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Just Transition Guide from a Regional Development and Planning Perspective in Türkiye's Coal Regions

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1.Purpose

This guide, prepared by INGEV in cooperation with CAN Europe (Climate Action Network Europe), aims to support just transition and green transformation efforts in Türkiye in line with the country's climate targets, from a regional development and planning perspective. In this context, topics such as the mechanisms of just transition at both national and regional levels, employment transformation, the protection of vulnerable groups, and institutional coordination are addressed, and actionable recommendations are developed for policy makers. Through this approach, INGEV seeks to contribute to the planning of Türkiye's just transition and green transformation process with a sustainable and inclusive regional development perspective that prioritizes social justice.

2.Methodology

In the first stage of the study titled “Just Transition Guide from a Regional Development and Planning Perspective”, national and international literature was reviewed, and the existing body of knowledge on just transition, green transformation, and coal phase-out was analyzed. The literature review covered not only academic studies but also policy documents, civil society reports, and publications of official institutions; thus, current trends and examples of good practice related to the subject were identified.

In the second stage, a workshop held in Ankara was designed around the question “What Kind of Just Transition?”, and just transition and green transformation processes were discussed together with institutional and local stakeholders. The workshop was conducted with the participation of public institutions, civil society representatives actively working in the field of just transition and climate policies, and local actors from coal regions; priorities regarding regional development and planning and the needs of different stakeholders were jointly assessed.

Finally, the findings of the literature review and the outputs of the workshop were considered together, existing opportunities and needs were analyzed, and social policy recommendations for just transition proposed by INGEV were formulated in light of these analyses. These recommendations were structured around the 2053 net-zero vision, areas for institutional improvement, and regional development needs.

3.Context

The concept of just transition refers to the set of policies that safeguard the welfare of workers and communities during the transition to a green economy. The concept emerged from the labor movement in the 1970s, was later embraced by the environmental movement, and in 2015 was included in the preamble of the Paris Agreement, thereby becoming central to international climate policy. The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) also define just transition as the reduction of social inequalities and the promotion of decent work during the transition to low-carbon economies. The success of the process requires fair and inclusive planning that takes the local context into account and ensures the participation of all relevant stakeholders.

From this perspective, just transition aims to facilitate the transition

to a more sustainable society and to ensure that the green economy provides livelihoods, decent and proper jobs for everyone. However, the changes that will occur during this process will not affect different regions, sectors, socio-economic groups, genders, or groups with different vulnerabilities and needs in the same way or to the same extent. Therefore, being aware that the process may deepen existing inequalities, it is critically important to design a planned transition process that leaves no one behind.[1]

In Türkiye, the just transition agenda gained momentum following the ratification of the Paris Agreement in 2021 and the announcement of the 2053 Net Zero Emissions target by President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan. In this context, the Green Deal Action Plan[2] and related specialized working groups were established, and strategic studies on the social impacts of green transformation were initiated within the Ministry of Labour and Social Security, the Ministry of Environment, Urbanization and Climate Change[3], and other relevant institutions.

The 2053 net-zero target and the green transformation process will have profound impacts not only at the national and global levels but also at the regional and local levels in Türkiye.

[1]https://www.ilo.org/sites/default/files/wcmsp5/groups/public/@ed_emp/@emp_ent/documents/publication/wcms_867426.pdf
[2]https://ticaret.gov.tr/data/60f1200013b876eb28421b23/MUTABAKAT%20YEŞİL.pdf
[3]https://www.iklim.gov.tr/db/turkce/icerikler/files/iklim%20Degisikligine%20Uyum%20Stratejisi%20ve%20Eylem%20Plan.pdf

If the green transformation is labor-oriented and includes sustainable economic practices that protect the environment and ensure and enhance prosperity for all, this process has the potential to serve regional development rather than deepen socio-economic distributional inequalities.[4]

3.1. Coal-Based Electricity Generation in Türkiye and the Current Situation in Coal Regions

In Türkiye, electricity generation from coal has largely lost its capacity to create employment; the existing workforce has instead come to be characterized by a problematic structure marked by insecure and

[4] https://caneurope.org/content/uploads/2024/02/Sendikalar-ve-Adil-Gecis_Yonetici-Ozeti_v2_2.pdf

unhealthy working conditions, with high risks of occupational accidents and diseases. Although the sector has contracted over time, the increase in accident and illness rates per worker has made the social costs of coal even more visible, while also deepening gender inequalities due to the imbalanced employment rates between men and women.

The 2024 report titled “Just Transition and Regional Employment: Policy Options for Türkiye” prepared by the SHURA Energy Transition Center emphasizes that assessing the socio-economic impacts of the transition in coal regions solely at the national level may be misleading, and that macro-level analyses conducted at the national scale fall short of capturing the large-scale negative impacts that may be experienced at the regional level. For example, although employment in the coal sector accounts for less than 0.2% of total national employment, this figure exceeds 40% in the Soma district of Manisa and surpasses 30% in the districts of Mihalıççık (Eskişehir) and Kilimli (Zonguldak).[5]

Therefore, in order to understand the real impacts of the coal phase-out process and to develop fair policies, it is essential to adopt an analytical approach that places the regional scale at its core, rather than relying on assessments based on national averages.

[5] https://shura.org.tr/adil-donusum-ve-bolgesel-istihdam-turkiye-icin-politika-secenekleri/

From a climate perspective, coal is one of the fossil fuels that causes the highest greenhouse gas emissions per unit of energy, and for this reason it is one of the main drivers of global climate change. According to Ember's 2024 report,[6] one fifth of Türkiye's total emissions originate from coal-based electricity generation. However, due to its high carbon intensity, its negative impacts on the environment and public health, and the increasingly declining costs of clean and renewable energy alternatives, the gradual phase-out of coal has become a priority on the climate policy agenda both in Türkiye and internationally.

In addition, international initiatives such as the European Union's Green Deal and the Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism (CBAM) require the transformation of Türkiye's energy and manufacturing sectors. With the financial obligations of CBAM starting in 2026 and the sale of CBAM certificates beginning in 2027,[7] Türkiye's economy will face substantial costs in its trade with the EU unless it transitions to a greener economy. Furthermore, under carbon pricing mechanisms, thermal power plants are expected to pay for the costs of the carbon dioxide emissions they generate through the emissions trading system to be introduced. Once the environmental degradation, public health problems, and occupational safety risks caused by coal-fired power plants and mining operations begin to be

[6] https://ember-energy.org/tr/analizler/yerli-komur-baz-yuk-saglamaktan-uzak/
[[7] https://www.europarl.europa.eu/legislative-train/package-clean-industrial-deal/file-simplifying-and-strengthening-cbam; https://yesilhaber.net/cbam-2026-2027-kritik-gecis-donemi/

paid for by the polluters, all but two coal power plants in Türkiye are expected to operate at a loss.[8] Consequently, coal will lose its economic attractiveness in electricity generation, and the coal phase-out process will accelerate due to market dynamics.

The 2021 report titled “The First Step Toward a Carbon-Neutral Türkiye[9]: Coal Phase-Out by 2030” demonstrates that, in the long term, coal policies impose increasingly heavy economic, environmental, and health costs, and therefore that coal subsidies maintained on the grounds of energy security (such as capacity mechanisms and domestic purchase guarantees) are unsustainable. The severe and deepening negative impacts of coal mining and coal-fired power plants on human health,[10] the environment, and worker safety further underline that coal has become an energy source that must be abandoned.

On the other hand, due to the strengthening global agenda to combat climate change and the rapidly growing renewable energy sector, the pipeline of new coal power plant projects in Türkiye has almost completely dried up; according to a report published

[8] https://sefia.org/arastirmalar/komurden-cikisin-finansmani-turkiye-ornegi-2/
[9]Bu rapor, Kömürün Ötesinde Avrupa (Europe Beyond Coal), Avrupa İklim Eylem Ağı (CAN Europe), Sürdürülebilir Ekonomi ve Finans Araştırmaları Derneği (SEFiA), WWF-Türkiye (Doğal Hayatı Koruma Vakfı), Greenpeace Akdeniz, İklim Değişikliği Politika ve Araştırma Derneği ve 350.org için APLUS Enerji tarafından hazırlanmıştır.
https://caneurope.org/content/uploads/2021/11/komurden-cikis-2030-min.pdf
[10] https://sefia.org/arastirmalar/komure-dayali-istihdamdan-cikis-sorun-alanlari-ve-cozum-onerileri/

by Global Energy Monitor in 2025[11], there is only a single power plant project with two units currently in the permitting process. In Türkiye, domestic coal-fired power plants are far from providing baseload power due to low capacity utilization rates, frequent breakdowns, and low availability ratios. While production losses caused by outages reach an annual average of 22 TWh[12], domestic coal power[13] plants are becoming economically unviable due to low efficiency[14] and rising costs[15], pointing to the necessity of accelerating the transition to renewable energy.

According to the evaluation note of the Turkish National Energy Plan[16], although an increase in coal capacity is projected until 2035, the utilization rates of coal power plants are expected to decline significantly. This indicates that, despite their high installed capacity, coal power plants will not be able to generate sufficient revenue and will not make a meaningful economic contribution to the system.

According to the above-mentioned 2024 report by Ember, the share of electricity generated from imported coal in total electricity production increased from 12% in 2013 to 22% in 2023. In addition, while the capacity utilization rate of domestic coal averages 48%, this

[11] https://globalenergymonitor.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/03/Boom-Bust-Coal-2025.pdf
[12] https://ember-energy.org/tr/analizler/yerli-komur-baz-yuk-saglamaktan-uzak/
[13] https://www.sozcu.com.tr/yatagan-termik-santralinde-184-kisi-isten-cikarildi-p82872
[14] https://www.karyahabermilas.com/milas-ta-termik-santraller-durma-noktasinda-yenikoy-ve-kemerkoy-de-komur-krizi-buyuyor/39348/#google_vignette
[15] https://www.enerjigunlugu.net/yerli-komurde-maliyet-artti-destekler-azaldi-32311yy.htm
[16] https://enerji.gov.tr/Media/Dizin/EIGM/tr/Raporlar/TUEP/Türkiye_Ulusal_Enerji_Planı.pdf

figure is calculated to be 71% for imported coal[17]. However, regardless of efficiency or origin, Türkiye's electricity generation data show that coal still accounts for a significant share—approximately 35%—of total electricity production. According to data from the Ministry of Energy and Natural Resources, in 2024 electricity generation consisted of 34.7% coal, 18.9% natural gas, 21.1% hydropower, 10.4% wind, 8.7% solar, 3.1% geothermal, and 3.1% other sources[18].

For this reason, in order to manage the coal phase-out process in a balanced and planned manner without disrupting electricity markets, it is critically important to systematically bring wind- and solar-based power plants online and to safeguard energy supply security.

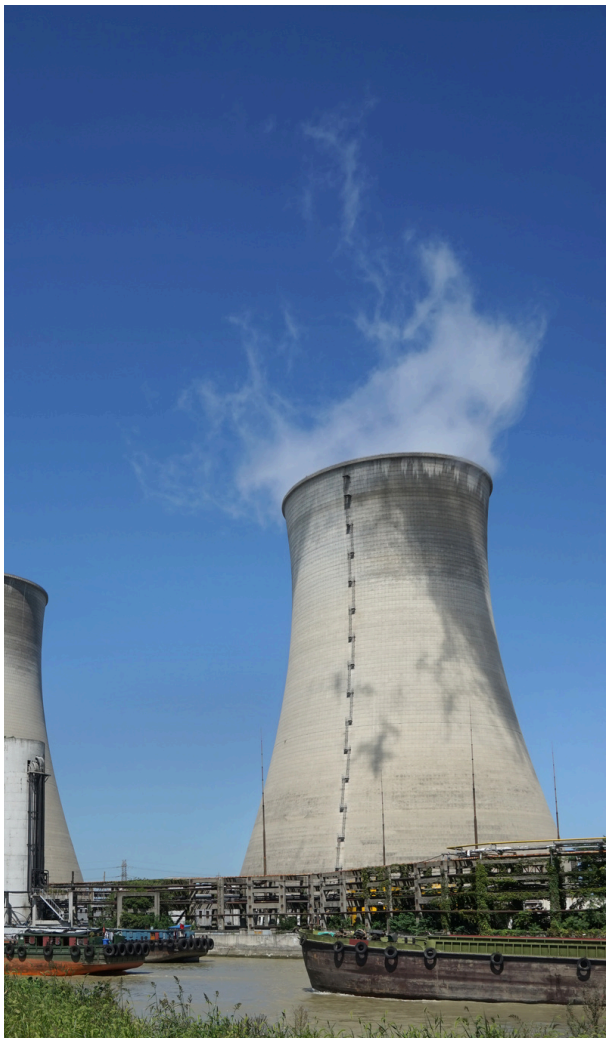
[17] https://ember-energy.org/tr/analizler/yerli-komur-baz-yuk-saglamaktan-uzak/
[18]https://enerji.gov.tr/bilgi-merkezi-enerji-elektrik

The cost reductions observed in renewable energy and energy storage technologies—which are expected to accelerate further in the future—play a critical role in the energy transition process. Today, these technologies have become cheaper than fossil fuels even without the need for any support mechanisms. These developments are driving a rapid global shift away from carbon-intensive energy sources toward renewable alternatives.

This transformation process offers significant economic opportunities for countries that act early and take the lead. With its high solar and wind potential, Türkiye is well positioned to benefit from these opportunities to the greatest possible extent. For example, according to data from TEİAŞ and the International Renewable Energy Agency (IRENA), the technical potential for solar energy is approximately 500 GW, while the current installed capacity is only around 12 GW; excluding hydropower, total installed renewable energy capacity exceeded 30 GW as of 2024[19]. According to another report by Ember[20], the potential for rooftop solar installations in Türkiye is close to ten times the country's current total installed solar capacity—exceeding 120 GW—and this potential alone could meet 45% of total electricity consumption.

[19] [18]https://enerji.gov.tr/bilgi-merkezi-enerji-elektrik; https://www.irena.org/Data
[20] https://ember-energy.org/tr/analizler/catilarda-120-gwtan-fazla-potansiyel-mevcut/f

In addition, a diversified energy strategy based on multiple sources—such as hydropower, geothermal energy, biomass, and nuclear energy—will play a fundamental role[21] in ensuring both the sustainability of the energy transition and security of supply. Replacing coal with domestic and renewable wind and solar power plant models will not only reduce dependence on energy imports and ease current account pressures, but also pave the way for an industrial policy aligned with net-zero targets.



In this context, as stated in the activity report[22] on energy and natural resources for 2024, the share of renewable sources in electricity generation reached 45.69% by the end of December of that year, and increasing this share has been set as a policy objective. In just transition and green transformation processes, when coal-fired thermal power plants are shut down and coal-mining-based

[21] https://dergipark.org.tr/en/download/article-file/4949444
[22] https://enerji.gov.tr/Media/Dizin/SGB/tr/Faaliyet_Raporlari/2024/ETKB2024_FR.pdf

production regions are downsized or gradually phased out, integrating new energy sources to replace this infrastructure becomes critically important. Planning an economic and social transformation of this scale proactively, in a forward-looking manner and through gradual phases rather than leaving it to the last moment, is essential for the success of the process. Just transition should be understood as a holistic approach that entails not only sectoral economic restructuring but also the transformation of the social fabric.

According to a 2021 report[23] by the SHURA Energy Transition Center examining the potential socio-economic impacts of the transformation of Türkiye's electricity system toward renewable energy, the increase in the share of renewables is expected to lead to a rise of up to 10% in current operating and investment costs of the electricity system by 2030. On the other hand, when factors such as improvements in the trade balance for energy and investment goods, wage increases, and reductions in negative environmental and health externalities are taken into account, the report indicates that the benefits of the transformation will far outweigh its costs.

[23] https://www.shura.org.tr/wp-content/uploads/2021/07/Turkiyede-Elektrik-Sistemi-Donusumunun-Sosyoekonomik-Etkileri-2.pdf

3.2. Coal Regions Paying the Price of an Unplanned Transition: The Cases of Ermenek and Zonguldak

The economic structure based on coal mining and coal-fired electricity generation has been gradually weakening, whether due to the increasing share of imported coal, the declining need for human labor as a result of advances in mining technologies, or the objective of transitioning to higher value-added and greener economic models. This situation has led to a reduction in employment opportunities in some coal regions, while also narrowing the income sources of local tradespeople and small-scale enterprises. For example, in the Tavşanlı district of Kütahya—one of Türkiye's major coal-producing regions—the number of people employed in the coal sector, which stood at approximately 8,000 in the early 2000s, declined to 2,491 by 2024.[24]

When the exit from the coal economy takes place without comprehensive planning, the transition moves away from being just, posing direct risks to workers in the coal sector and their families, particularly to vulnerable groups. One of the most striking examples of this has occurred in Ermenek.[25] Following the major mining disaster in 2014, the Ermenek region became a textbook case of an "unplanned exit," marked by a sharp decline in the coal economy. Due to weak trade union organization among mine workers in

[24] https://caneurope.org/tavsanlis-just-transition-a-roadmap-for-moving-beyond-coal/
[25] https://mekandaadalet.org/program/adil-gecis/

Ermenek, neither collective bargaining nor employment guarantees were secured during the closures. As there was no permanent social support mechanism or employment plan in place during the process, thousands of workers and their families were forced to migrate to surrounding regions in search of new jobs. As a result of the coal phase-out, many residents of Ermenek who were compelled to migrate—or who have not yet been able to do so—continue to struggle to make a living in Türkiye's highly inflationary economic environment.

Another example that clearly demonstrates the necessity of planned action in the coal phase-out process is Zonguldak. According to a 2020 report by the Climate Change Policy and Research Association (IDPAD)[26] on the Zonguldak coal region, the number of workers employed by the Turkish Hard Coal Enterprises (TTK) declined from 11,456 in 2010 to 7,947 in 2019. Alongside the decrease in domestic production and the increase in the use of imported coal, economic vitality in the region has also weakened. This transformation has created not only economic concerns but also uncertainties at the level of identity and sense of belonging among the local population. Interviews indicate that residents of Zonguldak are concerned that non-coal alternatives would feel alien to the city and that they will not be able to return to the prosperous days of the past. Expectations for state support are particularly high. This situation demonstrates

[26] https://www.iklimdernegi.org/wp-content/uploads/2024/03/zonguldak-raporu_48.pdf

that the transition must be planned in a manner that is sensitive to local needs and guided by the public sector.

A report[27] by Greenpeace focusing on Zonguldak likewise emphasizes that the energy transition should be addressed together with its impacts on employment, public health, and the environment. The report states that air pollution caused by coal in Zonguldak leads particularly to cardiovascular and respiratory diseases and that, for this reason, the transition should be planned not only as an economic process but also in an integrated manner with health policies. It further warns that an unplanned and abrupt exit could trigger severe social crises in regions such as Zonguldak, whose economies are dependent on a single sector.

In this context, the cases of Ermenek and Zonguldak clearly demonstrate that, in Türkiye's coal phase-out process, elements such as early planning, social dialogue, the identification of local potential, and state guarantees must be considered in a holistic manner, and, more importantly, how critical regional planning is to the success of the transition.

[27] https://www.greenpeace.org/turkey/raporlar/zonguldakta-komur-endustrisinin-sehrin-ekonomik-ve-toplumsal-yapisi-uzerindeki-etkisi/

4.Opportunities and Needs

Just transition is not limited to energy policy alone; it is a comprehensive transformation field that simultaneously encompasses employment, industrial transformation, regional economic development, and social policy dimensions[28]. In this sense, the successful implementation of just transition and green transformation in Türkiye's coal regions depends on addressing the transition process not only within the framework of national energy policies but also at the regional scale; on making effective use of existing structural opportunities; and on strategically managing the

[28] https://sefia.org/arastirmalar/turkiye-icin-adil-gecis-finansmani-mekanizmasi-onerisi/

economic, institutional, and social needs or shortcomings that may complicate the process.

4.1 Opportunities

Recent developments and opportunities that may support the green transformation process from a just transition perspective in Türkiye are briefly listed below:

- Türkiye aims to achieve net-zero emissions by 2053.
- The international climate and energy agenda is accelerating the shift away from coal toward other economic activities and supporting the transition process.
- Electricity generation from renewable energy has become cheaper.
- The costs arising from coal's negative impacts on occupational safety, public health, and the environment are steadily increasing.
- Existing thermal power plants operate with low capacity utilization and low efficiency.
- The Ministry of Energy has low-capacity projections for coal-fired power plants.

As in the rest of the world, the coal sector is shrinking in Türkiye.

In addition, at the Conference of the Parties on Climate Change (COP30) held in November 2025, the just transition agenda was placed at the center of discussions, and Türkiye was designated as the term president and host country of COP31 to be held in 2026.

This development may offer significant opportunities to accelerate and institutionalize the just transition process in coal regions in Türkiye. The preparation and implementation processes of COP31 could help bring national visibility to the social, economic, and regional impacts of the coal phase-out. At the same time, within the framework of COP31 preparations, it may become possible to establish stronger coordination among public institutions, local governments, trade unions, the private sector, and civil society; to develop concrete pilot projects; and to facilitate access to international climate finance, technical assistance, and good practice examples. In this context, COP31 could serve as a critical lever for Türkiye to concretize just transition policies that protect employment, support economic diversification, and strengthen local development in coal regions.

The opportunities arising from all these developments indicate that just transition has become an important and growing field of work for Türkiye. It is of great importance that the transition process be supported and accepted by public opinion and that the rights of all regions undergoing transformation—particularly coal regions, which have played a significant role in Türkiye's development and borne substantial social and economic costs—and of the citizens living in these regions be duly recognized and safeguarded throughout the process.

4.2 Needs

The main needs related to the just transition process are concentrated around the necessity of addressing the social dimension of the transition at the regional scale at earlier stages, the absence of a strong and coherent central policy framework to guide the process, and uncertainties regarding the financing of the entire transition. Addressing these needs in a holistic and coordinated manner throughout the process is of decisive importance for ensuring that just transition gains social acceptance and becomes a sustainable and implementable policy domain.

The Need to Plan Social Policies at Earlier Stages

Coal mining and coal-based thermal power plants create a strong binding effect in the regions where they operate in terms of employment, income, and the local economy[29]. However, due to various factors, contraction and downsizing in the coal sector have already begun. Employment data from CAN Europe's 2021 report titled "Analysis of Coal-Based Employment and the Economy in Türkiye" show that employment in coal and lignite mining has been on a downward trend over the years, declining to 35,019 by 2018. Between 2008 and 2019, the total number of compulsory insured workers decreased by approximately 26%. The share of coal and lignite extraction activities in total employment stands at 0.12%[30]. The 2024 SHURA report[31] likewise reveals that lignite mining employment accounted for 0.14% of total employment in Türkiye as of 2021 and that jobs at risk are concentrated in specific provinces.

This existing contraction trend has the potential to accelerate within the just transition process alongside the policies to be implemented as part of the coal phase-out, particularly if the process is not carried out in a fair manner for all. The process is expected to first affect direct employment in coal basins (miners, power plant workers, and subcontracted personnel), then indirect employment areas such

[29] https://globalenergymonitor.org/report/boom-and-bust-coal-2025/
[30] https://caneurope.org/content/uploads/2021/06/Komure-Dayali-Istihdam-ve-Ekonomi_CAN-Europe.pdf
[31] https://shura.org.tr/adil-donusum-ve-bolgesel-istihdam-turkiye-icin-politika-secenekleri/

as transportation, maintenance and repair, and supplier industries, and ultimately broader segments of the community through local tradespeople, SMEs, and households—especially young people and women.

In these regions, where alternative employment opportunities are relatively limited, the phase-out of coal is often associated with the risk of unemployment, income loss, and socio-economic decline, and therefore tends to encounter strong local resistance. For this reason, in order to balance the pace of the process and its social costs, it is of critical importance that the social dimension of just transition be planned at early stages through inclusive, region-specific policies that are fair to all.

The Absence of a High-Level Central Policy Framework for the Transition Process

Effectively, predictably, and fairly managing the coal phase-out and just transition process in Türkiye requires a strong central policy framework and clear governance mechanisms. However, at present, gaps between strategic direction, institutional responsibilities, and implementation instruments make it difficult for the process to progress in a holistic and coherent manner; they increase uncertainty and complicate the implementation of just transition for both public authorities and local stakeholders.

- The absence of a national roadmap with clear objectives and a legal framework to guarantee just transition in coal regions weakens institutional ownership of the process and its practical applicability.
- The lack of a time-bound national strategy specifying the pace and methods by which coal will be phased out of electricity generation deepens uncertainty.
- The absence of a comprehensive energy transition policy defining which energy sources and system solutions will replace the generation gap created by the coal phase-out increases concerns regarding security of supply.
- The continuation of energy policies and incentive mechanisms that position coal as a strategic priority creates a structural inconsistency with just transition principles and national climate targets.

Uncertainties Regarding the Financing of Just Transition and the Energy Transition

In Türkiye, a comprehensive and guiding financing architecture defining how just transition and the energy transition will be funded—namely, to what extent and within which framework public resources, international funds, and private sector financial instruments will be mobilized—has not yet been clearly established. In particular, the lack of clear policy instruments and steering mechanisms for financing the upfront costs of renewable energy investments, grid investments for transmission and distribution infrastructure, and

regional transformation programs to be implemented in coal regions limits the feasibility of the process.

The 2025 report by SEFİA titled “Proposal for a Just Transition Financing Mechanism for Türkiye”[32] identifies the main structural need in this field under two key headings. Accordingly, while international funds play an important complementary role, core financing must rely on the national budget and permanent public revenue sources in order for just transition to be implemented in a socially sustainable manner. Moreover, it is critically important that financial instruments be systematically and holistically directed not only toward technical carbon mitigation projects, but also toward workforce transformation, education and reskilling programs, income compensation mechanisms, and social policy areas that support local development.

[32] https://sefia.org/arastirmalar/turkiye-icin-adil-gecis-finansmani-mekanizmasi-onerisi/

5.Recommendations

In the context of Türkiye, policy recommendations developed through an effective, inclusive, and multi-stakeholder approach to address the green transformation within the framework of just transition principles and at the regional scale are of great importance. The recommendations listed below were formulated on the basis of literature reviews and workshop outputs and were shaped through a holistic perspective that jointly considers institutional needs and regional development dimensions. They aim to contribute to the planning, implementation, and monitoring of the just transition process in alignment with Türkiye's net-zero target.

5.1 Institutional-Level Recommendations for Just Transition

A just transition process that is planned in a holistic manner, based on local data, and ensures the participation of all relevant stakeholders—rather than an unplanned coal phase-out—offers significant opportunities for Türkiye in terms of sustainable development, regional equity, and green transformation. At the end of a planned just transition, it becomes possible to create decent jobs within an economic system that is more environmentally friendly and respectful of nature, and to establish a resilient development structure at both regional and national levels. Designing such a comprehensive development structure requires strong inter-institutional cooperation and coordination.

On 25 November 2025, a workshop titled “Just Transition and the Green Transformation Process” was held in Ankara in cooperation with the Human Development Foundation (İNGEV) and Climate Action Network Europe (CAN Europe), with the participation of public institutions, local stakeholders, national and international civil society organizations, trade unions, chambers, and commodity exchanges. One of the most intensively discussed topics during the workshop was which institutional structure should manage the just transition process and how this should be carried out. Participants emphasized that the existing fragmented national and local structures, with weak coordination, are inadequate to sustain a just transition process of this scale and duration.

The following recommendations regarding institutional needs were put forward during the workshop:

- There is a need for a strong coordination mechanism at the central level. This mechanism should provide a framework for strategic planning, budget allocation, and inter-institutional coordination.
- At the national level, a “Just Transition Commission” could be established to ensure coordination and enhance cooperation among all institutions working on just transition and energy issues. This commission would also define the duties and authorities of relevant institutions within a clear planning framework and timeline. As the body assuming leadership of the

just transition and green transformation process, the commission could manage communication and information-sharing processes with all relevant local stakeholders.

- At the regional level, governorates, municipalities, and the provincial branches of relevant public institutions may be positioned as implementing and facilitating actors in the process.
- A bridging mechanism is needed between the national and regional levels. With their capacity to accurately identify local needs and potentials and to develop multi-stakeholder planning and implementation frameworks, development agencies can play a key role in ensuring that just transition progresses in a manner that is aligned with climate targets and is sustainable not only economically but also socially.
- “Public–Stakeholder Meetings” could be organized in which public officials who are members of the Just Transition Commission come together with NGOs working on just transition, energy transition, and climate policies, as well as with trade unions, professional chambers, and local stakeholders affected by the process. These dialogue platforms, which would enable the active participation of all stakeholders in line with the just transition perspective, could make tangible contributions by increasing mutual information exchange among parties, ensuring that field-level experiences and needs are reflected in decision-making processes, developing joint strategies, and strengthening the social justice dimension of the transition.

- During the transition process, civil society organizations, professional chambers, trade unions, cooperatives, and local banks should be regarded as integral stakeholders.
- The transition process is not only a technical or economic issue but also a matter of rights and public health; therefore, the perspectives of institutions such as bar associations, health organizations, and human rights NGOs should be incorporated into the process.
- It is necessary to develop a predictable and institutionalized financing architecture or mechanism for the just transition process. To this end, a National Just Transition Fund could be established, financed in part by revenues from the Emissions Trading System (ETS), combining international resources with national and local financing.
- The financing, budgeting, and expenditures of the just transition process should be carried out in a transparent manner, be traceable by all relevant stakeholders, and be sensitive to local needs.
- It is important that the budget or fund allocated to the just transition process primarily focus on job creation and the provision of employment guarantees.
- However, resources should also be allocated within the just transition budget to education, health, environmental remediation, ecosystem restoration, and social services.

5.2 Regional-Level Recommendations for Just Transition

Just transition is fundamentally a matter of justice and regional development and requires local and concrete planning tailored to existing coal regions. When the process is addressed solely at the national and sectoral levels, socio-economic impacts at the regional scale may be overlooked; this can lead to risks of economic and social injustice and even collapse in certain regions. For this reason, the transition process should be designed with a regional development perspective and in a manner specific to local conditions.

The success of regional development plans also requires a participatory governance approach. The active involvement of municipalities, universities, trade unions, professional chambers, civil society organizations, and the local population and workers directly affected by the transition is of great importance. Since each region differs in terms of its economic, social, and cultural structure, it is essential to align general strategies with local dynamics.

In this context, Development Agencies play a critical bridging role in the just transition process by enabling accurate analysis of local economic structures, employment dynamics, and social needs; establishing multi-stakeholder planning and implementation mechanisms; and facilitating the implementation of region-specific transformation programs aligned with national climate targets.

The contributions of Development Agencies in this process may include the following:

- **Integrating the energy transition into planning processes:** Addressing energy efficiency, renewable energy generation, green industry, and circular economy investments in a holistic manner within regional plans.
- **Conducting detailed inventories and risk analyses in coal regions:** Taking into account region-specific economic, natural, and human resources, skills and competencies, market potential, transportation networks, and investment trends, and identifying priority sectors on the basis of these data.
- **Mobilizing the local entrepreneurship ecosystem:** Supporting local initiatives and small and medium-sized enterprises to develop alternative development models, new ventures, and employment opportunities within the just transition process, and strengthening public–private partnerships with local stakeholders.

The November 2025 Just Transition and Green Transformation workshop held in Ankara also placed particular emphasis on local differences among coal regions. During the workshop, a broad consensus emerged that a one-size-fits-all just transition model cannot be applied to all regions, as each coal region differs in terms of its socio-economic structure, demographic profile, skill sets, and vulnerabilities. Within this framework, additional recommendations

for a just transition process to be implemented at the regional scale include the following:

- **Establishing regional coordination and a permanent platform for social dialogue:** Multi-actor governance models can be created in coal regions such as Zonguldak, Soma, Tavşanlı, and Tufanbeyli, for example through the establishment of multi-stakeholder “Local Transition Platforms / Offices.”
- **Establishing regional employment centers:** “Just Transition Employment Centers” can be established in cooperation with Development Agencies, SMEs, and İŞKUR (the Turkish Employment Agency). These centers can carry out workforce mapping and provide counseling and social support on income compensation, employment guarantees, and early retirement rights. In addition, start-up incubators focusing on green technologies, digital skills, and climate entrepreneurship—aligned with the just transition perspective and addressing both green and digital transformation—can be established. To increase women’s participation in employment, childcare facilities, care services, and safe working environments can be provided.
- **Ensuring reskilling and workforce transformation:** Scenarios should be developed to safeguard the rights of workers employed in the coal sector. Based on worker profiling, training and guidance programs can be prepared to equip workers with vocational skills in high value-added industries and in renewable energy sectors.

- **Promoting social inclusion:** When preparing just transition and green transformation plans, the reasons for the transition, its timeline, and its expected outcomes should be communicated to local communities in a clear and transparent manner. Local opinion leaders, village heads (muhtars), teachers, and civil society actors can be regarded as key communicators and facilitators of the process. Furthermore, by including disadvantaged groups—particularly women and young people—digital and in-person participation mechanisms can be established to enable all relevant groups to actively contribute their views and participate in decision-making processes.
- **Supporting the establishment of renewable energy cooperatives:** These structures, which enable local communities to play an active role in energy production, can deliver both economic and social benefits simultaneously.
- **Developing data and monitoring mechanisms:** A “Just Transition Indicators Panel” supported by TÜİK (Turkish Statistical Institute) and TÜBİTAK can be developed to monitor the economic, environmental, and social impacts of strengthening new economic activities and implementing just transition in coal regions.

6.Conclusion

The analyses presented in this guide demonstrate that the just transition and green transformation process in Türkiye cannot be addressed merely as a technical transformation of the energy system; rather, it requires a holistic just transition approach that simultaneously encompasses employment, regional development, social policy, and governance dimensions. Given the current situation in which the coal sector has largely lost its economic, employment, and environmental sustainability, the risk is high that the costs of an unplanned and delayed transition will affect all segments of society, particularly coal regions. Therefore, in order to ensure a more successful just transition process, a comprehensive governance model is of critical importance—one that aims to create decent jobs, protect vulnerable groups, strengthen social participation, ensure institutional coordination, and implement planning at the regional scale.

With its strong renewable energy potential, dynamic local actors, and increasingly mature climate policy framework, Türkiye is well positioned to emerge from this transition process with gains in both environmental and socio-economic terms. However, turning this potential into reality depends directly on designing the transition process in a fair, inclusive, and well-planned manner, as well as on the strategic decisions taken today and the implementation capacity to be developed.

The policy recommendations developed within the scope of this guide provide a multidimensional framework ranging from energy efficiency and local employment strategies to economic diversification and institutional coordination. In this context, revisiting regional development plans covering coal regions in alignment with the just and green transformation agenda and Türkiye's 2053 net-zero target emerges as a critical necessity. The need for regional development plans aligned with the 2053 net-zero target, as well as for mechanisms that will finance the transformation while simultaneously supporting social development through Development Agencies, is obvious. Designing regional development plans and incentive schemes prepared from a just transition perspective—assures that safeguard the transition of coal workers, their families, local communities, and local investors and entrepreneurs connected to the coal sector—stands out as the core point and recommendation of this guide.