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for a Just Transition

SERBIA



"Breathing Innovation: Unleashing the Power of Change on Serbia's Playground Wall"

Immerse yourself in the vibrant mural in the Josif Pančić elementary school in Belgrade, where a captivating tale of transformation unfolds. This piece vividly captures the shift from polluting fossil fuels to dependable, secure, and renewable energy sources. Brace yourself as the comic "Energy Superheroes" springs to life, transporting you into an augmented reality adventure through a mobile phone app. In Serbia, a country grappling with the detrimental impacts of air pollution, the urgent need for concrete targets and actionable plans to shift away from coal towards renewable energy sources becomes clear.

In October 2022, a captivating mural was unveiled at a school playground in Serbia, marking the launch of an innovative initiative. The artwork, painted by local artists and pupils at Josif Pančić elementary school in Belgrade, to promote discussions among students, teachers and parents about an energy transition from dirty fossil fuels to renewable energies and depicts this transition through the “Energy Superheroes” characters Coaly, Sunny and Windy, that come to life thanks to augmented reality mobile phone app developed for this purpose.

But how did this artistic adventure start in the first place? To understand the importance of the mural and what it represents, we need to go back to its roots and trace its origins to a project that commenced in Lazarevac, Serbia. In this town, CAN Europe completed a comprehensive study focusing on the coal impacted community residing there.

The study aimed to capture a bottom-up perspective, affectionately termed "a view from below," delving into the problems, needs, and desires of Lazarevac's residents concerning crucial energy and just transition issues. This initial step paved the way for the subsequent mural project, as it provided insights on the perceptions of a heavily impacted coal community and deepened understanding of the community's aspirations and struggles. It was then, beyond the boundaries of the study, that the project persisted and amplified its impact, casting a spotlight on the imperative issue of transitioning from polluting fossil fuels to renewable energies.

By amplifying its scope, the objective of the study became not only raising awareness among the present generation but also among those who hold the key to our collective future: the youth. Hence, the project forged ahead, extending its reach to an elementary school in Belgrade, where it took the form of a vibrant mural.



By capturing the hearts and minds of youth and awaking their curiosity through the power of art to understand the urgent need for sustainable energy practices in Serbia and beyond, the young school pupils and the artist painted a surface covering 73 square metres of the school wall, that absorbs the same amount of smog (nitrogen oxide) as 73 trees!

While painting the mural, the children and teachers talked about causes of air pollution, decarbonisation and transition to renewable energy sources.

The story in the mural, based on the “Energy Superheroes” comic book, shows Sunny charging a phone with solar panels, Windy supplying light to a building, and Coaly turning into a diamond when he stays in the ground. In a simple and fun way, the mural conveys that the transition to renewable energies must be fair, supporting the most vulnerable people, and involving the local community, especially from towns that depend on coal mining, such as Lazarevac, Smederevo and Obrenovac in Serbia.



Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe together with artists and partners developed the art piece as a way to propose an engaging and simple way to introduce citizens with the opportunities that a just energy transition to renewables can offer, which is symbolised by the bridge over the river depicted on the mural. Years marked on the bridge represent the stages of the energy transition process towards a cleaner and safer future. As a further way to promote the beautiful artistic work, the mural was also featured in a short documentary published by Marka Žvaka (Brand Bubblegum) series team.

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