

Stakeholder Roundtable on EU social-ecological model

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Hybrid - Brussels, Belgium

Sustainable Welfare &
Eco-Social Policy Network



Representatives of European Institutions, academia, think tanks, social partners, and civil society organizations were invited to this Stakeholder Roundtable to discuss the challenges and opportunities to build an EU socio-ecological model for a just transition. The roundtable aimed at promoting dialogue, hence sharing insights and experiences, as well as at strengthening the strategic cooperation between academic and institutional-societal actors.

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

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BACKGROUND: Following the publication of the European Green Deal, an EU framework for a just transition has been gradually emerging, representing an important step forward towards a more integrated and effective approach to the socio-ecological transition. Nevertheless, these efforts are unlikely to be sufficient, given the magnitude of the challenges ahead, which include natural disasters, massive industrial changes and increasing levels of poverty and inequality. Furthermore, consensus on the European Green Deal seems to be fading in many parts of the political spectrum and sectors of society. Thus, rollbacks in implementation must be reckoned with. Better alignment of EU and member state social, climate and energy policies with the objectives of the just transition appears as a key precondition for continuing a consensual implementation of the European Green Deal. More ambitious initiatives are necessary to build an EU socio-ecological model based on integrated and environmentally sustainable ‘eco-social policies’, which promote ‘sustainable welfare’ aiming to guarantee human needs within planetary boundaries.

CHALLENGES

- **Unfair distributional impacts:** Climate policies can hit disadvantaged people more than well-situated people; countries with less capacity are disadvantaged in accessing EU just transition support. While climate change remains high on the agenda for many Europeans, resistance against climate policy and support for populist parties is also growing. Just transition approaches need to be extended to broaden public support.
- **Weak EU social dimension:** An EU framework for social ecological policy and just transition is needed but the EU social dimension remains weak. Emphasis remains on technological rather than social solutions to the climate emergency, but the latter are equally important.
- **Underinvestment:** Ensuring that the transition to climate neutrality is socially fair and improves well-being requires considerable investments, but policy and business practice remains curtailed by the EU economic governance structures and market logic.

BEST PRACTICES

- **Redistributive green taxes and policies:** Several countries have adopted redistributive policies that aim to reduce socially unjust impacts of climate policies and fuel poverty, e.g. a redistribution of windfall profits from energy price increases or support with high energy bills.
- **European Semester & EPSR:** The European Semester process should more firmly integrate social-ecological & just transition policies. The European Pillar of Social Rights is an important framework and needs to be strengthened and amended to include a stronger social-ecological dimension.
- **Citizen assemblies:** Several countries have conducted citizen assemblies to shape climate policy. These processes have been useful for building consensus and broadening support, they could also strengthen the fairness and just transition dimension of climate policies.
- **Research & expertise:** Much research relevant to social-ecological policy is ongoing and planned. Policymaking needs to build on insights from these efforts.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Catalyzing momentum for a Just Transition:** It is crucial to prominently place the just transition on the EU agenda by developing a comprehensive approach. This approach should be featured more substantially in the European Semester and the EPSR, and just transition policies should be guided by wellbeing indicators.
- **Resource allocation:** It is imperative to reconsider EU-level investments, emphasizing (and striking a balance between) social investments in the green economy and redistributive policies for a fair transition.
- **Advancing the understanding of a Just Transition:** Further research is crucial for the development of ‘eco-social policies’. In particular, there is a pressing need to collect data and assess the extent to which climate mitigation policies impact all segments of society.
- **Broadening the perspective:** There is a need to shift away from a Europe-centered approach, placing emphasis on intersectionality, considering those who are disproportionately affected by the transition from a global perspective.

USEFUL LINKS

- <https://fair-energy-transition.eu/method-guide/>
- https://fair-energy-transition.eu/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/FETA_EU_final.pdf
- <https://feeps-europe.eu/publication/climate-justice-principles/>
- <https://feeps-europe.eu/publication/improving-territorial-justice/>
- <https://feeps-europe.eu/publication/policy-challenges-and-policy-actions-for-a-just-climate-transition/>
- <https://feeps-europe.eu/publication/the-path-towards-a-socially-just-fit-for-55-package/>
- <https://feeps-europe.eu/publication/the-road-to-a-just-transition/>
- <https://president.ie/en/media-library/speeches/climate-action-and-the-role-of-engineers>
- https://research-and-innovation.ec.europa.eu/strategy/support-policy-making/support-national-research-and-innovation-policy-making/transitions-performance-index-tpi_en
- https://wwfeu.awsassets.panda.org/downloads/achieve-climate-neutrality_1.pdf
- <https://www.epc.eu/en/Publications/A-just-energy-transition-Tapping-into-a-century-of-ideas~447d34>
- <https://www.epc.eu/en/publications/Protective-preventative-policymaking-fit-for-the-future~54cef0>
- <https://www.epc.eu/en/publications/Wanted-An-Executive-Vice-President-for-the-Well-being-Economy~5048bc>
- <https://www.gov.wales/well-being-of-future-generations-wales>
- <https://www.justtransition.scot/>
- <https://www.leuven2030.be/>
- <https://www.ose.be/publication/just-transition-towards-climate-neutrality-eu>
- <https://www.solidar.org/publications-page/a-socially-just-and-environmentally-sustainable-eu-economic-governance-an-experts-paper/>
- <https://www.solidar.org/campaign/call-to-action-valladolid/>

LIST OF PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

- Climate Action Network
- E3G
- European Anti-Poverty Network
- European Commission – DG Employment
- European Policy Center
- European Social Observatory
- European Trade Union Confederation
- European Trade Union Institute
- Government of Belgium
- Foundation for European Progressive Studies
- Green European Foundation
- SciencesPo Paris
- Solidar
- Université Libre de Bruxelles
- University of Antwerp
- University of Leeds
- WWF Europe
- ZOE Institute

N.B. *The statements in this summary document shall not be taken as the official positions of any of these participating organisations. The document rather summarises different participants' heterogeneous points of view.*