

**Report of the workshop and field visit on just transition in mining communities  
and the potential for geothermal energy development  
20-21 June 2023, Tirana, Albania and online**

The [Workshop on Just Transition in Mining Communities and Potential for Development of Geothermal Energy](#) was organized by UNECE and held in Tirana, Albania, and online on 20 June 2023. The workshop was held in a hybrid format at the premises of the National Agency of Natural Resources of Albania (AKBN) and with the possibility to connect online. The workshop was attended by experts and Government officials from Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kazakhstan, Serbia, and Ukraine (UNECE member States and RPTC programme countries), Canada, Ireland, Poland, the Russian Federation, Spain, and the United States (UNECE member States), Australia, El Salvador, India, and Costa Rica (UN Member States) (total 50 participants, of which 12 women).

The workshop was conducted to present two recently developed RPTC studies: one aiming to identify principle-based guidelines for designing and implementing a programme for an efficient, safe, and environmentally conscious mine closure in Albania and Serbia, which was conducted at the request of AKBN and the Ministry of Mining and Energy of Serbia, and the other assessing geothermal potential of Albania, requested by AKBN. Apart from presenting the final documents, drawing from their findings, conclusions, and recommendations, the event aimed to explore ways to transform post-coal mining areas into thriving and sustainable hubs of green development.

Mr. Adrian Bylyku, Director of AKBN, opened the workshop and emphasized the importance of embracing green and transitioning by the principles of carbon neutrality. Experts, including UNECE consultants involved in developing the studies, as well as the representative of the UN Regional Coordinator in Albania, highlighted the need to align the pace and scope of the transformation process with each member State's unique capabilities and needs, considering their natural resources, technological foundations, cultural heritage, and legal frameworks.

The first part of the workshop focused on mine closure and the transformation of post-mining areas. The recently developed [Technical, principle-based guidelines for designing and implementing a programme for efficient, safe and environmentally conscious mine closure in Albania and Serbia](#) formed the basis for the discussions. These guidelines provide a principles-based approach to designing and implementing efficient, safe, and environmentally conscious mine closures. The goal is to reclaim and repurpose the land, ensuring its suitability for sustainable development unrelated to coal mining.

The [Report on Assessment of the geothermal resources of Albania](#) was presented and discussed in the second part of the workshop. The discussions shed light on the cost-effectiveness and potential benefits of utilizing geothermal energy in Albania. The study emphasized the need to adhere to the [United Nations Framework Classification for Resources \(UNFC\)](#) and the [United Nations Resource Management System \(UNRMS\)](#). By establishing suitable geological models and conducting comprehensive assessments, Albania could tap into its geothermal potential, diversify energy sources, improve living standards, and address environmental concerns.

Experts, decision-makers, and international participants shared their insights, experiences, and aspirations throughout the event. Presentations from representatives of Albania and Ukraine provided valuable perspectives on the challenges and opportunities surrounding post-coal mining areas. An expert representing the [Central American Integration System \(SICA\)](#) provided inputs on the application of UNFC for geothermal energy, with specific case studies from El Salvador and Costa Rica.

Open discussion, aiming to identify actionable steps towards a green and just transition in Albania's post-coal mining areas, provided rich views on understanding the country's existing needs, capacities, and challenges while also addressing the barriers hindering effective action from central and local authorities and uncovering these obstacles and exploring opportunities provided Albania with the impetus needed for a successful and transformative change.

Placing the discussions held at the workshop into a real-life perspective, on 21 June 2023, UNECE staff members Mr. Oleg Dzioubinski, Mr. Harikrishnan Tulsidas, and Mr. Michal Drabik, together with Albanian and international experts, participated in a field visit that aimed to explore the situation in Albania's post-coal mining regions and geothermal fields to identify what good practices could be implemented and scaled up to commercial operations to facilitate the transformation process of the targeted localities. The mission participants engaged in in-depth discussions and assessments to capture insights and ideas that could be valuable in the long run. The workshop and the field visit prepared the grounds for implementing the recently approved RPTC project *Mapping Albania's readiness for green and just transition in post-coal mining areas*.

Workshop materials are available on the UNECE [webpage](#).

Press release: [UNECE helps Albania repurpose abandoned coal mines and assess geothermal potential](#)