



LIFE Project Number
LIFE19 GIC/CZ/001333

Progress Report¹
Covering the project activities from 01/01/2021² to 31/03/2022

Reporting Date³
31/03/2022

LIFE PROJECT NAME or Acronym
**RegENERate: Mobilising Regions for Energetic Re-development and Transformative
NECPs**

Project acronym: RegENERate

Data Project

Project location:	Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Poland, Romania, Slovakia
Project start date:	01/01/2021
Project end date:	31/12/2023> Extension date: <dd/mm/yyyy >
Total budget:	€ 1,303,239
EU contribution:	€ 716,474
(%) of eligible costs:	54.98%

Data Beneficiary

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¹ Progress Report without any payment request (for Progress Reports with payment request, use the Mid-term Report template)

² Project start date in the case of the first Progress Report, otherwise date since the last reporting period

³ Include the reporting date as foreseen in Form C2 of Annex II of the Grant Agreement or as modified in agreement with the Agency

Section 1 - Overall assessment of the achievements and as to whether the project objectives and work plan are still viable (2 pages max)

Summary of the overall progress achieved under all groups of actions

The project started (1 January 2021) successfully and no major problems have been reported in the implementation so far. The overall progress achieved under the actions is sufficient. Due to the COVID restrictions and changes of the political process some activities were modified and slightly delayed.

Most of the delayed deliverables of Implementation actions C were completed by the end of 2021 or at the beginning of 2022. The remaining deliverables should be completed in 2022 and 2023 as foreseen. The monitoring and evaluation actions D have started as well, with some limitations due to the Covid-19 pandemic. Within Communication and dissemination actions D, the project sub-page has been launched (<https://bankwatch.org/regenerate-mobilising-regions-for-energetic-re-development-and-transformative-necps>). It is updated on a regular basis with the products and deliverables related to RegENERate. See more details about the key project achievements below. No major problems are reported in Project management actions F.

Our responses to the technical issues from the Agency letter of 15 September 2021 are attached to this report.

- **Brief description of the impact of the project on the main target audience and the environmental problem targeted**

The project successfully advanced the project objectives and delivered impact already in changing the official positions on coal and shale oil phase out in target CEE EU members and also public perception on the issue. We work on mobilisation of local stakeholders for improving the draft Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs) in **15 Just Transition Regions** (targeting 6 more regions than 9 originally planned in the project). The progress with development of ambitious decarbonisation plans is already a fact in 7 regions (3 more than 4 planned), which we expect to further advance by the end of the project. We took part in more than **60 meetings** with stakeholders in fossil fuel or less developed regions in CEE countries to raise awareness about the just transition concept. Our comments on the draft versions of the TJTPs were taken on board to promote: in Romania – Reduction on CO₂ emissions, investment in green production, circular economy and social inclusion; in Poland – Participatory and transparent approaches were taken in development of the plan and 60% of NGOs input resulted in change of the TJTP in Eastern Wielkopolska; in Bulgaria – established fruitful dialogue with consultant for developing background documents for the TJTP and stopping the coal to gas conversion planed in Recovery Plan in Mariza East region as result of a [letter](#) and advocacy to the European Commission; in Slovakia – working on promotion for proposal of 4th generation district heating; in Hungary – Regional actors should be involved in the planning and commenting calls for proposals and in the evaluation process through joint letter with number of stakeholders, in Estonia – we started discussion on alternatives for district heating after stop of shale oil use, comments on new proposal for shale oil plant, in Latvia – our comments on TJTPs were taken on board by the EC in their assessment of the peat production phase-out plan.

We contributed to acceleration of CEE countries coal phase out commitments, Romania committing to phase out by 2032 and Bulgaria starting the Decarbonisation Commission, where our partner Za Zemiata is part. On the NECPs revision process the progress will be expected in Y2 and Y3 of the project.

Additionally, we focused on building relationships with the European Commission while maintaining dialogue with national and local authorities. It is worth highlighting that in response to our second update on the status of the TJTPs, we organised a detailed discussion on the problems in the process with DG REGIO (in charge of assessments of the TJTPs) and regional actors from Bulgaria, Poland, Romania and the Czech Republic.

In the first year of the project, we published quarterly briefings on the Status of the TJTPs in CEE, each briefing was opened by around **300 viewers** on the Bankwatch website. Moreover, [Euractiv.com](https://www.euractiv.com) featured Bankwatch's Just Transition coordinator's op-ed in their special report (and it was re-published by the [European Council for Energy Efficient Economy](https://www.european-council.europa.eu/media/default/press/press-releases/2021/04/2021042101_en)). According to our media monitoring tool, **these two media publications had a reach of 712,000 people.**

- **Indirect impacts**

The impact delivered so far is line with the expectations foreseen in the proposal and could be bigger than planned by the end of the action. Development of just transition plans is example where we will deliver bigger impact in term of just transition regions covered by the project. Specific example is the adoption of the TJTPs where we were planning to work on 7 plans but as result of establishment of the Just Transition Fund (JTF) currently all coal, shale oil and peat extraction regions are preparing TJTPs and we expanded also the scope of our work. The indirect impacts are the increasing interest of youth groups in getting involved in the just transition planning. In two coal regions such collaboration was established (PL, EST). Another indirect impact of visibility for work is increased opportunity for a partnership in HORIZON project ([BOLSTER project](https://www.bolsterproject.eu)) where our experience will be used.

- **Policy implications**

At the national level, we have been quite vocal about the importance of green transition, specifically on the sustainable renewable energy sources that should be viewed with the highest priority, as well as the lack of transparency and expertise connected to decisions made behind closed doors. Bankwatch campaigners reached various national media outlets raising awareness about the benefits of the Fit for 55 package, issues with public participation in CEE countries during the planning of the cohesion spending, the special needs that fossil fuels regions have for EU funding, implementation of the 'do no significant harm' principle, and specific operational programme drafts and their consultation issues.

In September 2021, we had a successful online meeting with the Vice-President of the European Commission Frans Timmermans where we presented the status of CEE countries' Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTPs). That resulted in follow-up meetings between Romanian and Bulgarian campaigners and the DG REGIO national units. So far Romania has committed to phasing out coal by 2032 and Bulgaria has promised to cancel the coal-to-gas conversion of the one of its biggest coal power plants, Maritza East 2.

Section 2 - Identified deviations, problems and corrective actions taken in the period (max 2 pages)

On 17th of August 2021, in the premises of CEE Bankwatch Network, we had our first monitoring visit. The overall assessment was that the project started successfully with no major problems occurring in the implementation. However, a concern was raised about the lack of information about individual actions and deliverables as well as better visibility of the project and the LIFE programme in general. As our project started with delay - we received the positive news 6 months after the other LIFE 19 projects started, therefore the project coordinators of the other LIFE 19 projects already had induction on the requirements on time. As for us, we managed to complete this induction through the LIFE seminars in October and November 2021 which proved to be useful and very informative. This slight delay caused a misunderstanding in regards to monitoring visit, reporting of the KPI and general communication flow with the external monitoring officer.

Since the inception, we did have slight delays in meeting the deadlines for some of the activities, but we promised during the monitoring visit that our reporting will improve and since then it has improved.

In terms of delays, for example for one of our actions there were slight modifications in the deadline. This delay was due to external factors. For one of the deliverables we initially set the deadline for May 2021 but in fact we wanted to shift the deadline for later months in order to receive the EC's publication that was issued in October 2021 on the assessment of the NECPs so that our deliverable could be up to date as well as containing the right information when disseminating.

Another minor delay was the creation of the RegENERate subpage, this was supposed to be completed 6 months after the start of the project unfortunately we didn't meet the deadline, but in the autumn of 2021 we took corrective measures and rapidly started working on the creation and launching of the sub-page. Finally in October 2021 as promised in the project proposal we launched the sub-page and regularly we are updating the page with the key deliverables.

The re-launch of the JT info portal also had a minor delay, due to health reasons of the expert who was working on the portal. As a corrective measure we shifted the deadline for January and we made the re-launch in January 2022.

- **Problems or difficulties encountered or foreseen and their implications for future actions**

Besides minor delays in some implementation actions, no major problems occurred during the first year of implementation. Some delay was recorded in hiring new project staff in Latvia and staff changes in Bankwatch, Hungary, Poland, Estonia, more specifically in April, May and June. Swiftly, we managed to integrate the new team members smoothly into the project, by having introductory meeting, sharing the workplan and the tasks that are foreseen to be implemented with the given deadlines, and also maintaining regular meeting with the team for any updates.

COVID 19 restriction also led to change of some of the planned events such as Brussels Annual conference. It was instead converted to online event with correlated advocacy meetings.

- **Main deliverables and milestones not completed as foreseen in the Grant Agreement**

The main deliverables are on track, with minor shift in the deadline. Overall, all deliverables will be achieved in 2022 and 2023 as they are either already completed or in the preparatory process.

- **Anticipated significant deviations from the Key Project Indicators targets set initially and comment on targets already met or exceeded**

At the moment, we do not see significant deviations from the Key Project Indicators target, the targets will be met.

- **Assessing the extent to which these problems will affect interdependent actions and the timely completion of the project**

The project objectives and activities proved so far to be very much resilient to health crisis and political changes. It is worth noting that even though Bulgaria had a political stagnation due to three parliamentary elections in 2021, we still had a fruitful dialogue with the consultant developing the background documents for the decarbonisation plan. Also, we managed to organise meetings related to the development of the territorial plans with local authorities taking precautionary measure and developing COVID security protocol.

Some windows of opportunity are emerging relating to the political context in the regions. New government has recently started working in Bulgaria and some signs are already showing that there will be acceleration of the discussion about the country decarbonisation that could positively impact our work. Other governmental changes could happen in the region in the coming months, starting with Hungary, where parliamentary elections will take place in April 2022.

The war in Ukraine and the current increase in energy prices, and especially gas prices, is likely to open up a discussion about gas as a transition fuel, as this was recently proposed by the European Commission in the taxonomy proposal. The evolution of prices and the debate on taxonomy should have a strong impact on the debate and influence future government decisions in countries targeted by the project.

- **The measures taken or foreseen to overcome or alleviate the problems in question**

We expected that by the end of 2021, most regions would have a list of projects to finance through European instruments. The next step will therefore be to move from a discussion about strategies to one on concrete projects. We will advocate against any project supporting fossil fuels, be they from this JT Fund or others, but we will also support those which can have a meaningful impact in communities, so that acceptance of the energy transition improves.

Once the TJTPs are adopted, we will shift our focus towards monitoring the investments as well as to addressing issues related to district heating in these regions, as this could be a substantial obstacle to early closure of some of coal power plants. It could also stimulate investments in gas, which would further delay the start of transformation of district heating towards zero-carbon solutions.