

# BOLSTER

The European Green Deal (EGD) aims to transform the EU into a fair and prosperous society, with climate neutrality in 2050. However, there is a mismatch between the understanding of marginalized communities, participatory governance and policy plans to achieve a just transition. This can lead to social and political opposition.

The BOLSTER project, led by Tilburg University, aims to understand how marginalized communities are affected by EGD-related policies and whether involving them in decision-making processes increases the support for transition plans. The EU research fund Horizon Europe has awarded 3,8 million euros to the project.

According to the European Green Deal European societies should undergo a transition towards a carbon-neutral society. It seeks to design deeply transformative transition strategies, under the principle of leaving no one behind. The EU introduced the Just Transition Mechanism to show solidarity with the most polluted and affected regions in Europe. Regions across Europe are now designing and implementing just transition plans in order to receive funding and support from the Just Transition Mechanism.

However, there are three major knowledge gaps and societal barriers concerning the social acceptance of transition strategies. First, the link between transition strategies and the impact on marginalized communities remains poorly understood. Transition policies have the risk of predominantly benefitting already privileged citizens. Less visible and more vulnerable groups have less opportunity to reap the benefits of the transition.

Second, research has shown that citizens want more influence on how the transition will take place. However, meaningful ways of deliberation are rare and have a tendency to reproduce social inequalities.

Third, more research is needed on the causes and consequences of growing polarization vis-à-vis transition strategies. Low social acceptance of transition policies has been a significant barrier to the implementation of those policies and can lead to political polarization.

## **Comprehending marginalized communities**

In order to understand how marginalized communities are affected by EGD-related policies and whether involving them in decision-making processes increases the support for transition plans, the researchers within BOLSTER will employ novel qualitative research methods, such as the *go-along* method and *mind mapping*. The research design is focused on seeing the transition through the eyes of marginalized communities and understanding how people attribute meaning to events and their environment.

By understanding the lifeworld of marginalized people in relation to environmental issues and decarbonization policies, BOLSTER aims to improve how policymakers comprehend the needs of marginalized communities.

**BOLSTER** (*Bridging Organizations and marginalized communities for Local Sustainability Transitions in EuRope*) includes 12 key research partners and another 23 associated partners from across the EU including knowledge institutions, governmental institutions, NGO's and members of the business

community. In Croatia, apart from FTHM, Regional coordinator of the Istrian Region for European programs and funds is involved as associated partner. The project will run from 2022-2025.

Horizon Europe is the EU's key funding programme for research and innovation. It tackles climate change, helps to achieve the UN's Sustainable Development Goals and boosts the EU's competitiveness and growth.

Project start date: 01/09/2022

Project duration: 36 months

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Project partners: Tilburg University (**TiU**) University NL (lead partner), Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology Spain (**RMIT-EU**) University ES, University of Economics in Katowice (**EUKAT**) University PL, Sociedade Portuguesa de Inovação (**SPI**) SME PT, CrowdHelix (**CHX**) SME IE, University of National and World Economy (**UNWE**) University BU, University of Rijeka, Faculty of Tourism & Hospitality Management (**FTHM**) HR, University of Liege (**ULiege**) University BE, MKBT Make Better (**MKBT**) NGO RO, European Citizen Action Service (**ECAS**) NGO BE, CGE Erfurt (**CGE**) NGO DE and CEE Bankwatch Network (**BWN**) NGO CZ.

Total eligible budget: 3.873.955,00 EUR