

Transformation in the Coal Sector: Stakeholder Dialogue in Poland

3rd October 2017

Katowice, Poland

Summary

The aim of the meeting was to establish a framework needed to elaborate a just coal transition and strengthen the regional development in Silesia. The event welcomed reps from the Silesian Local Government, major labour unions, private sector, universities and research centres, as well as some other selected stakeholders. The overall discussion topic was very broad, however, a few key themes were identified:

1. Just Transition

The concept was introduced to the stakeholders. International experiences of Just Transition were then presented and discussed.

2. Coal transitions and challenges for labour market in Poland

Accurate assessments of the current situation and a good anticipation of future trends in the mining sectors and all connected sectors are key to the application of just transition in the Silesia region. Key current employment trends include **growing skillset requirements** and **layoffs of less skilled workers**. Due to the growing competences of miners, there is a strong prospect that they will be able to find alternative forms of employment. For those that are less qualified, they may find employment in other labour intensive industry, such as the automotive or construction sectors.

3. Economic development of cities in Silesia

Trans-industrialism, a new term proposed by researchers, defines a Silesia-specific development pathway for cities already constituting a conurbation (an extended urban area, typically consisting of several towns merging with the suburbs of a central city). In this instance, “trans-” can refer to “de-industrialisation” but may also mean “re-industrialisation”. Only a few Silesian cities have undergone a typical transformation from basic industries, through more advanced industries to post-industrial

time. Many are still heavily reliant on industry, either traditional or a mix of old and new industries, , while others have completely detached from their industrial roots.

Key Conclusions/Discussion Topics

- **Decrease in coal mining:** Views differed but none of the stakeholder expected a rise in coal production;
- **Reduction in mining sector employment:** Participants agreed that a reduction will take place, with, most conservative estimates predicting a decline of around 25% by 2030, with low-skilled jobs hit the hardest;
- **Competitiveness level:** The Polish mining sector was identified as an important component that could increase the risk of Polish dependence on imported coal;
- **Anticipatory actions:** Higher wages in the mining sector are often justified by shorter life expectancy and a lower quality of life, so solutions to mitigate the impact of job losses should take into account these wage levels and social status. This is important as other jobs often offer much lower salaries and subsequently, lower social status. So far most transition measures have been very reactive what led some participants to describe the transformation to date as “liquidation” of the sector;
- **Revitalisation processes:** Emphasis was placed on revitalisation processes in cities with a proposal for a single entity to coordinate these efforts;
- **Recultivation of post-mining areas:** Participants urged for creation of areas for economic activity and not only parks or playgrounds.

Other possible factors impacting the future of Polish mining were discussed, including the dynamic increase of **import and distribution of natural gas**, global **downward trend of renewable energy (RES) production costs**, and development of **energy storage systems**.

The meeting also discussed the **European just transition initiatives** including creation of Just Transition fund.

Next steps

Although no formal plans exist as of yet, participants expressed their willingness in continuing the just transition dialogue at future meetings, focusing on the selected subset of topics.

(based on the summary originally prepared by IBS, available: <http://ibs.org.pl/news/badania-i-dialog-na-temat-przyszlosci-gornictwa-na-slasku/>, in Polish)

The seminar was organized in the framework of the Coal Transitions project, led by Climate Strategies and IDDRI with IBS as a Polish partner.