

# POLITICO Pro Morning Energy and Environment, presented by Global Covenant of Mayors: Climate and PR — Spent nuclear fuel — Coal transition

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## **CLIMATE — TIME RUNNING OUT FOR A JUST COAL**

**TRANSITION:** Getting rid of coal is key in fighting climate change and meeting the goals of the Paris agreement, but the shift away from the black fuel comes with a challenging adjustment for coal workers, local mining communities and businesses that depend on coal production. Those transitions can be fair if managed properly, but the problem is that the world is running out of time to get it right, according to a [report](#) published this week by the nonprofit groups Climate Strategies and the Institute for Sustainable Development and International Relations in Paris.

— **What we've learned so far:** The report looks at how the Netherlands, the U.K., the Czech Republic, Poland, Spain and the U.S. dealt with coal transitions in the past decades. It found that coal jobs in the Czech Republic, for example, dropped from 160,000 in 1990 to about 33,000 in 2014, following the Soviet Union's collapse and the shift to a market-based economy. In the U.K., coal jobs fell from 237,000 in 1980 to 49,000 in 1990, after the government reduced its support for the industry in the 1980s, and even further to about 1,000 jobs in 2014. In the Netherlands, the restructuring in the decades before the 1990s came as a result of significant gas discoveries.

— **The risks:** If not managed properly, transitions can lead to “workers retiring completely from the workforce at abnormally young ages, with concomitant impacts on the costs of social security,” according to the report. It's also important to deal with workers' loss of professional pride, their socio-economic status and their role in a company, it added. “A just transition for workers and mining communities means acting before the economics turn

against you,” said Andrzej Błachowicz, managing director of Climate Strategies. “Early acceptance and anticipation can literally be the difference between ending up with 50 percent of former adults in former mining regions unable to find work or close to full employment in the region.”

— **Important to note:** In all the case studies, mining activity declined due to economic changes and industrial restructuring, not as a result of climate policy. These differences might also affect how wide-reaching the conclusions could be in today’s reality, the report’s authors said.