PRESS RELEASE

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Projections for the transition to 2030/2050 in nine coal-intensive regions

The EU-funded TRACER project (www.tracer-h2020.eu) supports nine coal-intensive regions to shape a broad vision and future-oriented priorities in order to facilitate transition towards sustainable energy systems. Other coal regions in transition can potentially benefit significantly from the outcomes of this international action.

In the TRACER project there are countries that have already committed to phase out coal from their energy mix either before 2030 (Greece, UK) or after this benchmark year (Germany), countries in which the phase out of coal is under consideration, but without setting strict time frames (Czech Republic, Poland), as well as countries in which no phase out has been planned officially in NECPs (Bulgaria and Romania). In Serbia and Ukraine policies are still under development. In Serbia no official phase out year for coal-fired generation is foreseen yet.

Most of renewable energy and other new energy technologies have a potential to develop in TRACER regions as a substitute for coal. Different pathways will need to be adjusted to local conditions and the transitional dynamics will be different in each country. While in Czech Republic, Serbia and Ukraine end of coal usage is not expected until 2030, the UK Government has committed to remove coal from the electricity mix by 2025 and it is consulting on bringing this forward to 2024. In addition, it will not provide new direct support for UK thermal coal mining or coal-fired power plants. In Germany energy transition is on the way, but the remaining blocks of Boxberg and Schwarze Pumpe will be shut down in 2038. In Poland the RES share in the gross final energy consumption in 2030 will reach 23%. The development of photovoltaics (especially after 2022) and offshore wind farms (the first offshore wind farm will be launched around 2025) will play a key role in meeting the target in the power industry, due to an increase in profitability of these sources and the expected increase in market flexibility, necessary for the development of renewable energy sources.

With the ambitious National Energy & Climate Plan (NECP) towards a climate-neutral economy by 2050, Greece is committed to withdraw all lignite power plants by 2023, with the exception of "Ptolemais V" plant expected to be operational by 2028. In this direction, the creation of an Innovation Hub for Hydrogen and Energy Storage in Western Macedonia (the Greek TRACER Region), for the production, transition and storage of the green hydrogen from RES, is seen as a flagship project. Large-scale solar PV is a good opportunity for the post-mining development of Maritsa-East area (Bulgaria), as it would take advantage of the existing electricity infrastructure, the available engineer's workforce, and the unusable (degraded) land. This option is also relevant for other coal regions in transition.

Many regions will continue to rely on natural gas for some years. Its use is expected to increase for power generation, district heating, and individual heating. One of the policy objectives should be to reduce the extraction and consumption of fossil fuels significantly and open new opportunities for sustainable energy resources.

More information is available in the report "Projections for the transition to 2030/2050 in nine coal-intensive regions".

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