



Consortium search for the participation of the region of Asturias (Spain) as a target region to accelerate community-driven clean energy transition in coal regions

Principality of Asturias



Programme - Call	LIFE-2021-CET-COALREGIONS "Community-driven clean energy transition in coal, peat and oil-shale regions"
Type of action	Coordination & Support Action (CSA)
Deadline	Single stage - 12/01/2022
Link to info	https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/topic-details/life-2021-cet-coalregions

INTRODUCTION

The Asturias Energy Foundation (FAEN) and the SME Espacio Tormaleo S.L. are looking for a consortium to join with regards to the LIFE Clean Energy Transition (CET) call on "*Community-driven clean energy transition in coal, peat and oil-shale regions*" (LIFE-2021-CET-COALREGIONS). Asturias Energy Foundation (FAEN) is the regional energy agency of the Principado of Asturias (Spain) and technical coordinator of the Asturias Just Energy Transition Strategy. Espacio Tormaleo S.L. is an SME developing an investment project in a rural remote area in the southwest of Asturias where abandonment of coal & closing of coal facilities has produced an important demographic challenge (45% population decline between 1999 and 2019).

Asturias, a region located in north-west Spain with a population of 1 million inhabitants is one of the historical coal regions in Spain. Over 70% of the municipalities are severely or directly affected by coal mine closures and the phase out of coal power plants. The region's coal mining industry was concentrated in the southwest and central areas, where the coal power plants are also located (most under a closure and decommissioning process). Of the 5 coalfired power plants, only 2 units are in operation or available with an expected closing date by 2025 or 2030. In 2017, over 3.000 people were employed on coal mining, power plants and other coal-related activities. Since 1994, over 30.000 employments related to the coal industry have disappeared in Spain. In 2011, 2 million tons of coal were extracted from Asturias' mines.

CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

In order to embrace the clean energy and just transition, and to avoid a switching from net exporter to net importer, Asturias is positioning itself in the renewable energy sector.

In line with European and national strategies for climate change, the region of Asturias has been working at several levels to promote and boost a clean energy transition. The Asturias Energy Foundation (FAEN), in collaboration with the regional government (General Directorate for Energy, Mining and Repurposing) and the main regional stakeholders, have recently released the “**Estrategia de Transición Energética Justa de Asturias**” (Asturias Just Energy Transition Strategy)¹, a document that will establish the guidelines and recommendations for the transition of the regional energy sector over the next decade, in addition to a long-term vision for 2050 towards climate neutrality.

The regional strategy has received technical support from the European Commission through the **START (Secretariat Technical Assistance for Regions in Transition)**² programme of the European Platform for Coal Regions in Transition. Asturias was the first European region to be selected for this programme to develop its transition strategy and governance arrangements, identification of relevant priority projects and the design and development of the identified priority projects, including appropriate financing strategies.

ROLE OF CONSUMERS AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES IN THE NEW ENERGY MODEL

The new energy model (decarbonized, decentralized, digitalized and sustainable) defined in the Asturias Energy Transition Strategy is based on several principles, one of them being positioning the consumer in the center of the new energy model. Of the several objectives within the regional strategy, we can highlight the following regarding consumers and local communities:

“A just energy transition centered around the citizens, that generates employment, reduces inequalities and support those most affected for the transition process” (O4)

For this objective, there are several strategic lines as part of the action plan.

LA12. Boost citizen participation in the energy model

M4.12.1. Promote pilot actions to boost local renewable energy generation, collective self-consumption and share surplus with vulnerable households

M4.12.2. Promote pilot actions of participatory citizen projects. Boost the participation of local administrations.

¹ <http://www.faen.es/wp-content/uploads/2021/05/Estrategia-de-Transicion-energetica-justa-de-Asturias.pdf>

² https://ec.europa.eu/energy/topics/oil-gas-and-coal/eu-coal-regions/secretariat-technical-assistance-regions-transition-start_en

CONTRIBUTION TO THE LIFE-2021-CET-COALREGIONS call

FAEN and Espacio Tormaleo S.L. would like to present the case of Asturias as a target region for this call. We can contribute to the following objectives and expected outcomes regarding the LIFE-CET-2021-COALREGIONS call:

- a) Contribute to the **capacity building & empowerment** of local communities regarding the clean energy transition, with a focus on rural areas.
- b) Involve key stakeholders and local communities **raising awareness** on the possibilities and benefits of the different bottom-up activities.
- c) Complete **mapping & scoping studies** on possible pilot actions* to mobilize investments in sustainable energy projects aligned with our regional strategy, maximizing the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM) and national recovery plans.
- d) Dissemination of **good practices** and **knowledge exchange** with other EU coal regions on different levels of implementation for their just energy transition process.

**As an example of a pilot case for supporting local communities in the energy transition process, Espacio Tormaleo is currently providing support to the local community of Fondosdevilla (Tormaleo, Ibias municipality) to assess the viability and scope of using brownfields and wastelands from open-pit coal mining activities to carry on a renewable energy project either as a solar power farm or as a local energy community.*

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Asturias Energy Foundation (FAEN) general aim is to promote and develop activities related to research, technical development and training with interest for the energetic industry of Asturias, extending those acts to electricity, gas, renewable energies, oil and other energy sectors, energetic and financial markets, and also with other connected sectors, as deliverers and/or consumers. It also aims to support the Principado of Asturias in the elaboration of an Energy Planning for the Community, promoting energy savings and diversification.

Espacio Tormaleo S.L. is a singular recovery project for the southwest of Asturias, by developing a unique infrastructure combining leisure, tourism, culture and entrepreneurship to transform Tormaleo and the surrounding area in a hub for rural economic development, promoting a viable future to a highly degraded territory due to mining activities in the last decades. In addition, the company is working in parallel with the local community and municipality on a number of initiatives in areas like social innovation, renewable energy, education & training, entrepreneurship or cultural heritage.