



PRESS RELEASE

From Silesia to Puglia

A Shared Vision for a Just Transition



Annual Meeting, May 2025 – Rybnik (PL)

Rybnik, June 30, 2025. During the 3rd Annual Meeting of the MISTRAL Project, held in Krakow and Rybnik, a meaningful connection was forged between two geographically distant cities following a common European path: Rybnik (Poland) and Taranto (Italy). As beneficiaries of the Just Transition Fund (JTF), both cities face historical environmental and health challenges. Today, they are united by a shared commitment to building a more sustainable and inclusive future.

Over the course of several days of fruitful exchanges, delegates from Italy and Poland—together with institutional representatives and researchers—held discussions emphasizing the strategic role of education and culture in enabling a fair and forward-looking transformation. Investing in green skills was particularly highlighted as a key to empowering workers and local communities toward a decarbonized economy.

The stories of Rybnik and Taranto are not just examples of targeted funding, but rather opportunities to build European bridges, share best practices, and create genuine synergies between regions transforming adversity into innovation.

Rodolfo Sardone, Scientific Coordinator of MISTRAL and Head of the Research and Innovation Unit at the Local Health Authority of Taranto, stated:

"The partnership between Rybnik and Taranto demonstrates that science, health, and environmental justice can travel together across borders. By sharing our experiences and aligning our strategies, we can ensure that the Just Transition is not only about phasing out coal or heavy industry, but also about investing in people, skills, and local innovation. This reflects the core mission of Horizon Europe: empowering cities through research, innovation, and cross-border cooperation."

Adrian Strzelczyk, Head of Air Protection at the City of Rybnik, presented insights on the long-standing

transformation of the Silesian region:

"The economic transformation of Silesia has been underway for over three decades. Rybnik and its surrounding municipalities, once major centers of coal mining dating back to the 18th century, are now adapting to new realities. This process brings numerous challenges. One of the most vital tools for navigating this path has been the Just Transition Fund—an EU cohesion policy instrument designed to support areas facing serious socio-economic difficulties during the shift to a greener economy."

"The transformation process is long-term and complex. Its success depends on stability, collaboration, and sustained support, including financial mechanisms like the JTF. Without such support in the post-2027 financial framework, mining regions like ours would face significant setbacks. Ensuring continued inclusion of coal regions in future cohesion policies is not only beneficial but essential."

Rybnik has emerged as a standout example of how coordinated, ambitious efforts can yield transformative outcomes:

"Until recently, Rybnik was one of the most polluted cities in Poland. Today, thanks to decisive actions by the local authorities and strong community engagement, Rybnik leads in combating air pollution. The city has implemented extensive programmes to replace outdated heating systems, modernized its public transport fleet with zero-emission vehicles (being the first in the region and second in Poland to purchase hydrogen buses), and launched revitalization projects that breathe new life into post-industrial spaces."

"A state-of-the-art gas-steam power plant is also under construction in Rybnik—the largest of its kind in Poland and among the largest in Europe. This facility will replace the remaining coal-fired units and secure energy supply for up to 2 million households."

"Rybnik proves that a just transition is achievable, even in coal-dependent areas. Its shift from a mining hub to a leader in hydrogen transport is unprecedented. This transformation sets a national benchmark for clean, low-carbon urban development."

Finally, both cities underscore the **importance of actively involving local actors in shaping future policies:**

"The experience accumulated in mining regions that have directly benefited from the JTF is extremely valuable in the process of designing the next EU financial perspective. Including regional representatives in discussions about post-2027 cohesion policy would provide crucial insights and ensure that their realities and proposals are reflected in the future shape of the Just Transition Fund."

Rybnik and Taranto stand together as cities committed to environmental justice, social equity, and innovation. Their partnership is a testament to the power of European solidarity in advancing the green transition.

For more information, visit: www.project-mistral.eu



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