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How to Make Coal Transitions Fair for All

The Wuppertal Institute has developed a toolbox to support practitioners in coal regions realising a just transition

To implement the global climate targets, a timely phase-out of coal is imperative. Doing so is not only an energy challenge, it is even more a question of how to distribute the burdens and gains of this transition and how to make sure everybody concerned is involved in the process. Against this background, the Wuppertal Institute has developed the Just Transition toolbox for coal regions, a comprehensive compendium of experiences and good practices with references and links to existing handbooks, tools and guidelines. The toolbox is now available on a dedicated website in three languages.

Wuppertal, 2 May 2022: “Obviously, coal regions across the globe face very different challenges: from socio-economic conditions over political and institutional set-ups to cultural differences,” says Jenny Kurwan, Researcher in the Structural Change and Innovation Research Unit at the Wuppertal Institute and co-author of the toolbox. “However, we believe that regions can still learn a lot from each other”. Thus, the new toolbox is not meant as a blueprint but rather a source of information and inspiration. It largely builds on knowledge the Wuppertal Institute has gained in analysing and engaging with coal regions in Europe, but has been expanded by a large number of examples from countries like South Africa, India, Chile, Canada, Indonesia, and others.

Starting to manage the transition early is key

Transitioning away from coal is a complex process: regions have to diversify their economy, develop new sustainable business models and need to strike a balance between potential losers and winners of this transition. “Historical cases like the transition of the German Ruhr area have shown that these processes can take many decades. That's why an early start is absolutely crucial” emphasises Jannis Beutel, Junior Researcher in the same Research Unit and co-author of the toolbox. “Even in countries which have not committed to phasing out coal yet, regional governments should start today to develop the basis for a green economy, a future beyond coal.”

To reach a better understanding of regional challenges and discourses, the Wuppertal Institute's team engaged with practitioners across the globe in interviews and a series of online events, in which experiences on how to manage coal transitions were presented to and discussed with stakeholders, knowledge and practice partners from coal regions. "In our events we have tried to touch upon some blind spots of the current Just Transition debates," exclaims Jenny Kurwan. "For example, in the EU, informal workers are not a key issue in the coal sector – in a country like India it is decisive." Understanding the commonalities but also the distinct differences between coal regions in Europe and countries of the Global South will be key, when it comes to developing vital pathways to phase out coal globally.

Website offers toolbox in three languages

The toolbox, its most important messages as well as recordings from the online events are now published on a new project website. It gives a comprehensive overview of the topic of Just Transition and the five main themes of the toolbox: strategy, governance, energy, industry, and employment. The Just Transition toolbox can be downloaded in three languages free of charge: English, Spanish, and soon Indonesian.

The project has been financially supported by the European Union's Partnership Instrument and the German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety, and Consumer Protection (BMUV) in the context of the International Climate Initiative (IKI).

Further information:

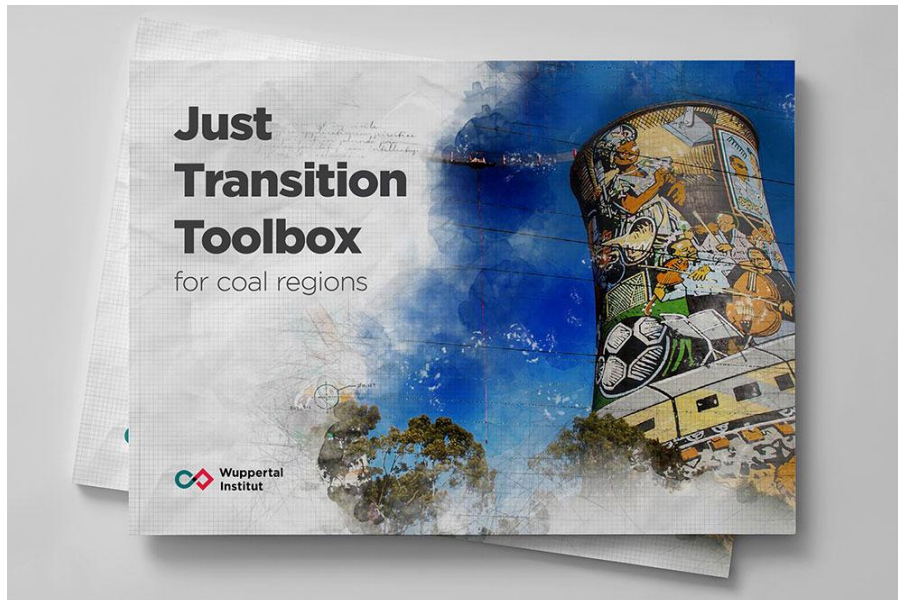
Website: Coal Transition Toolbox

<https://coaltransitions-toolbox.org/>

Project: Just Transition Toolbox

<https://wupperinst.org/p/wi/p/s/pd/1939>

Figure:



Cover of the Just Transition toolbox for coal regions.

Source: Wuppertal Institute

Press release

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The **Wuppertal Institute** is a leading international think tank for sustainability research focused on impacts and practical application. Since it was founded in 1991, the Wuppertal Institute's core mission has been to contribute towards the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. One particular focus is on showcasing and actively helping to shape transformation processes for a climate-friendly and resource-efficient world. To this end, the work of the Institute's scientists includes researching and developing practical guidelines and strategies to support business, politics and society – at a local level, in Germany, in Europe and all around the world.

With its interdisciplinary team of 250 staff, its transdisciplinary and transformative approach to research, and its involvement in a wide range of scientific networks, the Institute is in an excellent position to fulfil its mission. The non-profit Wuppertal Institute is organised into 13 research units within four divisions. Although it receives basic funding from the state government of North Rhine-Westphalia, which is also the sole shareholder in the non-profit limited company, the Institute is mainly financed by external bodies.

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