



REJEnerAXion

Energy for a just and green recovery deal: the role of the industrial relations in the energy sector for a resilient Europe



## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



Serena Rugiero

Simonetta Bormioli

Samuele Alessandrini

(Project no. 101052341/SOCPL-2021-IND-REL)

## **Partnership of the REJenerAXion Project:**

### **FDV (Coordinator)**

Serena Rugiero, Simonetta Bormioli, Samuele Alessandrini, Katrin Vitols (wmp) Eckhard Voß (wmp)

### **Astrees**

Christophe Teissier

### **CELSI**

Monika Martišková, Patrik Gažo, Pavol Bors, Tibor Meszmann

### **Filctem**

Letterio Oceano

### **Fundación 1° de Mayo**

Jesús Cruces Aguilera, Luis De la Fuente Sanz

### **IPA**

Małgorzata Koziarek

### **Lentic**

Frédéric Naedenoen, Indira Kuburas

## **Associate organisations:**

Cgil

Epsu

ETUI

industriAll

© Rejeneraxion project

Date of publication: October 2024

Graphic design by AISFOR

The electronic version of this publication is available on the website [www.rejeneraxion.com](http://www.rejeneraxion.com)

The content of this document does not reflect the official opinion of the European Commission. Responsibility for the information and views expressed therein lies entirely with the authors.

# TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION	4
1. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE	6
2. MAIN FINDINGS	8
2.1 SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND THE ENERGY TRANSITION AT EUROPEAN LEVEL	8
2.2 LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION IN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE REJENERAXION PROJECT	10
2.3 MEASURES INTRODUCED TO TACKLE THE IMPACT OF ENERGY TRANSITION ON EMPLOYMENT AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES	12
2.4 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE SYSTEM FACING THE ENERGY TRANSITION	13
3. FINAL REMARKS	16
4. RECOMMENDATIONS	19
4.1 BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF A JUST ENERGY TRANSITION	19
4.2 CONDITIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL DIALOGUE FOR THE JUST ENERGY TRANSITION	22
4.3 THE JUST TRANSITION AND ITS EFFECTS ON EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES	23
4.4 THE UNION'S ROLE AND ACTION IN THE JUST ENERGY TRANSITION	26
ANNEX	28
ANNEX 1. NATIONAL REPORTS AND CASE STUDY REPORTS	28
ANNEX 2. CASE STUDY REPORTS OVERVIEW	30

# INTRODUCTION

This document presents the **main findings of the project REJenerAXION** (Energy for a just and green recovery deal: the role of the industrial relations in the energy sector for a resilient Europe), a European Union co-funded research project (no. 101052341/SOCPL-2021-IND-REL).<sup>1</sup>

REJenerAXION aims to analyse and strengthen the role of innovative industrial relations structures and social dialogue, to respond in a socially fair and balanced way to the main challenges and opportunities offered by a green-energy transition at national and European level.

The project focuses on the analysis of the rules and practices regarding industrial relations in the energy transition in **eight European Member States, so as** to compare experiences and trends in South, North, Central and Eastern Europe: Italy, Spain, France, Belgium, Germany, Hungary, Slovakia, Poland, considering convergences and divergences in promoting a just transition to clean energy.

The project network includes research institutes and trade unions (Epsu– European Federation of Public Service Unions, ETUI - European Trade Union Institute, IndustriAll Europe as Associate Organisations and FILCTEM CGIL- Federazione Italiana Lavoratori Chimica Tessile Energia Manifatturiero as co-applicant) in order to adopt a comprehensive approach capable of considering the crucial issue of a just energy transition at both a theoretical and practical level.

The “Just Transition” principle, in line with the values of **equity, democracy, justice and environmental sustainability** of the European social model, aims to address the energy transition by promoting the participation of workers and communities that are involved in decarbonisation processes and guaranteeing the availability of good new jobs (in terms of sustainability and quality) through interventions to support employment, the training of new professionals, and the retraining and relocation of workers affected by the transition to employment in the new low-carbon economy.

Industrial relations can play a key role at European, national and regional level in accompanying and shaping transition processes while respecting the tenets of cohesion, social equity and inclusion enshrined in the ‘European Pillar of Social Rights’ (EU Commission, 2017) and the Commission Communication ‘A Strong Social Europe for a Just Transition’ (EU Commission, 2020).

As the analysis here conducted shows, the **Just Transition is a complex and multidimensional concept that requires a systemic approach**, reflective of the **intersectionality** between the social implications of the energy transition and the need for social and economic cohesion. It requires a **multi-level system of governance** (involving the European, national, sectoral, regional and company level), where social dialogue plays a fundamental role in ensuring the quality of the Energy Transition, as an instrument as much as a form of governance.

At the same time, the energy transition principle needs to become operational at the local level, as **energy is strongly context-dependent** and needs mechanisms to be put in place in conjunction with regional development policies in order to avoid industrial desertification and unequal spatial distribution effects.

The REJenerAXION's comparative analysis highlights the **lack**, in the countries examined, **of a clear and shared national definition of what a Just Transition means**. However the formulation of such a definition is an essential prerequisite for

---

<sup>1</sup> Serena Rugiero, senior researcher at Fondazione Di Vittorio, has coordinated this project.

the construction of effective energy transition policies and to control, monitor and evaluate the results of a process that is intended to be socially just and balanced.

In the absence of a shared framework on a Just Transition<sup>2</sup>, the different actors involved in the transition itself (companies, local institutions, trade unions, workers, environmentalist groups, experts, civil society) tend to interpret and implement its principles according to their own point of view. In this sense, the concept of a Just Transition seems to be “dispositional”: not only it derives from other concepts (safeguarding employment, quality of work, professional reconversion, training, local development, protection of labour and contractual protections, workers’ participation in decision-making processes), but it also changes according to the interpretation and interests of the various stakeholders.

The project demonstrates this **variety of interpretations** and the need to promote a shared and structured reflection on the meaning of a Just Transition, within a clear definition of the objectives to be achieved.

A Just Energy Transition implies: i) **public accountability with a new role for the State** to ensure a transformation aimed at the common interest and the financing of investments by ensuring their social conditionality; ii) a **framework of integrated policies** encompassing the different dimensions of a Just Transition: climate, employment, training, social and industrial policies. Only a structural and integrated approach can ensure a clear assumption of responsibility by the actors involved and a reconstruction of the different instances called into play by the energy transition, in order to anchor them to the achievement of shared goals which embody a common interest.

At the same time, it is also necessary to **strengthen social dialogue, collective bargaining and the participation of workers and trade unions** as key players in economic processes and active agents for socially acceptable structural change.

The energy transition represents a multifaceted challenge. On the one hand, it makes it necessary to **reorganise industrial relations systems** and adapt them to the particular complexity of the green transition. On the other hand, it allows social partners to **assume a key role in managing the transition**, also by filling the knowledge gaps (on new risks, job quality, new professional profiles) and action gaps caused by the speed and radicality of the decarbonisation processes, which require the reconstruction of an equitable regulatory system. Finally, the pursuit of a just transition constitutes, precisely because of its ambition to overcome the work/environment dilemma, an opportunity to make the **environmental ground a new space of representation for trade unions** outside and inside the workplace. The paragraphs that follow will illustrate: the methodological note, the main findings of the project, the final remarks and the recommendations regarding the role of industrial relations and social dialogue for a just energy transition.

---

2 According to the ILO, a *Just Transition* means “greening the economy in a way that is fair and inclusive to all.” It focuses on creating decent work opportunities while ensuring that no one is left behind. This requires maximising the social and economic opportunities arising from climate action and carefully managing any challenges through social dialogue and respect for fundamental labour rights ([Eurofound](#)). The European Parliament emphasises that a just transition is essential for achieving EU climate neutrality by 2050. It highlights the need for an inclusive and fair transition, ensuring that no region or group is left behind in the process. This concept is integrated into EU climate and energy policies, with particular attention to fostering sustainable job creation and supporting vulnerable areas ([EUR-lex](#)).

# 1. METHODOLOGICAL NOTE

The REJenerAXION project relies on its mix of research and action, through a comparative study involving experts, social partners and practitioners from eight European countries.

Through a multidisciplinary approach the study is oriented to analyse the consequences of the energy transition for working conditions and quality-of-work issues, employment structures, new risks and new opportunities for individuals, companies, local communities and the environment, exploring the policies and real practices that are emerging in this field and the role of innovative industrial relations to respond to and anticipate the energy transition in the world of work both at national and European level.

The research methodology of the project included: i) A desk analysis, at European and national level, based on literature review, studies and documents from academia and institutions and official databases focusing on the relationships between the energy transition, employment and social dialogue; ii ) A qualitative survey, with in-depth interviews with 81 'privileged observers' – key actors in the energy transition field (policy makers, experts, workers and companies' representatives) – carried out in each country involved in the project, in order to describe the positions of the social partners and the structures and processes of industrial relations in relation to the energy transition and a Just transition; iii. Country case studies selected to cover the main energy transition paths of each country and their effects considering the geopolitical and strategic context, the different stages of the value chain and the different fossil energy sectors involved (coal, oil, gas and nuclear), also – where appropriate – in a cross-sectoral approach due to the strong link between energy and industry.

## National reports and European report

The baseline reports at European (1) and national level (8 in total, one for each country involved in the project) present a description of the policy framework for the decarbonisation of the energy sector and the main trends concerning the economic, environmental and employment dimensions of the energy transition. A chapter is devoted to an overview of Industrial relations and Social dialogue initiatives on the topic of the Just Energy Transition.

## National qualitative survey

The Qualitative Survey Reports were produced in 2023. The main objective of the qualitative survey was to analyse the role of industrial relations and social dialogue in supporting a Just Energy Transition, considering the consequences on working conditions and quality, work organisation, new risks and opportunities for workers, companies, local communities and the environment. The survey was also aimed at validating the National Reports, integrating them with the stakeholders' point of view and identifying case studies for fieldwork.

The stakeholders interviewed included representatives of employers' organisations, trade union representatives, regional institutions and authorities, experts (universities, public and private research institutes), environmental, professional and social associations, civil society (local communities, informal networks).

---

## Case studies

The research case studies were conducted on concrete experiences of industrial relations in the field of a just energy transition, either in progress or already completed. The analysis focuses on all stages of the energy system value chain, also considering the relationship with the territory and the implications for regional restructuring processes in coal-intensive regions. From this perspective, the challenges and opportunities for industrial relations and social dialogue arising from the impacts of the energy transition on the organisation of work, on working conditions and on the labour market were also considered.

Three different case studies were conducted between September 2023 and February 2024 in each project partner country (24 in total for the eight countries).

The methodology was based on a combination and cross-fertilisation of data sources: direct observation, desk analysis and qualitative survey tools based on in-depth interviews with 'privileged observers': workers' trade union representatives, employers and representatives of employers' organisations, local institutions and authorities, experts (universities, public and private research institutes, etc.), environmental, professional and civic associations.

The research activities of the project were conducted between September 2022 and March 2024. The project was concluded in October 2024 with the delivery of all research products.

Annexed to this document are two tables presenting the research products: Annex 1 presents the European and national research reports, while Annex 2 gives an overview of the 24 case studies analysed.

## 2. MAIN FINDINGS

### 2.1 SOCIAL DIALOGUE AND THE ENERGY TRANSITION AT EUROPEAN LEVEL

In Europe the **energy sector** is characterised by extreme heterogeneity, due to differences between the Member States in terms of population and demographics, economy and industrial development, energy sources and infrastructure, legal frameworks and democratic preferences. The **energy policy mix** is also very diverse and has seen changes over the last two decades. The energy system is still **dominated by fossil fuels**, with natural gas playing an important role in north-western countries and Italy, while coal is a major resource for central and eastern countries. Thanks to technological developments, changes in economic structures, and energy policies, as well as relocation, energy and **carbon intensity** have decreased in Europe in recent decades. From an **economic point of view** in the period 2010-2020 the energy sector saw a decline, both in absolute terms and in terms of share of gross value added (in 2020, the sector generated 250 billion euros as economic activity, or 8% of European GDP). As regards the **workforce**, in 2019 the European energy sector had 7,500,000 workers (in supply, power generation and distribution, and in end-uses relating to vehicles and efficiency) (IEA 2022c) while more than 20 million European workers in the industry will be directly affected by the transition. Despite the reductions in the mining and quarrying sectors between 2015 and 2020, the **number of enterprises increased** by 77.3% (to 177,377 in 2020), driven by the NACE sectors of Electric power generation, transmission and distribution (+79.4%) and Manufacture of gas, distribution of gaseous fuels through mains (+192.5%). On the emissions side, emissions from the energy sector decreased by 44% in Europe between 1990 and 2019, well before the pandemic. Currently, the sector is responsible for more than **75% of the EU greenhouse gas emissions** due to energy use, but only one third of these come directly from the power sector. **Renewables** contributing to electricity production have exceeded the share of fossil fuels in Europe since 2018 and were 41% in 2020, while in **energy dependence**, which has increased over the decade to a share of 57.5% in 2020, all the Member States have been net energy importers since 2013.

It is against this backdrop that in the European continent, in the context of the decarbonisation policies to achieve climate neutrality by 2050, **the energy transition is already underway**. What is new is not the transition itself but the fact that **it is policy- and not market-driven**. Though, in order to match the climate targets of the EGD, Fit for 55 Package, RepowerEU and implement security plans it **needs further acceleration**. To this end and to be effective the efforts should take into account the **systemic nature of the transition**, that cannot be tackled by looking only at the energy sector since it is an integral part of the entire economic system: any change that occurs in it has immediate repercussions on the others (industry, transport, construction, etc). As a result an **integrated approach** is to apply to each interconnected field: social, technical, economic, legal, environmental as well as at their intersections. Indeed, the energy transition is a **global and complex process with profound social implications** that goes beyond the technological and economic dimensions, affecting also the socio-political and socio-economic ones. To properly understand and intervene in this process, it is therefore necessary to also **consider other dynamics**: digitisation, circularity, sector coupling and system integration, policies, regulations and markets, citizenship, cultures, lifestyles and energy practices.

In relation to the **disruptive social and economic effects** that are the result of the transformations of the energy transition - which revolve around the difficult dilemma between employment and environment the European Trade



Unions has re-proposed the **just transition approach** to include the social dimension in the decarbonisation processes in terms of **inclusiveness and fairness** both with respect to the energy transition results (the characteristics of the social and employment scenarios of the post-carbon economy) and process (how to arrive at the post-carbon economy and society from the current situation). Trade unions also pushed to strengthen the role of the social dialogue and industrial relations for the anticipation and management of the distributional effects of climate policies on the energy sector alongside with the promotion of economic growth, decent work, social equality and sustainable development.

As a matter of fact, for some time now, the main international institutional players have agreed that **social dialogue** at its different levels is, along with collective bargaining, an **indispensable tool** for including the social partners in the governance of the energy transition, in order to define and implement relevant measures in a way that is inclusive and environmentally sustainable. Though a number of factors affects the **effectiveness of social dialogue as a governing mechanism** of the Just Transition. These factors relate to the capacities of the social partners: to translate the results of the social dialogue into practices and policies (instrumental effectiveness), to set the political and public policy agenda (agenda effectiveness) and to critically analyse policies with a view to formulating the recommendations required to achieve the objectives, taking into account all the socio-economic aspects (analysis capacity). These, in essence, are **conditions** that allow the social partners to intervene as **social agents** to respond to the challenges of the Just Transition within the framework of European tripartite social dialogue. In turn, the European social partners have identified the **indispensable elements to ensure that the double transition (digital and green)**, in addition to being beneficial to companies and workers, **is effective and just**: a fair redistribution of the costs and revenues related to the transformations between consumers, companies and governments; the active management of structural changes, based on the preparation of transition plans that include better social security measures and active labour policies; quality jobs; the adoption of effective concrete solutions and not only theoretical ones to the problems and difficulties of the transition.

The centrality of social dialogue for the governance of the Just Transition has to be read, though, in the broader context of the **weakening of this institution**. Since the crisis of 2008, the social partners and European social dialogue have, in fact, come under severe pressure due to cuts in state budgets that have had serious repercussions on social policies. Subsequently, the pandemic contributed to a slow-down in social dialogue activities, which intensified in 2021 in the national tripartite dimension but without recovering previous levels in terms of the number of agreements and workers protected by them. Moreover, although at the European level horizontal relations between the social partners are strong, **major difficulties are reported** from several quarters **in the multilevel dimension and in relations between cross-industry and sectoral partners**. The social partners themselves, likewise, are expressing great dissatisfaction with the possibilities of social dialogue to intervene in the major challenges of the double transition (complaining, for example, about the absence of binding agreements between the partners and the excessive use of opinions and statements, the sub-optimal functioning of the sectoral social dialogue committees and a problem of representativeness of some organisations caused by structural changes in the labour market and economic sectors).

The weakness of European social dialogue is also in line with **the weakening of trade unions** over the last two decades, for reasons ranging from structural change and production patterns, to the rise of non-

standard working conditions, global economic integration and pressure on companies to compete. In this context and despite this situation, in many quarters the challenges posed by the twin transitions are seen as an **opportunity to revitalise trade unions**, from the perspective of membership (collective bargaining enables them to offer protections to workers in declining industries or to steer them towards new employment prospects), opportunities for renewal (by harnessing resources that enable them to exercise different forms of power) and worker involvement in the challenges of anticipating and managing the effects on work organisation, workers, territories and communities affected by the twin transitions.

As regards the twin transitions (digital and green), the European social partners share the **awareness that these processes are inevitable, interconnected and interdependent**, given their place in the broader context of globalisation, liberalisation, the flexibilisation of the labour market, the pandemic crisis and the invasion of Ukraine. In this direction the social partners **are working together** at different levels (from the European to the company level) in a bilateral or tripartite way, in the awareness that their actions can only go in the direction of further pushing the two transitions, according to a proactive and not neutral or obstructive approach.

Among the many interventions, statements and proposals of the social partners in these years, one of the most interesting with respect to the energy transition is the **Manifesto for the Just Transition of IndustriAll**, which explicitly calls on European policymakers to ensure that the transition is fair for all workers and that it preserves and creates good, quality jobs. The manifesto states, inter alia, that a **failure to align ambitions relating to the environment with equally stringent ambitions relating to the social dimension puts the entire European Green Deal at risk**. Already in September 2021 IndustriAll and its members, among other things, in welcoming the European Green Deal had pointed out that the measures and resources to ensure a fair transition for the workers involved were not sufficient and called for a strengthening of the social dialogue, to avoid the possibility of a repeated series of actions in conflict with the interests and rights of workers in some Member States jeopardising the Green Deal.

## 2.2 LEADERSHIP AND GOVERNANCE OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION IN THE MEMBER STATES OF THE REJENERAXION PROJECT

As per the modalities to achieve the expected decarbonisation goals in the energy sector, the Member States of the REJ project present a wide array of **energy transition paths**: the rationalisation of plants operation and production processes in the energy industry (**Poland, Slovakia, France**), the progressive electrification of production processes and consumption (**Italy**), the decarbonisation of the gas industry (**Slovakia**), the development and use of renewable energy with the creation of a hydrogen pilot market and clean technologies (**Belgium**), the conversion of large energy companies into multi-energy groups (**France, Poland and Germany**) or the adoption of a variety of technological solutions (**Italy, Belgium**). In all these countries, the shift to clean energy involves the use of natural gas as a vector of transition - with different approaches depending on climate, industrial and energy policies (**Belgium's** geographical location, for example, is strategic in terms of gas supply, as a gateway and hub for northern Europe).

Against this backdrop as regards the **leadership and guidance of the energy transition by the central government and national institutions** the Member States represented by the REJenerAXION project can be broken down into three different groups.

A first group includes **Germany, France and Spain**, where climate and energy policies are managed at the national level under the responsibility of ministries, commissions and authorities in coordination with regional governments as well as civil society involvement (or consultation) (which often includes trade unions). In these countries, **the underlying and integrated policies of the energy transition are negotiated, developed and implemented through strategic and comprehensive policy documents**. Spain stands out as having clearly defined strategic and operational frameworks to accompany, govern and monitor the Just Energy Transition.

The second group includes **Italy and Belgium**, that despite having a division of responsibilities on energy transition between ministries and other institutions **lack an overall vision and a clear strategy**. This weakness of public stakeholders, coupled with their inability to formalise a targeted strategy, results, in turn, in a lack of cohesion and alignment, or even actual uncertainty in policies and regulatory frameworks at the different levels.

The third group includes the Eastern European countries (**Poland, Hungary, Slovakia**), which have in common a strong role of the central government in guiding environmental and energy policies and transitions to a long-term coal phasing out. Policy-making is often contradictory and lacking in transparency, because of a more **formal, instrumental and inconsequential alignment with European guidelines and directives** on the green and ET.

The orientation of national environmental and energy policies outlined above have direct effects on the **governance of energy transition processes, stakeholders and resources**. In this respect, considering the energy transition as a whole, the REJenerAXION project countries can be categorised according to two opposite approaches: on the one hand, those with **weak and fragmented governance (Belgium, Italy, Slovakia and Hungary)** and, on the other hand, those with a more or less **cohesive governance (France, Spain, Germany and Poland)**.

The **weakness in Italy** is determined, among other things, by the shared competence between the central and regional governments when it comes to legislation on the generation, transport and distribution of energy; in **Belgium** by the fragmentation and poor coordination between the decision-making authorities at the different levels of; in **Hungary** by the adoption of a top-down, untransparent approach that marginalises social partners; in the case of **Slovakia**, trade unions only participate in public policy discussions around the energy transition and its effects through projects financed by the European Commission.

**Energy transition governance appears to be more cohesive in France** where, despite the difficulties of coordination between public policy stakeholders in economic, labour and environmental policies, the role of the government is underpinned by a strong collaboration with local authorities. In **Spain**, governance takes place through the 15 Just Transition Agreements covering 2021-2027 and the Just Transition Conventions. Cohesion in **Germany** has been achieved by the Commission for Growth, Structural Change and Employment (2018-2019) in accordance with the governance of processes, especially at regional level, as a prerequisite for agreeing on a concrete roadmap and timetable for the phasing out of coal-fired power generation and outlining economic, social and regional support measures for the affected areas. In **Poland**, policies at regional and local level are aligned with national ones and implemented by the relevant authorities, also with regard to the Just Energy Transition.

As regards the **Just Transition Mechanism** (established in June 2021 to assist with the economic and social costs of the transition in coal- and carbon- intensive regions, to diversify their economies, promote the employment of at-risk workers, achieve energy savings and switch to new sources) by December 2022, 38 **Territorial Just Transition Plans** across 16 MSs had been approved, mobilising more than €14.2 billion. But from the very onset a degree of **perplexity**

has been expressed **concerning the effectiveness and functionality of the Territorial Just Transition Plans**: because too much attention is paid to coal regions compared to carbon-intensive areas; the focus on employment effects is limited to fossil fuel industries; there is a lack of monitoring and evaluation activities. As a matter of fact, some of the **territorial plans** launched in the project countries show **weaknesses**: the insufficient funding to meet local needs; the short timeframe for the implementation of the actions caused by delays in preparing calls for proposals; the poor involvement of local stakeholders (including trade unions), which results in inefficient funding of actions for local development needs; the scarce capacity of local governments to run policies and create synergies between funds available within the same areas (as in the case of **Italy**); mistrust in public stakeholders and low participation of citizens; the uncertainty of political and administrative decision-making. In some cases (**Spain, France and Germany**), the development and implementation of Just Transition Fund territorial plans was possible thanks to coordination with development plans and other measures available to transition areas, maximising contributions and resources to promote results in a Just Transition perspective. In **Poland** regional authorities enjoyed autonomy in developing Just Transition Fund territorial plans, but the national government did not adopt a national strategy which could provide a relevant framework for their planning efforts. In **Hungary** Just Transition Fund territorial plans are only nominally in the hands of regional bodies but are actually run by the central state and the regional design is only used as a means to obtain European funds.

## 2.3 MEASURES INTRODUCED TO TACKLE THE IMPACT OF ENERGY TRANSITION ON EMPLOYMENT AND LOCAL COMMUNITIES

A fair energy transition not only aims at ensuring that those who lose their jobs can find a new one, but also at **implementing a decent job transition**. Indeed, the green conversion must be underpinned by job creation **based on the “good work” principles**, both for new entrants into the job markets and for those facing re-allocation. At the same time, job transitions should ensure that the right employment conditions are maintained together with appropriate qualifications and decent salaries, the latter being traditionally higher in the fossil energy sectors - with better contractual safeguards in all assessed Countries.

The measures that are taken into consideration – on the one hand - **they put the worker as an individual at the centre**, based on his/her professional experience as well as his/her know-how, qualifications and skills, and - on the other hand - **they do not overlook the needs of local communities**, the latter being inextricably linked to energy technologies. This requires a **place-based energy transition** to be implemented in parallel with regional development policies through solutions that make the most out of local specificities. The goal is to **avoid the risks of industrial desertification and the loss of skilled labour**.

The array of measures that have been implemented in REJenerAXION countries ranges from national and local measures to company-level ones (mostly by large companies) and mainly concerns direct employees and - less frequently - subcontracted workers, as well as the local dimension and the key actors of local development.

The measures that have been implemented in the REJenerAXION countries can be classified as follows:

- » Measures to manage the effects of energy transition at **territorial level**:
  - \* Measures to tackle changes in production geography: the emphasis is placed on regional policy measures, especially to promote diversification of local economies (territorial plans, support to individual enterprises, management tools for local development policies, reinforcement of territorial employment centres and the database containing training opportunities and job offers);

- \* Measures to protect workers, in order to counterbalance the impact of a potential weakening of workers' protection when shifting away from the fossil fuels sector towards the emerging sectors (site-level bargaining, specific agreements);
- » Measures to manage **job transition**, whose main challenges include the reduction of the out-of-job time period between the loss of jobs and the creation of new ones and the development of "good jobs":
  - \* Measures related to the destruction of jobs and the loss of skilled labour (combating the destruction of employment, boosting and promoting the exit from the job market, retaining and re-skilling staff);
  - \* Measures to relocate workers and transform the workplace (social protection, redeployment and relocation in other activities maintaining social and employment conditions, mapping markets and jobs and drafting provisional analyses aimed at jobs/skills-sets transferability)

## 2.4 INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE SYSTEM FACING THE ENERGY TRANSITION

The challenge of the green transition in the energy sector impacts the role of trade unions and industrial relations practices at multiple dimensions. The role of industrial relations and social dialogue for a Just Energy Transition can be examined according to the following analytical dimensions: a. the characteristics of industrial relations, b. the orientation of unions vis-à-vis the energy transition and c. the actions and measures taken by trade unions to guarantee a Just Energy Transition.

### *Characteristics of industrial relations and social dialogue systems*

Considering that fossil fuel sectors are traditionally well organised in terms of union representativeness and contractual coverage, in contrast to the emerging renewables sectors, the countries involved in the REJenerAXION project are categorised by type of industrial relations as follows: well-structured forms with a balanced participation of social partners; fragmented and poorly coordinated forms; weak forms sometimes due to not transparent and/or lacking dialogue between the parties.

National and/or sectoral systems of industrial relations characterised by a **strong and long tradition of collective bargaining** at various levels (as in the case of **Germany, Spain and Italy**) give high priority to both the energy transition and a Just Transition. These countries are characterised by a well-structured dialogue system between the parties and have seen industrial relations being strengthened and interlocution practices being expanded (multi-level dialogue).

Where the systems of industrial relations are fragmented, the actors poorly coordinate with each other, even though the dialogue between institutions and social partners involves multiple levels of power. **Poor coordination** (due to the plurality of the actors involved in **France** or the multi-level dimension of federal governance in **Belgium**) has a **negative impact on the effectiveness of bargaining**, which is also affected by the emergence of new players with a weak bargaining tradition, whose appearance on the scene somehow contributes to reducing the role of trade unions.

In Central and Eastern European countries (**Poland, Slovakia and Hungary**) there is a **general weakening of the social dialogue and collective bargaining system**. In general, industrial relations occurs in a context where unions are poorly recognised and the political and decision-making system is highly centralised and, in some cases, lacks transparency. The

weakening of social dialogue is reported by both employers and trade unions, while institutions maintain an ambiguous position on the green transition.

### ***Positions of the social partners on the just energy transition***

Union positions on the energy transition are ideal-types of a broader spectrum of behaviours and approaches that largely depend on the local institutional, social and economic context and can be summarised as the following three ones: unions playing a proactive role, a reactive role or an oppositional one.

The **proactive role** is based on the presence of trade unions and of a strong system of industrial relations and is associated with the formulation of specific contracts, agreements and procedures to facilitate workers' participation and an assessment of the transition impacts on the organisation of work. On the other hand, when unions adopt a **reactive role** vis-à-vis transition processes, they seek to minimise their social costs by supporting slow and gradual phase-outs. When unions **oppose the ET**, their bargaining efforts are mainly focused on traditional claims such as preserving jobs, guaranteeing employment levels and protecting the workers who are most affected by fossil industry closures.

In terms of changes in the union approach to the energy transition, in many cases (**France, Italy, Spain and Germany**) it can be noted a **shift from an oppositional stance to a reactive or proactive one**. Social partners initially opposed the energy transition processes with the aim of defending jobs and the very good conditions achieved in this sector. However, in recent years, trade unions and employers' organisations in the fossil fuel and energy industries have supported socio-ecological transformation. In the countries where this shift was observed (**Germany, France, Italy, Spain**), trade unions tend to adopt strategies in support of the green transition, focusing mainly on the social side of the Just Transition and on guarantees for a 'decent job transition'.

In Central and Eastern European countries (**Poland, Slovakia, Hungary**), trade unions maintain a non-prioritising position on the energy transition, with some of them openly opposing the coal phase out and expressing concerns for the transition to renewables (**Hungary**) considering the matter of energy security and the energy transition related loss of jobs and threat of price increases (**Poland**). Another element to consider is the **polarisation of positions on the energy transition (Poland)**.

In countries (**France and Belgium**) where the industrial relations system suffers fragmentation, social partners have a reactive approach to the matter. In general, in both countries **trade unions are poorly involved in decision-making processes**: in **Belgium**, unions are less attentive to the real effects of the transition, while in **France** social partners denounce not being sufficiently involved in the implementation of Just Transition strategies.

In the countries having a **proactive approach (Italy, Germany and Spain)** different intervention and anticipation strategies emerge according to the different institutional contexts that determine de facto the level of actual trade union involvement. In the **Italian** case, for example, the willingness to adopt a forward-looking approach to manage the effects of the transition and ensure its social acceptability is at odds with the weakness of governance processes and institutional support for the transition. In countries such as **Germany** and **Spain** the trade union movement appears to be a leading and proactive player in the implementation of certain transitional measures that pertain to both social and environmental justice.

## Just energy transition and the role of trade unions

The measures undertaken by social partners in the Just Energy Transition sphere concern both the preparation of instruments to **govern the transition** (participation objective) and the creation of instruments **to anticipate its effects** on employment and the territory (forecasting objective). Intervention levels vary depending on the capacity of the social partners involved, on how well-rooted they are territorially and how open and prone to their involvement are the institutions. The REJenerAXION project identified measures at national, territorial and company level.

At the national level, in **Spain** and **Germany** agreements between the national government and social partners are in force with the aim of managing phasing-out and the restructuring of the territories concerned. In **France** national authorities discussed the matter with social partners so as to draft measures benefiting the workers and territories. In **Poland**, following tripartite negotiations at the sectoral level, the social contracts were signed **providing measures to manage energy transition related redundancies**.

**At the territorial level, union participation in the definition of just transition measures is polarised:** on the one hand, the countries where unions are scarcely involved and the measures are limited (**Hungary, Slovakia, Belgium and Italy**); on the other, the cases where unions have been actively involved in the development and monitoring of the implementation of the Just Energy Transition territorial plans (**Poland**) and in local governance instruments (**Spain, Germany and France**).

**At company level**, bargaining instruments lend themselves to tackling various issues: coordination between territorial investment plans and corporate social dialogue (**Poland**), adoption by the major energy players of shared measures and approaches on the treatment of direct employees (**Germany**), negotiations at company level on the management of workers in transition, phase-out operations and shared monitoring of company agreements (**Italy, France, Spain and Belgium**) and also **workers' quality of life**.

Moreover, a crucial union intervention consists in **facilitating an employment transition** that is just in terms of collective bargaining coverage, job stability, maintenance of good conditions, wages and contractual safeguards on health and safety and workers' participation.

In such a context, union intervention also helps supporting the expansion of its **representation function**, where there is a shift toward sectors or working spheres that have not yet been reached by union action.

### 3. FINAL REMARKS

The findings of the project reported above allowed to outline some final remarks regarding the role of industrial relations and social dialogue with respect to the governance of the just energy transition.

1. The characteristics of the European context and of each Member State, the decarbonisation strategies and policies, the interests of the actors involved, the dynamics (including geo-political ones) and their resulting effects, outline the **global and complex nature** of the energy transition process.
2. The energy transition has a **systemic nature** but is also strongly **context-related** because of the close correlation between energy technologies and the local context, making it imperative to consider the **place-based dimension** of the transition, i.e. the adaptation of green conversion processes to each economic, social, political and territorial context.
3. Given the benefits that it brings along, with the creation of new economic opportunities and the development of green jobs that contribute to combating climate change (linked to the development of energy efficiency and renewable, to increasing electrification, waste management and circular economy and to digitalisation processes), **the energy transition can aggravate some existing social risks and generate new ones if not properly governed.**
4. The **main concerns regarding the energy and employment transition** are: the risk of impoverishment of the economic and social fabric linked to the reduction and divestment of fossil and related industrial activities; the safeguarding of employment levels; the impoverishment of highly qualified skills; how to preserve the protections that are currently in place for workers and which they have enjoyed thanks to the presence and activities of trade unions in the traditional energy industry; job polarisation; the inadequacy of social welfare; increasing territorial and regional inequalities; the weakening of social dialogue processes; the social acceptability of the ET.
5. Energy transition processes are generating **unequal redistributive effects that accentuate the economic, social and environmental disparities** of the territories which most depend on fossil economies, with the risk of exacerbating misalignment within the EU, due to the change in the geography of production, the interdependence of economic sectors, the loss of jobs and the risk of industrial desertification.
6. The systemic nature of the transition and its consequences on territories, production processes, the labour market and workers have highlighted a **far-reaching social dimension**. Intervention on it according to the **principle of a Just Transition** requires transversal policies based on an integrated approach sensitive to intersectionality, long-term energy strategies, coordination between the actors involved and the involvement of civil society, and the use of tools such as joint planning and participatory monitoring.
7. Given the place-based and long-term nature of the energy transition and its effects, its guidance at the national level requires a **multi-level governance** supported by clearly defined policy and regulatory frameworks, an overall vision and a shared reference strategy aligned with European guidelines and directives resulting out of a consultation and negotiation between national institutions, local authorities, social partners and civil society.



8. Achieving the goals of the energy transition and shaping it in terms of a fair and equitable change are strongly linked to the **key role of industrial policies** at European and national level, which are needed to manage the processes of: the labour market transition, skills development, innovation, industrial restructuring and infrastructure.
9. Given the change in production processes (mode, geography, organisation, business), the transition causes important effects on employment in the energy sector. In the context of an increasingly less stable and more fragmented labour market, the spatial and temporal misalignment caused by decarbonisation, the reduction and ageing of the sector's workforce and the processes of automation and digitalisation lead to a **final negative balance between jobs gained and jobs lost**. **Indirect (and supply chain) workers**, in particular, are similarly affected but less protected in terms of stability, wage levels, occupational health and safety due to lower contractual coverage, and they are often overlooked in just transition measures.
10. In the transition from fossil fuels to renewables, **job profiles (especially for new occupations) are also less coherent and more fragmented**, leading to the risk of inadequate contractual frameworks and weaker social protections. At the same time, workers still employed in the sector are being asked for **more versatility and an increase in skills**, with worrying effects of work overload and exposure to new occupational health and safety hazards. In general (with a few exceptions) there is a lack of studies and analyses concerning changes in employment, profiles, anticipation of market needs and qualification of resources.
11. In order to counter the negative effects on employment and workers, **measures for a Just Energy Transition** prioritise the **creation and protection of good jobs**, identifying the profiles needed to meet the challenges of change and ensuring a **decent job transition**, aimed at safeguarding employment and contractual protections. Measures to contrast the loss of jobs in traditional energy sectors focus on workers in the mines and power plants that are being closed down (voluntary early retirement, incentive retirement, redundancy payments, generation replacement agreements, etc.). However, these measures do not apply to indirect workers and, moreover, exacerbated by the demographic and digital transition, they may cause a generational mismatch and the loss of skills (as workers reach retirement age or skilled workers flee to other markets). Therefore, **measures are also being implemented to retain and retrain staff** in the energy sector, supporting outplacements and mobility (internal and external) especially through training interventions on upskilling and reskilling.
12. Managing the energy transition so as to achieve the climate neutrality targets requires a programmatic vision with specific guidelines based on a **strong role for the State**; likewise, the implementation of just transition policies demands the definition of a clear strategy at national level.
13. **Industrial relations and social dialogue can play a central role in ensuring the social acceptability of the transition** through the prevention and management of expected and unforeseen challenges and related risks (in the areas of employment, workers' health and safety, inequalities and social exclusion with respect to territorial impact). Where industrial relations are well structured (Germany, Spain and Italy), extensive social dialogue

allows social partners to participate in the formulation of territorial development plans, paying attention to the equity/justice component; where the social dialogue and the bargaining system are weaker (**Poland, Hungary and Slovakia**), the union's interventions are limited to company bargaining, with almost no participation in negotiations with central and local institutions - with notable exceptions in Poland, where, however, national (sectoral) level negotiations were not held as part of a structured transition planning process, but were forced on the government, representing the State employer, by trade unions through protest actions; finally, the effectiveness of bargaining is also reduced in situations where the industrial relations system has a high degree of fragmentation and sub-optimal coordination between the actors involved (**Belgium, France**).

14. **Trade unions** can contribute to shaping just employment transition paths. In fact, where trade unions take a proactive role, they contribute to the formulation of specific contracts, agreements and procedures on the effects of the energy transition aimed at promoting workers' participation and an assessment of the impacts on the organisation of work (**Germany, Spain, Italy**). In reactive contexts, trade unions mainly seek to reduce the social costs of transition through workers' protection measures and by supporting slow and gradual phase-outs, e.g. through instruments such as the Just Transition Plans (**Belgium, France**). Finally, in oppositional contexts (Hungary, Slovakia and Poland), trade unions focus on defending fossil sector jobs (achieving interesting results too, as in the case of the negotiation of the social pact for the closure of coal mines in **Poland**).

15. The measures implemented by social partners for a Just Energy Transition focus on two main goals: preparing **tools to manage the transition and creating mechanisms to anticipate the effects** on employment and the territory. The effectiveness of these measures depends on the capacity of the social partners themselves, on their territorial roots and on the willingness of institutions to involve them. At the **national level**, agreements between governments and social partners aim to manage the decommissioning and restructuring of affected regions. At the **territorial level**, the degree of union involvement varies, with active participation in some areas in the development and monitoring of Just Energy Transition plans, while in others this is limited. At the **company level**, collective bargaining focuses on economic and work organisation's planning and on workers' protection, often in response to the transition initiatives taken by companies. One can also note **a broadening of the topics of collective bargaining**, which in some cases leads to agreements that, in addition to dealing with working conditions, pay attention to the centrality of the individual, quality of life and environmental representation functions at company level.

16. To ensure that transition pathways are just and equitable, the role of social dialogue should be increased and collective bargaining and information and consultation practices should be strengthened to foster **negotiated participation** in the design phase of transition and in the definition of strategic choices.

## 4. RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of these recommendations is to **strengthen the role of the industrial relations systems and social dialogue at national and European level** to effectively manage the economic and social challenges posed by decarbonisation targets, as well as to promote a just energy transition fostering equity and social inclusion of regions, communities and citizens. Recommendations cover both the European national and local dimensions and are addressed to the respective institutions, social partners, key players in transition governance and civil society in its various forms (associations, professional and environmental organisations, research and university institutes, etc.).

These suggestions are the result of a comparative analysis of research activities, policies and measures that have been implemented to support energy transition in the eight countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Italy, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Hungary) involved in the REJenerAXION project.

Industrial relations can play a key role at European, national and regional level in accompanying and shaping transition processes while respecting the tenets of cohesion, social equity and inclusion enshrined in the 'European Pillar of Social Rights' (EU Commission, 2017) and the Commission Communication 'A Strong Social Europe for a Just Transition' (EU Commission, 2020). Governing substantial transformations of the economic model such as the twin - ecological and digital - transitions in a 'socially responsible' way, is all the more pivotal nowadays, not least in light of the new social risks posed by the succession of global crises: the COVID-19 pandemic, conflicts, the climate and economic crisis.

The following **recommendations can be implemented at different levels** due to the diversity of national contexts, which are based on specific industrial relations models with several variables, such as the role of the State, the governance model, the attitudes and cultures of the social partners, collective bargaining mechanisms, workers' participation at company level, union density, type of worker representation and the enforceability of rights on the workplace.

The recommendations are illustrated in a series of relevant actions - subdivided into **4 priority areas** concerning: 1) the basic requirements for the governance of the Just Energy Transition; 2) the conditions for an effective social dialogue to realize a Just Energy Transition; 3) the implications of the Just Transition for the employment, social protection and the local communities; 4) the role and action of trade unions in the Just Energy Transition.

### 4.1 BASIC REQUIREMENTS FOR THE GOVERNANCE OF A JUST ENERGY TRANSITION

#### ***R1: LEGAL AND POLICY FRAMEWORKS FOR A JUST TRANSITION***

European institutions and Member States must develop **comprehensive and integrated policies and legal frameworks for a Just Transition**. The goal is to outline unambiguous, clear and shared regulatory strategies and strategic guidelines to transform the economy in a fair and inclusive manner for all parties concerned, creating decent work opportunities and leaving no one behind. Indeed, the Just Transition Frameworks are offered as **policy tools** to manage the green transition by anticipating and managing the dynamics and effects of such transition, thereby overcoming the current fragmentation of initiatives, reaching out to the most vulnerable local communities, sectors, workers and their families – with positive spillover effects on social cohesion.

Setting up the Just Transition Frameworks requires the adoption of **participatory strategies**, so as to get stakeholders involved not only in the short term but also in the medium and longer term throughout the entire policy life cycle. The participatory approach makes it possible to outline strategies and directions in a fair and equitable manner. This allows, on the one hand, to maximise the economic and social benefits arising from the transition and, on the other hand, to ensure a fair redistribution of its social, economic and environmental costs throughout the society.

To this end, the EU and its Member State should rely on a **commonly accepted understanding and definition of the Just Transition**, as such a notion is yet to be developed to its relative novelty – not to mention the risk for its principles and characteristics to be downgraded.

## **R2: COMPLEXITY OF THE ENERGY TRANSITION**

The energy sector is at the heart of the green transition. Therefore, in order to properly address its shift towards a cleaner economy based on the principles of fairness and equity, it is essential to acknowledge:

- » its **dual nature**: the energy transition is a **global and complex process** (which goes well beyond the energy sector); however, at the same time, it is also markedly **context-dependent**, as it is shaped by local characteristics and specific needs due to its **local dimension**;
- » its **structure underpinned by two components**: the “outcome” component (i.e. the characteristics of the social and employment scenarios of the post-carbon economy) and the “process component” (i.e. the processes, initiatives and conditions that are needed to move away from the current situation towards a post-carbon economy and society);
- » its **broader social dimension**, i.e. the global and complex nature of the energy transition and its consequences on local communities, production processes, the labour market and employment conditions alike;
- » the **time mismatch** between the processes of decommissioning and closure of the plants, on the one hand, and the launch of reconversion and redevelopment projects on the territory, on the other, in order to reduce the out-of-job time between the loss of jobs (in the short term) and the creation of new ones (in the long term).

Against this backdrop it is all the more urgent to **overcome the tendency to measure only quantitative variables and the technocentric approach to energy transition**, which doesn't take into account the complexity and intersectional effects of the current transformations.

## **R3: MULTILEVEL GOVERNANCE OF THE JUST ENERGY TRANSITION**

In view of the complexity as well as the local and long-term nature of the energy transition, and in order to make the most of its potential as a lever for a more socially cohesive and equitable world, a **system of multi-level governance** (both at European and national level) is in order. Such a system must rest on clearly defined policies and regulatory frameworks, a global vision and a **common reference strategy** to be introduced following consultations and negotiations between national institutions, local authorities, social partners and civil society. Indeed, if poorly managed, the energy transition could exacerbate the existing **social risks** and generate new risks arising from the unequal redistributive effects that aggravate the economic, social and environmental inequalities of areas that rely heavily on fossil economies.

To properly face the energy transition, the multi-level governance system should:

- » rely on a strategic approach involving well-trained **planning and anticipation** instead of reaction-based management;
- » be **inclusive and democratic**, ensuring an appropriate and informed civil dialogue;
- » rely on **participatory mechanisms** to involve all key stakeholders in **public participation initiatives**;
- » **promote key actors' ownership** of implemented actions and measures, as well as accountability, monitoring and follow-up activities;
- » ensure an adequate **coordination and exchange of information** among the different actors and institutional levels involved;
- » **value and enable social dialogue as a central tool** for managing the just transition at all levels of governance (European, national, regional, local).

#### ***R4: A POLICY MIX APPROACH TO THE JUST ENERGY TRANSITION***

In order to address the multi-dimensional nature and complexity of ENERGY TRANSITION processes according to the Just Transition principle, it is necessary to adopt a combination of both direct and cross-cutting **integrated policies**. For this **policy mix approach** to be able to anticipate and manage the energy transition, it is equally necessary to:

- » adopt a **rights-based, cross-sectoral and gender-sensitive approach** to policy development and analysis;
- » avoid **fragmentation in policy making**;
- » **integrate and improve consistency** among the different policies, i.e. macroeconomic and growth-enhancing policies, industrial and sector-specific policies, corporate policies, skills development, employment, safety, health and social protection policies, as well as active labour market and environmental policies;
- » make sure that **policies are based on** relevant and quality knowledge, data and information;
- » ensure that activities that support the just energy transition are funded with **adequate** public and private, national and international **financial resources**;
- » take into account that the **Just Transition Mechanism is limited in scope and size**, as it only concerns a small part of the broader energy transition processes;
- » plan an **ad hoc financing facility in view of the expiry of the deadline for the implementation of the Recovery and Resilience Facility (RRF)**, which is currently co-financing a major part of green transition investments in Member Countries.

#### ***R5: SOCIAL ACCEPTABILITY AND CONSENSUS FOR THE JUST ENERGY TRANSITION***

In order to facilitate the deployment and acceptance of measures to anticipate and manage the effects of the Just Energy Transition and avoid potential conflicts, it is necessary to put in place actions and strategies targeting national and local institutions, workers and their families, communities, companies and employers, as well as other stakeholders involved in decision-making processes. This is to increase levels of **consensus** and **social acceptance**, thereby consolidating the cohesive approach of the main actors.

To this end, it is recommended that institutions, social partners and civil society:

- » **proof the Just Energy Transition measures and agreements with social and environmental conditionality;**
- » **disseminate information and knowledge** to increase understanding of transformations and their benefits, filling **knowledge gaps** and deconstructing **distorted representations;**
- » **analyse tensions and conflicts** stemming from the effects of the Just Energy Transition and its measures, so as to find shared solutions – first and foremost by identifying the underlying causes, drivers and triggers;
- » contribute to **fostering an inclusive culture** in social and organisational circles which cherish the values of equity, rights-based and leave-no-one-behind approaches to the challenges posed by ecological transition and the environment/work dilemma.

## 4.2 CONDITIONS FOR AN EFFECTIVE SOCIAL DIALOGUE FOR THE JUST ENERGY TRANSITION

### ***R6 - A TRULY TRIPARTITE AND MULTISTAKEHOLDER SOCIAL DIALOGUE***

As the governance instrument of the Just Energy Transition, social dialogue represents the public arena in which the social partners chip in the policy dialogue and have their say on transition actions and measures. Since such dialogue depends to a large extent on the characteristics of industrial relations systems, ensuring its effectiveness means that **the State and national institutions must express a strong willingness, taking responsibility for and exercising leadership.** In those Member States lacking a solid framework for social dialogue, it will be essential to promote support or advocacy actions through specific recommendations and initiatives.

Furthermore, in order to ensure the quality and sustainability of the Just Energy Transition, it is essential to strengthen **the inclusive nature of social dialogue** as a form of governance through the promotion of a broad (multistakeholder) vision based on the involvement of a wide range of stakeholders (first and foremost, associations representing labour, business and public institutions, but also experts, professional and environmental organisations and civil society).

### ***R7 - STRENGTHENING SOCIAL DIALOGUE TO SUPPORT THE JUST ENERGY TRANSITION***

**Social dialogue** plays a central role (both at European and national level) in ensuring fairness and social justice in connection with the Energy Transition as well as the governance of its transformations. It therefore allows social partners to fill the knowledge gaps (in terms of new risks, quality of work, new professional figures) and come to terms with the speed and the radical nature of decarbonisation processes. However, this instrument **needs to be strengthened** by:

- » **consolidating the cross-sector and multi-level interactions** of social dialogue, **on top of the sector-specific ones.** This is to foster learning, communication and the transfer of knowledge and information, not only from the top down but also vice versa, up to the European level, as well as across and within sectors;
- » ensuring **the full involvement of social partners in all stages of transition governance,** from decision-making and implementation to monitoring, evaluation and follow-up;
- » making sure that the inclusion of social partners and social dialogue result in **binding agreements between the parties,** overcoming the – albeit extensive – production of joint opinions, declarations and other non-

binding instruments;

- » ensuring that social partners strengthen the skills necessary to tackle the Just Transition, consolidating the ability to: translate the results of the social dialogue into practices and policies (**instrumental effectiveness**); set the political and public agenda (**agenda effectiveness**); and critically analyse policies in order to formulate the recommendations necessary to achieve the objectives, taking into account all socio-economic aspects (**analytical capacity**);
- » ensuring that the activities and outcomes of the social dialogue and collective bargaining take a **knowledge management** approach, to capitalise on knowledge, experience, learning and good practices on interventions, actions and measures for the just transition, on the one hand, and to promote the collection of granular and reliable data and information, enhancing the knowledge of communities of practice (workers and companies), on the other hand;
- » based on the **exchange of good practices at national and local level, cross-industry and sectoral social dialogue** at European level should play a stronger and more active role in developing guidance for national level social partners as well as in shaping European level Just Transition and industrial policies and measures.

## 4.3 THE JUST TRANSITION AND ITS EFFECTS ON EMPLOYMENT, SOCIAL PROTECTION AND THE LOCAL COMMUNITIES

### **R8 - SOCIAL PROTECTION AND DECENT WORK**

Institutions and social partners should strive to **promote universal access to** comprehensive, adequate and sustainable **social protection systems and decent work** to:

- » ensure the **creation of new and decent jobs** in terms of contract type, social security, wages and working conditions, in line with the ILO's decent work agenda and the European pillar of social rights;
- » **expand the social safeguards of collective bargaining** to indirect and ancillary workers affected by the transition, through: a. mapping (production and employment) value chains of fossil and renewable sources and b. strengthening site-level bargaining and the transferability of bargaining entitlements;
- » put **the reskilling and upskilling of workers** at the centre of collective bargaining in light of the reshuffling of positions and the demand for greater flexibility, whereby workers must now be able to work with different technologies and process control systems;
- » ensure that the **assessment of risks to workers' health and safety** also includes new risks emerging from energy transition processes. Such risks must be addressed by identifying appropriate prevention and protection measures based on the principle of hazard elimination and control;
- » include measures to address the **effects of transition on gender and intersectional discrimination** in the European Just Transition frameworks and national plans, so as to support the most vulnerable groups.

## R9 - LABOUR POLICIES, TRAINING AND SKILL DEVELOPMENT

To ensure **policies and measures related to employment, training and skills development** are on par with the Just Transition, collaboration between institutions and social partners at European, national and local level should be strengthened. More specifically, this means:

- » enhancing **active labour policies** to manage skill mismatch, foster inter-sector mobility, reduce labour-shredding, and encourage the inflow of skilled labour;
- » fostering **policy coordination** mechanisms to adapt skills development policies to macro-economic, industrial, sectoral, employment, digital, labour mobility, climate and environmental changes, as well as to corporate policies;
- » encouraging the creation of **specific institutional bodies or monitoring mechanisms for skill identification**;
- » **improving systems aimed at anticipating skills needs**, involving the social partners in skills-intelligence activities (forecasting needs, updating job profiles);
- » extending social dialogue to training institutions to help consolidate **labour market information systems** for skills anticipation and monitoring;
- » ensuring that **training of new workers and reskilling** of mobile or in-house workers take into account strategic and cross-cutting skills, in addition to technical ones;
- » facilitating the **transfer of specific skills** from highly qualified workers to those entering the labour market;
- » making sure **time spent in training is considered as working time in order** to encourage participation and provide access to paid training leave and career guidance;
- » promoting **lifelong learning in order** to foster personal development and meet the identified needs of the labour market through *on-the-job* training.

## R10 - JOB TRANSITION PATHWAYS

In order to effectively manage employment transition pathways, institutions and social partners must cooperate to:

- » **reinforce social protection measures** so they better address the needs of workers during employment transition through economic support and the provision of social safety nets for workers;
- » consolidate and strengthen the **tools of active and passive labour policies**, so as to support workers losing jobs' reintegration into – or exit from – the job market (early retirement, leaving incentives, etc.);
- » promote **the territorial mapping** of workers' **skills** in coordination between companies, trade unions and training institutions, i.e. by identifying of job profiles and using a **common skills certification system**, with the participation of trade unions;
- » enhance the territorial perspective of energy transition in order to enable workers to access **mobility paths that take into account** their skills and life expectations;
- » invest more in **improving local vocational education and training systems** and – more specifically – develop training programmes for those job profiles that will become more relevant in the future;
- » reinforce **controls on occupational safety and well-being during the transition** by analysing the impact



of the transition on occupational health and safety, as well as promoting measures aimed at identifying new emerging risks or the potential exacerbation of existing risks, identifying prevention and protection measures, updating safety protocols, and scheduling appropriate training for control bodies and workers;

- » tap into **good practices from other sectors** to support and finance job transitions, also through corporate and inter-sectoral social dialogue;
- » introduce monitoring, evaluation and follow-up mechanisms to **track the effectiveness of employment transition programmes**.

## **R11 - LOCAL COMMUNITIES AND VALUE CHAINS**

Interventions for the **protection and development of territorial social and economic structures** - which should be implemented by responsible public institutions and supported by social partners - should be aimed at:

- » focus in particular on the protection of **structurally weak regions** (which rely heavily on fossil-based industries) to avoid the risks of industrial desertification, loss of skilled workers, depopulation and forced processes of emigration and impoverishment. This can be ensured by:
  - \* supporting labour market with **active and passive policies**,
  - \* encouraging **economic diversification**, while also supporting supply chains with a high added value or a high innovation value,
  - \* using **fiscal policies** as a tool to tackle the effects of transition at the local level by strengthening social policies (health, education, care policies) to support affected communities,
  - \* **coordinating** actions undertaken and measures proposed at sectoral and territorial levels to effectively and efficiently address the challenges of the Just Energy Transition,
  - \* extending services and support measures to **all workers in the area, taking into account sector- and area- specific characteristics**;
- » strengthen **the role of regional actors** and their **coordination role** also through the reinforcement of **local social dialogue committees**;
- » apply a **place-based approach to Just Energy Transition measures**. This means coupling local development policies with measures that enhance territorial vocations, without neglecting the needs of local communities whose resources are linked to energy assets;
- » promote **the integration of Territorial Just Transition Plans into spatial development plans and other policies** affecting transition regions, so as to maximise the effective use of resources;
- » promote **the upgrade of – and link between - territorial** employment services, training establishments and social partners. Employment services can propose specific job-search solutions as well as learning courses, while protecting in particular people in vulnerable situations for them to be able to stay in the labour market.

## 4.4 THE UNION'S ROLE AND ACTION IN THE JUST ENERGY TRANSITION

### ***R12 – RECONFIGURATION OF INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS IN LIGHT OF THE CHANGES BROUGHT ABOUT BY THE ENERGY TRANSITION***

Social partners, supported by the government, should expedite the implementation of measures to **reconfigure the characteristics, functions and instruments of industrial relations** in order to maintain the safeguards and social protection guarantees of direct and indirect workers affected by changes in production processes and work organisation (uncertain status of new borderline professionals, fragmentation of employment contracts, increased exposure of workers to new, unfamiliar or less-known risks, worsening wage conditions, instability and precariousness of new jobs, etc.). In this connection, given the rapidly changing labour market, particular attention should be paid to **gaps in workers' representation**.

### ***R13 - ROLE OF THE UNION***

In order to strengthen the **role of trade unions and their ability to have a say** in industrial relations, unions should consider the following aspects:

- » the need to involve workers in tackling the challenges that will arise when anticipating and managing the effects of the energy transition, through their participation in social dialogue as an **instrument for the multilevel governance**;
- » the involvement of trade unions at different levels (national, sectoral, local) in restructuring and anticipating change to **protect and promote the interests of workers**;
- » the need to consolidate **cross-sectoral bargaining** in order to extend membership and strengthen the union's representative capacity;
- » the need to take on a **pro-active role**. This would allow trade unions to truly shape energy transition processes, anticipating changes and ensuring the participation of workers and their representatives from the planning stages of strategic decisions, with efforts aimed at signing agreements and formalise the role of trade unions.

### ***R14 - RENEWAL OF UNION ACTION***

In order to support the **renewal of trade union action by tapping into the Just Transition opportunities**, actions at European, national and territorial level should be aimed at:

- » **consolidating the capacity of trade unions** to participate effectively in the different levels of negotiations and decision-making (both at the political level and in corporate strategies), by investing in lifelong training and awareness-raising of trade union representatives. This, in turn, will reinforce their understanding of the complex issues involved in the energy transition and the tools to overcome them;
- » **promoting, enhancing and coordinating the articulation** of trade unions intervention on the energy transition issues;

- » **encouraging exchanges with other categories** involved in the energy chain to foster the sharing of bargaining best practices in bargaining at national, local and company level;
- » **strengthening the relations with civil society (in its various forms), research institutions and experts** to promote environmental sustainability and innovation vis-à-vis energy transition.

### ***R15 - EXTENSION OF THE AREAS FOR UNION ACTION***

The Just Transition represents an opportunity to broaden the areas of union action and collective bargaining, which could cover the following issues:

- » environmental sustainability of workplaces, through the legal recognition of **employee representatives with environmental skills, roles and functions** and the creation of the relevant professional role at company level;
- » the close **interconnection between digital and demographic transition**, with the resulting changes having a major impact on the future of workers' job profiles;
- » **quality of life and work-life balance**, from the perspective of the centrality of the person and the elimination of intersectional discrimination, through the strengthening of sectoral and company bargaining.

# ANNEX

## ANNEX 1. NATIONAL REPORTS AND CASE STUDY REPORTS

Country	National Reports <i>Energy for a just and green Recovery deal: the role of the Industrial relations in the Energy sector for a resilient Europe</i>	Case study Reports
Europe	Bormioli S., Rugiero S., <a href="#">Europe baseline report</a> , FDV Working Paper n.10/2024, 2023, ISSN: 2724 1882	
Belgium	Kuburas I., Naedenon F., <a href="#">Belgian baseline report</a> , FDV Working Paper n.8/2024, 2023, ISSN: 2724 1882	Kuburas I., Naedenon F., The energy transition of an electricity production plant, Belgian case study report, 1, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Kuburas I., Naedenon F., The energy transition of an electricity production plant, Belgian case study report, 2, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Colmont C., Naedenon F., Major electricity and gas distribution network operator: One Hundred years of energetical transition, Belgian case study report, 3, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
France	Teissier C., <a href="#">French national baseline report</a> , FDV Working Paper n.9/2024, 2023, ISSN: 2724 1882	Teissier C., Is a European Company Agreement relevant to support the green transition of a major “Fossil Group”?, French case study report, 1, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Teissier C., Managing the impacts of a Coal power plant future closure in the Pays de la Loire Region, French case study report, 2, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Teissier C., Managing the impacts of a Coal power plant closure in the Normandy Region, French case study report, 3, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
Germany	Vitols K., <a href="#">German national baseline report</a> , FDV Working Paper n.3/2023, 2023, ISSN: 2724 1882	Vitols, K., Voss E., The “Coal Consensus” of the Commission on Growth, Structural Change, and Employment, German case study report, 1, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Vitols, K., Voss E., “Revierwende” – A trade union project for the just transition of coal-mining areas, German case study report, 2, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Vitols, K., Voss E., Reconversion and managing energy transition at the Uniper company and in the Wilhelmshaven region, German case study report, 3, Rejeneraxion project, 2024

Hungary	Bors P., Meszmann T., <a href="#">Hungarian national baseline report</a> , FDV Working Paper n.3/2024, 2023, ISSN: 2724 1882	Transformation of the Mátra Erőmű Energia Zrt (MERT), Hungarian case study report, 1, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Transformation of the coal-based regions of Eastern Hungary, Hungarian case study report, 2, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		MOL company's portfolio greening, Hungarian case study report, 3, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
Italy	Alessandrini S., Bormioli S., Rugiero S., <a href="#">Italian national baseline report</a> , FDV Working Paper n.7/2024, 2023, ISSN: 2724 1882	Alessandrini S., Bormioli S., Rugiero S., The transition to the Gela biorefinery and the role of industrial relations, Italian case study report, 1, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Alessandrini S., Bormioli S., Rugiero S., The energy transition of Sulcis Iglesiente, Italian case study report, 2, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Alessandrini S., Bormioli S., Rugiero S., The energy transition in the Ravenna hub, Italian case study report, 3, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
Poland	Koziarek M., <a href="#">Polish national baseline report</a> , FDV Working Paper n.6/2024, 2023, ISSN: 2724 1882	Koziarek M., Social contract for hard coal mining sector, Polish case study report, 1, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Koziarek M., Social contract in lignite mining and electricity sectors, Polish case study report, 2, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Koziarek M., Energy transition in ZE PAK, Polish case study report, 3, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
Slovakia	Gažo P., Martišková M., <a href="#">Slovak national baseline report</a> , FDV Working Paper n.1/2024, 2023, ISSN: 2724 1882	Martišková M., Gažo P., Slovakia – from coal to geothermal energy in the Košice region, Slovak case study report, 1, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Gažo P., Martišková M., The mining region of Upper Nitra, Slovak case study report, 2, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Shokha S., Gažo P., Martišková M., Slovak gas industry transformation, Slovak case study report, 3, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
Spain	Cruces Aguilera J., De la Fuente Sanz L., <a href="#">Spanish national baseline report</a> , FDV Working Paper n.4/2023, 2023, ISSN: 2724 1882	Cruces Aguilera J., De la Fuente Sanz L., Meirama. From mine and coal-fired power plant to Hydrogen and biomethane plants, Spanish case study report, 1, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Cruces Aguilera J., De la Fuente Sanz L., Andorra. From coal-fired power plant to PV and Eolic knot, Spanish case study report, 2, Rejeneraxion project, 2024
		Cruces Aguilera J., De la Fuente Sanz L., Aboño. From mine and coal-fired power plant to hydrogen plant, Spanish case study report, 3, Rejeneraxion project, 2024

## ANNEX 2. CASE STUDY REPORTS OVERVIEW

COUNTRY	Title of the case study	FEATURES OF THE ECONOMIC ACTIVITY IN TRANSITION		INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND SOCIAL DIALOGUE		
		Fossil fuel sector	Typology of Energy Transition process	Level of Social Partners involvement	Level of Industrial relation/ Social Dialogue	Topics of Industrial relation/Social Dialogue
Germany	1) The “Coal Consensus” of the Commission on Growth, Structural Change, and Employment	Coal (lignite mines, coal fired plants)	Decommissioning/ dismantling and Reconversion	Ex ante - trade unions at national, regional and from different sectors have been involved from the beginning	Sectoral	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, reskilling
	2) “Revierwende” – A trade union project for the just transition of coal-mining areas	Coal (lignite mines, coal fired plants)	Reconversion	Multi-trade union-initiated project	Territorial	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Other (reskilling, regional conversion)
	3) Reconversion and managing energy transition at the Uniper company and in the Wilhelmshaven region	Oil, coal and gas	Reconversion	Ex ante - trade unions at national, regional and from different sectors have been involved from the beginning	Company	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions, green skills promotion
Spain	1) Meirama. From mine and coal-fired power plant to Hydrogen and bio-methane plants	Coal	Decommissioning/ dismantling and Reconversion	In Itinere, Ex post/evaluation phase	Company, Territorial, Sectoral, Inter-sectoral, National	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions, Other
	2) Andorra. From coal-fired power plant to PV and Eolic knot	Coal	Decommissioning/ dismantling and Reconversion	In Itinere, Ex post/evaluation phase	Company, Territorial, Sectoral, Inter-sectoral, National	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions, Other
	3) Aboño. From mine and coal-fired power plant to hydrogen plant	Coal	Decommissioning/ dismantling and Reconversion	In Itinere, Ex post/evaluation phase	Company, Territorial, Sectoral, Inter-sectoral, National	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions, Other

Poland	1) Social contract for hard coal mining sector	Coal (hard coal)	Decommissioning/ dismantling	Ex ante/DM process, In itinere	Sectoral	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions, Other
	2) Social contract in lignite mining and electricity sectors	Coal (lignite and hard coal)	Other	Ex ante/DM process, In itinere	Sectoral and National	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions
	3) Energy transition in ZE PAK	Coal (lignite)	Decommissioning/ dismantling and Reconversion and other	In itinere	Company and territorial	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems
Slovakia	1) Slovakia - from coal to geothermal energy in the Košice region	Coal	Reconversion	In itinere	Company	Social protection systems, Working conditions
	2) The mining region of Upper Nitra	Coal	Decommissioning/ dismantling	In itinere	Company	Social protection systems, Working conditions
	3) Slovak gas industry transformation	Gas	Reconversion	In itinere	Company	Social protection systems, Working conditions
Hungary	1) Transformation of the Mátra Erőmű Energia Zrt (MERT)	Coal and gas	Decommissioning/ dismantling and Reconversion	Ex ante/DM process and not involved	Company and sectoral	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions
	2) Transformation of the coal-based regions of Eastern Hungary	Coal	Decommissioning/ dismantling	Not involved	Territorial and sectoral	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems
	3) MOL company's portfolio greening	Oil and other	Reconversion	Ex ante/DM process, In itinere	Company	Social protection systems, Working conditions and other (introduction of new technologies)

Belgium	1) The energy transition of an electricity production plant	Coal	Reconversion and other ("closure-reopening")	In itinere	Company, Territorial, Sectoral	Social protection systems, working conditions
	2) The energy transition of an electricity production plant	Other: Nuclear	Decommissioning/dismantling and Reconversion	Ex ante/DM process, In itinere, Ex post/evaluation phase	Company, Territorial, Sectoral, National	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions
	3) Major electricity and gas distribution network operator: One Hundred years of energetical transition	Gas	Other	In itinere	Company and territorial	Transition and investment Policies
France	1) Is a European Company Agreement relevant to support the green transition of a major "Fossil Group"?	Oil	Other	In itinere	Company	Transition, Social protection systems, working conditions
	2) Managing the impacts of a Coal power plant future closure in the Pays de la Loire Region	Coal	Reconversion	Ex ante/DM process, In itinere	Company and territorial	Transition and investment Policies
	3) Managing the impacts of a Coal power plant closure in the Normandy Region	Coal	Decommissioning/dismantling and Reconversion	Ex ante/DM process, In itinere, Ex post/evaluation phase	Company and territorial	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions
Italy	1) The transition to the Gela biorefinery and the role of industrial relations	Oil	Reconversion	Ex ante/DM process, In itinere	Company, Territorial, Sectoral, National	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions
	2) The energy transition of Sulcis Iglesiente	Coal	Decommissioning/dismantling and Reconversion and other	In itinere	Territorial, Sectoral, National	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems
	3) The energy transition in the Ravenna hub	Oil and gas	Decommissioning/dismantling and Reconversion and other	Ex ante/DM process, In itinere	Company, Territorial, Sectoral, Inter-sectoral, National	Transition and investment Policies, Social protection systems, Working conditions, Other





ast:rées  
GroupesOS

CELSI Central European  
Labour Studies  
Institute



INSTITUTE OF  
PUBLIC AFFAIRS

LENTIC  
Technology - Innovation - Change



Co-funded by the European Union (Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion). Views and opinions expressed are however those of the author(s) only and do not necessarily reflect those of the European Union. Neither the European Union nor the granting authority can be held responsible for them. Project no. 101052341/SOCPL-2021-IND-REL