

The virtual inaugural meeting brought together representatives from Coal Regions in Western Balkans and Ukraine – transitioning energy economies with the goal to share experiences, best practices and lessons learned on the energy transition. With launch of this coal-transition regions platform, the European Commission emphasized the importance of the valuable lessons learnt from the experiences shared among 34 EU coal regions across 14 EU Member States in the framework of the ongoing EU initiative for coal regions in transition, which was launched exactly three years ago.

The virtual event began by outlining the state of the transition in the Western Balkans and Ukraine and the key transformation tasks ahead. Other sessions served to demonstrate the breadth of international support and coordination to help coal regions transition.

Participants heard international and European perspectives along with the point of view of government representatives from the Western Balkans and Ukraine on both the challenges and the opportunities posed by the energy transition. Representatives from civil society in the region also made their voices heard and provided a number of takeaways on the best pathway to decarbonize by engaging local communities.

Deputy Director Dirk Buschle presented the Energy Community's activities focused on decarbonization and the transition challenges of the Western Balkans and Ukraine as contracting parties. He underlined that the transition will not spare contracting parties, and they are well advised to embrace it instead of opposing it. Firm political decisions should be taken now, to avoid long periods of uncertainty. For the Energy Community it is evident, maybe more evident than in other parts of Europe, that the transition will only succeed if it is a just and inclusive transition. In this respect, the EnC have plenty of experience to share, but are also eager to learn from the experience made in the European Union and across the globe.

Zsuzsana Hargitai, the EBRD's Director for the Western Balkans, said that she is pleased to see the start of the coal transition process in the Western Balkans and Ukraine and the EBRD stands ready to provide both policy dialogue, technical assistance and financing support to the governments to shift from coal to clean energy sources.

The Platform Initiative for Coal Regions in Western Balkans and Ukraine, created in September 2019, assists countries in developing and implementing inclusive strategies for transitioning to low-carbon energy systems. The Platform initiative is a joint effort by the World Bank, the Energy Community Secretariat, the College of Europe, the European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, the European Commission and the Government of Poland.