



Delivering a Genuine Just Transition

Key Measures Needed

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STRONGER TOGETHER

CONGRESS

Irish Congress of Trade Unions



A Just Transition will help to protect jobs and create new employment opportunities as we move urgently to cut emissions and tackle climate change.

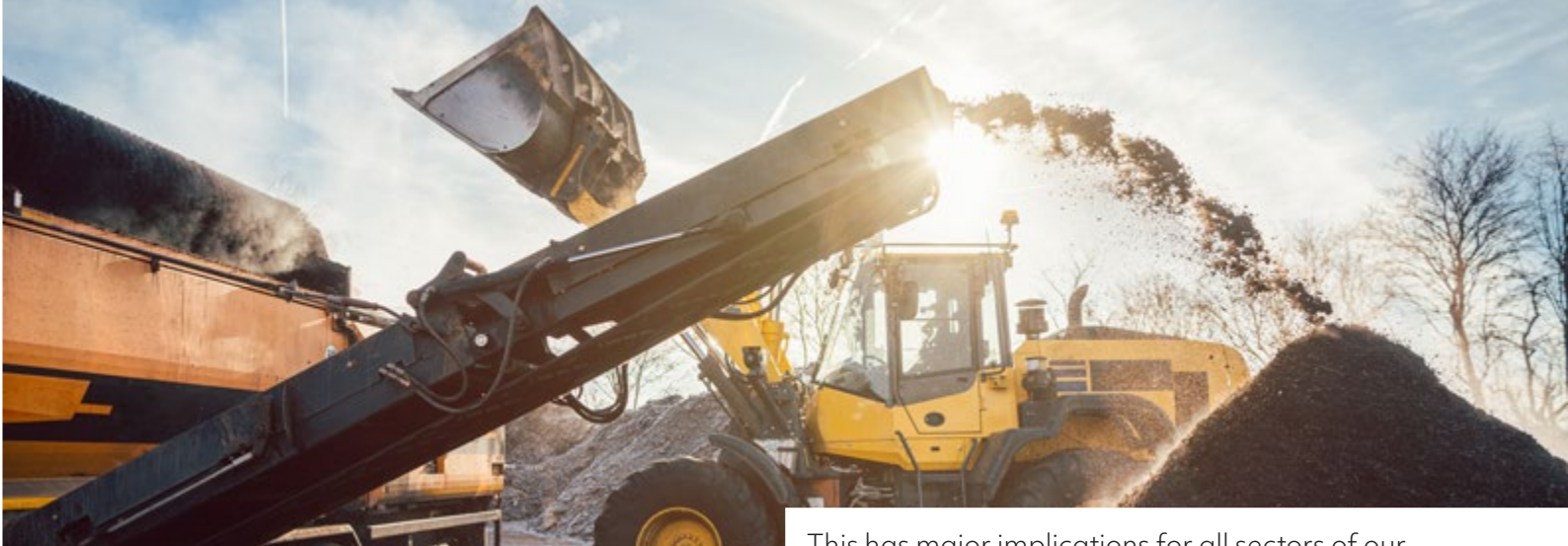
"...secures the future and (the) livelihoods of workers and their communities in the transition to a zero-carbon economy. It is based on social dialogue between workers and their unions, employers, government and communities. A plan for Just Transition provides and guarantees better and decent jobs, social protection, more training opportunities and greater job security for all workers affected by global warming and climate change policies."

In a recently published report on the array of challenges confronting humanity - *Our Common Agenda* - the Secretary General called on all countries to embrace the ILO Guidelines on Just Transition “as the minimum standard to ensure progress on decent work for all.”³



3 <https://www.un.org/en/content/common-agenda-report/>





Eroding Confidence

In responding to this challenge it is critical that policymakers act in accordance with the accepted global framework by adopting both the language *and* the substance of Just Transition.

To date, the impact of the transition process here has been overwhelmingly negative.

While extraordinary sacrifices have been demanded of Bord na Móna workers and communities in the Midlands, this has not been matched by appropriate supports from government or relevant state bodies, in a manner consistent with Just Transition.

In excess of 1000 jobs have been lost in the sector while not a single new replacement job has yet been delivered, as per accepted Just Transition guidelines and frameworks.

If these glaring policy deficits are not quickly addressed then the entire transition process could become synonymous with job loss, lower living standards and poorer communities.

This in turn will erode worker and community confidence in the need for urgent action on climate change.

The 2050 Targets

The new Climate Action Act (2021) sets as the objective of climate policy to “pursue and achieve, by no later than the end of the year 2050, the transition to a climate resilient, biodiversity rich, environmentally sustainable and climate neutral economy.”

This includes a 51% reduction in emissions by 2030.

The new law will see new emissions targets set for each sector of the economy.

This has major implications for all sectors of our economy and society, transforming how we live and work, within a relatively short space of time.

Indeed, the urgent need to act on climate change was vividly illustrated by the most recent report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC, Aug. 2021), with the report’s findings described as a “code red for humanity.”⁴

But if official action on climate change is to succeed then it must enjoy the confidence of workers in all sectors of the economy, along with wider community and public support.

Without this, it will become virtually impossible to realise these ambitious goals let alone to maximise the enormous opportunities promised by a new, green economy.

Just Transition provides the only realistic means to deliver on this.

Linking Emissions and Jobs

The new legislation (see above) includes key provisions for cutting emissions across all sectors of the economy, by way of new Carbon Budgets and a Climate Action Plan.

The responsibility for proposing Carbon Budgets will rest with the Climate Change Advisory Council and these will include proposed ‘ceilings’ on emissions, with final targets to be agreed by the government.

The new law requires that employment impact and Just Transition should be taken into account, in respect of such emission reductions.

This will impact on all sectors of our economy, especially key areas like Transport, Agriculture and Energy.

4 <https://www.ipcc.ch/2021/08/09/ar6-wg1-20210809-pr/>



It is therefore incumbent on the government to ensure that all necessary measures and supports are put in place to minimise job loss and disruption and to maximise job creation potential, across all sectors.

Congress believes that the introduction of mandatory Emission & Employment Impact Statements could be critical in determining the precise 'employment impact' in each sector.

These could provide a clear picture on the likely number and type of jobs that may be lost or created and the measures required to offset the impact of emission cuts.

This in turn will help ensure appropriate measures and training supports can be put in place, in advance.

This could help build worker and community confidence in the overall transition process.

National Retrofit Programme

The programme aims to deliver 'deep retrofitting' of some 500,000 homes - one third of our housing stock - by 2030, along with the installation of 400,000 heat pumps by the same date.

It is estimated that it will require up to 30,000 skilled workers to complete the multibillion euro programme over the coming years.

This is in tandem with the expected increased demand for skilled workers in the construction sector - between 27,500 and 40,000 - to deliver on the government's housing plans.

This will present enormous challenges and will require the development of a comprehensive national Skills Plan and Strategy, including a Skills Register, to help ensure targets are met, decent standards of work are upheld and that no community or household is left behind.

The retrofit programme must operate within the accepted Just Transition framework and this will require consultation, dialogue and engagement with trade unions and affected workers.

A New Vision for the Energy Sector

The Covid 19 pandemic has exposed the limitations of the private market model and its inability to deliver essential services.

Rebuilding in the aftermath of the pandemic will require the State to embrace a far greater role in the economy and society - including in the energy sector.

For the last two decades energy policy at EU and national level has been driven by the demands of privatisation and deregulation, and the results have not been good.

Irish energy prices are above the EU average and we remain heavily-reliant on energy imports, which hampers our capacity to meet renewable and emission targets and raises concerns around energy security of supply, into the future.

The issue has been brought into sharp relief by spiralling energy prices and stark warnings from Eirgrid of a potential energy shortfall in the coming years, all of which bolster the case for greater public ownership of this key resource.⁵

The key challenge for the future lies in developing a new vision for the energy sector as part of the process of delivering a genuine Just Transition across all sectors and communities, a vision that is grounded in decent work, in climate ambition and far greater public control over critical energy infrastructure. This will require a number of crucial measures.

1. National Just Transition Commission

- In accordance with international treaty obligations and commitments - and key recommendations from NESC - the Government must establish structured national social dialogue on the transition process in the form of a National Just Transition Commission, which would be tasked with developing an agreed national framework and blueprint for Just Transition, in accordance with the ILO's *Guidelines for a Just Transition Towards Environmentally Sustainable Economies and Societies For All*;
- The Commission would comprise representatives of government, trade unions, employers, communities and civil society and would oversee the implementation of the Just Transition process nationally, publish progress reports and report regularly to the Oireachtas Committee on Climate Action;
- In order to maximise job creation/ job retention, skills development and Decent Work, the Commission would implement and oversee the development of Emission & Employment Impact Statements across each sector of the economy, in line with sectoral emission targets set out in the annual Climate Action Plan;
- This would allow for Sectoral Dialogue structures to be established as required (Energy, Manufacturing, Construction, Transport etc) to devise sectoral plans to help maximise job creation and retention;

⁵ www.eirgridgroup.com/newsroom/eirgrid-predicts-electric/index.xml



- The process would give priority to those sectors and regions most impacted or vulnerable, or where there is a known/ planned date and timeframe for the closure (Moneypoint, the Derrinlough Briquette Factory etc) where work should commence immediately on devising the plans and supports to assist the workforce and the wider community in the transition process;
- Support and resources for companies and enterprises would be contingent on their participation in national or sectoral dialogue, as appropriate;
- Funds raised from the Carbon Tax should be ring fenced to create a dedicated Just Transition Job Creation Fund;
- There must be substantive social dialogue and consultation with key stakeholders on the national Just Transition Plan developed under the auspices of the EU's Just Transition Fund.

2. Energy & Just Transition

- A key component of a national Just Transition policy and framework should be the designation of 'energy' as an essential public good - like health or education - with a guarantee of universal access to affordable energy as a core priority of official policy. This accords with commitments Ireland has entered into in respect of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDG 7).
- Within the context of meeting agreed emission targets and the development of renewable energy sources and systems, we need to devise a new, overarching policy for the energy sector, which maximises cooperation and synergies between key utilities, agrees key roles within this framework for public companies and focuses on ensuring Security of Energy Supply;
- The electricity and gas distribution and transmission networks must be retained in public ownership and sufficient funding provided to ensure that the essential networks required to develop offshore electricity resources are retained in public ownership (the Government decision to ensure public ownership of the proposed new offshore national electricity grid is a very positive step, in this regard);
- A guarantee that no energy infrastructure in which public money has been invested will be sold off or privatised, to ensure we avoid a repeat of the strategic error seen with the privatisation of the telecommunications networks;
- Establish a licensing regime to ensure that the exploitation of Ireland's offshore wind resources will deliver lower energy costs for families and communities and create an appropriate royalty/ taxation regime for where super profits arise, with revenue utilised to establish a sovereign wealth fund similar to that which exists in countries such as Norway;

- Explore the employment and economic gains from using excess energy generated from offshore wind facilities to produce hydrogen and support semi-state companies in this, to ensure we can meet and lead on EU objectives to utilise hydrogen as a key component in decarbonising;

3. Sectoral Measures

- The National Retrofitting Programme must operate within an overall Just Transition framework, including social dialogue with trade unions and all key stakeholders to ensure the required skills infrastructure is developed, that the programme prioritises the creation of decent jobs and links directly with workforces affected by the transition process, in terms of offering employment and upskilling opportunities. Lack of financial resources must not prevent community or household access to the retrofitting programme;
- Government (and Bord na Móna) must fully engage with all stakeholders on the planned national Bog Rehabilitation Programme, to provide full clarity on job numbers, terms and conditions for staff and details on all plans in respect of the current workforce, with the goal of maximising the numbers in employment and ensuring that employment standards are not downgraded;
- A full employment impact study is carried out in advance of any phasing out of peat moss in horticulture, to quantify the likely job losses, the nature of jobs lost and the measures needed to create alternative, good quality employment. Where imports are to continue, Bord na Móna should be mandated to continue to seek permissions to harvest Horticultural Peat, until an acceptable substitute is found;
- There is full consultation on future plans for the Lough Ree and Shannonbridge power stations and on the future of the Edenderry plant, well in advance of its planned switch to full biomass fuel in 2023/4;
- The Government engages with Gas Networks Ireland (GNI) and key trade unions in relation to the Vision 2050 plan, in terms of ongoing employment levels and the key role of the company within the energy sector and in delivering a Just Transition.





Irish Congress of Trade Unions
31/32 Parnell Square
Dublin 1
Ireland
Tel: +353 1 8897777 Email: congress@ictu.ie
www.ictu.ie

 @irishcongress

