



Just Transition Platform – Project fiche:

BOLSTER – ADDRESSING INEQUALITY IN THE JUST TRANSITION

This document is part of a series presenting information and lessons learned on policy approaches at national, regional or local level supporting a just transition to a climate-neutral economy. The Just Transition Platform (JTP) assists EU Member States and regions to unlock the support in this transition. Visit the JTP website: https://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/funding/just-transition-fund/just-transition-platform_en

Sector:

Steel, Cement, Chemicals, Energy (Coal, other fossil fuels)

Total project budget (in €):

3 792 955

Financing conditions (co-financing rate in %):

N/A

Sources of funding (in €):**EU funding:**

Horizon Europe – Work Programme 2021-2022 – Climate, Energy and Mobility (Grant Agreement ID: 1010695860)

Project duration:

36 months

Responsible managing authority / agency / company:

Tilburg University (Universiteit van Tilburg)

Summary

BOLSTER ('Bridging Organizations and marginalised communities for Local Sustainability Transitions in EuRope') is an EU-funded research project carried out by a consortium of partners from 11 different EU Member States. The overall aim of the BOLSTER project is to understand how marginalised communities are affected transition process towards climate-neutrality and to investigate whether involving them in decision-making processes enhances support for transition plans. The project seeks to deliver new scientific evidence on decarbonisation transition strategies

at the intersection of various dimensions of inequality, including gender, race, age and class. It builds on the tenet of 'leaving no one behind'. To conceptualise this principle, participatory governance models and transition guidelines based on climate justice and gender equality are developed. To achieve these goals, BOLSTER uses qualitative research methods with participatory approaches to improve the understanding of the experiences and needs of marginalised communities.

Type of activities:

The BOLSTER project undertakes research activities in 10 European regions, three of which have already undergone economic transitions ('study regions') while the other seven are at high risk of being adversely affected by the European Green Deal (EGD) due to a high concentration of carbon-intensive industries ('target regions'). The project activities are divided into four phases. First, Territorial Just Transition Plans (TJTps) are analysed and key actors are interviewed to understand how TJTps are produced. Second, a range of qualitative methods are applied to map organisations representing front-line communities and understand how these communities make sense of the climate transition. Third, participatory processes are reimagined through a capacity-building programme for local initiatives and multi-actor forums to bring together key actors and create just transition roadmaps in the seven target regions. To enable balanced participation from all social groups, special attention is paid to enhancing the capacities of organisations that represent marginalised groups. Finally, based on the findings new governance models and policy guidelines are developed.

Goals and approach:

The BOLSTER project aims to provide new insights into the impacts of the EGD on marginalised communities. The project's findings are intended to help ensure that the EGD is fair and just for all people in Europe, and to increase support for just transition plans by better accommodating the needs of marginalised groups.

Specifically, the project's explicit objectives are to:

- create knowledge on how marginalised communities are affected by EGD policies;
- improve the procedural justice aspect of TJTps;
- increase social acceptance of TJTps;
- conceptualise the principle of 'leaving no one behind';
- ensure the project's findings, products and experience are replicable and transferable.

The project intends to achieve its objectives by combining different qualitative research methods and applying a participatory approach.

Important outputs, results or achievements:

The BOLSTER project is ongoing. One year into its three-year run, most of the envisioned outputs are yet to be reached.

Outputs include the creation of Local Just Transition Alliances (LJTAs) as well as the development of local visions and roadmaps to 2050 in the seven target regions. The project is also setting up a capacity-building programme for organisations representing marginalised

communities in the target regions. The project is set to deliver a range of products, including different reports and policy briefs, toolkits for monitoring and governance of the just transition, institutional mappings and JT scorecards for the target regions as well as a range of scientific publications covering, among other things, regional case studies and conceptual discussions.

Scalability¹ and transferability²:

One of the BOLSTER project's explicitly stated objectives is to foster the replication and transferability of its findings, products and experience. The scope of the BOLSTER project extends across two groups of regions: study regions, which have already undergone economic transitions; and target regions, which are vulnerable to industrial transformation due to a high concentration of energy-intensive industries. The project aims to foster a knowledge transfer between these two sets of regions. Through analysing the study regions, valuable learnings can be derived for the target regions.

Furthermore, by focusing on a range of different regions in Europe, methods and tools can be developed that can be applied in other regions across the EU and inform the design of EGD policies at the EU level.

¹ Scalability entails that a policy approach can be adapted to a bigger scale than just the local context.

² Transferability entails that a policy approach can be applicable to a similar setting and replicated.

Tools for supporting economic diversification and reskilling/upskilling via projects:

- Supporting vulnerable workers during the period of industrial transition
- Knowledge creation to support the development, implementation and monitoring of TJTPs that leave no one behind

Key success factors and lessons learnt:

The BOLSTER project is ongoing at the time of writing so any statements on the success of the project are tentative. One success factor of the BOLSTER project will likely be its participatory approach, which actively engages marginalised communities throughout the entire process. This approach ensures that the tools and methods developed by the project are relevant and suitable to meet the specific needs of these communities. Another success factor presumably lies in the utilisation of case studies of regions that have already undergone transitions to assess the transition process impact on marginalised communities across various contexts.

Key challenges:

The BOLSTER project addresses several challenges in examining the impacts of the EGD on marginalised communities. First, involving marginalised communities can be difficult, as they may mistrust researchers or feel that their voices are not heard. The BOLSTER project attempts to overcome this obstacle through a participatory approach that involves these communities in the entire research process. Data collection is also challenging because these communities are often underrepresented in existing surveys and databases. The project tackles this issue by employing various data collection methods, including case studies, interviews, and focus groups. Additionally, there is a lack of established tools and methods for investigating the impacts of the European Green Deal on marginalised communities. The BOLSTER project addresses this challenge by developing custom tools and methods tailored to the needs of marginalised communities.

Central framework conditions³:

The success of the BOLSTER project hinges on the right framework conditions. First, it requires political support from European, national, and regional authorities to secure the project's resources and access to relevant groups and organisations and ensure that its findings inform the development and implementation of policies related to the European Green Deal. Second, financed by the European

Union (through its Horizon Europe programme) is of course key for conducting research and disseminating findings. Third, access to information and data on marginalised communities is another important requirement. Active engagement with marginalised communities throughout the project is essential to ensure the relevance and utility of the project's findings.

Outlook:

At the time of writing, the BOLSTER project is about one year into its three-year duration. Most of the abovementioned outcomes and objectives are yet to be met. Its large international research team and comprehensive research agenda put this project in a position to generate valuable insights for a just transition that leaves no one behind. The proposed products that the project sets out to deliver may help in involving marginalised groups and developing just transition plans for other regions beyond the scope and duration of the project.

³ Framework conditions encompass the institutional, informational and socio-economic factors that determine a given environment (contextual information), e.g. market conditions, access to finance, tax regulation, infrastructure and support.

Project partners & contacts:

- Tilburg University
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Spain (RMIT-EU)
- University of Economics in Katowice (EUKAT)
- Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovacao (SPI)
- CrowdHelix (CHX)
- University of National and World Economy (UNWE)
- University of Rijeka Faculty of Tourism & Hospitality Management (FTHM)
- University of Liege (ULiege)
- MKBT Make Better (MKBT)
- European Citizen Action Service (ECAS)
- CGE Erfurt (CGE)
- CEE Bankwatch Network (BWN)
- Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT)

Website / social media:

- <https://bolster-horizon.eu/>
- <https://www.linkedin.com/company/bolster-horizon-europe/>
- https://twitter.com/BOLSTER_EU

Sources:

- BOLSTER (2023), BOLSTER. Available at: <https://bolster-horizon.eu/> (date accessed: 20.11.2023)
- European Commission (2022), Horizon Europe, Bridging Organizations and marginalized communities for Local Sustainability Transitions in EUROpe. Available at: <https://cordis.europa.eu/project/id/101069586> (date accessed: 20.11.2023)
- Tilburg University (2022), BOLSTER Bridging Organizations and marginalized communities for Local Sustainability Transitions in EUROpe, Deliverable 7.1 Project Management Handbook. Available at: <https://bolster-horizon.eu/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/BOLSTER-project-handbook-1.pdf> (date accessed: 20.11.2023)