

The funds proposal is more than five times bigger than the 7.5 billion euros Just Transition Fund the EU executive proposed in January before it overhauled its budget proposals amid the pandemic.

The European Commission (EC) has increased five-fold its proposed EU fund to wean carbon-intensive regions off fossil fuels, with fresh cash from a new recovery fund to help Europe's ailing economies rebound after the new coronavirus pandemic.

Countries are already clamouring for a slice of the EU's Just Transition Fund, with 18 member states preparing to apply for support to wind down coal sectors, retrain workers and help carbon-heavy businesses pivot to greener activities.

The EC confirmed how much money will be on offer: 40 billion euros in total, made up of 30 billion euros from an EU coronavirus recovery fund and 10 billion euros from the bloc's budget for 2021-27. This is in 2018 prices, the Commission said, and would be worth roughly 44 billion euros in current prices. Its proposal needs approval from member states and EU lawmakers.

The EC did not specify how the cash will be split between countries. The previous proposal prioritized regions whose economies and jobs depend on polluting industries. Under those criteria, Poland was set to get the largest slice of the fund, with 2 billion euros, followed by Germany with 877 million euros, which now translates to around 8 billion euros in case of Poland.

Regarding EU member states in southeastern Europe, they could expect up to 10 billion euros from the Just Transition Fund: Romania - 4.4 billion euros; Bulgaria - 2.7 billion; Greece - 1.7 billion, Slovenia - 538 million and Croatia with 387 million euros.