Co-funded by the
European Union

FIRST EUROPEAN LEVEL WORKSHOP

9 – 10 OCTOBER 2024, KRAKOW (PL)

Minutes

Marta Trawińska, ISP

Barbara Surdykowska, ISP

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

The 1st European Workshop on 9 and 10 October in Krakow started with a reflection on the EU's key climate goals. In 2021, the EU adopted its first EU climate law. It set out Europe's goals to become climate neutral by 2050 and to reduce emissions to 55% below 1990 levels by 2030. As required by the Climate Change Act, in February 2024 the Commission also recommended an additional interim target of 90% less emissions by 2040, confirming our direction of travel).

During the training, participants gained knowledge of the concept of **twin transition** and the concept of **Just Transition.**

Just Transition- According to the International Labour Organisation (ILO), a 'just transition' means 'transforming the economy in a way that is as fair and inclusive as possible for all concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind'. In the context of climate change mitigation, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) defines just transition as: "A set of principles, processes and practices aimed at ensuring that no people, workers, places, sectors, countries or regions are left behind in the transition from a high-carbon to a low-carbon economy".

The EU's main financial instruments for achieving the Just Transition objective are also presented:

- The Just Transition Fund (JTF) is the first pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism (JTM).
- The dedicated InvestEU scheme is the second pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism.
- The Public Sector Loan Facility is the third pillar of the Just Transition Mechanism.

A number of other EU funding instruments are available to possibly support programmes and projects focused on just transition:

Horizon Europe

Funding for climate action

LIFE Programme

Innovation Fund

Modernisation Fund

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

Connecting Europe Facility

NextGenerationEU (more than a recovery plan - it is a once in a lifetime chance to emerge stronger from the pandemic, transform our economies and societies, and design a Europe that works for everyone. 40% of NextGenerationEU funds goes to climate action)

EU Civil Protection Mechanism

- The Just Transition Platform (JTP) provides a single access point to support and knowledge on Europe's transition to a sustainable, climate-neutral economy.
- START provides tailored, short-term support to coal+ regions across a wide array of transition topics. It assists efforts to decarbonise energy production and usage, diversify economic activities, and progress social development in regions and communities that are heavily affected by the transition away from fossil fuels.
- The Green Deal Industrial Plan enhances the competitiveness of Europe's net-zero industry and is accelerating the transition to climate neutrality. It does so by creating a more supportive environment for scaling up the EU's manufacturing capacity for the net-zero technologies and products required to meet Europe's ambitious climate targets.
- The Net-Zero Industry Act will boost the manufacturing of net-zero technologies in the EU and strengthen their resilience and competitiveness
- The Critical Raw Materials Act will help ensure the EU's access to a secure, diversified, affordable and sustainable supply and to increase domestic capacities for critical raw materials.

During the workshop, it became evident that **participants hold varied perspectives on the European Green Deal (EGD).** They view it not only through the lens of their respective industries and as stakeholders in social dialogue but also as citizens concerned about the potential impact of the EGD on their regions and countries. Participants expressed their thoughts on how the EGD could affect society, the economy, and future development. The discussions revealed a range of opinions, from viewing the EGD as a necessary step toward sustainability to perceiving it as a "mission impossible"—an ambitious initiative that feels overwhelming.

Many participants questioned whether society was really ready for such a change and reflected on the feasibility and impact of the EGD on everyday life. Concerns were raised about the rising cost of living, increasing energy prices, higher taxes and the potential for widespread

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

unemployment in some regions. The cost of electricity for households and the need to use environmentally friendly sources to heat homes and apartments (the latter theme was particularly prominent in Polish speeches) aroused strong emotions.

In addition, participants highlighted significant gaps in the regulatory framework and the lack of clarity on implementation plans. There was consensus on the need for thorough cost-benefit analyses to understand the full implications of the transition. Overall, the conversations revealed a complex landscape of attitudes towards the EGD, where scepticism coexists with a sense of urgency for change.

Serious concerns were also expressed about the competitiveness of the EU economy. It was pointed out that other countries (USA, China, India) were not making comparable efforts on environmental and climate issues. The question was raised as to why the EU should take the lead.

Participants identified many challenges related to their industries in the context of the European Green Deal (EGD). When discussing key sector-specific challenges, several issues and difficulties emerged.

A key issue was energy independence - participants questioned whether Europe has the capacity to remain energy independent and whether this is currently feasible. They expressed concern about the extent to which Europe will be dependent on imports of raw materials or energy. The idea of a common European energy market was also introduced by one participant, leading to further discussion on its implications.

In each industry, the issue of outdated infrastructure and the costs associated with necessary changes in infrastructure and new technologies was a recurring theme. Many participants noted that the financial burden of these changes could be insurmountable for certain regions or companies, especially small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Additionally, there were concerns that excessive bureaucracy has hindered progress toward the necessary transitions. Many concerns were expressed about the technical feasibility of achieving the energy transition within the timeframe envisaged by the Green Deal.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.

At the same time, there was a strong conviction of the need to undertake broader educational activities, on the one hand to make citizens aware of the need to act and, on the other, simply to indicate what action (and in what time frame) will be taken by the Member States.

Discussions also focused on how the EGD will impact the workforce. Participants voiced apprehensions about potential unemployment, while simultaneously recognizing the necessity of implementing reasonable lifelong learning programs to support the development of in-demand skills. The conversations extended to geopolitical considerations, including the impacts of war and migration on these transitions.

The perspective of candidate countries for EU membership was also highlighted. These nations often face challenges such as limited knowledge and resources, along with the need to adapt their legal frameworks. Questions were raised about how they could be included in the EU decision-making process.

Discussions on the extent to which issues related to the twin transition appear in collective agreements revealed that this is to a limited extent. There are references in collective agreements to remote working or the right to disconnect, but no examples of sustainable transport issues (in terms of how workers get to work) or specific training activities related to digitalisation or greening. Some participants expressed the view that social partners should actively promote pro-environmental attitudes among their members. In particular, participants from Bulgaria shared insights into a study they are conducting among their members on the European Green Deal (EGD). This initiative reflects a proactive approach to engaging members in discussions on sustainability and environmental responsibility.

However, it was noted that such practices appear to be isolated among social partners. While the importance of promoting environmental awareness is recognized, many partners have not yet taken similar initiatives. This disparity suggests a need for greater cooperation and knowledge-sharing between social partners in order to promote a more unified effort to shape environmental attitudes within their respective communities.

Funded by the European Union. Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only, and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union or European Commission. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them.