

Shaping a Just Transition

A Just Transition as Successful Approach

Fighting climate change is one of the biggest challenges of our times. However, structural change is driven by the necessary climate protection measures as well as by digitalization, globalization and demography. To meet these challenges, trade unions around the world are fighting for ambitious climate policies and a just transition focusing on the protection of natural livelihoods, decent and co-determined work and equitable prosperity.

■ DGB Recommendations for a Just Transition

Workers are Key to the Transition

Workers are at the very core of the transition. Due to their activities on the ground, they have intricate knowledge of the sectors in question as well as being a trusted partner in industrial relations and bargaining processes. Studies have shown that companies with co-determination are more sustainable and are doing more to avoid greenhouse gas emissions. Worker participation promotes an innovative corporate culture. Workers know their company best and have the power and knowledge for innovation.

In addition, ongoing professional development as well as increased training and further education all empower workers. Works councils are key players in implementing climate protection on the ground. Co-determination and collective bargaining agreements ensure greater fairness in the company while also guaranteeing economic and social participation as well as security, especially in times of change. Therefore, decent work, binding collective agreements and co-determination must be strengthened to create an environment of trust and acceptance. This has to apply to existing and new jobs and sectors.



Leaving No One Behind

Economies, regions, industries, companies and employees are already in the middle of far-reaching change processes that are required for an energy and mobility transition. Trade unions have to ensure that this transition is implemented fairly with regard to working people and that no one is left behind. This is the only way to ensure the long-term acceptance of the necessary changes to our economic structure. It is crucial to consider the effects on the ground and to integrate affected stakeholders into the decision-making process. Besides creating new opportunities, a well-defined social system has to provide a security net. The rise of the far right is just one example of what can happen when sections of the public feel left behind.

A Political Framework is Needed

Structural change has to be actively shaped by governments in cooperation with trade unions and employers. Leaving the transition to the market would increase the risk of social and environmental dumping. Instead, there has to be a political and sustainable framework to bring climate protection, decent work and sustainable prosperity together. Such a strategy has to anticipate and proactively balance social, economic and ecological effects. It needs an integrated implementation of labor market, social, innovation, structural, industrial and regional policies. Trade unions are experienced in developing reliable results while balancing conflicting goals and, as a result, need to be part of the decision-making process.



Investments for Climate Protection, Prosperity and Decent Work

The Paris Agreement is resulting in the transition of regions, economies and societies worldwide, which is a major challenge for our generation. For a successful transition to create feasible and robust solutions, massive amounts of investment are required. Such an investment push is not only a prerequisite for transforming the economy towards carbon neutrality, but would also strengthen social cohesion and promote equal living conditions across society. Investments are especially needed for climate-friendly infrastructures, innovative technologies, buildings and mobility. These will safeguard the future viability of the economy, the environment, and, in turn, the decent work of tomorrow. An investment in this necessary transition is an investment in our future. It is a contribution to a sustainable way of production which increases competitiveness while providing prosperity and employment at the same time.



■ A Just Transition in the Real World – Best Practice Examples from Germany

Making Just Transition a Benchmark

The German Commission on Growth, Structural Change and Employment



The Commission on Growth, Structural Change and Employment was established to formulate a socially and economically acceptable path to the politically desired phase-out of coal-fired power generation. Trade unions (DGB, IG BCE, ver.di) participated in the negotiation process as did stakeholders from industry, the affected coal regions, academia, politics, NGOs and energy companies. The compromise reached by the commission is a true social consensus.

The commission's report stressed the necessity of creating high-quality jobs and value creation to the same extent by which they will be reduced. Trade unions negotiated for strong social protection measures to provide security for workers (e.g. compensation of lost wages and pension deductions, adjustment allowances as a bridge to retirement for older employees, collective bargaining agreements for the decommissioning of plants) and they made certain that structural change will be actively shaped together with social partners.

Involving Union Members and Asking their Opinion

Atlas on Transformation



The atlas on transformation (Transformationsatlas) published by IG Metall is based on a survey of works council members. The major challenge here is the fact that nearly 45 per cent of the companies surveyed lack strategies to cope with the challenges posed by the transition. Half of the companies do not have a human resources management strategy and lack a systematic approach to addressing the need for educational qualifications. At the same time, 95 per cent of works council members think that the need for qualifications is rising.

The results also showed that even if the upcoming transition is addressed in companies, it is often propelled by management, meaning that workers are disconnected from the process. This basically means that the people who are supposed to carry out the transition, namely, the workers, are not well enough informed about the challenges ahead.

Shaping the Transition at the Company Level

Collective Bargaining Agreements and Vocational Training Plan



IG BAU has negotiated a collective bargaining agreement that provides security for outdoor workers. They are even affected by climate change and exposure to extreme weather conditions in Germany. The collective bargaining agreement contains occupational safety and health regulations and protection against weather-related loss of income. It is more frequently the case that collective bargaining agreements contain aspects of the transition in order to provide workers with security.

Furthermore, IG BAU has incorporated topics such as climate protection and nature conservation into the cement industry's vocational training plan. These measures help to promote the transition of the sector from within by enabling trainees and future workers to shape climate and structural change themselves.

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