (e.g. website, blog, social media feeds), regularly crafting content to share on those channels, and developing promotional material. The following tips can help support success.

Newsworthiness: The most important thing to keep in mind when designing communication and dissemination campaigns and outputs is: *why would someone care about this?* Ask yourself this question before writing a piece of news, sending a social media post, designing a flyer, etc. If you put out content that is not newsworthy, your audience will stop paying attention to your update. However, by keeping your target audience in mind, it is always possible to find an interesting 'hook' that is relevant to them. For example, imagine that the Marshal's Office hosted a workshop as part of the ROPT. A news article that communicates only *'the Marshal's Office hosted a workshop, this was the list of speakers, this was the agenda'* is unlikely to be seen as newsworthy to readers. However, a news article that describes some of the most interesting take-aways from the workshop discussion, some inspiring or key quotes, and the agreed-upon next steps would be highly relevant to the Marshal's Office's target audiences.

Using narratives: As described by the Cities Mission, stories tend to be more effective at inspiring action and generating support, especially when compared to technical reports. Data and facts should still be a part of your messaging, but consider ways to convey that message in a narrative format. For example, if you are reporting on a recent event, think about presenting the arch of the event, and including inspiring quotes that were shared by speakers and participants.

Honesty: Silesian stakeholders were unanimous in affirming the need for honest communication. Being transparent and as concrete/specific as possible in messaging builds invaluable trust. A strong basis of trust makes it easier for people to celebrate wins without being sceptical of good news, and may make it easier to navigate challenges. Furthermore, if you accidentally publish something that is false, be honest about this error.

Celebrating wins and being transparent about challenges: Just transition is complex and full of challenges; but, regions are making real progress towards a just and sustainable future. It is important that transition communication highlights *both* realities. This is affirmed by the Cities Mission, who advise being honest and positive about changes.

Easy contact: One way to foster trust among organisations and their audiences is to make it easy and clear for audiences to contact you. Set-up a general email address (e.g., JustTransition[at]silesia.pl / transformacja[at]slaskie.pl) that is monitored daily, and which people can reach out to with questions. Ensure that their emails are read, and that people receive meaningful responses. Similarly, share a phone number that people can call to ask questions about transition in the region.

Considering the real people at the heart of transition: As articulated by the Cities Mission, your transition "is about people". Your work and messages will be more relatable, understandable, and memorable if they are tied to actual people, rather than abstract concepts (like the amount of money invested in transition projects). This also extends to the visuals you use – when possible, use images that depict people; this can include featuring people in photos about specific transition projects, and including staff pictures on your website.

Focusing on the local... and linking to the global: The Cities Mission points out that focusing on local challenges, solutions, and realities will resonate best with your communities. This means homing in on Silesia's goals and challenges, using local examples and imagery. While this should be the focus of day-to-day communication, overarching campaigns can also draw linkages to European and global endeavours to show: (1) that Silesia is not alone in its transition, and (2) that regional actions fit into a wider, global picture.

Diversity of channels, including in-person: Generally speaking, direct, in-person exchange is often the most impactful. It is important to consider and foster opportunities for direct discussions with locals. However, it is also worth considering that different members of the

public will have varied abilities to attend and engage in in-person discussions (like workshops, town hall meetings, public fora, etc.). As such, the same messages should always be conveyed in multiple different ways, such as in a video, on social media, in a printed flyer, and at a live workshop.

When the Just Transition Platform's Horizontal Working Group surveyed its community to ask about their experiences with transition communication, almost 70% of respondents reported that it was 'helpful' or 'very helpful' to receive information in-person!

Consistency: There are often several different organisations involved in leading just transition projects and processes, such as different levels of governments, private investors, associations, etc. Ensure that all these bodies are using consistent messaging to avoid confusion. One way to support consistency in messaging is to provide communications guidelines, key messages, and products to partners for them to use.



Best Practices

Through interviews and research, guided by word-of-mouth recommendations, the START team collected some examples of best practices in just transition communication that can inspire similar work – or be directly replicated – in Silesia and other coal+ regions.

Interviews were flexible, but roughly guided by the following main questions:

- Do you think that wider public in your region generally knows about your just transition work? If so, how do you stay in conversation with them?
 - Do you directly disseminate updates to the public, or do you rely on other multiplier or partner organisations to act as intermediaries?
 - Do you provide other organisations (like municipalities, NGOs, etc.) with tools to help them communicate just transition updates to the public?
- Do you have an example – either from your own region, or one you've heard about from elsewhere – of a successful communications action or campaign?
- How do you recommend that coal+ regions maintain two-way communication, so that they can share updates with the public, but also meaningfully engage and listen to the public's inputs?

Best practice: awareness-raising among children

Northern Hungary (HU)

The Eszterházy Károly Katolikus Egyetem (EKKE) university, which hosts the region of Northern Hungary's Coal Commission Secretariat, is known for its expertise in pedagogical education. This expertise, paired with very good relationships with local primary schools, has enabled them to develop diverse and impactful communication activities for children.

Their experience has shown that children bring the lessons they learn in school home, and can therefore act as important multipliers in communities. Furthermore, when children are aware of climate change and just transition, they are more likely to also become aware of, and interested in, pursuing jobs and skills opportunities outside of mining.

Examples:

Green Week games: The university has now hosted two annual Green Weeks, which involve a series of events to raise climate awareness among kids, with primary school children as the main target group. This is mainly done through games. For example, the university created a life-sized board game, in which the children themselves act as the board game pieces. They receive questions about climate change targeted to their age group, and move through the game by rolling huge dice and answering questions correctly. There is also a *Kahoot!* game for older children.

Drawing competition: As part of the last Green Week, the university organised a climate change-themed drawing competition, where children were invited to submit drawings related to different sub-topics, like water management and air pollution. This was a great success with a huge number of entries! Furthermore, it was paired with an additional learning opportunity. Namely, the winners won a study visit to the *Mátra Power Plant*, a lignite-fired power plant in the region. The university rented a bus, brought the winners to the plant, and used it to educate the children about how electricity generation works. They were impressed and inspired by seeing different components of the local energy story on-the-ground.

Partnerships with schools: Thanks to strong ties with local primary schools, the Coal Commission Secretariat has the opportunity to visit schools and lead special lessons on climate change, which also make use of games. For example, they have a large drawing of a house, and pictures depicting things like photovoltaics and electric cars, and use these to lead a game and discussion about how electricity works.

Best practice: seeking project proposals from community members

The Midlands (IE)

Community members in coal+ regions are the experts in local conditions, contexts, and transition. Effective communication campaigns recognise this fact, and meaningfully partner with communities to make just transition decisions. Bidirectional communication (from decision makers to communities *and* from communities to decision-makers) improves transparency, builds trust, and ensures that transition projects will be accepted and locally-relevant, thereby making it more likely that transition will be a success.

Example:

Ireland has its own national Just Transition Fund (JTF), which actually predates the European Commission's JTF. This national JTF provided support to projects across the Midlands – a historic peat harvesting region – in the wake of an accelerated phase-out of peat harvesting for energy generation.

The region decided to follow a *Midlands Engagement Process*³ to solicit project ideas from community members, which may benefit from the National JTF. The *Midlands Engagement Process* was among a suite of documents co-created with the START team. It provided case studies from across Europe and further afield to inspire impacted communities to propose projects for their region. The document was shared widely through existing regional networks, and provided inspiration to local players.

The Engagement Process resulted in the region receiving over 150 project concept notes. Of those, 101 progressed project proposals to the National JTF. Many of these received funding, and others were supported by the Midlands Regional Transition Team to further develop project concepts.

Best practice: connecting the government and community members

The Midlands (IE)

There is often too little direct exchange and opportunities for two-way communication between decision-makers planning just transitions, and those in the impacted communities. To combat this, governments can appoint (and must adequately fund) specific staff to act as direct conduits between the government, regional stakeholders, and impacted communities.

Example:

In 2019, the National Ministry of Environment, Climate and Communications in Ireland appointed a Just Transition Commissioner. The Commissioner provides a direct link between the government, regional stakeholders, and impacted communities. This has been very successful, with communities expressing appreciation that they have a direct line of contact to decision-makers. The Just Transition Commissioner also attends quarterly meetings of the Midlands Regional Transition Team. In other words, this point-of-contact is in a real position to communicate directly with community members, and then to influence processes at the decision-making level.

3. The Midlands Engagement Process was among a suite of documents co-created with the START technical assistance team. Read it in full at: https://energy.ec.europa.eu/system/files/2020-06/midlands_engagement_process_document_-_start_0.pdf.

Best practice: establishing a culture of direct democracy

Pomorskie Voivodeship (PL)

Two-way communication – i.e., receiving inputs from locals – must be done thoughtfully, so that it is clear to locals how their inputs will be used and received. This builds trust and mitigates the risk that locals will have unrealistic expectations regarding the extent to which their opinions will shape final decisions. One way to do this is to establish opportunities for “direct democracy”, in which decisions are made based on the opinion of a majority of participants, and not (only) by government representatives.

Example:

Following protest and concerns from residents, meaningful stakeholder engagement processes were launched to steer decision-making around shale gas exploration in Poland. Around 2011-2012, the Marshal's Office of the Pomorskie Voivodeship facilitated a communication and stakeholder engagement process, overseen by the Gdansk-based NGO Eco-Energy Solutions Foundation.

One of the activities carried out was the establishment of tripartite dialogues (among residents, authorities, investors) to collaboratively define the conditions under which shale gas extraction would be permissible. The dialogues resulted in social contracts being signed with project investors – these contracts included specific conditions that the investor would have to meet, in order to safeguard the needs of locals.

Additional activities included appointing an official in the district administration as the contact person for residents (see also the example above from the Midlands), and launching a public opinion survey. The survey was followed by a series of six monthly meetings. Before each meeting, residents themselves selected who they wanted to attend the meeting from a list of experts, allowing them to directly steer the conversation.

All of these steps, when viewed together, were seen as a success, bringing residents the ability to directly shape local decision-making.

Learning from past mistakes: coordination among stakeholders

Pomorskie Voivodeship (PL)

When a new nuclear power plant was planned to be constructed in the Pomeranian Voivodeship in 2009–2011, the government, the investor, and to some degree the local authority took on parallel communication campaigns, and even parallel processes for selecting a location for the plant. As a result, communication was confusing; there was a lack of clarity regarding who should lead on communication and engagement, and who should be a participant in these processes; and even locals that participated in regional dialogues on the topic were often surprised by subsequent actions taken on by the government and the investor.

Lessons learnt:

Just transition projects are often steered by a number of relevant actors. These actors must coordinate their communication and stakeholder engagement plans early and often. Furthermore, dialogues with locals must be transparent and upfront regarding next steps, and how local inputs will be taken-up to ensure that stakeholder engagement is effective, and does not foster distrust.

Best practice: continuous communication

Western Macedonia (GR) and Northern Hungary (HU)

All communications activities will only be optimally effective if they are continuous. Meetings, awareness-raising campaigns, and other outreach cannot be one-offs. Regularity builds trust and relationships, making it easier for transition communication to be two-way: with stakeholders sharing information to locals, and locals sharing feedback directly to decision-making stakeholders.

Specific recommendations based on experiences in Western Macedonia and Northern Hungary:

Regularity: Meetings should be organised repeatedly and on a regular basis (e.g. every two months) so that local people are better able to arrange their schedules and

attend. Furthermore, as they attend multiple meetings, people will begin to get to know the presenters and representatives of the region, establishing a relationship that opens the door for better two-way communication.

Easy contact: Key stakeholders, especially those leading or advising on just transition decision-making, must be easy to contact. This should include relationship-building (so that local people feel at ease to reach out). However, it also includes much simpler steps, like displaying (online and at their office reception) clear names, phone numbers, working hours, and email addresses for staff at bodies like the Marshal's Office, who locals can reach out to with questions and concerns.



GETTING IN TOUCH WITH THE EU

In person

All over the European Union there are hundreds of Europe Direct centres. You can find the address of the centre nearest you online (european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en).

On the phone or in writing

Europe Direct is a service that answers your questions about the European Union. You can contact this service:

- by freephone: 00 800 6 7 8 9 10 11 (certain operators may charge for these calls),
- at the following standard number: +32 22999696,
- via the following form: european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/write-us_en.

FINDING INFORMATION ABOUT THE EU

Online

Information about the European Union in all the official languages of the EU is available on the Europa website (european-union.europa.eu).

EU publications

You can view or order EU publications at op.europa.eu/en/publications. Multiple copies of free publications can be obtained by contacting Europe Direct or your local documentation centre (european-union.europa.eu/contact-eu/meet-us_en).

EU law and related documents

For access to legal information from the EU, including all EU law since 1951 in all the official language versions, go to EUR-Lex (eur-lex.europa.eu).

EU open data

The portal data.europa.eu provides access to open datasets from the EU institutions, bodies and agencies. These can be downloaded and reused for free, for both commercial and non-commercial purposes. The portal also provides access to a wealth of datasets from European countries.

Initiative for coal regions in transition

The Initiative for coal regions in transition is led by the European Commission.

🔗 ec.europa.eu/coal-regions-in-transition

✉ secretariat@coalregions.eu

🐦 @Energy4Europe



Publications Office
of the European Union